From Subject to Umbrella

What Happened to Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals Inside the Movement They Founded

A Comparative Analysis of Discursive Visibility, Institutional Specificity, and Public Priorities, 2010–2026

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ABSTRACT

This article begins from a political impression that can be stated quite simply: lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals remain indispensable to the history, legitimacy, electoral weight, and mass mobilization of the contemporary LGBT movement, yet they appear increasingly less often as distinct political subjects within the institutions that speak in its name. The question is therefore not whether LGB people remain formally included under expanding acronyms such as LGBTQ+, LGBTI+, or 2SLGBTQI+. They clearly do. The question is whether they retain the same capacity to be named separately when institutions define beneficiaries, design programs, allocate targeted funding, create dedicated strategies, or decide which populations require their own political infrastructure.

To examine that question, this study combines a longitudinal sample of 389 institutional headlines from ten major LGBT organizations, an independent recoding of the two endpoint periods, a cross-national review of subgroup-specific public policies, a substitution test across seven countries, and targeted analyses of philanthropy in the United States and of federally funded projects in Canada. The results point in the same general direction. In the original headline sample, L/G/B-specific subjects fell from 72.3% of thematic headlines in 2010–2013 to 5.6% in 2022–2026; an independent recoding of all endpoint headlines reproduced the pattern at 74.5% and 5.2%. The main replacement was not trans-specific discourse but general umbrella language: LGBTQ+, LGBT+, queer, and related collective terms.

The same asymmetry appears when institutions move from language to targeted infrastructure. In the seven-country test, specific T/NB/I/2S infrastructure remained in all seven countries when L/G/B-specific programs were removed, while specific non-biomedical L/G/B infrastructure remained in only four of seven when the exercise was reversed. In the United States, the 2024 national philanthropy tracking report recorded US$33.3 million specifically directed to trans, gender-nonconforming, and nonbinary communities, compared with less than US$6 million for gay/queer men and MSM and US$1.2 million for lesbians and queer women. Spain is an especially revealing case: the evidence invoked in the preamble of its own 2025 grants decree names lesbian women and gay men among the principal victims of several forms of hatred-related harm, while its strategic architecture combines a general LGTBI strategy with a separate trans-specific strategy.

The pattern is not simply that the umbrella expanded. LGB increasingly functions as the assumed background of a broader political subject, while some other populations within the umbrella retain both membership in the collective and the ability to constitute themselves as distinct institutional subjects. This article calls that transformation *relative political de-specification*: remaining inside the coalition while losing relative capacity to be named separately when attention, structure, and resources are distributed. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals have not ceased to supply much of the movement's history. They have become progressively less necessary to name when its present is being administratively organized.

Keywords: LGB; LGBT; LGBTQ+; queer; political specificity; institutional targeting; public policy; philanthropy; movement history; content analysis.

1. The Back Row

This study began with an impression rather than a statistical result. Whenever the LGBT movement tells its history, lesbians and gay men are easy to find: Stonewall, police raids, the criminalization of homosexuality, the AIDS crisis, lesbian activism, gay liberation, marriage equality, military exclusion, censorship, and decades of social organization. When the movement needs historical legitimacy, the genealogy remains remarkably specific. When a march is called, electoral support is sought, or social scale needs to be displayed, L, G, and B remain in the picture.

The impression changes when the question shifts from who belongs to that history to who receives political specificity in the present. Who gets a dedicated strategy? Who is identified as a distinct beneficiary of public policy? Who receives a named funding stream, a program, an advisory structure, or a separate institutional initiative? Who continues to appear as a population with problems of its own, rather than as one component of an increasingly large collective noun?

The intuition behind this research was that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals had not been expelled from the movement. Something subtler had happened. They remained useful as history, constituency, coalition mass, and symbolic inheritance, while becoming progressively less visible as autonomous subjects of policy. Put less academically, LGB still appears in the family photograph. The question is whether we have been moved toward the back row. Remaining an indispensable part of the family does not guarantee a seat in the front.

That distinction matters because inclusion and specificity are not the same political property. A lesbian may be formally included in an LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination program even when no lesbian-specific program exists. A gay man may belong to every general diversity strategy while appearing explicitly only when public health officials need to discuss PrEP, HIV, mpox, or sexually transmitted infections. A trans or Two-Spirit person may simultaneously belong to that same umbrella and retain a second level of recognition through a dedicated strategy, program, council, or funding stream.

The guiding question is therefore simple: **how did the position of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals as specific political subjects change inside the expanded LGBT movement between 2010 and 2026?** The working hypothesis is not that they were formally expelled. It is that their historical and coalitional centrality may coexist with a relative loss of contemporary specificity.

2. When an Acronym Becomes a Political Architecture

Political acronyms look deceptively trivial. They are treated as labels, but over time they begin to function like miniature constitutions. They determine who must be explicitly named, who can be assumed, which identities receive separate visibility, and sometimes even which historical claims are placed first.

The expansion from LGBT to LGBTQ+, LGBTI+, LGBTQIA+, 2SLGBTQI+, and related forms reflects a real broadening of the political constituency. HRC moved from LGBT to LGBTQ and later LGBTQ+; GLAAD likewise adopted Q; Stonewall expanded its formal remit from LGB to LGBT before adopting broader LGBTQ+ language; Germany's LSVD eventually presented itself as LSVD+ – Verband Queere Vielfalt. The underlying institutional subject was becoming larger (Human Rights Campaign, 2016; LSVD+, 2024; Stonewall, 2015). None of these changes proves by itself a loss of L/G/B power. They do show that the institutional subject ceased to be organized only around sexual orientation and began using increasingly expansive categories capable of containing heterogeneous histories, identities, and demands.

