

## Legal Rights and Discrimination Challenges for LGBTQ+ Individuals in Thailand

Pwint Nadi Maung<sup>\*1</sup>, Win Pyae Pyae Maung<sup>2</sup>, May Myat Noe Aung<sup>3</sup>, Ei Ei San Mon<sup>4</sup>, and Roongkan Nedtranon<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>International College, Rangsit University, Pathum Thani, Thailand

\*Corresponding author: [pwintnadi.m65@rsu.ac.th](mailto:pwintnadi.m65@rsu.ac.th)

### Abstract

This research investigates LGBTQ+ rights and societal attitudes in Thailand, a nation celebrated for its cultural acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Through interviews and focus groups, participants highlighted a disconnect between cultural visibility, particularly in media, and the lack of comprehensive legal protections. Key gaps include the absence of gender recognition laws, same-sex marriage rights, and anti-discrimination measures in healthcare, education, and employment. While societal tolerance has progressed, structural inequities and biases persist, especially in rural areas and among conservative communities. The findings reveal that cultural acceptance alone does not ensure equality, as many LGBTQ+ individuals face marginalization, workplace discrimination, and healthcare bias. Opinions varied on whether legal reforms or societal attitude shifts should take priority, but there was consensus on the urgent need for legislative measures to close these gaps. The study emphasizes a dual approach: advancing legal protections while fostering education and awareness to combat prejudice. Strengthening legal safeguards is vital to promoting equality, protecting human rights, and positioning Thailand as a leader in LGBTQ+ rights in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+, Legal Protection, Discrimination, Gender, Thailand

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, support for same-sex marriage in Thailand has grown, partly because of the country's historical openness to diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. While homosexuality and transgender identities have been present in Thai culture for many years, they were not always documented or recognized formally. Authorities such as government, educational, and religious institutions—often regarded these identities as abnormal or morally wrong. This perspective reveals a conflict between Thai social norms focused on “saving face,” Theravada Buddhist traditions, and the reality of Thailand's diverse sexual identities. Additionally, misconceptions about male homosexuality persist within Thai Buddhism, with a common belief attributing homosexuality to actions in a previous life. This belief is linked to the story of Ruja from the Mahanara-Takasapa Jataka, where Ruja explains that he was reborn as a “male homosexual” due to past-life adultery stated in Royal Thai Buddhist Scriptures, Book 28, 1971: 263-265 (Numun, 2012). Today, LGBTQ+ subcultures continue to grow alongside visibility for homosexuality and transgender identities. However, social acceptance remains limited, and Thai laws and policies have yet to comprehensively address issues related to homosexuality and transgender individuals.

Thailand is often considered a relatively developing nation within Asia, with a certain level of acceptance toward LGBTQ+ individuals. This acceptance is influenced by cultural factors and media, which together create an environment that promotes tolerance (Limsamarnphun, 2018). However, perspectives vary widely across regions, age groups, and socio-economic levels. Although urban centers tend to show more acceptance, rural areas and certain traditional groups often hold more conservative views. A major civil rights issue for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand is workplace discrimination. LGBTQ+ employees often face separate treatment, bullying, and limited opportunities for promotion. The lack of legal protections exacerbates these challenges, leaving many LGBTQ+ individuals vulnerable to workplace discrimination. Only a few employers have policies that actively prevent discrimination, which means that most LGBTQ+ employees lack adequate support. Violence and hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals do occur, though they are often underreported due to fears of additional stigma and limited legal repercussions (Suriyasarn, 2015). In March 2024, Thailand's Senate passed a marriage equality law, making it the first country in Southeast Asia to legalize same-sex unions (Human Rights Campaign, 2024). Advocates praised the decision as a historic advance for LGBTQ+ rights. Thailand is often seen as more progressive than its regional neighbors in terms of LGBTQ+ rights, with vibrant LGBTQ+ communities, activities, and significant media representation. The country's open stance is reflected in its diverse LGBTQ+ events, such as Pride parades and festivals held annually in Bangkok and other cities to celebrate LGBTQ+

identities and rights. These events often feature performances, community gatherings, and advocacy efforts (ibis Style Bangkok Siloam, 2024). In addition, cities like Bangkok and Pattaya host gay-friendly nightlife with bars, clubs, and entertainment venues catering specifically to LGBTQ+ individuals. Thai media is also increasingly showcasing LGBTQ+ characters and stories in TV, movies, and other outlets, promoting visibility and acceptance. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ organizations and advocacy groups are active in addressing social acceptance, legal rights, and community support. However, challenges remain due to the lack of comprehensive legal protections against discrimination in areas like healthcare, education, and employment (Thai LGBT Connect, 2024).

As acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals have grown in Thailand, the country became the first in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage through comprehensive legislation. This progressive law makes Thailand one of just 37 countries worldwide to allow same-sex marriage (Wikipedia, 2024). The decision reflects a significant societal shift in Thailand, impacting approximately five million LGBTQ+ individuals within its 65 million population. This development not only advances legal equality but could also inspire similar rulings in neighboring countries. Thailand has long been recognized as one of Asia's most LGBTQ+-friendly nations, with a more welcoming attitude toward LGBTQ+ individuals than many nearby countries. Same-sex couples are commonly seen in public, and LGBTQ+ topics are increasingly visible in the media and popular culture. As LGBTQ+ acceptance in Thailand is widely acknowledged, legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals remain inadequate. There are no specific laws to shield LGBTQ+ individuals from workplace discrimination, leaving them vulnerable to unfair treatment. Universal regulations that ensure equal protection for all workers are essential, and although progress is underway in healthcare, LGBTQ+ individuals in rural areas still face unequal access. Without explicit anti-discrimination laws, LGBTQ+ individuals often encounter hostile environments. To ensure their safety, mandatory inclusion policies should be adopted to protect all LGBTQ+ individuals (Tilleke & Gibbins, 2024).

