LBGTQ Study Abroad Information Packet
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General Overview

Laws affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people vary greatly by country or territory—everything from legal recognition of same-sex marriage or other types of partnerships, to the death penalty as punishment for same-sex romantic/sexual activity or identity.

LGBT rights are considered human rights by the Amnesty International and civil rights by some. LGBT rights laws include, but are not limited to, the following:

- allowing of men who have sex with men to donate blood
- government recognition of same-sex relationships (such as via same-sex marriage or similar unions)
- allowing of LGBT adoption
- recognition of LGBT parenting
- anti-bullying legislation and student non-discrimination laws to protect LGBT children and/or students
- immigration equality laws
- anti-discrimination laws for employment and housing
- hate crime laws providing enhanced criminal penalties for prejudice-motivated violence against LGBT people
- equal age of consent laws
- equal access to assisted reproductive technology
- access to sex reassignment surgery and hormone replacement therapy
- legal recognition and accommodation of reassigned gender
- laws related to sexual orientation and military service

As of July 2015, eighteen countries, most of them located in the Americas and Western Europe, recognize same-sex marriage and grant most of (if not all) the other rights listed above to its LGBT citizens.

Anti-LGBT laws include, but are not limited to, the following: sodomy laws penalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity with fines, jail terms, or the death penalty; anti-"lesbianism" laws; and higher ages of consent for same-sex activity.

In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed its first resolution recognizing LGBT rights, which was followed up with a report from the UN Human Rights Commission documenting violations of the rights of LGBT people, including hate crime, criminalization of homosexuality, and discrimination. Following up on the report, the UN Human Rights
Commission urged all countries which had not yet done so to enact laws protecting basic LGBT rights.

As of July 2015, seventy two countries as well as five sub-national jurisdictions have laws criminalizing homosexuality, most of them are located in Asia and Africa.

Worldwide laws regarding homosexual relationships and expression

- [Marriage](#) Restricted freedom of expression
- Civil union, registered partnership or unregistered cohabitation
- Unenforced penalty
- Marriage recognized but not performed
- Imprisonment
- Same-sex unions not recognized
- Up to life in prison
- Death penalty

Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_by_country_or_territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_by_country_or_territory)
Europe

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights are widely diverse in Europe per country. Twelve out of the eighteen countries that have legalized same-sex marriage are situated in Europe; a further thirteen European countries have legalized civil unions or other forms of recognition for same-sex couples. Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Switzerland are considering legislation to introduce same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage in Slovenia and Ireland is to become legal in 2015. In addition, it will be enacted in Finland by March 2017. Malta is the only country in Europe that recognizes legally performed same-sex marriages overseas but does not perform them. Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine have a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.

In a 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Project surveyed by the Pew Research Center, showed majorities in every Western European nation said homosexuality should be accepted by society, while most Russians, Poles and Ukrainians disagreed. A Eurobarometer in 2006 surveying up to 30,000 people from each European Union country, showed split opinion around the 27 member states on the issue of same sex marriage. The majority of support came from the Netherlands (82%), Sweden (71%), Denmark (69%), Belgium (62%), Luxembourg (58%), Spain (56%), Finland (54%), Germany (52%) and the Czech Republic (52%). All other countries within the EU had below 50% support; with Romania (11%), Latvia (12%), Cyprus (14%), Bulgaria (15%), Greece (15%), Lithuania (17%), Poland (17%), Hungary (18%) and Malta (18%) at the other end of the list. Same sex adoption had majority support from only two countries: Netherlands at 69% and Sweden at 51% and the least support from Poland and Malta on 7% respectively.

A more recent survey carried out in October 2008 by The Observer affirmed that the majority of Britons – 55% – support gay marriage. A 2013 poll shows that the majority of the Irish public support gay marriage and gay adoption, 73% and 60% respectively. France has support for same sex marriage at 62%, and Russian at 14%. Italy has support for the ‘Civil Partnership Law’ between gays at 45% with 47% opposed. In 2009 58.9% of Italians supported civil unions, while 40.4 supported same-sex marriage. In 2010, 63.9% of Greeks supported same-sex partnerships, while 38.5% supported same-sex marriage. In 2012 a poll by MaltaToday showed that 41% of Maltese supported same sex marriage, with support increasing to 60% amongst the 18-35 age group. In a 2013 opinion poll conducted by CBOS, 65% of Poles were against same-sex civil unions, 72% of Poles were against same-sex marriage, 88% were against adoption by same-sex couples, and 68% were against gays and lesbians publicly showing their way of life. In Croatia, a poll from November 2013 revealed that 59% of Croats think that marriage should be constitutionally defined as a union between a man and a woman, while 31% do not agree with the idea. A CBOS opinion poll from February 2014 found that 70% of Poles believe same-sex sexual activity is morally unacceptable, while only 22% believed it is morally acceptable.

According to pollster Gallup Europe, women, younger generations, and the highly educated are more likely to support same-sex marriage and adoption rights for gay people than other demographics.
Gay rights in the European Union
November 2015

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Belgium

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights in Belgium have been seen as some of the most progressive in Europe and in the world. Same-sex sexual activity was legalized in 1795 and the age of consent was equalized in 1985. After granting same-sex couples domestic partnership benefits in 2000, Belgium became the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage in 2003. Same-sex adoption was completely legalized in 2006 and is equalized with that of opposite-sex adoption. Lesbian couples can get access to IVF as well. Discrimination protections based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public and private accommodations have also been enacted since 2003 and on gender identity/expression since 2014. Transsexuals have been allowed to change their legal gender under certain circumstances since 2007.

Belgium has frequently been officially referred to as one of the most gay friendly countries in the world, with recent polls indicating that a majority of Belgians support same-sex marriage and adoption. The previous Prime Minister of Belgium, Elio Di Rupo, is an openly gay man and was one of the only three Prime Ministers in the world to identify as LGBT. Pascal Smet, the former Flemish Minister of Education (in the Peeters II Government) and current Brussels minister, is also openly gay. LGBT people are generally well socially accepted in Belgium. There is a strong gay community, with numerous gay clubs. A European Union member poll showed 62% of Belgians support same-sex marriage extension to the whole Europe.

Czech Republic

For its location, the legal and social climate in the Czech Republic seems to be relatively LGBT-friendly. Eastern Europe is typically considered a homophobic region. The Czech Republic made history in July 2006 by establishing same sex partnerships, referred to as “registered partners,” on a national level (AFP 2006). According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association (2009), discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal (Ilga.org). Prague, the capital, is heralded as the best place in Eastern Europe for LGBT travelers and has a number of gay-friendly establishments (Wilder 2010). The most prominent LGBT organization, Gay Iniciativa, dissolved in 2009 claiming that it had accomplished its goals (Gay Iniciativa 2009). Despite these positive signs, LGBT students should still be aware of the historically anti-LGBT attitude of Eastern Europe and monitor current events in the Czech Republic before departure.

In contrast to the limitations of the communist era, the Czech Republic has become socially relatively liberal since the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and is one of the most gay-friendly countries in the European Union. This increasing tolerance is probably helped by the low levels of religious belief in the country, particularly when compared to its neighbors Poland, Austria and Slovakia.

There is a comparatively large gay community in Prague, less so in the rest of the country, with the capital acting as a magnet for the country’s gay youth. The city has a large and well-developed gay nightlife scene, particularly centered around the district of Vinohrady, with at least 20 bars and clubs and 4 saunas. Gay venues are much more sparsely spread in other Czech towns however.

In 2012, Fundamental Rights Agency performed a survey on discrimination among 93,000 LGBT people across the European Union. Compared to the EU average, the Czech Republic showed relatively positive results. However, the outcomes also show that there is still large space for improvement of the LGBT rights. 43% of Czech respondents indicated that none or only few of their family members know about their sexual orientation. Only one in five respondents is open about their sexual orientation to all their colleagues or classmates. 71% of the respondents are selectively open about their orientation at work or school. 52% of gay men and 30% of lesbian women avoid holding hands in public outside of gay neighborhoods for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed.

Denmark

In 1989, Denmark became the first country to recognize civil unions for homosexuals at the national level. More than 20 years later, its status as one of the world’s most politically LGBT-friendly cities was confirmed by the approval of adoption rights for homosexual parents (AP 2009). The capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, has a thriving LGBT culture. In addition to many LGBT-friendly entertainment and lodging establishments, Copenhagen has a specifically gay radio station (GLCVB 2010). It was the site of the 2009 World OutGames, an international LGBT athletic event with over 5,500 participants representing 98 countries, and the OutGames Human Rights Conference. These events did face isolated homophobic incidents, but for the most part demonstrated the acceptance of the LGBT community by Danish society (Luongo 2009).

As already stated the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Denmark are some of the most extensive in the world and a high priority.

Same-sex sexual activity was legalized in 1933, and since 1977, the age of consent is 15, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Denmark was the first country in the world to grant legal recognition to same-sex unions, in the form of "registered partnerships", in 1989. On 7 June 2012, the law was replaced by a new same-sex marriage law, which came into effect on 15 June 2012, and Denmark recognizes same-sex marriages performed elsewhere. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was entirely prohibited in 2004. Same-sex couples are allowed to jointly adopt since 2010, while previously allowing stepchild adoptions and limited co-guardianship rights for non-biological parents. Gays and lesbians are also allowed to serve openly in the military.

Like its Scandinavian neighbors, Denmark has become one of the most socially liberal countries in the world, with recent polls indicating that a large majority of Danes support same-sex marriage and LGBT adoption. Copenhagen, the capital, has frequently been referred to by publishers as one of the most gay friendly cities in the world, famous for its annual Pride Parade.

England

Today, LGBT citizens have most of the same legal rights as non-LGBT citizens and the UK provides one of the highest degrees of liberty in the world for its LGBT communities. In ILGA-Europe’s 2015 review of LGBTI rights, the UK received the highest score in Europe, with 86% progress toward "respect of human rights and full equality" for LGBT people and 92% in Scotland alone. Recent polls have indicated that a majority of British people support same-sex marriage and 76% of the UK viewed that homosexuality should be accepted by society, one of the highest in the world. Additionally, the UK currently holds the world record for having the most LGBTI people in parliament with 27 LGBTI MPs elected at the 2015 election.

While civil partnerships were established nationwide, marriage law is a devolved matter in the United Kingdom and therefore the legislative procedure of same-sex marriage differs by jurisdiction. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, which allows same-sex marriage in England and Wales, was passed by UK Parliament in July 2013 and came into force on 13 March 2014, with the first same-sex marriages taking place on 29 March 2014. The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, allowing same-sex marriage in Scotland, was passed by the Scottish Parliament in February 2014 and came into effect on 16 December 2014.

Same-sex marriages in the UK give all the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage and can be performed on approved premises. This also includes religious venues, providing the religious or belief body has opted in. However, no religious or belief body is compelled to perform same-sex marriages; the Church of England and the Church in Wales are explicitly banned from doing so. For the purposes of the divorce of a same-sex marriage, the common law definition of adultery remains as sexual intercourse between a man and a woman only, although infidelity with a person of the same sex can be grounds for a divorce as "unreasonable behavior."

In Northern Ireland, same-sex marriage is not recognized or performed, following several votes against it by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Same-sex marriages performed in Great Britain and across the world are recognized as civil partnerships in Northern Ireland. Citing the Legislature’s constant refusal to approve a marriage bill and the law that recognizes marriages from other parts of the United Kingdom as civil partnerships, local LGBT rights groups announced that they will turn to the courts for the right to wed. In January 2015, a couple who married in England and reside in Northern Ireland, filed a lawsuit to have their marriage recognized in the region.

