



MEDIA

GUIDELINE

Media reference guide developed by the BRIDGE TO EQUALITY PROJECT with the aim of providing a reference guide to media institutions, journalists and other media personnel that would contribute to the accurate and conscious representing of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) persons across different media platforms.



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INTRODUCTION

This is a media reference guide developed by the BRIDGE TO EQUALITY PROJECT with the aim of providing a reference guide to media institutions, journalists and other media personnel that would contribute to the accurate and conscious representing of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) persons across different media platforms.

The LGBTQ community consists of individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions that do not align with what is considered as “normal” or “acceptable” by the society. Thus, individuals who identify as LGBTQ are often stigmatised, discriminated against, prosecuted, and persecuted by society at large.

Further, "Carnal intercourse and acts of 'gross indecency between same-sex individuals (described in law as “acts against the order of nature”) are criminalized by Sri Lankan law, under Section 365 and Section 365A of Sri Lankan Penal Code, 1833, thus, criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults regardless of the gender of those involved. These penal laws together with various social stigmas, have subjected LGBTQ individuals to an array of prejudices, injustices, and violence for decades. While the movement towards the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships has grown in strength since it emerged in the late 1990s, these legal, political, and social barriers remain. However, it is our view that, media can make significant contributions towards the well-being of the LGBTQ community in many ways, namely;

- It can create awareness on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) and the LGBTQ persons and the issues/challenges they face.
- It can report incidents regarding a person’s actual or perceived SOGIE in a manner that preserves the safety, dignity, and human rights of the said persons by ensuring accurate reporting, sensitive reporting and ethical reporting.
- It can invoke empathy in the readers and viewers towards the LGBTQ community.
- It may contribute to the creation of a non-discriminating, human rights abiding, equal enabling environment for all citizens of the country

BRIDGE to Equality

BRIDGE to Equality project (BRIDGE) aims to improve the protection of human rights for LGBTQ people in Sri Lanka through the use of international human rights law to enable justice actors (judges, lawyers and other legal professionals), activists and human rights defenders to improve justice outcomes for the LGBTQ community; with a focus on overcoming challenges imposed by the current legal framework, as well as the overall promotion and protection of human rights of LGBTI people. BRIDGE is jointly implemented by DAST, National Transgender Network and Young Out Here in partnership with the International Commission of Jurists since 2021.

GLOSSARY



Updated Vernacular for LGBTQ Terms

This is an adaptation of the GLAAD Media and Reference Guidebook and an updated vernacular of the Media Reference Guidelines Developed by Equal Grounds in 2018.

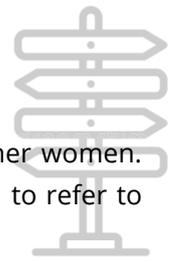
Sexual Orientation: Sexual Orientation describes a person's persistent feelings of physical, romantic, or emotional attraction to another person. Examples of sexual orientations include, Heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.

Gender Identity: The internal and unique perception of gender that each person has is their gender identity. It is the belief that an individual belongs to either the male or female gender, neither, both, or somewhere in between. A person's birth-assigned sex may sometimes not match their gender identity.

Gender Expression: The manner in which a person shows or expresses their gender is known as gender expression. This can include actions and outward manifestations like clothing, hair, makeup, body language, and voice in addition to behaviour. Pronouns and a person's chosen name are two additional common methods to express gender. These characteristics are how other people determine a person's gender.

SOGIESC : This is an acronym that is often used in advocacy to refer to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Inclusive of all gender expressions, sexual orientations, and attributes, including intersex qualities. Variations of this acronym can be SOGI (sexual orientation, gender identity), or SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression). All persons, including cisgender and straight people, who have sexual orientations and gender identities are included in the acronym.

LGBTQ : This is an acronym that stands to refer to individuals who identify as Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. The letter "Q" typically stands for queer in an advocacy and media stand point, however, especially when referring to young people this could also mean "questioning". The acronym is also used as LGBT and LGBTQ+ , the + signifies all identities besides heterosexual and cisgender persons.



Lesbian: A woman who is physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually attracted to other women. Some Lesbians may prefer to be referred to as gay or gay women. It is discouraged to refer to them as "homosexuals" and the term Lesbian can be used as a noun or adjective.

Gay: A person physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually attracted to someone of the same sex. Usually used to describe physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually attracted to men. It is discouraged to refer to them as homosexuals.

Bisexual: This is an adjective used to describe someone who may be attracted to people of different genders on a physical, romantic, and/or emotional level, though perhaps not always at the same time, in the same way, or to the same extent.

Transgender: This is a term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth. This is an umbrella term used to describe individuals who express their gender in a variety of ways that go against traditional gender roles. It encompasses, but is not limited to, those who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross-dressers, gender non-conforming, gender variant, or gender queer. It also includes transgender men and women. The term 'trans' is often used to refer to transgender.

Transwoman: This is a term used to describe a person who was assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is female.

Transman: This is a term used to describe a person who was assigned female at birth but whose gender identity is male.

Questioning: A person who is questioning their sexuality or gender identity.

Queer: This is a term used to describe individuals, especially younger individuals, who do not exclusively identify as heterosexual and does not wish to exclusively refer to themselves as Lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Heterosexual/straight: This is a term used to describe persons who are physically romantically, and/ or emotionally attracted to those of a sex different to their own.

Homosexual: This is a term used to describe persons who are physically, emotionally, and/or emotionally attracted to those of the same sex as them. This is an **Outdated** clinical term considered derogatory and offensive. The Associated Press, The New York Times, and The Washington Post restrict usage of the term.

Monosexual : Exclusively heterosexual or homosexual.

Intersex: This is a term used to describe persons with one or more innate biological sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. This is not to be confused with



transgender. Intersex people are assigned a sex at birth either male or female and that decision by medical providers and parents may not match the gender identity of the child.

Male – This is an individual of the sex that can generally produce small, frequently motile gametes that can fertilize a female's eggs. Certain individuals' assigned male at birth could have a different gender identity.

Female – This is an individual of the sex that is typically capable of bearing young. Certain individuals' assigned female at birth could have a different gender identity.

Transexual : This is a rather term originated by the medical and psychological fields and refers to those who wish to alter their physiques or those who have already undergone medical procedures including hormone therapy to change their physiques. This is not a commonly used term and transgender persons do not identify as transexual.

Cisgender: This is a term denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex they were identified as at birth *ie* not transgender.

Misgender: this is a term used when you refer to someone, especially a transgender person, with a pronoun or form of address, that does not reflect their gender identity.

Deadname: often used in the verb form and this is when a transgender person is addressed by their birth name when they have changed their name as part of their gender transition.

Cross dresser: This is a term used to describe persons who sometimes wears clothes usually worn by a different gender; usually a man who sometimes wears female/women clothes, make-up, jewelry, etc While some may use cross-dressing to express their gender identity, others would use this as a form of art. However the term cross dresser is **not encouraged** to be used when describing an LGBTQ person unless the said person refers to themselves as such.

Non Binary : Non binary or nonbinary, is a term used to describe individuals who believe that their gender identity and/or gender expression do not fall within the binary gender categories of man and woman. Enby is an abbreviated form of nonbinary. It is discouraged to use NB as it is commonly an abbreviation for non-Black.

