

Snapshot Series: The Lived Realities of Intersex Individuals

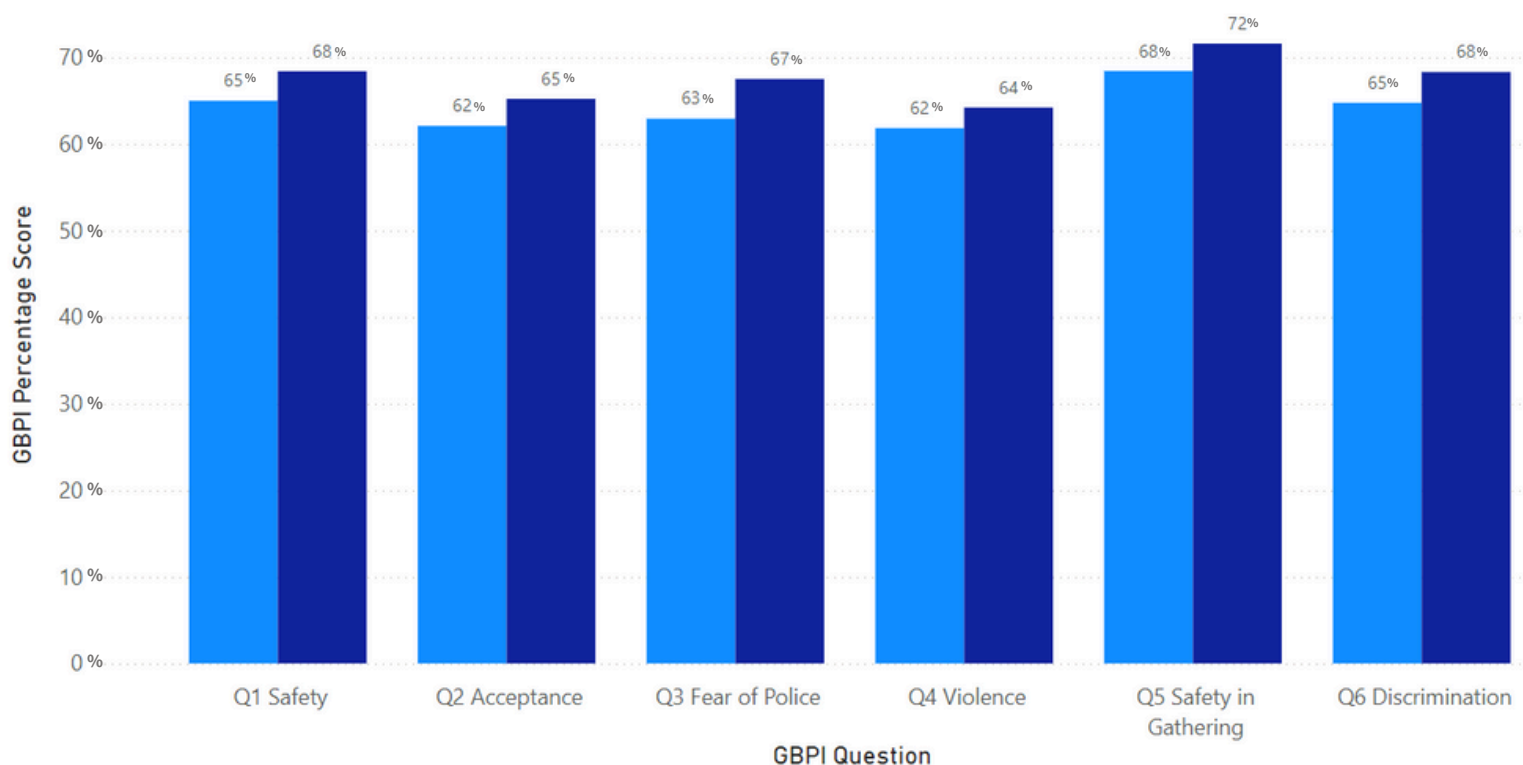
The F&M Global Barometers LGBTQI+ Perception Index (GBPI) illuminates the global lived reality of intersex people, whose sex characteristics -- hormones, chromosomes, gonads and genitalia -- do not fit into the normative categories of 'female' or 'male.'

