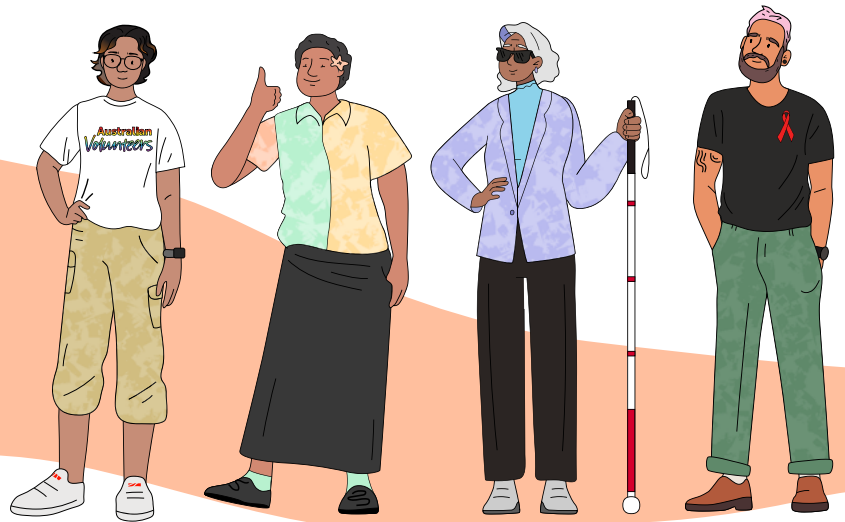


Pride Guide | Vietnam



The Australian Volunteers Program strives to provide a safe, supportive and equitable environment for LGBTIQ+ volunteers, approved accompanying dependents, partner organisations and all program staff. The Australian Volunteers Program has supported volunteers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in all program countries and has ongoing connections with community organisations in almost every country we work in.

Diverse SOGIESC program participants must be aware of the country context before undertaking an assignment. This guide is designed to introduce some key issues related to people with diverse SOGIESC and their participation in the program.

If you are a volunteer with diverse SOGIESC, you will need to:

- Do your own research. You will be required to follow the local laws, even if you disagree with them.
- Understand what the local law says you can and can't do when in-country;
- Be aware of what the legal protections are for LGBTIQ+ people in your destinations;
- Consider whether or not you are comfortable living and working in a place where you may be discriminated against and unable to live as openly as you can in some parts of Australia.

Language

Terminology may differ across urban and rural contexts, and across provinces or ethnic and cultural groups. Information sourced online can be outdated or inaccurate. For current and accurate information, please confirm with an appropriate diverse SOGIESC Civil Society Organisation (CSO) or ask your in-country team.

It is most appropriate for those outside the community to use LGBTI, the initialism for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex, when talking about the diverse SOGIESC community. Other terms used in Vietnam to describe the diverse SOGIESC community include:

Legal and policy context

Same-sex sexual acts have never been criminalised in Vietnam, however an exclusionary national legal framework denies the equal rights and protections of people with diverse SOGIESC. LGBTIQ+ CSOs are starting to raise awareness of the legal and rights issues that exist in the country, opening up dialogue between diverse SOGIESC communities and national legal bodies.

In 2013 the Vietnamese Government removed same-sex unions as a forbidden category of relationship, however they are not legally recognised. In 2016, at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Vietnam voted in favour of a resolution to protect against violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. In spite of some advances, there are a number of national legal provisions that harm diverse SOGIESC communities. For example, doctors are permitted to perform genital modification surgeries on intersex children to resemble typical male or female genitals.

Discrimination

No legal protections exist for people with diverse SOGIESC in Vietnam. This includes a lack of constitutional protections and national laws that protect against SOGIESC discrimination, laws that protect against SOGIESC discrimination in employment, and laws that protect against hate crimes, incitement to hatred, violence or discrimination based on one's SOGIESC. There is no legislation that references inheritance, taxation or family rights for people of diverse SOGIESC. LGBTIQ+ communities face difficulties obtaining work, and often experience workplace harassment and discrimination. Bullying causes many young people with diverse SOGIESC to leave school prematurely, with at least 85% of trans women dropping out of school due to bullying or violence.

Cultural and societal attitudes

Vietnam is made up a variety of ethnically and spiritually diverse groups, many of which are accepting of people who do not conform to traditional binary gender roles. The major religion in Vietnam is Buddhism (7.9%) but the majority of the population are atheist (81.8%). Vietnamese culture is influenced by a mix of traditional spirit worship and other folk practices.

As a result of strong LGBTIQ+ advocacy, public opinion has improved and government officials have supported for the rights of some in the diverse SOGIESC community. However, families of diverse SOGIESC individuals and the general public do not always have access to accurate information, and many still hold the misconception that diverse SOGIESC is a curable disease. Families are also shaped by patriarchy and, in order to be accepted, LGBTIQ+ people are expected to conform to gender roles. Family violence is not uncommon, including suppressing gender expression, conversion therapy and forced marriage. Some diverse SOGIESC youth choose to live on the streets of major cities to meet other people like them, and to access LGBTIQ+ resources and spaces.

Health and wellbeing

There is a strong network of CSOs supporting the health of the diverse SOGIESC community. Sexual health and HIV-related services are accessible to everyone, including trans people, but trans-specific services, such as hormone therapies and gender reassignment surgeries, are illegal. There are a limited number of mental health services that are well-informed about diverse SOGIESC issues. Intersex people face barriers to healthcare as they are grouped with the transgender community and face stigma and discrimination.

Schools in Vietnam lack the non-discrimination policies to protect and support their pupils with diverse SOGIESC, and sexual education is not mandatory.



Media

Social media plays an important role as an advocacy tool and as a means for Vietnam's diverse SOGIESC community to connect. It is worth noting that the Vietnamese Government prohibits independent and privately-owned media outlets and strictly regulates print-media, radio and television stations. Privately-owned blogs and websites are frequently shut down, and the government has successfully put pressure on social media platforms like Facebook to restrict access of pages that go against the political views of the Communist Party.