### Objectives

- 1) To examine the challenges and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in various aspects of life, such as employment, healthcare, education, and social acceptance..
- 2) To assess the progress and limitations of Thailand's legal framework in ensuring equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals.

## 2. Literature Review

Thailand's approach to LGBTQ+ rights reflect its unique cultural, social, and legal environment. Various aspects of LGBTQ+ life in Thailand, from legal hurdles to social acceptance, offer valuable perspectives on LGBTQ+ experiences in a largely conservative society. Despite some legal progress, protections for LGBTQ+ individuals remain inconsistent. The 2017 Thai Constitution includes provisions aimed at preventing discrimination based on sex and gender identity, though these protections are not consistently upheld (UNDP, 2019). We will explore this topic in a greater depth to gain a better understanding of the treatment and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals.

### *Same-sex marriage*

The debate surrounding LGBTQ+ rights is deeply shaped by each state's unique society, values, beliefs, religion, and political landscape. This issue highlights the stark polarization in perspectives on gender and sexuality across regions. Levels of LGBTQ+ acceptance vary widely both nationally and socially. According to State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update, as of 2020, twenty-eight UN Member States have legalized same-sex marriage, while thirty-four recognize same-sex partnerships as a preliminary step toward marriage equality. Denmark was the first to introduce a "registered partnership" for same-sex couples in 1989, and over time, more jurisdictions have followed (Mendos et al., 2020). However, same-sex sexual activity remains illegal in over 67 countries worldwide (Lempinen, 2022). For instance, Iran is the only nation enforcing the death penalty for consensual same-sex acts. In Brunei, Mauritania, Nigeria (in the northern region), Saudi Arabia, Somalia (in the state of Jubaland), and the UAE, the death penalty is legally sanctioned but rarely implemented. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ individuals in Afghanistan face extrajudicial killings under Taliban rule, as

do those in the Russian region of Chechnya. Sudan reintroduced the death penalty for anal intercourse in 2020, regardless of the genders involved. Stoning remains a legal punishment in fifteen countries for adultery, including same-sex acts, though Iran is the only country where it is actively enforced (Bandera, 2024).

In Thailand, a bill to legalize same-sex marriage was introduced by Tunyawat Kamolwongwat of the Move Forward Party in June 2020, with public consultations beginning on July 2. In 2021, Thailand's Constitutional Court upheld Section 1448 of the Civil and Commercial Code, which limits marriage to heterosexual couples. However, the full ruling included language suggesting LGBTQ+ individuals differ in nature and "should be studied and segregated," a statement that activists criticized as offensive and homophobic. In 2022, the Thai National Assembly approved multiple proposals related to same-sex unions in their initial readings. The Marriage Equality Bill, led by the Move Forward Party, sought to amend the marriage law to recognize couples of any gender. In November 2023, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin of the Pheu Thai Party announced that the cabinet had approved a draft law allowing same-sex marriage. A separate Civil Partnership Bill was also proposed to offer civil partnerships as a separate category, granting some but not all rights of marriage. Despite these efforts, neither bill passed before the Parliament adjourned. On February 14, 2023, Bangkok's Dusit district issued the country's first legally non-binding partnership certificates for same-sex couples. By March 2024, Thailand's lower house passed the same-sex marriage bill with a vote of 400 in favor and 10 against. The bill passed its first Senate reading on April 1, with 147 Senators supporting, 4 opposing, and 7 abstaining. The bill ultimately received Senate approval on June 18, 2024, with 130 of 152 members voting in favor and 18 abstaining, making Thailand the first Southeast Asian nation and the 37th globally to approve a comprehensive same-sex marriage law. The legislation now awaits the king's formal approval and will come into effect 120 days after his endorsement (Bangkok Post, 2024).

Thailand's January 23, 2025, legalisation of same-sex marriage is a significant turning point for LGBTQ+ rights in the nation and the region. Thailand has established a standard for tolerance and the legal acceptance of a variety of partnerships as the first country in Southeast Asia to allow marriage equality.

The new law, which reflects a major cultural and legal shift, guarantees equal rights in areas like inheritance, adoption, and medical decision-making. This accomplishment is a significant step in the right direction, but more work will be required to advance complete equality and more comprehensive protections for Thailand's LGBTQ+ population (Reuters, 2025).

#### Healthcare

Thailand is renowned for its welcoming attitude toward LGBTQ+ individuals, reflected in its vibrant culture and progressive approach to gender and sexual diversity. While Thailand is often celebrated for its cultural acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, significant gaps persist in the healthcare system. Many LGBTQ+ individuals face barriers such as limited access to knowledgeable and affirming healthcare providers, insufficient public health policies addressing their specific needs, and lingering social stigma in medical settings. In social visibility for LGBTQ+ individuals, access to healthcare in Thailand remains challenging. Policy adjustments are needed to provide dignified, inclusive healthcare services for the LGBTQ+ community. While Thailand's 2002 Universal Health Coverage (UHC) program offers affordable, nearly free basic health services in public hospitals, LGBTQ+ friendly private hospitals and clinics are mostly limited to larger cities like Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai, and are not covered by UHC. LGBTQ+ individuals thus face a tough choice between higher-cost private facilities with LGBTQ+ affirming care or accessible public hospitals, which may lack gender-affirming services and expose them to stigma and harassment (Tosakoon, 2024).

