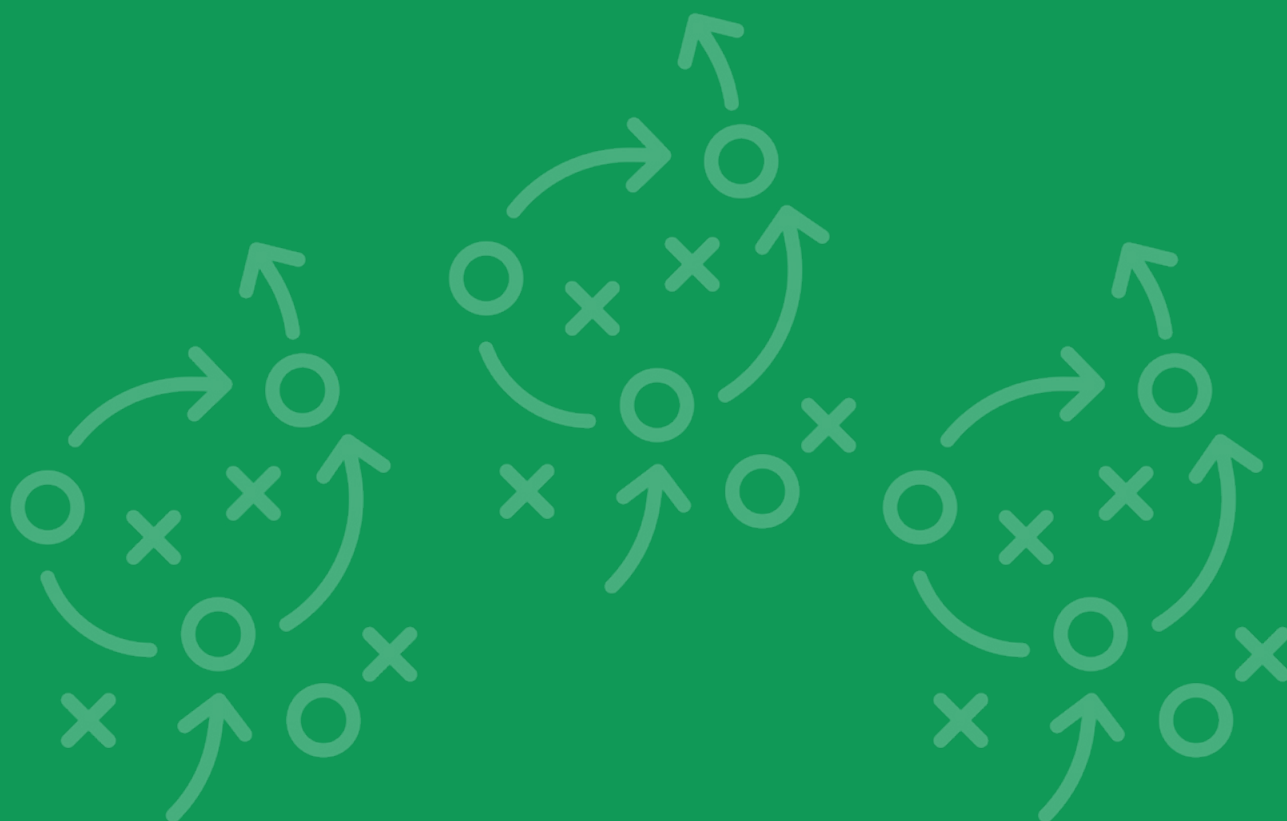


U.S. HOST CITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY AND INTERSEX INCLUSION AT THE FIFA WORLD CUP 2026



Centre for Sport
& Human Rights

GENERATION2026



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INTRODUCTION

Host Cities, not only have the responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) but also the opportunity to advance inclusiveness and build a lasting legacy well beyond 2026. With so many critical human rights standards to focus on, it can feel daunting to build in and execute strategies to make the FIFA World Cup 2026¹ experience as inclusive as possible for LGBTQI+ people, especially transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people.

To simplify the process, the Centre for Sport and Human Rights developed, in partnership with LGBTQI+ Sports Policy Consultant Danne Diamond, this resource to help guide host city committees in the United States to engage with community members and organizations in host cities, and in creating a lasting positive legacy related to LGBTQI+ human rights, with an emphasis on transgender, nonbinary, and intersex youth.

