

HOMOSEXUAL CITIZENS

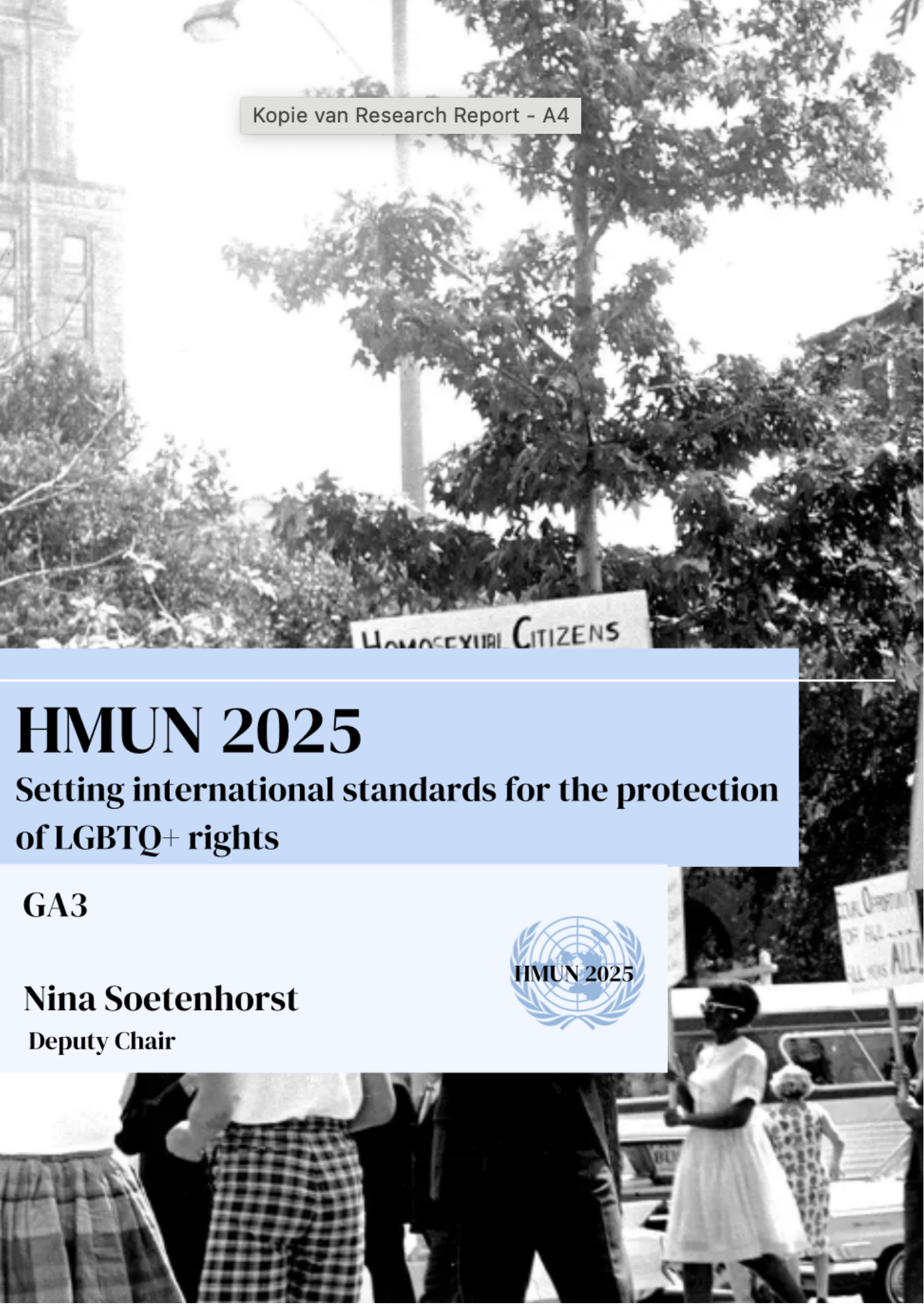
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Setting international standards for the protection of LGBTQ+ rights

GA3

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Introduction

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ people undermines the human rights principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is a resolution accepted by the General Assembly in 1948. Even after accepting this resolution, discrimination, and violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community are still all too common. Homophobia and transphobia remain deeply rooted in many different cultures around the world.

