



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي



PART I

OVERVIEW

This Part introduces the current situation of LGBTI people around the world and explains why it is important that MPs take urgent action to protect their human rights.

ADVANCING THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION OF LGBTI PEOPLE

A HANDBOOK FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

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Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is an international, cross-party, non-governmental network of parliamentarians that informs and mobilizes legislators to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination and gender equality.

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PGA, a non-governmental, multi-party, international network of legislators acting in their individual capacity, informs and mobilizes parliamentarians in all regions of the world to advocate for human rights and the Rule of Law, democracy, human security, inclusion, gender equality and justice, including climate justice. Since 2013, PGA's global parliamentary Campaign against Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI Campaign) has sensitized parliamentarians from all regions of the world, facilitated meaningful interactions between parliamentarians and representatives of the LGBTI community, and contributed to efforts to advance inclusive legislative reforms in Angola, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles and Uruguay. PGA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Arcus Foundation, Global Equality Fund, Open Society Foundations, Sigrid Rausing Trust, and Oak Foundation.

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**LGBTI INCLUSION MATTERS
TO EVERYONE, AND YOU,
AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,
CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN
MAKING IT HAPPEN.**

1. LGBTI inclusion matters ... to everyone

When societies determine that all their members must be enabled to participate in all areas of life on a full and equal basis, they pave the way for resilience, sustainability and peace. That is one of the reasons why countries around the world pledged to “leave no one behind” when adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While different groups of people are marginalized in different countries for different reasons, LGBTI people suffer from exclusion and human rights violations everywhere in the world. Stigma, discrimination and violence against LGBTI people also hurts families and communities, and their exclusion from equal participation means that countries squander their human capital and do not reach their full potential.



[The reality] is still **a systematic pattern of violence and abuse, even killings, for millions of LGBTI people around the world** – with many crimes not even being investigated.

No regime is immune.”

– Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, speaking at the Interparliamentary Plenary Assembly, Copenhagen 2021 Human Rights Forum, August 2021.

1.1 Who are LGBTI people?

LGBTI people are like anybody else: they aspire to work, take care of their families and loved ones, and bring meaningful contributions to their communities and societies.

LGBTI people exist in all regions, contexts and cultures, and have done throughout history.

LGBTI people are commonly discriminated against, oppressed and subjected to violence because they are seen as defying gender norms.

LGBTI people are not a homogeneous group, as suggested by the term “LGBTI community”. There are various sub-populations of LGBTI persons. The status of any one person within these populations is only part of their identity and lived experience.

“Across the Middle East and North Africa, the rampant policing of non-normativity of all kinds is a product of coordinated political strategies that governments deploy to maintain a status quo that serves the economic and political interests of the most powerful. These conditions yield shared experience, shaping coalitions and communities. But these trajectories should be approached as contextual, situational, functional, and strategic. Our political movements are not about naming or claiming identities for the sake of being recognized or visible to a dominant gaze. They are primarily a fight for bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, access to socioeconomic power, and free mobility.”

– Rasha Younes, “The trouble with ‘the LGBT community’”, *The Nation*, 28 July 2021.

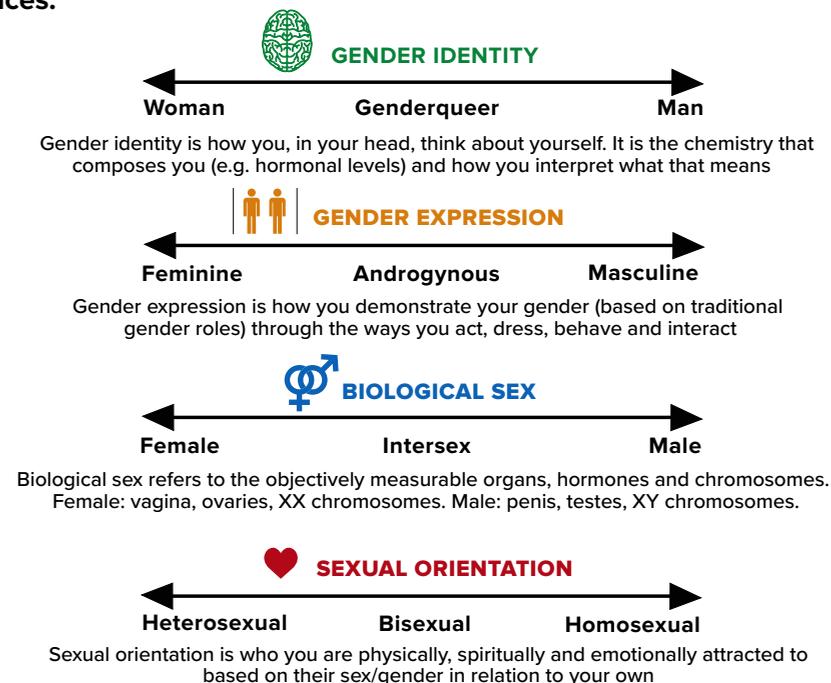
There is no universally accepted term for LGBTI people. In this Handbook, we use several terms and concepts to capture their diversity (see the Glossary). Three key terms are:

LGBTI: This acronym derives from five words: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. So it encompasses several groups of individuals. LGBTI is the most commonly used term in the international human rights field. However, it has its origins in the Global North and therefore has its limitations. It groups individuals according to identity categories (e.g. “lesbian”) that are not universal: people identify themselves in a myriad of ways, or sometimes do not identify within just one given category. The term LGBTI may include, for example, people who are non-binary, gender fluid or pansexual, but also people such as *hijras* in India and Bangladesh, *mahu* in French Polynesia, *muxe* in Mexico or *two-spirit* in North America. Virtually every language has its own terms for sexual and gender minorities, and while these words may be used in a negative or derogatory manner, they demonstrate the universality of sex, and sexual and gender diversity.

What LGBTI people all have in common is that they are seen as defying the gender norms and expectations of society. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people counter the gendered expectation that people of the same gender cannot have relationships with each other. Trans(gender) people counter the assumption that gender identity is always aligned with the sex assigned at birth. Non-binary people counter the assumption that gender identity must fall on one or the other side of the gender binary (male or female). Intersex people counter the expectation that biological sex characteristics can always be classified as male or female without ambiguity.

Breaking through the binary

There is now wide global consensus among scientists that homosexuality is a normal and natural variation of human sexuality without any inherently detrimental health consequences.



Source: Sam Killermann, “Breaking through the binary: Gender as a continuum”, *Issues*, No. 109, December 2014.

Other acronyms are increasingly used, such as LGBTIQ+, in which Q stands for “queer” and + acknowledges individuals of diverse sex characteristics, gender identities and sexual orientations who do not identify with LGBTIQ. We do not use the acronym LGBTIQ+ in this Handbook because the word “queer” does not translate well in every context.¹

SOGIESC: This acronym derives from the terms sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. It is important to note that these are not specific to LGBTI people: everyone has them. A person can be excluded or discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics.

Intersectionality²: This term highlights the specific forms of oppression that people face at the intersection of identity categories. For example, a person who is both trans and of colour does not experience transphobia and racism separately; their identity as a trans and racialized person exposes them to specific types of discrimination. Thus, LGBTI people may experience oppression on multiple grounds, not only because of their SOGIESC.

¹“Queer: Historically a negative term in English-speaking contexts, “queer” has since been reclaimed by many LGBTIQ+ people to describe a wide range of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions in a positive way. While “queer” is used by some individuals who feel that they do not conform to a given society’s economic, social and political norms based on their SOGIESC, it is not always acceptable to persons of diverse SOGIESC and should therefore be used with caution.” (UNHCR, Working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement, 2021).

²This term was coined by Black feminist lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

“We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.”

– Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Intersectional feminism: what it means and why it matters right now*, UN Women, 1 July 2020.

“This is what I say to my comrades in the struggle when they ask me why I waste time fighting for moffies.³ This is what I say to gay men and lesbians who ask me why I spend so much time struggling against apartheid when I should be fighting for gay rights. “I am black and I am gay. I cannot separate the two parts of me into secondary or primary struggles. In South Africa I am oppressed because I am a black man, and I am oppressed because I am gay. So when I fight for freedom I must fight against both oppressions.”⁴

– Simon Nkoli, anti-apartheid and gay activist, at South Africa’s first gay pride march, 1990.