This resource will:

- Give an overview of the current legislative landscape in the United States;
- Discuss the impacts of legislation and the current climate facing transgender, nonbinary, and intersex youth;
- Offer opportunities for Host Cities to build a positive legacy and suggestions for how to make change right now;
- Outline additional resources for continued learning and the most up-to-date information on the laws and policies that impacted LGBTQI+ people; and
- Provide an appendix with basic terminology and concepts around LGBTQI+ identity, with an emphasis on gender identity and sex characteristics.

As LGBTQI+ people and allies are already a massive fanbase globally, the cost of exclusion is high. In recent years, research has revealed that anti-LGBTQI+ laws and discrimination can cost as much as 1% of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), meaning a loss of billions of dollars every year.² From an economic and human rights perspective, creating inclusive environments for LGBTQI+ people to safely participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026 is a win-win.

¹ FIFA World Cup and FIFA World Cup 2026 are the official names of the men's senior tournament, and doesn't include the male designator. This document refers to the event by its official names.

² See <https://time.com/6297323/malaysia-1975-matty-healy-lgbt-economic-costs/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/25/counting-the-economic-cost-of-anti-lgbtq-laws>; and Badgett, M.V. Lee. 2020. *The Economic Case for LGBT Equality: Why Fair and Equal Treatment Benefits Us All*. Beacon Press.





OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE LANDSCAPE IN THE UNITED STATES

All people should be able to live a full and free life, including enjoying the power of a once-in-a-lifetime event like the FIFA World Cup. The reality is that LGBTQI+ people in the United States, and especially transgender, nonbinary, and intersex youth, are under sustained attack, and sport at different levels is being weaponized to marginalize and exclude a group of already vulnerable young people.

At the Federal level in the U.S., LGBTQI+ people do not have comprehensive nondiscrimination protections. What this means practically is that depending on which state you are in, fundamental rights as an LGBTQI+ person vary greatly. Nationally, LGBTQI+ people have the right to marry and can no longer be discriminated against in the workplace thanks to the *Bostock v. Clayton County Supreme Court* decision³, but they can still be denied housing, thrown out of a restaurant or sporting event, or be refused medical services in over half the country simply because they are LGBTQI+.⁴

Protections in states that will host tournament matches at the FIFA World Cup 2026 vary drastically. California and Washington do have state-wide comprehensive nondiscrimination protections. Georgia, Missouri, and Texas do not have state-wide nondiscrimination protections, though some cities do have city-level protections. Even though Pennsylvania does not have comprehensive nondiscrimination protections in legislation, some statewide administrative/ regulatory protections interpret "sex discrimination" to include sexual orientation and gender identity⁵ and several cities and counties have local protections.⁶ Even for cities with nondiscrimination ordinances (NDOs), there may be exceptions if those NDOs interfere with state laws. A detailed breakdown by state via the [Movement Advancement Project's Equality Maps](#) listed in the resource section.

The lack of laws and policies protecting LGBTQI+ people leads to a patchwork of protections that host cities should know and understand how to navigate

3 See a summary about this decision from Lambda Legal here: <https://lambdalegal.org/case/bostock-zarda-harris/>

4 See <https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/>

5 For more information, see: <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/protect-yourself/civil-rights/lgbtq-equality/>; <https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pabull?file=/secure/pabulletin/data/vol53/53-24/788.html> and MAP's breakdown of public accommodation laws and policies by state here: https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws/public-accommodations

6 See https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/PA



for each respective city context. For example, even though the city of Atlanta has full inclusive protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, Georgia prohibits a gender marker change on State IDs. Travelling throughout the state or country with an ID photo that does not match your gender marker is extremely dangerous; this can lead to increased harassment at airports, in hotels, and anywhere one may have to show ID.⁷ In Texas, Dallas has city-level comprehensive protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, but Houston does not.⁸ Further, Texas has a broad Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) law on the books that allows individuals and businesses to challenge an NDO that would "substantially burden" their ability to practice their religion. A religious freedom argument can be used to circumvent an NDO.⁹

Over the past several years, laws and policies have swept the U.S. focusing on criminalizing LGBTQI+ identities and attacking LGBTQI+ people in all areas of life. As the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) outlines in a 2023 report, opponents of LGBTQI+ equality are working toward five key goals: 1) invisibilizing LGBTQI+ youth in schools and public life; 2) criminalize and ban transition¹⁰ (social, medical, and legal) so transgender people can't be themselves; 3) enshrine inequality through laws and policies; 4) erect systemic and structural barriers (e.g. rolling back voting rights, gerrymandering), and 5) silence supporters of LGBTQI+ people through legal action and/or criminal penalties.¹¹