The concept of *de-specification* used here does not describe the disappearance of a category, nor does it require an organization to stop defending it. It describes something narrower and measurable: a reduction in how often a population is named as the primary object when institutions formulate problems, create

programs, allocate resources, or produce representation. The relevant variable is not “does the letter G appear inside LGBTQ+?” but “when does an institution need to say *gay* instead of treating LGBTQ+ as sufficient?”

Canada provides the most explicit example of acronym order as political symbolism. In 2022, the federal government moved from LGBTQ2 to 2SLGBTQI+, deliberately placing Two-Spirit at the beginning. The Action Plan states that placing “2S” at the front recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities and foregrounds their experiences within the federal reconciliation mandate (Government of Canada, 2022). That change is not a claim that contemporary LGBT activism historically began with Two-Spirit organizing. Its significance is different: the order of the acronym itself becomes available for the redistribution of symbolic priority.

3. Measuring the Loss of Specificity

The study used four complementary approaches. The first was an exploratory corpus of 389 institutional headlines from ten organizations: HRC, GLAAD, Stonewall, Egale, FELGTB/FELGTBI+, FALGBT, LSVD, ILGA Portugal, Grupo Gay da Bahia, and ABGLT. Historical pages were reconstructed primarily through the Wayback Machine and grouped into four periods: 2010–2013, 2014–2017, 2018–2021, and 2022–2026. Each headline was coded according to its principal subject: lesbian, gay, bisexual, LGB, trans, nonbinary/gender-diverse, intersex, Two-Spirit, LGBT general, queer general, racial/intersectional, or other. The original exercise was exploratory rather than probabilistic, and the initial coding was performed by a single coder. This is therefore a longitudinal institutional sample, not a population estimate of all LGBT organizations (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

The second was an independent coding audit. A blind sample of 80 records was first recoded; then all 175 headlines from the two endpoint periods (85 from 2010–2013 and 90 from 2022–2026) were recoded independently. Agreement on the binary LGB/non-LGB classification was 93.7%, with a Cohen's kappa of 0.824. The aim was not to manufacture a prettier number but to test whether the result survived when another coder rebuilt from scratch the contrast that supports the thesis.

The third examined state instruments: laws, strategies, named grants, administrative structures, official campaigns, and programs. Exclusively biomedical instruments were separated, because otherwise the presence of gay men in HIV, PrEP, and STI policy could create the appearance of persistent sociopolitical specificity when that specificity was in fact concentrated in epidemiology. In the comparative corpus of 31 specific non-biomedical instruments, 11 targeted L/G/B and 20 targeted T/NB/I/2S, with large differences by country and a strong German counterexample. The fourth approach was material: specifically targeted funding. The United States offers an unusually useful national source, the tracking report of Funders for LGBTQ Issues, while Canada publishes official lists of funded projects that permit reproducible coding of explicit target groups. In both cases, general umbrella funding was distinguished from resources reserved for a specific population, because that distinction is precisely the object of this article.

The result was striking, too large to attribute comfortably to a generational impression. In 2010–2013, 34 of 47 thematic headlines, or 72.3%, were specifically about L, G, B, or LGB subjects. By 2022–2026, the figure had fallen to 3 of 54, or 5.6%. The intermediate periods stood at roughly 26% and 27% (Figure 1). Because a result that large deserved suspicion rather than applause, all 175 endpoint headlines were recoded independently. The result barely moved: 74.5% LGB-specific in 2010–2013 and 5.2% in 2022–2026.

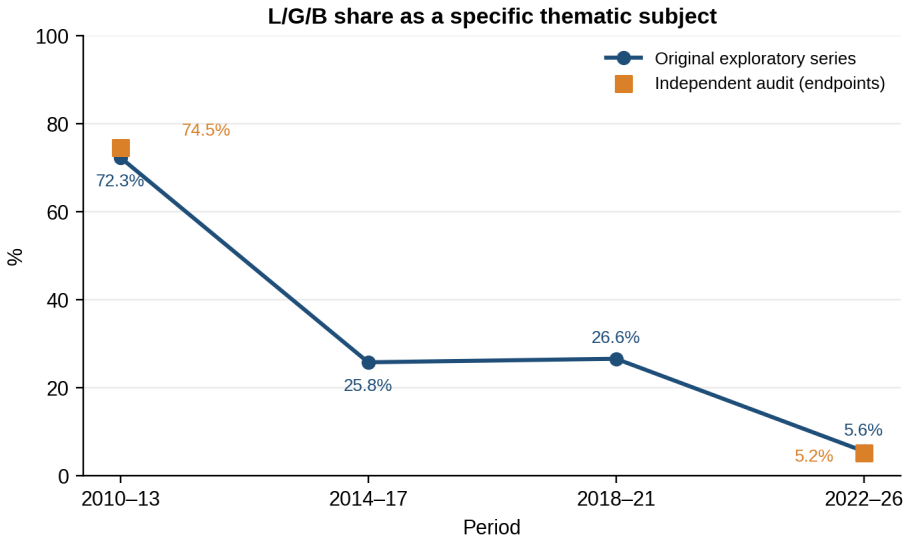


Figure 1. *L/G/B share as a specific thematic subject across four periods. The original exploratory series is shown together with the independent recoding of the two endpoint periods. Source: author-compiled corpus of 389 institutional headlines from ten organizations, and independent endpoint audit.*

The effect also survived a stringent sensitivity test. The early period coincided with the peak years of marriage equality, DOMA litigation, same-sex parenting, and related family-law battles. Removing marriage, DOMA, and civil partnerships reduced the early LGB share to 67.4%; also excluding parental recognition and fertility-related cases reduced it to 64.1%, still enormously above the final period of 5.2% (Figure 2). In every scenario tested, including an analysis restricted to organizations present at both endpoints, the initial period kept an LGB share above 64% and the final period stayed around 5%. The completion of a major LGB legal agenda therefore explains part of the decline, but not its overall magnitude. Early LGB specificity was not only marriage: it included rights, discrimination, culture, parenthood, representation, and conflicts that increasingly came to be expressed under the collective umbrella.