Healthcare access challenges are particularly pronounced for LGBTQ+ individuals in rural Thailand, where specialized services, including mental health and gender-affirming care, are less accessible. Rural areas often lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to support high-quality care, posing additional barriers, especially for transgender individuals seeking gender-affirming medical interventions. Only 18 percent of doctors in Thailand work in rural areas, further limiting access to healthcare and contributing to disparities such as long wait times and geographic isolation for rural LGBTQ+ populations. These conditions make it even more difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals in rural regions to obtain the necessary care (Wiwanitkit, 2011).

### ***Education***

In the education sector, studies indicate that LGBTQ+ youth often face unwelcoming environments in Thai schools due to the lack of protective policies (UNESCO, 2014). Institutional barriers and regulatory gaps are significant obstacles, with many schools lacking adequate anti-bullying measures for LGBTQ+ students. While Chiang Mai University introduced policies in 2021 to promote gender equality among staff and students, similar policies are not universally adopted across Thai educational institutions. This issue is compounded by a lack of training among teachers and administrators on LGBTQ+ issues and effective bullying prevention. A 2011 United Nations General Assembly report highlights the importance of anti-violence and anti-discrimination policies for the well-being of LGBTQ+ students. Thai schools must actively combat bullying and implement these rules consistently to make schools safer (Coalition of CSOs and INGOs for Children's SOGIESC Rights – Thailand, 2021). A UNESCO study reveals that 56% of LGBTQ+ youth in Thailand experience bullying each month, with 29% facing verbal abuse, 31% physical abuse, and 24% experiencing sexual harassment. Another report shows that discrimination, violence, and exclusion often continue for LGBTQ+ youth as they transition into the workforce. Bullying can occur in school environments, such as locker rooms, restrooms, and classrooms, as well as on the journey to and from school. It also extends to virtual spaces, with cyberbullying becoming increasingly common due to widespread internet access, particularly via mobile phones. A global survey involving 7,644 adolescents from 25 countries found that cyberbullying was prevalent, with China (70%), Singapore (58%), and India (53%) showing the highest rates among Asian nations, while Malaysia (33%), Pakistan (26%), and Japan (17%) reported lower percentages (Plan International, 2022).

### ***Societal Attitudes and Discrimination***

Thailand is often recognized for its relatively open and accepting culture toward LGBTQ+ individuals, reflected in its vibrant LGBTQ+ communities. LGBTQ+ advocacy groups like the Foundation for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Rights and Thai Transgender Alliance play a vital role in promoting sexual minority rights and raising awareness on related issues (Newman et al., 2021). These organizations have been instrumental in lobbying for legal reforms, providing social support services, and influencing public attitudes, contributing to a broader movement for equal rights and protection nationwide. Progress toward LGBTQ+ equality in Thailand has also been shaped by international human rights norms and treaties. Collaborations with foreign organizations and global advocacy efforts have fostered shifts in policy and social attitudes, aligning local practices with global movements against oppression and discrimination based on sexual and gender identity (CIVICUS, 2024).

LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand, acceptance from friends and family plays a crucial role in their well-being and sense of belonging. While Thai society is often seen as tolerant, familial and close social relationships can be deeply influenced by traditional cultural and religious values. Support from loved ones can significantly impact mental health, confidence, and overall happiness, serving as a counterbalance to societal discrimination or institutional barriers. However, when acceptance is absent, individuals may face isolation, rejection, or pressure to conform to traditional norms. Encouraging open dialogue and fostering understanding within close circles is vital for creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. Family acceptance is crucial, as family is often the primary support system. When family members struggle to accept an LGBTQ+ individual, it can lead to feelings of guilt or isolation, making them feel out of place or undervalued. Conversely, supportive families who encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to be authentic and pursue success contribute positively to their confidence and overall well-being (Wanachompoo, Sutaphoeksaporn, Banditmontree, & Setabundhu, 2023).

### ***Events***

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is actively working to position Thailand as a leading LGBTQ+ Friendly Destination in alignment with government efforts to promote gender equality and a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere for all. As stated by the Prime Minister, Thailand is well-prepared to welcome all types of tourists,



being a major global tourism hub. The government remains committed to empowering people of all backgrounds, regardless of age, gender, religion, nationality, or social standing. In June 2024, numerous events are being organized by both public and private sectors to celebrate Pride Month. These include a range of festivities expected to attract over 860,000 participants, such as the “Chiang Mai Colorful Pride Festival,” running from May 25 to June 30 with LGBTQ+ art exhibitions, concerts, and parades. The Bangkok Pride Festival 2024, themed “Celebration of Love,” is set for May 31–June 4, featuring forums, music, and drag performances. Additionally, the “Pride Nation Samui International Festival” will take place from June 24–29 on Ko Samui, culminating in a Pride march and music event on June 29 at Chaweng Beach. These celebrations are projected to circulate over 4.5 billion baht within the economy, enhancing Thailand’s status as a “Pride Friendly Destination” ahead of hosting World Pride in 2030. These events are not merely vibrant celebrations of diversity; they serve as powerful platforms for advocating the rights and well-being of Thailand’s LGBTQ+ community (Government Public Relations Department, 2024). Additionally, transgender individuals in Thailand are unable to legally change their gender, even after undergoing gender-affirming surgery, which leads to systemic discrimination and limits career opportunities (Knight & Chávez, 2021). By spotlighting these gaps, these events inspire meaningful dialogue and action, fostering greater awareness among the public and policymakers alike. They create opportunities to challenge prejudice, reduce stigma, and champion a more inclusive society where LGBTQ+ individuals can thrive with dignity and equal rights. In doing so, these celebrations go beyond festivity to become catalysts for lasting social change and a reminder of the ongoing journey toward equity and acceptance (Government Public Relations Department, 2023).

