



HEC IN&OUT

# How to be a good ally

This guide introduces ways of how to support queer people in their daily lives, make language more inclusive and react to homophobic or discriminatory behavior



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## Preface: Why this guide is important

For most cities, the first Pride parades after the lockdown were able to take place in 2022 - and they were a huge success! Draped in rainbow flags, more than 150,000 people marched for queer rights in Berlin. The Paris Pride, la marche des fiertés, part of a two-week Pride festival, was attended by even more people: 500,000 LQBTQIA+ people and allies from all over Europe!



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Despite this great public support towards the queer community, many people are still struggling to come out to the world because they fear homophobia and transphobia. This fear is particularly strong in France. In this context, two 2021 studies by YouGov and Statista found that 42% of French people would not react positively if a close relative came out as homosexual/bisexual. At 54%, the figure is even higher for transgender/non-binary people coming out. With these numbers, France is the least inclusive country in the study compared to other European industrialized nations.

Another issue is language. To begin with, most people probably do not know what all the letters in LGBTQIA+ stand for, which is understandable as it can be confusing. The same goes for the wide variety of pronouns. Can I just use his or her, is it correct to say they/them, or should I use more rare forms like ze/hir or per/pers? The list of linguistic pitfalls seems long if one does not want to be perceived as non-inclusive. We are here to help, not only with language!

We believe that HEC Paris is a great place to spread diversity and inclusiveness because people come from all over the world to study here and then go back to many different countries to work. Therefore, we hope that this guide can help you to become great allies to queer people in both your personal and professional lives. Enjoy reading and feel free to contact us with any questions!

# Setting the scene: a statistical view on LGBTQIA+ globally

**Legal Perspective:** Are consensual same-sex acts legal everywhere? How many countries have implemented same sex marriage? Is there still conversion therapy?

It is great news that in 2022, 32 countries around the world have legalized same-sex marriage. Most of them are in Europe (18 out of 44 European states) and the Americas (10 out of 35 states in the Americas), while only four countries in Asia, Oceania and Africa have legalized marriages between two people of the same sex: Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The two most recent countries to change their laws were Slovenia and Chile.

Most countries legalized same-sex marriage through legislation, while others, such as Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Slovenia, legalized it through court rulings. South Africa and Taiwan, on the other hand, enacted legislation following court rulings that invalidated their previous laws.

Given these statistics on same-sex marriage, it is not surprising that consensual same-sex acts between adults in private are legal in every country in Europe and North America. But there are two sides to every coin. As of 2022, there are still 68 jurisdictions worldwide that criminalize private, consensual same-sex activity, with nearly half (32) in Africa and another quarter in Asia. Not all of these 68 countries discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people in the same way. In fact, there are varying degrees of severity and differentiation between subgroups with respect to these laws. For instance, 42 jurisdictions have separate laws which criminalize queer sex between women by using laws against "lesbianism", "sexual relations with a person of the same sex" and "gross indecency". Even worse, eleven countries impose or can legally impose the death penalty for private same-sex sexual activity. These countries are Iran, Northern Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Brunei, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Regardless of sexual orientation, transgender people are discriminated against by 14 countries that enforce so-called "cross-dressing", "impersonating" or "disguising" laws.