1.2 Why should MPs take urgent action for LGBTI human rights?

When LGBTI people are legally and socially excluded, they are denied the possibility to develop their full potential, take care of their families, and make meaningful contributions to their societies.

MPs in many countries have taken action to address the roots of the exclusion of LGBTI people from society, and there have been many successes in recent years (see section 6). For example:

- Between 2019 and 2021, **Angola**, **Botswana**, **Bhutan** and **Gabon** decriminalized same-sex activity between consenting adults, either through legislation or strategic litigation.
- More countries are reforming their laws to remedy exclusion and prioritizing the human rights of LGBTI people. In 2018, **Pakistan** passed one of the most progressive legal gender recognition laws, soon after introducing an “X” gender marker on passports.
- There is growing understanding of the abuses perpetrated on intersex people and moves to counter this are gaining traction; more countries have adopted legislation banning intersex genital mutilation (IGM), such as **Portugal**, and many governments are working with medical representatives to address harmful practices.

³ Moffie is a derogatory Afrikaans term for a gay man.

⁴ Shaun De Waal and Anthony Manion, eds., *Pride: Protest and Celebration* (Johannesburg, Fanele, 2006), p. 37.

- Inclusive anti-discrimination bills that cover not only sexual orientation but also gender identity and sex characteristics are becoming more common. **Albania** and **Serbia** provide recent examples.
- Recognition of same-sex relationships and diverse family formations (such as “Rainbow families”) is progressing, with more countries adopting legislation on civil partnership, marriage equality and filiation of children by same-sex couples.
- Countries and international organizations are adopting legislation, policies and strategies that are inclusive of LGBTI people. Recent examples include **Argentina**, the **European Union (EU)**, **South Africa**, **Thailand** and the **UN**, all of which have developed and adopted LGBTI strategies, often spanning both domestic and international policy.

In the Global South, progress on legislation and policies is multiplying, with countries making groundbreaking advances in decriminalizing same-sex sexual activity, protecting LGBTI people against discrimination and violence, or developing policies that target the health inequalities they face. Some of these advances, made in many countries, are discussed in section 6.

But while there are many reasons to celebrate progress, there is much more work to be done.

“We are at a stage where there is tremendous, one might say unprecedented progress. There are trans people and gender-non-conforming people and gay people, and lesbian people and bisexual people who have been elected to offices around the world. There’s a tremendous amount of advance of rights, both in the global north and the global south, and of course tremendous representation in the media. ... But the violence and the backlash is also unprecedented and in some places in the world, historic.”

– Imara Jones, journalist and moderator of the [first high-level meeting on gender diversity and non-binary identities](#) held at UN headquarters, New York, 15 July 2019.

Globally, the situation of LGBTI people is far from positive, and often complex. The stereotype of a progressive Global North and a less progressive Global South has never been accurate – the United Kingdom pioneered anti-LGBTI laws banning the “promotion of homosexuality” in the late 1980s, while South Africa pioneered constitutional protections linked to sexual orientation in the 1990s.

More recently, in Europe and North America, several countries have been facing considerable setbacks as political parties and political representatives spread hate speech, protest progressive legislation, and introduce discriminatory laws.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown how crises can exacerbate the inequalities faced by members of vulnerable groups – such as LGBTI people.

“With its harrowing human, social and financial costs, the COVID-19 pandemic acts as a magnifying glass on those realities, to the point where they become apparent even to the untrained eye, and thus impossible to ignore – except, of course, intentionally.”