Created by the F&M Global Barometers, in partnership with the Council for Global Equality, the GBPI is a groundbreaking survey that gauges the lived human rights reality of the global LGBTQI+ community. The pilot survey, active from June 2022 to September 2022, asked six questions on safety, acceptance, fear of police, violence, safety in gathering, and discrimination. It was available in four languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Based on the responses, each country is assigned a letter grade of A-F and assessed on a number scale where A (100%) is the highest and F (0%) is the lowest.

The GBPI received 1,730 responses from intersex individuals in 116 countries, accounting for 1.03% of the 167,382 total responses. 770 respondents identified as intersex only, while 960 checked multiple sexual orientations and gender identities. Intersex respondents reported lower average scores than global averages for all respondents by 2-4% on all six questions, revealing that intersex individuals may experience worse lived realities than other people within the LGBTQI+ community.

Intersex Respondents' Average Scores v. All Respondents' Average Scores (GBPI 2022)

● Average from Intersex Respondents ● Global Average from all Respondents



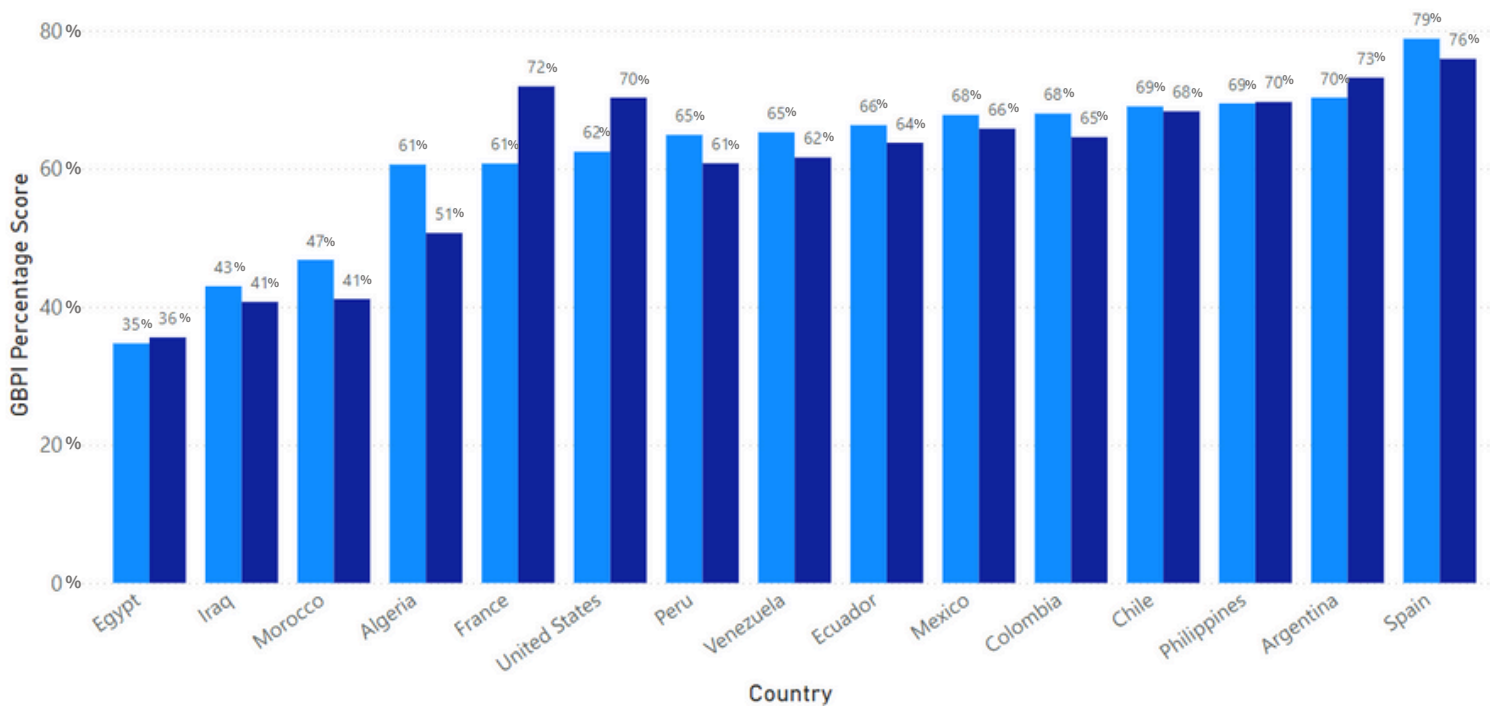
NB: The averages for all respondents rather than for all non-intersex respondents are used because 55.5% of intersex respondents on the GBPI checked multiple identifiers; in this case, intersex respondents cannot be easily separated from the rest of the LGBTQI+ community, and removing the 770 respondents identifying as intersex only (0.46% of the total sample size) does not change the global average for each GBPI question.