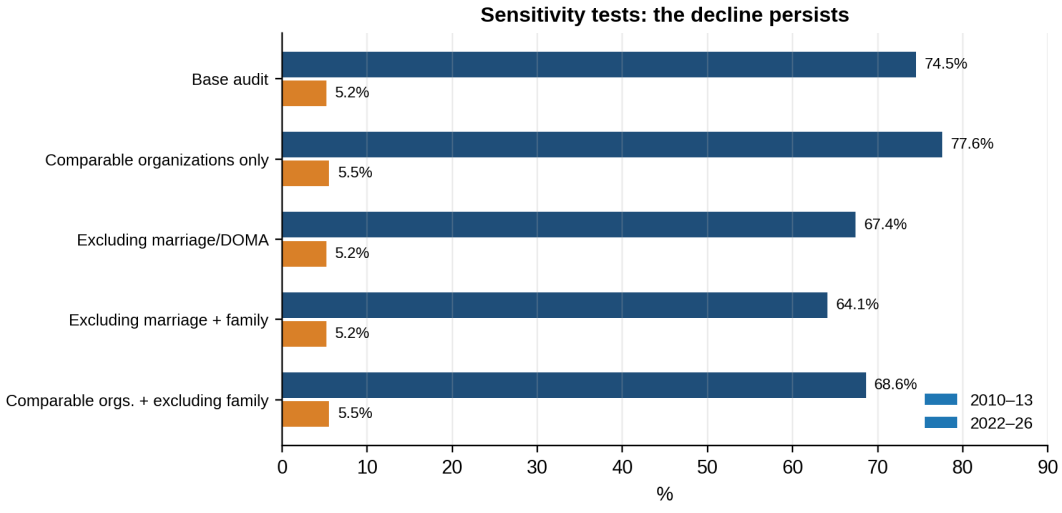


Figure 2. *Sensitivity analysis. The early-period L/G/B share remains far above the late-period share after excluding marriage, DOMA, parenthood, and fertility-related material. The strictest test excludes all of these from the early period. Source: independent endpoint audit.*

4. The Crucial Result: LGB Was Replaced Mainly by the Umbrella

The most revealing result is not simply that LGB-specific discourse declined. It is what took its place. If the contemporary movement had simply shifted from gay and lesbian politics to trans and nonbinary politics, one would expect the T/NB/I/2S category to absorb most of the space vacated by LGB. It did not. In the independent endpoint recoding, L/G/B-specific content fell from 74.5% to 5.2%, T/NB/I/2S-specific content rose much more modestly, from about 7.3% to 13.8%, and general LGBT/queer language rose from approximately 18.2% to 75.9% of thematic headlines (Figure 3).

The dominant transformation was therefore LGB-specific to general LGBT/queer, rather than LGB-specific to trans-specific. That distinction is fundamental. LGB did not primarily become absent. It became implicit. The historical subjects of the movement increasingly became populations that institutions could assume were already contained inside a collective category. The subject that was once “gays and lesbians” becomes “LGBTQ+”, and the general term performed the work that “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual” had previously performed separately.

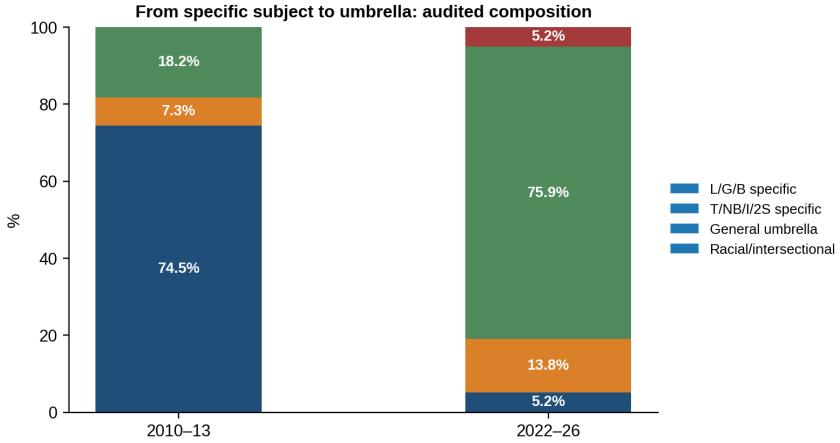


Figure 3. *Audited thematic composition at the two endpoints. The largest shift is from L/G/B-specific language to general umbrella language, not a one-for-one replacement by T/NB/I/2S-specific language. “Other” is excluded from the denominator. Source: independent recoding of the 175 endpoint headlines.*

The change appears across organizations with different histories and national settings (Figure 4). In the independent audit, HRC goes from 70% L/G/B thematic headlines in 2010–2013 to 0% in 2022–2026; GLAAD from 57.1% to 0%; Stonewall from 100% to 0%; LSVD from 100% to 10%; Grupo Gay da Bahia from 62.5% to 9.1%; and FELGTB/FELGTBI+, which retains more specificity than the others, from 66.7% to 20%. In the original corpus, HRC moved from seven L/G/B-specific headlines in the first period to none in the last, GLAAD from four to none, and Stonewall from nine to none, while general-category headlines rose.

The asymmetry also appears in current program architecture: HRC maintains a Trans Justice Initiative, and GLAAD lists Transgender Media as a dedicated program, while neither organization presents a symmetric current Gay Men's Initiative or Lesbian Initiative in the reviewed architecture (Human Rights Campaign, 2026; GLAAD, 2026). These percentages do not justify saying that the organizations “stopped caring about” gay men and lesbians. They measure something more concrete: whether gay, lesbian, and bisexual people still need to be named separately for the institution to define its political agenda, and whether the institution still needs them with the same frequency as the main noun of its discourse. An institution can continue defending a population under the general umbrella while sharply reducing the production of problems, campaigns, or priorities that name it separately. Increasingly, it does.

