

GLIDE 2024

Landscape

Analysis



OUTRIGHT
INTERNATIONAL



Contents

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GLIDE 2024 Landscape Analysis

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About the GLIDE Initiative Consortium:

Outright International works with partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations and advocate for inclusion and equality. Founded in 1990, with staff in over a dozen countries, Outright works with the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies and civil society partners.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) collaborates with civil society, public institutions and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone. Through technical assistance and applied research, IFES develops electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing stakeholders; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy.

Synergía - Initiative for Human Rights partners with organizations and human rights movements to protect and promote the human rights of all people, particularly those whose rights are most systematically and egregiously violated. Synergía addresses capacity gaps, provides funding and strategic guidance to prepare partners to assume leadership within human rights movements and leverages avenues for human rights advocacy to gain the most traction.

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Executive Summary

The Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE) Initiative – a partnership between Outright International, Synergía Initiative for Human Rights, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) – aims to support and increase the LGBTQI+ community’s participation in, and use of, democratic spaces and mechanisms through funding support for capacity and institutional strengthening of LGBTQI+ organizations and their leaders. This landscape analysis provides a snapshot of the status of LGBTQI+ rights and civic and democratic participation around the world, including those factors that impact the ability and willingness of LGBTQI+ people to engage in democratic and political processes. This overview is followed by a discussion of the results of the original research – in the form of an online survey and key informant interviews – and concludes with an analysis of the needs and gaps in the global LGBTQI+ movement and opportunities for future work.

The survey asked questions related to: individuals’ experiences with voting; the experiences of LGBTQI+ people when trying to participate in democratic processes in their country; their interest in or experiences with civic and democratic engagement, including running for elected office; their feelings of safety as an LGBTQI+ person in their country and thoughts on the rule of law and corruption; and specific initiatives they thought would support increased LGBTQI+ participation and engagement. The survey also collected basic demographic information related to age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status. The GLIDE team also conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 academics, religious leaders, leaders of international LGBTQI+ and human rights organizations, leaders of national and local LGBTQI+ organizations, and LGBTQI+ individuals.

As is well documented in the literature, for the last several years, concerns around democratic backsliding and increasing authoritarianism have dominated the democracy and governance space. This trend is somewhat in juxtaposition with the progress made with respect to LGBTQI+ rights, with, for example, approximately 20 countries decriminalizing same-sex conduct in the last 20 years. While the democracy and governance community has been particularly focused on elections in 2024, the experiences of people of diverse SOGIESC, although included in these assessments of democracy and free and fair elections, are much less rigorously covered.

In fact, a review of reporting on LGBTQI+ issues reveals that the rise in authoritarianism, trampling on the rule of law, shrinking civic space, and crackdowns on freedom of expression, association, and assembly have particularly negative consequences for LGBTQI+ people and organizations. There is an overall trend of autocratizing states reducing or overturning LGBTQI+ protections, wielding anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric (a particular problem during election campaigns), reducing media freedom, and repressing civil society organizations (CSOs). As autocrats consolidate power, reducing the power and/or independence of the legislature and judiciary while restricting fundamental freedoms for all citizens, many do so by targeting the LGBTQI+ community in the name of protecting national identity, traditional gender roles, children, and family values.

These opposition forces erode long-held universal human rights standards, diluting fundamental safeguards that bolster efforts to advance the rights of minority groups, including LGBTQI+ people. The lack of resources and capacity of many local and national LGBTQI+ organizations undermine the movement's ability to push back on shrinking civic space and effectively advocate for inclusive democracy at national, regional and international levels. As a result, LGBTQI+ people in countries around the world struggle to see the link between democratic engagement and participation and positive change in their lives or the lives of their communities, especially in cases where such engagement carries significant risk of harm.

While many countries have made changes to their legal frameworks to advance protections for the LGBTQI+ community, evidence abounds that this alone is insufficient to improve the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people. As interviewees noted, LGBTQI+ people face hostility in their homes, communities, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. Some traditional and religious leaders use their positions to ignite anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment and violence, and those attitudes are further exploited by elected leaders and political candidates in too many places around the world.

Despite these challenges, many LGBTQI+ individuals, activists, and organizations remain committed to leveraging political, civic, and democratic processes to drive improvements in their countries and communities. As documented in the survey and interview responses detailed in this report, members of the LGBTQI+ community are regularly engaged in democratic processes. This includes voting in elections, campaigning for candidates, engaging in lobbying and demonstrations, and working with elected and appointed officials to sensitize them to the needs of LGBTQI+ communities and encouraging them to support and advance LGBTQI+-friendly laws and policies.

This work does not come without risk, and LGBTQI+ people around the world reported significant barriers when it comes to engaging in political and democratic processes. This includes challenges with obtaining identification that matches their gender identity; significant concerns about their safety as voters, candidates, and elected officials; the misuse of election season to deploy hateful rhetoric to scapegoat the LGBTQI+ community; and a sense that, given the corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability for elected officials, their vote will not make a difference in the direction in which their country moves. Furthermore, many LGBTQI+ people do not see themselves represented in their elected leaders, and often find that campaign promises in support of the community evaporate once candidates are elected.

Lack of safety, lack of access to justice, and lack of trust in public officials are also significant issues for LGBTQI+ people. Two-thirds of survey respondents reported that they do not feel safe as an LGBTQI+ person in their country, and fewer than 20% said that they would go to the police or rely on the justice system if they were the victim of a crime. In many cases, interviewees pointed to the police as specific sources of danger and harassment. In addition, the lack of specific protections for LGBTQI+ people, in the form of anti-discrimination and hate crime laws, was an issue for more than half of survey respondents. Interviewees noted that even if courts are inclined to support LGBTQI+ rights, they need relevant laws to apply and enforce. Corruption amongst public officials is also a significant issue for survey respondents and interviewees across the board. While this was generally identified as a challenge for all citizens, the impacts on LGBTQI+ people, the degree to which corrupt actors – the police in particular – specifically targeted LGBTQI+ people, was seen as especially severe.

The challenges that government officials pose to LGBTQI+ individuals extend to LGBTQI+ organizations. These include specific restrictions on registration for LGBTQI+ organizations, and broader crackdowns on civil society generally, impacting their ability to operate openly or to engage on issues outside of narrowly approved lanes, such as health or social services. In some places, this pressure has resulted in activists having to leave the country to avoid violence or arrest, and public attempts to rally for human rights, including around key LGBTQI+ events, like Pride and IDAHOBIT, are met with vigilante violence. Attacks, online violence and harassment – including doxing and catfishing – are significant problems for the LGBTQI+ community. In addition, at least for the LGBTQI+ organizations represented in this study, funding is insufficient to both support the need in the community and the livelihoods of the people working tirelessly to keep the organizations afloat. As a result, too many LGBTQI+ activists work on a voluntary basis.

Nonetheless, the LGBTQI+ movement remains dynamic, resilient, and determined to fight for the rights of the community. This report details a variety of creative ways interviewees engage political candidates and elected officials, provide sensitization training for police and election management body staff, support civic and voter education efforts to increase the political awareness of the community, campaign for political candidates and even contest for elected office themselves. These activities involve partnerships and alliances with government officials, political parties, religious leaders, and broader human rights and democracy actors.

This report also details a variety of needs and opportunities to deepen the work of LGBTQI+ activists around the world on issues of democracy and governance and identifies areas where future research and collaboration are needed to drive progress. Key initiatives that could encourage the political participation of LGBTQI+ people include specific outreach from political parties and the incorporation of LGBTQI+ priorities on their platforms, increased information and training for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved; and increased financial and capacity building support for LGBTQI+ organizations and activists.

Interviewees also identified areas that could use additional work, resources, and attention, for example, increasing efforts to address legal gender recognition and increased support for lesbian, trans, and intersex communities, including campaign skills for aspiring political candidates. Other needs include training and information on how to work with political candidates, how to sensitize lawmakers and government officials, and efforts to build collaborations and develop messages to increase support and LGBTQI+ allyship, with a specific focus on traditional and religious leaders. LGBTQI+ organization leaders requested specific support for fundraising, psychosocial support, safety and security training, and specific support to protect themselves when engaging online.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations:

- **Safety is paramount and largely unavailable.** The atmosphere of violence and intimidation – and the total lack of access to justice for too many – shapes LGBTQI+ people's decision to participate in political and public life and fully exercise their human rights.
- **The prevalence of corruption and ineffective government drives a sense of apathy** among LGBTQI+ people and additional outreach and education are needed for the community to understand how their voices can make a difference in civic and democratic processes.

- **The LGBTQI+ community is dynamic, resilient, flexible, and under-resourced.** LGBTQI+ rights activists and organizations have proven exceptionally adept at adapting in cases of emergency, closed and closing space, and providing mutual aid when formal resources are too slow or unavailable. There are important lessons to learn about how to leverage and better support these innovative and informal structures so that flexible assistance can remain available and so that the community has the resources and infrastructure to plan and execute more long-term, holistic, and cross-cutting civic and democratic engagement strategies. Additional support is also needed for coalition-building through an intersectional and solidarity-focused approach, where the full diversity of LGBTQI+ communities is leveraged to develop and execute strategies advancing areas of mutual interest.
- **The anti-rights and anti-gender movement are increasingly using the language and spaces of human rights activists, complicating attempts to develop compelling counter-narratives.** Support for strong electoral and democratic institutions cannot come without protections for minority rights. Too often, those most impacted by these narratives have been excluded from the conversation. As an added challenge, the restriction of LGBTQI+ organizations to the health sector in too many places has limited the ability of advocates to leverage human rights language and mechanisms and to connect and collaborate with the broader human rights, democracy, and governance movement.
- **The messenger matters.** Investing in local and indigenous activists, leaders, and allies is essential to crafting and delivering messages that reach and resonate with the intended audience. This includes gathering information on where and how anti-LGBTQI+ messages were initiated and how and why they have spread. Why do anti-LGBTQI+ messages come to dominate some campaigns and countries and not others? How can the community reduce the salience of anti-LGBTQI+ messages, including by working with traditional and social media?
- **Lack of legal gender recognition is a huge barrier for trans, intersex, and nonbinary people's participation.** Without identification that accurately represents each person, trans, intersex, and nonbinary people will remain at increased risk for discrimination and violence in many aspects of life, including the ability to register to vote, get a job, claim benefits and other essential services, and participate as political candidates and leaders.
- **Data gaps persist and limit the movement's ability to increase democratic and civic participation.** Despite increased research efforts on this topic over the last several years, there remain persistent gaps in information, including basic data related to LGBTQI+ voters, candidates, and elected officials. Without this information it will be difficult to determine where to invest limited resources to support potential openings. This lack of data continues with respect to funding itself – where is it going, to which groups, how effective it is, and how partners can find one another and better coordinate their programs and activities.

Finally, in addition to addressing the data gaps above, additional research is needed on how to best operate, and effect change within political systems at varying stages of the democratic spectrum. This may include conducting political economy analysis that specifically centers on the needs and experiences of LGBTQI+ people and seeks to understand how existing power dynamics can be transformed to increase LGBTQI+ people's access to leadership. This may also include a framework for analyzing how to drive political change and where change is most likely to happen, including best practices

for engaging from the local government level to national systems analysis of political finance laws, candidate nomination procedures, and political party regulations that can best support increased LGBTQI+ participation and leadership.



Introduction

On December 9, 2021, concurrent with the first Summit for Democracy, the U.S. government announced the launch of the Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE) Fund, intended to “facilitate the participation and leadership of LGBTQI+ community members in democratic institutions.¹ The GLIDE Fund – now the GLIDE Initiative – is a partnership between Outright International, Synergia Initiative for Human Rights, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and aims to support and increase the LGBTQI+ community’s participation in and use of democratic spaces and mechanisms through funding support for capacity and institutional strengthening of LGBTQI+ organizations and their leaders. To this end, GLIDE works to:

- Generate interest in, and build skills and capacity for, LGBTQI+ communities to strengthen leadership, engagement, and participation in political and public life.
- Develop and coordinate communication and advocacy strategies that encourage LGBTQI+ individuals to use democratic mechanisms to mitigate intolerance, violence, and discrimination.
- Engage supportive political, government, community, and/or religious leaders to promote political engagement and reduce intolerance and human rights abuses against LGBTQI+ communities.

To inform the development and funding priorities for the GLIDE Initiative, GLIDE consortium partners undertook an initial landscape analysis in Spring 2023, evaluating democracy literature and collecting primary research utilizing an online survey of LGBTQI+ people around the world as well as key informant interviews with LGBTQI+ activists, experts, and leaders. This analysis proved useful in informing the first round of GLIDE grantmaking, which took place in Fall 2023, and provided important insight into the experiences and challenges LGBTQI+ people around the world are facing as they engage in political, civic, and democratic processes.²

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/12/09/fact-sheet-announcing-the-presidential-initiative-for-democratic-renewal/>

² While the initial landscape analysis was not published in full, an executive summary is included at Annex A.

2024 Landscape Analysis Methodology

This report provides a snapshot of the status of LGBTQI+ rights and civic and democratic participation around the world, including those factors such as negative and protective legislation, respect for the rule of law, the impact of corruption, presence of LGBTQI+ candidates and legislators, protection of the human rights of LGBTQI+ people (in particular the right to freedoms of expression, association and assembly), and the presence of and space for civil society to engage on LGBTQI+ issues that impact the ability and willingness of LGBTQI+ people to engage in democratic and political processes. This overview is followed by a discussion of the results of the original research that IFES conducted and concludes with an analysis of the needs and gaps in the global LGBTQI+ movement and opportunities for future work.

Data collection took place in the spring of 2024 and consisted of a desk review, an online survey, and semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs). Documents reviewed for the desk review include key indices from democracy and governance literature, reports on LGBTQI+ rights, human rights reports, UN and other multilateral reports, election observation reports, news sources, academic and research reports, and reports that local and international NGOs produced. Specific resources are cited as references throughout this document. Unless otherwise indicated, unattributed quotes are from KII participants.

When the GLIDE team conducted a similar desk review to inform the 2023 landscape analysis, the literature examining the specific connection between LGBTQI+ issues, civic and political participation, and democratic backsliding was extremely limited. However, during the development of the first report, two new research projects, one by UNDP³ and another by the Williams Institute at UCLA⁴ were in process. Both documents informed this analysis as well as several new reports on this topic, indicating that the research, while still scant, is beginning to grow – a welcome development considering the strong link between the denial of LGBTQI+ rights and democratic backsliding around the world. In this connection, the GLIDE team is also aware of the forthcoming report by the United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity on electoral participation and sexual orientation and gender identity. That report, which is due to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2024, will undoubtedly further enrich the literature in this field.

With respect to primary data collection, the survey was available online for a five-week period and was offered in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. The survey questions are included in Annex B. The team also conducted KIIs with 45 individuals, including leaders of LGBTQI+ organizations, LGBTQI+ activists, academics, and expert researchers in the field as well as individuals who completed the survey and expressed interest in participating in an interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone or video call and recorded to ensure accuracy, provided interviewers had obtained prior consent. While the research team endeavored to conduct interviews with people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) from all regions of the world, interviewees only represent a fragment of the LGBTQI+ population worldwide and thus are not presented as speaking for everyone. A sample of the interview questions is included in Annex C.

³ <https://www.undp.org/publications/building-inclusive-democracies-guide-strengthening-participation-lgbti-persons-political-and-electoral-processes>

⁴ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/dem-backsliding-gai/>

Background and context – LGBTQI+ rights and the status of democracy in the year of elections

For the last several years, conversations surrounding democratic backsliding and increasing authoritarianism have dominated the democracy and governance space. The first Summit for Democracy sought to spotlight threats to democracy and bring governments from around the world together to renew democracy, which US President – Joe Biden – called “the defining challenge of our time.”⁵ Two additional Summits for Democracy followed, each with similarly urgent calls to action for the global community.

The 2023 landscape analysis noted the juxtaposition of the progress made with respect to LGBTQI+ rights⁶ – approximately 20 countries decriminalized same-sex conduct in the last 20 years, with four doing so since the beginning of 2022 alone⁷ for example – with the broader downward trend for democracy, documented in the 2023 Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) report. The V-DEM report noted, among other dire findings, that “[a]dvances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have been wiped out”; 72 percent of the world’s population lived in autocracies in 2022; and the “level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen is down to 1986 levels.”⁸

As 2023 ended, another set of headlines came to the fore, proclaiming 2024 to be the “year of elections,” noting that more than 60 countries were to hold elections in 2024, representing 50% of the global population and including such regional powers as Indonesia, India, South Africa, Mexico, and the United States.⁹ As this global election super-season began in earnest, V-DEM, Freedom House, and similar publications shared updated indices, capturing the state of democracy and freedom as a background to these critical contests.

Toplines from the 2024 V-DEM report paint a similarly grim picture as the year before: “the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in the world in 2023 is down to 1985-levels” and now 71% of the world’s population live in autocracies, “an increase from 48% ten years ago.”¹⁰ Latin America and the Caribbean prove to be a bright spot, where democracy levels actually increased and “large countries are more democratic than smaller ones,” while democratic declines were starkest in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹¹ On the elections front, V-Dem’s measure on “clean elections” saw deteriorating conditions in 23 countries, with improvements in only 12, making it the second worst affected component of democracy (behind freedom of expression). For those countries holding elections in 2024 that are experiencing changing levels of democracy, 31 countries are declining by V-DEM’s measure, while only three are improving.¹²

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/12/09/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-summit-for-democracy-opening-session/>

⁶ This is, of course, not without associated backlash. “The past two decades have seen the rights of sexual minorities expand, but also face fresh restrictions. Since 2000, more than two-hundred new national policies that increase protections for, and criminalize discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, have been adopted. Over that same span, however, new policies limiting or openly discriminating against the same group have numbered more than a hundred.” Pauselli, G., & Urzúa, M. (2024). Why Autocracies Fear LGBTQ+ Rights. *Journal of Democracy* 35(2), 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2024.a922835>.

⁷ <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>

⁸ https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf

⁹ <https://time.com/6550920/world-elections-2024>/<https://www.cfr.org/blog/ten-elections-watch-2024><https://apnews.com/25-elections-in-2024-that-could-change-the-world>

¹⁰ https://www.v-dem.net/documents/43/v-dem_dr2024_lowres.pdf

¹¹ Ibid

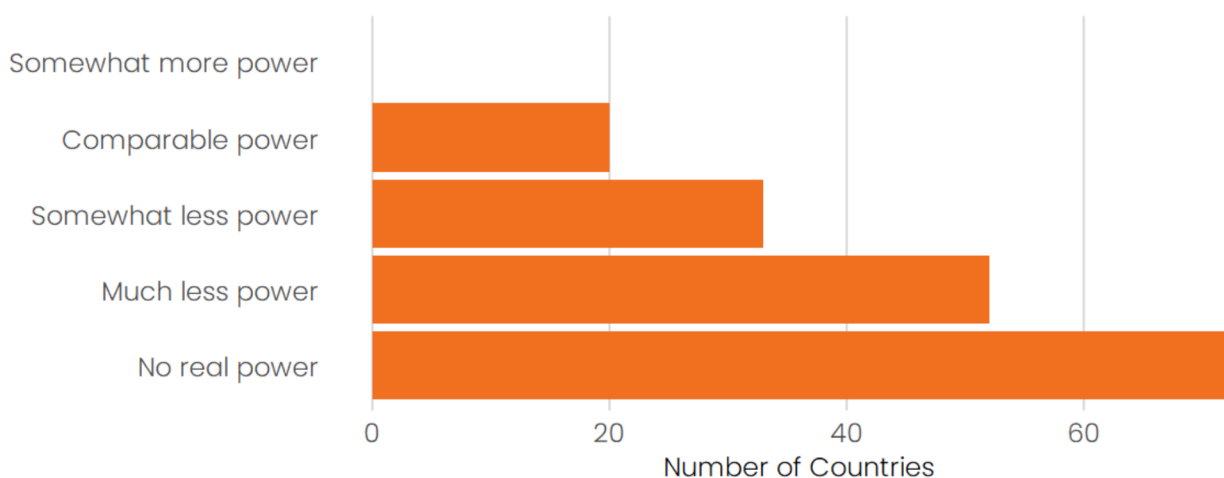
¹² Ibid

Sadly, Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Report documented an 18th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.¹³ As in V-DEM, Freedom House named the “manipulation of elections [as] one of the leading causes of the global decline in freedom.”¹⁴ Furthermore, the countries experiencing declines in political rights and civil liberties were home to more than three times as many people as the countries that had improved in these areas.¹⁵

What does this mean for the LGBTQI+ community?

Both this year’s Freedom House and V-DEM reports reference elections in their titles – V-DEM’s *Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot and Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict* – and the focus on elections and civil and political rights is fundamental to their analyses. What is much less rigorously covered is the degree to which the experiences of people of diverse SOGIESC are included in these assessments of democracy and free and fair elections. Freedom House includes two questions in their extensive list of scoring guidance that references the LGBTQI+ community¹⁶ but there is no mention of the specific experiences of LGBTQI+ people in their report. While V-DEM similarly does not discuss LGBTQI+ issues in their report, they do include an indicator related to LGBTQI+ communities – “power distributed by sexual orientation” – in their dataset. The results of that indicator are presented in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: How much political power do LGBTQI+ people have in comparison to others?¹⁷



To address this gap in the research, GLIDE partners consolidated data related to the legal status of LGBTQI+ people around the world and provided a comparison with the V-DEM and Freedom House studies, presented in **Figure 2 and 3** below.

¹³ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/mounting-damage-flawed-elections-and-armed-conflict>

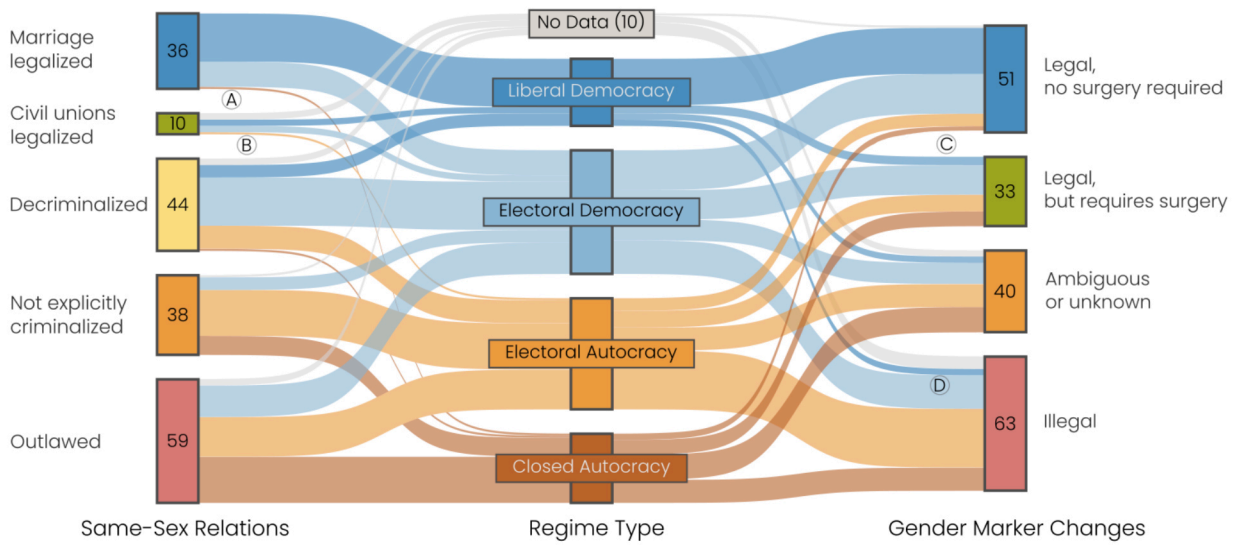
¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ 1) “Are members of various distinct groups (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) able to effectively exercise their human rights with full equality before the law?” and 2) “Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?”

¹⁷ VDEM codebook

Figure 2: Democratic countries tend to provide greater legal protections for LGBTQI+ people. (However, there are exceptions to this pattern, especially with regard to the legal right to change one’s gender marker.)