Among the 15 countries with more than 30 intersex respondents, there is greater variation in the difference between national lived reality averages for intersex respondents and for all LGBTQI+ respondents. For example, while intersex individuals in Algeria report an average 10% higher than all LGBTQI+ Algerian respondents, French intersex respondents report an average 11% lower than all French respondents. The relative lived reality of intersex people thus greatly depends upon location.








The countries with a better lived reality for intersex people than for all LGBTQI+ people are not necessarily more protecting of intersex people than the countries with a below-average lived reality for intersex citizens; they are also less protective of other rights. Among the four countries with the greatest positive difference between intersex lived reality and LGBTQI+ lived reality, Algeria and Morocco criminalize homosexuality, and none of the four allow same-sex marriage. The data suggest that intersex citizens in those countries are simply less visible or their rights are less proscribed than those of sexual orientation minorities.

Intersex Respondents' Average Scores v. All LGBTQI+ Respondents' Average Scores by Country (GBPI 2022)

● Intersex Respondents ● Country Average



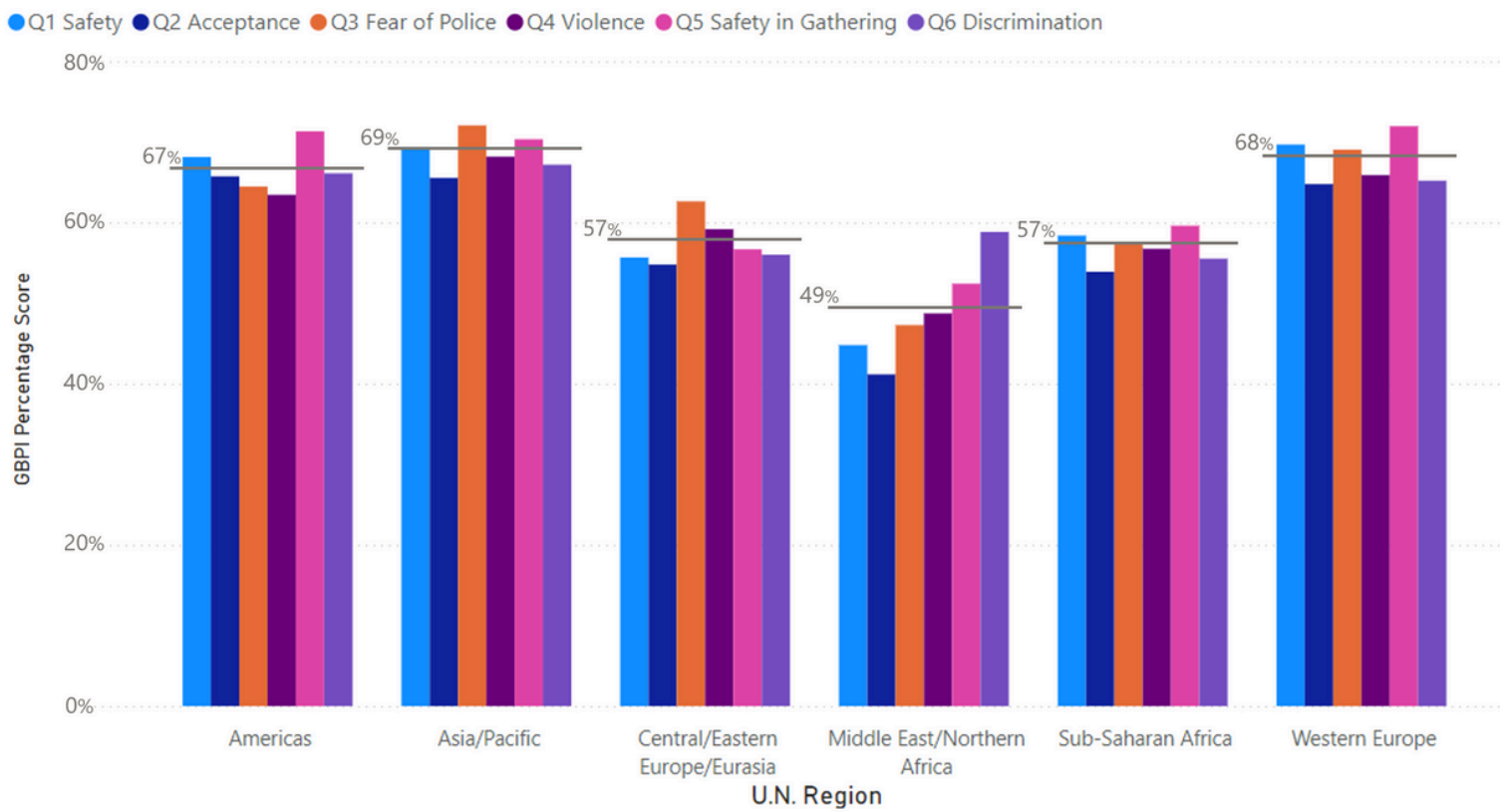
Countries with the Greatest Difference Between Lived Reality Averages for Intersex Respondents and for All LGBTQI+ Respondents (GBPI 2022)