Androsexual/Androphilic: This is a term used to describe persons who are sexually, aesthetically, and/or romantically attracted to masculinity.

Gynesexual/gynephilic: This is a term used to describe persons who are sexually, aesthetically, and/or romantically attracted to femininity.

Aromantic: This is a term used to describe persons who does not experience romantic attractions towards anyone. Aromantic may include people who do not feel romantic attraction unless an intense emotional or sexual connection is established with someone.



Asexual: This is a term used to describe persons who do not experience sexual attraction towards anyone. Sometimes abbreviated to "ace."

Demisexual : This is a term used to describe persons who experience sexual attraction, only in certain situations, for example, after they have formed a strong emotional or romantic connection with a partner. This often used under the umbrella of asexual.

Pansexual: This is a term used to describe persons who has the capacity to form physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions to people, regardless of gender identity. This is one of several terms under the bi+ umbrella.

Ally: This is a heterosexual and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ people. Plural is allies.

Closeted: This is a term used to describe persons who's sexual orientation and/or gender identity are not know by the public or rather not out about being LGBTQ.

Coming Out: This can be a lifelong process of self-acceptance. While people come to understand and accept their own sexual orientation first, they may reveal it to others. It is stressed that it is not necessary to have sexual experiences to come out as LGBTQ, nor is it necessary to tell others.

Homophobia: This is a term used to refer to intolerance, biases, prejudice, or hatred toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer people, expressed in speech or actions.

Biphobia: This is a term referred to the intolerance, prejudice or hatred toward bisexual people that maybe expressed in speech or actions. Comments that instigate doubts about the legitimacy of bisexuality, such as you "its not real", "it is just a phase" are examples of biphobia.

Transphobia :This is a term referred to the intolerance, prejudice, hatred, aversion towards transgender people that maybe expressed in discriminatory words, speech or actions. **Gender Pronouns:** This is a term used to refer to the terms individuals use to refer to themselves that may reflect their gender identity. These could be he/him, she/her, or gender neutral words like they/them.

Sexual Preference: This has a similar definition to sexual orientation, however is considered a derogatory term and the use of the same is discouraged. It implies that being a certain sexual orientation besides being heterosexual is a choice and thus maybe "curable."



Updated Vernacular for Media Terms

Audience: This phrase refers to both the target audience for whom the media or content was created and everyone else who is exposed to it.

Demographics: This refers to the quantifiable traits of media consumers, such as their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, level of education, and income.

Ideology: This speaks to how people perceive the outside world and their surroundings. Individual psychologies and the societal structures that are built around us may interact in this way.

Media: Media refers to all industrial forms of mass communication as a whole.

Media Education: This is the method by which one learns the technical production abilities related to producing media texts.

Media Literacy: The process of comprehending and utilizing the media in a proactive and non-passive manner. This entails having a thorough awareness of the nature of the media, their methods, and the results of those methods.

Mass media: Media that is intended to be consumed by typically large audiences through the use of technology are referred to as mass media.

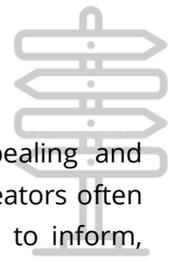
Social Media: refers to applications and websites that give users the ability to publish material, participate in social networking, or both. Social media applications include Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Social Media Reach: The amount of individuals who view material shared on social media is known as social media reach. It's one of many social media metrics, which are certain types of information that demonstrate how consumers view and engage with material on social media.

Social media marketing: Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing that makes use of the strength of well-known social media platforms to meet your branding and marketing objectives.

Journalist: a person who produces news reports or articles for radio or television or writes them for a newspaper or magazine.

Influencers: In social media, influencers are People who have developed a name for their knowledge and expertise on a particular subject. They frequently post about that subject on their favoured social media platforms, building sizable followings of fervent, active followers who closely follow their opinions. Because they can start trends and motivate their followers to purchase the goods they advertise, brands adore social media influencers.



Digital Content creator: this is a person in charge of producing visually appealing and audience-engaging material is known as a digital content creator. Digital content creators often create content for social media platforms. Usually, the purpose of this material is to inform, amuse, and delight a connected, online audience.

Narrative: how the story or plot is presented. A media text's narrative is the logical arrangement of its events as they unfold over time and space.

Stereotypes: A technique employed in media representation to assign individuals of social or cultural groups labels based on instantly recognizable traits. Stereotypes are utilized by the media to instantly connect with the audience, even if they are frequently negative and may include a kernel of truth.

Sources: this is a term used to refer to the people interviewed, spoken to by the journalist when doing a news story or an article.

By-line: this is a term used to refer to the name or pseudonym of the writer of a certain article (often used in print media)



THE AUDIENCE

This is a media reference guide designed to act as a handbook for all media entities including, mainstream print, broadcast, social media platforms, digital spaces, when reporting issues related to LGBTQ or SOGIE issues. It is imperative to specifically identify the audience of this booklet as the booklet aims to minimise the use of terms, concepts and ideologies that stigmatise, discriminate and perpetuate harassment and violence against people of diverse SOGIE and the LGBTQ community.

What are the media entities aimed at?

Media is defined as the plural form of medium; the term has come to mean all the industrial forms of mass communication combined.

Media includes mass media which includes those media that are designed to be consumed by generally large audiences through the agencies of technology (while includes print media, Television and radio) and the newest and rapidly progressing branch of media social media.

All individuals involved in telling stories of LGBTQ persons and discussing issues related to said persons in any of the aforesaid forms of media are considered to be the target audience of this reference guide.

This media reference guide lists out important guidelines for print/electronic media institutions, video media agencies, television, radio, journalists, content creators, editors, sub editors of print/electronic media institutions, editors of television and radio institutions, social media influencers, social media managers.

How does this reference guide help mass media?

Mass media in Sri Lanka is primarily governed by the Sri Lanka Press Council. There are parameters in place to ensure that the free media is responsible and sensitive to the needs and expectations of its readers while maintaining the highest standards of journalism.

In this practice, it is important to identify that marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ community is not portrayed in a negative, discriminatory, and derogatory frame thus instigating social stigmas against these individuals. While there have being various examples which will be examined in the next chapter, where traditional media has portrayed the LGBTQ community in a negative light. Therefore, this is a reference guide that will help and encourage Newspapers, Magazines, Television, radio stations and all other forms of traditional media to implement responsible and sensitive practices, when reporting issues surrounding the LGBTQ community.



How does the reference guide help social media?

The visibility of social media is extremely high in the current context and accountability of individuals' content on social media is also becoming increasingly high. Influencers and organisations conducting social media promotions should maintain professionalism and remain unbiased when reporting matters and issues relating to LGBTQ individuals and refrain from instigating harassment and violence and mentioning statements and notions that may promote various stigmas and prejudices against the community.

While real-time communication is permitted through social media, it is important that there are certain parameters set when individuals including social media influencers conduct themselves on social media. The reference guide will act as a set of guidelines to protect the rights of LGBTQ persons when content related to such persons or issues related to them are published and or shared through social media.