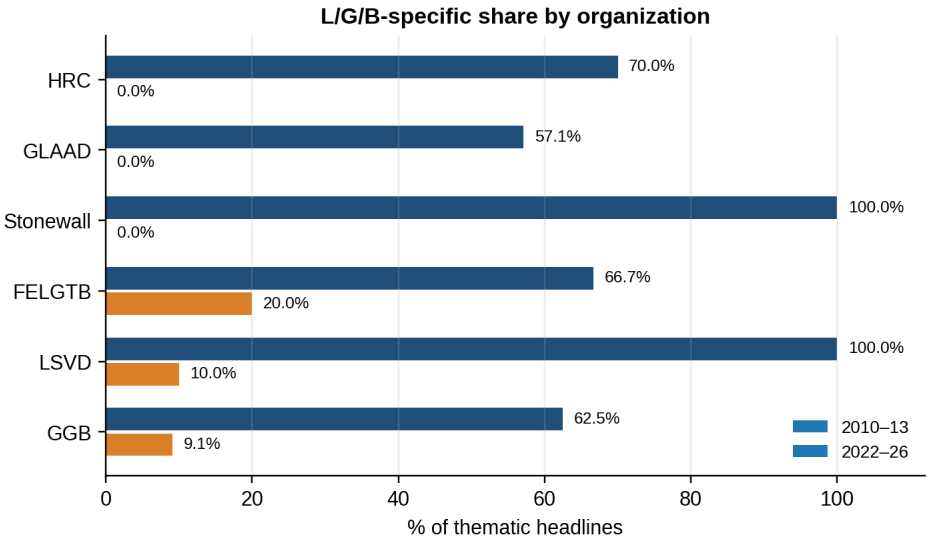


Figure 4. *L/G/B-specific share by organization in the early and late periods. Percentages are calculated among each organization's thematic headlines. Source: independent endpoint audit.*

5. The Umbrella Paradox

The broader the coalition becomes, the easier it becomes for historically central groups to lose nominal specificity. A general LGBTQ+ policy formally includes everyone. But general inclusion does not prevent selected populations inside that umbrella from receiving additional dedicated recognition. This produces what might be called a *double citizenship of specificity*.

A trans person may be included in a general LGBTI strategy and simultaneously in a trans-specific strategy. A Two-Spirit person may belong to the Canadian 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella while also receiving Two-Spirit-specific resources. An intersex person may be covered by a general equality architecture while also being addressed through specific policy on sex characteristics. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals can remain fully inside the first level while becoming less present at the second.

That is where the usual reassurance that “everyone is still included” becomes analytically inadequate. The question is not merely who is under the umbrella. The question is which populations also retain an umbrella of their own underneath it. Formal inclusion can increase at the same time as the specificity of some groups decreases.

6. When the Umbrella Starts Distributing Money

A decline in naming could still be dismissed as linguistic modernization. Perhaps institutions simply prefer more inclusive terminology while allocating targeted resources in ways that remain balanced. United States philanthropy allows that possibility to be tested.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues, which has tracked LGBTQ foundation grantmaking for more than two decades, reported 5,043 grants from 445 foundations worth US$178.2 million in 2024. The overall distribution already mirrors the linguistic shift: approximately 77% of funding was classified as LGBTQ general, while only 23% was directed toward specific SOGIESC populations (Funders for LGBTQ Issues, 2026; Figure 5).

The more revealing comparison occurs inside the targeted portion. Funding specifically directed toward trans, gender-nonconforming, and nonbinary communities reached US$33.3 million. Gay/queer men and MSM received less than US$6 million, while lesbians and queer women received US$1.2 million. Bisexual, intersex, and Two-Spirit funding each accounted for less than 1%, and no funding was specifically

categorized as asexual (Funders for LGBTQ Issues, 2026; Figure 6). Even when the L/G categories are defined generously, combining gay men with queer men and MSM, and lesbians with queer women, the total remains below US$7.2 million. TGNCNBi-specific funding was therefore at least 4.6 times larger.

This does not measure all benefits received by LGB people, because they may benefit substantially from the much larger LGBTQ-general pool, roughly three quarters of the total. That distinction is exactly the point of the present analysis. When institutions decide that no further distinction is necessary, LGB remains inside the general category. When institutions decide that a subgroup requires its own identification, intervention, and reserved resources, the distribution becomes highly uneven. This is political specificity translated into dollars: at this level, specificity stops being a word and becomes a line item.

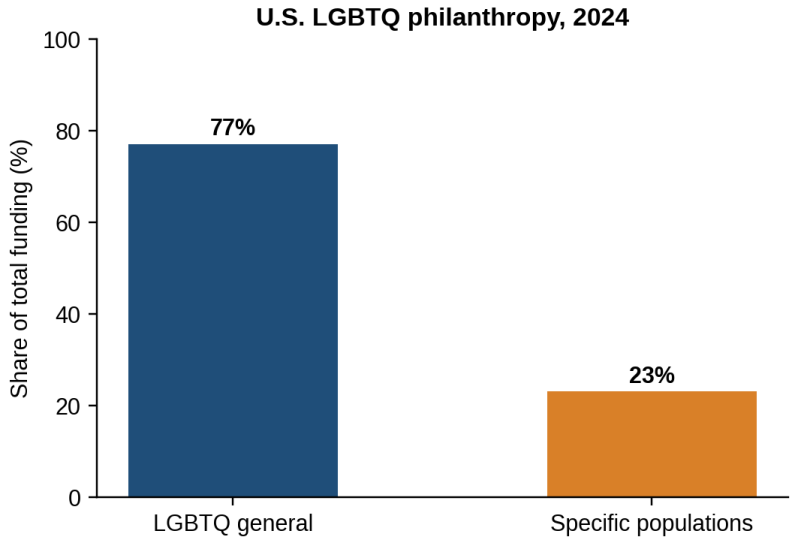


Figure 5. *U.S. LGBTQ philanthropy in 2024: funding classified as LGBTQ general versus funding directed toward specific populations. Total tracked funding: US$178.2 million. Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues (2026).*

