

Current Reality for LGBTQIA+ People in the United States

Prepared by [ReconcilingWorks](#)

Based on the [Movement Advancement Project \(MAP\)](#) Equality Maps

1. Overview of Equality Laws & Policy Landscape

MAP tracks over 50 [LGBTQ-related laws and policies](#) across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five populated U.S. territories. These policies influence how LGBTQIA+ people live their lives — including family recognition, discrimination protections, health care, youth protections, identity documents, and more.

Each state receives a “**policy tally**” score based on laws that *protect* or *harm* LGBTQ people — then is categorized:

- **High** — Strong protections
- **Medium**
- **Fair**
- **Low**
- **Negative** — More harmful than protective laws

This score helps show how welcoming or hostile a state’s legal environment is for LGBTQIA+ communities.

2. National Snapshot — Policy Tallies & Population Coverage

Policy Tally Distribution

According to the latest MAP data:

- **15 states + D.C.** have **High overall policy tallies**
- **5 states** have **Medium tallies**
- **3 states + 2 territories** have **Fair tallies**
- **10 states + 3 territories** have **Low tallies**
- **17 states** have **Negative tallies** (more harmful than protective)

This starkly shows that **a large portion of the U.S. remains legally challenging** for LGBTQIA+ people — with many states lacking protections or actively enacting harmful laws.

Population Coverage

- **40%** of the LGBTQ population lives in states with **high overall protections**
- **14%** in states with **low protections**
- **32%** in states with **negative protections** — meaning many LGBTQ people live in states where harmful laws outweigh protections.

Transgender Policy Landscape

- Only about **42%** of transgender people live in states with **high protections** for gender identity
- **37%** live in states with **negative protections** for gender identity — meaning many trans people face hostile legal conditions.

3. Nondiscrimination Protections — What Exists & What Doesn't

Not all states protect LGBTQIA+ people from discrimination:

- **Nondiscrimination laws** cover areas such as **employment, housing, public places, and credit/lending** when sexual orientation and gender identity are legally included as protected classes.
- In many states, **sexual orientation may be protected but gender identity is not**, or protections are only at **local levels (cities/counties)** rather than at the state level.

For example:

- **Arizona:** ~50% of the population lives under full protections for both sexual orientation and gender identity, but protections may rely on city ordinances rather than statewide laws.
- **Indiana:** Only ~33% of the population has full statewide protections — and overall the state has a *negative policy tally* on LGBTQ issues.
- **Minnesota:** While strong protections exist in some areas, it still has *negative laws* that restrict transgender youth in schools (e.g., sports participation consistent with gender identity).

This creates a **patchwork of protections** — where basic rights depend heavily on where a person lives.

4. Data Collection, Visibility, and Youth Inclusion

Data on LGBTQ identity and youth experiences is itself inconsistent across states:

- Only **58%** of LGBTQ adults live in states that include **sexual orientation and gender identity questions** in health surveys.
- For LGBTQ youth, many states do **not include these questions** in youth surveys — meaning youth experiences often go uncounted or unrecognized.

This lack of data affects policy understanding and advocacy efforts.

5. Geographic & Demographic Reality

Population Distribution

- MAP maps the **estimated number of LGBTQ people by state** — showing that LGBTQ adults and youth are distributed across all states,

with noticeable variations in percentages and absolute numbers of LGBTQ residents.

Variation by State

National laws no longer uniformly protect LGBTQ people; instead:

- Some states like [California](#) and [Colorado](#) have comprehensive laws **protecting LGBTQ rights**.
- Others, such as [Indiana](#) and **states with negative tallies**, have laws that leave LGBTQ people vulnerable to discrimination or restrict their rights.

[Public accommodation nondiscrimination laws](#) protect LGBTQ people from being unfairly refused service, denied entry to, or otherwise discriminated against in public places based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Public accommodation laws generally cover anywhere someone is when they are not at home, work, or school, including retail stores, restaurants, parks, hotels, doctors' offices, and banks. This map shows state public accommodation nondiscrimination laws that explicitly enumerate sexual orientation and/or gender identity as protected classes, as well as states that explicitly interpret existing sex protections to include sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Additionally, in states without state protections, municipalities may provide [local-level nondiscrimination protections](#).