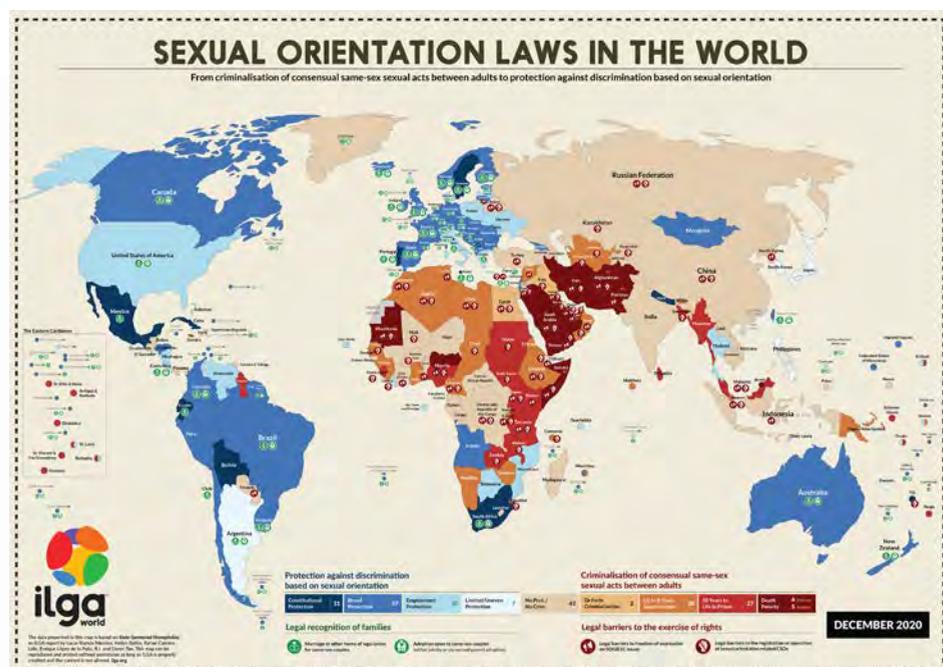
– Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, report on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (A/75/258), 28 July 2020.

1.3 What is at stake for LGBTI people right now?

Thousands of trans people around the world are murdered every year. The numbers are massively underreported and increase every year. “Due to data not being systematically collected in most countries, added to the constant misgendering by families, authorities and media, it is not possible to estimate the number of unreported cases.”⁵

70 Member States of the UN expressly criminalize consensual same-sex activity in 2021, as does one semi-independent jurisdiction (the Cook Islands), and two others (Egypt and Iraq) apply de facto criminalization.

The death penalty is the legally prescribed punishment for consensual same-sex activity in six Member States of the UN (Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, 12 northern states of Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen).⁶



Source: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) World, “Maps – Sexual orientation laws”, 2020.

⁵ Carsten Bolzer and others, *Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide: A Comparative Review of the Human-rights Situation of Gender-variant/Trans People*, TvT Publication Series, vol. 6. TransgenderEurope; Transrespect Versus Transphobia Worldwide (TvT) (Berlin, 2012); TvT, [Map: Trans Murder Monitoring](#).

⁶ ILGA World: Lucas Ramon Mendos and others, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update* (Geneva, ILGA, December 2020)

Only three countries (Malta, Portugal and Germany) **prohibit unconsented surgical and other medical interventions on intersex infants** as at 2021. The consequences of such surgeries, combined with the stigma faced by intersex people, are multiple: chronic health issues, pain, and mental health issues.

LGBTI exclusion costs Kenya US\$1.3 billion every year because of poor health outcomes, reduced tourism and lower productivity.⁷ **In the Czech Republic, the annual cost of exclusion is estimated at US\$1.7 billion** because of unequal health outcomes, economic discrimination, and lost revenue from same-sex weddings.⁸ **In the English-speaking Caribbean,⁹ anti-LGBTI laws and stigma diminish tourism at a cost of between US\$423 million and US\$689 million every year.**¹⁰

Up to 40 percent of transgender women are estimated to be living with HIV. In the African region, transgender people are at 13 times greater risk of acquiring HIV than adults in the general population.¹¹

These are the statistics of exclusion, and they diminish us all.

“So long as people face criminalization, bias and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, we must redouble our efforts to end these violations.”

– UN Secretary-General António Guterres, [Video message to the Ministerial Level meeting of the UN LGBTI Core Group](#), 25 September 2018.

At the Interparliamentary Plenary Assembly in Copenhagen in August 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, called for freedom to both “be who you are without fear of persecution” and “to love.”

She warned that 69 countries continue to have discriminatory laws used to “arrest, harass, blackmail, and exclude”, on the grounds of perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of individuals. In five of these States, laws are so extreme that they include the death penalty. Efforts to repeal all laws that “deny the basic humanity, dignity, and rights of people, must be accelerated”, she said.