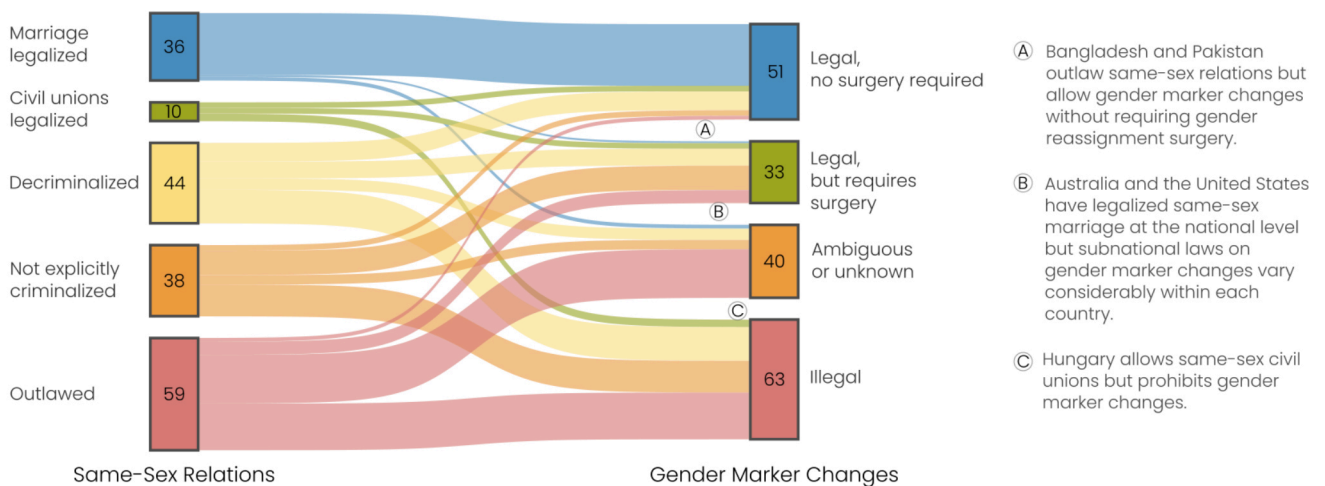
(A) Cuba, a closed autocracy, legalized same-sex marriage in 2022.

(B) Hungary, an electoral autocracy, allows same-sex civil unions despite the ongoing erosion of LGBTQI+ rights in the country.

(C) While only 1 closed autocracy has legalized same-sex marriage, 9 allow residents to change their gender marker, including 2 that do not require gender reassignment surgery (Cuba and Hong Kong).

(D) While none of the liberal democracies criminalize same-sex relations, 3 forbid residents from changing their gender markers (Barbados, Seychelles, Suriname) and 10 more have ambiguous or internally varying laws.

Figure 3: Countries that provide greater legal protections for same-sex relationships do not always provide the same degree of protection for legal self-determination of gender (and vice versa).



(A) Bangladesh and Pakistan outlaw same-sex relations but allow gender marker changes without requiring gender reassignment surgery.

(B) Australia and the United States have legalized same-sex marriage at the national level but subnational laws on gender marker changes vary considerably within each country.

(C) Hungary allows same-sex civil unions but prohibits gender marker changes.

While there are some positive changes in the legal framework for LGBTQI+ people over the last year – in addition to the significant gains in LGBTQI+ rights generally over the last two decades – the rise in authoritarianism, trampling on the rule of law, shrinking civic space, and crackdowns on freedom of expression, association, and assembly have particularly negative consequences for LGBTQI+ people and organizations. There is an overall trend of autocratizing states reducing or overturning LGBTQI+ protections, wielding anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric (a particular problem during election campaigns), reducing media freedom, and repressing civil society organizations (CSOs). As autocrats consolidate power, reducing the power and/or independence of the legislature and judiciary while restricting fundamental freedoms for all citizens, many do so by targeting the LGBTQI+ community in the name of protecting national identity, traditional gender roles, children, and family values. By demonizing the LGBTQI+ community, they often succeed in distracting from their own corruption and failure to deliver by scapegoating a group that is already marginalized and vulnerable within society.

A new report by Over Zero examines the specific phenomena of political scapegoating of the LGBTQI+ community and describes six interconnected and overlapping goals of such efforts, namely, to: stigmatize, mobilize a base, win elections, polarize, distract, and normalize political violence. The authors note, “LGBTQ scapegoating misleadingly mimics a ‘natural backlash’ to recent progress on LGBTQ rights and leverages pre-existing homophobia and transphobia” but is itself, “a threat to democracy, cloaking itself as culture war politics as usual.”¹⁸ This targeting of the LGBTQI+ community by political figures can have devastating consequences. In March 2023, for example, Human Rights Watch reported on the case of three lesbian women who were burned to death when a Molotov cocktail was thrown through the window of their boarding house in Argentina. Human rights defenders, including the Buenos Aires LGBT ombudsman, expressed concern that hateful speech by members of President Javier Milei’s political party during the 2023 campaign, exacerbated an already dangerous environment for LGBTQI+ people.¹⁹

In September 2023, the Williams Institute published a study analyzing the link between social acceptance of LGBTQI+ people and democratic backsliding.²⁰ The report notes that, despite an overall increase in societal acceptance of LGBTQI+ people, progress has been generally polarized. That is, “the most accepting countries have become more accepting of LGBTI people and their rights, while the least accepting countries experienced decreased levels of acceptance or relatively unchanging levels of acceptance.”²¹ The authors also describe a bidirectional relationship between respect for LGBTQI+ rights and liberal democracy, wherein “fundamental aspects of liberal democracy may be necessary for LGBTI acceptance, while greater acceptance of sexual and gender minorities may itself reinforce and embody democratic values and practices.”²² At the same time, in non-democratic countries or those which are sliding towards authoritarianism and where civil liberties are constrained (noting that freedom of expression was the democratic condition most in decline in the 2024 V-DEM report), LGBTQI+ organizations and activists must, by necessity, “adopt non-confrontational strategies that avoid conflict with the government or more broadly within society, thus limiting opportunities to advocate for full inclusion.”²³ The GLIDE team observed this phenomenon in KIs with activists, detailed further below.

¹⁸ <https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications/decoding-lgbtq-scapegoating>

¹⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/14/lesbian-women-set-fire-argentina>

²⁰ Flores, A.R., Fuentes Carreño, M., & Shaw, A. (2023). Democratic Backsliding and LGBTI Acceptance. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

This moves beyond the domestic context as well. Researchers at Princeton University compared countries' voting records on SOGI-related resolutions in the UN system – primarily within the UN Human Rights Council – with their political regime, as categorized by V-DEM. They found “a strong relationship between a country’s political regime and its voting behavior regarding SOGI resolutions... democracies are more than 90 percent likely to vote ‘yes’ on such resolutions, while autocracies are more than 80 percent likely to vote “no.”²⁴ As a general proposition, “the more autocratic a state is, the more likely it will oppose SOGI rights at the UNHRC.” This trend is visible even within one country’s record over time. Take Hungary for example; in 2011, the Hungarian representative, under the government of Viktor Orbán who leads the country to this day, defended the “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity” resolution, specifically pushing back against the argument that the resolution was attempting to create new rights. However, in 2019, Hungary abstained from the vote for the renewal of the SOGI independent expert’s mandate, demonstrating a “shift at the UN [that] was of a piece with growing autocratic tendencies at home.” The authors also identify important outliers. As will be discussed further below, there are democratic states – Ghana, Moldova, and Senegal – which “oppose SOGI rights in international organizations.”²⁵ In a KII, an academic noted that the relationship between LGBTQI+ rights and democracy are increasingly complicated. He reported that “before 2010, democracy was helpful for LGBTQ rights, but since 2010, and the rise of populist movements, democratic means have been worse for LGBTQ rights,” demonstrating the challenges associated with majority rule in the absence of sincere protections for minority rights.

Finally, illiberal governments and some right-wing politicians have made a concerted push to make anti-LGBTQI+ actions and rhetoric central pillars of their regimes. As discussed in the January 2024 edition of the *Journal of Democracy*: “They aim to create suspicion and fear and to convince the people that liberal democracy, with its respect for individual human rights, is a less attractive political option than majoritarianism and authoritarian rule, which will keep in place the majority’s core values.”²⁶ Those core values are framed according to concepts which are hard to argue against: the protection of religion, nation, women, children, and the family. Of particular concern is the success that these anti-LGBTQI+ leaders have had in framing LGBTQI+ rights as a foreign imposition from a vast, connected, liberal (and colonialist) international movement, when, in fact, anti-LGBTQI+ activists and leaders have created an extremely well-funded and coordinated “transnational conservative-values agenda that political forces in many countries use to advance antiliberal and antidemocratic policies.”²⁷

As demonstrated in various ways across these reports, the rising tide of authoritarianism, coupled with populist anti-rights and anti-gender movements, are weakening the democratic institutions and systems that have historically been necessary to advance and protect the rights of LGBTQI+ people. Despite examples of LGBTQI+ people carving out spaces for democratic action and practice, opposition groups and some governments are subverting democratic institutions, processes, and tools, to counter advancement and remove protections for LGBTQI+ rights.

²⁴ Pauselli, G., & Urzúa, M. (2024). Why Autocracies Fear LGBTQ+ Rights. *Journal of Democracy* 35(2), 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2024.a922835>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ayoub, P., & Stoeckl, K. (2024). The Global Resistance to LGBTQ Rights. *Journal of Democracy* 35(1), 59-73. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2024.a915349>

²⁷ Ibid

These opposition forces erode long-held universal human rights standards, diluting fundamental safeguards that bolster efforts to advance the rights of minority groups, including LGBTQI+ people. The lack of resources and capacity of many local and national LGBTQI+ organizations undermine the movement's ability to push back on shrinking civic space and effectively advocate for inclusive democracy at national, regional and international levels. As a result, LGBTQI+ people in countries around the world struggle to see democratic engagement and participation resulting in positive changes in their lives or the lives of their communities, especially where such engagement carries significant risk of harm.

Within this broader trend are patterns in the ways that governments at different points on the autocracy-to-democracy continuum engage on LGBTQI+ issues. One category is **countries that are increasingly autocratic**, where anti-gender movements (often undergirded by religious leaders within and outside the country) support autocratic leaders and target the LGBTQI+ community to build popular support for their anti-democratic agenda. For example, since 2021, governments introduced or passed laws specifically targeting or disproportionately impacting the LGBTQI+ community in Hungary, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tanzania, and Uganda, among others. This included the strengthening of the so-called "anti-propaganda" law in Russia, which spawned imitators around the world since the first such law was passed in 2013, "making it illegal for anyone to promote same-sex relationships or suggest that non-heterosexual orientations are 'normal.'"²⁸ Many of these laws target the LGBTQI+ community, but have freedom of expression, assembly, and association implications for all citizens, as in Indonesia, where the Penal Code adopted in 2022 (to go into effect in 2026) is expected to "violate the rights of women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and undermine rights to freedom of speech and association."²⁹

Many of these pieces of legislation were introduced or endorsed by some of the most autocratic regimes in the world. Ghana, however, is a slightly different case as it is still considered to be an electoral democracy despite being on V-DEM's list of autocratizers. Ghana's bill, first introduced in 2021, contains a number of troubling features including criminalizing being an ally of the LGBTQI+ community and providing penalties for failing to report "gay acts," as well as assigning "criminal penalties for speech posted online, and threaten[ing] online platforms—specifically naming Twitter and Meta products Facebook and Instagram—with criminal penalties if they do not restrict pro-LGBTQ content."³⁰ Further, Ghana's bill stemmed from a conference in the country organized by the World Congress of Families, an anti-LGBTQI+ Christian group based in the United States, which has instigated the introduction of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in Uganda and Nigeria. The legislature passed the bill in February 2024, but it still requires presidential action to become law.

A second group falls into the category of **countries that are at least partially democratic**, but where democracy consistently fails LGBTQI+ people, inhibiting their ability to safely organize, express themselves, and participate in democratic processes. Kenya, which V-DEM identifies as an electoral democracy whose trajectory has improved over the last ten years,³¹ and whose August 2022 election was "hailed as its most transparent presidential election ever" featuring "fresh evidence of judicial independence, and a peaceful handover of the presidency from one political bloc to another" is one such example.³² Despite this overall progress, the proposed Family Protection Bill, 2023 would increase criminal penalties for same-sex conduct, prohibit the registration of LGBTQI+ organizations, and restrict the publishing of any information supportive of the LGBTQI+ community.

²⁸ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/05/europe/russia-lgbtq-propaganda-law-signed-by-putin-intl/index.html>

²⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/08/indonesia-new-criminal-code-disastrous-rights>

³⁰ <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2023/03/civil-society-organizations-urge-ghanas-parliament-reject-repressive-anti-lgbtq>

³¹ Vdem 2023 https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf

³² https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf



Similarly, in Poland, which remains an electoral democracy but has experienced one of the steepest declines in democracy in the last decade until the war in Ukraine halted its slide, the LGBTQI+ community and their right to freedoms of expression, association and assembly have been under threat as part of a broader crackdown on civil society, media freedom, and the judiciary. In 2023, elections led to the defeat of the Law and Justice (PiS) party's eight-year rule. Under the PiS, the LGBTQI+ community experienced "pressure and interference from the authorities over their peaceful activism, including arrests and criminal prosecutions, some under blasphemy laws."³³ In Paraguay, an electoral democracy, leaders used anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric in advance of the April 2023 elections and "managed to deepen discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity through hate speech in public debates."³⁴ Observers described the campaign as "marked by misinformation and failures to progress discussions on women's, children's and LGBTQ rights" and noted "the use of gender misinformation, hate messages towards female candidates and the near-absence of promising projects for the full exercise of rights of these populations."³⁵

Finally, there are **democratic systems** where LGBTQI+ people engage more in political and democratic activities and leverage the court system, the legislature, and electoral processes to drive change to benefit their communities and broader democratic efforts. For example, in Taiwan, the LGBTQI+ movement secured the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 and in May 2023 the legislature amended the same-sex marriage law to allow same-sex couples to adopt children.³⁶ In South Korea, a February 2023 Seoul High Court decision recognized, for the first time, the rights of same-sex couples in the country, making an important point about the protection of minorities even within majority-rule systems.³⁷ At the end of 2022, Barbados took a critical step to uphold its status as a liberal democracy by decriminalizing consensual same-sex conduct, the result of a years-long concerted effort by civil society to address criminalization in the Eastern Caribbean.³⁸ In Latvia, voters elected the first openly gay president in a Baltic country and the state will have officially recognized same-sex partnerships by July 2024.

In Brazil and the United States, the rejection of authoritarian leaders in the most recent national elections was a critical step in stalling their respective slides toward autocracy, despite state-level anti-LGBTQI+ (and especially anti-trans) policies playing an increasingly destructive role in the United States, demonstrating both the challenges and opportunities for civil society movements in federated systems.³⁹ The 2024 local elections in Brazil and presidential elections in the United States will be critical tests of the trajectory of democracy and LGBTQI+ rights in both countries. Nonetheless, these results demonstrate the potential of LGBTQI+ people to organize, build coalitions, and win elections in systems where the legal system allows space for all people to not only vote, but also actively participate in democracy.

³³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/15/poland-rule-law-erosion-harms-women-lgbt-people>

³⁴ <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2023/05/04/anti-lgbtq-candidates-win-paraguay-elections/>

³⁵ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/paraguay-general-election-2023-women-lgbtq-anr-concertacion/>

³⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/16/1176433353/taiwan-same-sex-adoption-rights>

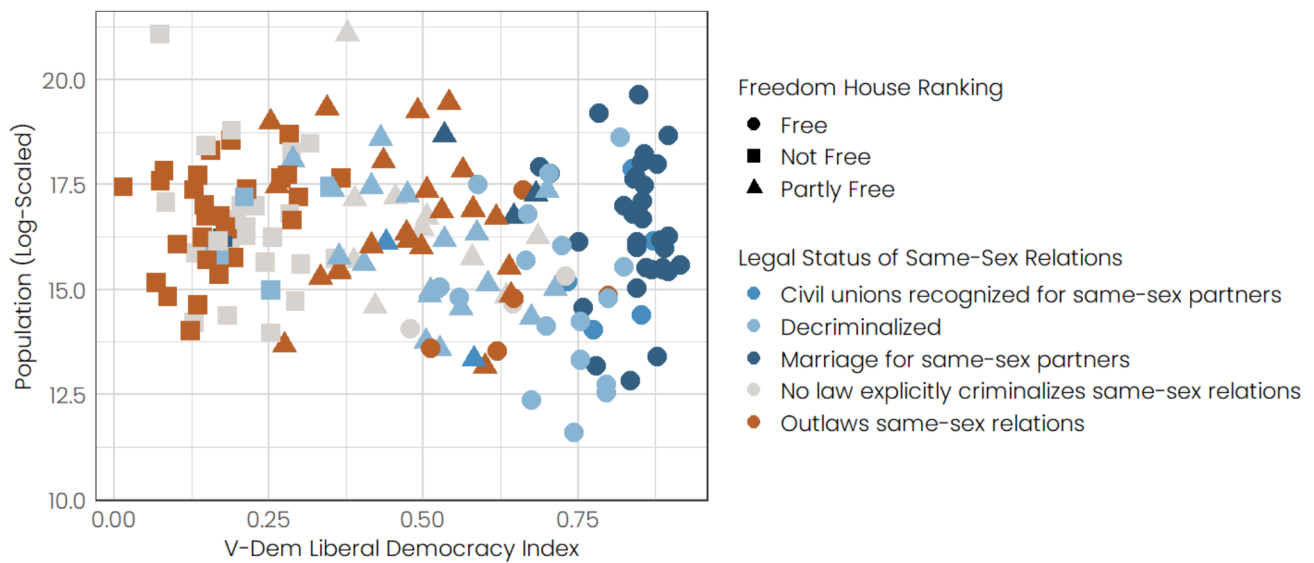
³⁷ "To be in the minority is to be different from the majority and cannot be wrong itself," the court judgment read. "In a society dominated by the principle of majority rule, awareness of the rights of minorities and efforts to protect them are necessary." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64714625>

³⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/13/barbados-high-court-decriminalizes-gay-sex>

³⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/united-states-un-expert-warns-lgbt-rights-being-eroded-urges-stronger>

However, underscoring all these categories of countries at varying degrees of democratization, is the issue of criminalization (see **Figure 4** below). The existing criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual conduct in scores of countries – regardless of whether those provisions are actively enforced – sends a terrible signal about the validity of LGBTQI+ people’s existence, leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, corruption, abuse and violence, and makes it much less likely for LGBTQI+ people to go to the police or seek justice in the courts without being revictimized, fundamentally undermining the rule of law. Countries have also used these laws to further disempower democratic movements by refusing to allow LGBTQI+-serving organizations to register on the grounds that doing so would be inconsistent with criminal law.⁴⁰

Figure 4: Legal status of same-sex relations by country. ⁴¹



Lack of representation, lack of data – leaders and voters

The politicization of the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons, including vitriolic language on the part of legislators, candidates and elected leaders, impacts the safety and well-being of LGBTQI+ individuals, including their ability to engage in political and democratic processes. This is often particularly the case during electoral campaigns, when the LGBTQI+ community faces higher incidences of violence during the pre-election period and on election day. In addition to the outright hostility and scapegoating of the LGBTQI+ community that is increasingly a feature of elections around the world, there remain limited numbers of open LGBTQI+ candidates on the ballot and those serving in elected and appointed office at all levels of government. One significant challenge in this space remains the lack of verifiable and accurate data on the number of elected officials who openly identify as members of the LGBTQI+ community.

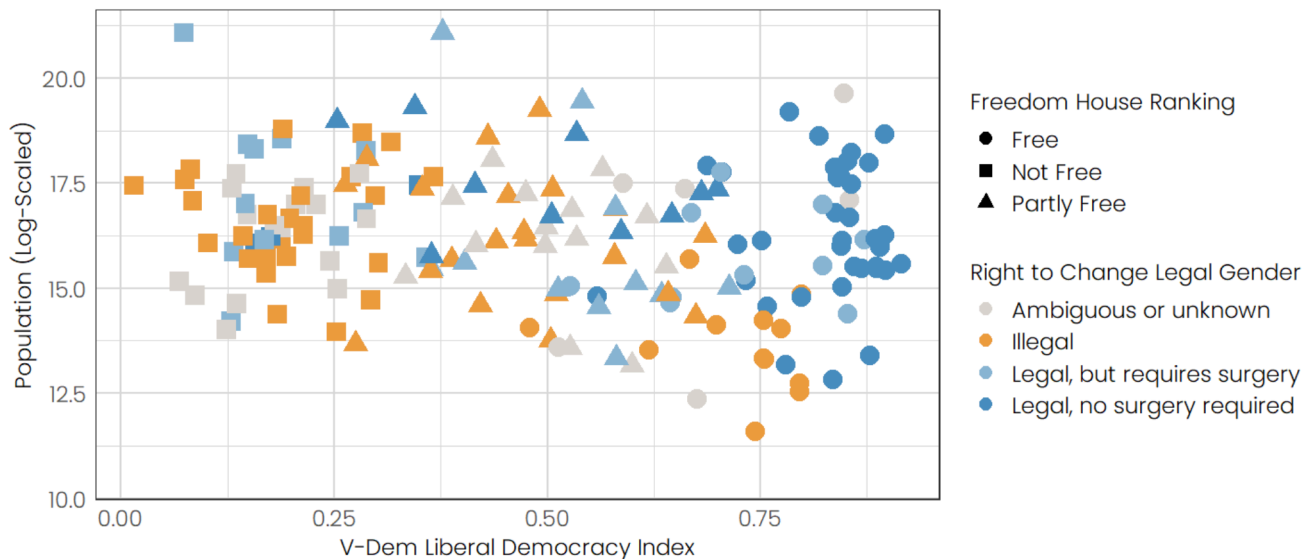
⁴⁰ See e.g., current laws in Nigeria, proposed laws in Ghana and Kenya, as well as a recent court decision in Eswatini

⁴¹ “Legal Status of Same-Sex Relations” data sourced from Criminalization Dataset (2024), Human Rights Watch; available at https://features.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt_laws/index.html. “V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index” data sourced from V-Dem Codebook v14 (2024) Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, V-Dem Institute, Gothenburg, Sweden. “Population (Log-Scaled)” data sourced from World Population Prospects 2022, UN DESA; available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/MostUsed/>. “Freedom House Ranking” data sourced from Freedom in the World Dataset (2024) Freedom House, Washington, DC; available at <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.

It is also not clear what percentage of voters identify as LGBTQI+. Even if LGBTQI+ persons felt safe openly self-identifying, many electoral management bodies do not currently collect and/or make publicly available gender-disaggregated voter registration and voter participation data.⁴² In countries where voters are able to change their gender marker on their voter ID to their affirmed gender or to a third gender, as in the case of Pakistan, Nepal, and a number of other countries, there may be data available on those who identify as a “third gender,” but historically those numbers represent a significant undercount of the third gender population and are often incorrectly conflated with transgender persons.⁴³

Transgender people face challenges when attempting to cast their ballot on election day. In many countries, people must return to their family home to vote, something that can be difficult for those who may have left their homes to escape violence and discrimination. Too often, this barrier proves insurmountable, and they choose not to vote at all. In addition, in many Latin American countries, as well as some countries in Europe and Asia, the sex marker on one’s official identification dictates the gender-segregated lines or polling stations people report to on election day. Transgender people who present according to their gender identity may not be willing to line up based on the gender marker on their ID, and there have been cases of people being denied the opportunity to vote because their gender identity and expression does not match their identification.⁴⁴ Even in countries where people are able to change the gender marker on their identification without medical intervention, the cost of traveling to do so can be prohibitive, and lack of training and discrimination on the part of election officials and voter registrars leads to transgender people being denied the chance to vote or to register as candidates according to their gender identity.

Figure 5: Right to change legal gender by country.⁴⁵



⁴² IFES’ ElectionsGuide, the most comprehensive verified election database available online does post gender-disaggregated data by election whenever that information is available: <https://www.electionguide.org/>.

⁴³ “NADRA Launches Registration Campaign for Transgender-persons” 2021. NADRA. <https://www.nadra.gov.pk/nadra-launches-registration-campaign-for-transgender-persons/>

⁴⁴ <https://observaigualdad.jne.gob.pe/ObigdDocumentos/documentos/recursos/reportes/VotoTransEleccionesG2016.pdf> ; <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/05/12/transgender-people-s-qualms-regarding-the-upcoming-election>

⁴⁵ “Right to Change Legal Gender by Country” data sourced from Changing Gender dataset (2024), Equaldex; available at <https://www.equaldex.com/>. “V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index” data sourced from V-Dem Codebook v14 (2024) Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, V-Dem Institute, Gothenburg, Sweden. “Population (Log-Scaled)” data sourced from World Population Prospects 2022, UN DESA; available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/MostUsed/>. “Freedom House Ranking” data sourced from Freedom in the World Dataset (2024) Freedom House, Washington, DC; available at <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.

LGBTQI+ rights in the year of elections

At the time of report writing, several of the year's most-watched elections had already taken place.⁴⁶ Voters went to the polls in Bangladesh (January), Taiwan (January), El Salvador (February), Pakistan (February), Indonesia (February), Russia (March), Senegal (March), India (April), South Korea (April), and South Africa (May). LGBTQI+ issues – and the phenomenon discussed above – figured into a number of these electoral campaigns.