There are also large LGBT communities most noted in Birmingham (Birmingham Gay Village), Blackpool, Brighton (LGBT community of Brighton and Hove), Liverpool (LGBT culture in Liverpool), London (Old Compton Street) and Manchester (Canal Street), who all host annual pride festivals. Many pride festivals are hosted in the UK every year. The first gay marches were in London in 1970, followed by the debut of the UK Gay Pride Rally there in 1972. Pride London is the biggest and oldest festival, and has been organized annually since. Pride festivals are very popular summer events in major cities, and have expanded to smaller communities in recent years.
Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_the_United_Kingdom
France

France is known for having progressive LGBT legal policies in the world. In 1999, France became one of the first countries to legalize homosexual civil partnerships on a national level (“French ‘gay marriage’” 1999). French LGBT activists’ attempts to gain full marriage rights have been unsuccessful (as of 2010) but France has enacted laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (ILGA 2009). Despite a less progressive record when it comes to transgender people, France became the first country to remove transsexualism from its list of mental illnesses in 2010 (Faure 2010).

The social climate towards the LGBT community in France is mostly accepting, but can vary. The famous lack of Mediterranean macho culture in France and the general social liberalism of the country yield a fairly LGBT-tolerant attitude among French people, especially in cities and towards travelers. However, because French culture encourages discretion about what are considered to be personal matters, “coming out” can be considered in poor taste (“French attitudes” n.d.). Just like in other countries, there are still incidents of homophobia in LGBT-friendly Paris such as the attacks on LGBT activists by Christian activists at a “kiss-in” demonstration (“Gay ‘Kiss-in’” 2010). Students should remember that some prejudice may remain, especially among strictly religious citizens.

Same-sex marriage was legalized in France on May 18, 2013. Same-sex couples and LGBT individuals are allowed to adopt. Transgender individuals are legally allowed to change their sex. In 1985, an anti-discrimination policy was formed to forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation; in 2012, this policy was expanded to include sexual identity. While attitudes towards LGBT individuals vary widely within France, Paris is among the most tolerant and cosmopolitan cities in Europe. It boasts many gay clubs, restaurants, and bars; the neighborhood known as Le Marais is also known as a hip, predominantly gay

Germany

Germany is among the world’s most LGBT-friendly countries in terms of civil rights. Not only are homosexual relations legal, but same sex partnerships have been recognized on national level since 2001 (ILGA). In August 2009, second parent adoption rights were granted to homosexual couples. In October, pension benefits for homosexual civil partners of government employees were made equal to those for heterosexual married partners (Geen Oct 2009). The incredible contrast between present-day treatment of the LGBT community in Germany and the days of pink triangles is solidified by the large-scale public LGBT events hosted in the country. 2010 Gay Games, an international LGBT sports and culture event, will be hosted in Cologne, Germany, the site of one of the world’s most famous Catholic Cathedrals (Gay Games 2010). Social acceptance of the LGBT community in Germany varies by region. Many urban areas, like Berlin, are liberal and there is little social stigma toward the LGBT community. Areas like Bavaria, which are more conservative and closely linked to the traditional Catholic Church, are generally less socially welcoming and openly accepting of the LGBT community.

Germany is fairly progressive in its tolerance of LGBT rights and individuals. While same-sex partnerships have been recognized since 2001, same-sex marriage is not yet officially recognized. It is already becoming a key campaign issue for upcoming elections. Antidiscrimination policies cover both sexual orientation and gender identity. Transgender individuals are allowed to legally change their names, and homosexual transsexuals have the ability to get their partnerships recognized. Tübingen, like Berlin and Stuttgart, is one of Germany’s most culturally liberal cities, and so gay culture is typically accepted.

The antidiscrimination law prohibits discrimination based on sexual identity. There were no official statistics on mistreatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons; the availability of NGO reports on the incidence of such mistreatment varied widely in different parts of the country, although some quantitative data was available for cities with large populations of LGBT persons. In 2013 in Berlin, according to the NGO Maneo, there were 259 assaults, including physical violence motivated by bias against LGBT persons.

Greece

Despite ancient Greece’s strong homosexual traditions, modern Greece is not as socially accepting of the LGBT community as some other European nations. According to activists, the media and the influential Orthodox Church perpetuate anti-LGBT sentiments. This is demonstrated multiple legal attempts by residents of the island of Lesbos to make LGBT groups stop using the word “lesbian” to describe homosexual women; ironically, homosexual female visitors to the island contribute significantly to its economy (Smith 2008). Homosexual relations are legal in Greece, but despite pressure from the European Union, same sex partnerships are not legally recognized (ilga.org). Gay marriage rights are the source of ongoing conflict between the conservative courts and LGBT activist groups in Greece. Two homosexual couples were married in the island of Tilos in July 2008, but the courts annulled these marriages in 2009 (Geen 2009). USF students travelling to Greece should monitor LGBT-relevant current events, as the outcome of legal and political battles over rights may affect the LGBT climate.

Some antidiscrimination laws do not specify sexual orientation or gender identity. Violence against LGBT individuals remained a problem, and societal discrimination and harassment were widespread. The legal age of consent for heterosexual sex is 15 and for sexual intercourse between men, 17. The law does not specify an age of consent for sex between women. The NGO Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece (OLKE) stated that the higher age of consent for gay men and the lack of any legal framework for lesbians constituted discrimination, and it criticized the laws against hate speech for not including sexual orientation or gender identity.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Greece may face legal and social challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity are legal in Greece. Households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples. Athens has a large number of LGBT associations and a developing gay village in the Gazi, Athens neighborhood. A gay pride event, the 'Athens Pride' and an international Gay and Lesbian film festival, the 'Outview', are held annually.

There is also a big gay scene in Thessaloniki with gay/lesbian bars/clubs and several friendly mixed venues, and several LGBT organisations. In June 2012 the city got its own annual pride event (Thessaloniki Pride). One of the most notable events in Thessaloniki, concerning LGBT rights, is the attempt to raise a 20m long banner, urging people to boycott the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, on the town’s’ most famous landmark, the White Tower. The attempt was quickly stopped by the local police, but the event was advertised in online media.

The gay scene in the island of Myconos and the lesbian scene in Eressos, Lesbos are famous internationally.
In June 2013 The Pew Research Center released data where they conducted surveys of respondents in some 40 countries on the question of whether the respondents believed their society should or should not accept homosexuality. Pew Research questioners scientifically asked respondents in Greece this question and found that amongst those asked, a majority 53% of those Greek respondents believed their society should accept homosexuality, while 40% of the respondents believed that society should not accept homosexuality. Amongst those Greeks surveyed between the ages of 18 and 29 years of age support for society accepting homosexuality was at a higher 66% than the overall 53%. For those respondents aged 30 to 49 support was too at a higher 62%, but a lower 40% for those respondents 50 years and older.

Hungry

The Act on Equal Opportunity explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. In addition the laws on “inciting against a community” and “violence against a member of a community” prohibit certain forms of hate speech and prescribe increased punishment for violence against members of the LGBT community, specifically referencing these groups as being targeted for their “gender identity” or “sexual orientation.” Despite legal protections, anti-LGBT extremists continued to abuse LGBT persons. NGOs reported law enforcement and other authorities often disregarded the hate element of these crimes, and no protocol or regular training on the subject existed.

In contrast with more conservative Central European countries such as Poland and Slovakia, Hungary appears to be a more tolerant society as far as gay rights and acceptance of LGBT people are concerned.

Hungary was the host country of Mr Gay Europe 2007 contest and the Eurogames in 2012. Budapest Pride was the first such event in the former Eastern Bloc, and draws a steady, but moderate number of LGBT people and their supporters. The LGBT festival lasts a week every summer with a film festival, pride march and parties across the city. In 2000, the Constitutional Court recognized that the Constitutional ban on discrimination based on "other status" covers sexual orientation as well. There exists an anti-discrimination law in the Act on Public Health since 1997. The 2003 Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities forbids discrimination based on factors that include sexual orientation and gender identity in the fields of employment, education, housing, health, and access to goods and services.

Italy

Homosexual relations are currently legal in Italy, but there is no national recognition of same sex partnerships, though activists have been working towards changing this (ILGA). The legal, social and political climate in Italy is influenced by both the progressive trends towards LGBT rights in the European Union and the opposition to LGBT-friendly initiatives from the Roman Catholic Church. While the Church disagrees with European Union LGBT initiatives, LGBT activists claim the Vatican has an excessive amount of influence on Italian policies. To protest this influence, activists took to the streets in Rome and other European cities in 2009 in favor of gay marriage (Associated Press 2009). Socially, Italian cities seem to be relatively LGBT-friendly. Despite the presence of the Vatican, Rome hosts a large annual Pride festival and many LGBT-friendly establishments. However, the appeal of the LGBT culture has been tempered by reports of a rash of hate crimes in 2009, which stirred international reactions (Geen Sept 2009). LGBT students traveling to Italy should monitor current events if they plan to engage in the LGBT culture.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) persons in Italy face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. In Italy in pre-unification, homosexuality was legal only in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In the Kingdom of Sardinia, homosexual acts were illegal and severely punished. After the unification of Italy, this disparity continued, with homosexuality being legal in the south, but illegal in the north. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1890, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples. Transgender people have been allowed to legally change their legal gender since 1982.

Although discrimination regarding sexual orientation in employment has been banned since 2003, no other anti-discrimination laws regarding sexual orientation or gender identity and expression have been enacted yet. Public opinion on homosexuality has generally been regarded as socially liberal, with a recent poll in 2014 indicating that a majority of Italians support same-sex marriage. According to data from the 2010 Italy Eurispes report released Jan. 29, the percentage of Italians who have a positive attitude towards homosexuality and are in favor of legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples is still growing. 82% of the Italian states consider homosexuals equal to all others. 41% of citizens think that homosexual couples have the right to marry in a civil ceremony, and 20.4% agree with civil unions. In total, therefore, 61.4% are in favor of a form of legal recognition for gay and lesbian couples. This is an increase of 2.5% from last year (58.9%) and almost 10% in 7 years (51.6% in 2003).

Antidiscrimination laws exist and apply specifically to LGBT victims of homophobic and transphobic offenses, but there was no provision for a victim’s sexual orientation to be considered an aggravating circumstance in hate crimes, nor is incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation prohibited. In 2013 Gay Help Line, an NGO that runs a hotline dedicated to LGBT persons, received 14,000 calls. Approximately 40 percent of callers under the age of 25 reported problems at school and with their families, while most adults (38 percent) reported discrimination at work. The press reported cases of violence against
gay and lesbian couples during the year. References:
http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Italy,
Netherlands

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights in the Netherlands have been some of the most progressive in Europe and worldwide. Same-sex sexual activity was legalized in 1811 after France invaded the country and installed the Napoleonic Code, erasing any remaining sodomy laws and no more were enacted after the country received independence. During the late 20th century, awareness surrounding homosexuality grew and society became more tolerant of homosexuals, eventually leading to its declassification as a mental illness in 1973 and ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation in the military. The Equal Rights Law was enacted in 1993, which bans discrimination on sexual orientation on the grounds of employment, housing, public accommodations, and more. After the country began granting same-sex couples domestic partnerships benefits in 1998, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001. The Netherlands has become one of the most socially liberal countries in the world, with recent polls indicating that more 90% of ethnic Dutch people view homosexuality as moral. Most opposition and violence against LGBT citizens stem from the Christian and Muslim communities, which make up less than a quarter of the country’s population.