Despite the fact that more comprehensive national anti-discrimination laws are being adopted, the High Commissioner reminded delegates that “only one third of countries ban discrimination based on sexual orientation”, just one in 10 against trans individuals, and only one in 20 against intersex people.

⁷ Open For Business, [Research Series. The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in Kenya](#), 2019.

⁸ Open For Business, [Economic Brief. The Economic and Business Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Czech Republic](#), 2020.

⁹ Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

¹⁰ Open For Business, [Research Series. The Economic Case for LGBT+ inclusion in the Caribbean](#), 2021.

¹¹ UNAIDS, [Seizing the moment. Tackling entrenched inequalities to end epidemics](#), 2020.

GLOSSARY

.....

This list includes terms used in this Handbook as well as other, related terms, that are not. It is not an exhaustive list of terms relevant to the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI people.

Note also that the terms listed here are in constant evolution. Their use and the meaning attached to them varies from one place to another. To use terms such as these in a way that is appropriate to a particular context and/or culture, see section 8, “Speaking about LGBTI human rights and inclusion”.

The definitions in this list are drawn (and sometimes expanded) from existing definitions in international texts such as the Yogyakarta Principles, or written by international organizations (UNESCO) or LGBTI organizations (ILGA, RFSL, TRANSIT, MSMIT, OII Australia, OII-Europe, NELFA).

A

Aromantic: Someone who does not experience romantic attraction to anyone.

Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction towards anyone.

B

Biphobia: The fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance or/and hatred toward bisexuality and bisexual people. The phobia may exist among heterosexuals, gay men, lesbians or bisexuals themselves and is often related to multiple negative stereotypes of bisexuals centered on a belief that bisexuality does not exist and on the generalization that bisexuals are promiscuous.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one sex.

C

Cisgender: A term referring to persons whose gender identity and gender expression match the sex they were assigned at birth and the social expectations related to their gender.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE): A curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.⁹⁶

Conversion therapy: An umbrella expression to refer to any sustained effort to modify a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Other terms include: “reparative therapy”, “gay cure”, “ex-gay therapy”, “gender critical therapy” and Sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression change efforts (SOGIECE) (ILGA). Conversion therapy is banned in several countries and has been defined as torture by several national and international instances, such as the UN expert on SOGI.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ UNESCO, *Why Comprehensive sexuality education is important*, 2018.

⁹⁷ OHCHR, *‘Conversion therapy’ can amount to torture and should be banned says UN expert*, 2020.

E

Endosex (or dyadic): A person who was born with sex characteristics that fit typical gender-binary notions of or social expectations for male or female bodies (e.g. non-intersex). An endosex person may identify with any gender identity and any sexual orientation.

G

Gay: Usually used to refer to a person who identifies as a man and who is emotionally, affectionally and/or sexually attracted to men, even though women attracted by women may define themselves as gay.

Gender: Refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context and time specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.⁹⁸

Gender-based violence: An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.⁹⁹

Gender binary: A classification system consisting of two opposites: men or women, male or female, feminine or masculine.

Gender expression: The way a person communicates their gender identity externally through their appearance, e.g. clothing, hair style, use of cosmetics, mannerisms, way of speaking and demeanour and how these presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.

Gender identity: A person's internal, deeply felt sense of their gender or a combination of genders. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond with her or his sex assigned at birth and their sex characteristics.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ UN Women, *Concepts and Definitions*.

⁹⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Introduction to the Yogyakarta Principles.

H

Heterosexism: Refers to the imposition of heterosexuality as the only normal and acceptable expression of sexuality, resulting in prejudice or discrimination against people who are not heterosexual or who are perceived to not be heterosexual.

Heterosexual: Refers to a person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of a different gender (sometimes referred to as "straight").

Homophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against persons known or assumed to be homosexual, or against homosexual behaviour or cultures.

Homosexual: A sexual orientation classification based on the gender of the individual and the gender of her or his sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, the person is categorized as homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbians and gay men instead of homosexuals. The terms lesbian and gay are considered neutral and positive, with a focus on the person's identity rather than their sexuality. Lastly, the term homosexual has, for many, a historical connotation of pathology.