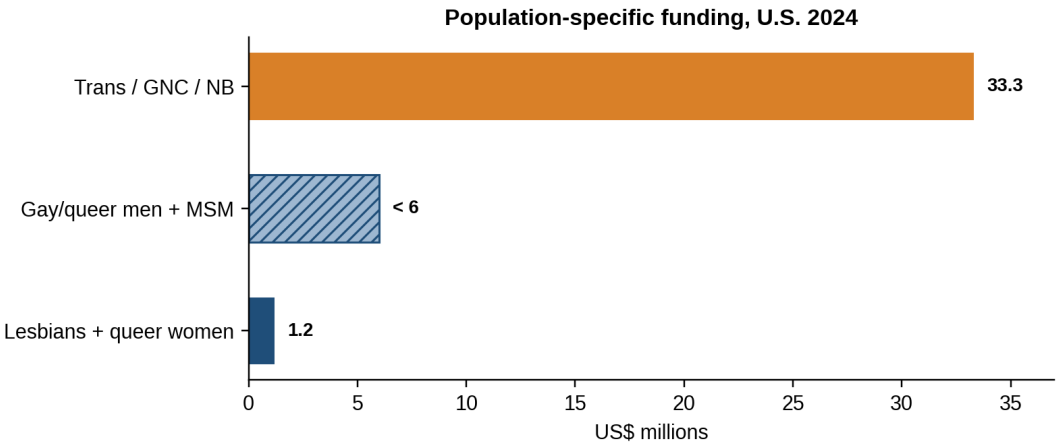


Figure 6. *Population-specific LGBTQ funding in the United States, 2024. The hatched bar for gay/queer men + MSM is drawn at US$6.0 million as a visual upper bound; the report states "less than US$6 million." Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues (2026).*

7. Canada: The Same Pattern in a Public Funding System, and the Politics of the First Position

Canada concentrates two dimensions of the problem. The first is financial. Women and Gender Equality Canada published a list of 106 funded 2SLGBTQI+ projects in January 2025. A conservative coding conducted for this study counted only projects whose organization, title, or description clearly identified a specific subgroup, and excluded general 2SLGBTQI+ projects as well as youth, seniors, newcomers, and other cross-cutting axes (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2025).

Under that rule, 15 projects focused clearly on trans, gender-diverse, Two-Spirit, or intersex populations, totaling approximately CAD$7.21 million. Four projects were clearly centered on lesbians or gay/bisexual men, totaling approximately CAD$898,000 (Figure 7). The roughly eight-to-one difference should be treated as an author coding of the official list rather than as a Canadian government statistic. The coding rule is reproducible and points in the same direction as the U.S. philanthropy data, but it depends on our own classification and has not yet undergone a second blind audit. The next step is not to argue about the impression but to recode all 106 projects independently and test whether the asymmetry survives.

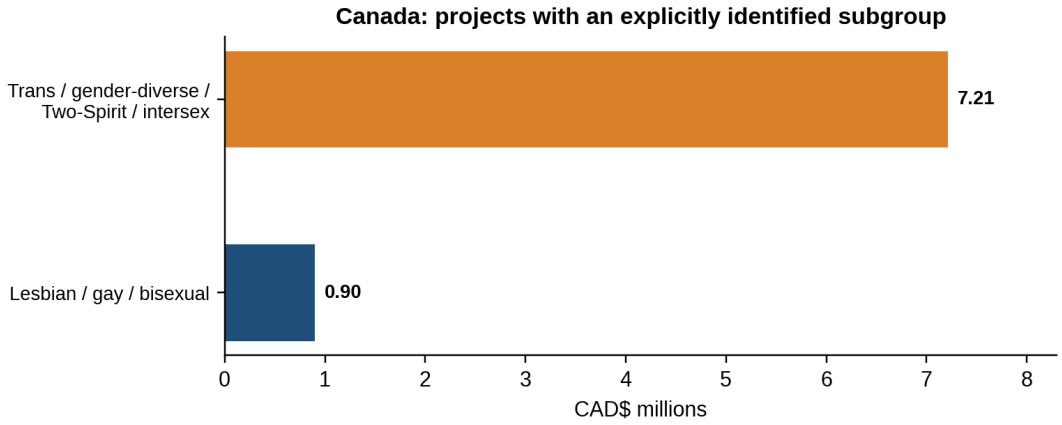


Figure 7. *Author coding of the official 2025 WAGE list of 106 funded 2SLGBTQI+ projects. General 2SLGBTQI+ projects are excluded. This is a reproducible study classification, not an official Canadian subgroup statistic.*

The federal Action Plan reinforces the pattern qualitatively. One of its six priority areas explicitly supports Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence, and official examples emphasize Indigenous access and the amplification of trans voices in leadership positions. The architecture contains no parallel priority titled, for example, “gay men's wellbeing” or “lesbian resilience” (Government of Canada, 2022). Again, LGB remains within the general subject. The additional layer of specificity is distributed elsewhere.