### 3. Methodology

The purpose of this research is to investigate the sociopolitical environment around LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand with particular attention on legislative frameworks, cultural elements, and public opinion. The research methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a thorough understanding of the problem. Using this method enables the researcher to examine the topic from several angles when researching LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand, providing both statistical analysis and in-depth insights into individual experiences. The survey received responses from 221 people, offering a wide variety of viewpoints on the subject. Five in-depth interviews were also done with LGBTQ+ people in order to learn more about their specific struggles and experiences. A focus group discussion was also conducted with five LGBTQ+ participants. Interviews with important stakeholders, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, will be used to gather primary data. Surveys will also be done to find out how the general population feels about LGBTQ+ equality and rights. In addition to primary data, secondary sources such as academic literature, reports from human rights organizations, and legal documents will provide insights into the legal and historical background of LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand. Together, the integration of these data sources aims to provide an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of the sociopolitical dynamics influencing LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on equality and social justice.

#### *Quantitative Research*

Quantitative analysis is the structured evaluation of numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, or trends. It employs statistical methods to measure variables and make informed predictions or decisions grounded in empirical evidence. Quantitative research on LGBTQ+ rights involves surveys to learn what the public thinks about LGBTQ+ rights, acceptance rates, and any discrimination. The gathered data might highlight patterns, such as the ways in which sentiments vary by area, age bracket, or educational attainment. Statistical analysis can be used to find trends or connections in the numerical data from surveys, such as whether younger Thai generations are more accepting of LGBTQ+ people than older generations. The survey questions focused on awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights, experiences of discrimination and acceptance, policy support, and cultural beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ rights. The survey and in-depth interview targets individuals aged 18 to 28 and above. The data collection period spans from October 15, 2024 to November 3, 2024 and the survey is

being conducted through online platforms. These comprehensive data collection and analysis efforts are essential for developing a broad yet detailed understanding of the societal landscape, helping to inform future policies and initiatives aimed at advancing equality and inclusion for LGBTQ+ communities in Thailand.

### ***Survey Questions***

1. Are you aware of any legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand?
2. How familiar are you with Thailand's stance on same-sex marriage?
3. Do you think that Thailand need more legal reforms to better protect LGBTQ+ rights?
4. Have you witnessed someone being discriminated against based on their gender identity or sexual orientation in Thailand?
5. How comfortable do you feel expressing your gender identity or sexual orientation in public in Thailand?
6. How comfortable would you feel if a close family member or friend identified as LGBT?
7. What areas do you think LGBTQ+ individuals face the most discrimination in Thailand?
8. In your opinion, how supportive is Thai society toward LGBTQ+ rights?
9. Do you personally support equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand?
10. What areas do you think need improvement in terms of legal protections or societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand?
11. What steps do you think the Thai government should take to improve the rights of LGBT individuals? (optional)
12. Any additional comments or suggestions on LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand?

### **Qualitative Research**

#### ***In-depth Interview***

Quantitative analysis is a systematic approach to examining numerical data to uncover patterns, relationships, and trends. It utilizes statistical techniques to assess variables and generate data-driven predictions or decisions based on empirical evidence. Quantitative research on LGBTQ+ rights involves surveys to learn what the public thinks about LGBTQ+ rights, acceptance rates, and any discrimination. The gathered data might highlight patterns, such as the ways in which sentiments vary by area, age bracket, or educational attainment. Statistical analysis can be used to find trends or connections in the numerical data from surveys, such as whether younger Thai generations are more accepting of LGBTQ+ people than older generations. The survey questions focused on awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights, experiences of discrimination and acceptance, policy support, and cultural beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ rights. The survey and in-depth interview targets individuals aged 18 to 28 and above. The data collection period spans from October 15, 2024 to November 3, 2024 and the survey is being conducted through online platforms. These comprehensive data collection and analysis efforts are essential for developing a broad yet detailed understanding of the societal landscape, helping to inform future policies and initiatives aimed at advancing equality and inclusion for LGBTQ+ communities in Thailand.

#### ***Focus Groups***

A focus group is a qualitative research method that brings together a small, diverse group of individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ or represent various LGBTQ+ identities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, and asexual. This approach encourages participants to engage in meaningful discussions about their experiences, social perceptions, and broader societal challenges. The focus group discussion, conducted on October 30, 2024, explored key topics such as personal experiences, perceptions of LGBTQ+ rights, discrimination, legal protections, and the influence of Thai cultural values on acceptance. By including LGBTQ+ individuals, the discussion fostered an open and supportive environment where participants could share their stories, perspectives, and emotions freely. These conversations encouraged diverse viewpoints,

deepening the understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences. The interaction between participants provided valuable insights into the social dynamics at play, uncovering attitudes, motivations, and cultural influences. The qualitative data not only amplified individual voices but also revealed broader patterns of acceptance and challenges within society.