For example, in Bangladesh, the elections were marked by opposition boycotts and violent protests. In addition, hateful rhetoric was deployed to “undermine opposing candidates, with a particular focus on suppressing and discouraging women, religious and ethnic minorities and transgender candidates.”⁴⁷ On a positive note, in Taiwan, Kaohsiung City Councilor, Huang Jie, became Taiwan's first openly gay legislator, but not without considerable negative rhetoric that this is a sign of “selling out” to international/Western forces.⁴⁸ In El Salvador, President Nayib Bukele was re-elected with 84% of the vote, effectively consolidating the power of his *Nuevas Ideas* party. Bukele acted against LGBTQI+ citizens almost immediately. On 28 February 2024 his Minister of Education announced that “any usage of gender ideology has been thrown out of public schools,” making it impossible for schools to discuss LGBTQI+ issues.⁴⁹ In Russia, following a Supreme Court ruling in November 2023, declaring the international LGBT movement an “extremist organization”, effectively criminalizing LGBTQI+ activism, Vladimir Putin won re-election in March 2024 with 87 percent of the vote.⁵⁰ When the world's largest election took place in India in April, neither of the major political parties fielded LGBTQI+ candidates, but LGBTQI+ issues were included on several party platforms. This included the Indian National Congress's promise to introduce a bill to legalize same-sex civil unions after the Supreme Court rejected this in December.⁵¹

⁴⁶ <https://electionguide.org/elections/type/past/>

⁴⁷ <https://dangerousspeech.org/on-the-brink-of-elections-dangerous-speech-surges-in-bangladesh/>

⁴⁸ <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202401130016>

⁴⁹ <https://www.elpais.hn/ministro-de-educacion-de-el-salvador-hemos-sacado-la-ideologia-de-genero-de-las-escuelas/>

⁵⁰ Putin's re-election was described as “pre-ordained” and the election itself decried by a number of governments, including Australia, Germany, Norway, and the United States, as neither free nor fair; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/30/russia-supreme-court-bans-lgbt-movement-extremist>

⁵¹ <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha/lok-sabha-elections-congress-supports-same-sex-union-in-its-manifesto/article68032403.ece>

2024 GLIDE KII and Survey Analysis

It is in this context, and to help address remaining data gaps, that the GLIDE team developed and administered an online survey to gather primary data about LGBTQI+ people's experiences with and attitudes toward democratic, civic, and political participation. GLIDE partners shared the survey with their networks directly, encouraged those contacts to share the survey with their own networks and contacts, and posted the survey on social media. The survey asked questions related to: individuals' experiences with voting, including any barriers they had faced; their views on the experiences of LGBTQI+ people generally when trying to vote or participate in democratic processes in their country; their interest in or experiences with civic or democratic engagement, including running for elected office; their feelings of safety as LGBTQI+ people in their country and thoughts on the rule of law and corruption; and specific initiatives they thought would support increased LGBTQI+ participation and engagement. The survey also collected basic demographic information related to age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status.

The GLIDE team also conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 individuals including academics, religious leaders, leaders of international LGBTQI+ and human rights organizations, leaders of national and local LGBTQI+ organizations, and LGBTQI+ individuals. The landscape analysis team contacted some interviewees directly to participate in interviews based on their work in the LGBTQI+ community while others completed the survey and indicated that they would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Interviewees were from Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mozambique, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Poland, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. Wherever possible, both survey and related KII data are presented together, although there are some topics which were covered much more richly in the KIIs and consequently, those sections focus more heavily on interview responses.

Demographics

The 2024 GLIDE Survey received 194 responses. Of these, 173 responses met all criteria and are included in this analysis.⁵² Respondents come from 62 countries and all major regions of the world, although the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was underrepresented and the Americas (North, Central, and South America) region was relatively overrepresented, as detailed in **Figure 6** below.

⁵² Respondents identified as members of the LGBTQI+ community and were 18 years of age or over

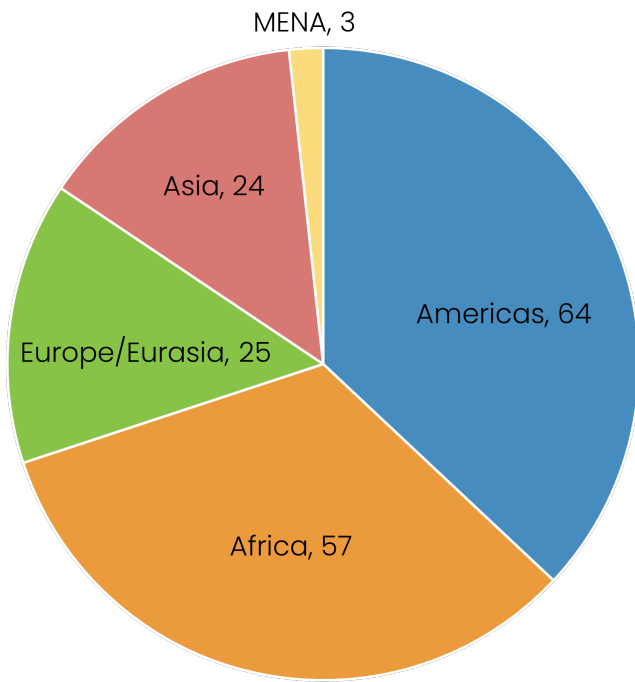
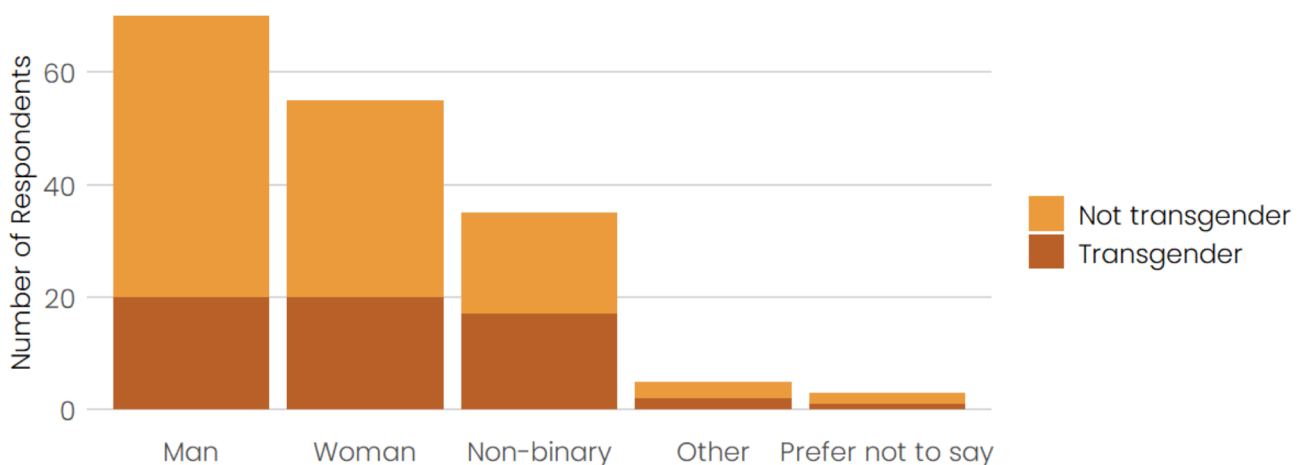


Figure 6: Survey response by region.

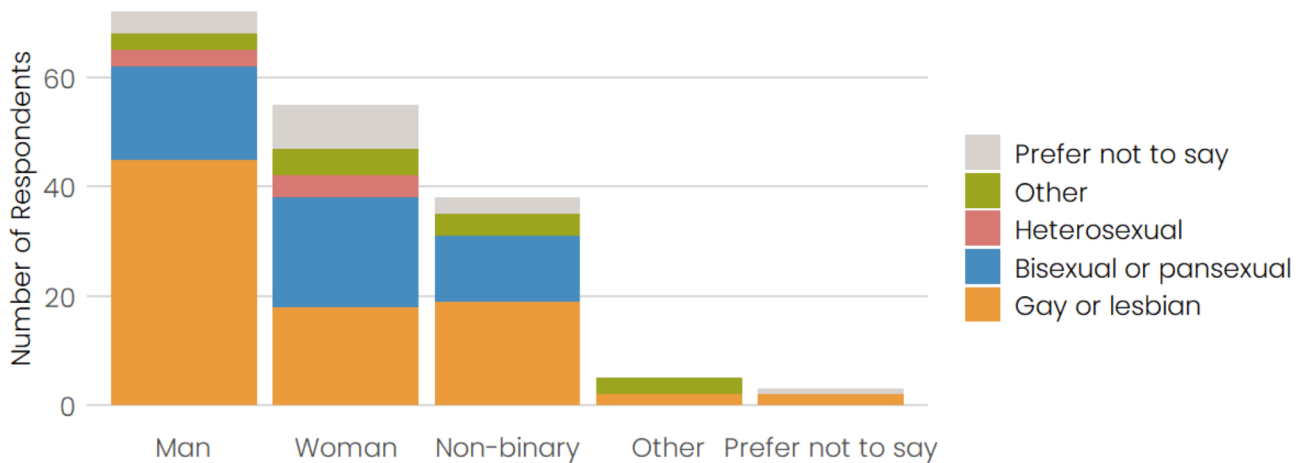
Respondent age skewed younger with 69% of respondents under the age of 40 and only 3% of respondents over the age of 60. Age distribution was similar across genders. 42% of respondents identified as men, 32% identified as women, 22% identified as nonbinary, 5% listed a different gender identity (gender non-conforming, genderqueer, fa’afafine, etc.), and 2% declined to state their gender. Additionally, 35% of respondents identified as transgender (including men, women, and nonbinary people), and 5% identified as intersex.

Figure 7: Respondents disaggregated by gender.



In terms of sexual orientation, nearly half of all respondents (49.7%) identify as gay or lesbian. An additional 28% identify as bisexual or pansexual, 4% identify as heterosexual (all were transgender or intersex people), 9% identified with another sexual orientation (queer, fa’afafine, asexual, etc.), and 9% declined to state their sexual orientation.

Figure 8: Respondents disaggregated by gender and sexual orientation.



Finally, 14% of respondents (24 out of 173) reported that they had a disability. 4% of all respondents had a disability or disabilities that affected multiple functional areas (vision, memory, communicating, etc.). The most common functional difficulties included memory/concentration (7.5% of all respondents) and vision (6%).⁵³

Societal attitudes

To better understand the context in which interviewees live and work, as well as the motivations behind the actions of government leaders, KII participants discussed societal attitudes towards LGBTQI+ communities. While realizing it can be difficult to summarize the attitudes of an entire country, many respondents were able to articulate the general atmosphere for LGBTQI+ people. In addition, several researchers and experts provided important insights about the ways in which societal attitudes and social forces impact LGBTQI+ people’s participation in civic and political processes.

“We work under the impression that legal change leads to behavioral change, but this isn’t the case... You can have the state on your side, but it’s not always enough when society is not on your side.”

For example, while many countries have made changes to their legal frameworks to advance protections for the LGBTQI+ community, evidence abounds that this alone is insufficient to improve the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people. Interviewees noted that even in places with protective legislation, that hasn’t translated into attitude change in the people that surround members of the LGBTQI+ community – teachers, doctors, neighbors, families, colleagues, and religious and traditional leaders. Interviewees noted the need for open conversations around diverse SOGIESC, as many people are governed by ignorance, prejudice, and misconceptions.

⁵³ Classification of disability status is based on the Washington Group [recommendation](#) that respondents stating they have ‘a lot of difficulty’ or ‘cannot do at all’ for at least one of the Washington Group Short Set Questions on Functioning should be considered as having a disability.

Many respondents described general societal attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people in their country as hostile on all fronts – the media, the church, the traditional leaders – and noted that LGBTQI+ people are blamed for everything. For example, in southern Africa, some traditional and religious leaders describe an intersex child as cursed or a bad omen and LGBTQI+ individuals are subjected to religious rituals to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. In Ghana, according to one interviewee, some traditional authorities are the ones pushing Members of Parliament to take a more strident anti-LGBTQI+ stance and have established their own local task forces to persecute LGBTQI+ people. Support from traditional and religious leaders has helped drive the narrative that “homosexuality is not African,” as noted by an interviewee from Kenya who described homophobia as a uniting factor in Kenya.

“It’s everywhere – in the churches, in the markets, at the bus stations – there’s a lot of hate.”

As a respondent from Pakistan reported, religious extremists in their country help drive intolerance: “[T]here are mosques everywhere, but there are no social places for LGBT people.” In the Philippines, despite the country’s reputation for openness, one interviewee reported that “somehow we’re still treated as second class citizens” and attributed that in part to religious conservatism. Christian fundamentalists are also driving anti-LGBTQI+ narratives in Latin America. A respondent from El Salvador noted that these groups are trying to use the language of morals and ethics – including the protection of children and the traditional family – to roll back progress made in raising awareness and gaining recognition of LGBTQI+ rights.

“We have always been here; we were here pre-colonization.”

In addition to pitting LGBTQI+ rights as antithetical to “traditional family values,” some interviewees noted that religious leaders have also successfully painted LGBTQI+ communities as a foreign or western influence. This is despite the fact that there are many LGBTQI+ people of

faith and many anti-LGBTQI+ messengers, including religious leaders, utilizing a playbook developed by opponents in the United States to defend antiquated laws which the United Kingdom and other colonial powers imposed.

Religious leaders interviewed for this report spoke to the importance of amplifying the voices of local LGBTQI+ faith leaders, LGBTQI+-affirming faith leaders, and LGBTQI+ people of faith from the Global South and East, both because it is essential that they speak for themselves, but also because those voices are important to counter messages that homosexuality is a foreign import. In addition, one faith leader identified the tendency to erase the faith community from the secular discussion around human rights resulting in the double erasure of LGBTQI+ people of faith. Instead, it is essential to be able to ground LGBTQI+ rights in indigenous and faith traditions to disrupt the notion that one must be anti-LGBTQI+ to hold onto their cultural identity. Reclaiming the narrative must be about indigenizing queer existence and rejecting colonial conceptions of gender and sexuality.⁵⁴

Several activists also identified family support as critical, several of them emphasizing how important their own family’s support was in deciding to pursue a career in LGBTQI+ advocacy. At the same time, some respondents reported that while their societies were generally tolerant toward LGBTQI+ people or members of society were generally accepting of LGBTQI+ rights, many would feel very differently were there an LGBTQI+ person in their own families. One interviewee from Nepal told the story of how a family member caught two young women together and started beating them. A neighbor shot a video of the women being beaten and streamed it on social media rather than calling the police for help. Those responding in the comments section were intensely derogatory towards the couple. As the interviewee noted, “even with ‘progress’ we are not progressive when it is in our home... that denial of rights starts at the community.”

⁵⁴ An excellent discussion of colonialism and violence and discrimination based on SOGIESC is included in the last report issued by the previous Independent Expert on SOG: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/ie-sogi-summary-report-colonialism.pdf>

In Taiwan, however, the number of people who are accepting of LGBTQI+ people generally, and who would accept their child being LGBTQI+, has grown steadily since 2020. In Sri Lanka, an activist reported that engaging family members of LGBTQI+ people in campaigns and as LGBTQI+ rights champions has proved to be a very effective strategy to increase acceptance and understanding. In addition, several respondents noted that acceptance is higher among young people in their countries, which bodes well for a more open and affirming future for LGBTQI+ people.

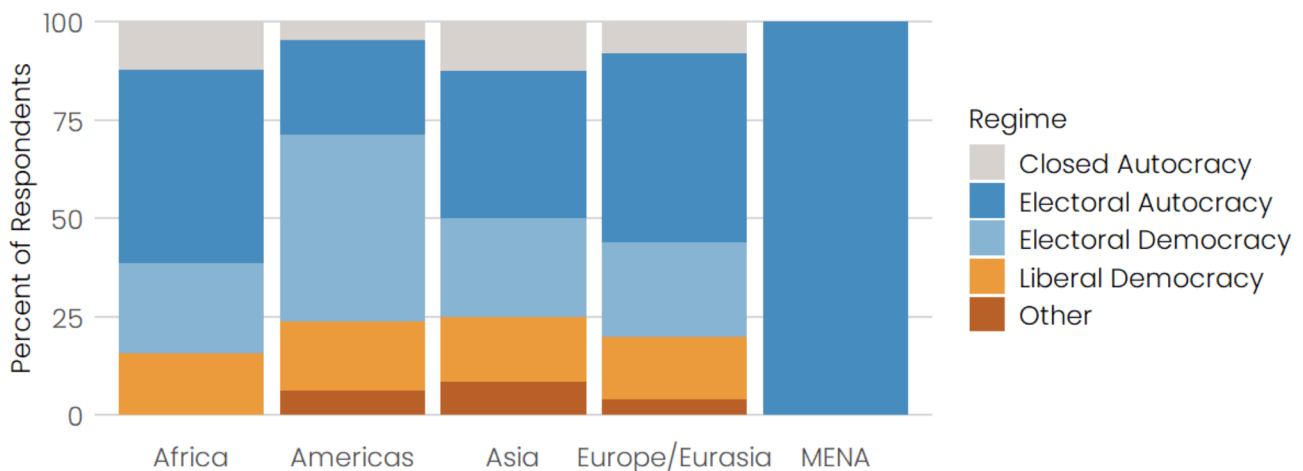


What is democracy?

Understanding that the definition and concepts of democracy and democratic governance vary by context and are informed by lived experiences, both interviewees and survey respondents were asked whether they would characterize their country as a democracy. The survey provided respondents with V-DEM definitions⁵⁵ of Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy and asked which definition best described their countries. Respondents could also select “Other” if they did not feel that the V-DEM definition fit their country’s context. The answers yielded important data on the intersection between democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, and the need for all to be in place for LGBTQI+ citizens to feel they can safely participate in democratic processes.

As detailed in **Figure 9**, respondents were evenly split in describing their national governments: 47% said they lived in an autocracy and 47% said they lived in a democracy. An additional 6% of respondents indicated that their national government did not fit neatly into these regime types, for example, describing a democracy at war (Ukraine), a hybrid democracy facing institutional capture (Peru), and a “simulated” democracy (Mexico), among others. The distribution of reported regime types was similar across regions with two exceptions: 65% of respondents in the Americas reported living in a democracy and all respondents in the MENA region reported living in an (electoral) autocracy.

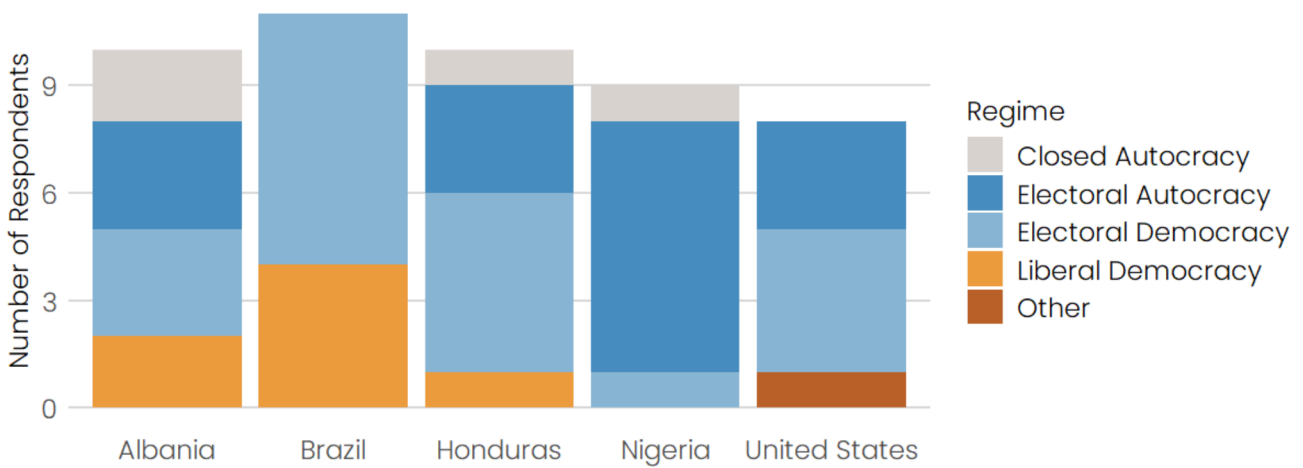
Figure 9: Respondent-reported regime types – selected countries.



It is also worth noting that inter-respondent agreement varied greatly by country. For example, as shown below in **Figure 10**, respondents from Albania and Honduras described their government as all four regime types, while all 11 Brazilian respondents agreed that Brazil was a democracy, be it liberal or electoral.

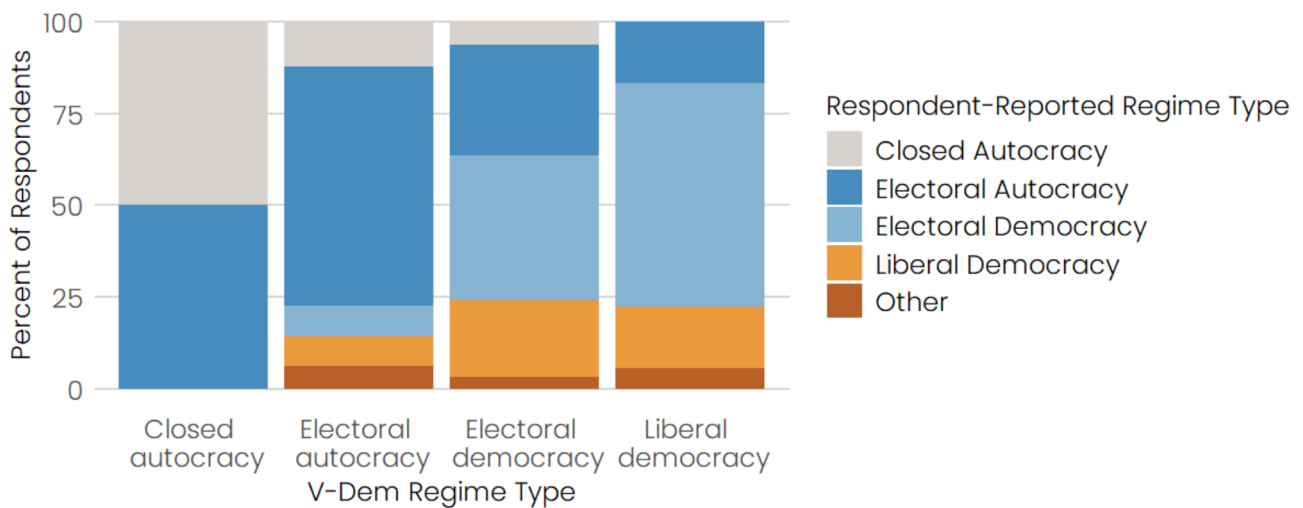
⁵⁵ V-DEM definitions are as follows: Closed Autocracy: No multiparty elections for the executive; absence of fundamental democratic components such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free and fair elections; Electoral Autocracy: Multiparty elections for the executive exist; insufficient levels of fundamental requisites such as freedom of expression and association, and free and fair elections; Electoral Democracy: Multiparty elections for the executive are free and fair; satisfactory degrees of suffrage, freedom of expression, freedom of association; Liberal Democracy: Requirements of Electoral Democracy are met; judicial and legislative constraints on the executive along with the protection of civil liberties and equality before the law.

Figure 10: Respondent-reported v. V-DEM regime types.



Respondents characterized their governments’ regime status in a way consistent with V-Dem’s own assessment in the 2024 Democracy Report Regimes of the World⁵⁶ classifications 43.9% of the time. 83% of respondents living on either end of the regime spectrum agreed with V-Dem experts in terms of broad regime category (autocracy vs. democracy). Respondents living in electoral democracies (according to V-Dem) varied the most in their regime classifications, but they erred on the autocratic side; 36% classified their country as an autocracy. Conversely, 50% of respondents living in *closed* autocracies classified their country as an *electoral* autocracy.

Figure 11: Respondent-reported v. V-DEM regime types.



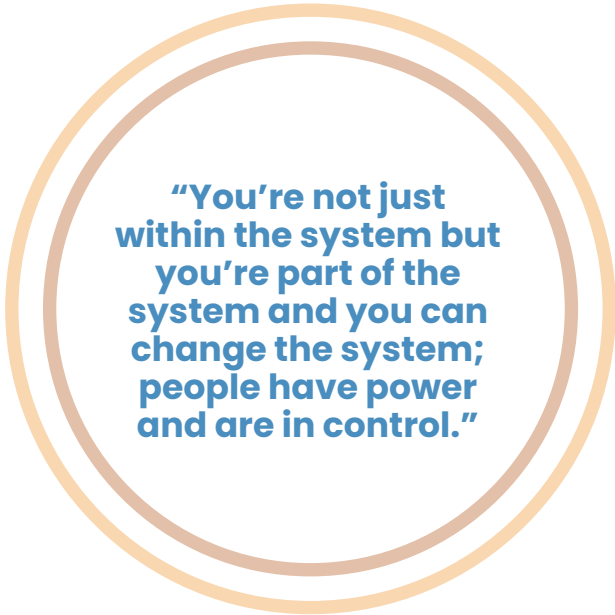
⁵⁶ https://www.v-dem.net/documents/43/v-dem_dr2024_lowres.pdf

What does democracy mean to you?