Multiple United Nations human rights mechanisms have expressed their concerns about these human rights violations since the beginning of the 1990s. These mechanisms include the treaty bodies, which are established to monitor member states' compliance with international human rights treaties like the UDHR, special rapporteurs, and other independent experts, who were mostly appointed by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

Definition of Key Terms

Cisgender

Cisgender describes a person whose gender identity corresponds to their biological sex and its sex characteristics. A cisgender person can also be described as someone who is not transgender and/or transsexual.

Hate crime

A crime motivated by hatred and/or intolerance of members of a certain social group based on their ethnicity, religion, income, gender identity, romantic orientation, disability, and/or sexual orientation.

Homophobia

Hatred or irrational fear of someone who is homosexual or homoromantic, specifically of men who are exclusively sexually and/or romantically attracted to other men. This term can be used for hatred towards any person with another sexual orientation.

Homosexuality

Being exclusively sexually attracted to other members of one's own biological sex. A homosexual person can also be described as gay.

Homoromantic

Being exclusively romantically attracted to other members of one's own biological sex. A homoromantic person can also be described as gay.

LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, and queer/questioning. It is a term broadly referring to all sexual orientations, romantic orientations, and gender identities that differ from heterosexual, heteroromantic, and/or cisgender.

Queer

An umbrella term for people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is a description for people who are transgender/transsexual and for people whose sexual and/or romantic orientation differs from heterosexual and/or heteroromantic.

Queerbaiting

The harassment, abuse, or targeted provocation of LGBTQ+ people. Queerbaiting can also be described as the practice of trying to appeal to and capitalize on LGBTQ+ audiences or customers in a deceptive or superficial manner.

Same-sex marriage

The marriage between two members of the same biological sex. It can also be described as gay marriage.

Transgender

When someone is transgender, their gender identity differs from the traditional expectations of their biological sex.

Transphobia

When someone has negative beliefs and/or irrational fears about someone being transsexual/transgender.

Transsexual

A transgender person who has undergone medical procedures to match their gender identity with their physical appearance.

General Overview

When former American president Biden was in office (2021-2025), the Center for American Progress (CAP) created a survey with the independent research group NORC at the University of Chicago. The nationally representative survey includes interviews with 1,828 LGBTQ+ adults and 1,542 non-LGBTQ+ adults ages 18 years old and older, recruited and administered through an online panel created by NORC, conducted from May 27, 2022, to June 23, 2022. Compared with the CAP survey of 2020, the 2022 survey sample size was expanded to include a sizable control group of non-members of the LGBTQ+ community. This shows a better assessment of the statistical significance of the survey's findings. The most critical takeaway from the survey of 2022 is that members of the LGBTQ+ community continue to experience significantly higher rates of discrimination than non-LGBTQ+ individuals, a trend that holds true in virtually every setting that was surveyed. Here are some of the results of the survey:

Over 1 in 3, LGBTQ+ adults reported facing some kind of discrimination in the year prior to when they took the survey, while less than 1 in 5 non-LGBTQ+ individuals did so.

50% of LGBTQ+ adults reported experiencing some form of workplace discrimination or harassment in the workplace in 2022 because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including being fired, being denied a promotion, having their work hours cut, or experiencing verbal, physical, or sexual harassment.

Almost 3 in 10 LGBTQ+ adults who took the survey reported experiencing some kind of housing discrimination or harassment in the year that the survey was taken because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, including being prevented or discouraged from buying a home, being denied access to a shelter, or experiencing harassment from housemates or neighbors.

More than 3 in 5 LGBTQ+ adults reported they took at least one action to avoid experiencing discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, including hiding a personal relationship, avoiding law enforcement, avoiding medical offices, or changing the way they dressed.

Over 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ adults reported postponing or avoiding medical care in 2022 due to cost issues.

More than 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ adults reported postponing or avoiding medical care in the past year due to disrespect or discrimination by providers.

More than fifty percent of LGBTQ+ adults reported that “recent debates about state laws restricting the rights of LGBTQ+ people” moderately or significantly affected their mental health or made them feel less safe.

Approximately 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ adults reported encountering at least one kind of negative experience or form of mistreatment when interacting with a mental health professional in 2022.

This survey provides an overview of survey responses, including a comparative analysis of outcomes of LGBTQ+ respondents and outcomes of non-LGBTQ+ respondents. These findings provide insight into the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in the United States of America.