Diving deeper into sports, 25 states¹² have passed legislation or state policy banning transgender, nonbinary (and often intersex) youth, from playing K-12

7 For a detailed outline of how barriers to accessing the correct identity documents create significant barriers and harm for the transgender and nonbinary community, see: <https://www.mapresearch.org/file/ID-info-transgender-nonbinary-communities.pdf>

8 See https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/TX

9 "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is Discriminatory. Let's Fix It." Religion News. May 18, 2016. <https://religionnews.com/2016/05/18/the-religious-freedom-restoration-act-is-discriminatory-lets-fix-it/#>

10 Transition can mean a multitude of things, and there are many different ways to transition. There's no singular way to transition and no "right" way to transition. There are several potential parts of a transition that trans (or nonbinary) people may or may not choose. This includes making a social transition (changing name, pronouns, clothing/style expression, facilities used, etc.), a medical transition (medical interventions such as hormones, gender-affirming surgeries, puberty delaying intervention, etc.), or a legal transition (legally changing name, changing gender marker on documents such as ID, social security card, passport, birth certificate, etc). Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual's gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.

11 Movement Advancement Project (2023). Under Fire: The War on LGBTQ People in America. Available online at https://www.mapresearch.org/file/Under%20Fire%20report_MAP%202023.pdf

12 24 states passed legislation and one state – Alaska – has enacted a ban through state policy. For more, see TransAthlete.Com's Take Action section, available here: <https://www.transathlete.com/take-action>



school sports in line with their gender identity. Additionally, 22 of 25 states also ban athletes from participating in college sports,¹³ even if that college sport is a club or recreational level sport. At a time when sports outside of school are increasingly expensive and competitive, the reality is that the vast majority of trans, nonbinary and intersex youth in 25 states will not be able to experience the life-changing power of sports.

Some of this legislation extends to bathrooms, locker rooms, and other public spaces in an attempt to isolate and erase transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people from everyday life. In addition, lawmakers have introduced bills across the country focused on dismantling diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives,¹⁴ and other bills attempting to control the discussion of LGBTQI+ people in school and conversations about race through censorship of school curricula.¹⁵

In Florida, for example, The Safety in Private Spaces Act, or House Bill 1521, prohibits transgender people from using state-owned bathrooms that align with their gender identity. If a transgender person wanted to come to Miami for any FIFA World Cup 2026 games, it would be illegal for them to go to the bathroom that matches their gender identity in the airport, public parks, or any stadium or arena that is even partially municipally or publicly owned. Various news sources have also reported that this law has led to citizens policing people who they believe are transgender, including cisgender women, in other spaces like private restaurants, gyms, and movie theatres, where the law doesn't apply.¹⁶

As a Host City, it is essential to know the laws and policies that protect LGBTQI+ people – and the ones that put them at risk – to mitigate harm and proactively create safe spaces within stadia and fan zones. Despite discriminatory legislation and challenging environments, all Host Cities have an opportunity to do what is within their control to create a welcoming and supportive environment for the LGBTQI+ community.

Having an LGBTQI+ organization on a host city's stakeholder engagement council to provide feedback will be invaluable to this process and help create a blueprint for LGBTQI+ inclusion that will be used in other Host City and Host Country contexts for years to come.

¹³ For a detailed breakdown of the sports bans, see: <https://www.lgbtmap.org/img/maps/citations-sports-participation-bans.pdf>

¹⁴ For a thorough review into this topic, see The Chronicle of Higher Education's "Assault on DEI" series, available here: <https://www.chronicle.com/package/the-assault-on-dei>

¹⁵ Movement Advancement Project. March 2022. Policy Spotlight: Curriculum Censorship & Hostile School Climate Bills. www.lgbtmap.org/2022-spotlight-school-bills-report. Accessed May 9, 2024.