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Laws have been revised to eliminate any discrimination on problems such as taxes and allowances, pensions, inheritance, or access to health care. The government gave high priority to combating anti-LGBT violence. The police had “pink in blue” units dedicated to protecting the rights of LGBT persons. When courts find acts of violence against LGBT persons to be motivated by bias, they can provide higher penalties to perpetrators. In January the Sexual Diversity Awareness Act came into effect obliging all elementary and secondary schools to pay attention to diversity and LGBT problems. The Expreszo youth website set up a hotline for complaints on schools that did not comply. The government supported Christian LGBT groups and Muslim community changers as well as “gay-straight” alliances to counter bullying. Government programs to counter prejudice in immigrant and orthodox religious communities where social acceptance of homosexuality was low also continued.

Norway

Norway, like most of Scandinavia, is very liberal in regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights and it also became the first country in the world to enact an anti-discrimination law protecting homosexuals in certain areas. Same-sex marriage, adoption, and IVF/assisted insemination treatments for lesbian couples have been legal since 2009. Rights for trans people, however, have received less attention and protection. Same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1972. At the same time of legalization, the age of consent became equal regardless of gender and/or sexual orientation, at 16.

In 1981, Norway became the first country in the world to enact a law to prevent discrimination against LGBT people by amending Paragraph 349a of its Penal Code, prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the provision of goods or services and in access to public gatherings. In the same year, Paragraph 135a of the Penal Code was amended to prohibit hate speech directed at LGBT people. The country has banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment since 1998. Norway also has a law explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and expression, by a report from ILGA-Europe. Norway is one of 5 countries besides Australia, South Africa, Malta, and Germany to protect intersex people and explicitly states it in the anti-discrimination law, by the same report from ILGA-Europe. Norway is generally gay-friendly. The most open and including community can be found in the capital, Oslo, where many gay-friendly events and venues are located.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Norway
Poland

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Poland may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity are legal in Poland, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples. However, homosexuality was never illegal under Polish law, and Poland was one of the first countries to avoid punishing homosexuality in early modern era. This was formally codified in 1932, and when Poland introduced an equal age of consent for homosexuals and heterosexuals was set at 15. Poland is one of few countries where homosexuals are allowed to donate blood. However, there are incidents of discrimination against gay blood donors. In a CBOS opinion poll from August 2013, a majority (56%) of respondents stated that homosexuality is "always wrong and can never be justified". 26% stated that "there is nothing wrong with it and can always be justified". 12% were indifferent.

A CBOS opinion poll from February 2014 found that 70% of Poles believe same-sex sexual activity is morally unacceptable, while only 22% believed it is morally acceptable. Poland country signed the LGBT rights Declaration, but some rights of heterosexual citizens, such as marriage equality are unavailable to its LGBT citizens. Poland is not on the list of countries with state-sponsored homophobia. Homosexuality in Poland was never criminalized under Polish jurisdiction, and it was confirmed legal in 1932. Poland also recognizes gender change and requires no sterilization of trans citizens.

Portugal

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Portugal have improved substantially in the past decade and are now among the best in the world. After a long period of oppression during the Salazar dictatorship, Portuguese society has become increasingly accepting of homosexuality, which was decriminalized in 1982, eight years after the Carnation Revolution. Portugal has wide-ranging anti-discrimination laws and is one of the few countries in the world to contain a ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation in its Constitution. Since 5 June 2010, the state became the eighth in the world to recognize same-sex marriage, even though any couple of the same sex are not able to jointly adopt – but they may adopt as individuals. On 1 March 2011 the President ratified the Law of Gender Identity, said to be the most advanced in the world, which simplifies the process of sex and name change for transgender people.

Portugal has recognized unregistered cohabitation since 5 May 2001, and same-sex marriage since 5 June 2010. Same-sex marriage was legalized under the second term of the Socrates Socialist Government, and passed the Portuguese Parliament with the support of other leftist parties. Same-sex married couples are granted all of the rights of different-sex married couples, except the right to jointly adopt children and to have access to IVF. The Penal Code was amended in 2007 to equalize the age of consent and to criminalize domestic violence in same-sex relationships, thus equalizing treatment with opposite-sex couples. The bill was fiercely opposed by conservatives.

Although there are several cases of public prejudice against LGBT people, there is a dynamic gay scene in Lisbon, Porto and in the main touristic cities in the Algarve region, like Faro, Lagos, Albufeira and Tavira, with gay bars, pubs, nightclubs and beaches (in the Algarve). Other smaller cities and regions such as Aveiro, Leiria, Coimbra, Braga, Évora and Madeira have more discreet gay communities, not very visible to the public eye. In Lisbon, most LGBT-oriented businesses are grouped around the bohemian Bairro Alto and the adjacent Príncipe Real and Chiado neighborhoods. In both Lisbon and Porto there are also annual Gay Pride Parades that attract thousands of participants and spectators. Lisbon is also host to one of the largest LGBT film festivals in Europe – Queer Lisboa – the Lisbon Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. Some Portuguese beaches are popular among LGBT population, like 19 Beach, near Costa da Caparica, and Barril Naturist Beach (an official naturist beach) or Cacela Velha beach, both of them near Tavira.

A Eurobarometer survey published in late 2006 showed that only 30% of Portuguese surveyed support same-sex marriage and 20% recognize same-sex couple’s right to adopt (EU-wide average 44% and 33%).

Opinions on same-sex marriage have considerably changed in 2009 with the discussion of the same-sex marriage bill. A survey by the Universidade Catolica reveals that 42% of the inquired citizens were in favor of same-sex marriage and another recent survey by Eurosondagem, Radio Renascença, SIC TV, and the Expresso newspaper stated that about 52% of the Portuguese are in favor of same sex marriages. Most recently, an Angus Reid
poll on 11 January 2010, showed that 45.5% of those polled were in support of same-sex marriage, but this was less than the 49.3% that opposed.

Views on adoption had not been changed significantly at the time same-sex marriage was passed into law: only 21.7% favor adoption while 68.4% oppose allowing gay couples to adopt. However, during the debate on the parliament’s initiative to legalize joint-adoptive rights for same-sex couples, polls showed the majority of the population supported both joint-adoptive rights and full adoption rights.

Russia

In Russia, the anti-LGBT tone typical of Eastern Europe still defines politics, though progress is being made. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1993 and gays and lesbians can currently serve in the Russian armed forces (ILGA 2009). However, the imprisonment of LGBT activists as recently as March 2009 on the grounds of distributing “homosexual propaganda to minors” is troubling to those hoping for equal treatment of LGBT people in Russia (“Two Moscow” 2009). According to an article in Passport Magazine in March 2010, “being queer now in St. Petersburg, and in Russia, is still not a fact to be broadcast to anyone but your closest friends” (Strubbe 2010). Discretion seems to be key for LGBT citizens of Russia and should be for LGBT travelers as well. The denial of marriage rights to a lesbian couple in 2009 stirred controversy, which may lead to increased LGBT rights and/or a social backlash (“Lesbian couple” 2010). Also, a St. Petersburg Parliament member’s recent condemnation of LGBT Pride parades as “anti-state actions” could mean the collision of established anti LGBT sentiments in government with an increasingly vocal LGBT movement at the planned Gay Pride event on June 26 (GayRussia 2010). LGBT students traveling to Russia should monitor current events before departure because of the tumultuous nature of LGBT relations in the area.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) persons in Russia face legal and social challenges not experienced by non-LGBT persons. Although same-sex sexual activity between consenting adults in private was decriminalized in 1993, same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are ineligible for the legal protections available to opposite-sex couples and there are currently no laws prohibiting discrimination regarding sexual orientation. Transgender people are allowed to change their legal gender following sex reassignment surgery, however, there are currently no laws prohibiting discrimination regarding gender identity or expression and recent laws could discriminate against transgender residents. Homosexuality has been declassified as a mental illness since 1999 and although gays and lesbians are allowed to serve “openly” in the military, there is an unofficial “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

Russia has been viewed as being socially conservative regarding homosexuality, with recent polls indicating that a majority of Russians are against the acceptance of homosexuality and have shown support for laws discriminating against homosexuals. Britain’s Channel 4 aired Hunted, a documentary describing the lives of LGBT residents under the propaganda law and the legitimization of vigilante groups hunting and abusing homosexuals—primarily gay men—in “a wave of terror”. Since the law’s enactment, a number of Russian LGBT people seeking asylum in the United States has increased fourfold. However, despite receiving international criticism due to the recent increasing number of social discrimination, crimes, and violence against homosexuals, larger cities such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg have been said to have a thriving LGBT community.

However, there has been a historic resistance to gay pride parades by local governments; despite being fined by the European Court of Human Rights in 2010 for interpreting it as
discrimination, the city of Moscow denied 100 individual requests for permission to hold Moscow Pride through 2112, citing a risk of violence against participants.

In the 21st century, Russia began to receive worldwide attention for their legal treatment of LGBT citizens, which has been referred to as one of the worst human rights violations in the post-Soviet era. Since 2006, numerous regions in Russia have enacted varying laws restricting the distribution of materials promoting LGBT relationships to minors; in June 2013, a federal law criminalizing the distribution of "propaganda" among minors in support of what it defined as "non-traditional" sexual relationships, was enacted as an amendment to an existing child protection law. The law has resulted in the numerous arrests of Russian LGBT citizens publicly opposing the law and there has reportedly been a surge of homophobic propaganda, violence, and even hate crimes, many of whom use the law as justification. It has received international criticism from human rights observers, LGBT activists, and media outlets and has been viewed as de facto means of criminalizing LGBT culture. Russian historian and human rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva has called it “a step toward the Middle Ages.”

**Homophobia in Russia:** Public opinion in Russia tends to be among the most hostile toward homosexuality in the world—outside predominantly Muslim countries and some parts of Africa and Asia—and the level of intolerance has been rising. A 2013 survey found that 74% of Russians said homosexuality should not be accepted by society (up from 60% in 2002), compared to 16% who said that homosexuality should be accepted by society. Unlike in many western nations, LGBT persons in Russia do not enjoy increased and specific legal protections over other citizens. Violent criminal acts carried out against these persons are prosecuted as criminal offenses under Russian law, but the fact that these crimes are motivated by the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim is not considered an aggravating factor when the court determines the sentence

A 2013 law criminalizes the “propaganda” of nontraditional sexual relations to minors. The law effectively limits the rights of free expression and assembly for citizens who wish to publicly advocate for LGBT rights or express the opinion that homosexuality is normal. Examples of what the government considered LGBT propaganda included materials that “directly or indirectly approve of people who are in nontraditional sexual relationships.” LGBT persons reported heightened societal stigma and discrimination, which some attributed to increasing official promotion of intolerance and homophobia. Gay rights activists asserted that the majority of LGBT persons hid their orientation due to fear of losing their jobs or their homes as well as the threat of violence. Medical practitioners reportedly continued to limit or deny LGBT persons health services due to intolerance and prejudice.