Research also finds that discriminatory experiences or fear of discrimination may engender avoidance behavior. The 2022 CAP survey, therefore, also asked LGBTQ+ respondents to report whether they had changed any aspects of their lives to avoid experiences of discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sex characteristics. They reported engaging in behaviors such as hiding a personal relationship (55%), changing the way they dressed or their mannerisms (39%), making decisions about where to work (36%) or go to school (26%), and moving away from their relatives (34%) or from where they were living (31%). LGBTQ+ respondents also reported avoiding houses of worship (43%); certain public places such as stores, restaurants, or banks (31%); law enforcement (30%); medical offices, mental health providers, and/or hospitals (26%); and certain places to travel to (20%).

How the acronym came to be

Prior to the late nineteenth century, the concept of having a specific sexual orientation did not exist, though people at this time lived lives similar to our modern understanding of what it means to be part of the LGBTQ+ community. Homosexuality, as both a personal and political category, did not fully emerge until the mid-twentieth century. Historical terminology used to describe sexuality and gender often lacked the specificity that exists today.

Out of all the letters in the acronym LGBTQ+, the L, meaning ‘lesbian,’ was the first to come into existence. For centuries, the word had been associated with the works of the ancient Greek writer Sappho, a woman from the island of Lesbos who wrote poems about same-sex passion.

The oldest use of the term to describe female same-sex love has been traced back to the 17th century. However, its modern use emerged in the 1890s when it was used in an English-language medical dictionary and a variety of books on psychology and sexual orientation. Over time, the word ‘lesbian’ grew in popularity and was adopted by women who secretly, then proudly, were sexually and/or romantically attracted to other people from the same biological sex.

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a nineteenth-century German lawyer and writer who may have identified as gay, was the first known person to try to label the gay community. As early as 1862, he used the term “Urning” to refer to men who were attracted to other biological men. “We Urnings constitute a special class of human gender,” he wrote. “We are our own gender, a third sex.”

But the term was quickly replaced by a word coined by an Austro-Hungarian journalist under the pseudonym Karoly Maria Kertbeny. In 1869, the Prussian government thought about adding language that forbade male same-sex sexual activity to its constitution.

In response, Kertbeny wrote a passionate, anonymous open letter to the Prussian minister of justice calling the proposed law “shocking nonsense” and using the word “homosexuality,” which he had previously coined in a private letter to Ulrichs. He also coined the term heterosexual, referring to those who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex, and bisexual, which, to this day, still refers to people who are sexually attracted to both biological sexes.

In the late 1960s, activists reclaimed the decades-old slur “gay.” Throughout the twentieth century, same-sex attraction and sexual activity were largely outlawed, and this and other slurs that denigrate LGBTQ+ people were very common. Though its origins are murky, “gay” was eventually embraced by men who defied the status quo with open expressions of same-sex sexual and romantic attraction.

Queer activists also began using other terms like social variant, deviant, and “homophile,” which means “same love,” in an effort to emphasize the loving relationships of same-sex relationships and to protest discriminatory laws and see the term as a more neutral and acceptable option because it removed the word “sexual” while positively affirming same-sex attraction.

But it took longer to gain acceptance for another term that is now part of the modern acronym: “transgender.” Though transgender people have existed throughout history, the term only came into being in the 1960s. Historians have traced the earliest use of the term to a 1965 psychology textbook, and it was popularized by transgender activist women like Virginia Prince, for example, who argued that sex and gender are separate entities. As it replaced other terminology that mocked or minimized transgender people, “transgender” was increasingly embraced as part of the wider LGBT rights movement, and it was widespread by the 2000s. The term “transgender” was

also adopted by people who did not identify with the earlier label “transsexual” due to its association with medical transition across the gender spectrum.

More recently, the letter Q has been added to the acronym. In use since at least the 1910s, it was also once a slur used to separate people from a heteronormative society. But “queer” was increasingly used by people within the gay rights movement beginning in the 1990s. Linguist Gregory Coles writes that it “can be read as at once pejorative and honorific,” depending on the speaker’s identity and intention. Scholars largely consider the use of “queer” as one of reclamation.

The Q in the acronym is also used to stand for “questioning” as a way to acknowledge those who are exploring their gender. Sexual orientation and/or romantic orientation. This dual definition points to a larger, ongoing conversation about the meaning of personal identity and whether it’s even appropriate to use umbrella terms like LGBTQ+ as shorthand for people’s lived experiences.

