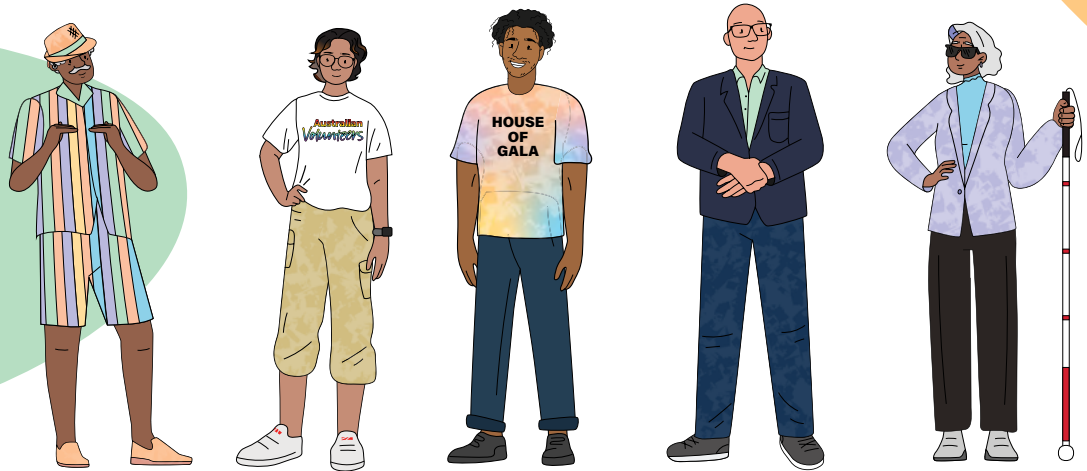


Pride Guide | Philippines



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 Information sourced online can be outdated or inaccurate.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.

