



## COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Zimbabwe
Title	Situation of lesbian women
Reference period	January 2022 to 5 October 2025
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">Legislation and implementation</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">Treatment by the state</a></li><li>3. <a href="#">Treatment by society</a></li><li>4. <a href="#">Access to justice</a></li><li>5. <a href="#">Access to support services</a></li></ol>
Date of completion	6 October 2025
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Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A

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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Cite as: EUAA, Country of Origin Information Query, Zimbabwe, Situation of lesbian women, 6 October 2025, [url](#)

## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Zimbabwe

### Situation of lesbian women

#### 1. Legislation and implementation

Article 78 (3) of the Constitution states that ‘Persons of the same sex are prohibited from marrying each other’.<sup>1</sup> Further, the 2006 Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act explicitly criminalizes public indecency under Article 77 and sodomy under Article 73.<sup>2</sup> Sources indicated that the law specifically prohibited same-sex sexual acts between men.<sup>3</sup> Information specifically on the legislation and implementation on relations and sexual activity between women could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

Human Dignity Trust, a legal organisation focused on defending human rights, described that ‘there is some evidence of the law being enforced in recent years’, with LGBTIQ persons ‘being occasionally subject to arrest, though there appear to be no successful prosecutions under the law’.<sup>4</sup> Corroborating information could not be found.

According to the International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL), ‘there are no legal protections for LGBTI people in Zimbabwean law’.<sup>5</sup> Further, the 2023 Country Report by the United States Department of State (USDOS) described that ‘the law did not prohibit discrimination by state or nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics’.<sup>6</sup>

According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), in 2022, during the third cycle of the United Nations’ (UN) Universal Periodic Review, the head of Zimbabwe’s delegation in Geneva reportedly stated that the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex acts ‘would not be considered at all’, stating that ‘sexual diversity is [...] outlawed in Zimbabwe’.<sup>7</sup>

A January 2024 report published by Amnesty International stated that ‘in 2023 the climate for LGBTI persons in Zimbabwe has been marked by diminishing space for civil engagement’, which has ‘made it increasingly difficult for LGBTI persons to organize and advocate for their rights’.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Bill

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<sup>1</sup> Zimbabwe, Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> Zimbabwe, Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, 2006, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> Human Dignity Trust, Zimbabwe, 17 December 2024, [url](#); Development Aid, Zimbabwe tightens its grip on the LGBT community, 12 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> Human Dignity Trust, Zimbabwe, 17 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> ICNL, Civic Freedom Monitor – Zimbabwe, last updated 5 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>7</sup> ILGA, Zimbabwe: Database, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> AI, Africa: We are facing extinction: Escalating anti-LGBTI sentiment, the weaponization of law and their human rights implications in select African countries, 9 January 2024, [url](#), p. 55

(Patriotic Bill) on 31 May 2023, has ‘worsened the situation’.<sup>9</sup> The bill, which was ‘ostensibly designed to protect the sovereignty and national interests of Zimbabwe, has raised significant concerns, especially among LGBTI persons who have long faced discrimination and persecution’ as it ‘compounds [...] challenges related to civil rights and personal freedoms of LGBTI persons’.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Treatment by the state

USDOS stated that LGBTIQ persons were ‘disproportionally charged with public indecency and disorderly conduct, in some cases resulting in severe mental health consequences including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation’.<sup>11</sup> However, ‘state-sanctioned violence’ targeting LGBTIQ persons was ‘less frequent than in the previous administration’.<sup>12</sup> The ICNL also added that ‘although the administration of President Emmerson Mnangagwa—in power since 2017—has adopted less harsh and discriminatory rhetoric towards sexual minorities than that of former President Robert Mugabe, discriminatory laws remain in force’.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, USDOS described that ‘higher education institutions reportedly threatened to expel students based on their sexual orientation’ and ‘health care workers commonly discriminated against and refused service to LGBTQI+ persons’.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, members were ‘vulnerable to extortion by police because of the criminalization and stigma associated with same-sex conduct’.<sup>15</sup>