Spain

Spain is considered one of the most LGBT-friendly places in the world and became one of the first countries to legalize gay marriage in 2005 (Ferren 2009). In accordance with its European Union membership standards, Spain also has anti-discrimination laws in place regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (ILGA). Spain’s LGBT community is active and visible in its major cities. Organizations like FELGT (Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals), an umbrella political and activist group, have a strong presence in Spain. Within cities, organizations focused on LGBT advocacy and activism have a place, like Madrid’s LGBT Center, COGAM. Visibility is also bolstered in cities by the LGBT nightlife, which is thriving (Ammon 2008). LGBT students visiting the major cities of Spain will find a number of LGBT-friendly establishments.

Spain has some of the most progressive laws and legal protections for its LGBT citizens. Same-sex marriage has been recognized since 2005, and same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1979. Same-sex couples are allowed to adopt as well. Transsexual individuals are legally allowed to change their gender. Antidiscrimination policies include discrimination based on sexual orientation. Within Madrid itself, the gay culture is concentrated in the neighborhood of Chueca.

Sweden

Currently, Sweden offers significantly more civil rights to the LGBT community than the United States; gay marriage is legal, homosexual partners can adopt children and there are laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (ILGA 2009). Socially, Sweden is generally a welcoming place for LGBT people. Some attribute this to the socially liberal nature of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, which most Swedes are part of. It is almost surprising that gay marriage wasn’t legalized before May 2009; in 2008, 71% of people in Sweden and six of the seven parliamentary parties supported gay marriage (Pink News 2008). The capital, Stockholm, boasts a thriving LGBT scene and a huge Pride festival every summer (Pridefestival 2010). Because of the culture and welcoming climate, the Stockholm, and Sweden overall, is a popular destination for LGBT travelers.

During the year there were isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against persons perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). The NCCP reported 630 hate crimes in 2013 based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Antidiscrimination laws exist, are enforced, and apply to LGBT individuals. In January the government presented its first comprehensive strategy for LGBT rights. Its purpose was to strengthen the LGBT situation in Sweden.

The United Kingdom is politically and legally very progressive when it comes to LGBT rights. Homosexual partnerships have been recognized on a national level since 2005, homosexual couples can adopt and there are a number of laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (ILGA). In addition to the government’s statements in support of international LGBT rights, it sends an LGBT-friendly message through actions; on May 1, 2009, open lesbian Carol Ann Duffy was named the British Poet Laureate (Wockner 2009). London’s LGBT scene is thriving, with many LGBT-friendly establishments - so many, in fact, that VisitLondon has created an iPod/iPhone application for tourists called “Gay London” (Staff Writer 2010). Students traveling to London who choose to experience the LGBT culture should have no trouble finding something to do.

As one of the largest cities in Europe, London is tolerant and accepting of LGBT culture. Civil partnerships have been recognized in the UK since 2005, and most recently, the passage of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act on July 17, 2013 will allow same-sex couples to marry as of summer of 2014. Same-sex sexual activity is legal, and the age of consent was equalized nationwide in 2001. Since 2005, citizens have the right to change their legal gender and obtain a new birth certificate. Anti-discrimination policies have been in place since 2010. Adoption by same-sex couples has been permitted since 2005. Keep in mind that the four jurisdictions of the United Kingdom differ; for example, Scotland and Northern Ireland are more restrictive in their LGBT rights.

Central and South America

Argentina

In Argentina, the legal and social climate towards the LGBT community varies significantly by region. On a national level, homosexual relationships are legal, but same sex partnerships are not recognized. In Buenos Aires, Rio Negro and Villa Carlos Paz, a substitute for marriage is an option for homosexuals. Some regions have laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (ILGA). There is hope for national change; in 2009, the ban on gays in the military was lifted (AG Magazine 2009). The typical macho nature of Latin American societies and the opposition to pro-LGBT initiatives expressed by the hugely influential Roman Catholic Church make progress towards LGBT rights in Argentina slow in coming.

Homophobia, especially towards gay men, is most prevalent in rural areas (Kelly 2009). Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, is unique in its relatively welcoming climate towards the LGBT community; it even boasts a number of expressly LGBT-friendly establishments (Gay Argentina 2010). Buenos Aires famously became the first Latin American city to legalize civil unions in 2002. Though the city does not yet recognize gay marriage, extensive legal battles resulted in one gay marriage being permitted in 2009, which activists hope will lead to an expansion in LGBT rights throughout the country (Kelly 2009). LGBT students traveling to any area of Argentina should monitor LGBT current events in the country because the climate may change as the gay marriage battle heats up.

References: https://educationabroad.global.usf.edu/_customtags/ct_FileRetrieve.cfm?File_ID=51978
Brazil

In Brazil, homosexual relations are currently legal and an inferior substitute for marriage is recognized in some areas (ILGA). The Latin American influences of religion and masculinity breed homophobia in Brazil, though cities like Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo are more tolerant and have flourished as LGBT tourist destinations. Sao Paolo’s Pride celebration is the largest in the world and expects four million participants for the 2010 event (Gay Pride Brazil 2010). Despite the active community, there is still violence and homophobia. LGBT hate crimes reportedly rose 55% in 2009, concerning activists greatly in combination with a growing number of demonstrations against LGBT pride marches (Frassinet 2009). This has drawn attention to the fact that beneath the celebratory urban image of LGBT Brazil, the nation has one of the highest hate crime rates in the world (Columbia Law School 2010). Students should be aware of the contradictory nature of the LGBT climate in Brazil and monitor current events prior to departure.

References: https://educationabroad.global.usf.edu/_customtags/ct_FileRetrieve.cfm?File_ID=51978
Chile

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Chile may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Chile. From October 22, 2015, same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples will have the same legal protections available to opposite-sex married couples, within a civil union - except for adoption rights and the title of marriage. Public opinion has shown substantial support for same-sex civil unions: 65% favored their legalization in 2004, even though only 24% supported same-sex marriage. In 2009, 33.2% supported same-sex marriage and 26.5% supported adoption by same-sex couples. Support among young people is much higher: according to a study by the National Youth Institute of Chile, 56% of young respondents supported same-sex marriage, while 51.3% supported same-sex adoption. An August 2012 poll found that 54.9% of Chileans support same-sex marriage, while 40.7% are opposed. A more recent poll showed that 70% of youths support same-sex marriage.

In Chile, the Catholic Church and traditional beliefs regarding gender roles do play a combined role in prevailing attitudes about sex roles, sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBT-rights began to be publicly discussed as Chile went through a larger process of democratization, with an expanded interest in human rights and dignity.

While LGBT people live throughout Chile, the visible LGBT community is largely restricted to Santiago in the bohemian, socially liberal, neighborhood Bellavista, home to a thriving restaurant and club scene. A public parade for LGBT-rights is held every year in downtown Santiago.

Both male and female same-sex sexual activity has been legal in Chile since 1998, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for recognition by the government or adoption. However, Santiago calls itself the “gay capital” of Chile, due in particular to the small neighborhood of Bellavista. A gay pride parade is held every year in downtown Santiago. There have also been a series of well publicized cases of LGBT discrimination, which led to the passing of an anti-discrimination law in April 2012.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Chile,
Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, homosexual relations have been legal since 1971, but same sex partnerships are not yet recognized on a national level (ILGA). Like other Latin American nations, Costa Rica’s culture is characterized by general loyalty to the anti-LGBT Catholic Church and machismo, which breed homophobia. Activists are struggling against these powerful forces to gain rights for the LGBT community. There are indications of national change though; in 2008, Costa Rica’s government decided to recognize the annual International Day Against Homophobia on May 17 (Pink News Costa Rica 2008). LGBT activists hoped to gain rights for same sex couples when a new president took office in 2010; unfortunately, she reversed her position not long after taking office and now claims not to support civil unions (Molina 2010). The conservative and Catholic influence that restricts widespread acceptance of the LGBT community in Costa Rica is generally highest in rural areas. The capital city, San Jose, is more secular, socially liberal and LGBT-friendly. There is an active LGBT nightlife scene in San Jose, though LGBT students should be cautious and check current events in Costa Rica before considering visiting such venues (Costa Rica 2009).

Cuba

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Cuba may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents.

Public antipathy towards LGBT people is high, reflecting regional norms. This has eased somewhat since the 1990s. Educational campaigns on LGBT issues are currently implemented by the National Center for Sex Education, headed by Mariela Castro, President Raúl Castro’s daughter. Article 36 of the Constitution of Cuba defines marriage as "the voluntarily established union between a man and a woman". Under Article 2 of the Family Code, marriage is restricted to the voluntary union of a man and a woman.

No alternative to marriage such as civil unions or domestic partnerships is available. Several measures favorable to the LGBT community, including the legalization of same-sex unions, have not passed the National Assembly of People’s Power, Cuba’s parliament.

Employment discrimination on account of sexual orientation is prohibited by law. The equal opportunity law does not cover gender identity, and LGBT discrimination in other sectors of society -such as education, housing and public accommodations -is not addressed in the non-discrimination laws.

Homophobia is recognized as a problem in Cuba and is addressed through the HIV program (including school classes which begin at grade 5) as well as through the National Center for Sex Education. This education program includes a television soap opera that features gay, lesbian, and HIV-positive people.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Cuba
Dominican Republic

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in the Dominican Republic may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. While the criminal code does not expressly prohibit homosexuality or cross-dressing, it also does not address discrimination or harassment on the account of sexual orientation or gender identity. Household headed by same-sex couples are also not eligible for any of the same rights given to traditional married couples.

Discrimination on account of sexual orientation or gender identity is not illegal in areas such as employment, education, housing, health care, banking, transportation, government services and public accommodations. As a result, many LGBT people feel the need to remain in the closet and reports of anti-gay discrimination are quite common. The Dominican Republic does not have a hate crime or bias motivated crime law that includes sexual orientation or gender identity. Yet, LGBT people in the Dominican Republic are often the targets of harassment, violence and even murder.

The Dominican Republic does not legally recognize marriage between persons of the same-sex, civil partnerships or domestic partnership arrangements. In additional to the Dominican's family law, the Constitution was amended in 2010 to expressly ban legal recognition of same-sex marriage.

The socially conservative mores of the Catholic Church and evangelical Protestant denominations hold significant sway in both public policy and prevailing attitudes surrounding LGBT rights. Recent reports suggest that signs of a visible, politically active LGBT community are often targets of a government crackdown, often with the support of religious leaders. Due to the majority of residents having conservative views, including opposition to homosexuality, the major political parties in the Dominican Republic have not expressed much public support for LGBT rights legislation.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_the_Dominican_Republic
Ecuador

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Ecuador may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Ecuador, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for all of the same legal protections available to opposite-sex married couples. In 1998, Ecuador became the first country in the Americas (and only the third worldwide) to include sexual orientation as a protected category in its constitution.

Ecuador includes both sexual orientation and gender identity in its constitutional prohibition against discrimination. A fairly large gay scene has developed in Quito and Guayaquil. The first gay pride in Ecuador had place in Quito, in 1998, following the Constitutional Court ruling that overturned the law that prohibited sexual acts between people of the same sex. Nevertheless, Ecuador has a conservative and macho culture, and homosexuality continues to be viewed negatively by society.

Since the last decade, many gay-pride marches have been organized in all major cities, with the authorization of authorities and police protection, in addition to their participation. In Guayaquil’s gay-pride march of 2011, for instance, among those present were the province’s vice-prefect Luzmila Nicolaide, city council member Gino Molinari, and National Assambleist Gina Godoy, while the police band played traditional songs.

There have also been LGBT film festivals organized in the major cities.