Country	Intersex	GBPI Average	Difference	Country	Intersex	GBPI Average	Difference
 Algeria	61%	51%	+10%	 France	61%	72%	-11%
 Morocco	47%	41%	+6%	 United States	62%	70%	-8%
 Peru	65%	61%	+4%	 Argentina	70%	73%	-3%
 Venezuela	65%	62%	+4%				

Lived Realities for Intersex Individuals on the Regional Level

The average lived reality scores for intersex individuals in the Americas, Asia/Pacific, and Western Europe range from 67-69%, suggesting that these regions are the most livable for intersex people. Central/Eastern Europe/Eurasia and Sub-Saharan Africa both have averages of 57%, and the Middle East/Northern Africa (MENA) has an average of 49%. These differences in regional averages indicate stark contrasts in intersex people’s lived reality across the globe.

Intersex Respondents’ Average Scores by Question and U.N. Region (GBPI 2022)










A relationship may exist between intersex lived reality and national prohibitions on unnecessary surgical interventions on intersex minors: Western Europe reports the highest proportion of countries with restrictions (on surgeries) and one of the highest (most positive) averages for intersex lived reality, but the Americas and Asia/Pacific show little correlation between the two measures as few have such restrictions. There is a stronger relationship between intersex lived reality and protections against discrimination on the ground of sex characteristics: Western Europe has the highest proportion of countries with discrimination protections, but Central/Eastern Europe/Eurasia has a higher proportion of countries with discrimination protections than the Americas or Asia/Pacific despite having a lower (more negative) lived reality for intersex people. Legislation against unnecessary genital surgeries and against discrimination are key to protecting the human rights of intersex individuals.