In February 2024, the Zimbabwean government blocked a university scholarship program for young LGBTIQ people aged 18 to 35, sponsored by Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ), a membership organization advocating for LGBTIQ rights.<sup>16</sup> Vice President Chiwenga was quoted saying, ‘our schools and institutions of higher learning will not entertain applicants, let alone enroll persons associated with such alien, anti-life, un-African and un-Christian values which are being promoted and cultivated by, as well as practiced in decadent societies with whom we share no moral or cultural affinities’.<sup>17</sup>

Further information on the treatment of the state towards lesbian women could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

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<sup>9</sup> AI, Africa: We are facing extinction: Escalating anti-LGBTI sentiment, the weaponization of law and their human rights implications in select African countries, 9 January 2024, [url](#), p. 55

<sup>10</sup> AI, Africa: We are facing extinction: Escalating anti-LGBTI sentiment, the weaponization of law and their human rights implications in select African countries, 9 January 2024, [url](#), p. 55

<sup>11</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>12</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>13</sup> ICNL, Civic Freedom Monitor – Zimbabwe, last updated 5 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>15</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>16</sup> NBC News, Zimbabwe’s vice president says the government will block a scholarship for LGBTQ people, 16 February 2024, [url](#); AP News, Zimbabwe’s vice president says the government will block a scholarship for LGBTQ+ people, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> NBC News, Zimbabwe’s vice president says the government will block a scholarship for LGBTQ people, 16 February 2024, [url](#); AP News, Zimbabwe’s vice president says the government will block a scholarship for LGBTQ+ people, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

### 3. Treatment by society

According to the 2025 World Report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), lesbian women ‘frequently face threats, harassment and violence’.<sup>18</sup> The 2023 report by USDOS added that the LGBTIQ community were ‘often subjected to widespread intolerance, rejection and exclusion from society, including from their own communities, churches and even the economy and government’,<sup>19</sup> and there were ‘consistent reports of discrimination and violence being committed’ including ‘assault, sexual violence, harassment, blackmail, and the denial of basic rights and services’.<sup>20</sup>

The 2024 report on violations towards LGBTIQ persons by GALZ described that there was a ‘disturbing yet predictable pattern of systemic discrimination and violence targeting LGBTI individuals in Zimbabwe, with distinct manifestations across different demographic groups’.<sup>21</sup> The same report added that ‘lesbian women face particular vulnerabilities to intimate partner violence and familial rejection, consequences of both their systematic erasure from public discourse and patriarchal attempts to control female sexuality’ and LGBTIQ persons faced ‘particularly acute forms of discrimination that highlight the pervasive nature of systemic exclusion’.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, USDOS citing a 2021 respondent study by GALZ, described that ‘one in three lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women experienced violence for their sexual orientation or gender identity’.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the same source described that ‘leading NGOs noted harassment and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons seeking employment, housing, and health services’ and LGBTIQ persons ‘often left school at an early age due to discrimination’.<sup>24</sup>

In June 2024, the offices of GALZ in Harare were vandalized by a group of protestors who chanted anti-homosexual slogans and vandalized the building with ‘hateful graffiti’, according to local sources.<sup>25</sup>

Concerning lesbian women, a January 2023 article by GALZ quoted their Program Manager, Samuel Matsikure, highlighting that ‘little to no conversation has been facilitated on the experiences of LBT women, who are disproportionately affected by GBV’.<sup>26</sup> Matsikure further noted that GALZ ‘has recorded extreme cases of correctional rape, sexual assault, physical assault, and intimate partner violence (IPV)’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 - Zimbabwe, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Development Aid, Zimbabwe tightens its grip on the LGBT community, 12 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Human Dignity Trust, Zimbabwe, 17 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2024 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2024, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>22</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2024 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2024, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>23</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 48-49

<sup>24</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>25</sup> All Africa, Zimbabwe: Utterly Unacceptable! - GALZ Says After Anti-Gay Protestors Target Harare Offices, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Mamba Online, Zimbabwe: LGBTIQ+ Group's Offices Vandalised by Homophobes, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> News is out, LGBTQ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe fight gender-based violence, 18 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> News is out, LGBTQ advocacy groups in Zimbabwe fight gender-based violence, 18 January 2023, [url](#)

The following incidents of assault or harassment against lesbians were reported among sources consulted between 2022 and 2024:

- In April 2024, a lesbian couple in Highfields Harare, was physically assaulted by the brother and friends of one of the women. They accused her partner of ‘recruiting’ their sister into homosexuality. The couple reported the incident to the police, and a protection order was granted.<sup>28</sup>
- In 2023, GALZ reported that a lesbian couple in Chitungwiza faced discrimination and threats, including demands by a local political leader to leave the area, rent increases by their landlady, and harassment by a masked individual. They relocated to Chitungwiza but ‘continue to fear for their safety’.<sup>29</sup>
- In 2022, GALZ reported that the father of a lesbian woman demanded she undergo spiritual conversion to restore her ‘normalcy’ or leave the home, withdrawing all financial support. The woman experienced depression and suicidal thoughts, and GALZ provided counseling and attempted family mediation.<sup>30</sup>
- In October 2022, the news outlet called Breaking News described a Lesbians woman’s personal experience in Zimbabwe, stating ‘her hut was torched with fire by homophobic residents of her community in Zimbabwe’ and that she fled Zimbabwe because her husband became physically violent and made death threats against her due to her lesbian identity, after she was ‘involuntarily outed’ by members of her community.<sup>31</sup>
- In 2021, GALZ stated that a lesbian woman was outed to her family, who gave her an ultimatum to either change her sexual orientation or move out, claiming her ‘behaviour’ would negatively influence her younger siblings. She chose to relocate but her family continued to pressure her to ‘amend her ways’.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. Access to justice

Information specifically on access to justice for lesbian women was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information could be relevant.

The 2023 Country Report USDOS stated that ‘police and government agents tolerated violence and abuse against LGBTQI+ persons’ and LGBTQI persons ‘continued to report homophobic attacks by the public, which police did not investigate’.<sup>33</sup> USDOS, citing a 2021 study by GALZ, described that 65 % of LGBTQI respondents who were subject to violence refrained from reporting it ‘due to concerns regarding subsequent victimization at the hands of authorities’.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2024 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>29</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2023 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>30</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2022 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2022, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>31</sup> Breaking News, African asylum seeker married at age 9 and 13 earns court reprieve to remain in Ireland, 17 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> GALZ, LGBTI 2021 Violations Report: Zimbabwe, 2021, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>34</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 48-49

A January 2023 article by the local news outlet, The Zimbabwean, reported that same-sex couples face 'difficulties' in 'obtaining legal and judicial protection', citing the case of a lesbian woman who approached the police after experiencing intimate partner violence.<sup>35</sup>

The same source, citing investigations by an external body, reported that 'some lesbians and bisexual women do not disclose these offenses because societal moral expectations take precedence over the law in Zimbabwean public systems'.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the same source, quoting a member of the LGBTIQ community, confirmed that members were 'afraid to report for fear of embarrassment, and those who do, usually do not have their cases investigated by law enforcement'.<sup>37</sup> It was further noted that 'when lesbians and bisexual women report a violation committed by their partners to police, their coming out as lesbians or bisexuals generates more questions about their sexuality than the merits of the case'.<sup>38</sup>

According to a 2022 research report focusing on social exclusion linked to sexual orientation in southern African countries, which included a survey on the treatment of LGBTIQ persons in Zimbabwe, four out of five respondents believed it was 'unlikely that an LGBTIQ person can seek police protection from violence without experiencing discrimination'.<sup>39</sup> The study further added that this was 'particularly significant as many LGBT Zimbabweans have reported experiencing violence: 63% had experienced harassment, 39% had experienced sexual violence and 43% physical violence, with 77% attributing the violence to their SOGIE [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression]'.<sup>40</sup>

The 2023 report by Freedom House described that 'LGBT+ advocacy groups exist, but severe discrimination limits their ability to advance their interests in the political sphere'.<sup>41</sup>

## 5. Access to support services

Information specifically on access to support services for lesbian women was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information could be relevant.