Mexico

Mexico is recognized as one of the most LGBT-friendly nations in Latin America. Same sex partnerships are recognized in some areas of the country, a practice common to Latin America (ILGA). In 2010, Mexico City became the first city in Latin America to legalize same sex marriage, raising expectations for both other Hispanic countries and the U.S. (Malkin 2010). Culturally, elements of machismo, conservatism and Catholicism keep the whole country from being as LGBT-friendly as Mexico City (Joaquin 2009). Homophobia still runs high in rural areas, especially in the few areas where formal Catholicism is practiced in traditionally anti-clerical Mexico (Malkin 2010).

In Mexico City, however, areas like the Zona Rosa district act as a haven for members of LGBT community from other parts of Mexico. Though the city is much more accepting than rural areas, entrenched homophobia still has an impact. This is especially true for gay men, many of whom do not disclose their sexual orientation because of the pressure to fit traditional gender roles (Joaquin 2009). LGBT students traveling to Mexico should keep these pressures in mind when visiting this newly progressive area.

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Nicaragua

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Nicaragua may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Nicaragua. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Nicaragua since March 2008. The age of consent is 18, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, and all sexual offenses are gender-neutral. Same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal benefits and protections available to opposite-sex married couples.

In June 2014, Nicaraguan Congress approved a revised Family Code that would limit marriage, partnerships and adoption to heterosexual couples. On 8 April 2015, Nicaragua’s new Family Code went into effect. LGBT in the country will take their case to the Nicaragua’s Supreme Court.

Gay men are generally more visible in public than lesbians are. When lesbians socialize with each other, it often happens in private residences or other private places. According to Pew Research Center survey, conducted between November 9 and December 13, 2013, 16% of Nicaraguans supported same-sex marriage, 77% were opposed.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Nicaragua
Panama

Homosexual relations were decriminalized in Panama in 2008 and it is possible for Panamanians to change their gender on official documents, a relatively progressive policy for Latin America (ILGA). Otherwise, however, the LGBT movement in Panama has been slow in progressing. As of 2010, Panama’s only reported LGBT advocacy organization was the AHMNP (Asociación Hombres y Mujeres Nuevos de Panama or the ‘New Men and Women of Panama’). To be recognized by the nation, this group had to battle one of the biggest opponents of LGBT rights throughout Latin America – the politically powerful Catholic Church. Now, Catholic leaders speak out against any LGBT initiatives that AHMNP proposes (Ammon March 2010). Besides the anti-LGBT stance of the Catholic Church and the influence of machismo, the movement also faces a major lack of LGBT participants.

Panama’s cities have a lively LGBT nightlife, but low (less than 500 people) attendance at annual public Pride parades. This willingness to be openly LGBT around the community but not publicly suggests that LGBT Panamanians may fear social stigma (Chesnut 2009). LGBT students traveling to Panama may want to keep this in mind when determining whether to disclose their sexual orientation during a trip.

Peru

Homosexual relations are legal in Peru, but police and state attitudes towards the LGBT community have historically been inconsistent (ILGA). Along with the Latin American forces of machismo and the anti LGBT influence of the Catholic Church, LGBT residents of Peru must deal with another anti-LGBT force – the Serenazgo. The Serenazgo, a police force in Lima, is notorious for homophobic and transphobic violence, though it is rarely prosecuted. Serenazgo hate crimes are not constant and seem to spike for specific periods of time, so LGBT students traveling to Peru should check LGBT current events to monitor any recent human rights issues.

The Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (MHOL) was the first LGBT organization established in Peru and its efforts have left a positive mark on the LGBT climate in Lima. It was formed in 1983 after the dictatorship in Peru collapsed and has been instrumental in organizing events and campaigning for social, political and legal equality for LGBT people (Historia 2010). Lima, the capital of Peru, seems to be relatively tolerant for MHOL’s efforts; despite some slight interference from police, a very public “Besos Contra la Homofobia” (Kisses Against Homophobia, modeled after a French event) was held on February 14 2010 (Noticias Nacionales 2010). This and other events are helping to change the LGBT climate in Peru for the better.

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Asia

China

As of April 2010, homosexual relations are legal in China, though there is no national recognition of same sex partnerships or gay adoption rights (ILGA). There is also no law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, though activists are campaigning for one (Chu & McLeod 2010). Since the law used to criminalize homosexuality was overturned in 1997 and homosexuality was removed from the China Psychiatric Association’s list of mental disorders in 2001, there have been signs that the historically taboo treatment of anything LGBT-related is changing in China (Lau 2010). There is no doubt that the social perception of the LGBT community has improved in China in recent years, but the degree of this change is based on location and perception. The community’s presence in cities has increased significantly as urban China has experienced rapid economic and social globalization (Ho 2009). It also doesn’t hurt that China is mostly secular and influential Confucian teachings don’t comment on homosexuality. In 2008, an LGBT Center was established in Beijing; in 2009, activists organized the country’s first Pride celebration in Shanghai, a project that had been shut down five years earlier (Lau 2010). These signs of progress are tempered by the fact that many LGBT Chinese people are still “closeted” because of social pressures.

The pressure in Chinese culture to continue the family line has led many gay men (and presumably lesbians) to enter heterosexual marriages and start a family. There are so many of these that wives of gay men, self-proclaimed “tongqi,” have created support networks and begun speak out against the practice and the social stigma that causes it (Homosexuality in China 2010). Though China may not have the most thriving LGBT culture, it does seem to have a low level of violence towards LGBT people (Lau 2010). Still, with the pace of change in LGBT rights in China, LGBT students should check current events before departing.

Adult, consensual and non-commercial homosexuality has been legal in the mainland People’s Republic of China since 1997. Same-sex couples are not permitted to adopt children and do not have the same rights as heterosexual married couples. Homosexuality was removed from the Ministry of Health’s list of mental illnesses in 2001, but the public health campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic does include education for men who have sex with men. There is no anti-discrimination law or policy currently in place. Overall, the attitude of the Chinese government towards LGBT individuals has been described with the Chinese idiom “不支持, 不反对, 不提倡 (not encouraging, not discouraging and not promoting).” However, as in the US, acceptance of LGBT individuals varies widely in China according to region and city. Westernized cities such as Shanghai and Beijing are more diverse and tolerant of LGBT individuals, while smaller cities and towns may not be familiar or accepting of the idea of homosexuality. This is partly due to the culture of conformity in China; everyone is expected to marry, produce male offspring, and continue the familial blood line. Thus, many gay Chinese men lead “double lives,” marrying women
India

India is currently in a state of transition regarding treatment of the LGBT community. Though homosexual relationships have historically been forbidden under the Indian penal code, the New Delhi 10 High Court decriminalized adult homosexual relationships on July 2, 2009 (Venkatraman 6). Combined with the re-launch earlier in 2009 of India’s only LGBT magazine after a seven-year hiatus, this may symbolize a change in LGBT relations in a country that has largely ignored or condemned the LGBT community (Phukan 12). Students should still monitor current events, as a political or legal backlash to these progressive events is possible. The High Court’s ruling did not make homosexuality socially and culturally acceptable. The huge influence that religion has on society in India means that a major cultural change will have to come from religious leaders. Leaders of the Orthodox Islam and Christianity churches in India have publicly declared opposition to the ruling. Because the major religion, Hinduism, doesn’t directly condemn homosexuality, its leaders are split in opinion on the decriminalization. The stance that Hindu spiritual leaders reach on this issue will likely have a major effect on the treatment of LGBT people in India (Venkatraman 6-7). Again, LGBT students should monitor current events regarding the LGBT community before departure.

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Japan

In Japan, homosexual relationships are legal and citizens have the ability to change gender on official documents (ILGA). Human Rights Watch and other groups are currently seeking a bill prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation (Kato 2009). As in many other Asian cultures, the Japanese LGBT community is not as public as in some Western nations. LGBT activists in Japan are also not vocal (Kato 2009). However, in the 2009 elections, power shifted towards political parties that are supportive of LGBT rights. Activists hope that this will bring positive changes for the LGBT community in Japan (Kato 2009). The boundaries of gender expression in Japan are significantly different than those of the U.S., especially for men. Japanese men, famous for their style, have made common such styles as pierced ears, long hair and, most recently, skirts and kilts. Though these fads are adopted predominately by fashion-forward heterosexual men, their presence has led to general cultural acceptance of more fluid physical expressions of gender (Kaneko 2010). As political power and perceptions of the LGBT community are changing, LGBT students traveling to Japan should research current events for an update.

Japan has very open gay scenes in its larger cities, but there is still widespread denial of homosexuality. Change of legal sex following a sex reassignment surgery has been allowed since 2008. As in China, many gay men also marry women in order to fulfill societal norms and thus lead “double lives.” There are currently no laws against homosexuality, but there is no recognition of same-sex relationships. Gay culture is appearing more in popular media. Japan also held its first Rainbow Week in April 2013 with an aim to reach out to LGBT individuals in the country.

Kazakhstan

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Kazakhstan face legal challenges and discrimination not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Kazakhstan, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-sex married couples.

In 2009, Kazakhstan co-sponsored the opposing statement to the United Nations Declaration on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is legal in Kazakhstan since 1998. The age of consent is 16.

Prior to 1997, Article 104 Penal Code of Kazakhstan used to criminalize "buggery". This legislation followed the corresponding Section 121 from the former Soviet Union, which only specifically criminalized anal intercourse between men.

LGBT people in Kazakhstan face discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity during the course of their everyday lives. Manifestation of negative attitudes toward LGBT people, such as social exclusion, taunting, and violence often cause the victims physical, psychological and emotional harm. In order to avoid the dangers posed by people who do not approve of non-heterosexual sexual orientations, many LGBT people feel compelled to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity a secret from almost all people in their lives. The majority regard it as necessary to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity from people in the workplace in order to retain their jobs and avoid hostility from bosses and co-workers. Attempts to report homophobic and transphobic violence to police are often met with resistance and even hostility on the part of law enforcement officers.

A 2011 cross-national study by University of Chicago has demonstrated that a trend of LGBT acceptance is either slowed or reversed in Russia or other former USSR republics, a direct opposite of world trends.

Nepal

Nepal is the most open country in South Asia for LGBT rights and has recognized LGBT rights in higher standards. The Nepalese government, following the monarchy that ended in 2007, legalized homosexuality in 2007 along with the introduction of several new laws. Based on the ruling of the Supreme Court of Nepal in late 2008, the government is looking into legalizing same-sex marriage. According to several sources, the new Nepalese constitution, which is currently being drafted, will include same-sex marriage and protection for sexual minorities. The human rights organization Blue Diamond Society, established in 2001, seeks to represent LGBT people in Nepal politically and provide assistance with sexual health in the community. A drop-in center exists in Kathmandu.

However, according to the Blue Diamond Society, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and Metis (cross-dressing males) sometimes suffer from violence, rape, abuse, blackmailing and murder threats and continue to be discriminated against or even abused in work places.