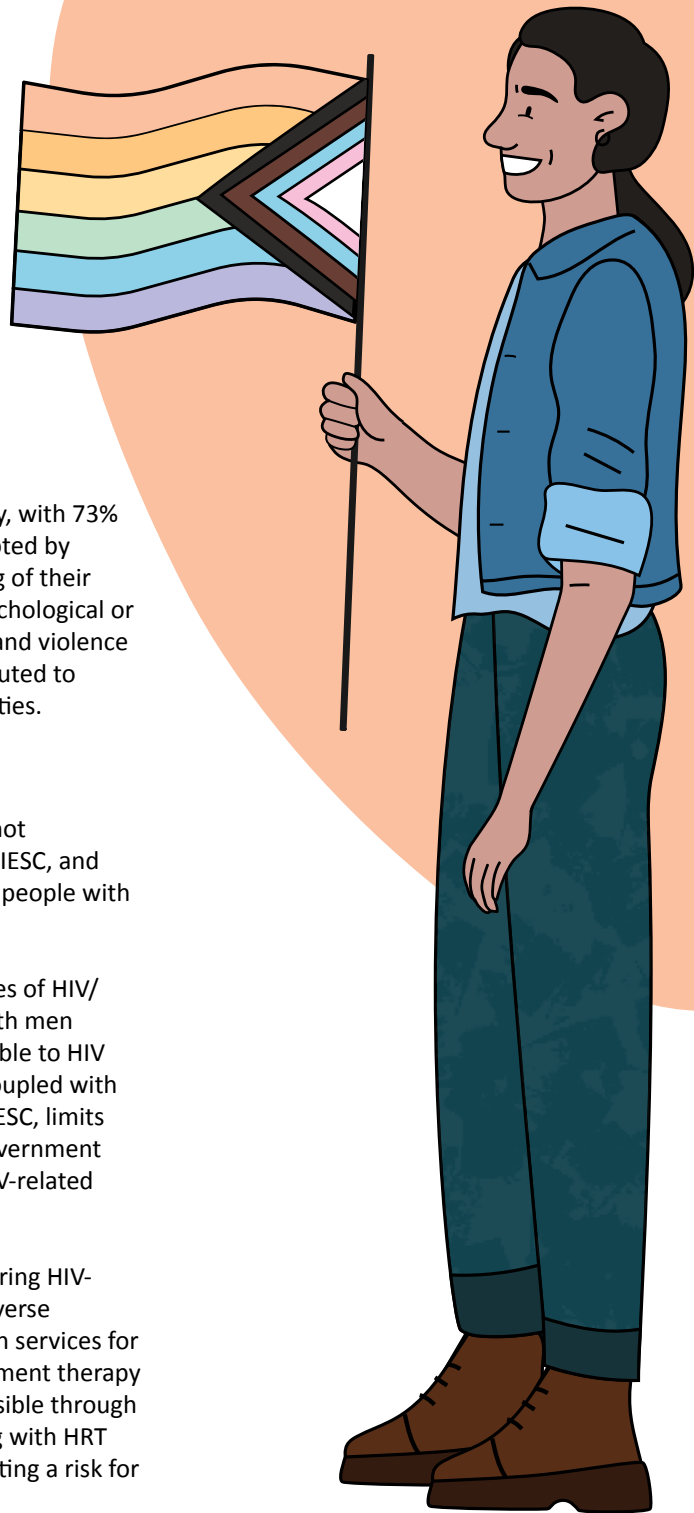
Legal and policy context

Same-sex sexual acts were decriminalised in the Philippines in 1870, however an exclusionary national legal framework denies the equal rights and protections of diverse SOGIESC communities. Same-sex marriage and civil unions are not recognised by the state. Transgender individuals are prevented from changing their "status of sex" to align with their gender identity. Efforts since 2001 to pass a bill banning discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation have not progressed.

Discrimination

No legal protections exist at a national level for people with diverse SOGIESC in the Philippines. 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. However, in the cities Dumaguete, Ilagan, Manila, Marikina, Valenzuela, and Zamboanga, local ordinances prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, including in employment. Six provinces have passed local ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In schools, students are protected by law from violence and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

¹ ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, "Universal Periodic Review. 3rd Cycle, 2017," Joint submission of CSOs on LGBTIQ Persons in the Philippines, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://aseansogiecaucus.org/images/resources/upr-reports/Philippines/Philippines-UPR-JointReport-3rdCycle.pdf>, 6.



Cultural and societal attitudes

Filipino society is largely tolerant of homosexuality, with 73% of Filipinos stating homosexuality should be accepted by society. However, many families are not accepting of their relative's diverse SOGIESC, which can result in psychological or physical violence. Underreporting of hate crimes and violence toward diverse SOGIESC populations can be attributed to feelings of guilt or shame surrounding their identities.

Health and wellbeing

Basic sexual and reproductive health services do not incorporate the needs of people with diverse SOGIESC, and discrimination from healthcare workers can deter people with diverse SOGIESC from seeking assistance.

The Philippines has one of the fastest growing rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. Men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women are more vulnerable to HIV infection. Stigma toward people with HIV/AIDS, coupled with negative perceptions of people with diverse SOGIESC, limits willingness to get tested or receive treatment. Government health institutions, the primary mechanism for HIV-related healthcare delivery, often lack resources.

There is a recognition of the role CSOs play in offering HIV-related services that cater toward the needs of diverse SOGIESC communities. There are few public health services for transgender individuals seeking hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and gender-affirming surgeries are not possible through the healthcare system. As a result, self-medicating with HRT and other hormone medications is practised, creating a risk for negative health outcomes.

Mental health services are provided in over 50 medical centres in the Philippines, however these remain geographically inaccessible, and are not diverse SOGIESC-specific. While there are protections against mental health service users being discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, there is a lack of healthcare professionals who respect and accept their clients' identities.

Media

National media broadcasting outlets are used by diverse SOGIESC rights activists and allies to bring awareness to issues in the Philippines. However, religious groups also monopolise media outlets to promote negative messaging about the SOGIESC community.

Pew Research Center, "The Global Divide on Homosexuality," Research topics, published June 4, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/>.