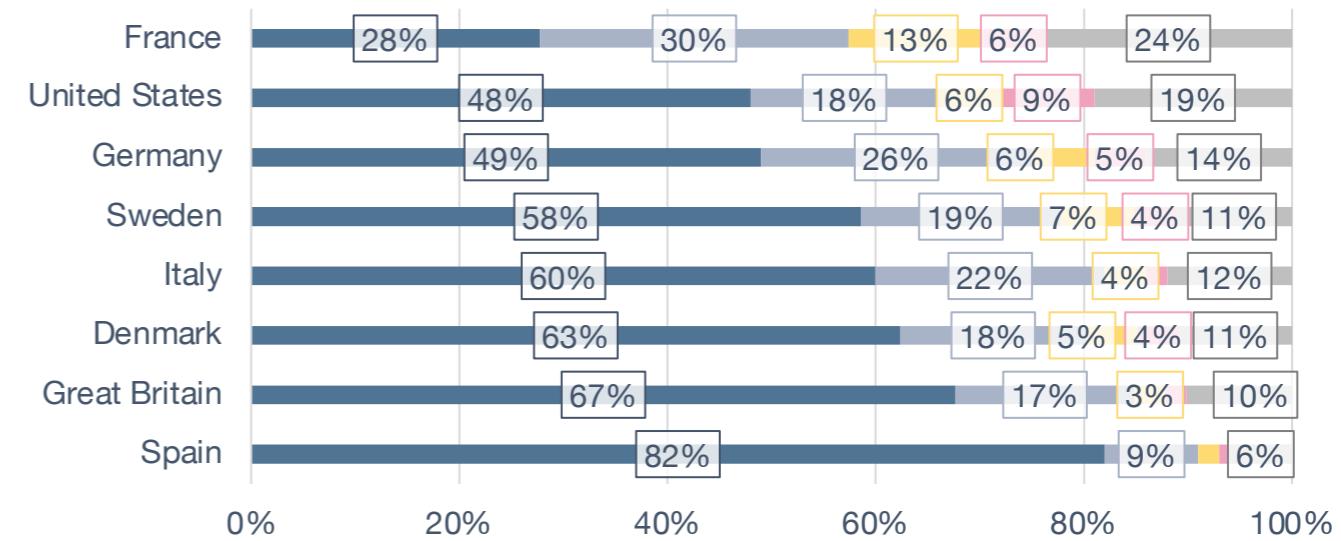
Another hot topic around LGBTQIA+ rights is the banning of conversion therapy. Conversion therapy primarily refers to efforts to change a person's sexual orientation from non-heterosexual to heterosexual using methods such as psychoanalysis, behavior modification, or spiritual counseling. The term may also be used when such methods are used to change a person's gender identity or expression. Developments in this area are relatively recent, as in 2020 only four countries (Brazil, Ecuador, Germany, and Malta) had passed laws banning conversion therapy. By 2022, already 14 countries had some form of national ban on conversion therapy. Unfortunately, the ban is not always universal. In Germany, for example, the practice is only banned for people under the age of 18, or for coerced or incapacitated adults. An example of a country with a universal ban is Canada: the law passed by the Canadian House of Commons in December 2021 protects both adults and minors from conversion therapy related to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Fortunately, like Canada, many countries are working on new LGBTQIA+-friendly legislation, so the world is well on its way to achieving legal equality for LGBTQIA people. Related issues not covered in this section include, for example, adoption rights and the right to donate blood.

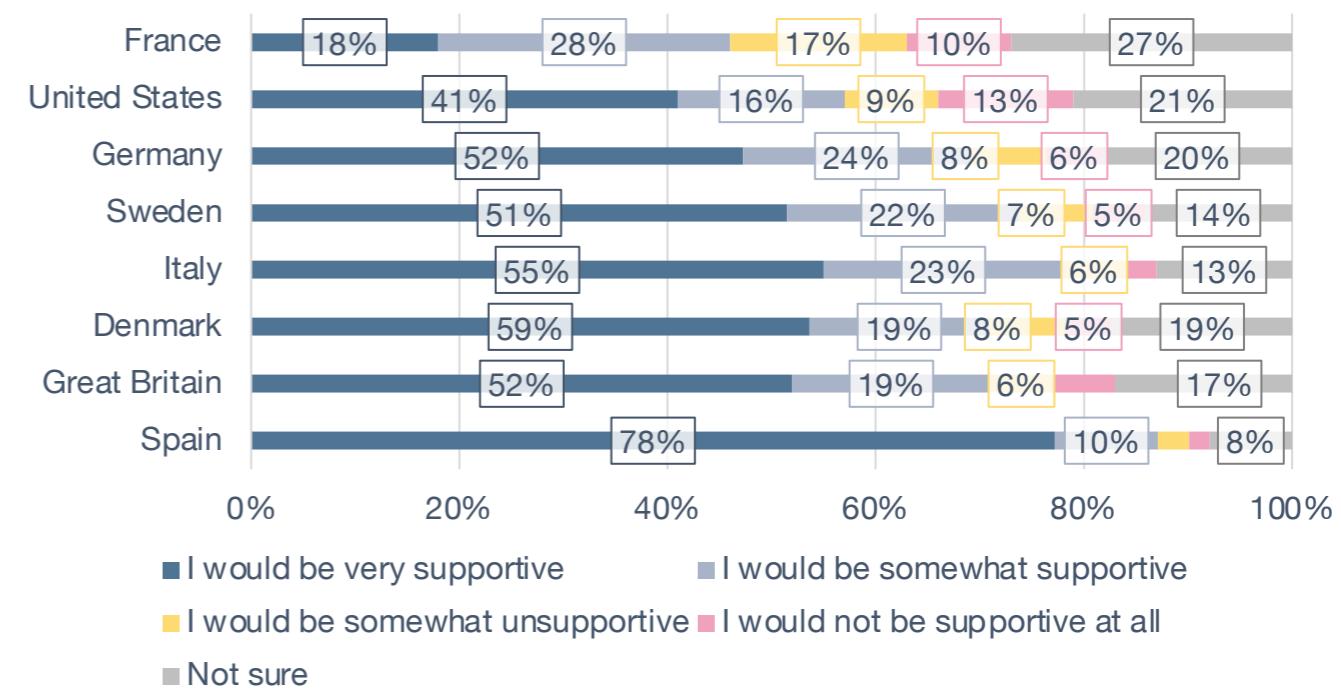
## Reactions to Coming Outs: How do people globally react if people in their close social circle came out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or non-binary?