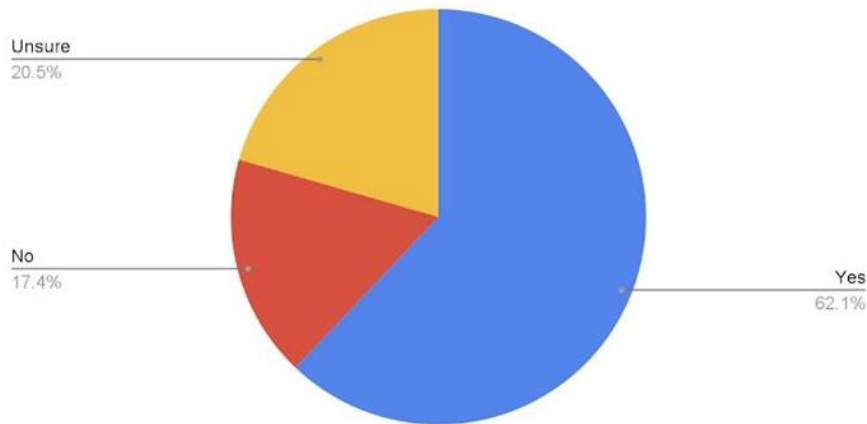
#### Interview questions

1. What legal protections exist for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand?
2. Have you witnessed or experienced LGBTQ+ discrimination in Thailand?
3. How does Thai culture affect views on LGBTQ+ rights?
4. What challenges do you think LGBTQ+ people face when seeking legal help?
5. How could legal reforms improve LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand?
6. Do you think Thailand is moving toward greater acceptance and legal recognition of LGBT individuals?
7. How do you feel about the legal recognition of transgender individuals in terms of identity documentation?
8. What changes would you like to see regarding LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand over the next five to ten years?
9. Do you feel that the current laws in Thailand adequately protect LGBTQ+ individuals? Why or why not?
10. Can you share your experience with coming out in Thailand? Was your family and social circle supportive?

## 4. Results and Discussion

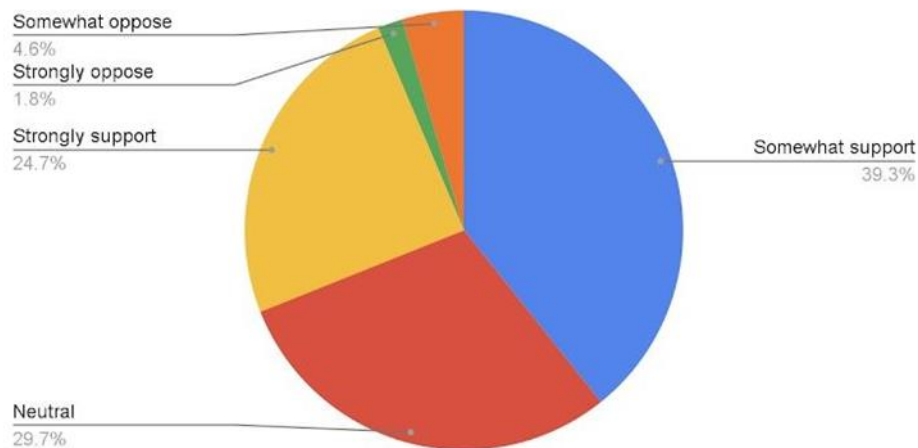
### 4.1 Results

Quantitative studies provide valuable data on the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, helping to identify patterns, challenges, and areas for improvement. Surveys and statistical analyses often measure key indicators such as rates of discrimination, social acceptance, and access to supportive networks. Overall, 221 responses were obtained through different platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Line, WhatsApp and local respondents who have relevant work experience or knowledge regarding legal protection and discrimination of LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand. Majority of the respondents are from Myanmar. A significant number of the responses described the respondents' own experiences of legal and social obstacles surrounding LGBTQ+ issues and their rights in Thailand. The following data below are the results collected from 221 respondents. The data were based on the following: Awareness of legal protection for LGBTQ+ in Thailand. Figure (1) Awareness of any legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. Figure (2) Supporting equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. Figure (3) Areas in which LGBTQ+ individuals face the most discrimination in Thailand. Figure (4) Areas where improvements are needed in terms of legal protections or societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand



**Figure 1** Awareness of any legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand  
Source: Authors' conduct

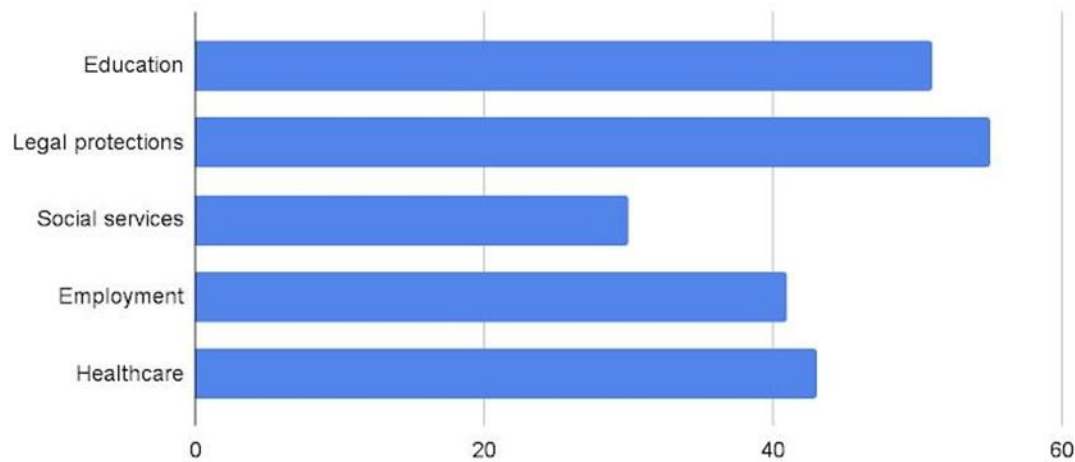
The pie chart illustrates the level of awareness regarding legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. The results indicate that 62.1% of respondents reported being aware, 20.5% were uncertain, and 17.4% were unaware of such protections. The findings suggest that although there is a majority of people who know about issues related to legal protection, there is still a large portion of the population that is either ignorant or unsure with regards to the protection of LGBTQ+ people. This emphasizes the importance of further efforts in educating people on the issues regarding LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand. See Figure 1.