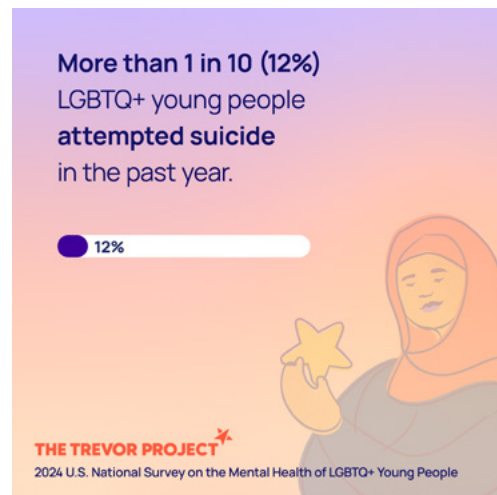
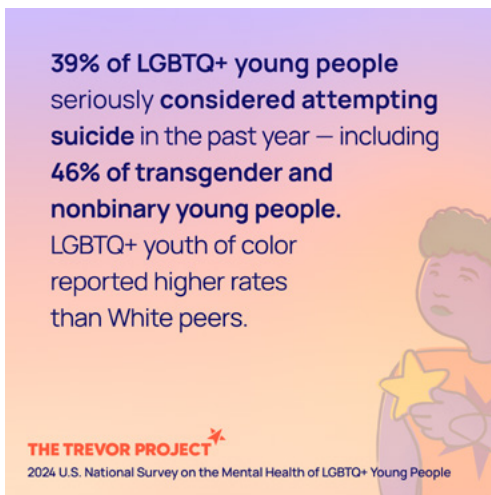
¹⁶ See, for example, <https://www.advocate.com/transgender/extremists-confront-trans-people-restrooms> and <https://www.thedailybeast.com/floridas-anti-trans-bathroom-law-spurs-harrowing-vigilante-attacks>



captain

IMPACTS ON TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY, AND INTERSEX YOUTH

Anti-LGBTQI+ legislation is having a significant and negative impact on young people in the United States. Amidst the outpouring of anti-trans legislation in the United States, trans, nonbinary, and intersex youth “expressed concerns of being a burden to their families and reported increased thoughts of suicide, and both TGD [trans and gender diverse] youth and caregivers have reported increased anxiety and hypervigilance.”¹⁷ A 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of Young People by The Trevor Project¹⁸ found:





17 Kuper, L.E., Cooper, M.B., Mooney, M.A. (2022). Supporting and Advocating for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth and Their Families Within the Sociopolitical Context of Widespread Discriminatory Legislation and Policies. *Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology*, 10(3), 336-345.

18 Graphics provided with thanks to The Trevor Project's 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>





90% of LGBTQ+ young people said their well-being was negatively impacted due to recent politics.


THE TREVOR PROJECT
2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People

45% of transgender and nonbinary young people reported that they or their family have considered moving to a different state because of LGBTQ+-related politics and laws.

THE TREVOR PROJECT
2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People

Nearly half (49%) of LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-17 experienced bullying in the past year, and those who did reported significantly higher rates attempting suicide in the past year than those who did not experience bullying.



THE TREVOR PROJECT
2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People

LGBTQ+ young people who reported living in very accepting communities attempted suicide at less than half the rate of those who reported living in very unaccepting communities.



THE TREVOR PROJECT
2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People

GET HELP

The Trevor Project

If you are thinking about harming yourself — get immediate crisis support. Connect to a crisis counselor 24/7, 365 days a year, from anywhere in the U.S via text, chat, or phone. The Trevor Project is 100% confidential and 100% free.


[Get Help Here](#)

Trans Lifeline

Trans Lifeline's Hotline is a peer support phone service run by trans people for our trans and questioning peers. Call us if you need someone trans to talk to, even if you're not in a crisis or if you're not sure you're trans.

[Get Help Here](#)





Access to sports is a lifeline for so many young people, and youth sports play a critical role in children's lives and development. Sports settings can often foster positive psychological growth in children after they experience adversity.¹⁹ Such growth stems from the opportunities to interact with peers and develop "supportive relationships with adults and coaches."²⁰ Youth sports programs also give kids "the opportunity to develop physical skills and a sense of accomplishment, confidence, and self-esteem, which are key factors for promoting PYD [positive youth development] in sport".²¹ When LGBTQI+ youth have access to sports, and an opportunity to connect with their peers and feel a sense of belonging, they live drastically healthier lives.²² Sports should be open and accessible to all, and the power of the FIFA World Cup 2026 and its legacy is perfectly placed for host cities to make that dream a reality.

19 Tamminen, K.A. & Neely, K.C. (2016). Positive growth in sport. In Holt, N. L. (Ed.), Positive youth development through sport (pp. 193-204). Routledge.