Below you can see the results of two studies conducted by Statista and YouGov in 2021 on reactions to coming out. In general, the research shows that there is a large discrepancy in terms of inclusion and acceptance among European industrialized nations, with Spain being the most inclusive country and France being the least inclusive. Please take a look at the numbers and judge for yourself.

How would you react if your child, sibling, or a close family member came out as **gay, lesbian, or bisexual?**



How would you react if your child, sibling, or a close family member came out as **transgender or non-binary?**



**Queer Travel:** Is it safe to travel as a queer person to every country? What dimensions to consider when choosing a travel destination as a queer person?

A helpful metric for measuring how LGBTQIA+-friendly a destination is is the Gay Travel Index (GTI), published annually by Spartacus since 2012. The authors of the study describe the goal of the GTI as follows.

*„The index attempts at finding a balance between measuring the rights of the local LGBTIQ community and considering the demands of queer holidaymakers. Our aim is to monitor the safety of queer people in each country and also increase the awareness on grievances. We are convinced that there are holidaymakers who choose countries where the queer community is an accepted and beloved part of society. But there are also holidaymakers who consciously want to travel to a country in order to enter into a dialogue with the oppressed local queer community. The index is intended to provide either type of holidaymaker with trustworthy and valid information.“ (Source: Gay Travel Index 2021, p. 1)*

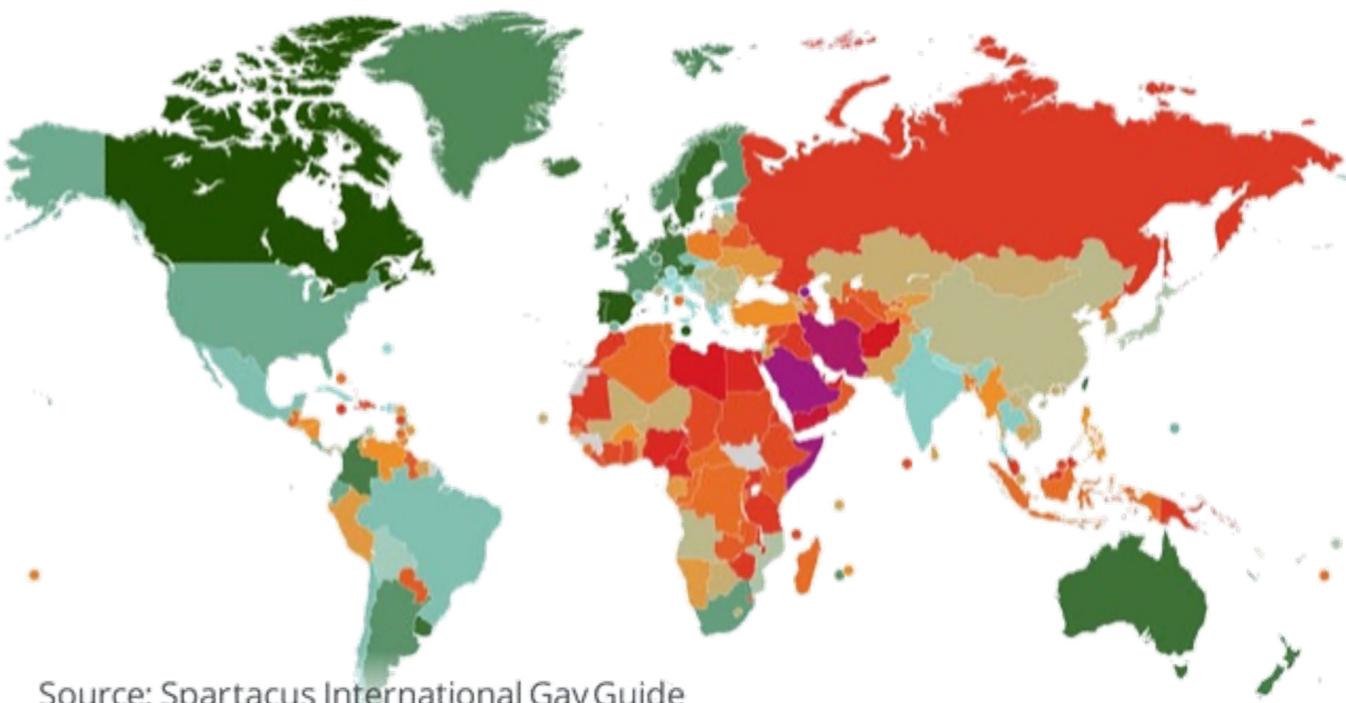
The GTI considers the following 17 scoring dimensions to create an international ranking.