Mental health

Mental health problems, such as depression, self-harm, alcohol abuse, suicidal thoughts, and drug abuse, can affect anyone, but they’re more common among people who are LGBTQ+. People who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community are at least twice as likely to have any mental health disorders compared to the general population and 2.5 times as likely to experience depression, substance misuse, and anxiety.

Being LGBTQ+ doesn’t cause these problems. But there are some things that LGBTQ+ people go through that can affect their mental health, such as violence, homophobia and/or transphobia, social isolation, rejection, and difficult experiences of coming out.

However, it is important to note that embracing being LGBTQ+ can also have a positive impact on someone’s well-being. It might mean they have more confidence, a sense of belonging to a community, feelings of relief and/or self-acceptance, and better relationships with friends and family.

Being LGBTQ+ doesn’t automatically mean someone will have mental health issues, but it may mean they’re at higher risk of experiencing poor mental health.

A study by Stonewall shows that about 50% of LGBTQ+ people had experienced depression, and three in five had experienced anxiety; one in eight LGBTQ+ people aged 18 to 24 had attempted to end their life; almost half of transgender/transsexual people had thought about taking their life.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are also at a greater risk of experiencing hate crimes compared to non-members. Certain LGBTQ+ groups are at particular risk, including gay men, young

people, and those who are from Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority groups. In the U.S. state of Minnesota, 79% of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color who identify as LGBTQ+ experienced anti-LGBTQ+ behavior.

Around one in eight LGBTQ+ people have experienced unequal treatment from healthcare-providing services because they are part of the LGBTQ+ community. One in seven members has avoided treatment for fear of discrimination.

People who are queer have unique experiences with stress that non-LGBTQ+ people may not experience. For example, a gay man may worry that others will treat him poorly for being gay or that he will get fired if he openly talks about his male spouse at work. When stress is not managed appropriately, it can lead to health problems and unhealthy behaviors — this is true for anyone regardless of sexual/romantic orientation, gender identity, race, and/or ethnicity. However, the characteristics of minority stress can increase the likelihood of mental health concerns in people who identify as LGBTQ+.

Depression, clinically known as Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), is a condition that involves feelings of despair, hopelessness, self-guilt, and a loss of motivation for even simple tasks. It is a common mental health concern in the United States — 1 in 20 people in the U.S.A. have regular feelings of depression. But depression is far more common in the LGBTQ+ community. According to the Rainbow Health survey, about 75% of adults from Minnesota who identify as LGBTQ+ feel depressed one or more times per week, and about 20% feel depressed 5 to 7 days each week. Fifty-eight percent of LGBTQ+ youth report experiencing some symptoms of depression.

Suicide is also a serious public health problem. In 2020, it ranked among the top nine leading causes of death for people ages 10-64 and was the second leading cause of death for people aged 10-14 or 25-34, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Identifying as LGBTQ+ makes it much more likely that someone will consider, plan, or attempt suicide. LGBTQ+ youth are around four times more likely to try suicide than non-members. A Trevor Project survey found that 45% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide, and 14% actually attempted it. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults are also more likely to consider, plan, or try suicide than the general population. According to a 2021 research article, suicidal behaviors among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults of all ages, races, and ethnicities were 3 to 6 times greater than those among their heterosexual/heteroromantic counterparts.

Criminality

There are 64 nations around the world that have laws that criminalize homosexuality; many of those countries can be traced back to European colonization. In some countries, people can even be sentenced to the death penalty if they engage in consensual same-sex sexual acts.

Discrimination can go beyond being criminally prosecuted for being an LGBTQ+ person and can include limited access to healthcare, difficulty in securing employment, bullying, and/or harassment in the workplace.

At least 510 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in state legislatures across the United States in 2023 alone—a new record, according to American Civil Liberties Union data. That's nearly three times the number of such bills introduced in 2022.

Education and healthcare-related bills, in particular, flooded in at unprecedented levels, according to the group's data through December 21. Along with a renewed push to ban access to gender-affirming care in the health care system for transgender/transsexual youth, there was also a heavy focus on regulating the curriculum in public schools, including discussions around gender identity and sexual orientation.