Availability of Protections Against Discrimination Based on Sex Characteristics, Prohibitions on Interventions on Intersex Minors, and Nonbinary Gender Markers by U.N. Region

U.N. Region	Americas	Asia/Pacific	Central/Eastern Europe/Eurasia	Middle East/Northern Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe
% of Countries with Protections Against Discrimination Based on Sex Characteristics in 2022 [1]	8%	8%	14%	0%	4%	31%
% of Countries with Restrictions on Interventions on Intersex Minors in 2022 [2]	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%	17%
% of Countries with Nonbinary Gender Markers in 2022 [3]	11%	13%	0%	0%	2%	24%

On a regional level, the average lived reality of intersex people more closely correlates with the availability of nonbinary gender markers on identity documents: in 2022, the Americas, Asia/Pacific, and Western Europe (the countries with the highest average lived reality scores) had the highest proportions of countries offering nonbinary gender markers. No countries in Central/Eastern Europe/Eurasia or the MENA regions offered nonbinary gender markers, and only Kenya did in Sub-Saharan Africa [4]. This finding implies that offering nonbinary gender markers to intersex people may create better lived realities for intersex individuals, and that more countries should allow these markers to better protect their intersex citizens.



Countries with Prohibitions on Interventions on Intersex Minors as of 2022 [5]

Country	Year Implemented	Country	Year Implemented
 Colombia	1999	 Germany	2021
 Malta	2015	 Greece	2022
 Portugal	2018	 Kenya	2022
 Iceland	2020		

Countries Implementing Prohibitions After 2022 [6]

Country	Year Implemented
 Chile	2023
 Spain	2023

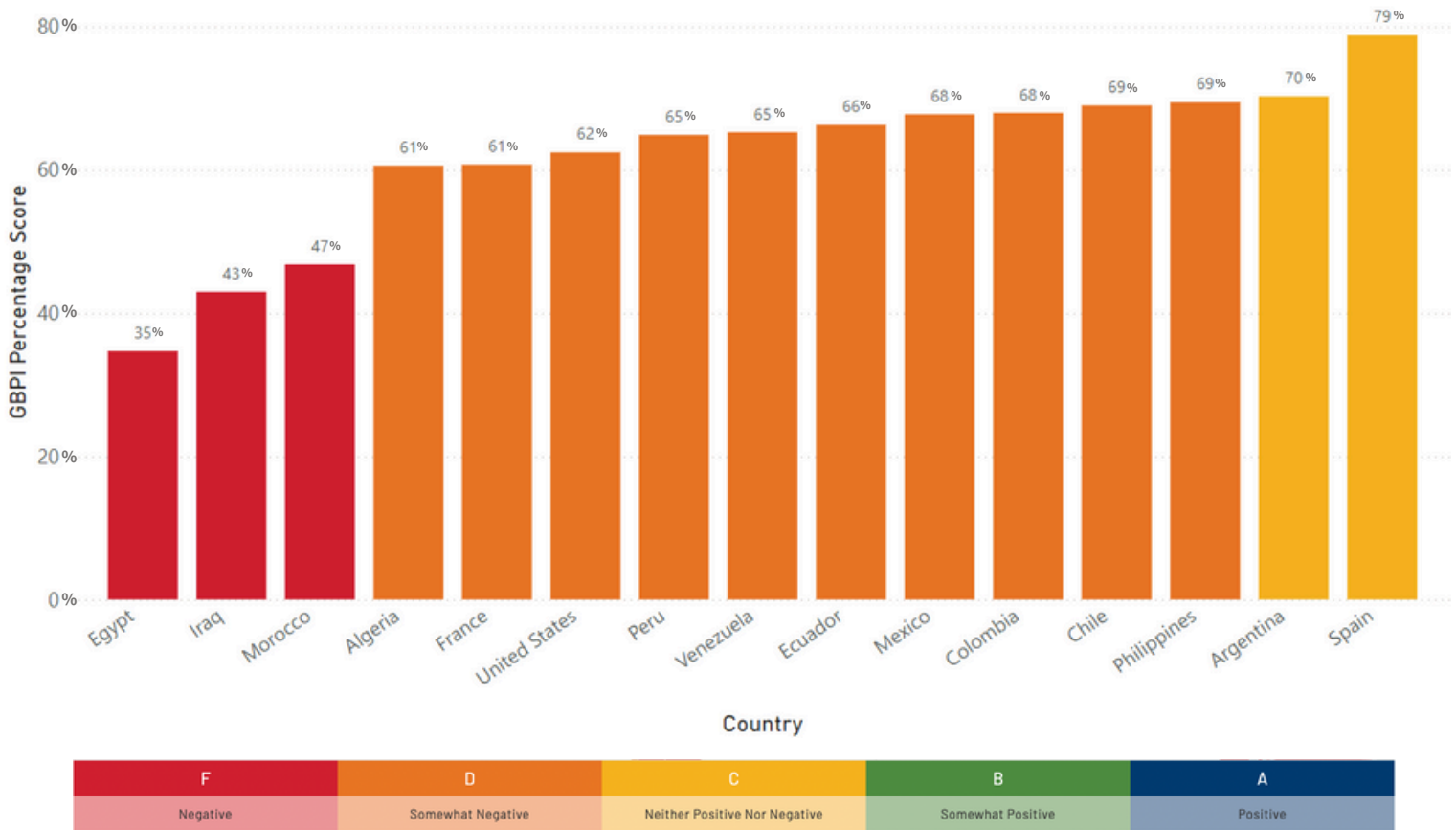
Countries with Subnational Prohibitions [7]