1. Anti-Discrimination Legislation
2. Marriage / Civil Partnership
3. Adoption Allowed
4. Transgender Rights
5. Intersex / 3rd Option
6. Equal Age of Consent
7. “Conversion Therapy”
8. LGBT Marketing
9. Religious Influence
10. HIV Travel Restrictions
11. Anti-Gay Laws
12. Homosexuality Illegal
13. Pride Banned
14. Locals Hostile
15. Prosecution
16. Murders
17. Death Sentences



Depending on the category, countries can receive either positive or negative points. Finally, they are ranked in descending order by their final score.

The latest edition of the Spartacus GTI was published in 2021. The top ten countries were Canada (13), Malta (11), Portugal (11), Spain (11), Austria (10), Denmark (10), Sweden (10), the United Kingdom (10), and Uruguay (10). On the other hand, however, the bottom ten countries were Chechnya (-19), Somalia (-18), Saudi Arabia (-18), Iran (-17), Yemen (-15), United Arab Emirates (-14), Libya (-14), Afghanistan (-14), Qatar (-13), Nigeria (-13), Kuwait (-13), Egypt (-13), Cameroon (-13). Below is a map which summarizes global rankings.



Source: Spartacus International Gay Guide

Looking at the map and the numbers, it is clear that African countries do not score well. In fact, eight of the top ten African countries received a negative score. However, this result is only somewhat surprising, as the acceptance of homosexuality in African countries is generally low. In popular African vacation destinations such as Kenya and Tunisia, acceptance rates are 14% and 9%, respectively. Only in South Africa, the most gay-friendly country in Africa, is there a slight majority, with 54% of people saying that homosexuality should be accepted by society.

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## When is it okay or not to “out” someone?

Outing someone is revealing their romantic or sexual orientation to a third party without ensuring prior their consent for you to do so.

Let's put as a basic rule that you should **never** out someone. As romantic and sexual orientation are deeply personal topics, it is not for you to decide when it is appropriate or not to share someone else's, taking into account that it can have consequences on LGBTQIA+ people's lives. Below you can find some studies on how people react to outings depending on the country they live in.

Most of us know this basic rule but it can be difficult to act according to it. Here's a little review of the situations on campus (or in life !) where you could be might « out » someone and a few tips on how to think about it.

**Situation 1:** Your friend has a crush on someone and asks you whether you think they are straight or not (you know they aren't). What do you tell your friend ?

No matter how much you want your friend to find someone and not “waste” their time, revealing that their crush isn't straight without their consent is **outing**.

You must all the time ask yourself the question : have I had clear consent from the person to share their romantic and sexual orientation with *anyone/someone in particular* on campus ? Most of the time, the answer is no.

Even if you think the person would be okay, you must always check with them prior to discuss it with other people. If you don't feel comfortable asking it directly to the person, it may be because they haven't come out to you directly / did not want you to have that information. In that case, you can understand that you are not legitimate to talk about it with a third party.

**PS:** you can also remember that no matter your gender or your romantic and sexual orientation, it can be uncomfortable having people discussing it without you and take that into account while discussing other people's ones.

**Situation 2:** Your sports team is often criticized for not being very inclusive/sexist. You know one of your teammates identifies as gay and would like to show to other people outside that he is very well integrated despite his romantic and sexual orientation. What do you do?

First, it is not because your teammate is comfortable sharing it with the team that he is sharing with the rest of the campus. You should always check with him before discussing it with anyone else.