According to sources, the National AIDS Council (NAC), established by the government to coordinate and lead the national multi-sectoral response to HIV and AIDS, has been supporting the LGBTIQ community.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, sources further indicated that healthcare

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<sup>35</sup> Zimbabwean (The), Lack of protection for LGBTIQ people worsens intimate partner violence, 14 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> Zimbabwean (The), Lack of protection for LGBTIQ people worsens intimate partner violence, 14 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Zimbabwean (The), Lack of protection for LGBTIQ people worsens intimate partner violence, 14 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> Zimbabwean (The), Lack of protection for LGBTIQ people worsens intimate partner violence, 14 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> Müller, A., & Judge, M., From the Inside Out: Social Exclusion Linked to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Research Report, Out & Proud LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa, 16 November 2022, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>40</sup> Müller, A., & Judge, M., From the Inside Out: Social Exclusion Linked to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Research Report, Out & Proud LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa, 16 November 2022, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>41</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Zimbabwe, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> News Hub Zimbabwe, Violence prevalent in LGBTQ+ as partners suffer in silence, 11 June 2023, [url](#); Herald (The), As Zimbabwe makes strides on HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ+ people left behind, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

services to assist the LGBTIQ community were provided by the non-governmental organizations, GALZ<sup>43</sup> and the Sexual Rights Centre (SRC).<sup>44</sup>

A 2024 qualitative study based on interviews of lesbian and bisexual women on the access of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, concluded that lesbian and bisexual women faced ‘challenges’ accessing SRH services and many women ‘rarely’ used these health services for two main reasons: ‘fear of judgment or discrimination by health care providers’ and that ‘often no specific services are offered to address the needs of lesbian and bisexual women’.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the same source added that ‘the observed low uptake of these services can be attributed to several systemic barriers, including inadequate training of health providers, negative attitudes and lack of inclusive policies’.<sup>46</sup>

USDOS further added that LGBTIQ members were ‘less likely to seek medical care for sexually transmitted diseases or other health problems due to fear that health-care providers would shun them or report them to authorities’.<sup>47</sup> In addition, LGBTIQ persons ‘lacked consistent access to reproductive health services’.<sup>48</sup>

The 2022 study on social exclusion linked to sexual orientation noted that one in four respondents thought it was at ‘least somewhat likely that LGBTIQ persons could access social welfare or grants without discrimination,’ as 38 % thought this was ‘not likely’, and 36 % thought this was not likely at all’.<sup>49</sup> The same source, citing an external study, further found that 54 % of respondents had been ‘treated disrespectfully in a health facility’, 43 % had been ‘insulted in a health facility’, 34 % had been ‘denied healthcare because of their SOGIE’, and 36 % had ‘hidden a SOGIE-related health concern from their healthcare provider’.<sup>50</sup> The same report added that ‘in light of these experiences, it is unsurprising that NGOs are often the most important source of care for LGBT people, especially for HIV testing and counselling or psychosocial support’.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> News Hub Zimbabwe, Violence prevalent in LGBTQ+ as partners suffer in silence, 11 June 2023, [url](#); Herald (The), As Zimbabwe makes strides on HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ+ people left behind, 23 March 2024, [url](#); Zimbabwe Now, GALZ Pushes for LGBTI Rights Protection, 17 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> News Hub Zimbabwe, Violence prevalent in LGBTQ+ as partners suffer in silence, 11 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> Khozah, M.Y., & Nunu, W.N., Exploring challenges to the uptake of sexual and reproductive health services among lesbian and bisexual women in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: a qualitative enquiry. *Therapeutic Advances in Reproductive Health*. 17 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> Khozah, M.Y., & Nunu, W.N., Exploring challenges to the uptake of sexual and reproductive health services among lesbian and bisexual women in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: a qualitative enquiry. *Therapeutic Advances in Reproductive Health*. 17 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>48</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>49</sup> Müller, A., & Judge, M., From the Inside Out: Social Exclusion Linked to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Research Report, Out & Proud LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa, 16 November 2022, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>50</sup> Müller, A., & Judge, M., From the Inside Out: Social Exclusion Linked to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Research Report, Out & Proud LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa, 16 November 2022, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>51</sup> Müller, A., & Judge, M., From the Inside Out: Social Exclusion Linked to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Research Report, Out & Proud LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa, 16 November 2022, [url](#), p. 38

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## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED**

Africa News; Asylum Research Centre; Crisis24; ecoi.net; EUAA COI Portal; Fédération internationale pour les droits humains (FIDH); Germany – Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF); France – Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA); Norwegian Refugee Council; Global Protection Cluster; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)