There has also been a shift toward new categories of bills. Just as states followed Florida's bill that the opposition labeled "Don't Say Gay"—which restricts in-school discussions about sexual orientation and/or gender identity—several other states joined Tennessee in proposing bills that would ban drag performances.

Republican lawmakers in the U.S. state of Kentucky voted to override the governor's veto of a bill that the Democrats in the state have called the "most extreme anti-LGBTQ+ bill in America." However, Republicans say that the new law, which includes a ban on transgender medical treatment for those under 18, is meant to protect minors. Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, a Democrat, vetoed the law and, in a statement, said that it stripped "freedom from parents" and would "cause an increase in suicide among Kentucky's youth." Republican legislators in Kentucky hold a supermajority, however, and swiftly overrode Mr. Beshear's veto with a 76-23 vote in the state's House of Representatives and a 29-8 vote in the state's Senate. Kentucky Senator Max Wise, a Republican, and the bill's sponsor, said the purpose of the law "was to strengthen parental engagement and communication in children's education while protecting the safety of our children".

Laws restricting and regulating the lives of transgender youth are part of a rising trend in the U.S., as several similar bills have been proposed—and passed—in several other states in recent years by Republican state lawmakers.

The Transitional National Council in Mali passed a law on October 31, 2024, that criminalizes homosexuality. The new legislation will likely intensify the risks of stigma, discrimination, and violence against the LGBTQ+ community throughout the country.

The human rights record of Mali, which was under military rule since 2021, has significantly worsened since January, amidst a government crackdown on the political opposition and media and worsening fighting between the armed forces and Islamist armed groups.

While same-sex sexual conduct was not previously illegal in Mali, vague provisions in the penal code—such as Article 225 penalizing “public indecency”—were often used to persecute LGBTQ+ people and those with nonconforming gender expressions. Justice Minister Mamadou Kassogue, who announced the new law, previously condemned homosexuality as “unnatural” and vowed to criminalize it. The law bans the “promotion” of homosexuality, which is undefined, greatly expanding upon those subject to prosecution under this law.

The members of parliament of Mali have sought to justify the law as a defense of “traditional and moral values.” Yet, the immediate consequence has been a jump in arbitrary arrests and detention and physical abuses based solely on physical appearance or gender expression.

The penalties for violating the new law remain unclear, adding to the uncertainty of those people who might be affected by it. The law directly contravenes Mali’s obligations under international human rights law, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and African Union Resolution 275, which condemns violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It also violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Mali adopted in 1974.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
June 28 - July 3 1969	<p>Stonewall Riots in New York City, in the U.S.A. The police raided a gay bar called Stonewall. The people who were present started to throw bricks at the police in protest. The riots led to multiple activist groups like the Human Rights Campaign.</p> <p>The month June is now known as Pride Month.</p>

April 1 2001	The legalization of gay marriage in the Netherlands. This was the first time that a country passed a bill to make same-sex marriage legal.
May 27, 2022- June 23, 2022	Online panel by NORC
October 31, 2024	The Transitional National Council in Mali passed a law that criminalizes homosexuality

Major Parties Involved

The Netherlands

On April 1, 2001, a bill took effect in the Netherlands that stated that not only heterosexual/heteroromantic couples but also homosexual/homoromantic couples would be able to get married. The Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriage.

United States of America

Between June 28 and July 1969, riots by queer people in New York City. The riots were sparked when the police raided a gay bar called Stonewall. The riots led to multiple activist groups, like the Human Rights Campaign, who fought for LGBTQ+ rights. Because of these riots, the month of June is now known as Pride Month, which is celebrated across the globe.

Possible Solutions

Governments could pass laws that protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination in specific areas like employment, healthcare, housing, and public services.

Legalizing same-sex marriage in all regions where it is not yet allowed can be seen as an essential step towards recognizing the rights and equality of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Specialized counseling and mental health services for LGBTQ+ people can be made more available, as many queer people face unique challenges such as discrimination for being part of the LGBTQ+ community, internalized homophobia, and internalized transphobia.

Hosting public dialogues and debates on LGBTQ+ issues hosted by independent, neutral organizations can promote wider understanding and dispel misconceptions about the LGBTQ+ community.

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be created to fight for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community around the globe. These NGOs could also set up suicide hotlines

specifically for LGBTQ+ people who are dealing with mental health issues so that they can talk their issues through without being scared of judgment.

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