If your teammate think as well that it is a good idea, make sure to agree with him about the way it will be publicized : for example, he might want to talk about it on campus during the sport integration but not to have a Facebook post about it. Always check!

**PS:** it is not because that particular teammate feels comfortable sharing their romantic and sexual orientation in the team that it is the case for everyone there ! If your team is criticized for not being inclusive, you can try to think more broadly about the reasons people are thinking that and what you can do as an ally to bring a little change!

**Situation 3:** Your friend told you that they weren't feeling very well lately as they didn't feel comfortable being themselves on campus, especially because of their questionings about their gender. Later, the rest of your group of friends asks you if you have any clue about why your friend seems to behave in an unusual way. What can you answer to them?

Even if you are all very close, if your friends haven't talked about it, there is a reason.

It may be just a question of moment and opportunity to discuss it but your friend might also have chosen only you to talk about it based on behaviors that made them feel less comfortable with the others.

Once again, it is not your guess to make. Even if you know that your friends are truly concerned and want the best for your friend, you can tell them to ask directly. You can then of course mention to your friend that the rest of the group is worried but it is ultimately not your decision to share it or not.

**Situation 4:** Your friend tell you that one member of your club identifies as pansexual. Apparently, they talk openly about it. You think it is not very common and want to know whether your group of friends has heard of it before and what they think about it. How can you do it?

First, you can discuss gender, romantic and sexual orientations without talking about a person in particular ! The discussion can be brought without having to take a precise example of someone they know. You can start the discussion with podcasts or books you read (ADD EXAMPLES?)

Concerning « Apparently, they talk openly about it ».

In random conversations, some friends might share with you details about someone's gender or sexual orientation saying that they are comfortable sharing it : instead of assuming that it is « public knowledge », you should ensure that your friends have had confirmation they could talk about it with you. They might not know they are « outing » someone. Moreover, the fact that they can talk about it doesn't mean you can. Maybe the person feels comfortable with your friends' way of discussing it and not with yours.

You can always go back to the question : have I had clear consent from the person to share their romantic and sexual orientation with anyone/someone in particular on campus ?

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# How to make your language more inclusive towards queer people

Here are a few good practices that you can put into place to use a more inclusive language.

## 1) Use the words people use to refer to themselves.

It is always better to listen to people and how they define themselves rather than putting the labels you think correspond. For the pronouns, you can also directly ask! Additionally, it has become common to put them on social media.

## 2) Use gender neutral words when possible

For example, when you don't know someone's romantic and sexual orientation, you can try using the expression « partner » or « significant other » instead of « girlfriend » or « boyfriend ».

## 3) If you make a mistake, correct it and move on.

Even if you are careful about your language, it can happen that you use a wrong word or pronoun. In that case, you shouldn't just hope that the person won't notice or over-apologize which may make them feel uncomfortable. It is most of the time better to apologize quickly and correct the mistake immediately without going on and on about it.

## 4) Accept feedback

You can always improve your communication and adapt to the people you are with. Don't take it personally when they want to correct your mistakes and accept that you are not always right, especially if you don't experience personally these discriminations and micro-aggressions on a daily basis.

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# Vocabulary breakdown for more inclusive language

General vocabulary breakdown:

Word	Meaning
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and others
Lesbian	A woman who experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction towards other women
Gay	A man who experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction towards other men
Bisexual	Someone who experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction towards more than one gender
Transgender	Someone whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Cisgender</b> (on the contrary): a person whose gender identity matches the gender and sex assigned at birth</li><li>• <b>Non-binary</b> (notably): someone whose gender identity is neither exclusively male nor exclusively female. Non-binary people often use the gender-neutral pronoun "they"</li></ul>
Queer	An English word that was earlier used as an insult towards LGBT+ people but has been reclaimed by people whose gender identity or sexual orientation is outside the social norm
Intersex	A person born with sexual characteristics that are not exclusively "male" or "female" according to current medical standards. Intersex people usually undergo surgery at a very young age to match one gender or another
Asexual	A person who feels little or no sexual attraction
Coming out	Disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to certain people
Drag Queen/King	A person who performs a gender other than their own through a character, often in a stereotypical and humorous way
Heteronormativity	Cultural and societal bias that result in underrepresenting cultural diversity by assuming that all people are heterosexual

## Vocabulary specific to trans people:

Word	Meaning
Dysphoria	The feeling of intense discomfort experienced by a trans person caused by the difference between their assigned sex at birth, society's gender violations, their body, and their gender identity
Gender expression	The way someone publicly displays their gender (behavior, clothing, language, etc.)
Gender identity	The way one feels inside: male, female, in between or neither
Misgendering	Using a first name, pronoun, or other gender designation that does not match someone's gender identity
Deadname	A name assigned to a trans person at birth that they no longer use
Transition	The process for a trans person to state their gender identity (through a change in style, hormones, etc.)



