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Visualizing Information

Final Project Documentation

I wanted to create a visualization showing how widespread the criminalization of LGBTQ+ people is, but that’s such a large topic that I needed to narrow it down and be specific in order to make anything readable. So, I decided to focus on the criminalization of consensual sexual acts between adults of the same sex. This gave me one solid thing to focus on, so I didn’t get overwhelmed in the data. The dataset I found for this also gave a large spectrum of possible ways to present that data, showing not only if it was illegal, but if it was, what the sentence was in that country. That provided another large variable that I feared would muddy my visualization, so I decided to put that into another simplification, whether or not it was punishable by death. This gave me three possible categories a country could fit into: legal, illegal, and punishable by death.

With this set up a map was the most obvious way to visualize this information and given the three categories I’d created a simple red/yellow/green color code seemed simple to understand and would provide a good amount of contrast. There were a couple of countries that didn’t have any data listen in my dataset, so I created a fourth “unknown” category that would be colored grey to distinguish this.

The map allows you to hover over the countries and see the name and score that was assigned to them. By clicking on a country you can also zoom in to get a better look at it and the surrounding area.

Looking at the data, I realized that this only stated if there were written laws criminalizing homosexuality in the country, and that didn’t necessarily mean it was safe to be out of the closet there. To avoid misleading the viewer, I decided to include a disclaimer at the top of the page to clarify this. Even if there are not written laws criminalizing homosexuality, it’s still very possible for a country to be unsafe for LGBTQ+ persons in a wide variety of ways.

While putting together my visualization, I was struck by few countries has explicitly outlawed homosexuality. I was under the impression that there would be more yellow on the map. This makes me wonder what other anti-LGBTQ+ laws or practices may exist even in the countries that don’t specifically outlaw homosexuality.