I

Intersectionality: The interaction of different axes of identity, such as gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, race, ability and socio-economic status, in multiple and intersecting ways, resulting in different forms of oppression affecting a person in interrelated ways.¹⁰¹

Intersex: Intersex people are born with physical or biological sex characteristics, such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns, that do not fit the typical definitions or social expectations for male or female bodies. These characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty.¹⁰²

Intersexphobia or interphobia: A range of negative attitudes (e.g. emotional disgust, fear, violence, anger, or discomfort) felt or expressed towards people whose sex characteristics do not conform with society's expectations of how the sex characteristics of a person, understood only as male or female, should look.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Adapted from Psychological Society of South Africa, *Practice Guidelines for Psychology Professionals Working with Sexually and Gender-Diverse People*, 17 April 2018.

¹⁰² UN Free and Equal, *Fact Sheet: Intersex*.

¹⁰³ Dan Christian Ghattas, *Protecting Intersex People in Europe: A Toolkit for Law and Policymakers* (ILGA Europe and OII-Europe, 2019).

K

Key populations: Key populations, or key populations at higher risk of HIV, are groups of people who are more likely to be exposed to HIV or to transmit it and whose engagement is critical to a successful HIV response. In all countries, key populations include people living with HIV. In most settings men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs and sex workers and their clients are at higher risk of exposure to HIV than other groups.¹⁰⁴ However, each country should define the specific populations that are key to their epidemic and response based on the epidemiological and social context.

L

Legal gender recognition: Laws, policies or administrative procedures and processes which set out how trans and gender-diverse people can change their sex/gender marker and names on official identity documents.¹⁰⁵

Lesbian: A person who identifies as a woman and who is emotionally, affectionally and/or sexually attracted to women.

Lesbophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against persons known or assumed to be lesbian, or against lesbian behaviour or cultures.

LGBTI: This acronym derives from the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. So it encompasses several groups of individuals. LGBTI is the most commonly used term in the international human rights field. However, it has its origins in the Global North and therefore has its limitations. It groups individuals according to identity categories that are not universal: people identify themselves in a myriad of ways, or sometimes do not identify within just one given category. The term LGBTI may include, for example, people who are non-binary, gender fluid or pansexual, but also people such as *hijras* in India and Bangladesh, *mahu* in French Polynesia, *muxe* in Mexico or *two-spirit* in North America. Virtually every language has its own terms for sexual and gender minorities, and while these words may be negative or derogatory, they also demonstrate the universality of sex, and sexual and gender diversity.

What LGBTI people all have in common is that they are considered as defying the gender norms and expectations of society. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual people counter the gendered expectation that men and women have relationships only with people of their own sex and that people of the same gender cannot have relationships. Trans people counter the assumption that gender identity is always aligned with the sex assigned at birth. Non-binary people counter the assumption that gender identity must fall on one or the other side of the gender binary (male or female). Intersex people counter the expectation that biological sex characteristics can always be classified as male or female without ambiguity.

LGBTIphobia: An umbrella term that covers forms of fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against LGBTI people (or those perceived to be). It includes homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia (also called intersexphobia).

¹⁰⁴ A/75/836.

¹⁰⁵ Lucas Ramón Mendos and others, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update* (Geneva, ILGA, December 2020).

M

Men who have sex with men (MSM): This refers to all men who engage in sexual and/or romantic relations with other men or who experience sexual attraction towards the same sex. As used in this publication, the term is inclusive both of a variety of patterns of sexual behaviour by males with members of the same sex and of diverse self-determined sexual identities and forms of sexual and social associations (“communities”). “Men who have sex with men” can include men who identify as gay or bisexual, transgender men who have sex with men and men who identify as heterosexual. Some men who have sex with men also form relationships with, or are married to, women. Some men sell sex to other men, regardless of their sexual identity. Some men who have sex with men do not associate themselves with any particular identity, community or terminology.

O

Out (verb): To reveal the covert sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics of someone. (noun): The fact of being open about one’s SOGIESC. Some LGBTI people “come out” or are out in some social circles and not others.