The second dimension is symbolic. By moving Two-Spirit to the beginning of 2SLGBTQI+, the federal government explicitly used ordering as recognition. No one needs to pretend that the position of letters in an acronym mechanically allocates political power, yet institutions do not reorganize their official names accidentally. The first position communicates whom the institution wishes to foreground. For decades the L occupied the first position in LGBT; in Canada it was moved back to make another normative criterion visible, and the conventional L-G-B-T genealogy is no longer the criterion that organizes the acronym. For historically central LGB populations, this produces an unusual relationship to memory: the movement may still invoke homosexual persecution and gay liberation as foundational history while arranging its contemporary symbolic order according to different priorities. The founding story and the current front row no longer have to contain the same people.

8. Spain: When Victimization and Specificity Diverge

Spain provides perhaps the strongest case for testing a common defense of subgroup-specific policy: that institutional specificity simply follows differential vulnerability.

Law 4/2023 provides for both a general State Strategy for equal treatment and non-discrimination of LGTBI people (Article 10; the acronym order is the one conventional in Spanish law and public policy) and a separate State Strategy for the social inclusion of trans people (Article 52), which the law requires to prioritize positive-action measures in employment, education, health, and housing (Jefatura del Estado, 2023). The Council of Ministers approved both strategies on 22 July 2025, for 2025–2028 (Gobierno de España, 2025). No equivalent strategy for lesbians, gay men, or bisexuals exists. The trans-specific strategy is, moreover, a statutory mandate, which matters for interpretation: the specificity was written into the law itself.

The law is not silent on L and B. It guarantees lesbian women, bisexual women, and women without a partner access to assisted reproduction on equal terms (Article 16.2), and it extends non-marital filiation to couples of women by amending the Civil Registry Law. These are rights provisions rather than strategies or programs, which is consistent with the rights-saturation mechanism discussed in Section 15. Whether they should count as specific institutional infrastructure is a coding decision that affects how Spain is classified in the substitution test (Section 9).

Royal Decree 1034/2025 adds another layer (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2025). It regulates eight direct grants totaling at most €615,000, three of them to LGTBI+ entities (Table 1). Its list of fundable actions includes a full trans-specific line (Article 3.4, with seven kinds of action), a line for older LGTBI+ people (Article 3.5), and a general LGTBI+ line (Article 3.3) that contains a component on the training and empowerment of women, from a feminist perspective, against lesbophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and related forms of hatred. Lesbian-related intervention therefore appears inside a shared formulation. The largest LGTBI+ grant goes to the general federation; none of the three grantees is an LGB-specific organization.

Grantee (RD 1034/2025, Art. 7)	Profile	Maximum amount
FELGTBI+ (Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Trans, Bisexuales, Intersexuales y más)	General LGTBI+ federation	€100,000
Federación Plataforma Trans	Trans-specific	€60,000
Fundación 26 de Diciembre	Older LGTBI+ people	€30,000

Table 1. *Direct grants to LGTBI+ entities in Royal Decree 1034/2025. The same decree funds five further entities in the area of racial and ethnic equal treatment (total for all eight grants: up to €615,000). Source: Ministerio de Igualdad (2025), Article 7.*

The decree's preamble also sets out the evidence on which it relies. Drawing on a 2025 report by the FELGTBI+ federation, a civil-society source cited by the decree rather than an official statistic, it states that the principal victims of harassment are trans people and lesbian women; of discrimination, lesbian women and nonbinary people; and of physical or sexual assault, gay men and asexual people. Its stated rationale for its priorities is that trans people and older LGTBI+ people suffer, more frequently, the most serious forms of LGTBIphobic discrimination and violence. Separately, a study by the Instituto de las Mujeres, published in April 2025 with 4,362 participating women (40.1% lesbian and 59.9% bisexual), found that 81.9% had experienced violence related to their sexual orientation, predominantly verbal and psychological (physical violence 4%, sexual violence 5.6%) (Instituto de las Mujeres, 2025).

Spain therefore makes an analytically important point visible: institutional specificity does not track the victim profile that the state itself invokes in a simple, symmetric way. The preamble names lesbian women or gay men among the principal victims in each of the three categories it cites, while its dedicated lines and named trans grantee go to trans people and, separately, to older LGTBI+ people; the decree does not explain how those profiles were weighed against its stated rationale. This does not show that a trans-specific strategy is unjustified. The statutory mandate and the decree's own rationale offer reasons for it. It shows that specificity is not a simple linear function of who appears most heavily victimized in the data cited. Some populations are victims within the umbrella. Others are victims and, additionally, distinct institutional subjects (Figure 8).

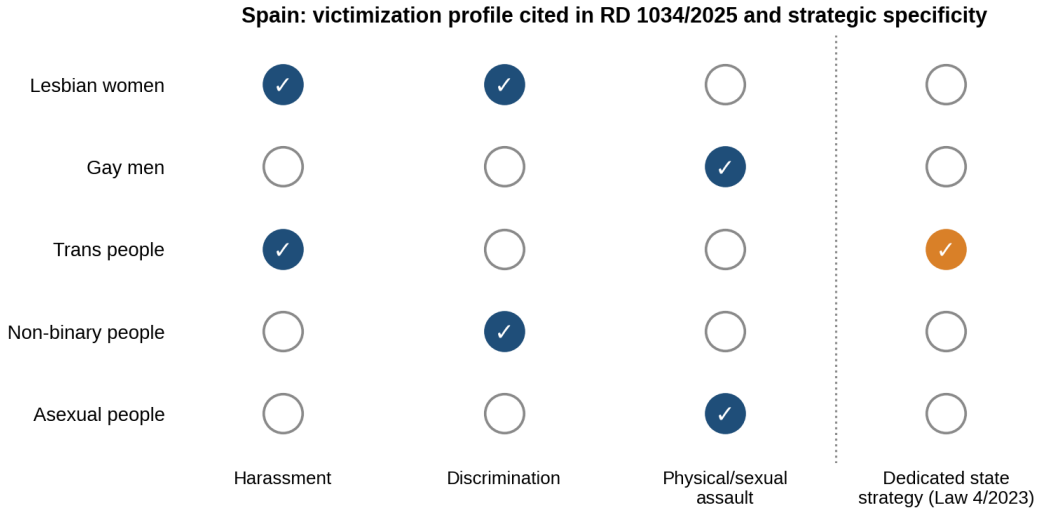


Figure 8. *Spain: groups named among the principal victims in the categories of harassment, discrimination, or physical/sexual assault cited in the preamble of Royal Decree 1034/2025, compared with the existence of a dedicated state strategy. A blank cell does not imply absence of victimization. Sources: Ministerio de Igualdad (2025); Jefatura del Estado (2023); Gobierno de España (2025).*