**Figure 2** Supporting equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand  
Source: Authors' conduct

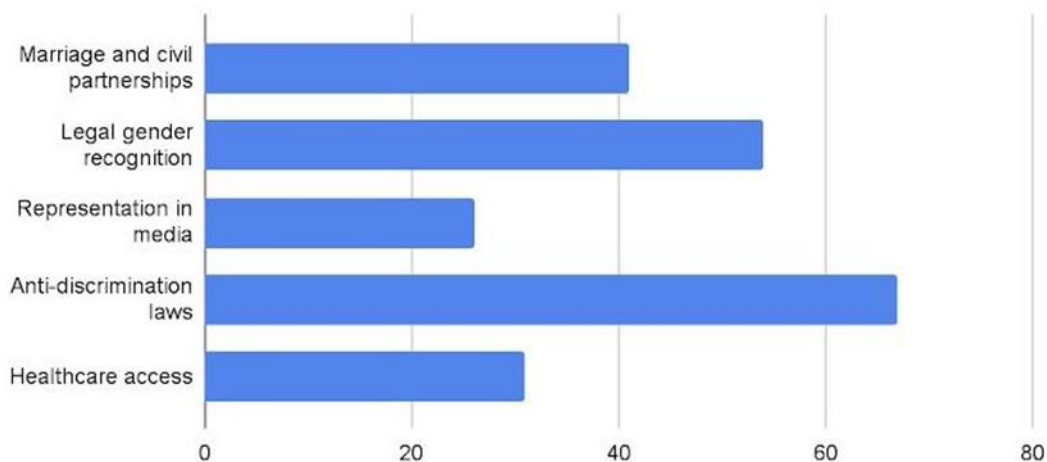
The pie chart reflects respondents' attitudes toward supporting equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. The results show that 24.7% strongly support, 39.3% somewhat support, 29.4% are neutral, 4.6% somewhat oppose, and 1.8% strongly oppose equal rights. From the survey, the majority of the respondents provided some support for LGBTQ+ rights, as over half of them showed some degree of support. Some of the respondents were neutral which does highlight the need for awareness campaigns to promote the understanding and involvement of the society regarding the gay and lesbian rights protection in Thailand. See Figure 2.





**Figure 3** Areas in which LGBTQ+ individuals face the most discrimination in Thailand  
Source: Authors' conduct

The bar chart highlights the areas where LGBTQ+ individuals experience the highest levels of discrimination in Thailand. According to the chart, 55 respondents identified legal protections as the most challenging area, followed by education with 51 respondents, healthcare with 43, employment with 41, and social services with 30. The results of the research indicate that the subjective feeling of discrimination towards the LGBTQ+ community in Thailand extends to several core domains, legal protection and education being the worst conducted in their opinion. The testified findings, thus, call for extensive advocacy and policy reforms in these areas aimed at combating discrimination and building an inclusive environment for members of the LGBTQ+ community. See Figure 3.



**Figure 4** Areas where improvements are needed in terms of legal protections or societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand  
Source: Authors' conduct

The bar chart above shows the areas where improvements are needed regarding legal protections or societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand. The results reveal that 41 respondents identified marriage and civil partnerships, 54 pointed to legal gender recognition, 26 mentioned media representation, 67 highlighted the need for stronger anti-discrimination laws, and 31 emphasized the importance of better healthcare access. These findings demonstrate a strong desire for stronger legal safeguards and wider social acceptability in a number of areas, with anti-discrimination legislation and legal gender recognition standing out as the most

important issues. Policymakers, activists, and groups fighting for LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand can benefit greatly from this data, which highlights certain areas where reforms could make a big difference. See Figure 4.

Participants indicated that in order to combat prejudices and advance inclusivity, they wanted more public education as well as legislative changes like same-sex marriage and gender recognition legislation. The concerted effort of activism, education, and structural change is necessary to bring cultural views into line with legal equity. Closing this information gap is crucial to ensuring that social attitudes and legal protections change in tandem for a more inclusive Thailand. Education programs and awareness efforts are crucial for increasing public support. These initiatives have the potential to dispel myths, promote compassion, and emphasize the significance of universal equality of rights. The survey helps determine areas that require more engagement and advocacy.

## Qualitative Results

### *In-depth Interview*

In the in-depth interview, the interviewer collected information from five LGBTQ+ individuals on 25th October, 2024. The interview for each participant lasted for 15 minutes. Their answers offer insightful information about the rights of LGBTQ+ people in the nation. Many attendees talked about their own experiences, pointing out both the improvements and the areas that still present difficulties. All things considered, the interviewees stressed the necessity of discrimination and more robust legal security. These results demonstrate the goals of Thailand's LGBTQ+ community, highlighting the significance of continuous initiatives to advance inclusion, equality, and social support.

In the interview, John stated “Thai culture is accepting, particularly given the prevalence of LGBTQ+ individuals in entertainment and the media.” (John, personal communications, 25th October, 2024)

John believed that there is still a divide between genuine equality and cultural acceptability. John stated that Thai culture does support LGBTQ+. According to him, acceptability is rising, particularly in large cities. Full legal recognition, however, still requires a lot of work, especially in the areas of gender recognition and marital equality.

Min stated in the interview “some LGBTQ+ people are afraid to ask for help because they fear they won't receive equal treatment”. (Min, personal communications, 25th October, 2024)

Min affirmed that the judicial system can be intimidating. It's common to worry that their concerns won't receive enough consideration, and legalising same-sex marriage would be quite advantageous.