P

Pronouns: Pronouns are the way we refer to someone without using their name. A person’s pronouns are part of a person’s identity, just as a name is. It’s important that, like a person’s name, we take the time to learn a person’s pronouns rather than making assumptions about how to refer to them in conversation or writing. While it may be our habit to refer to everyone as “he” or “she” based on appearances, we recognize that gender is a spectrum and we can’t assume a person’s gender or a person’s pronouns based on appearances.¹⁰⁶

Pronouns differ from one language to another. In some languages, gender-neutral pronouns exist. In English, common gendered pronouns are “he” or “she”. Some people use the gender-neutral “they”.

¹⁰⁶ University of Northern Iowa, Gender & Sexuality Services, [Pronouns](#).



Queer: “Originally an offensive term used to degrade sexual and gender minorities, this term has intentionally been re-appropriated (taken back) and now refers to a political, sexual and/or gender identity that is intentionally and visibly different from the norm. ‘Queer’ is often used as a broad term for all people who are not strictly heterosexual or CIS gendered.”¹⁰⁷



Rainbow family: A family in which a child has (or several children have) at least one parent who identifies themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer.



Sex: The classification of a person as male or female. Sex is assigned at birth and written on a birth certificate, usually based on the appearance of the baby’s external anatomy and on a binary vision of sex which excludes intersex people. A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.¹⁰⁸ Most countries only allow to record “male” or “female” on an infant’s birth certificate (see also “sex binary”).

Sex binary: “A system of categorising all people into two sexes: male or female. It makes people who do not fit this binary invisible, oppressed or stigmatised, and gives power to people who uphold the sex binary. This is especially true for intersex and transsexual people whose experiences are not acknowledged or reflected in society, and who when discovered can be subject to harassment and violence.”¹⁰⁹

Sex characteristics: The characteristics that compose a person’s physio-anatomical sex, including genitals, gonads, hormones, internal organs and chromosome patterns. These characteristics may be apparent from conception or at birth, or emerge later in life, often at puberty.

Sexual and gender minorities: An umbrella term used to designate people who are part of a minority of the population and discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

¹⁰⁷ Talia Meer, *All the (Tricky) Words: A Glossary of Terms on Sex, Gender and Violence* (Cape Town, GHJRU, University of Cape Town, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ ILGA-Europe, *Glossary beginning with s*.

¹⁰⁹ Talia Meer, *All the (Tricky) Words: A Glossary of Terms on Sex, Gender and Violence* (Cape Town: GHJRU, University of Cape Town, 2014).

Sexual orientation: Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.¹¹⁰

SOGIESC: This acronym derives from the terms sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. These are not specific to LGBTI people: everyone has them. A person can be oppressed because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics.

State-sponsored homophobia: The practice of criminalizing sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex.



Trans (or transgender): As used in this publication, transgender describes persons whose gender identity (their internal sense of their gender) is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans is an umbrella term that describes a wide variety of cross-gender behaviours and identities. It is not a diagnostic term and does not imply a medical or psychological condition. This term should be avoided as a noun: a person is not “a trans”; they may be a trans person. It is important to understand that not all people who are considered trans from an outsider’s perspective in fact identify as transgender, nor will they necessarily use this term to describe themselves. In many countries there are indigenous terms that describe similar cross-gender identities.

Trans people may have undergone or plan to undergo hormonal treatment or surgery, or they may not, may express their gender in very different ways (see “gender expression”) and may identify with one, multiple genders or no gender at all.

Transition: A series of steps a person may take to live in the gender they identify with. A person's transition can be social and/or medical. Steps may include: coming out to family, friends and colleagues; dressing and acting according to one's gender; changing one's name and/or sex/gender on legal documents; medical treatments including hormone therapies and possibly one or more types of surgery.¹¹¹

Transphobia: Prejudice directed at transgender people because of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression. Transphobia can be structural, i.e. manifested in policies, laws and socioeconomic arrangements that discriminate against transgender people. It can also be societal, when transgender people are rejected or mistreated by others. Additionally, transphobia can be internalized when transgender people accept and reflect such prejudicial attitudes about themselves or other transgender people.

¹¹⁰ Introduction to the Yogyakarta Principles.

¹¹¹ ILGA-Europe, *Glossary beginning with T*.



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