All participants were asked to provide a definition of democracy or describe what democracy means to them. There were several common themes.

“To me, democracy means”:

- **Power of the people:** The right to have a say in the running of your country; the right to participate in the political sphere; the right to vote freely and elect your leaders.
- **Dignity and Equality:** Not just majority rule, but protection of minority rights; people are not discriminated against because of their identity; those who are not as privileged also have a say; every person can exist peacefully and live with dignity; access to equal opportunities and resources; people participate freely and equally in political processes, form a society and generate social justice.
- **Rule of Law:** Accountability, transparency, checks on the power of leaders; balance of powers between branches of government.
- **Responsive and effective government:** The freedom to state your needs and the state fulfills those needs; the state acts to ensure the well-being of all its citizens.
- **Inclusive participation and representation:** A political system that allows the participation of all sectors including the state and civil society. It is the right not only to choose these people but also participate in governance; the right to decide who will represent the country, govern, manage resources, and support the population.



“You’re not just within the system but you’re part of the system and you can change the system; people have power and are in control.”



“It’s the right not only to choose these people but also participate in governance.”

Is your country a democracy?

KII participants were also asked whether they considered their own country to be a democracy and to elaborate on why or why not. Many did describe their country as a democracy, but interesting nuances and qualifiers emerged in the interviews.

A democracy in transition

A few patterns emerged in the KII interviews. In countries that transitioned to democracy after a conflict, such as the civil war in El Salvador from 1980–1992, respondents indicated that the institutional foundations of democracy were in place but were not strong enough to withstand the consolidation of power under the current executive. As one respondent noted, El Salvador “uses the tools of democracy, but it is not a democratic country.” In Colombia, one interviewee noted, they have democratic processes in the form of elections and there are many forums for political participation; however, those processes are negatively impacted by the current armed conflict which adversely affects people’s participation. On the other hand, an interviewee from Argentina noted the extremely powerful impact of their country’s transformation from dictatorship to democracy in 1983, leaving people who grew up without democratic governance acutely aware of the value of being able to participate in and influence their government.

Similarly, in Malaysia, the transition from a one-party state to a more open and competitive political system was the primary indicator of democracy, but it was noted that the governing party still retains significant advantages in terms of access to state media and other resources and that “political elites,” to the detriment of minority groups, are the only ones who can access the system. In the Philippines, one interviewee noted that while the country has left behind the Marcos dictatorship, and has all the elements of democracy, the prevalence of political clans and their increasing prominence under the Duterte regime, and persistent presence under the current Marcos presidency, impacts the ability of ordinary citizens to take on leadership roles in politics.

A democracy on paper, not in practice

Several respondents described their countries as democracies that have not been fully realized due to the lack of equality between people, the establishment of equality in some institutions but not others, or the lack of access to full freedoms and democratic processes for some groups. As one respondent from Brazil noted, “to have democracy you have to have equality.” This sentiment was also shared by respondents from South Africa who noted that despite the country’s strong history of peaceful transitions of power in the post-apartheid era and progressive constitution – a democracy on paper – there is still widespread poverty and discrimination. The characterization of a “democracy on paper” (but not in action) or a democracy only during elections, was also echoed by respondents from Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Several respondents from South Asia similarly expressed explicit frustration with their democracies. One interviewee noted that people in their country are “hopeless” as they have seen power devolve from a monarch to hundreds of elected lawmakers resulting in oppression by hundreds of officials who are not taking any meaningful actions to help people. In another country in the South Asia region, one interviewee noted, democracy is only about the political parties and people in power maintaining and gaining more power, and the regular people having no power at all. Another interviewee reported that freedom of expression is increasingly restricted and that the “practice of democracy” is repressed.

For those characterizing their countries as democracies, some, including respondents in Mexico and Lesotho, specifically highlighted the importance of elections and the ability to select their leaders through voting. However, one respondent from Mexico reported that during the electoral contests, some politicians use anti-democratic tactics. On the other hand, an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago reported that while regular elections take place, the entrenched two-party system prevents the establishment of alternative parties and candidates, limiting choice and competition. A Ghanaian respondent noted that while their country has regular elections, changes in government, and a constitution that includes some rights and protections, in practice - this has amounted to a system that has enabled people to determine “who can and cannot be included.”

In other cases, there was a sense that democracy exists, but is in decline. For example, when speaking about the upcoming (June 2024) European Parliament elections, an activist noted that 25 % of current MPs have voted against LGBTQI+ and human rights measures. Based on the candidates being put forward for the next Parliament, it is expected that that number will grow to 40 %.

Finally, several interviewees discussed their country’s level of democracy in terms of citizen participation and civil society’s ability to organize and operate freely. One respondent from South Africa reported that the public’s lack of awareness of provisions in the Constitution, legal framework, and citizen’s rights and responsibilities prevents many people from more active and meaningful democratic engagement. At the same time, robust civil society and the right and ability to peaceful protest, was cited as a positive indicator of democracy. In Mozambique, closing civic space and restrictions on freedom of expression was a reason the respondent did not identify their country as a full democracy. Similarly, a researcher and activist from the MENA region noted that LGBTQI+ activism in the MENA is necessarily intersectional – that is, the only way for LGBTQI+ activists and organizations to operate is in partnership with other human rights and CSOs, a challenge that is increasingly difficult as governments clamp down on civic space.

Indeed, across the desk research and GLIDE’s original research, it is clear that true democracy, inclusive of people of diverse SOGIESC, cannot exist without a robust and engaged civil society, including the LGBTQI+ movement.



Participation in civic and democratic processes

Both the survey and KIIs collected information on what participation in civic and democratic processes looks like for members of the LGBTQI+ community around the world. The survey asked questions regarding voting habits, access, and challenges; experience and interest in running for office and participating in political activities; and broad civic and community engagement. KIIs were asked for additional information about the experience of participating in democratic and electoral processes for LGBTQI+ people.

Electoral participation

Survey respondents were asked whether they had the ID card required by their country to vote and 92% of respondents reported that they did have the requisite ID. Regionally, respondents from MENA (100%) and the Americas (97%) had the highest rates of ID possession, while respondents from Asia had the lowest rate of ID possession (86%). Younger respondents and transgender respondents were slightly less likely to have the required ID to vote; 10% of respondents ages 18-39 did not have the required ID, compared to only 2% of respondents over the age of 40. Further, 13% of transgender respondents lacked the requisite ID compared to 5% of non-transgender respondents.

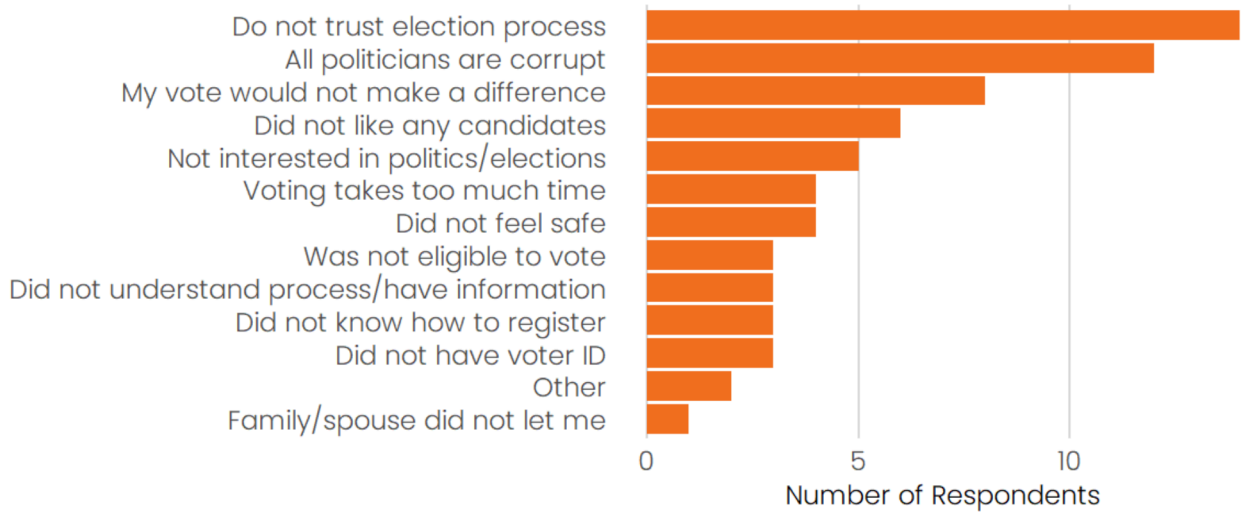
However, only 52.5% of respondents with a voter ID reported that the gender marker, photo, and name on that ID properly reflected their gender identity; 20% of respondents with an ID reported that none of those three ID components properly reflected their gender identity, and an additional 27% reported an issue with one or two of those ID components.

Figure 12: Does your voter ID match your gender identity?

| Gender Marker | Name | Photo | Percent |
|---------------|------|-------|---------|
| Yes | Yes | Yes | 52.5% |
| Yes | Yes | No | 1.3% |
| Yes | No | Yes | 0% |
| No | Yes | Yes | 14.4% |
| Yes | No | No | 1.9% |
| No | Yes | No | 4.4% |
| No | No | Yes | 5.0% |
| No | No | No | 20.0% |

For those who did not have an ID (8% of total respondents), the primary reasons given were: the process of getting an ID is too onerous/complicated/expensive (5/12), they cannot obtain an ID that reflects their gender identity (3/12), or they do not feel safe registering for an ID (3/12). While more than 90% of respondents were registered to vote, only 70.5% voted in their country’s most recent election. When asked why they did not vote, the top five reasons centered on disinterest/distrust in politics as detailed below in **Figure 13**:

Figure 13: Reasons for Not Voting.

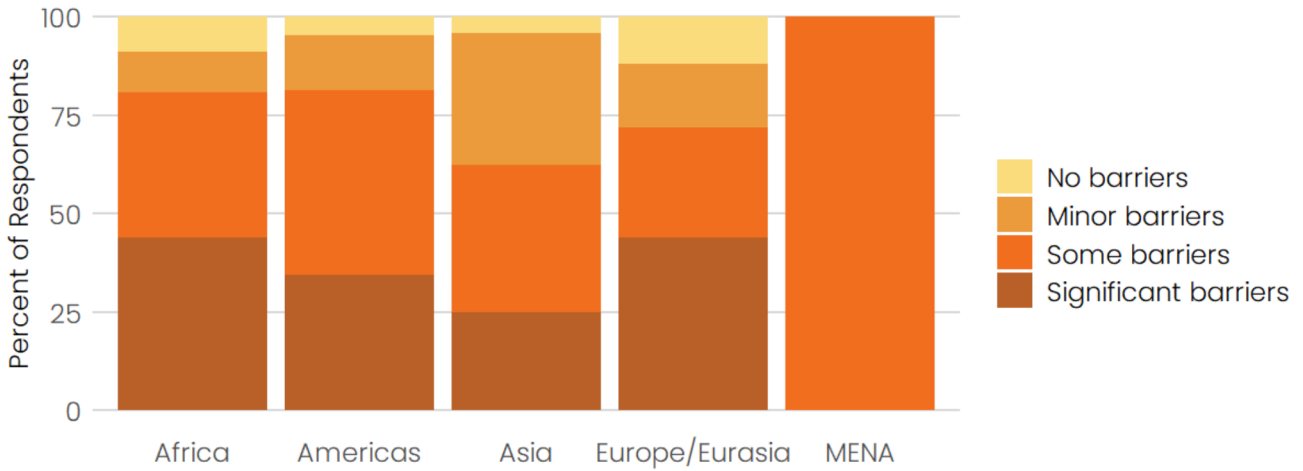


Barriers to Electoral Participation

Among respondents who reported voting in their most recent election, 12% (15/122) reported facing difficulties when voting. The most commonly reported difficulties identified included long lines/voting took too long (8/15), violence or harassment by poll workers (7/15), and violence/harassment by other voters (7/15). Of the respondents facing difficulties, two-thirds believed that these difficulties were linked to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

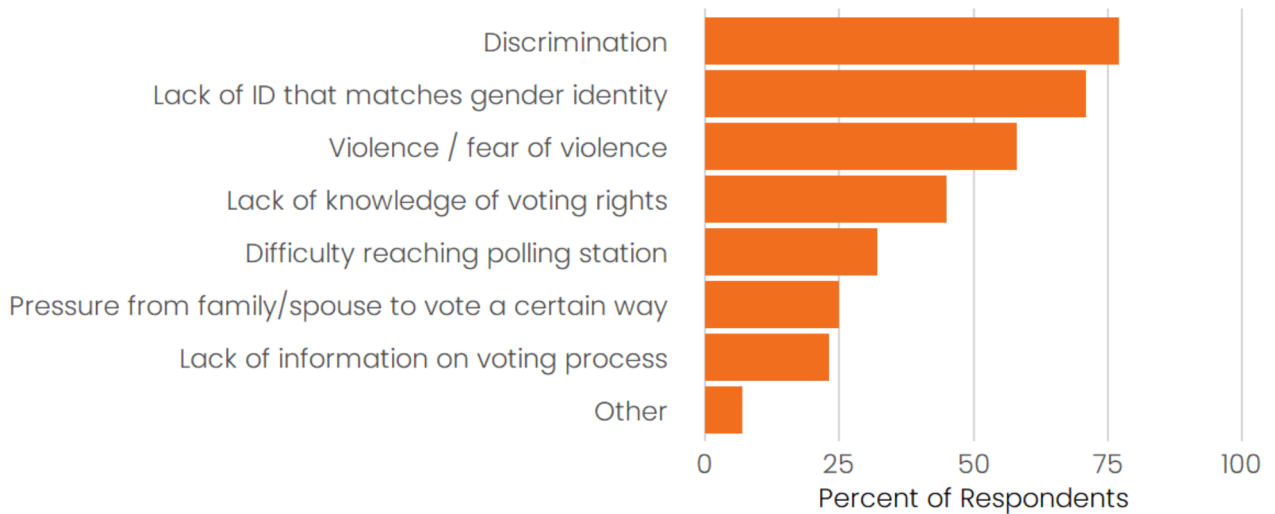
77% of respondents believed that LGBTQI+ people in their country face moderate to significant barriers in trying to vote. Only 7% of respondents stated that LGBTQI+ people did not face any barriers in trying to vote in their country. Most respondents from every region responded that LGBTQI+ people faced moderate or significant barriers when seeking to exercise their right to vote.

Figure 14: Perceived severity of barriers to voting for LGBTQI+ people.



The most cited barriers to LGBTQI+ people voting were discrimination, lack of ID that matches gender identity/expression or name, and violence/fear of violence. These barriers ranked in the top three across all regions.

Figure 15: Types of barriers to LGBTQI+ Voting.



Additionally, 79% of respondents observed an increase in anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and/or violence in the run-up to the most recent or upcoming election in their country. Most respondents within each region observed this increase in anti-LGBTQI+ actions, with that proportion varying from 84% in Africa to 66% in MENA.

KIIs also discussed issues of participation in political processes and the ways that politicians engage around LGBTQI+ issues, particularly in the context of elections. The responses indicated a range of ways in which both members of the community and politicians engage on LGBTQI+ issues and shed additional light on the challenges that members of the community face in exercising their political rights.

When asked about LGBTQI+ persons' participation in political processes, KII responses trended in several broad categories: 1) LGBTQI+ people do not feel they can participate at all or at least not openly; 2) LGBTQI+ people are able to participate openly, but LGBTQI+ issues are not taken into account by government officials or are only engaged in a superficial or tokenistic way; or 3) the LGBTQI+ community or individuals and organizations have had at least some success in engaging in political processes.

In the first category, respondents from Lebanon, Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, amongst others, noted that people were afraid to participate openly (as LGBTQI+ people) in political and democratic processes, citing discrimination, threats, and even violence. A respondent from Ghana reported that if people know that you are a member of the LGBTQI+ community, you will face challenges in trying to participate. The respondent also pointed out that the discrimination that LGBTQI+ people face in accessing education impacts their ability to effectively exercise their right to vote. This respondent noted that in advance of passing the anti-LGBTQI+ law in February 2024, the legislature established a process to receive comments or to testify in person, but some LGBTQI+ organizations did not participate due to fear of violence or persecution. In Lebanon, political participation is "really far away – we can't even achieve women's equal participation and representation."

In the second category, respondents from Malaysia, the Philippines, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam, among other countries, described a mixed situation for LGBTQI+ people's political participation. For example, one respondent from Vietnam noted that most people – regardless of SOGIESC status – in Vietnam do vote, but that otherwise many do not participate in government processes, aside from attending political party meetings. Young people who are within the activist community, including those involved in LGBTQI+ issues, tend to have greater awareness of both social and governance issues. A respondent from Trinidad and Tobago noted that LGBTQI+ people do participate through civil society organizations, including submitting feedback on constitutional reforms, but that for many people the onerous process of submitting feedback and the complexity of the legal language involved resulted in very few submissions.

"It's not just going to vote but participating in all the processes that citizenship affords. This includes participating in community committees, the census, local government, national surveys. It's hard for the LGBT community to participate effectively because we don't have all our rights recognized."

In Malaysia, LGBTQI+ people generally have access to the vote, according to an interviewee, but there are significant barriers, especially for transgender people who typically must go home to vote and vote under their dead name, the announcement of which can put them in danger. In addition, while LGBTQI+ people can join political parties, they are rarely able to move into leadership or any type of public-facing role. The issue of having to return home to vote was also cited as a barrier for some voters in Sri Lanka, as many members of the community live in cities and do not always feel comfortable returning to their hometowns. A respondent from Botswana, a country generally seen as a brighter spot for LGBTQI+ people, noted that there is a need for greater efforts to increase safety to help LGBTQI+ people participate in elections, providing the example that there were some polling places where women aren't allowed to wear trousers, which made some women feel like they could not go and vote in those places.

In countries like the Philippines, publicly recognized as one of the most queer-friendly places in Asia,⁵⁷ members of the LGBTQI+ community can and do vote, raise their voices in public discourse, participate in CSOs, and run for office. However, societal stigma and discrimination does impact LGBTQI+ people's political participation and, despite political parties' public displays of support during the 2022 elections, there was no action including the continued failure on the part of the national government to act on key legislation such as SOGIESC non-discrimination. One issue noted by a respondent was the failure of LGBTQI+ people to effectively pressure political actors to demonstrate support for the community beyond symbolic gestures or "pinkwashing" such as flying pride flags during campaign events. Other activists observed that political figures pay lip service to appease the LGBTQI+ community – or even other governments – to gain power, then do not fulfill their promises once they are in office.

“Safety is an ideal, and how LGBTQI+ people feel safe is shaky... institutions of safety are not necessarily safe for the community. The realities of people participating in democratic institutions and having full access is a much more patchwork approach.”

Finally, respondents from a small handful of countries noted their ability to openly engage in political and governance processes. For example, in Lesotho, LGBTQI+ organizations participate in consultative meetings with government officials to develop policy documents, even on topics not directly related to LGBTQI+ issues. In addition, during the most recent election, a newly formed political party released a party manifesto inclusive of LGBTQI+ issues – a first in the country's history. An interviewee from Colombia noted that there are many ways to participate and a strong culture of civic participation, including the participation of LGBTQI+ people as political candidates, even though they may not always include LGBTQI+ rights on their platform.

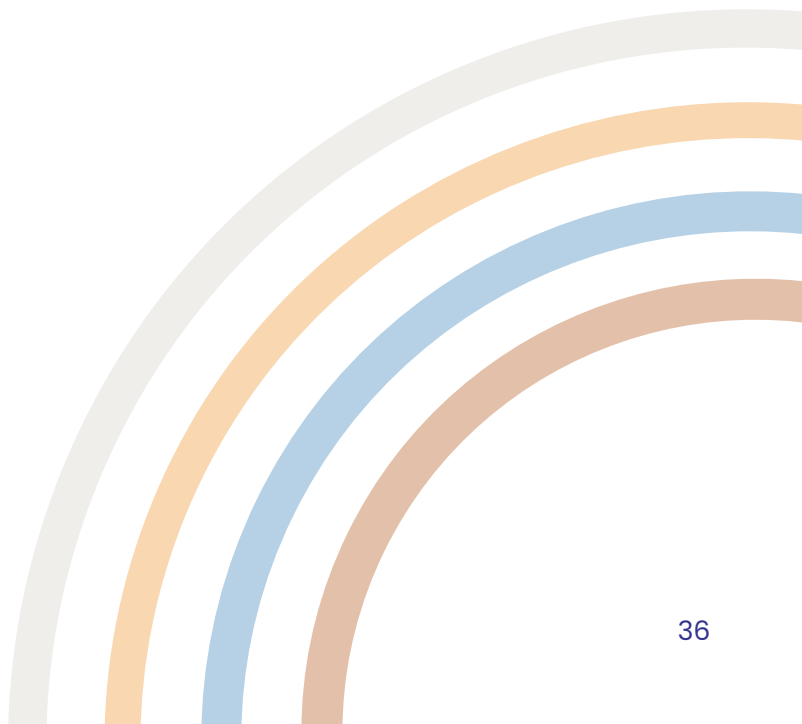
Interviewees from South Africa reported a more mixed picture. While South Africa was the first country in the world to include protections for LGBTQI+ people in its Constitution and has led the way on comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation for intersex people, one respondent noted that a person's LGBTQI+ identity, or even allyship with LGBTQI+ communities, can be used against them if they seek to run for office. Another interviewee expressed frustration that members of the LGBTQI+ community still support political figures who openly support anti-LGBTQI+ policies, and that LGBTQI+ people do not always vote in their own best interest. As this person noted, there is a failure to recognize that “the personal is political.”

Specific challenges for transgender voters and candidates

Consistent with the survey findings regarding lack of voter ID that conforms to a person's gender identity, specific challenges persist for transgender persons across several contexts. For example, a respondent from Tanzania emphasized specifically that there is no space for transgender people as the country does not acknowledge their existence. If they want to participate, they must deny their true identity and revert to their deadname. Similarly, in Kenya, transgender people who have sought to run for office have been harassed or threatened into dropping out of the race. In Zimbabwe, one respondent noted that transgender individuals get turned away from voting stations due to lack of documents, but some trans people have been able to vote if someone else can vouch for their identity.

⁵⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/>

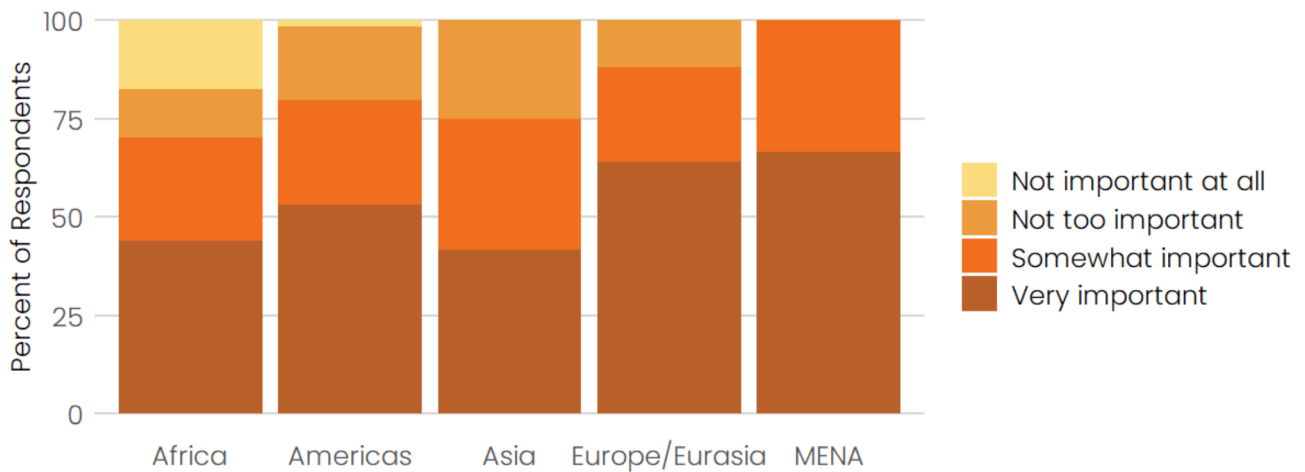
In the Philippines, lack of legal gender recognition means trans people will be recognized by their government name and sex assigned at birth which is a dehumanizing experience. An interviewee from Honduras shared the story of a trans woman who ran for office but noted that no one respected her gender identity; not only did the media refer to her by her deadname, her deadname also appeared on the ballot. On the other hand, in places like Bangladesh, identifying as hijra or third gender has made it easier to engage in political processes, including contesting for office, as being third gender is more accepted than other forms of diverse SOGIESC.