South Korea

In South Korea, male and female homosexual relationships are legal but are not yet recognized by marriages, civil unions or legal partnership benefits (ILGA; Pettid). Citizens are offered some allowances for changing their gender on official documents, perhaps indicating a level of acceptance of transgenderism in the country (ILGA). Socially, it seems that South Korean culture tends to encourage discretion regarding sexual orientation and gender identity because of an overall emphasis on keeping a mainstream public appearance. LGBT citizens in South Korea are more likely to be “out” around friends than in the public sphere. However, this social stigma is suspended somewhat in “kijich’ŏn,” or the areas surrounding military bases. These are specially designated for tourists by the South Korean government and are subject to different legal and social standards than the rest of the country, including standards regarding the LGBT community; most of the nation’s LGBT nightclubs are located in these kijich’ŏn (Pettid). As many metropolitan areas and universities are near U.S. military bases, it is likely that Education Abroad programs to South Korea will be located near kijich’ŏn and therefore will experience these more liberal social standards. LGBT students should monitor current events in South Korea and check the status of the specific areas they’ll be visiting.

References: https://educationabroad.global.usf.edu/_customtags/ct_FileRetrieve.cfm?File_ID=51978
Taiwan

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights in Taiwan (ROC) have been regarded as some of the most progressive in East Asia and Asia in general. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity are legal, however, same-sex couples and houses headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the legal protections available to opposite-sex couples. The executive branch in the Republic of China government (Executive Yuan) proposed the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2003, however, the bill received opposition and was not voted on. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in education and employment have been banned statewide since 2003 and 2007, respectively. The Taiwan Pride in 2012 was attended by more than 65,000 citizens, making it the largest LGBT event in Asia, which has led many to refer to the Republic of China as one of the most liberal locations in Asia as well. Adult, private, non-commercial and consensual same-sex sexual activity is legal in Taiwan (ROC). A poll of 6,439 adults released in April 2006 by the National Union of Taiwan Women's Association/Constitutional Reform Alliance concluded that 75% believe homosexual relations are acceptable, while 25% thought they were unacceptable.

A 2013 poll showed that 53% of Taiwanese support same-sex marriage. According to the poll 76% are in favor of equal rights for gay and lesbians.

In 2007, the legislature of Taiwan (ROC), the Legislative Yuan, passed legislation banning discrimination based on sexual orientation at work. Discrimination against sexual orientation in education has been banned since 2003 through the Gender Equity Education Act. In March 2010, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan) announced that, starting from 2011, school textbooks would include topics on LGBT human rights and non-discrimination. According to the Ministry, the reform seeks to "root out discrimination", since "students should be able to grow up happily in an environment of tolerance and respect"

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Taiwan_(ROC)
South East Asia

Cambodia

Same-sex sexual activity is legal in Cambodia. While traditional cultural mores tend to be tolerant in this area, even expressly providing support for people of an intermediate or third gender, LGBT rights legislation has not yet been enacted by the ruling government. The Khmer language recognises male ("pros") and female ("srey") as the dominant genders, but also includes term kteuy (equivalent to the Thai "kathoey") for a third gender intermediate between the other two: it describes a person who has the external physical characteristics of either pros or srey but behaves in a manner appropriate to the other. As in Thailand, the term kathoey now refers almost exclusively to the physiologically masculine pair of this term – i.e., physical males who have a female identity, most often expressed in cross-dressing.

The broad category of kteuy covers two distinct sub-groupings, "short hairs" and "long hairs". Short hairs (sak klay) are men who dress and identify as men but have sex with "real" men; they are usually married, and very few of them have sex exclusively with men. Long hairs (sak veng, also called srey sros, "charming girls"), identify and behave as women, and may use hormones and surgery to change their physical sex. They call themselves kteuy, but may be insulted if outsiders use this term.

"Real men" (pros pith brakat), men who identify, appear and behave as "pros", are the object of desire for both long and short hairs. All "real men" are, or will be, married; some have sex only with women, but others have a range of sexual partners.

Kteuy face significant problems of social acceptance (including issues relating to marriage and children) and violence. The general social environment towards kteuy is tolerant, but those who transgress gender behaviour are nevertheless treated with contempt and subject to discrimination ("real men" with important jobs who engage in same-sex relations hide their lifestyles). Some "real men" are violently prejudiced against non-real men, and may attack or rape them. (Former King Sihanouk once commented that "real men", not minorities, are the source of violence in society).

The cultural tolerance of LGBT people has yet to advance LGBT-rights legislation. While the cultural mores and Buddhism tends to produce a degree of tolerance for LGBT people, harassment and discrimination still occurs and there is also intense social pressure to marry and raise a family.

Cambodia’s first ever LGBT Pride celebration was held in 2003 in the capital city of Phnom Penh. It is now a yearly event that openly celebrates the diversity of Cambodia. Once a taboo subject, there is an increasing acceptance for homosexuality among Cambodians. In 2006, about 400 Cambodians in the Gay and Lesbian communities came to support and celebrate Gay Pride.

Myanmar

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons in Myanmar (also known as Burma) face legal challenges and discrimination not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Same sex sexual activity is illegal in Burma and punishable by fines and imprisonment for ten years to life. The past authoritarian nature of the government made it difficult to obtain accurate information about the legal or social status of LGBT Burmese citizens. However, along with the ongoing political reforms, improvements in media and civil freedoms have allowed LGBT people to gain more and more recognition in the country. Burma does not recognize a same-sex marriage or civil union performed in another nation, nor does it permit such legal recognition internally.

In 2003, FocusAsia (Star TV) aired a story about the Nat Kadaws. The "Utopia Guide to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar & Vietnam" references "transgender shaman channeling spirits at Myanmar sacred festivals. Yet, within Burma itself, no formal gay bars or LGBT-rights organizations exist. There are only some unconfirmed reports that certain nightclubs in the cities that are a reputation for both heterosexual and LGBT clientele. Despite the illegal nature of it, homosexuality and gender expression has become more visible in Burma, especially after the political reforms. Gay and lesbian couples freely cohabit in major cities like Yangon and Mandalay, though they are not legally allowed to marry. The increased media freedom has also allowed journalists to report on the gay and lesbian community. Same-sex couples have also been able to celebrate ceremonial marriages in major cities without any legal persecution.

Burma also celebrated its first gay pride in several cities around the country in 2012, to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Myanmar
Singapore

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Singapore face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Male same-sex sexual activity is illegal, though the law is generally not enforced.

Singaporean government representatives have previously spoke glowingly of the conditions faced by LGBT citizens at a United Nations anti-discrimination committee; "homosexuals are free to lead their lives and pursue their social activities. Gay groups have held public discussions and published websites, and there are films and plays on gay themes and gay bars and clubs in Singapore." Whilst some 75% of Singaporeans oppose same-sex marriage and same-sex sexual activity (according to polling conducted in 2014), in recent years record crowds of approximately 28,000 have attended Singapore’s annual gay rights rally, with a heavy bent toward younger demographics. No laws exist specifically protecting LGBT Singaporeans from discrimination in the workplace, housing or any other relevant areas. Previous attempts claim damages for alleged discriminatory conduct in such fields have been dismissed in Singaporean courts. Singapore does not recognize relationships of same-sex couples in any form. Post-operative transgender individuals have, since January 1996, been permitted to marry a person of the opposite sex.

Thailand

Although there is no overt persecution of LGBT people, Thai society does not wholly accept sexual and gender minorities. Attitudes towards LGBT individuals can be somewhat tolerant as long as LGBT people remain within certain social confines. Hostile attitudes may lurk below the surface of individuals and parts of society that do not express their views openly. There is a lack of understanding about the specific struggles and needs of LGBT people. Arguably, the greatest and often most important struggle that a Thai LGBT individual faces is that of family acceptance. Being respectful to the wishes of one’s parents and upholding a family reputation is fundamental to how a Thai individual conducts their life, which can run counter to those with sexual orientation or gender identity that do not conform to social norms.

Even though Thailand’s Constitution and numerous ratified human rights resolutions and conventions prohibit discrimination, specific laws that refer to sexual orientation and gender identity do not exist. Sodomy was decriminalized in 1956. Homosexuality is no longer considered a mental illness by the Ministry of Health; however, transsexuality is still pathologized. A proposal to include sexual identities under the anti-discrimination clause of the 2007 constitution was rejected. Transgender individuals cannot change their gender on identity papers. Existing marriage laws specifically reference only men and women, reflecting a traditional interpretation of gender and family structure. All biological males in Thailand are required to serve in the military. However, transgender women, including any biological males who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) or any form of surgery to physically appear more feminine, are not allowed to serve in the military. Until 2011, they were given a letter of dismissal stating ‘Permanent Mental Disorder’ as the cause. After much lobbying by the LGBT community, the letter now states the cause as “Gender Identity Disorder.” Legal and policy reform is seen as difficult both because lawmakers tend to be conservative, and because the constitution and country’s laws are seen as sacred.

LGBT behaviour and people who are seen as “abnormal” or “deviant” are not accepted by the norms of Thai society. There are those who choose not to conform to the accepted gender norms and societal constructs and there are also those who passively accept their situations out of the need to become a “good” person as mandated by prevailing social norms. Common terminology used to address LGBT people in Thai society are: persons of the third gender, purple folk, tom, dee, gay, men who love men, kathoey, khon kham phet, saw praphet song, women who love women, lesbian, and bisexual (Ojanen, 2009). Although many of these terms were coined with a pejorative connotation, the LGBT community has normalized most by taking ownership of them. Often LGBT individuals are segregated into a group referred to as the “other gender” and considered inherently abnormal because they do not fit into the sexuality and gender constructs widely accepted by society. Although there is no overt persecution, albeit no protection either, of LGBT people, Thai society does not wholly accept sexual and gender minorities. Attitudes towards LGBT individuals can be somewhat tolerant as long as LGBT people remain within certain social confines and are not particularly visible. Hostile attitudes may lurk below the surface of individuals and parts of society that do not express their views openly. For example, a community member
who attended the dialogue noted a conversation he had with a taxi driver who said to him of Dr. Seri Wongmontha, an outspoken gay media persona and supporter of Thailand’s People’s Alliance for Democracy political party, “if he doesn’t know what sex he is, how could he possibly know his politics?” It can be generally stated that there is a lack of understanding of human rights principles by Thai society. This translates into a frequent lack of understanding or sympathy for LGBT individuals who face discrimination. Examples include discrimination in health care settings, in dealings with persons of authority, in education, in the pursuit of employment, and in being prohibited from entering certain establishments.

Though society may tolerate LGBT individuals, there is a lack of understanding about the specific struggles and needs of this minority group (Ojanen 2009). More effective strategies for increasing understanding and acceptance of LGBT people would be to build empathy with them rather than using human rights discourse, and to use the language and framing devices of morality. With a government survey conducted nationwide in 2012 showing that over 60% of respondents were opposed to same-sex marriage (Bangkok Post, 2013), could it be argued that marriage is a moral good, one that is useful for stability in society, rather than arguing for the “right” to be married? Arguably, the greatest and often most important struggle that Thai LGBT individuals face is the struggle for family acceptance. Being respectful to the wishes of one’s parents and upholding a family reputation is fundamental to how a Thai individual conducts their life. The fear of bringing shame to the family and parents lead many LGBT people to remain closeted, move away from home, and struggle with self-stigma (Samakkeekarom & Taesombat, 2013).

References:
http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/Being_LGBT_in_Asia_Thailand_Country_Report.pdf (this resource also has personal stories attached to it and has some facts and figures about HIV in the region)
Africa

The continent of Africa contains a wide variety of cultures with differing attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity, many of which are negative; any LGBT student should research his or her destination before traveling to Africa. Some areas, like Cape Town, South Africa, are growing in popularity as LGBT vacation destinations because of liberal attitudes towards sexual orientation and are relatively safe (Out Magazine). Others, however, can be dangerous for travelers in a social and legal sense. A recent increase in legal movements and violence against homosexuals in areas of Africa that were considered to be relatively tolerant, like Senegal, warrants special attention for LGBT students travelling to the continent (Callimachi 2010). Though Africans tend to act familiar towards members of the same sex in a way that might be considered "gay" by American standards, such as men holding hands with men, there is a strong social stigma in most areas against the LGBT community. This comes from a sense of strict Christian influence on perception of the issue and the association of homosexuality with Western culture.