20 Tamminen and Neely, p. 200.

21 Ibid.

22 See <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fact-sheet-importance-sports-participation-transgender-youth/>





EQUALITY

LEGACY OPPORTUNITIES AND HOW TO MAKE CHANGE NOW

Leaving an enduring legacy in host cities of the FIFA World Cup 2026 begins now. No matter the context cities operate within, positive and sustained change can be made. Here are several ideas for respecting, protecting, and promoting the human rights of LGBTQI+ people before, during, and after the tournament.

Diversify hiring practices and the stakeholder engagement council: The FIFA World Cup brings together the most diverse fanbase in the world, and host city workforces and those advising on human rights should reflect that diversity. LGBTQI+ people, especially transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people, often are discriminated against in hiring processes, so it's important that host city committee hiring practices are inclusive. As host cities put together their stakeholder engagement council, seek out the support of a local LGBTQI+ organization working in the community. Though several cities may have appointed LGBTQI+ bodies, like a mayor's advisory board, not all appointees are deeply connected to the community and therefore they should not be the only group turned to for support. To find Statewide LGBTQI+ organizations, visit the Equality Federation's list of member organizations [here](#). To find local LGBTQI+ Centers, visit CenterLink's directory of LGBT centers [here](#).

Some organizations we can recommend that cities explore working with include, but are not limited to:

[BlaqOut \(MO\)](#)
[Equality California](#)
[Equality Florida](#)
[Equality Texas](#)
[Garden State Equality \(NJ\)](#)
[Lavender Rights Project \(Seattle, WA\)](#)
[Mass Trans Political Coalition \(MTPC\)](#)
[New Pride Agenda \(NY\)](#)
[Georgia Equality](#)
[Transgender Network of Texas \(TENT\)](#)
[PROMO Missouri](#)
[William Way LGBT Center \(Philadelphia, PA\)](#)

Prioritize Education: We don't know what we don't know, and the easiest way to combat misinformation about transgender and nonbinary people is to train ourselves and our staff on LGBTQI+ respect and inclusion. We suggest hiring a trainer to do



LGBTQI+ inclusion training within host city teams and any other staff who may need training. Many organizations provide training, including local LGBTQ+ centers.

Integrate Gender-Neutral Language

When possible, integrate gender-neutral language into the operations and practices of public-facing members of host city committees. For example, consider having all announcers trained to use gender-neutral language. Instead of saying "Ladies and Gentlemen", "Welcome Fans!" is a great, gender-neutral way to engage everyone. Banners and announcements in the city and in fan zones can also read "Welcome Fans!".


Get creative with existing infrastructure: Since all matches will be using existing infrastructure, it is not realistic to think new structures can be built to accommodate everyone's needs. With that said, bathrooms – or sets of bathrooms – can be changed to be gender-neutral or ensure there are enough single-stall bathrooms available to anyone who may want to use them, including parents and children, people with disabilities, and anyone requiring a little extra privacy. Athletes, coaches, and team staff should also have access to gender-neutral and private facilities. To indicate a bathroom is gender-neutral, signage can be easily changed. We've included some examples below:



Adopt Codes of Conduct and Create Clear Reporting Mechanisms:

Having policies like a Fan Code of Conduct that clearly articulates what behaviors will and will not be tolerated in stadiums and fan zones is recommended. If not already provided by FIFA or FIFA World Cup 2026, there are strong examples of a fan code of conduct, one of which can be found here and such documents should be co-created in consultation with fan groups. In addition, there should be clear reporting mechanisms and processes to report complaints and remove fans engaging in unsafe and/or discriminatory behavior. Most stadiums work with their security staff to come up with a game plan if a fan does need to be escorted out of a match, so host cities can work within existing structures to add an additional layer of sensitivity training around LGBTQI+ respect and inclusion. Security staff, for example, can be part of any training provided to front-office staff.





Support Inclusive Youth Soccer: One of the biggest legacy opportunities host cities have is the support for and/or establishment of youth soccer programs that are inclusive for all kids. Beyond laws and policies that ostracize transgender, nonbinary, and intersex youth, many young people also do not have access to sports outside of school because of the cost and accessibility. Creating or supporting inclusive youth soccer is an incredible lasting legacy not only to support local youth but also to grow the sport. One of the most powerful models of this can be seen with the [Portland Community Football Club \(PCFC\)](#). Created in 2012, PCFC dismantles the barriers to competitive soccer training and opportunity and provides a safe and space for all youth to gain skills, confidence, educational and emotional support. In addition to supporting low-income, immigrant and refugee youth, PCFC is one of the only youth soccer clubs in the nation that openly encourages and supports LGBTQ+ players, coaches and parents. By providing resources to community-led and inclusive football clubs like PCFC, it will create and sustain an incredible legacy for decades to come.