Country	Region	Year Implemented
 India	Tamil Nadu	2019
 Australia	Australian Capital Territory	2024

Lived Realities for Intersex Individuals on the National Level

National lived reality averages for intersex people vary by 44% among the 15 statistically significant countries. Spain, the highest-scoring country, reports an average lived reality for intersex people 9% higher than Argentina, the next highest-scoring country. Although Spain scores in the C range at 79%, it is close to achieving a B, and its score suggests that it is the most livable country for intersex individuals (based on available data).

Intersex Respondents' Averages Scores by Country (GBPI 2022)



However, as Spain and Argentina are the only countries that score a C, and not a single country reports an A or a B, much improvement is needed. Public policy ensuring the availability of nonbinary gender markers on government-issued identification documents, protections for intersex individuals from unnecessary surgeries or treatments to fit normative ideals of 'female' or 'male,' and more robust education on sexes and genders outside the binary could improve lived reality for intersex people globally.

Although 17 countries offered nonbinary gender markers in 2022, of the 15 highlighted countries, nonbinary gender markers were only available nationally in Argentina and sub-nationally (in select parts of the country) in Spain and the United States [8].

Conclusions on Intersex Lived Reality from the 2022 GBPI

Examining the results from the 2022 GBPI reveals that intersex individuals report better lived realities in countries with protections against discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics, prohibitions on unnecessary surgeries for intersex individuals, and availability of nonbinary gender markers on government-issued identification documents. To better protect their intersex citizens, countries must extend and uphold these rights.

Intersex Respondents' Comments

From Australia:

"Intersex individuals are still fighting for basic human right to be visible and to be accepted in the community, we are often mistaken for transgender people and experience the same types of abuse from the community due to our body variances which at times are not accepted and understood due to lack of education."

From the Philippines:

"The population outside first world countries...we are evolving and slowly inching our way to change but there is a long way to go so...keep this up and keep on fighting..."

From Spain:

"The population today still does not understand many things no matter how much we want them to understand. There is not enough information nor are people informed properly. My case is one of them: I was born with completely different genetics from the rest; that's why I was born intersexual XXY, and people don't quite understand that or don't want to understand it."

From Colombia:

"I am very discriminated against, to the point that no one will give me a job."

From the United States:

"I am afraid for my life as an intersex Afro-Hispanic in America. I feel threatened when I walk down the streets at night. I face discrimination everyday, I face violence everyday."

Notes

[1] Eliana Rubashkyn & Ilia Savelev, “Intersex Legal Mapping Report: Global Survey on Legal Protections for People Born with Variations in Sex Characteristics,” December 12, 2023, <https://ilga.org/resources/intersex-legal-mapping-report-2023/>.

[2] “Restrictions on Interventions on Intersex Minors,” Legal Frameworks, ILGA World, last modified 2024, <https://database.ilga.org/interventions-intersex-minors>.

[3] “Legal Gender Recognition,” Legal Frameworks, ILGA World, last modified 2024, <https://database.ilga.org/legal-gender-recognition>.

[4] Ibid.

[5] ILGA World, “Restrictions on Interventions.”

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] ILGA World, “Legal Gender Recognition.”

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