Many African leaders have referred to homosexuality as an invasive, un-African import and this seems to be a widely held cultural belief as well. Gender roles, especially the perceived masculinity of males, are often rigidly held. Deviations from the norm on gender identity are also often reacted to negatively. The repercussions of violating cultural standards for sexual orientation or gender identity can range from social tension to violence. Travelers should take care when deciding whether to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity in a social situation if it varies from cultural standards. (NYU Student-to Student Guide) In Mauritania, Sudan and regions of Nigeria and Somalia, same sex acts are punishable by death. The penalty is for these acts is 11 years to life in prison in Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Tanzania, and other regions of Nigeria. The penalty is between a month and ten years imprisonment in Botswana, Ghana, Eritrea, Algeria, Ethiopia, the Comoros, Egypt, Libya, Guinea, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon, Togo, Senegal, Western Sahara, Mauritius, Zimbabwe and other regions of Somalia (Van Der Westhuizen 2009). The laws enforcing these penalties often apply only to male-to-male sexual acts and include no penalties for lesbian acts.

References: https://educationabroad.global.usf.edu/_customtags/ct_FileRetrieve.cfm?File_ID=51978
Botswana

Homosexuality is a taboo subject in Botswana. It is commonly seen as a "Western" "disease" and "un-African". Although same-sex sexual acts remain illegal, their prosecution is rare according to a 2004 publication. The U.S. Department of State’s 2011 Human Rights Report found that, "The country has no law explicitly criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity. However, what the law describes as 'unnatural acts' are criminalized, and there is widespread belief this is directed toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. Police did not target same-sex activity, and there were no reports of violence against persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity during the year."

Although same-sex sexual acts remain illegal, their prosecution is rare according to a 2004 publication.

Botswana’s primary LGBT rights organization is "Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LeGaBiBo)". The government has twice rejected its application to be registered; therefore, LeGaBiBo’s ability to raise funds is limited. The registrar said that it could not register any group that "is likely to be used for any unlawful purpose or any purpose prejudicial to or incompatible with peace, welfare or good order in Botswana". In 2013, fourteen members of LeGaBiBo engaged Unity Dow to sue the Botswana government to force it to register the organization. The High Court ruled in November 2014 that LeGaBiBo must be registered. Same-sex couples have no legal recognition. The Employment Act has prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation since 2010.

Ghana

In Ghana, male-to-male sexual acts are illegal and punishable by 10 or more years of imprisonment (ILGA). The Education Abroad department recommends that students obey the laws of the country they're studying in. In addition to the social stigma in African culture against homosexuality mentioned in the above section and the illegality of homosexual acts in Ghana, students should be aware of specific cyberspace risks regarding Ghana. An internet search engine query for information about homosexuality and Ghana will yield pages of online personal advertisements from young gay Ghanaian men claiming to want to meet Americans and other pages accusing these same men of blackmailing tourists (Haute 2009). Neither source is particularly credible or verifiable, but the accusations certainly merit caution on the part of students in cyberspace interactions.

Sexual activity between males is illegal, while there is no legislation regarding sexual activity between females. On July 21, 2011, Paul Evans Aidoo, the Western Region Minister, called for all gay people in the west of the country to be rounded up and arrested, and for landlords and tenants to inform on people they suspected of being gay. Gay culture is very hard to find in Accra, and many rural Ghanaians are not familiar with the idea of homosexuality. As with any unfamiliar LGBT culture, one should also approach meeting places and relationships with caution and discretion. There have been some reports of scams that were carried out through LGBT websites and meeting places.

Kenya

Homosexuality is "largely considered to be taboo and repugnant to [the] cultural values and morality" of Kenya, and the state punishes same-sex sexual acts as crimes. Despite this, various organizations are working to protect and improve LGBT rights. According to the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 96 percent of Kenyan residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept, which was the fifth-highest rate of non-acceptance in the 45 countries surveyed. The non-governmental Kenya Human Rights Commission published, in 2011, the first research paper on the legal and social status of LGBTI people in Kenya. Among those who came out or were outed to their family members, 89 percent reported that they were disowned. Employees were reported to have been terminated or subjected to hostility, ridicule, humiliation, and discrimination when their sexual orientation or gender identity became known in the workplace. Traditional religious and cultural values play a substantial role in this figures. Leaders within the three dominate religions in Kenya, Catholic, Anglican and Islamic, condemn homosexuality and transgenderism as signs of decadence, disease, and immorality.

Morocco

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Morocco face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Morocco. Morocco’s statute and culture towards LGBT issues stands in stark contrast to that of neighboring Spain. Article 489 of the Penal Code of Morocco criminalizes “lewd or unnatural acts with an individual of the same sex.” Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Morocco and can be punished with anything from 6 months to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of 120 to 1200 dirhams. However, the law is sporadically enforced by the authorities, with a degree of tolerance extended to homosexuality in the holiday resorts like Marrakesh. Often these relationships are a form of prostitution, involving tourists.

The legal status of LGBT people living in Morocco stems largely from traditional Islamic morality, which views homosexuality and cross dressing as signs of immorality. There is no legal recognition of same-sex couples. Discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is not addressed in any civil rights laws. Some Moroccan citizens were raised to believe that homosexuality and gender identity are signs of western decadence or immorality and the government has not been especially eager to formally address the issue of LGBT-rights in Morocco. Morocco has a macho culture, with rigid gender roles that requires a male, regardless of his sexual orientation, to get married and have children. The government has also reportedly stepped up its crackdowns on homosexuality with several public arrests.

Namibia

Namibia has a history lacking of laws supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) citizens. Sodomy is illegal in Namibia, and is punishable with prison time. In 2005, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, Teopolina Mushelenga, claimed that lesbians and gay men betrayed the fight for Namibian freedom, were responsible for the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and were an insult to African culture. In 2001, President Sam Nujoma warned about forthcoming purges against gays and lesbians in Namibia, saying "the police must arrest, imprison and deport homosexuals and lesbians found in Namibia." Home Affairs Minister Jerry Ekandjo in 2000 urged 700 newly graduated police officers to "eliminate" gays and lesbians "from the face of Namibia".

Senegal

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Senegal face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Senegal specifically outlaws same-sex sexual acts and, in the past, has prosecuted men accused of homosexuality. LGBT persons face routine discrimination in society. According to the 2013 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 97 percent of Senegal residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept, a figure unchanged from 2007.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Senegal
South Africa

Although the Constitutional and legal system in South Africa theoretically ensure equality, social acceptance is generally lacking, especially outside of urban areas in the eastern half of the country. A 2008 survey found that 84% of South Africans said homosexual sexual behavior is always wrong, compared to 8% who said that it is not wrong at all. In a 2013 survey, 61% said society should not accept homosexuality.

Despite the occasional incidents of homophobia, gay people in major urban areas, such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town, are fairly accepted, and all of these cities have a thriving gay nightlife. Cultural, arts, sports and outdoor activities play a major part in everyday South African gay life. Annual Gay pride events are held in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. Smaller cities such as Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and East London, too, cater for gay people. Knysna hosts the yearly Pink Loerie Mardi Gras, which attracts gay people from all over the country.

References: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_South_Africa#cite_note-55](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_South_Africa#cite_note-55)
Tanzania

Homosexuality in Tanzania is a socially taboo topic, and same-sex sexual acts are crimes punishable by the state. According to the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 95 percent of Tanzanian residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept, which was the seventh-highest rate of non-acceptance in the 45 countries surveyed. Throughout Tanzania, sex acts between men are illegal and carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Sex acts between women are not mentioned specifically in mainland Tanzanian law.

The semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar outlaws same-sex sexual acts between women with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and a 500,000 shilling fine. There are no gay bars, although there are places where gay men meet. Lesbians are less visible than gay men. The traditional view of homosexuality assumes one man, the msenge, will play the role of a female (for money or because he himself is impotent, not because he wants to), while the basha, the dominant partner, is assumed to have relations with women as well as men. The msenge is more heavily stigmatized than the basha by Tanzanian tradition.

Homophobia is very high. There are no hospitals where LGBT people can access treatment. The government has no programs to prevent HIV infection among the LGBT community.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Tanzania
Uganda

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Uganda have no specific legal protections. Activists estimated in 2007 that the Ugandan gay community consisted of 500,000 people.

Both male and female homosexual activity is illegal. Under the Penal Code, "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" between two males carries a potential penalty of life imprisonment.

According to the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 96 percent of Ugandan residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept, which was the fifth-highest rate of non-acceptance in the 45 countries surveyed.[3] A poll conducted in 2010, however, revealed that 11 percent of Ugandans viewed homosexual behavior as being morally acceptable. Among other members of the East African Community, only 1 percent in Tanzania, 4 percent in Rwanda, and 1 percent in Kenya had the same view. (Burundi was not surveyed.)

In November 2012, the speaker of the Parliament of Uganda promised to enact a revised anti-homosexuality bill, providing for harsher penalties against suspected LGBT people and anyone who fails to report them to authorities, including long-term imprisonment and the death penalty for what the law terms "repeat offenders". Despite the criminal laws and prevailing attitudes, the government has not expressly banned Uganda residents from trying to change public policies and attitudes with regards to LGBT people.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Uganda
Middle East

In Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen, the laws state that if a person is found of engaging in same gender sexual behavior, a death penalty would be granted.

According to Country Reports of US Department of State, in Saudi Arabia, there are no LGBT organizations. Furthermore the reports of official and social discrimination on sexual orientation remains unfounded because of social pressure of not to discuss LGBT matters.

The report of Human Rights Watch in relation with the LGBT rights in the Middle East includes:

In a few places, like Egypt and Morocco, sexual orientation and gender identity issues have begun to enter the agendas of some mainstream human rights movements. Now, unlike in earlier years, there are lawyers to defend people when they are arrested, and voices to speak up in the press. These vital developments were not won through identity politics. Those have misfired disastrously as a way of claiming rights in much of the Middle East; the urge of some western LGBT activists to unearth and foster 'gay' politics in the region is potentially deeply counterproductive. Rather, the mainstreaming was won largely by framing the situations of LGBT (or otherwise-identified) people in terms of the rights violations, and protections, that existing human rights movements understand. (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 18)

Klauda wrote that the Europeans had "have brought about and sorted out" homosexuals "as a distinct "minority" through a centuries-long process of normalization in the first place". By the late 20th century attitudes towards homosexuals were negative in the Middle East in Arab and Persian countries.

Israel is a notable exception, being more progressive concerning LGBT rights, recognizing unregistered cohabitation, and having a wide support for same-sex marriage

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_in_the_Middle_East
Egypt

LGBT-rights issues were not among the reforms demanded by any of the protesters or other dissidents during the 2011 revolution. The provisional constitution, approved by voters in 2011, does not specifically address LGBT-rights and the Egyptian government continued to oppose a failed United Nations declaration that would condemn anti-gay discrimination and harassment. Until 2001, the Egyptian government refused to recognize that homosexuality was the sexual identity for some of its residents, and after 2001, it only did so only to brush off criticism from human rights organizations and foreign politicians.