Alex also mentioned in the interview “Same-sex couples should enjoy the same rights and protections as heterosexual couples with regard to hospital visits, inheritance, and family benefits”. (Alex, personal communications, 25th Oct, 2024)

Alex wishes that altering one's gender identity was a legal procedure because people whose gender identity does not match their looks frequently fail to consider the psychological toll of constantly having to justify their gender identity.

Htut expressed “I would like to see more focus on education, especially in educational institutions and professional setting to promote acceptance,” ( Htut, personal communications, 25th Oct, 2024)

Htut suggested that legislative reforms are necessary, but they wouldn't be successful until people's attitudes changed. He believes that the laws in place are beneficial but not comprehensive.

Jiah noted in the interview “Although the government is cognisant of the problems, many persons still lack complete legal protections and are susceptible to prejudice.” (Jiah, personal communication, 25th Oct, 2024)

In Jiah statement, his friends were incredibly supportive when he first came out to them. Although they still find it difficult to comprehend, his family has grown more tolerant with time. Support from younger generations is easier to come by than from older ones.

### *Focus Groups*

There are five in-depth interviews conducted on 30th October, 2024 that lasted for 45 minutes long. The Participants provided various opinions regarding the rights and protection of five LGBTQ+ people in Thailand. They pointed out that although there might be some legal provisions, implementation remains sporadic, and there are no comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. Quite a few pointed out instances when they were discriminated against, especially in seeking health care, or in a workplace, where various kinds of biases and prejudices create unpleasant or alienating circumstances. Entertainment has fostered a fair amount of acceptance for LGBTQ+ people as Thai culture is said to be fairly progressive; however, participants felt there is a disconnect between this cultural acceptance and actual legal equity. Many voiced their apprehensions about getting legal assistance as the legal design system is viewed as oppressive and unsympathetic towards the LGBTQ+ community. In the future,

however, they wish to see changes, such as banning same-sex marriages, putting strong gender recognition laws in place, and changing the school system so that kids learn about LGBTQ+ people. They contend that this is necessary in making Thailand closer to equality and less protection for LGBTQ+ people. Three participants agreed that although the portrayal of LGBTQ+ people in entertainment is quite advanced in Thai culture, in terms of legal protection, there is no such thing as comprehensive protection. They noted the lack of anti-discrimination legislation and reiterated the examples of workplace discrimination, healthcare discrimination, and microaggressions. Likewise, these participants were also determined that changes were necessary in order to achieve legal same sex marriage, more protective gender recognition legislation and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ issues in the educational curriculum. Two participants disagreed that legal reforms were needed with such immediacy, doubting sociocultural acceptance for changes like same sex marriage or recognition of other genders. They thought that even if some legal progress is necessary, it should be preceded by changes in social attitudes to prevent opposition or backlash. They also pointed out that such speed of changes may further fragment the society instead of integrating it.

#### 4.2 Discussion

The current situation and difficulties experienced by the LGBTQ+ community in Thailand are clarified by the conversations from focus groups and individual interviews. Participants agreed that Thai culture has promoted a degree of acceptance for LGBTQ+ people, especially through its media and entertainment sectors. They did, however, highlight a notable discrepancy between full legal rights and cultural acceptability. Inadequate gender recognition laws, a lack of anti-discrimination laws, and a lack of laws allowing same-sex marriage are still major causes for worry. Numerous individuals talked about their experiences with discrimination, especially in healthcare and professional environments where biases and prejudices foster hostile conditions. Although all of the participants agreed that legal reforms were required to solve these problems, they had different views on how quickly these changes should be implemented. To guarantee equity and inclusivity, several emphasised the necessity of enacting legislation that prohibit discrimination, permit same-sex marriage, and enhance gender recognition practices. However, some contended that social attitude improvements must come before legal reforms, since swift legal changes without societal preparation may spark opposition or cause society disintegration. Participants called for more awareness campaigns to combat prejudices and for LGBTQ+ issues to be incorporated into school curricula, highlighting the importance of education as a critical tool for promoting acceptance and understanding. These insights highlight the significance of a dual approach that combines societal education and legal advancements to create an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ people in Thailand.

Strong legislative changes to guarantee legal equality and focused lobbying to promote inclusivity in educational institutions are the two main strategies required to close these inequalities. The main goals of advocacy campaigns should be to increase understanding, dispel prejudices, and increase awareness. These initiatives are essential to creating a society in which LGBTQ+ people are recognised, feel safe, and have the confidence to succeed. These results highlight the pressing need for social and legal changes in Thailand to guarantee the complete acceptance and protection of LGBTQ+ people. Legal gender recognition and anti-discrimination legislation are especially crucial since they would close current legal loopholes and send a powerful message of inclusivity. In addition to more general educational initiatives to change public perceptions, policymakers and activists have a chance to significantly impact society by giving priority to these issues. Greater public awareness and a more inclusive legal system would enable Thailand to make significant progress towards achieving equality for all of its residents.

#### 5. Conclusion

Thailand has made significant strides in advancing LGBTQ+ rights, balancing legal challenges with a culturally open mindset. Over the past years, substantial progress has been made, particularly in areas like adoption and same-sex marriage, which have set important legal precedents. However, despite these advances, there remain considerable gaps in crucial areas such as healthcare, education, and legal protections. While the legal framework has evolved to offer more rights to LGBTQ+ individuals, complete equality has yet to be achieved. The country's shifting stance on same-sex marriage, with recent legislative moves pushing for broader acceptance, but there is still work to be done to ensure full legal equity for LGBTQ+ communities. Moreover, LGBTQ+ individuals in rural areas continue to face significant challenges. Even though urban centers might offer better access to healthcare and other services, rural areas lack sufficient affirming care, with fewer healthcare providers and support systems that understand or cater to LGBTQ+ needs. This discrepancy between urban and rural access

reflects a larger issue of unequal distribution of resources and care, which leaves many LGBTQ+ individuals in underserved areas vulnerable.