In the GLAAD's 2022 Social Media Safety Index (SMSI)¹ a review of the social media platforms were conducted against the explicit protections from hate and harassment for LGBTQ users, this included offering gender pronoun options on profiles, and prohibiting advertising that could be harmful and/or discriminatory to LGBTQ people, it was rather surprising and appalling that all platforms scored under a 50.

For example Instagram doesn't have any rules against targeted deadnaming and gender misrepresentation of users. Although the company has a feature that lets users add pronouns to their user profiles, it acknowledges that not all users can currently use it. Additionally, the corporation offers users very few options for limiting who can view their gender pronouns. Instagram also provides just a limited amount of information about the choices users have regarding how the firm collects and deduces information about those users' sexual orientation and gender identity. According to Meta's targeted advertising standards, it is forbidden to use targeted advertising based on delicate subjects, such as sexual orientation-related subjects. However, no comparable disclosure was discovered, indicating that the corporation does not allow for precise user-based targeting.

Hence, this reference guide provides a clear and comprehensive set of guidelines to navigate the parameters of protecting the rights and preventing discrimination and harassment against LGBTQ persons via social media.

¹ <https://sites.google.com/glaad.org/smsi/platform-scores?pli=1>

AN OVERVIEW OF MEDIA ETHICS



General Media Ethics

1. The Code of Ethics for journalists

The Code of Ethics for journalists is provided for in Gazette extraordinary No. 162/5A- 1981. The aforesaid code of ethics provides regulations to be followed by every journalist, printers, broadcast corporations and all forms of media. A summary of the said guidelines are as follows;

- Refrain from reporting false information, distorting the truth publishing content that may offend the public taste or morality or might lower the standards of public taste or morality.
- Every journalist is responsible to use their reasonable means to draw a clear distinction between a statement of fact and an opinion or criticism (section 3 of Gazette extraordinary No. 162/5A- 1981).
- Maintain the confidentiality of sources unless the said sources wish to have such information disclosed.
- Refrain from divulging any private information about individuals unless it is of public interest.
- With reference to reporting crimes refrain from the following unless it is of public interest;
 1. Divulging names of victims of sex crimes
 2. Name young persons accused or criminal offenses
 3. Name persons who are relatives of a person accused or convicted of a crime.
- Refrain from plagiarism, and reporting information that may promote violence.
- Refrain from publishing matters that are obscene unless it is of public interest,
- Refrain from promoting communal or religious discord or violence.
- Maintain dignity of media personnel and media institutions and safeguard the reputation of their profession.



2. Code of Professional Practice (Code of ethics) of the Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka adapted by the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka.

The Code of Professional Practice (Code of ethics) of the Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka aims to ensure that the Sri Lankan press is independent, accountable and sensitive to the desires and expectations of its readers while maintaining the highest standards of journalism.

It requires newspapers to;

- strive for accuracy and professional integrity
- uphold the best traditions of investigative journalism in the public interest,
- unfettered by distorting commercialism or by improper pressure or narrow self-interest,
- give consideration to the views of others and endeavor to reflect social responsibility, which expressing their own strong opinions.

In the resolution of complaints, editors are required to collaborate promptly with the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL).

Publications that may have breached the Code must print the resolution/adjudication in full and with due prominence, including a headline reference to the PCCSL.

The code provides for guidelines on accurate reporting and corrections and apologies, opportunity to reply, confidential Sources, general reporting and writing, privacy, harassment and subterfuge and integrity².

3. Social media declaration

Working under the #EngageSMinSL this is a 16-organization effort to craft a code of conduct for responsible social media use in Sri Lanka, recognizing the undisputable value of the right to free expression on or through social media, while also endorsing and reinforcing the moral, forward-thinking, autonomous use of social media.

The declaration aims to impose the following responsibilities on social media platforms;

- Boost language proficiency for local language material moderating (both Sinhala and Tamil).
- Be open and honest about the number of moderators designated to handle user-generated reports about Sri Lankan content, as well as their gender, language skills, and time zones.

² Code of Professional Practice (Code of Ethics) of The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka adopted by the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka



- Make unambiguous commitments to investigate and address user-generated complaints about Sri Lankan material within a predetermined time frame, which must be further shortened during times of increased violence.
- Publish the standards that social media platforms will use to weed out material that incites violence and hate.
- Make sure any solutions used can be duplicated in other areas and are scalable, responsive, and sustainable³.

What to do and not do – Social media platforms

A survey conducted by the Amnesty International regarding discriminations of LGBTQ persons in Sri Lanka suggests that 89% violence on LGBTQ persons are conducted on social media⁴. Most, social media platforms have their own rules and regulations relating to harassment, hate speech and discrimination set out as community guidelines.

Facebook removes content that are direct attacks⁵ on a person's 'protected characteristics' which includes race, ethnicity, religious affiliations, nationality caste, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or serious diseases or disability. Sometimes such content could be presented covered with a warning screen. A direct attack could include a person imitating a LGBTQ person in a derogatory manner.

Facebook categorizes their community guidelines into three sections based on the severity of the content. In the case of sharing hate speech of another person to raise awareness or discuss whether the said speech is appropriate to use, Facebook allows this if the intention is clear.

Youtube bans hate speech and content that promotes violence or hatred against individuals based on certain attributes including age, caste, disabilities, ethnicities, nationalities, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation etc. such content is restricted after a series of preliminary warnings and if continued, the Youtuber's channel may be removed.

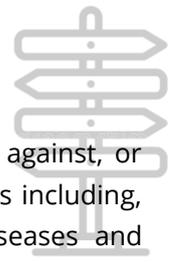
Twitter has a 'hateful conduct policy', that protects against promoting violence against or directly attacking or threatening people or dehumanizing people based on ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, caste, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliations, age, disability etc.

Instagram follows the same rules defining hate speech however there are stricter rules on hate speech like black face and common antisemitic tropes. In case of such violations Instagram may delete content, disable accounts and also may work with law enforcement if there is a risk of physical harm or threat to public safety.

³ Social media Declaration Colombo 2019-Code of Conduct for responsible social media use.

⁴ <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Final%20Report%20-%2012th%20Jan%202022.pdf>

⁵ Facebook defines a direct attack as a violent or dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes, statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt, disgust or dismissal, cursing and calls for exclusion of segregation.



Tiktok defines hate speech or behavior as content that threatens, incites violence against, or otherwise dehumanizes an individual or a group on the basis of protected attributes including, race, ethnicity, nationality, caste, religion, gender, sexual orientation, serious diseases and disabilities and/or immigration status⁶.

Therefore, content that may stigmatise, discriminate, or instigate hate and violence against LGBTQ persons will be thus removed from social media platforms. And influencers should be mindful not to be get noticed trying to promote such content or of content that may ignorantly promote such content.

While the government of Sri Lanka is working on a social media and telecommunication act, that would properly protect the rights of those who use social media and set out clear parameters for use of social media, currently digital content creators, social media influencers and other social media personnel (who are also considered Citizen Journalists) are governed by the aforementioned Code of Ethics for Journalists and Professional Practice (Code of ethics) of the Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka adapted by the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka as well.

Further the guidelines such as the social media declaration discussed in the above chapter there are no specific external guidelines governing only content published on social media in Sri Lanka, besides the community guidelines set out by each social media platform.