Culturally, most Egyptian citizens are Muslim, which impacts prevailing social biases and attitudes. Traditional Islamic morality does not condone homosexuality. According to Pew Research Center 95% Egyptians believe that homosexuality should not be accepted by society.

While the Egyptian legal system is strongly influenced by the civil law system, Islam is the official state religion. In fact the most recent Constitution stipulates that Islamic law shall be the main source of legislation (Article 2).

Homosexuality has recently become more visible in Egypt, thanks to the rise of social media and Arab Spring demonstrations. There was widespread Egyptian media coverage of the LGBT celebrations of International Day Against Homophobia. In recent years there has also been a rise in the number of bars and cafes catering to gays in Egypt, such as Alexandria.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Egypt#cite_note-1
Israel

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights in Israel is the most advanced in the Middle East and one of the most advanced in Asia. Same-sex sexual activity was legalized in 1988, although the former law against buggery had not been enforced since a court decision of 1963. Israel became the first in Asia to recognize unregistered cohabitation between same-sex couples, making it the only country in Asia to recognize any same-sex union thus far. Although same-sex marriages are not performed in the country, Israel recognizes same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, making it the first and only country in Asia to do so. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was prohibited in 1992. Same-sex couples are allowed to jointly adopt after a court decision in 2008, while previously allowing stepchild adoptions and limited co-guardianship rights for non-biological parents. Gays and lesbians are also allowed to serve openly in the military. Recent polls have indicated that a majority of Israelis support same-sex marriage, despite some social conservatism. Tel Aviv has frequently been referred to by publishers as one of the most gay friendly cities in the world, famous for its annual Pride Parade and gay beach, earning it the nickname "the gay capital of the Middle East" by Out magazine. According to LGBT travelers, it was ranked as the best gay city in 2011, despite reports of some LGBT violence during the 2000s, which were criticized by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres. A monument dedicated to the gay victims of the Holocaust was erected in Tel Aviv in 2014.

Same-sex marriage cannot legally be performed in Israel. Israeli law recognizes same-sex marriages performed elsewhere. Civil marriage doesn’t exist in Israel for heterosexual couples, either (except where both heterosexual spouses do not belong to any of the recognized religious communities in the country) and therefore only a marriage sanctioned by the small number of officially recognized religious authorities can take place within Israel. (This restriction forces not only gay couples, but also all mixed-religion heterosexual couples and any person who wishes a non-religious marriage, to marry outside the country.) Israel has an active gay community, with well attended annual gay pride festivals held in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem since 1998. Pride events are also held regularly in Haifa, Beer Sheva, Petah Tikva, Hadera, Ra’anana, Eilat and Rishon LeZion. Israel is one of only eleven foreign countries to have a chapter of the U.S. PFLAG group called TEHILA. A 2013 public opinion poll by Haaretz showed support for same-sex marriage at 59% among Israelis.

Jordan

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons may still face some legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in Jordan since 1951.

To date no law exists or has been proposed in the Jordanian parliament to address sexual identity-based discrimination or bias motivated crimes. Same-sex marriages, or more limited civil unions, are not legally recognized in Jordan and there is no public effort in Jordan to modify these laws.

However, outside the realm of LGBT rights and party politics there is a growing level of tolerance and visibility in certain artistic or chic-cosmopolitan parts of Jordan, especially in Amman.

In 1951, a revision of the Jordanian Criminal Code legalized private, adult, non-commercial, and consensual sodomy, with the age of consent set at 16.

Turkey

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons in Turkey face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT persons. Same-sex sexual activity was legalized in the Ottoman Empire (predecessor of Turkey) in 1858 and in modern Turkey, homosexual activity has always been a legal act since the day it has founded in 1923. LGBT people have had the right to seek asylum in Turkey under the Geneva Convention since 1951, but same-sex couples are not given the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples. Transsexuals have been allowed to change their legal gender since 1988. Although discrimination protections regarding sexual orientation and gender identity or expression have been legally debated, they have not yet been legislated.

Public opinion on homosexuality has generally been conservative and LGBT people have been widely reported to experience discrimination, harassment and even violence in recent years. Gay sexual conduct between consenting adults in private is not a crime in Turkey. The age of consent for both heterosexual and homosexual sex is 18. The criminal code also has vaguely worded prohibitions on "public exhibitionism," and "offenses against public morality" that are used to harass gay and transgender people. Turkish towns and cities are given some leeway to enact various "public morality" laws. Turkey does not recognize same-sex marriages, civil unions or domestic partnership benefits. LGBT persons in Turkey may face discrimination, harassment and even violence from their relatives, neighbors, coworkers, bosses, employees, teachers, and even members of the Turkish police. Homosexuality is widely a taboo subject in Turkey and the culture of "honour killings" can be observed in Turkish society families murdering members (usually female) who engage in sexual/moral behaviors regarded as inappropriate. An honor killing is the homicide of a member of a family by other members, due to the perpetrators' belief that the victim has brought shame or dishonor upon the family, or has violated the principles of a community or a religion, usually for reasons such as refusing to enter an arranged marriage, being in a relationship that is disapproved by their family, having sex outside marriage, becoming the victim of rape, dressing in ways which are deemed inappropriate, or engaging in homosexual relations.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Turkey
UAE

Both civil law and sharia criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity. Under sharia individuals who engage in consensual same-sex sexual conduct are subject to the death penalty. Dubai’s penal code allows for up to a 10-year prison sentence for such activity. There were prosecutions for consensual same-sex activity during the year. At times the government subjected persons against their will to psychological treatment and counseling for consensual same-sex activity.

Due to social conventions and potential persecution, LGBT organizations did not operate openly, nor were gay pride marches or gay rights advocacy events held. Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination. Wearing clothing deemed inappropriate for one’s gender is a punishable offense under the law. The government deported foreign residents and referred to the public prosecutor any individuals who wore clothing deemed inappropriate. For example, in June authorities sentenced two Filipino men to one-month jail sentences, followed by deportation, for wearing women’s clothing in public.

Sexual relations outside of a traditional, heterosexual marriage are a crime. The death penalty applies for homosexuality. Punishments range from jail time, fines, deportation, and the death penalty. Adultery and fornication are also crimes, and a person convicted of homosexuality may also face charges of adultery if they have a spouse while having sexual relations with a person of the same sex. The laws, some of which were introduced by the British during the colonial period, are still vigorously enforced.

References: http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper
Oceania

Australia

The state and social attitude towards the LGBT community in Australia is, in some respects, more progressive than it is in the United States. As in most developed nations, tolerance levels vary by region and cities are generally more accepting of the LGBT community than rural areas. Depending on the destination, LGBT travelers to Australia may even find themselves more comfortable being "out" than they do at home. The major difference between the Australian and U.S. views on the LGBT community is the reliance on boundaries. Scholars note that Australians in and out of the community seem to put less importance on labels of sexual orientation and gender than we do in the U.S. (Worth 151). LGBT travelers to the progressive areas of the country may find less pressure to conform to gender norms.

According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association, homosexuals can serve in the military, citizens can change their gender on official documents and discrimination on the basis of gender identity is illegal in Australia. Adoption rights for homosexual parents and substitutes for marriage exist in some areas (ILGA). Though LGBT organizations exist across the nation, they are most concentrated in the Victoria region between Melbourne and Sydney, site of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, one of the largest LGBT events in the world. Tasmania, the last to overturn Australia's ban on homosexuality, used to be considered more conservative than other states on many social issues. However, it now has some of the most progressive relationship legislation in the world (Relationships Tasmania 2008). Regardless of the high acceptance levels, students should still research LGBT-relevant current events in their destination before traveling. Some students may also want to enjoy the LGBT celebrations and events while in Australia.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights in Australia have gradually progressed since the late-20th century, to the point where anti-discrimination laws protect LGBT people in many areas of employment and service access, and same sex couples enjoy many of the same rights and benefits as nonSAME-sex couples – with the notable exception of marriage.

Australia is a federation of several states and territories, meaning many of its laws with respect to LGBT and intersex rights originate from a sub-jurisdictional level. States and territories began granting domestic partnership benefits and civil unions to same-sex couples from the mid 2000s and federal law recognizes same-sex couples as de facto unions. Same-sex marriage has been proposed to the Commonwealth Parliament multiple times, but the parliament has rejected the bills on all occasions. Marriage, for federal law purposes, is defined as the union of a man and woman. The Australian Capital Territory legalization of same-sex marriage was annulled by the High Court of Australia on the grounds that only the federal parliament has the constitutional and legal authority to legalize same-sex marriage. Same-sex adoption varies across each state and territory, with
some allowing both joint and step adoption whilst others have not legislated same-sex adoption altogether. Discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression also vary in each state and territory, though federal protection laws have been in place since 1 August 2013.

Transgender Australians are able to change their legal gender in all states and territories and are recognized as their desired gender. Androgynous and genderqueer Australians are legally able to register their gender as 'non-specific' on personal legal documents related to sex.

Australia has been referred to by publications as one of the most gay friendly countries in the world, with recent polls indicating that a majority of Australians support same-sex marriage. A 2013 poll conducted by Pew Research indicated that 79% of Australians viewed that homosexuality should be accepted by society, making it the fifth most supportive country in the world behind Spain (88%), Germany (87%), Canada and Czech Republic (both 80%). Because of its long history in regard to LGBT rights and its annual three-week-long Mardi Gras festival, Sydney has been named one of the most gay friendly cities in the country and in the world.

References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Australia,
Fiji

In 1997, Fiji became the second country in the world to explicitly protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation in its constitution. In 2009, the Constitution was abolished. The new constitution, promulgated in September 2013, bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Public displays of affection in general are considered offensive in Fiji.

Social mores regarding sexual orientation and gender identity tend to be conservative, with no organized campaign in Fiji to address LGBT-rights. Fiji family laws does not provide legal recognition of same-sex marriage or civil unions. Since 2002, the law expressly bans same-sex marriage.

New Zealand

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people have the same legal rights as other people in New Zealand. Sex between men was decriminalized in 1986. New Zealand enacted legislation that permitted civil unions in 2005, which allowed couples many of the same rights as married couples and same-sex marriage has been legalized and gone into effect since 19 August 2013. Discrimination on the basis of gender identity can also be cultural discrimination, as in New Zealand, several cultures have a history of differences in gender identity.

Transgender Maori people - *Tangata ira tane* (male who was born female), and *whakawahine, Hinehi, and Hinehua* (female who was born male) – were observed by the first European explorers to New Zealand. Likewise, many Pacific Island communities had traditionally accepted transgender people, such as *fa'afafine* from Samoa, *fakaleiti* in Tonga, and *Akava'ine* in the Cook Islands. Cultures which accept transgender people can create positive environments for its members to determine their own gender identity. Transgender people from these communities may be aware of the potential to transition earlier, and may be less likely to require or desire genital surgery. However, there are also general concerns that Maori patients have reduced health access and receive fewer referrals and medical tests. The Human Rights Act 1993 outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and, implicitly, gender identity/expression. Initially this law exempted government activities until 1999. In 1998 an Amendment Bill was introduced making this exemption permanent. This was abandoned following a change of government in 1999. The new Labour government instead passed another Amendment Act to apply the Human Rights Act to government activities, and also to create a new ability for the Courts to "declare" legislation inconsistent with the Act.