9. The Substitution Test

One of the simplest exercises in the comparative audit produced one of the clearest results. Seven countries were examined by asking what specific institutional infrastructure would remain if one side of the umbrella were hypothetically removed.

If all T/NB/I/2S-specific instruments were removed, non-biomedical L/G/B-specific infrastructure remained in only four of seven countries, and only in Germany could it be described as especially substantial; in several other cases it consisted primarily of historical reparations, memory, programs for older cohorts, or research. Spain retained little more than a study; Argentina, Uruguay, and Portugal retained no national LGB-specific infrastructure in the reviewed corpus. (As noted in Section 8, Spain's law also contains rights provisions specific to lesbian and bisexual women; they are not counted here as strategies or programs.)

When the test was reversed and L/G/B-specific instruments were removed, all seven countries retained specific T/NB/I/2S infrastructure: trans strategies and laws in Spain and Uruguay, gender-identity legislation in Argentina, T/NB instruments in Brazil, self-determination legislation and funding for T/I organizations in Germany, trans/intersex measures in Portugal, and Two-Spirit components in Canada (Figure 9).

The comparison is not a moral ranking, nor are all policy needs interchangeable. Institutionally, however, the asymmetry is unmistakable. The contemporary architecture survives the hypothetical loss of LGB-specific infrastructure much more easily than it survives the loss of T/NB/I/2S-specific infrastructure.

LGB can remain politically present through the general umbrella with less infrastructure of its own, while other categories appear more often as general plus specific. That is a measurable meaning of being moved to the back row.

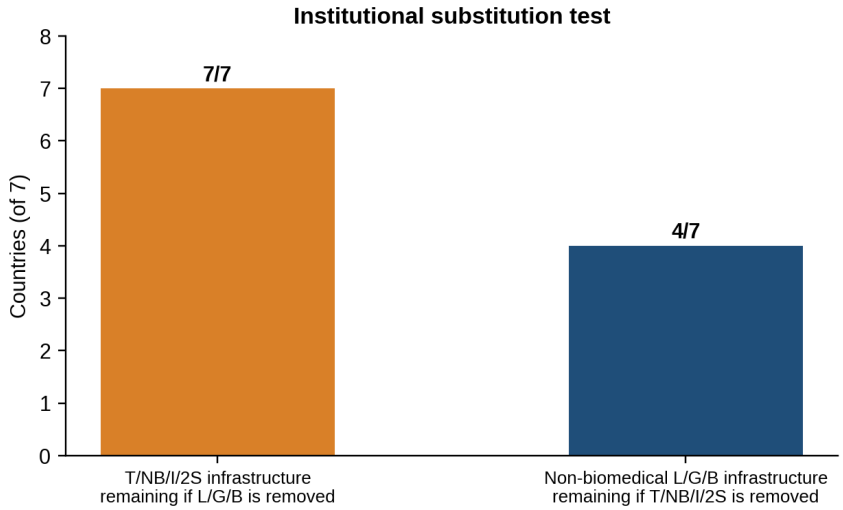


Figure 9. *Institutional substitution test across Spain, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, and Canada. The comparison is restricted to specific non-biomedical infrastructure in the reviewed corpus. Source: comparative audit of the study.*

10. Gay Men: Precise When We Become Epidemiology

The present-day institutional visibility of gay men contains another revealing pattern. A targeted search for contemporary institutional material in which gay men, GBMSM, GBHSH, *homens gays*, *schwule Männer*, or equivalent categories were the explicit subject identified 17 institutional cases between 2023 and 2026. Eleven of the 17 were linked to sexual health or to a sexual-health survey: HIV, PrEP, sexually transmitted infections, mpox, chemsex, and blood donation. The highest-level institutional appearances outside Brazil came from health agencies or ministries. Lesbian-specific material was more likely to concern visibility, violence, and culture. This is a convenience sample, not a census.

The result produces an uncomfortable but accurate formulation: gay men become diffuse as a general political subject and remarkably precise again when they become an epidemiological population. When institutions discuss representation, institutional development, diversity, or broad equality, LGBTQ+ is often sufficient. When a health authority needs to identify who should receive PrEP or an mpox vaccine, the same institutions suddenly recover an impressive capacity for categorical precision.

The issue is not that health-specific targeting is inappropriate. The point is that this is one of the domains where gay men still consistently retain a distinct institutional existence. The category did not disappear; the kind of problem that makes it administratively necessary changed. Political specificity shrinks; epidemiological specificity survives.

11. History at the Front, Policy at the Back

A broader pattern now begins to emerge. LGB continues to perform at least three important functions within the expanded movement. The first is *genealogical*: the movement's moral history still draws heavily on anti-homosexual persecution, gay liberation, lesbian activism, Stonewall, AIDS, criminalization, censorship, and marriage equality. The second is *coalitional*: lesbian, gay, and bisexual people remain part of the demographic and political mass mobilized through Pride, electoral advocacy, public campaigns, and institutional membership. The third is *nominal*: L, G, and B remain inside nearly every major acronym, however many additional characters the acronym eventually requires before it begins to resemble a Wi-Fi password.