Further note that the guidelines on reporting about LGBTQ persons, respectful/dignified reporting, avoiding harmful clichés and stereotypes, covering anti-trans hate and disinformation, and conducting interviews with LGBTQ persons elaborated in the chapter below are relevant to digital content creators and social media influencers as well.

However, based on the Code of Ethics for Bloggers, Social Media and Content Creators by Thinking out loud⁷ about the Internet the following are a few guidelines to keep in mind specifically when creating content for social media;

1. while you have a right to express your views and express your freedom of speech, information, publication, and expression, note that as a creator you also have a responsibility to defend these rights on other social media users.
2. Remember that it is your responsibility to shed light on both what occurs in society and how Content Producers, such as yourself, portray these occurrences.
3. Utilize your influence to defend. You have the power to bring attention to mistreatment of people and groups as a content creator. Do not abuse this authority.
4. Do not spread, false information or misinformation. Fact-check before posting anything and be ready to take responsibility for what you post.
5. Keep in mind that your perspective on events is valuable and should be expressed, but it must not be confused with actual facts or statistics. Always state your own or another person's opinion or interpretation clearly.

⁶ <https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines?lang=en#38>

⁷ <https://mor10.com/code-of-ethics-for-bloggers-social-media-and-content-creators/>



6. Always disclose any connection you may have to the subject or topic you are presenting, whether it be financial, personal, political, or otherwise, in order to maintain your credibility and integrity as a content creator.
7. Always disclose your sources to ensure transparency unless doing so could endanger your sources, especially if it is a LGBTQ person.
8. Always give credit when it is due.
9. Always make sure to convey a statement's intended meaning when quoting or paraphrasing it.
10. When presenting an argument always give your opponent a chance to convey the case for the other side.
11. Acknowledge your errors and fix them right away.
12. Be respectful when it comes to posting about sensitive topics such as gender and sexual orientation.
13. Ensure that you do not imply or hint at prevalent social stigmas in a degrading manner when posting content relating to LGBTQ persons.

Media Ethics Specific to The LGBTQ Community.

The Sri Lanka Press Council or the government of Sri Lanka have not put forward any specific guidelines to be followed by journalists and other media personnel when it comes to reporting issues relating to LGBTQ individuals.

However, there are various international guidelines including the LGBTQ Style Book by the Association of LGBTQ Journalists⁸ and the Style Guide by the Trans Journalists Association⁹.

As per the aforementioned style guides the following guidelines/regulations and general precautionary measures should be kept in mind when reporting matters/issues related to LGBTQ persons.

General guidelines when reporting about LGBTQ persons;

- If sources openly identify as transgender or gender nonconforming, inquire and use their pronouns accurately.
- Seek out contrasting viewpoints when writing about contentious or sensitive topics.

⁸ <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>

⁹ <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>



Guidelines for respectful/dignified coverage;

- Inquire the preferred terms to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression before assigning a label on them.
- A person's sexual orientation or gender identity should be capitalized only in the beginning of a sentence.
- If an administrative body, family member, police or friend of a source misgender them or refer to them with their dead name, do not use that particular quote.
- Use a person's current name and accurate pronouns unless they request otherwise.
- Refrain from mentioning a source's sexual orientation or gender identity unless it is relevant to your story.
- Do not emphasize on someone's pronouns, unless it is relevant to your story.
- Do not emphasize on someone's gender unless it is relevant to your story.
- Do not assume a source's gender or pronouns.
- Do not out your sources. Please note that some people may be out to certain people but not want to be out publicly in a published article.
- If a trans person requests you to update their new name or to remove certain information from an article or report, honor such request.
- If a reporter, editor, or writer changes their name, the media institution should update bylines on past stories to reflect the person's new name if the said person requests so.
- Do not assume gender based on anatomy of a person.
- Do not ask offensive or inappropriate questions.
- Do not ask about a trans person's dead name, unless they volunteer such information
- Do not ask an LGBTQ person's criminal history or publish such information, unless it is of public interest.

Guidelines to avoid harmful clichés and stereotypes;

- When writing about trans people do not focus on their bodies and topics related to transition-related care¹⁰.
- Do not report too many details about the physical appearance of gay/lesbian or trans people.
- Seek out stories beyond LGBTQ pain and talk about LGBTQ persons living normal lives and having successful careers instead of highlighting them as a vulnerable group with trauma and issues only.
- When reporting about trans persons, avoid furthering the "losing a loved one" cliché, which is often disrespectful to such persons.
- Do not imply that trans or LGBTQ persons are furthering a trend.
- Do not use stereotypically gendered imagery or "before" and "after" pictures.

¹⁰ This includes the various health care associated with gender transition. This includes hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery and the other clinical care required by a person in the transition process. While there is a misconception that this is simply cosmetic, experimental or simply unnecessary, however as it is now understood that a person's gender identity, one's inner sense of being male or female is deep-seated and not something that can be changed or cured, transition-related care is considered medically necessary.



Guidelines for covering anti-trans hate and disinformation;

- Report carefully on anti-trans hate.
- Do not spread misinformation, fact check everything
- Avoid giving a platform to Trans exclusionary radical feminists or TERFs ¹¹
- Avoid giving a platform to transmedicalists / transcum(this is a part of the trans community that believes that experiencing gender dysphoria and seeking gender-affirming medical care is a prerequisite of being trans)
- Avoid disinformation on “rapid onset gender dysphoria”¹²
- Do not emphasize on de-transitioning¹³ or report or publish disinformation on individuals who have stopped transition-related care.
- Avoid publishing misinformation in coverage of trans women in sports.

Guidelines when conducting interviews with LGBTQ persons

- When interviewing a trans person do not assume their gender, always ask how they prefer to be addressed.
- When interviewing a trans person do not assume their sexual orientation, always ask how they prefer to be referred to as.
- When interviewing a trans person do not assume their pronouns, always ask how they prefer to be addressed.
- Do not refer to them with their deadname.
- Do not ask personal questions specially about sex and their sexual habits unless it is a topic related to sexual health.

¹¹ These are some anti-trans rights groups and individuals use the euphemism “gender critical feminism” to describe their hateful ideology..

¹². This is an alleged epidemic of young people allegedly coming out as transgender "out of the blue" as a result of mental illness and social contagion. The phrase is an intentional attempt to use language with a scientific ring to deny the growing body of actual data supporting the advantages of transition.

¹³ “Detransitioning” is generally defined as seeking gender-affirming medical care and then stopping it and/or attempting to reverse its effects.



Discriminatory, derogatory and demeaning reporting practices by Sri Lankan media and Suggestions for better practices.

Sri Lankan media institutions have gotten into a reckless habit of introducing or describing LGBTQ persons or reporting their issues in manner that social stigmas, discrimination, hate and violence are arising and in a manner that they are prosecuted for their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression

Most of these negative social perceptions include disinformation¹⁴, misinformation¹⁵ various myths and misconceptions surrounding the LGBTQ community which leads to ingrained social stigma, discrimination, hate and violence include but not limited to the following;

- LGBTQ persons are mentally ill.
- Being LGBTQ is against the culture and social traditions.
- LGBTQ persons spread diseases (a public health treat)
- They are sexual predators.
- It is a personal choice, trend to be LGBTQ.
- They are dangerous to children
- Being LGBTQ is "bad Karma"
- It is shameful to be an LGBTQ person.

