

Suriname



LGBTIQ+ Rights

Submitted by: The Advocates for Human Rights, Suriname Men United, CariFLAGS, ILGA-North America and Caribbean, and Khaleem Ali

MECHANISM

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Summary: Although Suriname has made incremental progress in legal protections for LGBTIQ+ people, significant social stigma, discriminatory practices by State and non-State actors, and critical gaps in legislation continue to undermine the full enjoyment of human rights by LGBTIQ+ individuals. Existing protections are inconsistently enforced, and vulnerable groups face acute barriers. Comprehensive legislative and policy reforms are urgently needed.

Discrimination and legal gaps persist despite some legislative progress.

- The 2022 Equal Treatment in Employment Act protects against workplace discrimination—but only for private sector employees, excluding civil servants.
- There are no legislative or policy protections against discrimination based on gender expression or sex characteristics, and protections for transgender people outside employment remain absent.
- A 2024 survey found that 67% of LGBTIQ+ respondents experienced discrimination in the prior year.
- Suriname lacks an independent police oversight body; all complaints against officers are handled internally.
- Discrimination by non-State actors—including employers, religious institutions, and the general public—further restricts LGBTIQ+ people's access to work, services, and public spaces.

LGBTIQ+ youth face systemic exclusion, violence, and housing insecurity.

- LGBTIQ+ youth experience significant discrimination, harassment, and violence from family members, peers, and institutions, including expulsion from the home following family disclosure of their identity.
- 86% of LGBTIQ+ individuals aged 16-25 reported problems with self-image due to bullying or discrimination.
- Displaced LGBTIQ+ youth face heightened risks of homelessness, exposure to violence and exploitation, barriers to education and healthcare, and increased risk of criminalization and mental health harm. There are no specialized shelters, family mediation mechanisms sensitive to SOGIESC issues, or coordinated social services for these youth.
- Despite the Government launching a zero-tolerance bullying policy in 2022, enforcement has been inconsistent.
- Some religious leaders and family members have subjected LGBTIQ+ individuals to so-called conversion therapy, including "demon exorcisms." There is no legal prohibition on conversion practices.

Legal gender recognition and same-sex family rights remain inadequate.

- Suriname has no legislation on legal gender recognition. A 2022 High Court ruling allowed one individual to change their legal gender but required surgery, psychological assessment, and gender screening.
- Only one person has successfully changed their legal gender in Suriname's history. Non-binary gender identity is not recognized.
- Suriname's Civil Code, updated in 2025, still defines marriage as a union between a man and woman.
- In early 2025, a judge ordered Suriname to register the marriages of two same-sex couples wed abroad, citing Suriname's international treaty obligations—but no legislative change followed.
- The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in 2018 that same-sex marriage is a right under the American Convention on Human Rights, to which Suriname is a signatory; Suriname has yet to codify this protection

Recommendations

- **Enact comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination by State and non-State actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, and ensure consistent enforcement.**
- Expand the scope of the 2022 Labor Violence and Sexual Harassment Act and Equal Treatment Employment Act to protect LGBTQ+ civil servants, and expedite the operational regulations needed for their enforcement.
- **Adopt an independent police oversight body that impartially, promptly, and thoroughly investigates all claims of human rights violations by police officers.**
- **Develop targeted protection mechanisms, including emergency housing, psychosocial support, and family mediation for LGBTQ+ youth displaced due to their identity.**
- In collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations, draft and enact legislation that simplifies the legal gender recognition process and removes all surgical and medical barriers to legal gender recognition.
- Explicitly prohibit conversion practices, including so-called conversion therapy, in law and policy.
- Amend Article 33, Book 1 of the Civil Code to permit same-sex marriage, compatible with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights decision, and make property, family, and inheritance law inclusive for LGBTQ+ persons.
- In collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations, develop and fully fund public education campaigns on LGBTQ+ people and their human rights to foster positive societal attitudes.
- Revise the 2021-2035 Gender Vision Policy to make it LGBTQ+ inclusive.