Additional Resources

Several organizations and individuals have the most up-to-date information about laws, policies, and the overall climate for LGBTQI+ people in the United States.

[Equality Federation](#)

Equality Federation (EqFed) is an advocacy accelerator rooted in social justice, building power in our network of state-based lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) advocacy organizations. EqFed tracks current legislation by state [here](#), and has a list of state-based organizations working in every Host City and state.

[The Movement Advancement Project \(MAP\)](#)

Founded in 2006, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) is an independent, nonprofit think tank that provides rigorous research, insight, and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all. They track trends in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and provide monthly updates to laws and policies in all 50 states.

[TransAthlete](#)

Transgender athlete and activist Chris Mosier created this resource in 2013 as a one-stop shop for policies impacting transgender athletes in the US and beyond. For the most up-to-date policy information, use this website.

[GLAAD](#)

GLAAD is a non-profit organization advancing LGBTQ acceptance through fair, accurate, and inclusive representation through global, national, and local programs. GLAAD's [media reference guide](#) will have the most current information on terminology and concepts around LGBTQI+ identity and experience. Ahead of many mega sporting events like the Olympics, GLAAD will release a specific media guide on covering LGBTQI+ athletes. See their most recent guide, crafted with Athlete Ally and OutChina, from the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics [here](#).



Terminology²³

Language matters in how we build welcoming sporting environments. Terminology around LGBTQI+ respect and inclusion is always changing, but below are a few key terms and concepts that will be helpful in building inclusive environments for LGBTQI+ people before, during, and after the FIFA World Cup.

Sexual Orientation: We all have a sexual orientation. Sexual orientation describes a person's enduring physical, romantic and/ or emotional attraction to another person. Sexual orientations include but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual (straight), and asexual.

Gender Identity: We all have a gender identity. Gender Identity is one's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. Each of us has a felt sense of gender identity, including cisgender people. One's gender identity does not always correspond to sex assigned at birth. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced very early in life, but may also shift over the course of one's life.

Cisgender people are people whose gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Sex assigned at birth is the sex assigned to an infant at birth, usually by a doctor or medical staff, based on the infant's visible anatomy, including genitalia and other physical characteristics. Sex assignment may or may not align with someone's gender identity, even from a very early age.

Transgender, often shortened to *trans*, is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. Transgender people span all communities, come from a variety of different backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and abilities. Use the word transgender as an adjective, i.e. "She is a transgender woman." Do not say "she is a transgender" or "she is transgendered."

Transgender man: A man assigned female at birth may use this term to describe himself. He may shorten it to *trans man*. Some may prefer to simply be called *men*, without any modifying language.

Transgender woman: A woman assigned male at birth may use this term to describe herself. She may shorten it to *trans woman*. Some may prefer to simply be called *women*, without any modifying language.

Nonbinary refers to individuals who identify as neither man nor a woman, both man and woman, or a combination of man or woman. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender. Use the word nonbinary as an adjective, i.e. "They are a nonbinary person."

²³ This terminology was compiled and crafted by Danne Diamond and Chris Mosier in reference to generally used and accepted terminology as outlined by GLAAD, InterAct and other sources. For a constantly updated list of terms, visit <https://glaad.org/reference/terms>.



Gender diverse is an umbrella term used to describe the evolving array of language people use when describing their gender identity and expression that does not conform to binary understandings of gender (i.e. male/female, man/woman, girl/boy).

Gender Expression is the manner in which a person communicates their gender to others through external means such as clothing, hairstyles, appearance, and/or mannerisms.

Intersex refers to having innate variations in bodily traits (such as genitals, reproductive organs, hormone function, or chromosomes) that don't fit typical expectations of male or female bodies. Intersex is not a gender identity or a sexual orientation. In general, use "intersex people," "people with intersex traits," and/or "people with variations in sex characteristics." Avoid pathologizing terms like disorders of sex development or intersex conditions.²⁴ Some people prefer the term differences of sex development but the fact that this term is derived from "disorders of sex development" (and that both are abbreviated as "DSD") means that many prefer to avoid these terms altogether.

Sex characteristics are physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, and secondary features that emerge from puberty.

²⁴ While some people do think of their intersex traits primarily as a medical condition, the potential stigma of medicalization makes using this language a risk. "Condition" should usually be replaced with "variation."



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