Myths and misconceptions

Many writers who cover LGBTQ news believe certain things about the LGBTQ which are most misinformation and/or disinformation which is often a result of misconception, myths and stigmas surrounding the LGBTQ community that are ingrained in the society.

Some of these include that minority sexual orientations and gender identities are incompatible with the nation's dominant culture and thus are harmful to the society. In most occasions, this accusation is supported by one of the nation's many existing faiths, and scriptures are cited as clear proof. Some authors have also made the implication that opposing LGBTQ communities, their presence, and their right to be treated equally as citizens of the nation equates to valor, loyalty, and the ability to become "sath prurusha" or "good" men. The misconception that LGBTQ persons are dangerous to children is stemming from the aforementioned misconception as it is believed that it is a responsibility of the society to protect our children from what is bad for them. A few examples of these misconceptions and myths are discussed below;

¹⁴ Dis information refers to false information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth.

¹⁵ Misinformation refers to incorrect or misleading information often not shared with a specific intention to mislead the public.



- **LGBTQ persons are mentally ill :**

“Punishment of individuals based on sexual orientation and sexual identification was spread throughout the world by colonial legal systems in the Victorian era. But in modern psychiatry, this is not considered a crime or a perversion.”- (Daily news 25.08.2022)

While this is a rather progressive article about an amendment to the Penal Code handed over to President to decriminalize LGBTQ persons in Sri Lanka, this particular paragraph suggests that this is a psychiatric concern furthering the common misconception that LGBTQ persons are mentally ill. This is an example of spreading misinformation. Misinformation is “false information that may mislead the public regardless of intent to mislead.” In this case unlike disinformation there is no clear intention to deceive or mislead the public but it could happen as a consequence of the spread of false information. In this case the while it spreads the misconception that LGBTQ persons are mentally ill, it appears to be a piece of information shared without clear knowledge on the subject.

Suggested rewrite: *“During the Victorian era, colonial legal systems allowed for the punishment of people based on their sexual orientation and sexual identity to be practiced all over the world. Nonetheless, this is not viewed as a crime or a perversion in contemporary psychiatry as it is deduced that sexual orientation and sexual identity are not matters relating to the psychology of an individual.”*

“The lack of Testosterone supply for someone to be male causes the change of sexual learning in the brains. As a result, those who are born male become a woman in the mind” (Venura Sanath Kumara- Diyayina 15.12.2017)

This is complete disinformation and version of deranged science that is published for the reader to see which also furthers the incorrect misconception that LGBTQ persons are mentally ill.

Suggested rewrite: ***“A person’s*** sexual orientation describes a person’s persistent feelings of physical, romantic, or emotional attraction to another person. Examples of sexual orientations include Heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.



- ***It is a personal choice, trend to be LGBTQ:-***



TransGenders in Sri Lanka | ලංකාවේ ලිංගික සංක්‍රාන්තිකයින්

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Chanika Adam bargain nangiya Siumali 4 years ago

ගැහැනියෙක් ගෙන් ගන්න එකල් එකක් සමනල්ලුන්ගෙන් ගන්න බැහැඑයාලට එයාලට පුලුවන්ලැනි

2 Reply

This is a comment directed at trans people with the impression that they are choosing to live life in a manner that is not conventionally pleasurable. It is a rather derogative statement both to women and sexual pleasure in general.

“Firstly, we must respect and accept all these people as humans. Their sexual orientation is their personal choice. In the Asian mindset, those who come under the LGBTQ umbrella are judged, subjected to insults and emotional trauma.”- (Dishan Joseph, Daily new 11.10.2021)

Once again this is a progressive piece of writing promoting the importance of mental health and treating humans for who they are. However, the sentence ‘their sexual orientation is their personal choice’ suggests that the writer believes that sexual orientation is a preference and thus could be changed or cured, which is incorrect information. This is again a spread of misinformation and an example of spreading of a misconception that sexual orientation is a lifestyle choice.

Suggested rewrite: *“Firstly, we must respect and accept all these people as humans, despite of their sexual orientation or gender. In the Asian mindset, those who come under the LGBTQ umbrella are judged, subjected to insults and emotional trauma.”*



- **Against the culture:-**

"In a hateful rampage that is shocking even by the Kremlin's standards, Russian state TV is railing against Black and LGBTQ+ athletes competing in the Tokyo Olympics, blasting the Games as a cesspool of degradation, debauchery, and "impurity."- (Sunday Observer 01.08.2021)

This is an article regarding a Russian news session that was rather discriminatory towards trans people. The article proceeds to share several discriminatory and derogatory comments about the LGBTQ community. Although this is simply a report of a discriminatory report done by a broadcast station, sharing such information without a commentary on the harm it may do to the society as a whole could be considered discriminatory.

Suggested rewrite: *"In a hateful rampage Russian state TV is railing against Black and LGBTQ+ athletes competing in the Tokyo Olympics, hatefully and incorrectly blasting the Games as a cesspool of degradation, debauchery, and "impurity";* This phrase can be followed by a clear definition on what a person's sexual orientation denotes and what transgender is and that the spread of hateful campaigns in this regard are discriminatory and demeaning and should be discouraged.

"විශේෂයෙන්ම මේ නීතිය ඉවත් කිරීමක් කලහොත් ඒ සඳහා දැඩි ආගමික විරෝධතාවයක්ද අති වන බව පැවසූ රාජීන සේනාරත්න මහතා රටේ ස නොගැලපෙන කිසිදු යෝජනාවකට වත්මන් රජය එකඟ නො වන බව ද පැවසීය ."

(Translation: removing this law will create a religious resistance and the government will not agree with any suggestion that is against the culture of this country, said Rajitha Senarathne)
-Panuka Rapaksha, Lakbima,

This is an example of a predominant notion that accepting the LGBTQ community's presence and "allowing" their rights to be protected would endanger Sri Lankan culture and "threaten" the "future generation" of the nation.



Mangala Samaraweera @MangalaLK · Jun 3, 2019



#Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith fanning the flames of hatred and communalism by visiting fasting robed MP Rathana. #Vatican TAKE NOTE! @Pontifex @VaticanNews #lka