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# How can allies react to discriminatory behavior in daily life?

LGBTQIA+ people often face « micro-aggressions » which are daily life manifestations of LGBTphobias. It can be tiring to stand up everytime against them. As an ally/a straight person, reacting when you notice LGBTphobias can really help making life easier for others.

Your reaction doesn't need to be huge to be effective : when confronted to LGBTphobic jokes, not laughing is already acting and is a way to make the person understand that their joke was problematic.

There are a lot of ways to react:

- You can ask the person who said something LGBTphobic to repeat : they might understand that their behaviour was problematic and be too ashamed to repeat loudly.
- Sometimes the person doesn't realize on their own that they had a problematic behaviour and you might need to explain. To do so, don't hesitate to label their attitude as an LGBTphobia and take the time to explain why. It might be easier to transpose the situation to another criteria of discrimination or show how personally it can affect the person.

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# How can I support LGBTQ people in my life as an ally?

## Proposal 1: Being aware of one's privileges

To be a good ally, you must first be aware that LGBT+ people are discriminated against. It is false to believe that in 2022 in France, LGBT+ people are treated in the same way as heterosexual and cisgender people. The gaze of others weighs constantly on LGBT people, who must measure their every move.

A heterosexual and cisgender person is therefore privileged in our heteronormative society and can use this privilege to defend the LGBT people around him/her, who sometimes have more difficulty to be heard.

## Proposal 2: Be a good listener and know how to keep quiet

It is important for allies to listen to what people have to say, without judgement, and to support their words (without appropriating them).

An ally must also know how to recognize his/her mistakes, especially if he/she has offended someone else. In this case, listening to the other person is always a priority, as well as apologizing, but one should not try to justify one's intentions because this would delegitimize the feelings of the person concerned. Above all, one must learn from each experience and commit to doing better in the future.

## Proposal 3: Paying attention to and challenging daily microaggressions

Microaggressions are situations, comments or questions that can be hurtful or stigmatizing to marginalized people. The person committing the microaggression may have no idea that what he or she did or said could be hurtful.

For example, telling a trans woman that she "doesn't look trans" or asking a gay man you just met how his coming out went are microaggressions when the intentions were good to begin with. An ally should therefore strive to avoid committing these microaggressions and should let those around them know if they find their remarks offensive or stereotypical.

On the HEC campus specifically, this means challenging homophobic and transphobic traditions or practices and rejecting the culture of rumor. Allies need to be especially careful about certain homophobic terms that are still used far too frequently. Yes, calling your soccer friend a "faggot" or "motherfucker" is homophobic and is a microaggression that can make LGBT people around them very uncomfortable. It's also important to remember that not all LGBT people are "out". So don't assume someone's sexual orientation or gender identity (even if you hear echoes of so-and-so), and most importantly, avoid any homophobic jokes or terms so as not to make anyone uncomfortable.

## Proposal 4: Educate oneself

To become an ally of the LGBTQ+ community, it is essential to educate yourself. Don't wait for the people involved to do the heavy lifting for you and always educate yourself. It's best to educate yourself and do your own research.

We invite you to discover and learn about all dimensions of the LGBTQ struggle: learn the history of the movement, enjoy queer culture, keep up to date with political struggles in France and elsewhere... Documentaries (Paris is burning, Marsha P. Johnson: story of a legend...), shows on Netflix or France TV (Rupaul's Drag Race, Drag Race France...), podcasts (Coming Out on Spotify...): educating yourself doesn't have to be something boring!

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## Sources

**Information Sources:** Which sources did we use for the stated information?

### Preface: Why this guide is important

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- <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>

### Setting the scene: a statistical view on LGBTQIA+ globally

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**Image Sources:** Where did we get the images we used from?

- Page 1:** <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-a-colorful-balloon-4347990/>
- Page 8:** <https://www.pexels.com/de-de/foto/ernte-jungen-mann-mit-lgbt-flagge-uber-gesicht-gemalt-5451714/>
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