The importance of citizen participation

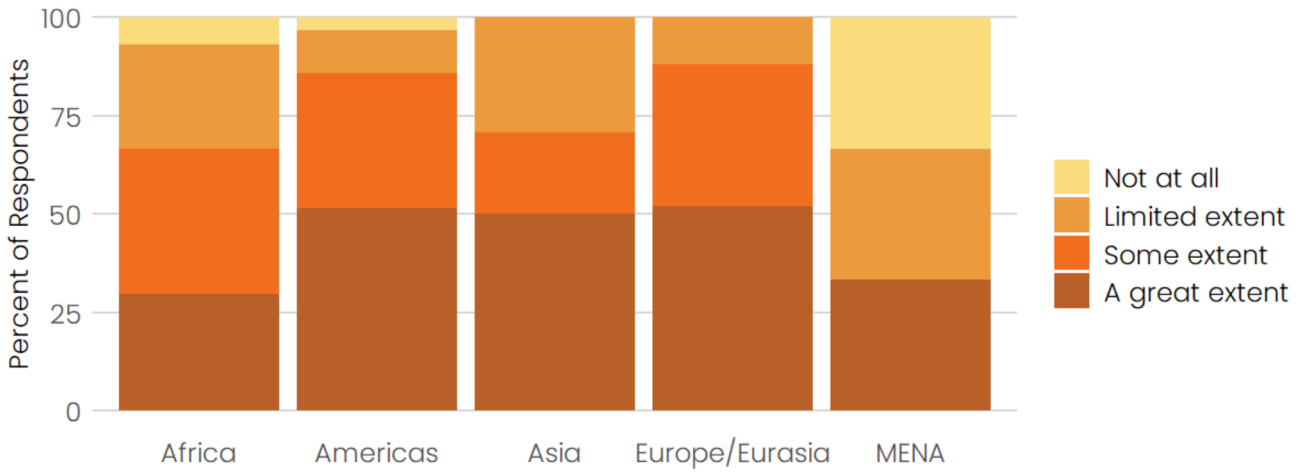
Acknowledging elections as only one way to participate in the democratic process, the survey also asked participants about their level of involvement in their communities, including through volunteer work, lobbying elected and government officials, participating in protests and demonstrations, and campaigning on behalf of a political party, candidate, or cause. Just over half of respondents (50.3%) stated that citizen participation is very important among LGBTQI+ people in their country. There were a few regional variations in reported importance: 66% of MENA respondents and 64% of Europe/Eurasia respondents stated that citizen participation was very important to LGBTQI+ people in their countries – the highest rates across regions. In contrast, 12% of African respondents reported that LGBTQI+ people in their countries saw citizen participation as not at all important.

Figure 16: Importance of citizen participation to LGBTQI+ people.



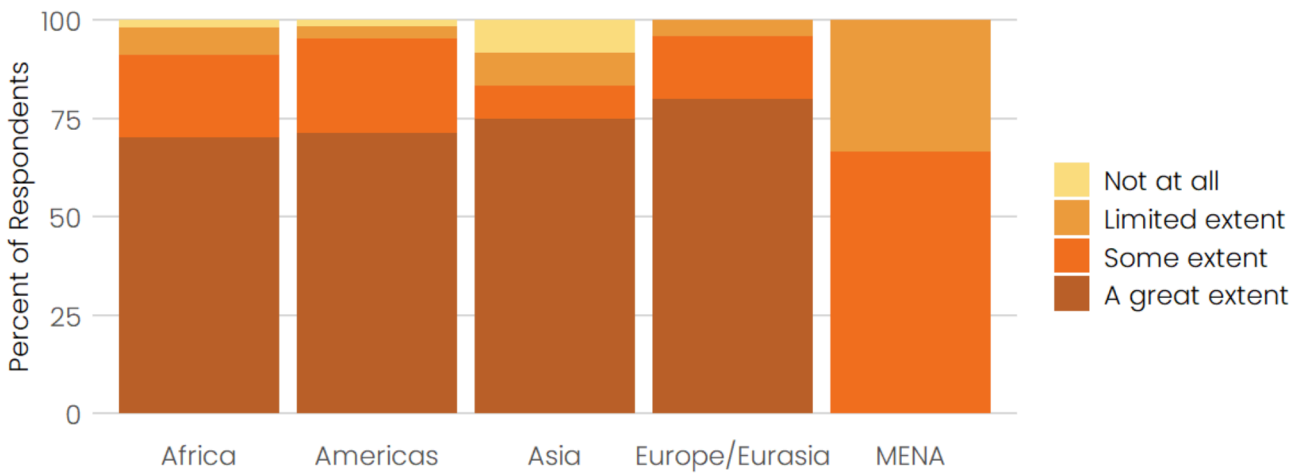
In all, 44% of respondents reported that they participated in civic life to a great extent, 52% reported little or some engagement, and 4% did not participate at all. Most respondents reported participating to a great extent in Europe/Eurasia (52%), the Americas (52%), and Asia (50%). Africa and Asia had the largest shares of respondents who participated to a limited extent or not at all (33% and 29%, respectively).

Figure 17: Extent of respondent citizen participation.



Respondents reporting that citizen participation was less important to LGBTQI+ people also reported lower personal levels of participation. 71% of respondents indicated that civic engagement can make a great difference for LGBTQI+ people in their country. Belief in civic engagement was similarly high across all regions other than MENA, with 70% (Africa) to 80% (Europe/Eurasia) of respondents indicating the "great" difference it could make.

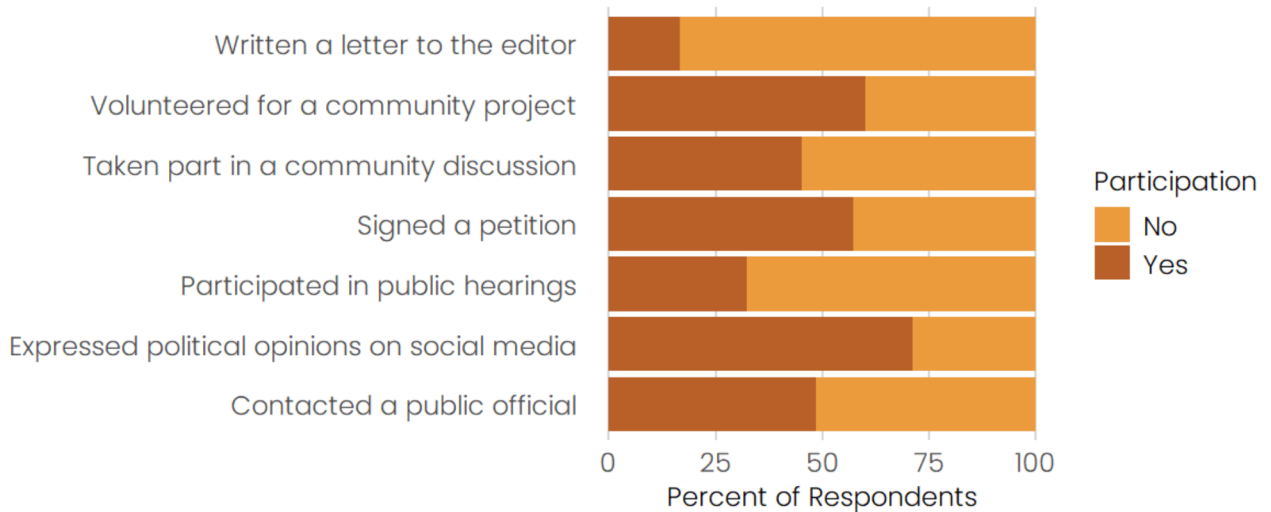
Figure 18: Power of civic engagement to make a difference for LGBTQI+ people.



History of Civic Engagement

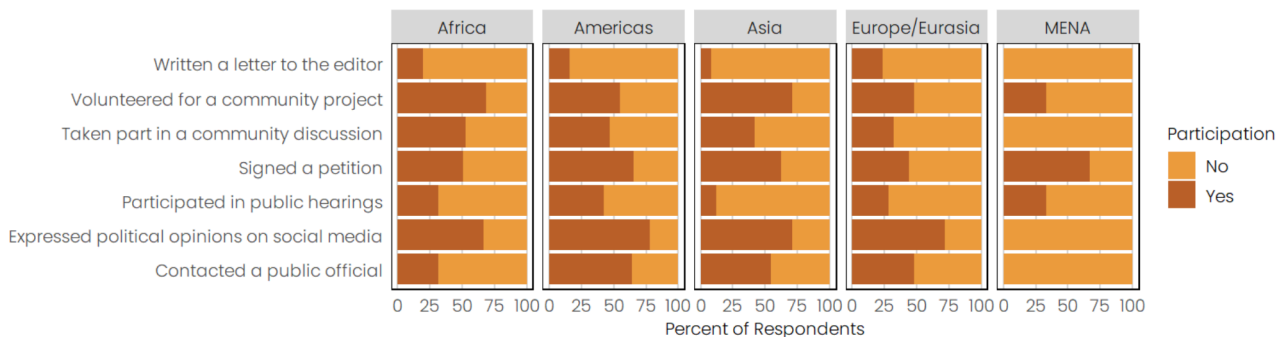
Perhaps unsurprisingly, when asked about whether they had participated in one of seven forms of civic engagement listed in the graph below, 98% of respondents engaged in at least one of the seven listed activities over the last 12 months. The median number of activities engaged in was three. Many respondents reported expressing political opinions on social media (71%), volunteering for a community project (60%), and signing a petition (57%).

Figure 19: Civic activity in the last 12 months.



A majority of respondents from all regions reported expressing political opinions via social media. Respondents from Africa were most likely to take part in community discussions (53% vs. 0-46% for other regions) but less likely to contact a public official (32% vs. over 50% for other regions). Respondents from the Americas were most likely to participate in public hearings (42% vs. 13-33%). Most respondents from the Americas, Asia, and MENA reported signing petitions, while less than 50% of respondents from other regions did.

Figure 20: Civic activity in the last 12 months by region.



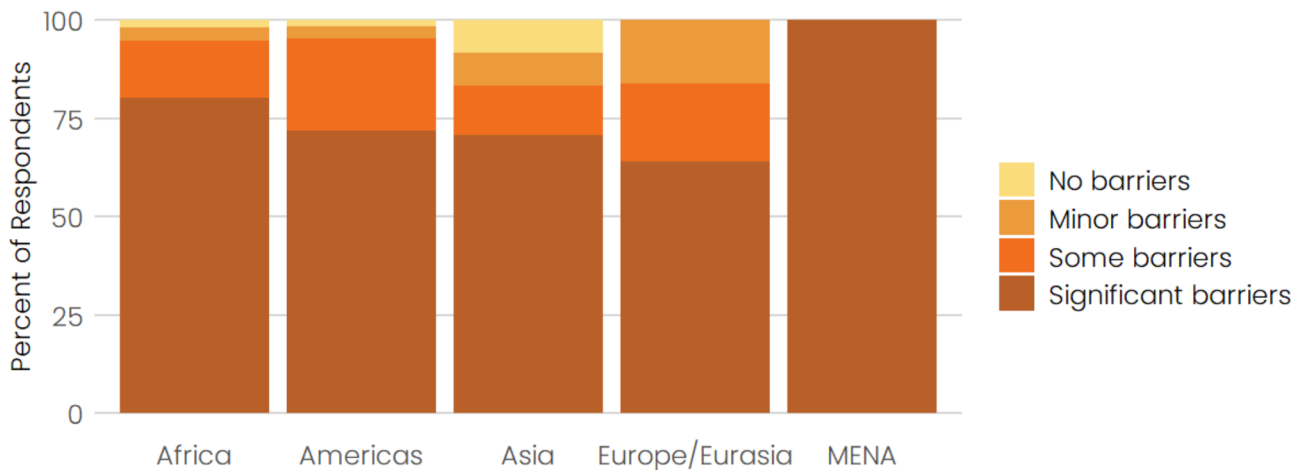
68% of respondents knew an LGBTQI+ person who has run for office in their country. Nearly all respondents from the Americas (91%) knew an LGBTQI+ candidate, while none of the respondents from the MENA region did. Slightly more than half of respondents from Africa (58%), Europe/Eurasia (56%), and Asia (54%), knew an LGBTQI+ candidate.

42% of respondents have considered running for office; of those, 46% identified as men, just over 27% identified as women, and 21% identified as nonbinary. Though most respondents from the Americas knew an LGBTQI+ person who had run for office, only 45% had ever considered running for office themselves. A higher proportion of respondents from Europe/Eurasia had considered running for office (72%) compared to respondents from other regions. Less than half of respondents had considered running for office in Africa (32%) and Asia (33%). None of the respondents from MENA considered running for office.

Barriers to Political Participation

73% of respondents stated that LGBTQI+ people face significant barriers to political participation in their country. This was affirmed by most respondents across all regions, ranging from 64% of respondents from Europe/Eurasia to 100% of respondents from MENA.

Figure 21: Perceived severity of barriers to LGBTQI+ political participation.



The most cited barriers to LGBTQI+ political participation included discrimination (92%), violence or fear of violence (79%), and lack of support from political parties (79%). Barriers were similarly prevalent across regions, with the exception that respondents from Europe/Eurasia reported violence (36%) and lack of time/resources (56%) as barriers less often than respondents from other regions (80%+ and 68%+, respectively).

How does your government engage on LGBTQI+ issues?

Underscoring the survey findings summarized above, interviewees from many countries reported that LGBTQI+ issues and people were exploited by political figures in the context of elections. For example, an interviewee from Argentina noted the use of anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric during the last presidential campaign, perpetuated by the media, exploited by candidates to “hook people into hateful discourse” and distract from the government’s terrible economic performance. Other respondents from Latin America reported a similar trend, noting that political parties consistently use hateful anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric to make democratic participation impossible for LGBTQI+ people, positioning members of the community as “a public enemy” to gain the support of conservative voters. A respondent from Tanzania noted that “scapegoating is very very prevalent” and is used to distract from the government’s failings. Finally, an interviewee from Southeast Asia shared the story of an openly LGBTQI+ person who ran in the last election as an independent candidate: while the other candidates did not make negative statements, there was hateful rhetoric used in media reporting as well as an entire online hate campaign which was generally attributed to the governing party.

An activist from Central Asia noted that growing government engagement on LGBTQI+ issues – following the model of cultural ally Russia – has had a negative impact as officials are increasingly mimicking both Russian narratives on traditional values and negative legislation in the form of an anti-gay propaganda and an anti-terrorism law. The interviewee reported their surprise that it is only within the last couple of years that their government has taken up this Russian narrative, given that gaining “legitimacy out of homophobia” is low-hanging fruit for political gain.

“Sometimes they keep quiet until election season – and then it all comes out. It’s a huge problem.”

For those respondents from countries currently amid an electoral period, there was significant anxiety about the potential outcomes of the election. For example, a respondent from South Africa noted a rise in anti-rights, anti-gender rhetoric within smaller parties and religion-based parties. There was particular concern that if the governing party didn’t achieve a majority in the election, they would join in coalition with one of these parties to

form a government, and LGBTQI+ people would suffer because “we are the easiest target.” In Ghana, a prolonged campaign to target LGBTQI+ people have reached the next level in this presidential election year, with current MPs and presidential candidates looking to shore up their anti-LGBTQI+ bona fides. This includes an attempt for the governing party to include in their party bylaws a provision that anyone showing support for LGBTQI+ people should be barred from running for office or serving in a government position.

Interviewees were also asked about the ways their governments engage on LGBTQI+ issues outside of electioneering and about any allies they may have within their governments or other influential institutions. A respondent from Lebanon outlined a range of concerns echoed by LGBTQI+ people from more closed or hostile spaces. These include pending

legislation effectively criminalizing any activities or entities seen as supportive of the LGBTQI+ community, attempts to ban freedom of assembly for LGBTQI+ people and their allies, and harmful rhetoric specifically designed to mobilize the public against LGBTQI+ people. In Kenya, one activist noted that MPs have made attempts to adopt a law similar to the most recent Uganda law, but that they are attempting to do so discreetly to avoid international scrutiny, including sharing a version of the bill in local languages. Similarly, in Mozambique, a respondent reported that there are no politicians with positive involvement in LGBTQI+ issues, but there are public figures, including politicians and representatives of political parties, who appear on television and spout hate about LGBTQI+ communities. This is also carried and discussed generally in prominent media outlets during and beyond electoral campaigns.

“Government is inciting an aggressive narrative – what we fear more than the law itself are vigilantes and extremist groups.”

In the Philippines, the picture is much more positive but, as one interviewee reported, there is a failure to deliver on the promises made during campaigns. Even if legislators move forward with filing promised legislation on issues such as anti-discrimination or marriage equality, they don't advocate for its passage and little changes in practice. Furthermore, support to candidates during the campaign can impact an organization's ability to work with other officials moving forward as a newly elected local official will form their own local LGBT council rather than engaging with advocates who supported someone else, and that group is then beholden to that politician rather than the community. An activist from Nepal noted a similar dynamic post-election, where despite positive statements during campaigns and actual directives from entities like the Supreme Court to take legislative action on same-sex marriage, no action has been taken to change legislation. As the interviewee noted, “they pretend to be allies and then blame the other parties for why things don't work... if I am a true ally that should be visible in my actions.”

An interviewee from Botswana noted that its reputation for inclusive and consultative democracy does not always extend to the LGBTQI+ community. They specifically cited the constitutional review process as less inclusive than it should have been and noted that it sometimes feels as though the legal framework is fragmented, especially for LGBTQI+ people. For example, while the Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex conduct in 2021, the government has not yet acted on Bill 29 of 2022 which would remove the relevant provisions from the Criminal Code.

Within Latin America, Colombia is a clear bright spot. One interviewee noted that there is a congressional commission in place working on LGBTQI+ issues and numerous public policies and initiatives to protect LGBTQI+ rights, although some are inadequately resourced. The current president supports LGBTQI+ rights and is creating a Ministry of Equality or Ministry of LGBTQI+ Issues. Other government ministries – including those governing statistics, national planning, health, justice, and the interior – engage positively on LGBTQI+ issues. Brazil is more of a mixed picture. As one activist noted, there are 77 laws against LGBTQI+ people currently in place and new laws are introduced all the time. The president has required that every ministry have a trans woman, but they are often placed in the lowest and most underpaid position. There is also a National Secretary for the Promotion & Defense of the Rights of LGBTQIA+ People but she has no budget with which to work. This interviewee also reported significant concerns about the October 2024 local elections and the expected tenor of those campaigns.

In Tonga, one interviewee noted that while same-sex sexual conduct is criminalized, the community does have some support from government leaders, including the prime minister, some MPs, and the Minister of Justice. They have been able to make progress on key issues such as the definition of rape and the development of a policy on cyberbullying. They are also working to address a harmful law banning “cross-dressing.” From her perspective, it was better to focus on these specific issues where it is possible to make progress than get bogged down in broader issues of decriminalization and same-sex marriage.

Allies

Most respondents – even those operating in the toughest contexts – were able to identify some institutional and organizational allies, even if they are representatives from other governments or international organizations. These include UN agencies, such as UN Women, embassies from more LGBTQI+-friendly countries, and international NGOs. Ministries of Health were most likely to be identified as entry points, even if they are not allies. For example, respondents from east Africa noted that health professionals, as the result of HIV/AIDS programs, may be more accustomed to working with men who have sex with men (MSM), but that often they also provide “conversion practices” along with health care. In Zimbabwe, leaders in the health field, including in the government, were seen as true allies, at least within their field, and civil society organizations were also identified as allies. Similarly in Malaysia, while elected officials have not engaged much publicly in either direction, those MPs with a medical background are effective in speaking out about health access issues relevant to the community. In that case, as the interviewee noted, their “expertise is protective.”

An interviewee from Vietnam also shared an example of positive engagement from a legislator on a transgender-related issue, where he joined the community to hear their views, answer questions, and share his perspective on a piece of draft legislation related to the requirements associated with changing one’s gender. The interviewee noted that the exchange helped the community understand the legislator’s perspective – and vice versa – and to have a better concept of what was realistic to expect from the rest of the legislature. In other cases, political allyship is only available from independent or opposition parties and even then, the relationship is nuanced. For example, in Kazakhstan one independent party is supportive of the community in private but is much more neutral in public.

In Honduras, one interviewee identified the current president as an ally, but noted that hateful discourse within Congress and other branches has delayed progress. However, there has been concrete action in the form of a working group on LGBTI inclusion issues within the Secretariat of Social Development to develop proposals for legal reforms to increase the rights of LGBTI people. The opposite dynamic is at play in Argentina where civil society can work with the legislature and the judiciary but not the executive.

In Ghana, the LGBTQI+ community has found support in the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, which has maintained its position against anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in the face of attacks. Interviewees also identified HIV networks and related health workers as allies along with some mainstream CSOs who have mobilized against the bill. Some lawmakers from both parties have shown support privately. In El Salvador, where the movement is seeing backtracking due to the Bukele government, including the ability of the Ministries of Education and Health to operate as allies, LGBTQI+ activists identified feminist groups and some youth organizations as particularly helpful allies in civil society.

One interviewee also mentioned building relationships with local governments and municipalities (although those are shrinking in number given executive-driven centralization) through a Positive Leadership Alliance network. Even in more open contexts, allies may be more likely to be individuals rather than institutions. For example, an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago noted that there are some independent senators who are considered allies, but they are in the minority. According to this respondent, the two major political parties “dance around the issue” and neither party has done or said anything to demonstrate allyship.

Representation must come from within the community

Respondents mentioned open LGBTQI+ people running for, and winning, elected office as essential for achieving “positive momentum for LGBTQI+ people within decision-making spaces.” For example, several interviewees knew of LGBTQI+ people serving in public office without being public about their identity for fear that being open would cost them their positions or their ability to be taken seriously. As a result, they have been hesitant to openly advocate for LGBTQI+ issues. A similar sentiment was noted by interviewees in West Africa – while some lawmakers have shown private support for the community, they fear their stance being weaponized when they next contest for office. Similarly, a respondent from the Pacific noted that there are MPs who are members of the community, but that they don’t take LGBTQI+ issues on board – they maintain a low profile and focus on advocating for their constituency. This respondent did note that increasing open involvement of people of diverse SOGIESC in elected roles could also allow these individuals to become more staunch allies in the future. Finally, an activist from Latin America recommended that there be an LGBTQI+-led political party that can take on decision-making roles within political structures.

While data on the number of LGBTQI+ elected officials around the world remains incomplete, it is important that efforts to increase the number of openly LGBTQI+ politicians intentionally seek to recruit and support candidates who represent the full diversity of LGBTQI+ people. This includes LBT women, nonbinary, and intersex people, as well as people from a variety of religious and ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples. Many of the early LGBTQI+ elected officials have identified as gay cisgender men from the dominant ethnic group, replicating – with the exception of sexual orientation – the characteristics of other elected officials.

In building a diverse movement of leaders and allies, the LGBTQI+ community can realize both a much broader definition of the practice of democracy and political engagement and to establish a cadre of leaders who better reflect the population they seek to represent.

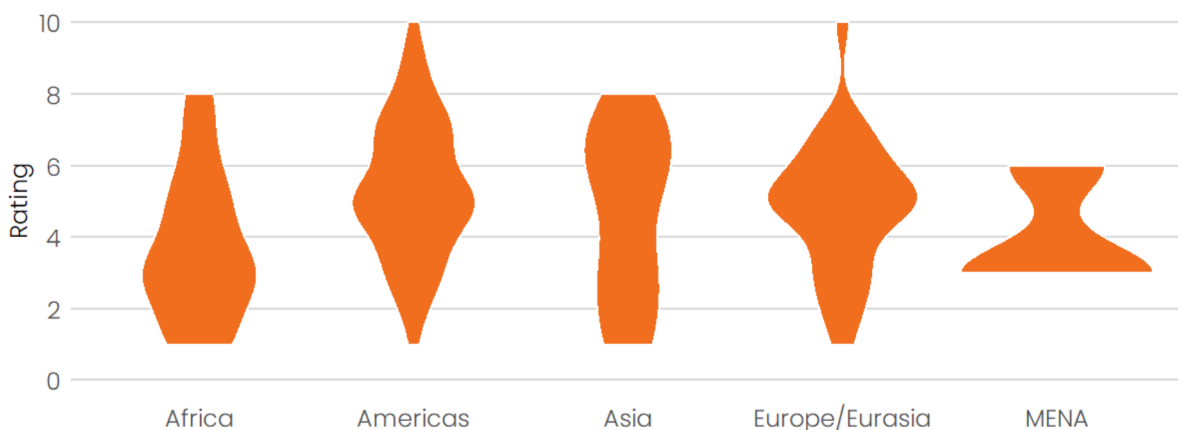
“Only openly LGBTQI+ people will be able to make real changes in state institutions. Other people won’t do it for us, and it shouldn’t be heterosexual people making decisions for us or deciding what is most important for us.”

Safety, Rule of Law, and Access to Justice

Respect for the rule of law⁵⁸ is a critical factor in how well governments function and how likely people are to be able to enact change in their countries. The survey asked respondents several questions related to respect for the rule of law in their country and KII participants were also asked about adherence to the rule of law in their countries.