938 379 748



Asela
@Asela05084395



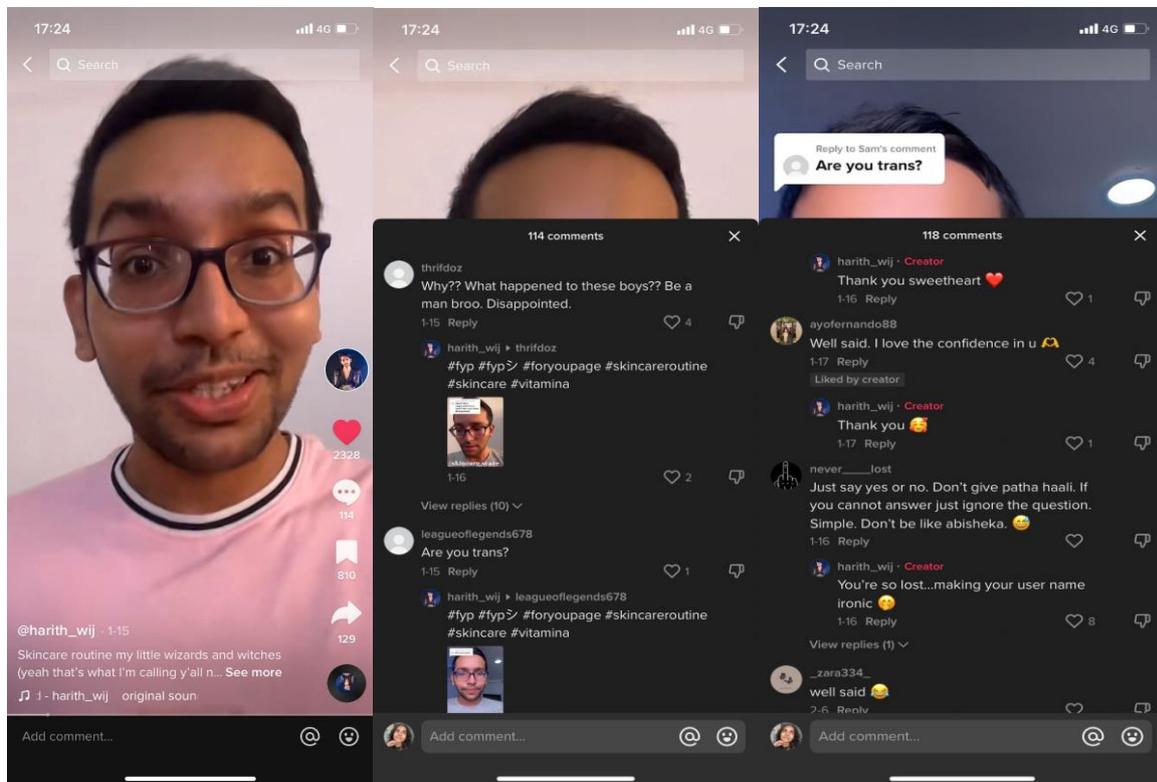
Replying to @MangalaLK @Pontifex and @VaticanNews

What does a faghot know about religion. #ponnaya take note

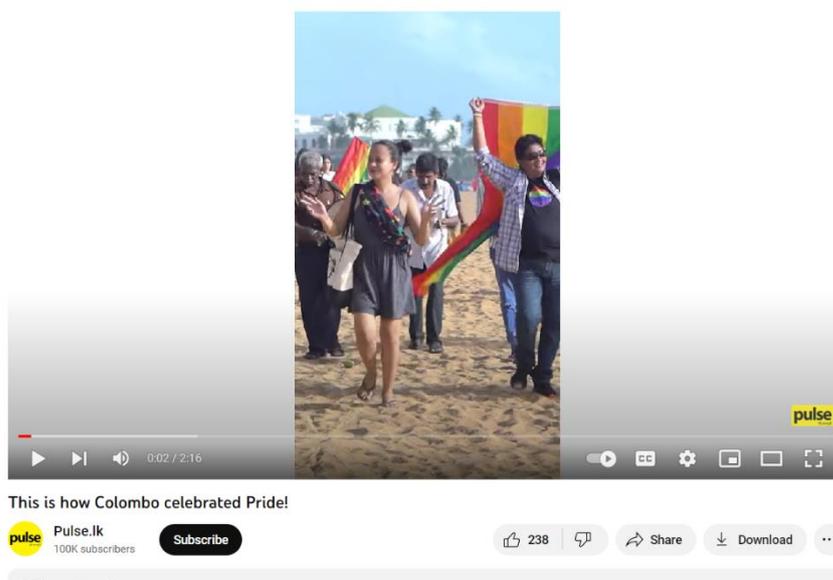
3:01 PM · Jun 3, 2019



This is an example of hateful comments directed at a diseased politician who was known to have talked for the progression of LGBTQ rights in Sri Lanka. 'Ponnaya' is a common homophobic slur thrown at the community in Sri Lanka.



This is a series of hate comments directed at a LGBTQ person due to his tiktok videos where he had seemingly feminine behavior as it is against cultural norms.





N Nikah 2019 5 months ago
This should NOT be allowed in Sri Lanka. I strongly urge the Buddhist community led by the monks to come forward and stop events like these if they truly want to protect their religion. I repeat these things should be stopped at any cost.

👍 15 🗨️ Reply

▲ 24 replies

The one who killed John Wick's dog 4 months ago
Ok tribe 😊

👍 6 🗨️ Reply

oiiii I have weak lungs 4 months ago
It's your religion not others let people live bruh 🙄

👍 9 🗨️ Reply

The one who killed John Wick's dog 4 months ago
[@oiiii I have weak lungs](#) Buddhism was never against homosexuality. That guy is talking BS.

👍 14 🗨️ Reply

oiiii I have weak lungs 4 months ago
[@The one who killed John Wick's dog](#) tbh I'm not Shure but either way people should let people live there lives idc if your religion hates LGBT just respect people you know. Not that hard

👍 2 🗨️ Reply

The one who killed John Wick's dog 4 months ago
[@oiiii I have weak lungs](#) I do respect every human being. And I do believe that they should live the way they love. I think you just misunderstood my comment.

👍 6 🗨️ Reply

N Nikah 2019 5 months ago
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👍 6 🗨️ Reply

This is a video on Pride celebrations in Colombo followed by a series of hateful and discriminative comments furthering the misconceptions that being LGBTQ is against Sri Lankan culture and Buddhist principles and that they are dangerous to children.



- **Dangerous to children:-**

“වින්දනයන් ලබා ගැනීමට හෝ මුදල් සෙවීමට අඳුරු කාලයේ මහමගට හෝ පාළුතැන් වලට ඇදගෙන සාමකාමීන් නිසා බාල පරම්පරාව ලිංගික කටයුතුවලට යොමුවන අවස්තා බහුල ය.”

Translation: “There is a bigger possibility for the younger generation to involve in sexual activities because of the homosexuals who creep to roads and alienated areas at night, seeking pleasure for money.”(Mithra Shri Karunayake –Sunday Divayina 12.02.2017)

The above comment is discriminatory and frames the LGBTQ community as sex predators, which is incorrect and completely offensive misconception that should not be instigated through media.

Suggested rewrite: *“There is a bigger possibility for the younger generation to involve in sexual activities due to various reasons including the influence they would have from people they meet and or see on their daily routes on a regular basis.”*

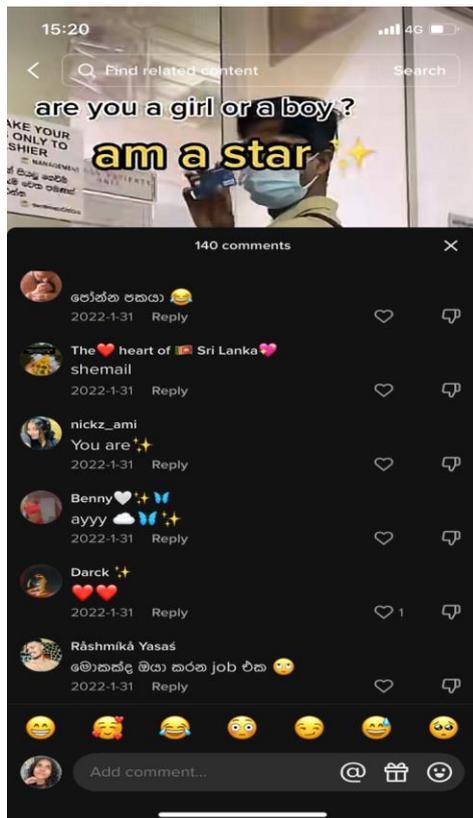
- **Dangerous to the society:-**

Headline-

“Suspect confesses over killing Thalangama businessman, both suspect and victim were part of gay men’s club”- (Darshana Sanjeeva Balasuriya, Daily Mirror 06.02.2023)