In the educational system, LGBTQ+ students still endure bullying and discrimination, as schools often lack comprehensive anti-bullying policies or programs aimed at fostering inclusivity. The absence of sufficient support mechanisms and clear legal protections in educational institutions perpetuates a hostile environment for many young LGBTQ+ individuals, hindering their personal development and well-being.

In 2024 when Thailand legalized same-sex marriage, positioning the country as a leader in LGBTQ+ rights in Southeast Asia. These years of dedicated advocacy from LGBTQ+ rights groups, whose proactive efforts, alongside the visibility created by high-profile LGBTQ+ events, helped shift public opinion and influence legislative change. These efforts have not only highlighted the importance of legal recognition but also underscored the need for further societal reform. Despite the progress, the journey toward true equality is far from complete. Thailand still requires significant institutional, cultural, and legal reforms to ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals are fully accepted and protected. Moving forward, overcoming remaining obstacles will require sustained advocacy, further legislative changes, and a broader public commitment to raising awareness and fostering inclusivity. Achieving a society where LGBTQ+ individuals can live freely and without discrimination will depend on continued efforts to address both the legal and social challenges they encounter in Thailand.

## 6. References

- Bandera, G. (2024, July 13). Where is homosexuality illegal and punishable by death?. FairPlanet. <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/death-penalty-homosexuality-illegal/>
- Bangkok Post. (2024). Senate passes same-sex marriage law. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2813329/senate-passes-same-sex-marriage-law>
- CIVICUS. (2024, June 18). Thailand's LGBTQI+ rights breakthrough. LENS. <https://lens.civicus.org/thailands-lgbtqi-rights-breakthrough/>
- Coalition of CSOs and INGOs for Children's SOGIESC Rights - Thailand. (2021). The rights of LGBTQI+ youth and children in Thailand. Joint UPR Submission for Thailand's 3rd Universal Periodic Review Cycle. <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?file=EnglishTranslation&filename=8974>
- Government Public Relations Department. (2023, September 15). New regulations for enhancing public safety and health in Thailand. Retrieved from <https://thailand.prd.go.th/en/content/category/detail/id/2078/iid/292203>
- Government Public Relations Department. (2024, May 26). Moving Thailand toward becoming top LGBTQ+ friendly destination. Thailand PRD. <https://thailand.prd.go.th/en/content/category/detail/id/48/iid/291992The Pattaya News+2>
- Knight, K., & Chávez, A. (2021). "People can't be fit into boxes": Thailand's need for legal gender recognition. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/12/15/people-cant-be-fit-boxes/thailands-need-legal-gender-recognition>
- Lempinen, E. (2022, May 4). Attack on LGBTQ+ rights: The Politics and Psychology of a Backlash. Berkeley News. <https://news.berkeley.edu/2022/05/02/attack-on-lgbtq-rights-the-politics-and-psychology-of-a-backlash/>
- Limsamarnphun, N. (2018, November 23). More rights for same-sex couples. The Nation Weekend. Retrieved from <https://www.nationthailand.com/in-focus/30359180>
- Newman, P. A., Reid, L., Tepjan, S., & Akkakanjanasupar, P. (2021). LGBT+ inclusion and human rights in Thailand: A scoping review of the literature. BMC Public Health, 21, 1816 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8501542>
- Newman, P. A., Koo, K. B., Womack, V. Y., Shahi, P., & Logie, C. H. (2021). LGBT+ inclusion and human rights in Thailand: A scoping review of the literature. BMC Public Health, 21, 1-17. Retrieved from <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11798-2>
- Numun, W. (2012). Significance of Homosexuality in Thai Society. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Prince of Songkla University, 8(2), 157–170. retrieved from <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/eJHUSO/article/view/85753>
- Reuters. (2025, January 23). Thailand's same-sex marriage law. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailands-same-sex-marriage-law-2025-01-23/>

- 
- Suriyasarn, B. (2015). Gender identity and sexual orientation in Thailand. International Labour Organization. Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_356950.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_356950.pdf)
- Thai LGBT Connect. (2024) Events. Retrieved from <https://www.thailgbtconnect.com/even>
- Tilleke & Gibbins. (2024). Strong privacy protections support same-sex marriage and adoption in Thailand. Retrieved from <https://www.tilleke.com/insights/strong-privacy-protections-support-same-sex-marriage-and-adoption-in-thailand/>
- Tosakoon, S. (2024) Thailand's transgender community struggles to find health care, Washington Blade: LGBTQ News, Politics, LGBTQ Rights, Gay News. Available at: <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2024/04/10/thailands-transgender-community-struggles-to-find-health-care>
- UNESCO. (2014). LGBT-friendly Thailand? A brief on school bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Retrieved from <https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/A-Brief-on-school-bullying-on-the-basis-of-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-LGBT-friendly-Thailand-2014-eng.pdf>
- Wanachompoo, M., Sutaphoeksaporn, I., Banditmontree, S., & Setabundhu, P. (2023). LGBTQIA+ equality in Thailand. ASEAN International Sandbox Conference2023.<https://rsujournals.rsu.ac.th/index.php/aisc/article/download/3045/2433/>
- Wikipedia. (2024). Same-sex marriage in Thailand. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex\\_marriage\\_in\\_Thailand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_Thailand)
- Wikipedia contributors. (2024). LGBT rights in Thailand. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved from [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_rights\\_in\\_Thailand](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Thailand)
- Wiwanitkit, V. (2011). Mandatory rural service for health care workers in Thailand. *Rural and Remote Health*, 11(1), 1583. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH1583>