A majority (67%) of respondents rated their country's adherence to the rule of law as a five or below on a ten-point scale, indicating low adherence. Rule of law adherence ratings were highest among respondents from the Americas (mean=5.34) and Europe/Eurasia (4.88). Respondents from Africa gave the lowest mean rule of law adherence rating (3.72).

Figure 22: Respondent rating of adherence to rule of Law.



Similarly, 66% of respondents gave separation of powers a rating of five or lower, indicating little separation of powers. Ratings did not vary much across regions, however, with all regions other than MENA exhibiting mean ratings between 4.32 and 4.78. The mean rating for the MENA region was only three out of ten, but this data comes from only three respondents from three countries.

The lack of respect for the rule of law and limitations on separations of power were also key topics of discussion with KII participants. In El Salvador, interviewees noted the consolidation of power in the executive under the Bukele administration, which was also detrimental to local governance, because the number of municipalities in the country was reduced. Another respondent from El Salvador noted that whether an LGBTQI+ person can get justice from the courts – like being able to change their name and gender on identification documents – depends entirely on the whims of the individual judge.

⁵⁸ **Rule of Law:** "The rule of law is a set of principles, or ideals, for ensuring an orderly and just society. Many countries throughout the world strive to uphold the rule of law where no one is above the law, everyone is treated equally under the law, everyone is held accountable to the same laws, there are clear and fair processes for enforcing laws, there is an independent judiciary, and human rights are guaranteed for all." (ABA)

In Honduras, a respondent reported that there is no rule of law, separation of powers, or checks and balances, specifically citing a complete lack of independence of institutions like the Supreme Court and public ministries. Similarly, a respondent from Mozambique noted that the constitution provides for the separation of powers, but this independence is not observed in practice. In particular, the presidency exerts a lot of influence on the judiciary, and this affects LGBTQI+ people's access to justice. In the Philippines, an activist described the lack of separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, noting "anything the president wants the legislature does," leaving the judiciary as the last hope.

In one South Asian country, an interviewee noted, access to justice depends on who you are and who you know: "when we talk about rule of law and access to justice... they are available for the oppressor group..." and even within LGBTQI+ communities, the experiences can vary. They gave the example of the gay son of a government official who filed a public interest litigation (PIL) claim with the Supreme Court for themselves and their partner. In that case, the judgment was received in less than a year, but other PILs for extreme human rights violations have not been acted upon. In Brazil, a respondent reported that the ability to access justice depends very much on access to resources – those who cannot afford a lawyer linger in jail and "people can get away with everything when they have money." A respondent from Bangladesh noted that not only does the executive have a lot of power over the judiciary, but lawyers are also hesitant to take up cases for LGBTQI+ people for fear of societal backlash. While there was hope that the Supreme Court might follow India and take up decriminalization, it did not take up the petition. In the MENA region, as one expert noted, the issue is not just criminalization of same-sex conduct, but the total lack of access to justice and legal recourse in the face of criminalization along with cybercrime laws, debauchery laws, morality laws, and counter-terrorism laws, all of which combine to block the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

In better news, a respondent from Lesotho noted that courts are, in general, fairly independent, cases move quickly, and judges provide robust due process. LGBTQI+ people have been able to take people to court for violations. A similar situation was mentioned by an interviewee from Trinidad and Tobago who described the courts as independent, including around issues related to LGBTQI+ people, noting that they have been successful in pursuing anti-discrimination cases. Respondents from both countries noted that civil society provides essential legal support in pursuing these cases. And in Colombia, an interviewee noted that there is both formal adherence to the rule of law and "a social rule of law where the Constitution, human rights, and institutionalism are extremely important..." "in general Colombians talk about rights – to life, to public life. When there's an institutional crisis we appeal to the rule of law and the Constitution."

"For me there's no rule of law because there are no guarantees that we'll have rights. The judicial system barely functions, and we've seen many community leaders deprived of their liberty even though they haven't been charged with anything.... It may seem like there is rule of law, but it's only when it's convenient for the government."

Protections for LGBTQI+ People

Several KII respondents pointed out, even if courts can operate independently and be accessible to LGBTQI+ people, they need to have legislation available to enforce. The lack of anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation for people of diverse SOGIESC is a significant barrier to LGBTQI+ people's ability to access justice and fully participate in society. In Malaysia, there is no law against workplace discrimination, which prevents members of the LGBTQI+ community from being able to act if they are fired when their employer finds out they are gay or trans.

In fact, 55% of survey respondents reported that their country did not have anti-discrimination laws that protect the rights of LGBTQI+ people. Of the 45% of respondents indicating that their country did have LGBTQI+ anti-discrimination laws, only a third (33%) felt those laws were at least somewhat enforced.

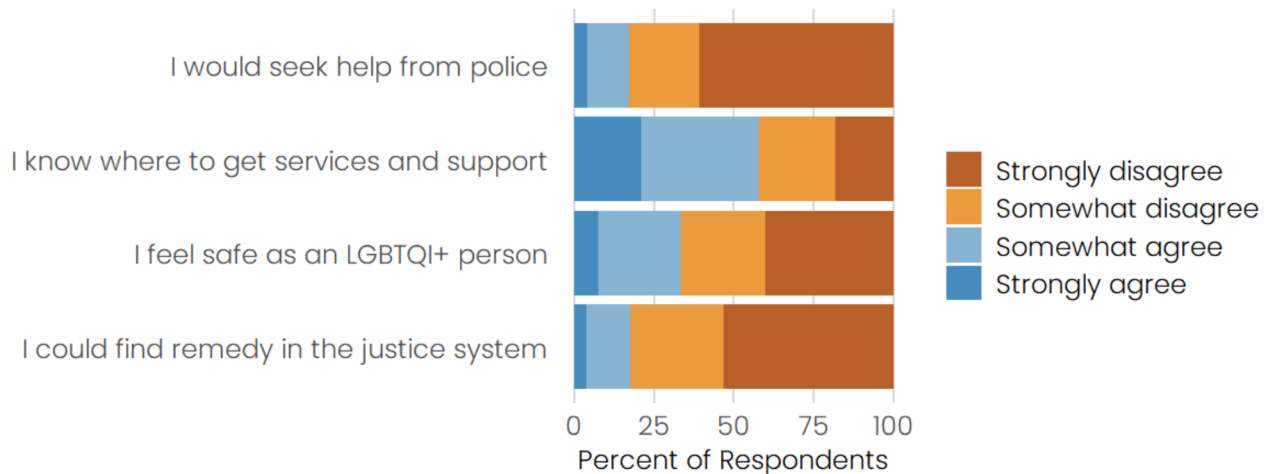
In the Philippines, while “the last hope is the judiciary” for the enforcement of LGBTQI+ rights, the lack of hate crimes and other identity-based protections means the ultimate outcome of many cases is up to the interpretation of the Supreme Court judges. An interviewee gave the example of a hate crime not being recognized as such because there is no specific piece of legislation in place that can help the police to recognize, record, and charge the alleged perpetrator(s) accordingly. Interviewees from South Africa reported similar issues and frustration with the fact that the Parliament passed hate crime legislation but the President had not yet assented to it.⁵⁹ As a result, they noted cases such as one where a trans woman died in police custody, but the prosecutor kept talking about how a man died in prison, completely erasing the hate crime element, and the woman's identity, and the perpetrators got away with it. Without specific legislation in place, the burden is on the victim to prove that the crime was motivated by their diverse SOGIESC background, and it therefore becomes harder to hold people accountable.

Safety and access to justice

Survey respondents' feelings of personal safety were low overall with only one third (33%) agreeing that they feel safe as an LGBTQI+ person in their country. Confidence in formal institutions was even lower, with only 17% agreeing that they would seek help from police or that they could find a remedy in the justice system. However, 57% of respondents agreed that they knew where to get services and support if they were the victim of a crime. These contrasting results suggest that some respondents may know of, or rely on, informal sources of support that bolster their personal safety.

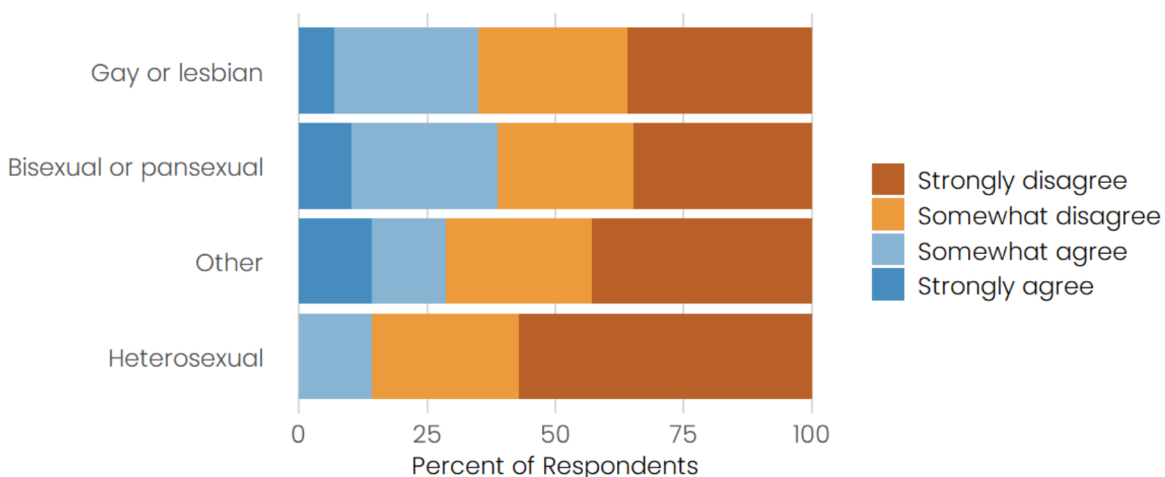
⁵⁹ President Ramaphosa approved the bill on 10 May 2024, after these interviews were conducted: <https://www.jurist.org/news/2024/05/south-africa-president-approves-bill-criminalizing-hate-crimes-and-hate-speech/#:~:text=Section%209%20of%20the%20Constitution,culture%2C%20language%20and%20birth.%E2%80%9D>

Figure 23: Perceptions of personal safety and access to justice.



Perceptions of personal safety and justice were similar across regions with a few exceptions. All MENA respondents (n=3) disagreed with all four statements. Respondents from Africa and the Americas were much less likely to seek help from police (11% agreed from each region) versus respondents from Asia (28%) and Europe/Eurasia (40%). Agreement rates did not differ markedly based on respondent gender identity. However, when examining responses by respondent sexual orientation, heterosexual respondents (all of whom were transgender or intersex) reported lower levels of personal safety and lower knowledge of support systems in comparison to homosexual and bi-/pansexual respondents.

Figure 24: Perceptions of safety by sexual orientation.



Even when comparing transgender respondents of different sexual orientations, the heterosexual group lags. This group may experience a somewhat counterintuitive intersectional affect: if police and other public officials typically misgender trans people in the respondents' countries, heterosexual trans people would be interpreted as gender-nonconforming and homosexual, thus being doubly stigmatized for their (perceived) sexual orientation and gender presentation. While this survey certainly cannot produce generalized conclusions or prove causation, this finding underlines the importance of considering intersectional identities, especially when engaging the LGBTQI+ community.

The police are not the answer

In the KIs, many people confirmed the survey findings that LGBTQI+ people do not feel safe in their communities and may not feel safe going to the police for assistance, although in some places, including Mozambique, Tonga and Sri Lanka, LGBTQI+ groups reported some success working with the police through sensitization and training.

For example, one respondent from West Africa reported that “if the community has problems, it’s on the community – it’s not something considered by the government... They can’t call the police... the laws don’t protect them, it’s only the organizations that are trying to help.” This sentiment was echoed by a respondent from one Pacific Island nation, who noted that perhaps if they were able to sensitize the police and community leaders on LGBTQI+ issues the situation would be different, but as it stands the LGBTQI+ person would be seen as the problem and as a result, community members don’t generally seek help from the police or justice from the courts. In Tanzania, the police have been a source of danger to the LGBTQI+ community, leveraging the law criminalizing same-sex conduct to arrest people in their homes or at bars and subjecting them to forced anal exams. A similar situation was described in Honduras where one interviewee reported that 95% of reported hate crimes go unpunished and “the police are the biggest violators of LGBTI rights in the country.” In MENA, one of the researchers interviewed noted that in every case they documented where an LGBTQI+ person went to the police to report a crime or to seek protection from violence or threats, the person who submitted the complaint was arrested, charged, and ultimately convicted of the crime they were reporting to the police.

In Zimbabwe, an interviewee noted that everyone is treated the same when reporting a crime if SOGIESC is not at the core of the crime, which leaves cases of intimate partner violence between same-sex couples unaddressed. When police do get involved in cases involving an LGBTQI+ person, their questions are often overly intrusive and violate the survivor’s privacy. The interviewee described the police as “the aunties you avoid at family gatherings.” Respondents from South Africa noted the same attitude – you can only go to the police if you are not openly queer. In Vietnam, a respondent reported that they didn’t think that the general population was in the habit of going to the police or the courts as a solution and that it is even less likely for LGBTQI+ people to take that step for fear of being discriminated against or dismissed.

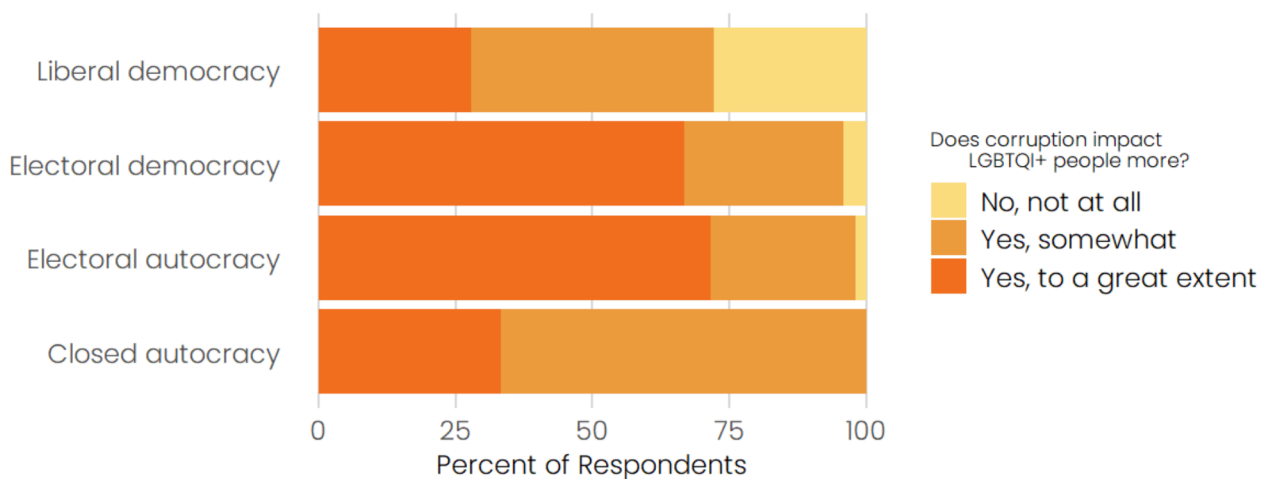
In Tonga the situation is a bit different; according to one activist the challenge they have faced is that cases do not make it all the way through the process – not because the police do not take cases seriously – but because survivors’ families do not want the case to proceed. Due to taboos and fear of damaging the family’s reputation they may request that the police drop the matter, which they do. Part of the work LGBTQI+ activists in Tonga have done is create a separate referral pathway, in partnership with the police and other stakeholders, to mitigate this issue. An activist from Botswana reported less success in working with the police, despite a supportive police commissioner, but noted that they consider engaging with them an important step towards achieving an inclusive democracy and will continue to pursue partnerships and training.

Corruption

Corruption⁶⁰ is a significant barrier to democratic governance and an issue that has unique consequences for LGBTQI+ people. In the survey, 86% of respondents said corruption was a big problem in their country. This trend persisted across global regions, apart from MENA, where two-thirds of respondents said corruption was only something of a problem. Furthermore, 94% of respondents agreed that corruption affects LGBTQI+ people more than others in their country, with 62% stating that corruption had a much greater effect.

Respondents living in electoral democracies and electoral autocracies were most likely to state that corruption impacts LGBTQI+ people more than others (66% and 71%, respectively). Respondents living in closed autocracies and liberal democracies were similarly likely to state that corruption impacts LGBTQI+ people to a greater extent than others (33% and 28%, respectively). However, the largest portion of respondents who reported that corruption did not impact LGBTQI+ people more were those living in liberal democracies.

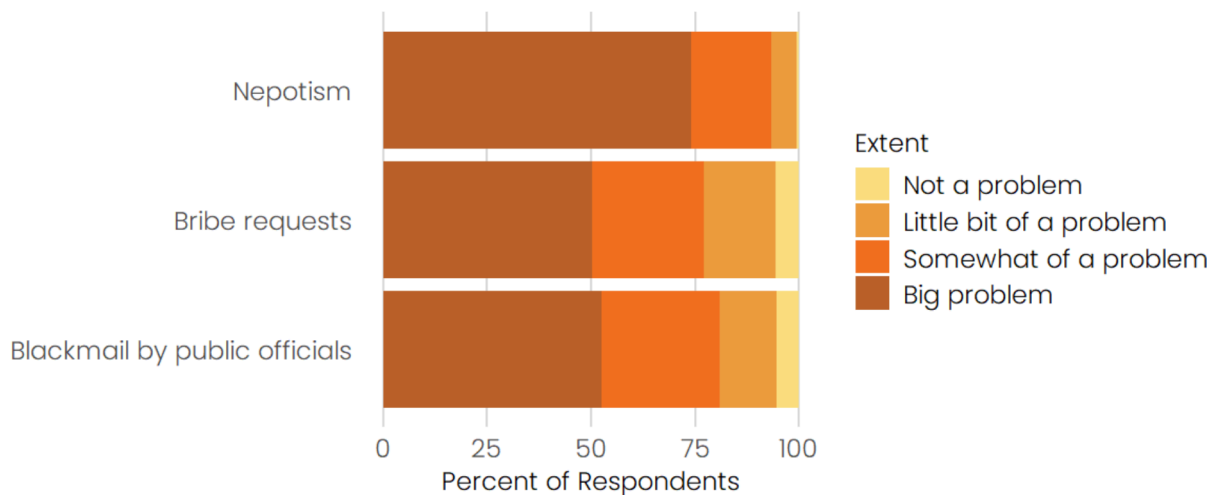
Figure 25: Impact of corruption on LGBTQI+ people by regime type.



A majority of respondents described each of the three corruption issues named in the survey – nepotism, bribery, and blackmail – as big problems. Nepotism or preferential treatment in the allocation of employment and political opportunities was described as a big problem by over two thirds of respondents (69%), and all but one respondent described it as at least a little bit of a problem. Bribe requests for standard government services and blackmail by public officials related to criminalization laws were cited as big problems by just over 50% of respondents and an additional 25% of respondents described these incidents of corruption as something of a problem.

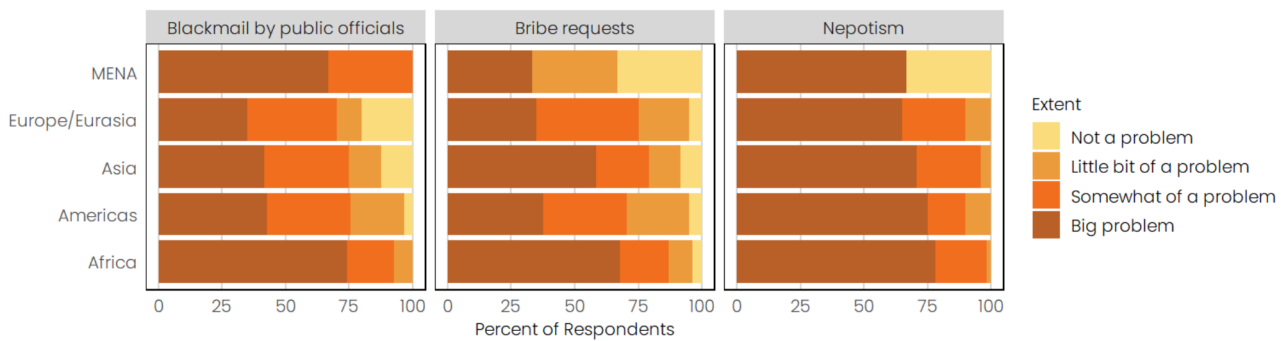
⁶⁰ Corruption is defined by [Transparency International](https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption) as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

Figure 26: Extent of corruption problem by type.



Most respondents from all regions cited nepotism/preferential treatment as a big problem. Respondents from Africa reported that all three types of corruption were ‘big problems’ more often than respondents from other regions, with 63-75% of African respondents citing each type as a big problem. Additionally, a majority (58%) of Asian respondents cited bribe requests as a big problem, and two thirds of MENA respondents cited blackmail as a big problem. Conversely, respondents from the MENA region reported the lowest levels of concern about bribery and nepotism.

Figure 27: Extent of corruption problems by region.



Most KII respondents agreed that corruption was a major problem in their country, although there was some diversity of opinion about whether it was a bigger problem for LGBTQI+ people than for other citizens. In Tanzania, activists were clear that not only is corruption a big problem, LGBTQI+ people are basically required to contribute to the problem to keep themselves safe. A similar sentiment was noted in Kenya: corruption is an issue facing all Kenyans, but LGBTQI+ people may be more impacted by requests to pay more for services (like housing), including from private actors, to have their queer identities protected. In Zimbabwe, one interview noted, “we definitely have to pay for rights,” and LGBTQI+ people pay more than everyone else to get basic services or to avoid going to jail and being persecuted or mistreated by the police. In Malaysia, police conduct raids on places where LGBTQI+ people gather, including bars, clubs, and even private homes, specifically to solicit

bribes so that members of the community won't be arrested, outed to their families, or lose their jobs. Places where transpeople engage in sex work is another common target for police. Interviewees from Senegal and Kazakhstan reported similar police treatment.

“When they see a gay person, they see money.”

Respondents from South Africa noted corruption as a serious issue but that generally LGBTQI+ people experience it in the same way as other people, although members of the community are more likely to be denied services or may have to pay extra for services because of prejudice on the part of individual civil servants. “The fact that corruption is so widespread makes it easy for people to do whatever they want.”

In addition to police shakedowns, interviewees identified several other specific ways that LGBTQI+ people specifically experience corruption. In one Southeast Asian country, where surrogacy is not legal, but is relied upon by gay couples to have a child, they must take extra-legal measures, and pay the associated costs, to make that happen. As one respondent noted, if something is “not legal on paper, you can deal with it if you have the right connections or money.” An interviewee from South Asia noted that as the bureaucracy has increased in size and power over the last 20 years, those providing public services have begun acting like they can do whatever they want. For LGBTQI+ people, especially trans people, this creates specific problems. For example, to get a certificate of citizenship some government officials will insist on “physically examining” trans people to issue the documents. In other cases, an LGBTQI+ person may not have the money to pay for a bribe and be expected to provide “in-kind payments” in the form of sex.⁶¹

In Honduras, as one activist pointed out, widespread corruption “makes the state lose money, and then there’s not enough money to invest in citizen needs such as health, housing, economic opportunity... So it affects everyone, but for LGBT people because we’ve historically been so excluded from public life, we suffer more.” An interviewee from Colombia agreed: “when there are so few resources, and so many of them go to finance corrupt practices, it impacts the most vulnerable group.” An activist from Brazil also noted that in their country LGBTQI+ groups are extremely transparent which means they do not take advantage of the culture of corruption at play in the country.

The most common sentiment expressed across the interviews – from Africa, Latin America, and South Asia – is that corruption is a part of life in many countries, to the extent that people expect to pay government officials, civil servants, and private service providers to get anything done. This toll is greater on LGBTQI+ communities because they are already generally scapegoated by society and as a result, individuals are willing to pay to keep their identities concealed; they have little recourse in the face of extortion or blackmail; they often have fewer resources to begin with and are expected to pay even more than the general population.

⁶¹ Also known as sextortion.

The LGBTQI+ movement – needs, gaps, challenges, and opportunities for investment

A common theme across our KIs, and as demonstrated in the survey data on the importance of civic engagement, is the role that the LGBTQI+ movement plays in civic and democratic participation around the world.

“I think civic participation is important, not just electoral, and that’s how LGBT people see it and what they’re working on.”