This is a headline of an article describing the recent updates of a murder that took place in Thalangama. The headline suggests that the murder was perhaps a result of the sexual orientation of the victim and a supposed relationship they may have had, thus making the murder simply about the victim’s sexual orientation. This is a good information of the spread of disinformation through media. Disinformation is defined as false information which is intended to mislead the public. The abovementioned headline not only implies that the killing was to do with the LGBTQ status of the person involved, with the use of the word ‘gay club’ it tries to suggest that LGBTQ status of the aforesaid suspect should and would confirm their criminal offences.

Suggested rewrite: *“Suspect confesses over killing Thalangama businessman”*; while the information here is that is the confession, a slight disapproving nudge at the possible LGBTQ status of the persons is not at all necessary as it has no relevance to the story.



This is a disrespectful and derogatory statement made at a supposed LGBTQ person in the form of hate speech.

*"මොවුන් නිතරම වගේ පොදු වැසිකිලි අස්සේ ගැවසෙන අතර පාසැල් දරුවන්, වයස 25ට අඩු ළමුන් දරුවන් සමඟ අයගේ ඉල්කකම වෙනි."***Translation: "Most of the time, they hang around public toilets and school children and young men below 25 years of age are their targets" (Prageeth Sampath-Mawbima 08.10.2017)**

This is another example of a time when media has framed LGBTQ persons as pedophiles and sex predators and thus a dangerous set of people, you need to protect your children from.



Furthermore Young Out Here conducted an analysis on the manner in which media reports have been taking place in the 2017¹⁶ and their findings show that the targeted communities in the various reports published within the said year are as follows;

Newspaper	Gay, Lesbian/ MSM	Transgender	Gay, Lesbian and Transgender	Total
Lakbima	5	0	0	5
Lankadeepa	2	1	1	4
Divaina	11	4	4	19
Mawbima	6	4	0	10
Dinamina	5	1	1	7
Total	29	10	6	45

How to avoid furthering the aforesaid misinformation, disinformation, myths and misconceptions.

Besides following the guidelines for respectful and careful reporting of issues relating to LGBTQ persons as provided in the above section. A better understanding on LGBTQ persons, the specific socioeconomic issues they might be facing will enable accurate reporting and prevent the spread of misinformation as above.

The main suggestion for media institutions, social media influencers, journalists and editors is to do required research on LGBTQ persons, the transition process of trans persons and ensure that their articles, and other outputs align with latest accurate information.

A set of terms to avoid when referring to LGBTQ persons and reporting issues relating to them as per Trans Journalists Association and the GLADD media reference guide 11th edition¹⁷ are as follows;

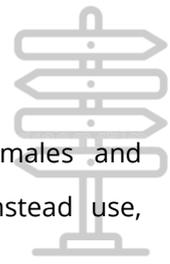
¹⁶ Words Misused, A study on stigma, discrimination and violence directed at LGBTQ community through newspaper reporting

¹⁷ <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>



Terms and Phrases to Avoid

1. Avoid using the term 'homosexual' as it is clinical and is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ groups. Instead use the terms, gay person/people.
2. Avoid the term 'homosexual couple' (unnecessary and offensive), instead use couple.
3. Avoid using terms "biological gender," "biological sex," "biological woman," "biological female," "biological man," or "biological male." Instead use the terms assigned male/female at birth, assigned sex at birth or raised as a boy/girl
4. Avoid using the term 'cross dresser' (considered outdated and offensive to trans people).
5. Avoid stating 'female/feminine pronouns, male/masculine pronouns' (note that all those who use she/her are not women, and all those who use he/him are not men). Instead use, 'pronouns, she/her pronouns, he/him pronouns'
6. Avoid the phrase 'gender identity disorder' (outdated and offensive). instead use, 'gender dysphoria'
7. Gender non-binary (considered grammatically incorrect), instead use, non-binary
8. Avoid the phrases 'identify as or identifies as' when referring to a trans person (this questions the trans person's gender by calling it an identity), instead use, 'is'
9. Avoid using the phrases 'male-bodied/female-bodied' (incorrect and offensive), instead use, 'assigned male/female at birth or raised as a boy/girl'
10. Avoid using the terms 'male-to-female (MtF), female-to-male (FtM)', instead use, 'trans woman, trans man'.
11. Avoid using 'non-binary pronouns' (incorrect, not all non-binary people use the same pronouns), instead use, 'gender-neutral pronouns, they/them pronouns, or pronouns'.



12. Avoid the term 'opposite sex/gender'(this term incorrectly positions men/males and women/females opposites, when are they are simply different genders), instead use, 'different gender/sex'.
13. Avoid the term 'preferred pronouns' (implies that a person's pronouns are a preference rather than the appropriate way to refer to them), instead use the term pronouns
14. Avoid the terms sex change/sex reassignment (outdated and offensive), instead use, 'transition, gender-affirming care, or transition-related care'.
15. Avoid using the terms stealth/passing to define someone who is not commonly perceived as trans, instead use, 'out as trans, not out as trans, publicly disclosed as trans, not publicly disclosed as trans, generally perceived as trans, not generally perceived as trans'.
16. Avoid the terms 'transgenderism/gender ideology/trans ideology/trans agenda' (this could be used as disinformation by anti-trans campaigns). Instead use, 'transgender'.
17. Avoid the terms 'LGBTQ lifestyle, gay lifestyle (reductive, incorrect, discriminatory and suggests that being LGBTQ is a choice). Instead use, LGBTQ people and their lives.
18. Avoid using the discriminatory and demeaning terms, 'fag, faggot, dyke, homo, sodomite, and similar epithets'.
19. Avoid describing members of the LGBTQ community as "deviant," "disordered," "dysfunctional," "diseased," "perverted," "destructive" and similar descriptions.
20. Avoid associating LGBTQ persons with pedophilia, sexual abuse, child abuse, incest, bestiality, polygamy, bigamy and/or adultery.



Frequently Asked Questions

How to report on anti-LGBTQ violence?

Never report or publicize anything without having it verified by numerous sources first. When reporting on crimes against LGBTQ people, refrain from passing judgment too quickly. Hold off on accusing a plausible serial killer of a series of such homicides and refrain from concluding that an LGBTQ person's death was a homicide.

What sources should be used when reporting violence against trans LGBTQ persons?

Media personnel should seek elsewhere for information about violence against LGBTQ people besides the police when reporting on it. Police commonly misidentify, mis gender, and dead name victims who identify as trans. In addition to being frequently false, the information will harm media's relationships with LGBTQ organizations if it is published.

What special notes to remember when reporting about murdered LGBTQ persons?

