

# Research report

Forum: Human Rights Council  
Issue: Discussing the enhancement of LGBTQIA+ rights  
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## **Introduction**

All states are required under the International Human Rights law to promote and protect their citizens from any form of discrimination and violence. But in at least 70 countries criminalize having same-sex relationships and in at least five countries queer people can face the death penalty. LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to face violence, blackmail discrimination, stigma and the risk of arrest in such countries. This includes countries where Islam is the dominant religion. Most African countries (except South Africa), most Asian countries (except Israel, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines) and multiple former communist countries such as Russia, Poland, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such violence often comes forth from religious or conservative beliefs that see homosexuality as a sickness or a character flaw.

## **Definitions of key terms**

### **LGBTQIA+**

People who identify differently from heterosexual (being attracted to the opposite sex) and/or cisgender (identifying as the gender assigned at birth).

### **Queer**

People who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

### **Same-Sex marriage**

Marriage between two people of the same sex.

### **Hate crime**

Crimes committed against people, because of their race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

## General overview

### History of the letters

Since at least the 1910s “queer” has been used as an insult to exclude people in a heteronormative society. Since the early 1990s it was more used by people within the LGB-community. But it took longer to gain respect for the term “transgender”. Even though transgender people have existed throughout history, the term has only been around since the 1960s. The earliest use of “transgender” was found in a psychology textbook from 1965. It became more popular since the transfeminine activist Virginia Prince used it. The term was embraced as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and widespread in the 2000s.

Newer letters of the acronym are an attempt to embrace an even wider variant of the community. A plus sign, referring to a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations. The letter I (intersex) and A (asexual and aromantic) are sometimes added after LGBT.

### Mental health

Being LGBTQ+ doesn't cause problems such as self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts, alcohol and drug abuse. These things can affect anyone. But people from the LGBTQIA+ community are two times more likely to develop these problems. They face things, such as homophobia or transphobia, social isolation, hate crime, rejection and difficult experiences of coming out. A study by Stonewall found that over the previous year:

- Half of LGBTQIA+ people had experienced depression, and three in five had experienced anxiety.
- One in eight of LGBTQIA+ people aged 18 to 24 had attempted to end their lives.
- Almost half of all transgender people had thought about suicide.

Around one in eight LGBTQIA+ people have experienced unequal treatment from health care staff, because they are LGBTQIA+. One in seven have avoided treatment out of fear for discrimination.

### Criminalization of LGBTQIA+

We are all protected to discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression under the international human rights law.

However, in reality, authorities in many countries that have signed international treaties to protect human rights, continue to implement and introduce laws that single out and discriminate against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

There are 64 countries around the globe which have laws that criminalize homosexuality. A lot of those laws can be traced back to European colonization.

In some countries, people can be sentenced to the death penalty if they engage in consensual same-sex activities.

Discrimination goes further that being criminally prosecuted for being LGBTQIA+ and may include:

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- Having limited access to healthcare
- Difficulty in securing employment
- Bullying
- Harassment in the workplace
- etc.

Across all states in the US there have been at least 417 anti-LGBTQ+ bills passed since the start of 2023. That's already over twice the number of such bills introduced all of last year.

Especially, education and health care-related bills are flooding in at unpredictable levels. Along with a renewed push against minors who are transgender, there has been a lot of focus on regulating curriculum in public schools, including discussions about gender identity and sexuality.

There has also been a change of focus towards new categories of bills. Just as states followed Florida's bill that opponents call "Don't Say Gay" -which restricts discussions in school about sexuality and gender identity- several joined Tennessee in proposing bills banning drag performances.

## Major parties involved

### *USA*

A 2022 poll concluded that 7,1 percent of the adult population of the United States identified as LGBTQIA+. In light of the recent anti-LGBTQIA+ bills that have been passed, demonstrations have happened in multiple countries.

### *Ukraine*

Ukraine has a large LGBTQIA+ community and there are several LGBTQIA+ groups active in the country, but as the war continues, these groups are not able to assist as they normally would in a stable environment. With the Russian army bombing urban areas – where LGBTQIA+ groups are usually headquartered – they no longer have the resources to help the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, the internal displacement of people within Ukraine and refugees fleeing to other countries, means that the staff and those they serve may not be available to gather or coordinate like before. While social media platforms and chat apps are likely to provide communication between the groups and community, this does not provide the level of support that is needed in normal times, much less during war.

## Timeline of Key Events

June 28, 1969 - July 3, 1969

- Stonewall riots. The uprisings in New York City were spontaneous protests by members of the LGBTQIA+ community when the police became violent. These riots are considered the event that changed the gay liberation movement and the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights in the USA.

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December 21, 2000

- The Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage. The bill took effect on April 1, 2001.

## Possible solutions

- Develop international guidelines to ensure the safety of LGBTQIA+ refugees.

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- Include LGBTQIA+ organizations in decision-making processes related to human rights and social events.
- Create a global fund to financially support LGBTQIA+ groups in countries where LGBTQIA+ rights are under threat.
- Release annual reports on the global state of LGBTQIA+ rights to track progress and identify countries in need of improvement.

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