

“The safety of the people shall be the highest law”

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Spaces and Places



Level 2



10 to 30



40 to 60
minutes



Complexity: Level 2

Group size: 10 to 30

Time: 40 to 60 minutes

Overview: This activity looks at the safety of LGBT+ young people in different everyday settings. Participants position themselves along the length of a wall, according to how safe or unsafe they think it is for LGBT+ people to be “out” in particular settings.

Objectives:

- To raise participants’ awareness of the fact that openly LGBT+ young people may feel unsafe when entering (public) spaces
- To reflect on what it means to be safe when your gender identity or sexual orientation is not accepted by society
- To discuss the human rights threats faced by LGBT+ people

Materials:

- A large empty wall, with space for the participants to move along it
- Three large pieces of paper with the headings: ‘SAFE’, ‘UNSAFE’, ‘I DON’T KNOW’

Preparation: Prepare three large pieces of paper with ‘SAFE’, ‘UNSAFE’, ‘I DON’T KNOW’ written on them. Stick the first two onto opposite ends of a large empty wall making sure that there is plenty of space between them.

The poster with ‘I DON’T KNOW’ written on it should be placed in a corner or a different side of the room facing the “Safe” – “Unsafe” wall.



Instructions

- 1) Ask participants to imagine that the room is a giant opinion scale, with one end of the room representing 'SAFE', the other end 'UNSAFE'. Indicate the posters on the wall and clarify that those who have no idea about how to answer can choose the 'I DON'T KNOW' space.
- 2) Explain to participants that they will need to imagine the safety levels for LGBT+ people to be 'out' at various events or locations, and to position themselves on the scale accordingly

Read aloud each of the events or locations below, allowing time between reading each one for participants to position themselves in silence:

- at a gay or lesbian bar
 - during a classroom discussion at school
 - during a music festival
 - during a discussion at school where racist, homophobic and xenophobic remarks are made
 - at a gay or lesbian bookstore
 - at the work place
 - in a local youth club in a culturally diverse urban area
 - at the pharmacy when asking for condoms
 - at a football match or any other sports event
 - at a youth conference or training course where homophobic remarks have been expressed by participants
- 3) After each statement ask participants to explain the position they have taken by asking individual participants why they think a setting is safe or unsafe for LGBTs+ to show they are "out". Encourage participants to engage in discussion with others who have a different view, but try to ensure that they provide relevant, evidence-based arguments, or that they speak from a position of personal experience. Participants should outline their own opinion rather than disputing the opinion of others, but they may make references to arguments put by other people.

Make sure to invite also the participants who opted for "I don't know" to share anything they may want to share or to check if they are better informed now and could thus place themselves in the safety scale.

Repeat this procedure for some or all of the settings on the list. Decide in advance how long you would like to devote to the discussion of each setting (5 to 10 minutes, recommended). This will give you an idea of how long you need for the whole activity.

- 4) Invite the participants for the debriefing.



Debriefing and evaluation

Start by inviting participants to share how they feel after the activity.

- Was there anything surprising in any of the positions taken or arguments made?
- Were there differences in perception concerning the safety of these settings for LGBT+ people who are “out”? Why?
- Based on the activity, what are some of the characteristics of settings considered to be ‘unsafe’ for LGBT+?
- What are some of the characteristics of settings considered to be ‘safe’ for LGBT+?
- Can you identify settings from your local context which are ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’?
- What are some of the dangers facing young LGBTs+ who are ‘out’ in your local context?
- Are there other aspects of identity - other than belonging to LGBT+ - which might lead to someone feeling unsafe in your local context?
- What do you think that people in these settings can do to help LGBTs+ who are ‘out’ to feel safe? Give examples from the different settings
- What precautions can young LGBTs+ take to improve their own safety?
- Why do some people have difficulties in imagining the level of safety of some places (the “I don’t know” positions)?
- What are some of the human rights threats facing LGBT+ people in your community / country? Can these be overcome? How?



Tips for facilitators

You need to give consideration to the right time to run this activity with your group, depending on the group itself and the specific objectives you have. You might not want to use this activity at the beginning of a training, if participants do not already know each other and do not feel safe to challenge each others’ views or speak about their personal experiences. You should ensure that participants have a minimal understanding of the terminology and what is involved in coming out. You can find more information on these questions in Chapter 4, in the section on LGBT+.

Depending on the composition of your group and the experiences of participants, the activity may lead to some of them sharing personal experiences involving violence and insecurity. You should be prepared to deal with such experiences and the emotions that might arise as a result of sharing them. However, you should also make it clear to participants at the beginning of the activity that they should not feel compelled to share anything that they are not comfortable with.

It may be useful to run this activity together with a co-facilitator who can support you by taking notes or supporting participants who may need to take a break from the activity.

Especially when working with a local group, it is useful to be aware of any instances or settings where there has been violence against LGBT+. Awareness of any such issues will be helpful when facilitating the discussion among participants.

When working with a group that has limited awareness and experience with LGBT+ you might be faced with a situation where 'I DON'T KNOW' is the most common answer. To avoid this, you can take the option away, pushing people to make a choice between 'SAFE' and 'UNSAFE'.

The list of settings provided is not exhaustive. You could revise it to make it more relevant to your group's reality.

It may be useful for the debriefing if the facilitator or a co-facilitator has made a note of the results for each setting, and these are displayed for participants, so that they can recall how many people thought the setting was unsafe or safe, etc. It may also be useful to make a note of some of the arguments used by participants, so that you can refer to these later on during the discussion.

The issue of safety in public spaces is also important for women, as well as from an intersectional point of view. You could develop a list of roles for participants to play, and ask them to position themselves according to their perceived level of security. Such a list could include such roles as being a young woman, young LGBT+ from an ethnic community, etc.

Suggestions for follow-up

You could try the activity "Where do you stand?" from *Compass*, using statements adapted to the themes of gender and gender-based violence.

The activity could also be followed by looking at private instances of gender-based violence – e.g using 'Kati's story' or 'Understanding gender-based violence' from this manual.

Ideas for action

You could work further with participants on the question of safety and inclusion within their organisations and groups. They could conduct an 'inclusivity analysis' of your group, or another organisation they belong to. Such an analysis can be carried out by reviewing organisational policies and practices to check whether they are safe, welcoming and open to LGBT young people. Be aware that this type of review requires a large measure of openness to criticism on your part and on the part of others in your organisation.

You could also suggest that young people conduct some research in the local community, identifying places where violence targeting LGBT+ has occurred. They could work to raise awareness of such issues in the community by organising a silent march to highlight instances of violence, or create collaborative online maps that illustrate the extent of the problem and indications about available support services in the community.

You could also invite law enforcement representatives to discuss with the group the measures they adopt (or do not adopt) to prevent and follow-up on instances of violence against LGBT+.