Note that reporting and publishing about LGBTQ people who have died frequently reduces their lives to their gender, sexual orientation, and the crime done against them. Instead of sensationalizing the victim's life, these stories should attempt to portray them in a more nuanced way.

What if the person appears to be a member of the LGBTQ community but, unsure?

Do not make generalizations about transgender individuals or gender diversity in other societies. When reporting on a culture other than your own, it is always important to take extra care to understand and accurately portray people and groups within that cultural context.

What are the best practices for reporting on LGBTQ sex workers?

Ask the transgender people you are writing about what names and pronouns you should use to refer to them in stories that reference their employment.

What happens when the sources tell you a story in confidence and refuses to share it on media?

To determine what information is public and what information is private, you should also verify with your sources. For instance, some sources may be aware of their colleagues' sexual behavior but not want it to be publicized for fear of it endangering their safety. Other sites might openly advertise certain services while only casually discussing their full-service work.

LIABILITY IN BASES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES SUCH AS THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY.



There are certain laws and regulations in place to ensure that media institutions, journalists and social media influencers does not harass, abuse and discriminate when it comes to reporting and publishing issues related to LGBTQ persons.

The Sri Lanka Press Council act No. 5 of 1973

The Sri Lanka Press Council act No. 5 of 1973 was established to ensure that abuses, harassment instigation of violence does not take place amongst media spheres¹⁸. According to Section 8 of the aforementioned act, this act's goals are to guarantee press freedom in Sri Lanka, prevent abuses of that freedom, and preserve the integrity of the Sri Lankan press in accordance with the best professional standards.

A copy of every printed newspaper, as well as every subsequent and different edition or impression of that newspaper, printed or published, must be delivered to the Commissioner's office along with a signed and written note from the printer or publisher of that newspaper, as required by section 26 of the aforementioned act.

Section 30 of the act states that the Council may make rules and regulations for printers and publishers and outlines the code of ethics for journalists. In accordance with Section 32 of the act, anyone who disobeys any lawful order of the Council or otherwise violates any provisions of this Law shall be guilty of an offence under this Law and shall, upon conviction after summary trial before a Magistrate, be subject, except as otherwise provided in this Law, to a fine of one thousand Rupees.

¹⁸ http://www.commonlii.org/lk/legis/num_act/slpc15o1973298/s8.html



Intellectual Property Act, No. 36 of 2003

Part II of the Intellectual Property Act provides for the violation of copyright laws by media institutions. Section 6 of the act identifies books, articles, other writings, speeches, lectures, sermons, musical works, pantomimes, choreographic works, audiovisual works, works of drawing, painting, illustrations, maps, plans and sketches among other things as intellectual creations in the literary, artistic and scientific domain are protected as works, in particular.

Media institutions are required to refer to the name and the original work of the copy right owner 22 and section 170 provides that in the case of infringement of copyrights, the Court has power and jurisdiction to grant injunctions, to order the impounding and destruction of illegal copies and to award damages.

Violations of provisions under section 148, results to an offence, and shall on conviction after trial before a Magistrate be **liable to a fine not exceeding rupees five hundred thousand or to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding six months or to both such fine and imprisonment and in the case of a second or subsequent conviction such fine or term of imprisonment or both such fine and imprisonment may be doubled.**

Defamation laws and liability

When someone purposefully spreads false information to damage another's image, this is known as defamation. There are two types. Libel and slander. Libel is a defamatory statement that is conveyed in a fixed medium (typically writing, but can also be a picture, sign, or radio or television broadcast). Slander refers to defamatory statements made verbally.

Defamation falls under the category of a "tort," and torts are not written laws, they are simply put forward by case precedents. If a person's tortious behaviour unjustly causes another person to experience loss or harm, that person may be said to have "legal accountability" for their actions.

A well-known defamation case in recent times involved former Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa suing *The Sunday Leader* for Rs. 2 billion in 2010. The individual who is suing for defamation must first have been the subject of a false and defamatory statement. Comments can be made orally, in writing, or even graphically. Even a newspaper headline can be considered to be defamatory, so it is not necessary for the entire statement to be so.

Technically speaking, it is possible to be sued over a defamatory comment or "status" made about them on Facebook even though it hasn't been done in Sri Lanka yet because sharing a defamatory status has the impact of "publishing" defamatory content to thousands of viewers if it turns out to be true afterward (depending on privacy settings). However, if someone "shares" defamatory content without knowing it is false, they may not be held accountable under the law.

In the event that a person is liable for defamation, they would be obligated to on **damages**, depending on the circumstances of the case.



Computer Crime Act, No. 24 of 2007

Section 3 of this act provides that any person who intentionally does any act, in order to secure for himself or for any other person, access to (a) any computer; or (b) any information held in any computer, would be liable to a **fine not exceeding one hundred thousand rupees, or to imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or both such fine and imprisonment.**

Section 10 of the act provides that, any person who, being entrusted with information that enables him to access any service provided by means of a computer, discloses such information without any express authority to do so or in breach of any contract expressed or implied, shall be guilty of an offence. Thus any individual who is given access to confidential information of a person's sexual orientation or gender identity via social media, if reveals the same would be guilty of an offence and would be liable to **a fine not less than one hundred thousand rupees and not exceeding three hundred thousand rupees or to imprisonment of either description for a term not less than six months and not exceeding three years or to both such fine and imprisonment.**

Violations of Fundamental rights

Whilst reporting biases and prejudices against LGBTQ persons is discriminatory and inhuman, if a national media organization commits the said atrocity it is also a violation of a fundamental rights of a person to treat them in a manner that is different due to their race, gender, sexual orientation or any other factor as per **article 12 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka.**

Article 12 provides that " all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law and that no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds."

The fundamental rights are human rights the state and all state bodies including national media organizations swear to protect the citizens of their country and in case of a violation therein the victim of such a violation can file a Fundamental Rights application in the Human Rights commission and/or the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.



FURTHER READING

- **I might be Transgender -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/I-MIGHT-BE-TRANSGENDER.pdf>
- **I might be Gay -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/Gay-English.pdf>
- **I might be Lesbian -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/Lesbian-English-.pdf>
- **I might be Bisexual -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/Bi-English-.pdf>
- **The LGBT Stigma Index Sri Lanka -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/The-LGBT-Stigma-and-Discrimination-Index-of-Sri-Lanka-A-project-of-EQUAL-GROUND.pdf>
- **Struggling against homophobic violence and hate crimes -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/homophobicviolencebooklet.pdf>
- **Understanding LGBTQ Terminology -**
<https://www.equal-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/LGBTIQ-Terminology-EN-1.pdf>



BRIDGE to Equality - BRIDGE project which aims to improve the protection of human rights for LGBTQ people in Sri Lanka through the use of international human rights law to enable justice actors (judges, lawyers and other legal professionals), activists and human rights defenders to improve justice outcomes for the LGBTQ community; with a focus on overcoming challenges imposed by the current legal framework, as well as the overall promotion and protection of human rights of LGBTI people.

BRIDGE is jointly implemented by DAST, National Transgender Network and Young Out Here in partnership with the International Commission of Jurists since 2021.

 facebook.com/BridgetoEquality

 instagram.com/bridgetoequality2021

 twitter.com/B2ECampaign

 bridgetoequalitycampaign@protonmail.com