

**Title:** Settlement Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Newcomers in BC

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### **Research Question:**

This study investigated the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) newcomers (immigrants and refugees) and their families in settling in communities of various sizes in BC and their perceptions of their settlement service needs. Settlement service workers' experiences responding to the needs of LGB newcomers and their perceptions of LGB newcomers' needs and of supports and impediments to them accessing services were also explored. Finally, members of local LGB community organizations were interviewed about their insights regarding issues in welcoming newcomers to their groups.

### **Importance:**

Little attention has been given to understanding the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual newcomers who can be assumed to comprise 10 per cent of this population. In addition to facing challenges similar to those encountered by many other immigrants and refugees, including discrimination related to 'race' and ethnicity, LGB newcomers may encounter impediments to settlement associated with their sexual orientation, particularly in smaller, more rural communities, and have needs for settlement services that address these issues.

### **Research Findings:**

Some newcomers who are attracted to members of the same sex identify as LGB, while others do not. Newcomers reported experiencing isolation, their settlement being shaped by anticipation of racism within general LGB communities, and heterosexism within their cultural and majority communities. Thus, some LGB newcomers did not approach either settlement services or LGB community organizations for help, particularly in smaller centres. Newcomers also need information regarding services relevant to LGBs and local LGB organizations. Settlement service and LGB organization participants had differing perceptions regarding LGB newcomers' needs.

### **Implications:**

Information provided to all newcomers should affirm that the human rights LGB people are legally recognized in Canada and identify LGB community resources. In addition, settlement services' policies should require that issues related to sexual orientation be addressed in resources and services they provide. Services, particularly in smaller centres, should be sensitive to safety concerns of LGB newcomers. Settlement services and local LGB organizations should collaborate in service delivery and staff training. The creation of programs specific to LGB asylum seekers should also be considered.