Organizations are under pressure and under-resourced

While many activists noted the strength of the LGBTQI+ movement in their country, many also noted that activists are working under significant pressure, and even threats, and with insufficient resources. For example, in Tanzania, LGBTQI+ organizations cannot register and operate openly so they must present broader missions related to youth, women’s rights, or health. Recently, even human rights organizations have been deregistered because their work was associated with LGBTQI+ issues. A pending NGO bill in Zimbabwe, which seeks to limit civil society operations, would provide the government unfettered access to personal information and banking details which an activist described as “an invitation for chaos.” Organizations in Southeast Asia also noted the limited number of registered LGBTQI+ organizations, but have employed creative solutions, including subgrants, to enable unregistered organizations to operate. In Lebanon, the security situation is such that activists have had to flee the country, leaving the remaining organizations under even more stress. Public attempts to rally for human rights, including around key LGBTQI+ events like Pride and IDAHOBIT have been met with vigilante violence, and attacks and online violence and harassment – including doxing and catfishing – are an immense problem.

Further, over the last 20 years, about 120 countries have implemented restrictions on foreign funding to domestic NGOs and countries are also taking steps to make it difficult for international organizations to register. This is both part and parcel of the broader context of democratic backsliding⁶² and is used by some governments as evidence that certain causes are foreign impositions. This is, of course, particularly dangerous with respect to LGBTQI+-related efforts, as it feeds into the false narrative that homosexuality and LGBTQI+ rights are Western imports and inconsistent with a country’s “traditional values.”

Perhaps the most common issue for LGBTQI+ organizations represented in this study is that funding is insufficient to both support the need in the community and the livelihoods of the people working tirelessly to keep the organizations afloat. Many LGBTQI+ activists are forced to work on a voluntary basis indicating the value that the international community has placed on their work. And, in too many cases, when LGBTQI+ organizations or individual activists are asked to contribute to a project, they are treated as advisors or consultants rather than as partners.

⁶² Dupuy, K., & Prakash, A. (2022). Why Restrictive NGO Foreign Funding Laws Reduce Voter Turnout in Africa’s National Elections. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(1), 170–189; Weinstein, Jeremy, and Darin Christensen. “Defunding Dissent: Restrictions on Aid to NGOs”. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 2, Apr. 2013, pp. 77–91.

Collaboration, competition and growing pains

Several activists noted that as the movement is growing in their countries, personality and political dynamics have sometimes complicated their work, but they also identified successful collaborations around specific projects. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, the Alliance for Gender Justice, which brings together LGBTQI+ and feminist organizations, pools resources and ideas to share with political candidates in advance of the elections. However, activists in multiple countries, even those representing well-established national organizations, noted the need to better connect organizations across the country, with a particular focus on reaching local organizations and people in rural areas.

Some activists noted that engaging around the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), or other multilateral processes, provided an opportunity to connect with broader human rights organizations and that LGBTQI+ organizations have come together with broader civil society organizations to rally for free and fair elections. There are both resource and political challenges associated with building coalitions – as one activist noted “building consensus is hard, it's a lot of work, it's a full-time job.” They also noted generational challenges within the movement in their country, identifying a division between older gay men and a younger more diverse generation of activists who are more connected with intersectional organizations and issues. Finally, activists noted the need to “professionalize” the LGBTQI+ movement, so that boards and leadership understand their respective roles, that organizational governance is improved, and that infighting and personal issues are not allowed to undermine the mission.

Promising practices

Several activists noted the value of **regional collaboration and connecting on broader democracy issues**. For example, in the EU, the United 4 Diversity Network was established, in part, in response to the lawsuit over Hungary's anti-LGBTQI+ law, largely because of concerns related to Hungary's replication of Russian LGBTQI+ laws. This activity ultimately prompted the European Commission (EC) to sue Hungary, the first time the EC sued a member state. European activists are also looking to connect with NATO officials about the threats of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI+ movement and national security. Activists in both Africa and Asia noted that there is value in regional-level collaboration to advance LGBTQI+ participation in politics, especially in places where working with the national government on LGBTQI+ issues might be too sensitive or risky.

Other organizations have worked to **engage their communities specifically on issues of electoral and political participation**. For example, one organization in Mozambique ran a mobilization campaign to increase LGBTQI+ participation in voter registration. One South African organization partnered with the Independent Electoral Commission to help ensure that LGBTQI+ voters understood the voting process, including where to go to vote and how to mark their ballots to avoid spoiling them. In Sri Lanka, activists plan to **work with the electoral commission to support trans people's ability to vote** safely and free of harassment, which may include ensuring that there's a trained LGBTQI+-friendly person at each polling station. In Central America, activists have supported LGBTQI+ people to increase their participation in civic and political life, including running for local office and engaging in advocacy around legal reform. An activist from Colombia reported that they have partnered with the Victory Institute in the past to train LGBTQI+ candidates.

Activists also noted their success in **collaborating on issues of broader civic and public concern**. For example, one interviewee from South Africa described how their organization works with a local organization on issues of local service delivery (trash collection, road repair, etc.) to help make sure that LGBTQI+ people know how to hold their local officials responsible. The United 4 Democracy Network mentioned above, was established by an LGBTQI+ organization, but is a coalition of LGBTQI+, transparency, rule of law, and broader democracy actors to fight anti-LGBTQI+ threats and advance the importance of viewing anti-LGBTQI+ attacks as broader attacks on democracy.

Interviewees shared their experiences **engaging in training and education with lawmakers and other institutions on LGBTQI+ issues**. For example, at the request of the Speaker of the House, one Tongan organization translated the UN's SOGIESC guidelines into the local Tongan language, a difficult and tedious process, but one that paid dividends because they were asked to take that language to the ministry of internal affairs and incorporate it into the Family Protection Act. It also helped legislators, and the community have a common language around LGBTQI+ issues. They are working to expand that training to the police, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Health, all relationships developed while translating and socializing the guidelines. Activists from Botswana also spoke to the importance of sensitizing local leaders – council members and district commissioners – to ensure they are driving messages of diversity and inclusion. An interviewee from Bangladesh noted that some CSOs are providing support to journalists and local level leaders to develop allies and encourage accurate reporting on LGBTQI+ issues rather than using demeaning language or advancing misleading narratives.

Areas of need and priorities for future activities

In the GLIDE survey, respondents were asked to identify initiatives to encourage the political participation of LGBTQI+ people, selecting from the following options:

- More LGBTQI+ candidates running for office.
- Specific outreach from political parties to the LGBTQI+ community.
- Political parties/candidates including initiatives that would benefit the LGBTQI+ community on their platforms, in speeches and campaign materials.
- Increased societal acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community.
- Increased acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community from friends, family, and community members.
- A safer environment for LGBTQI+ people to organize.
- Increased information for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved; training for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved.
- Outreach from government officials to solicit the views of LGBTQI+ people.
- Increased financial and capacity building support for LGBTQI+ organizations and activists.
- Support from organizations and activists that represent other marginalized groups (women's organizations, organizations for people with disabilities (OPDs), youth organizations, etc.).

Respondents rated the following as most impactful: financial/capacity building for LGBTQI+ organizations (81%), safer environment for LGBTQI+ people to organize (79%) and increased societal acceptance of LGBTQI+ people (78%). At least 65% of respondents rated all initiatives highly impactful.

In discussing needs and priorities with KII respondents we heard similar themes as found in the survey data, along with additional areas of future focus. For example, activists noted the following topics as priority areas of focus in the future: **legal gender recognition** and increased **support for lesbian, trans, and intersex communities**. They also identified **training for LGBTQI+ political candidates** on campaign skills such as messaging, fundraising, and coalition building. One activist from the Caribbean mentioned that there is a need for **training and materials on civic engagement topics and strategies** so that people generally, and the LGBTQI+ community specifically, can learn what it means to be an active citizen, including topics like public speaking, mobilization, and media engagement. Others mentioned **training on engaging with lawmakers, policy development, and sensitization** of LGBTQI+ issues, including in contexts where any support from lawmakers will have to remain quiet, and in **messaging on LGBTQI+ issues with the general public**. Finally, an activist from Southeast Asia noted that there's an opportunity to

“As long as there is space, we will find ways to use that space.”

engage with independent candidates and smaller parties so they will be poised to support LGBTQI+ issues when they gain traction with the broader public. The community can gain **experience in campaigning** in support of these candidates in the areas of canvassing, fundraising, communications, including digital communications, and how to counter disinformation.

Interviewees from a variety of contexts also emphasized the need for **training and resources for how to best engage faith communities** – both Muslim and Christian communities were specifically mentioned – on issues of faith and sexuality. Respondents also noted the importance of **engaging people from across a variety of backgrounds** – for example, religious and ethnic minorities, youth groups, women’s groups, or persons with disabilities – on issues of common concern, such as access to justice or anti-corruption. And, as noted above, activists requested **support with connecting with international organizations and broader human rights organizations and mechanisms**. As one activist reported, movements in east Africa have been pigeon-holed into only being able to focus on health issues, which has both limited the funding available on democracy and governance issues and their experience engaging with the broader human rights system including treaty bodies.

Other activists requested **support in engaging LGBTQI+ communities on the importance of voting and strategies to counter voter apathy, civic and voter education, and support for engaging with electoral bodies**, including providing sensitization training for Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and polling staff, review of EMB inclusion policies, and training on election observation. Respondents noted that it is important to work with EMBs to help make elections as LGBTQI+-friendly as possible and see what opportunities there are to support LGBTQI+ people within existing electoral laws and regulations, in addition to advocating for legal change.

In terms of technical skill and capacity needs, organization representatives noted the need for **support in connecting to donors**, including embassies, **training in fundraising and proposal writing** and using “the donor’s language” as raising money to support their work is a constant and often existential concern. As one experienced LGBTQI+ activist noted, they are being exponentially outspent by hate groups on the other side. Without resources to maintain and expand their work, the movement will remain at a significant disadvantage no matter how many skills they develop. There is also a pressing need for **psychosocial support, livelihoods training and support, and safety and security training, including how to best protect themselves when engaging online**. Organizations noted the need for **support in developing a crisis contingency plan** so that leaders have clear steps to take if their lives and personal security are threatened.

“When we do campaigns, or postings or put out our messages we need to make sure that they aren’t misused. Most people use social media in today’s world, and we want people to be safe online.”

Finally, while there are many places where safety conditions do not allow for LGBTQI+ people to be out, in other places, **there are opportunities for LGBTQI+ people to leverage their power and presence as a constituency**. As one activist noted, while estimates of the LGBTQI+ population in their country was approximately 12%, that is likely an underestimate, and it is likely higher. Either way, “it’s foolish for the government to ignore the community,

“as that is a significant portion of the population that is eligible to vote. If the LGBTQI+ community can get a better understanding of the true size of the population, there is more of an opportunity for LGBTQI+ people to be able to take their place as a powerful voting bloc whose representatives must attend to their needs.



Key Takeaways

Across the review of the democracy and governance literature, countries' LGBTQI+ rights records, pending and just-completed elections, survey data from around the world, and many hours of conversations with LGBTQI+ activists and leaders, a few key themes emerged:

- **Safety is paramount and largely unavailable.** LGBTQI+ people in too many places live under significant threat all day, every day– a situation only made worse during the conducting of political and electoral campaigns. The atmosphere of violence and intimidation – and the total lack of access to justice for too many – shapes LGBTQI+ people's decision to participate in political and public life and fully exercise their human rights.
- **The prevalence of corruption and ineffective government drives a sense of apathy** among LGBTQI+ people and additional outreach and education are needed for the community to understand how their voices can make a difference in civic and democratic processes.
- **The LGBTQI+ community is dynamic, resilient, flexible, and under-resourced.** LGBTQI+ rights activists and organizations have proven exceptionally adept at adapting in cases of emergency, closed and closing space, and providing mutual aid when formal resources are too slow or unavailable. There are important lessons to learn about how to leverage and better support these innovative and informal structures so that flexible assistance can remain available and so that the community has the resources and infrastructure to plan and execute more long-term, holistic, and cross-cutting civic and democratic engagement strategies. Additional support is needed for coalition-building through an intersectional and solidarity-focused approach, where the full diversity of the LGBTQI+ community is leveraged to develop and execute strategies advancing areas of mutual interest.
- **The anti-rights and anti-gender movement are increasingly using the language and spaces of human rights activists, complicating attempts to develop compelling counter-narratives.** Support for strong electoral and democratic institutions cannot come without protections for minority rights and too often those most impacted by these narratives have been excluded from the conversation. As an added challenge, the restriction of LGBTQI+ organizations to the health sector in too many places has limited the ability of advocates to leverage human rights language and mechanisms and to connect and collaborate with the broader human rights, democracy, and governance movement.
- **The messenger matters.** Investing in local and indigenous activists, leaders, and allies is essential to crafting and delivering messages that reach and resonate with the intended audience. This includes gathering information on where and how anti-LGBTQI+ messages were initiated and how and why they have spread. Why do anti-LGBTQI+ messages come to dominate some campaigns and countries and not others? How can the community reduce the prominence of anti-LGBTQI+ messages, including by working with traditional and social media?

- **Lack of legal gender recognition is a huge barrier for trans, intersex, and nonbinary people's participation.** Without identification that accurately represents each person, trans, intersex, and nonbinary people will remain at increased risk for discrimination and violence in many aspects of life, including the ability to register to vote, get a job, claim benefits and other essential services, and participate as political candidates and leaders.
- **Data gaps persist and limit the movement's ability to increase democratic and civic participation.** Despite increased research efforts on this topic over the last several years, there remain persistent gaps in information, including basic data related to LGBTQI+ voters, candidates, and elected officials. Without this information it will be difficult to determine where to invest limited resources to support potential openings. This lack of data continues with respect to funding itself – where is it going, to which groups, how effective is it, and how can partners find one another and better coordinate their programs and activities?

Finally, in addition to addressing the data gaps above, additional research is needed on how to best operate and make change within political systems at varying stages of the democratic spectrum. This may include conducting political economy analysis that specifically centers on the needs and experiences of LGBTQI+ people and seeks to understand how existing power dynamics can be transformed to increase LGBTQI+ people's access to leadership. This research may also involve a framework for analyzing how to drive political change and where change is most likely to happen, including best practices for engaging from the local government level to national systems analysis of political finance laws, candidate nomination procedures, and political party regulations that can best support increased LGBTQI+ participation and leadership.

Annex A: Executive Summary 2023 Landscape Analysis

The global decline in democracy parallels increasing restrictions on LGBTQI+ advocacy and rights. Anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and policies often serve as a warning sign of further democratic backsliding and lay the groundwork for laws that infringe on all citizens' rights. LGBTQI+ individuals and communities are often the first to experience the negative impact of eroding democracies and are often the first line of defense. Despite the vital role democratic systems play in the protection and promotion of LGBTQI+ rights, in too many countries, LGBTQI+ people face significant barriers to democratic engagement. The lack of resources and capacity of many LGBTQI+ organizations undermine the movement's ability to push back on shrinking civic space and effectively advocate for inclusive democracy. In response, Outright International, Synergía – Initiatives for Human Rights, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), is implementing the Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE) Initiative which seeks to fill these resource and capacity gaps and disrupt democratic backsliding and attacks on human rights by putting LGBTQI+ communities at the helm of democratic initiatives.

To inform the funding and partnership priorities of the GLIDE Initiative, IFES, with support from Outright and Synergía, conducted a landscape analysis. This executive summary provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations from the analysis, including the state of LGBTQI+ people's involvement in political, civic, and democratic governance and the barriers and opportunities to increase the LGBTQI+ community's participation and engagement in governance bodies. Data collection for the landscape analysis took place between early February and mid-May 2023 and consisted of a desk review, an online survey, which yielded 168 responses, and 25 semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs).

LGBTQI+ rights and the status of democracy

The story of LGBTQI+ rights over the last two decades has generally been positive. Approximately 20 countries decriminalized same-sex conduct in the last 20 years,⁶³ 33 countries across the Americas, Europe, and Asia institutionalized the recognition of same-sex marriage,⁶⁴ and in 2022 at least 105 countries held Pride events.⁶⁵ The levels of acceptance of LGBTQI+ people have steadily increased since 1980,⁶⁶ while the number of LGBTQI+ rights protecting countries continues to increase, albeit slowly.⁶⁷

This progress stands in stark contrast to the broader downward trend for democracy, documented most recently in the 2023 Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) report, which noted, among other dire findings, that “[a]dvances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have been wiped out”; 72 percent of the world's population lived in autocracies in 2022; and the “level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen is down to 1986 levels.”⁶⁸ Despite the progress noted above, some 62 countries continue to criminalize

⁶³ <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>

⁶⁴ https://features.hrw.org/features/features/marriage_equality/index.html

⁶⁵ <https://outrightinternational.org/2023-pride-around-world-report>

⁶⁶ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/projects/gai/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.fandmglobalbarometers.org/>

⁶⁸ https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf

same-sex conduct between consenting adults.⁶⁹ Within this broader trend are patterns in the ways that governments, at different points on the autocracy-to-democracy continuum, engage on LGBTQI+ issues.

- **Countries that are increasingly autocratic** – In the last two years, governments introduced or passed laws targeting or disproportionately impacting the LGBTQI+ community in Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Russia, Tanzania, and Uganda.⁷⁰ Many of these laws target the LGBTQI+ community, but have freedom of expression, assembly, and association implications for all citizens, as in Russia, Hungary, and Indonesia, where a new Penal Code has been deemed to “violate the rights of women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and undermine rights to freedom of speech and association.”⁷¹
- **Countries that are at least partially democratic** – In Poland, which remains an electoral democracy but experienced one of the steepest declines in democracy in the last decade, the LGBTQI+ community and their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly have been under threat as part of a broader crackdown on civil society, media freedom, and the judiciary since the Law and Justice party came to power in 2015.⁷² The LGBTQI+ community has experienced “pressure and interference from the authorities over their peaceful activism, including arrests and criminal prosecutions, some under blasphemy laws.”⁷³
- **Democratic systems** – In Taiwan, the LGBTQI+ movement secured the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 and, in May 2023, the legislature amended the same-sex marriage law to allow same-sex couples to adopt children.⁷⁴ At the end of 2022 Barbados took a critical step to uphold its status as a liberal democracy by decriminalizing consensual same-sex conduct, the result of a years-long concerted effort by civil society to address criminalization in the Eastern Caribbean.⁷⁵

Lack of representation and lack of data

The politicization of the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons, including vitriolic language on the part of legislators, candidates, and elected leaders, impacts LGBTQI+ individuals’ ability to engage in political and democratic processes. Outright hostility and scapegoating of the LGBTQI+ community that is increasingly a feature of elections mean limited numbers of open LGBTQI+ candidates on the ballot and serving in elected and appointed office at all levels of government.⁷⁶ In addition, a significant challenge in this space is a lack of verifiable and accurate data on the number of elected officials who openly identify as members of the LGBTQI+ community.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ https://internap.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt_laws/#type-of-laws

⁷⁰ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/05/europe/russia-lgbtq-propaganda-law-signed-by-putin-intl/index.html>

⁷¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/08/indonesia-new-criminal-code-disastrous-rights>

⁷² https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf

⁷³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/15/poland-rule-law-erosion-harms-women-lgbt-people>

⁷⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/16/1176433353/taiwan-same-sex-adoption-rights>

⁷⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/13/barbados-high-court-decriminalizes-gay-sex>

⁷⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/01/11/118th-congress-breaks-record-for-lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-representation/#>; https://www.voanews.com/a/middle-east_israel-reaches-record-number-openly-gay-lawmakers/6191537.html; <https://victoryinstitute.org/news/lgbtq-history-made-in-brazil-first-trans-people-elected-to-the-brazilian-congress/>

⁷⁷ The Queer Politics at Princeton website offers a promising map and downloadable database with information on more than 1,000 LGBTQI+ Members of Parliament from around the world, but the resource does not appear to be operational.

One thing is certain: leaders around the world do not reflect the full diversity of the people they represent. Only 26.5% of parliamentarians are women and only 59 countries have ever had a woman head of state or government.⁷⁸ The consistent pattern of cisgender men serving in elected office sends a powerful message regarding what leadership looks like and reflects an underlying system designed to perpetuate their hold on positions of power. In many places, particularly those where democracy is losing ground, a “patriarchal authoritarian” world view is taking over.⁷⁹ As a result, those that attempt to break into leadership roles face an uphill climb, in terms of clientelism and corruption as well as real threats to their safety and well-being.

It is not clear what percentage of voters identify as LGBTQI+ as many electoral management bodies do not collect and/or make publicly available even gender-disaggregated voter registration and participation data.⁸⁰ In countries where voters can change their gender marker on their voter ID to their affirmed gender or to a third gender, there is some data available, but historically the numbers represent a significant undercount of the actual transgender population.⁸¹ Of the LGBTQI+ community, transgender people face challenges when voting. In many countries in Latin America, Europe, and Asia, the sex marker on one’s official identification dictates the gender-segregated lines or polling stations people must report to on election day. Transgender people who present according to their gender identity may not be willing to queue based on the gender marker on their ID, resulting in cases of people being denied the opportunity to vote due to a mismatch between their gender identity and identification.⁸² In countries where people can change the gender marker on their ID, the lack of training and discrimination on the part of election officials and voter registrars has resulted in transgender people illegally being denied their right to vote.

Survey Findings

Voting

The survey asked questions about voting and participating in elections, including whether individuals had the identification they needed to vote under their affirmed gender identity.

- 93% of respondents indicated they did have a voter ID card but only 65% indicated having a voter ID that matched their gender identity.
- 80% of respondents reported having voted in an election (national, regional, or local) in the last five years.
- 61% of respondents noted no difficulties with voting, while 32% had some difficulties. With respect to the type of difficulties experienced, 40% noted that voting took too long, 37% indicated they faced violence or harassment from other voters, 33% faced violence or harassment from poll workers, 27% indicated the poll worker would not accept their ID, and 27% indicated they did not know which gender line to stand in.

⁷⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/03/28/women-leaders-around-the-world/>

⁷⁹ <https://msmagazine.com/2023/05/15/patriarchy-war-on-women-lgbtq-reproductive-rights/>

⁸⁰ IFES’ ElectionsGuide, the most comprehensive verified election database available online does post gender-disaggregated data by election whenever that information is available: <https://www.electionguide.org/>

⁸¹ “NADRA Launches Registration Campaign for Transgender-persons” 2021. NADRA. <https://www.nadra.gov.pk/nadra-launches-registration-campaign-for-transgender-persons/>

⁸² <https://observaigualdad.jne.gob.pe/documentos/recursos/reportes/VotoTransEleccionesG2016.pdf> ; <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/05/12/transgender-people-s-qualms-regarding-the-upcoming-election>

- 81% of respondents reported that LGBTQI+ people face barriers to voting in their country with 36% characterizing those barriers as significant. Difficulties identified were discrimination (70%), lack of identification that matches their gender identity (68%), violence or fear of violence (66%) and lack of knowledge on their right to vote (48%).

Citizen participation in democratic processes

Understanding that citizen engagement and participation in democracy extends well beyond voting in elections, IFES sought information on how LGBTQI+ people around the world view citizen participation.⁸³

- 58% respondents stated that citizen participation among LGBTQI+ people it is very important while 19% stated it is somewhat important.
- 41% of respondents participate to a great extent, with 29% participating to some extent. Respondents were more likely to carry out formal activities like signing a petition or contacting a public official. Other forms of participation included volunteering for a community project, participating in local public hearing, or taking part in neighborhood or community discussions.
- The data also pointed to an increased emphasis being placed on engagement of LGBTQI+ individuals in local political processes given they already engage in local issues, even in cases where citizen participation is considered not as important.

Political participation

Respondents were also asked for their views and experiences on more direct political participation.

- 64% of respondents reported they were aware of LGBTQI+ people who had run for office in their country.
- 35% of respondents indicated they would be very willing to run for elected office in their country while 21% chose somewhat willing, 20% chose not very willing, and 23% chose not willing at all.
- With respect to barriers to political participation for LGBTQI+ people – defined broadly as running for office, joining a political party, volunteering for a campaign, or participating in an advocacy campaign – 88% of respondents reported that LGBTQI+ people face significant barriers. Main barriers include discrimination (87%), violence or fear of violence (75%), lack of support from a political party (72%), lack of time and resources (67%), lack of support from friends/family (61%), and lack of information on the process (51%).

Rule of law

Rule of law is fundamental to democracy and directly impacts people's ability and willingness to participate in their communities and in political and democratic processes. Therefore, the survey asked respondents how they felt about safety and availability of remedy through law enforcement and justice systems. Most respondents (73%) strongly or somewhat agreed that they knew where to go for support if they were a victim of crime or harassment, but the majority also reported that they would not go to law enforcement or the courts.

⁸³ Citizen participation was described for survey respondents as "Citizen participation is about getting citizens actively involved in public decision-making processes that affect their lives."

Finally, IFES asked respondents for their views on which initiatives might be most effective to increase LGBTQI+ persons' access to and participation in political processes. While all the options were determined to encourage increased participation "to a great extent" or "to some extent" by at least 80% of respondents, the following were identified as the most useful:

- Increased financial and capacity building support for LGBTQI+ organizations and activists
- A safer environment for LGBTQI+ people to organize
- Support from organizations and activists that represent other marginalized groups (women's organizations, organizations for people with disabilities, youth organizations)
- Increased societal acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community
- Increased acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community from friends, family, and community members
- Training for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved
- Political parties/candidates including initiatives that benefit the LGBTQI+ community in their platforms, speeches, and campaign materials

Key Informant Interview Findings

What is democracy?

The definition and concepts of democracy and democratic governance vary around the world. When asked what democracy means to them, interviewees stated the following:

- The people's ability to choose their representatives/ownership of the political process, governance by the people for the people, the ability to express themselves through elections, tools to work towards nation building
- A system that guarantees personal freedoms, recognition of human rights, the same space and right to speak and exist for all persons/The freedom to just be
- Balance/distribution of power; checks and balances/Rule of law
- Non-discrimination in the distribution of services; Freedom for everyone to be actively engaged and heard without discrimination/ equal and inclusive participation
- Citizens can organize/NGOs can do their work without fear of surveillance
- Listening to minorities and meeting their needs
- Media freedom, freedom of movement

Interviewees also identified several challenges and barriers to participation, including fear and apathy, particularly in the face of more pressing concerns, such as meeting basic needs. For example, interviewees from Kenya and Tanzania noted that some activism has been done in the past around LGBTQI+ engagement in democratic systems but there is a sense of apathy when it comes to feeling like their vote makes a difference. An interviewee from India noted that LGBTQI+ people don't vote because they have no faith in political parties to represent them. Similar sentiments were shared by interviewees from Cambodia who noted that while they might vote out of a sense of civic obligation, they were hesitant to get involved in anything that might be perceived as political and risk running afoul of the ruling party.

“What does participation mean when your very personhood is put into question and is not recognized at the most basic level?”

An interviewee from Lebanon noted that voting can be dangerous for members of the LGBTQI+ community, particularly for those facing other forms of marginalization. In Lebanon people must travel to their home village to vote, presenting a barrier for LGBTQI+ people in terms of safety and running up against gender norms where it is inappropriate for women to travel alone. Other barriers include documentation, where, as in Serbia, changing one's documents requires a lengthy court process, medical documentation and, in many cases, encountering transphobic judges.

Other interviewees described their political work as a duty rather than an interest due to situations in which they were essentially forced to take on political work to defend themselves and their community (or, as in the case of education advocates in Hungary, because their work is politicized by others). One interviewee noted that the marriage equality movement in Taiwan brought them and other LGBTQI+ people into politics, and once they saw how a political decision could impact their lives, were more likely to want to participate. In Hungary, more and more LGBTQI+ people are turning away from politics entirely, including voting, and even leaving the country, as the government increasingly targets them with abusive rhetoric. An interviewee from Albania expressed similar discouragement describing the political landscape as “toxic, corrupt, and sometimes violent.” For most interviewees, engagement from the government on LGBTQI+ issues are almost exclusively negative, and any support is generally expressed in private.

Attacks on fundamental freedoms and absence of the rule of law

Interviews with activists from East Africa highlighted the impact of crackdowns on freedom of assembly and association, including targeting LGBTQI+ individuals and organizations, as fundamental challenges to engaging on LGBTQI+ issues. In both Kenya and Tanzania, LGBTQI+ organizations have had to register as women's empowerment organizations or health organizations to obtain registration. Challenges with the police and the absence of the rule of law, at least as applied to LGBTQI+ persons, is a fundamental barrier to democratic participation and governance. Interviewees from Serbia, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania,

“The thing that makes queer populations distinct is that there is a fundamental question about whether or not they even exist in the first place... The level of conversation is around whether or not this is even a proper way to exist, as a person. Even in democracies, needing to get other people to acknowledge that you exist is the typical tenor of debate: both institutionally and in the larger civil society.”

Lebanon, Egypt, and Thailand all noted that the police are a source of harassment and that LGBTQI+ victims who report crimes run the risk of being arrested themselves, outed or blackmailed by the police.

Several interviewees identified judges and the court system as an opportunity for accountability and justice for LGBTQI+ people. However, while court cases have been successful, they are expensive and time consuming. There is a lack of awareness among LGBTQI+ people of their rights, so people may not be aware of their options when they are victims of a crime or experience discrimination. In other countries, lack of training for judges on how to handle bias-motivated violence against LGBTQI+ persons interfere with the court's ability to uphold the rule of law.

Political transitions create both challenges and opportunities

Given several recent political transitions and other shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewees noted that disruptive events create both opportunities and risks for increased LGBTQI+ involvement. During the revolution in Lebanon, LGBTQI+ individuals joined the protest movement and took advantage of the opportunity to interact with the new political parties in the increasingly secular space. In Myanmar, one interviewee noted that LGBTQI+ people were at the forefront of coordinating and leading pro-democracy protests and continue to stay engaged and involved in the National Unity Government (NUG), helping to develop a pro-LGBTQI+ platform. At the same time these moments are fleeting and risky. Research shows that after a dramatic regime change such as a revolution, when any new regime is the weakest, those that emerge as the most stable are the ones who employ homophobia the best. Anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment is a powerful way to distract the population, legitimize extralegal actions, and consolidate power.

Persistent needs, gaps, challenges, and opportunities for investment

The “anti-gender agenda” and its opportunistic use by politicians has spread rapidly around the world. A Hungarian activist noted the infiltration of far-right narratives into women's movements, particularly around transgender issues. Anti-LGBTQI+ leaders are borrowing tactics, rhetoric, and legislative language and collaborating to make their hateful campaigns as successful as possible. Funders, including the GLIDE Initiative, can help provide the space and resources for LGBTQI+ leaders and allies from across sectors (including politicians, academics, religious leaders, members of the media) to collaboratively work to address this common challenge. Practically, this means providing funding and spaces for organizations to convene nationally, regionally, and globally to share experiences, workshop counter-messages, identify allies and test cases, and dedicate time and safe space to attend to this amorphous but existential threat.

Invest in online spaces and prepare activists to effectively leverage technology

Funders, including the GLIDE Initiative, should prioritize support for training and capacity strengthening so LGBTQI+ people and organizations are better equipped to safely engage online; able to identify, track, and counter-message against mis- and disinformation; and prepared to leverage social media and other technology tools to promote democratic and civic engagement. Initiatives may include hackathons to develop cybersecurity tools to protect LGBTQI+ candidates online, social media campaigns to promote the voter

registration process, or develop and highlight LGBTQI+ positions of various candidates for elected office. GLIDE should target tech conferences such as [RightsCon](#) or partnerships with coalitions such as [Design 4 Democracy](#), to raise the profile of LGBTQI+ related democratic engagement with a tech audience and provide opportunities for LGBTQI+ activists to connect with technology leaders.

Address the lack of national, regional, and global data on LGBTQI+ participation

There is a dearth of quantitative and qualitative data on issues related to LGBTQI+ persons in general, as well as LGBTQI+ participation more broadly. Many country datasets on voter registration and any number of issues do not collect data related to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. In addition, with respect to LGBTQI+ people in particular, their vulnerability to corrupt officials, including police, directly impacts their ability to participate in political and public life and thus this link is ripe for further research. To start, GLIDE partners should seek to connect with researchers working on democracy issues, rule of law, and LGBTQI+ issues to identify opportunities to build the research base on democratic engagement and LGBTQI+ participation, including the presence of openly LGBTQI+ politicians at all levels of government.

Support public opinion research

Interviewees emphasized the value of public opinion research. Attitudinal data makes it possible for LGBTQI+ activists to engage with political parties and decision-makers directly and provides them with evidence for policy recommendations. Public opinion research can also provide powerful data to inform public engagement efforts and campaigns by LGBTQI+ movements and their allies. Sensitization efforts based on public opinion research help the development of targeted and compelling campaigns, those that play to the audience's better instincts and anticipate and address the arguments of the opposition (a la "myth-busting"). Both the Franklin and Marshall University [Global Barometers LGBTQI+ Perceptions Index](#) and the [Global Acceptance Index](#) (GAI) from the Williams Institute at UCLA are valuable tools on the global scale. GLIDE could look to bring those indices together to consolidate global data, add a measure of the connection between corruption, democratic engagement, and LGBTQI+ identity, and support complementary local efforts.

Target key elections and other political opportunities

GLIDE should identify a small number of upcoming elections and prioritize them for longer-term strategy development (across a full election cycle) while reserving a pool of rapid response funds to swiftly counter negative developments or maximize unexpected openings. Specific targets could be selected from "Countries on the Cusp" - those successfully countering autocratization, those at-risk of moving from democracy to autocracy, or those that have regional implications. Specific elections could be targeted based on timing (from Electionguide.org) and the country's trajectory as identified in the democracy trends literature (V-DEM, Freedom House, etc.) as well as consultations with local partners and considering regional dynamics.

Increase democratic and political engagement at the local government level

Interviewees noted that the space most available for successful elections of LGBTQI+ candidates and engagement with elected officials on LGBTQI+ issues is at the local level. Local government is also where people are more likely to know and have existing relationships with their potential constituents and are more likely to be able to enact policies and programs that have a direct impact on LGBTQI+ people. LGBTQI+ people are already engaging in local community-level projects, regardless of whether they participate in more formal political activities. This indicates that not only is it possible to make progress in terms of identifying allies and electing LGBTQI+ candidates at the local level but it may also be easier to engage the LGBTQI+ community to get involved in community-based and local efforts. GLIDE Initiative investments could include partnering with the Victory Institute or other political leadership academies⁸⁴ to expand training for potential LGBTQI+ candidates at the local level. In other instances, local level programming could help LGBTQI+ people understand how to get involved in political and democratic processes in their locality in ways that feel safe or less risky.

Invest in civic and human rights education with a focus on democratic engagement

Many people simply do not know their rights and the barriers to entry for members of marginalized communities, especially LGBTQI+ people, are unnecessarily high as a result. By supporting creative and targeted training on civic education, democratic engagement, and human rights specifically targeted to LGBTQI+ people, especially in more rural communities or communities not typically reached by such efforts, the GLIDE Initiative can help people to better understand their rights and responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, the importance of exercising their right to vote, to participate in protests and demonstrations, to organize citizen movements, and to engage elected officials.

Fund local/Indigenous organizations

Approximately 120 countries have restrictions on foreign funding to domestic NGOs and some countries are taking steps to make it difficult for international organizations to register. This is both part and parcel of the broader context of democratic backsliding⁸⁵ and justified by governments on the basis that certain causes are foreign impositions, further feeding a false (and dangerous) narrative that homosexuality is a Western import and inconsistent with a country's "traditional values." Therefore, local activists should receive GLIDE Initiative funding wherever possible and will require creativity and flexibility with respect to local organizations that are not able to register, open bank accounts, and access foreign funding due to their work. Where possible, registered organizations in the country working on related issues should be encouraged to collaborate with LGBTQI+ organizations to make increased funding available for programs that will benefit both groups. This would have the benefit of deepening local cross-sector collaboration and provide organic opportunities for established NGOs to support and share knowledge with LGBTQI+ organizations and activists.

⁸⁴ <https://www.apolitical.foundation/>

⁸⁵ Dupuy, K., & Prakash, A. (2022). Why Restrictive NGO Foreign Funding Laws Reduce Voter Turnout in Africa's National Elections. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(1), 170–189; Weinstein, Jeremy, and Darin Christensen. "Defunding Dissent: Restrictions on Aid to NGOs". *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 2, Apr. 2013, pp. 77–91.

Annex B: Landscape Analysis 2024 Survey Questions

1. Do you identify as LGBTQI+? (Y/N – if no, survey ends)
2. What best describes your age? (under 18 (survey ends); 18-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60+)

Country Context

3. What country do you live in?
4. Which of the options below do you feel best characterizes the government in your country? (select the option that best describes your country)
 - a. Liberal democracy: There are free and fair multiparty elections for the executive with full and equal suffrage; judicial and legislative constraints on the executive along with the protection of civil liberties and equality before the law.
 - b. Electoral democracy: Multiparty elections for the executive are free and fair; satisfactory degrees of suffrage, freedom of expression, freedom of association.
 - c. Electoral autocracy: Multiparty elections for the executive exist; insufficient levels of fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and association, and free and fair elections.
 - d. Closed autocracy: No multiparty elections for the executive; absence of fundamental democratic components such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free and fair elections.
 - e. Other (please describe in your own words):
5. Are you aware of LGBTQI+ organizations or an LGBTQI+ movement in your country? (Y/N)
6. [if Y to Q10] Do you participate in the LGBTQI+ movement (including work – paid or voluntary – with an LGBTQI+ organization) in your country? (Y/N)

Corruption, Rule of Law, and Accountability

The UN describes the Rule of Law as “a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.” The questions in this section seek to understand how well your country upholds the rule of law, including for LGBTQI+ people.

7. Using a scale of 1-10, where 1 is low adherence to the Rule of Law, and 10 is high adherence to the Rule of Law, where would you rank your country's adherence to the rule of law?
 - a. 1 – low adherence indicates Civil rights are systematically violated. There are no mechanisms and institutions to protect residents against violations of their rights.
 - b. 10 – high adherence indicates Civil rights are codified by law and respected by all state institutions, which actively prevent discrimination. Residents are effectively protected by mechanisms and institutions established to prosecute, punish, and redress violations of their rights.
8. Using a scale of 1-10, where 1 is there is no separation of powers and 10 is a clear separation of powers with mutual checks and balances, how would you rank the separation of powers between different branches of government in your country (i.e. the judiciary operates independently from the executive)?
 - a. There is no separation of powers
 - b. There is a clear separation of powers with mutual checks and balances
9. What do you understand corruption to mean? (open-ended)
10. To what extent would you say corruption is a problem in your country?
 - a. A very big problem
 - b. Somewhat of a problem
 - c. A little bit of a problem
 - d. Not at problem at all
11. Do you think corruption impacts LGBTQI+ people in your country more than other people?
 - a. Yes, to a great extent
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. No, not at all
12. [if yes to Q11] To what extent are any of these types of corruption an issue for LGBTQI+ people in your country? (for each – a big problem/somewhat of a problem/a little bit of a problem/not a problem at all)
 - a. Blackmail of LGBTQI+ people by police or other government officials related to criminalization laws, including threats of "outing"
 - b. Requests for money or other favors by government officials in exchange for providing standard government services to which all citizens are entitled
 - c. Nepotism or other preferential treatment in the allocation of employment or political opportunities
 - d. Other, please describe

13. To what degree would you agree/disagree with the following statements? (Strongly disagree – strongly agree)
- a. I feel safe as an LGBTQI+ person in my community
 - b. If I were a victim of crime and/or harassment, I would feel comfortable going to the police for assistance
 - c. If I were a victim of a crime and/or harassment, I know where I could go to get services and support
 - d. If I were a victim of a crime, I believe that I could find a remedy in the justice system
14. Are civil society organizations (CSOs) routinely consulted by policymakers on policies relevant to their members? (Y/N)
15. Are there anti-discrimination laws and/or other laws, policies, or action plans that protect the rights of LGBTQI+ communities and/or anti-discrimination laws? (y/n)
16. If yes to question 15: In your experience, to what extent are these laws/policies enforced to protect the rights of LGBTQI+ communities? (A great deal, Somewhat, To a limited extent, Not at all)

Voting

17. Do you have a national ID card or whichever ID is required for voting? (Yes/No)
- a. [If yes] Does the gender marker on your ID reflect your gender identity? (Yes/No)
 - b. [If yes] Does the photo on your ID reflect your gender expression? (Y/N)
 - c. [If yes] Does the name on your ID reflect your affirmed name? (Y/N)
- [If no] Why do you not have a national ID card? Please select all that apply
- a. I cannot get an ID with my affirmed name/gender marker/gender expression.
 - b. The process for getting an ID is too complicated/onerous/takes too much time/too expensive.
 - c. I don't understand the process and/or I have no information on procedures.
 - d. I don't know how to register to vote.
 - e. My family won't allow me to get one.
 - f. I do not feel safe registering for an ID card.
 - g. Other: _____
18. Are you registered to vote? (Y/N)

19. Did you vote in your country's most recent election (national and/or local)? (yes/no)

[If no] Why did you not vote in the election? Please select all that apply.

- a. I'm not interested in politics/elections
- b. I don't trust the election process/fraudulent process
- c. My vote would not have made a difference
- d. It takes too much time
- e. All politicians are corrupt/look after their own interests
- f. I didn't like any of the candidates/parties
- g. I didn't understand the process/I had no information on procedures
- h. I do not have my voter ID card
- i. I was not eligible to vote
- j. I didn't know how to register to vote
- k. My family/spouse didn't allow me to vote
- l. I did not feel safe voting
- m. Other: _____

20. [Ask all] Did you encounter difficulties when voting in the most recent election? (Yes/No)

a. [If yes] What kinds of difficulties did you face? [select all that apply]

- i. Violence or harassment at the polling station by poll workers
- ii. Violence or harassment at the polling station by other voters
- iii. Violence or harassment at the polling station by security forces
- iv. I did not know in which gender line to stand
- v. The poll worker would not accept my ID
- vi. The line was too long/took too much time
- vii. Other: _____

b. [If yes] Do you think those difficulties had anything to do with your sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression? (yes/no)

21. [Ask all] To what extent do you think members of the LGBTQI+ community in your country face barriers to voting?
- a. Significant barriers
 - b. Some barriers
 - c. Minor barriers
 - d. No barriers at all
22. (If a, b, or c in response to Q20 In your opinion, what are the main barriers LGBTQI+ people face when trying to participate in elections? Please select up to three responses from the list below.
- a. Discrimination
 - b. Violence or fear of violence
 - c. Lack of knowledge regarding their rights as citizens to vote
 - d. Lack of information on the voter registration process
 - e. Lack of information on the voting process
 - f. Lack of identification that matches their gender identity, gender expression, affirmed name
 - g. Pressure from family/spouse about voting a particular way
 - h. Difficulty traveling to the polling station
 - i. Other: _____
 - j. Don't know
23. Have you seen an increase in negative or anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric or violence in the lead-up to the most recent (or upcoming) elections in your country? (y/n)

Civic/Community Engagement

Elections are just one way to participate in the democratic process. This next section includes questions about your level of involvement in your community, including through volunteer work, lobbying elected and government officials, participating in protests and demonstrations, and campaigning on behalf of a political party, candidate, or cause.

24. [Ask all] Citizen participation is about getting citizens actively involved in public decision-making processes that affect their lives. How important is citizen participation among LGBTQI+ people in your country?
- a. Very important
 - b. Somewhat important

- c. Not too important
- d. Not important at all

25. Based on the definition of citizen participation above, in general, to what extent do you actively participate as a citizen?

- a. A great extent
- b. Some extent
- c. A limited extent
- d. Not at all

26. To what extent do you believe that civic engagement can make a difference for LGBTQI+ people in your country? (To a great extent, to some extent, to a limited extent, not at all)

- a. Why do you feel that way?

27. Which of these following activities have you done any of the following within the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.

- a. Contacted or visited a public official – at any level of government – to express your opinion
- b. Signed a written or email petition on an important civic issue
- c. Taken part in a neighborhood/community discussion on issues
- d. Used social media to express your opinions on an important civic or political issue
- e. Participated in local public hearings/town halls
- f. Volunteered for a community project
- g. Written a letter to the editor of a newspaper
- h. Other _____

28. [Ask all] Have you ever been involved in any of the following political activities in your country? Please select all that apply.

- a. Joined a political party
- b. Helped with a political campaign
- c. Contested for elected office at any level
- d. Contacted or visited a public official – at any level of government – to express your opinion
- e. Signed a written or email petition

- f. Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration
- g. Participated in a neighborhood or community discussion on issues
- h. Used social media to express your views on political issues
- i. Participated in local public hearings/town halls
- j. Other: (fill in blank)
- k. None of the above

29. Do you know of any LGBTQI+ people who have run for elected office in your country? (Yes/No)

30. Have you ever considered running for elected office in your country? (Yes/No)

[If Yes] Why have you considered running for elected office?

[If No] Why have you not considered running for elected office?

31. To what extent do you think LGBTQI+ people face barriers in participating in politics (such as running for elected office, joining a political party, volunteering for a campaign, participating in an advocacy campaign) in your country?

- a. Significant barriers
- b. Some barriers
- c. A few barriers
- d. No barriers at all

32. [If a-b to Q31] In your opinion, what are the main barriers they face in participating in politics?

- a. Discrimination
- b. Violence or fear of violence
- c. Lack of information on the process to participate
- d. Lack of support from friends/family
- e. Lack of support from political party
- f. Lack of time/resources
- g. Other
- h. Don't know

33. To what extent do you think the following initiatives would encourage more LGBTQI+ people to get engaged in politics? (To a great extent, to some extent, to a limited extent, not at all)
- a. More LGBTQI+ candidates running for office
 - b. Specific outreach from political parties to the LGBTQI+ community
 - c. Political parties/candidates including initiatives that would benefit the LGBTQI+ community in their platforms, speeches, campaign materials
 - d. Increased societal acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community
 - e. Increased acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community from friends, family, and community members
 - f. A safer environment for LGBTQI+ people to organize
 - g. Increased information for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved
 - h. Training for LGBTQI+ people on how to get involved
 - i. Outreach from government officials to solicit the views of LGBTQI+ people
 - j. Increased financial and capacity building support for LGBTQI+ organizations and activists
 - k. Support from organizations and activists that represent other marginalized groups (women's organizations, organizations for people with disabilities (OPDs), youth organizations, etc.)
 - l. Other

Demographic Questions

34. With which gender do you identify?

- a. Woman
- b. Man
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not to say
- e. Not listed: _____

35. Do you identify as transgender?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to say

36. Do you identify as intersex?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to say

37. Do you consider yourself to be:

- a. Gay or lesbian
- b. Bisexual
- c. Prefer not to say
- d. Not listed: __

38. Do you have any difficulty...

| | No difficulty | Some difficulty | A lot of difficulty | Cannot do at all |
|--|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Seeing, even if wearing glasses | | | | |
| Hearing, even if using hearing aids | | | | |
| Walking or climbing steps | | | | |
| Remembering or concentrating | | | | |
| With self-care, such as washing all over or dressing | | | | |
| Communicating, for example understanding or being understood using your usual language | | | | |

Annex C: Sample interview questions

Boilerplate introduction for CSO leaders

“Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is _____ and I work for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. [if needed, this is our translator, _____.”]

“We are trying to understand more about access to political and civic participation for LGBTQI+ people and the lived experience of people working to advance LGBTQ rights in their countries. This information will eventually help us to create funding opportunities for LGBTQ people and organizations to increase their participation and leadership within democratic systems. Is it OK with you if we record this interview so that we can be sure to record your responses correctly? The recording will of course be kept completely private, and nothing you say will be attributed to you.”

“Before we begin, do you have any questions for us?”

“To get us started, I’d love to know a bit more about you – how did you get involved in this work? What is your experience working with _____ (name of organization)?”

Interview protocol (for individual LGBTQI+ leaders and/or CSO heads)

1. What does democracy mean to you?
2. Would you consider your country to be a democracy?
 - a. Why/why not?
3. What does it mean to participate in democratic processes in your country?
 - a. Is this different for members of the LGBTQI+ community?
4. What does the LGBTQI+ CSO community look like in your country?
5. How, if at all, does your government/political figures engage on LGBTQI+ issues? Have you seen political figures utilize anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric to further their own political goals? Can you tell me about that? (prompts below if needed)
 - a. Has that happened in the context of legislative processes?
 - b. In the context of elections? (If applicable – is anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric being utilized in the current electoral period? If so, how?)
 - c. How, if at all, has your organization engaged in those situations?

6. How are LGBTQI+ people perceived in your country? What do people talk about when they talk about the LGBTQI+ community?
7. Are there any allies for the LGBTQI+ community in your country's government, other political parties/leaders, and/or broader civil society?
8. Do you believe the rule of law exists in your country? For example:
 - a. Are the courts independent? Are LGBTQI+ people likely to get justice through the courts? Is this different for other people who aren't members of the community, do you think?
 - b. Do you feel like the police protect LGBTQI+ people?
 - c. Are there other official structures that protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ people and hold violators or perpetrators accountable?
9. Is corruption a problem in your country? If so, can you describe what corruption looks like in your country?
 - a. In your opinion/experience, are LGBTQI+ people more likely to experience corruption than other citizens? If so, how?
10. Has your organization worked on issues of democratic/electoral/political participation for LGBTQI+ people?
 - a. Why/why not?
 - b. If yes, can you describe your past or current work/programs in this space?
 - c. If yes, were there any lessons learned?
11. Are there specific areas of support, skills, and/or knowledge that you/your organization need to increase LGBTQI+ persons engagement on issues of democracy and democratic processes?
12. Have you connected with other human rights organizations (specifically serving LGBTQI+ people or otherwise)?
 - a. Do you think your work could benefit from being better connected with other organizations? If yes, what types of organizations?
13. Is there any additional information we didn't cover that you would like to share?



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