What weakens is a fourth function: the capacity to convert one's own problems into autonomous institutional categories, to produce programs and resources that say explicitly “this is for lesbians,” “this is for gay men,” or “this is for bisexuals.” This distinction helps explain why the movement can continue to depend on LGB history and participation while simultaneously producing fewer LGB-specific programs. LGB becomes the movement's inherited capital. Its history legitimizes the whole. Its population enlarges the coalition. Its letters remain in the name. Its contemporary problems are increasingly expected to fit inside the general category.

This reading may also help explain why proposals to separate LGB politically from TIQ+ generate such strong resistance. If the expanded coalition derives part of its legitimacy from a common history, any attempt to differentiate agendas risks exposing that nominal unity can conceal structures of need, priority, and representation that are already different. This is an interpretation that goes beyond the data presented here. The question is not whether solidarity across groups should exist; it is whether solidarity requires giving up the ability to describe one's own interests.

12. Uruguay: Who Receives Specific Recognition as a Historical Victim

Uruguay offers a different version of the same issue through reparative policy, and it shows that the asymmetry did not necessarily begin as a late imported fashion. The Tarjeta Uruguay Social specifically incorporated trans people from 2012 (Presidencia de la República, 2012). Law 19.684 of 2018 created a broad set of targeted measures: public-employment and training quotas, scholarship quotas, and a reparations regime for trans people born before 31 December 1975 who suffered institutional violence or deprivation of liberty because of their gender identity, with a lifetime monthly benefit equal to three *Bases de Prestaciones y Contribuciones* and a Special Honorary Reparations Commission (Articles 10 and 11; República Oriental del Uruguay, 2018). In the comparative audit, this contrasted with Germany and Canada, where some of the major mechanisms of historical reparation were built around persecution related to homosexuality.

The political significance of a reparation regime goes beyond money. Reparation officially identifies a population as the specific historical subject of a state injustice. In Uruguay, the specific reparative subject found in the audit is trans. Gay men and lesbians persecuted by the state may be included within a broader narrative of the repression of sexual diversity, but no equivalent national reparative instrument specifically addressed to gay men or lesbians was identified in the reviewed corpus. The comparison does not turn memory into a competition among victims, but it reveals something institutionally concrete: which history receives its own name and which is absorbed into the broader narrative of sexual diversity. That difference between general memory and specific recognition is, here, written into law.

13. The Timeline Prevents an Overly Convenient Story

There is an important limit to any account in which the movement was first LGB and was later "taken over" by newer identities. Trans specificity was institutionalized very early in several countries: the United Kingdom had a transgender action plan in 2011 (United Kingdom Government Equalities Office, 2011); Portugal had a gender-identity law the same year (Law 7/2011); Argentina enacted Law 26.743 in 2012; Uruguay implemented its trans-specific social card from 2012; and Brazil expanded its gender-transition health process in 2013. Contemporary asymmetry cannot honestly be described as a universal sequence of late substitution.

That fact does not weaken the central thesis, because the thesis does not require chronological usurpation. The headline corpus shows a transformation in the place of L/G/B within institutional discourse, while the policy corpus shows that the capacity to remain specific is distributed unevenly. Both can coexist with a history in which trans policies emerged early. The relevant phenomenon is not who reached each state first, but who today still needs to be named separately.

14. Counterexamples Matter Because They Show It Was Not Inevitable

Brazil and Germany prevent this argument from becoming a universal law, and they are valuable precisely for that reason. Germany retains a comparatively substantial set of services, research, organizations, and historical reparations specifically addressed to gay men and lesbians, although a substantial part of it is tied to reparation, aging, and memory. Brazil combines an expansive LGBTQIA+ state architecture with trans and nonbinary instruments and, at the same time, maintains or creates specifically lesbian initiatives, including LesboCenso, funded through agreements with the Ministry of Women.

Stonewall in the United Kingdom provides another institutional counterexample. It currently maintains separate hubs for gay, lesbian, bi, trans, ace, QTIPOC, and disability constituencies, and has itself acknowledged that lesbian issues can be overshadowed within broader LGBTQ+ policy discussions (Stonewall, 2026).

These cases demonstrate something important: expanding the umbrella does not mechanically require the disappearance of LGB specificity. An institution can recognize new populations and still maintain dedicated lesbian and gay structures. Once that possibility exists, the absorption of LGB into general categories can no longer be presented as an unavoidable administrative consequence of inclusion. It becomes one institutional arrangement among several possible ones and, therefore, a political decision.

15. Why Did It Happen?

Several mechanisms probably operate simultaneously. The first is the completion of major LGB rights campaigns. Marriage, adoption, military service, protection from discrimination, and legal recognition consumed enormous political energy during the early years of the period studied. Once major victories were achieved, their relative weight naturally declined, and fewer new LGB-specific policies are to be expected. The sensitivity analysis confirms that this mechanism matters, but it leaves most of the decline unexplained.

The second is organizational expansion. Institutions that once represented a narrower homosexual constituency progressively expanded the populations they represent. As the coalition adds categories, the general umbrella becomes the most efficient linguistic and administrative solution, since it avoids naming every subgroup in every intervention. The cost of that efficiency is that historically central subjects can become implicit components.

The third is differential administrative need. Legal gender recognition, identity documentation, sex characteristics, certain healthcare interventions, and some forms of historical repair create policy problems that reasonably require targeted instruments. The existence of a targeted policy is therefore not automatically evidence of favoritism. The early trans-specific measures described in Section 13 also caution against treating all trans-specific institutionalization as a recent replacement phenomenon.

The fourth mechanism is harder to measure: a hierarchy of recognized vulnerability. Within certain progressive institutional cultures, some identities appear to carry a stronger presumption that their distinctiveness should retain political specificity, while gay or lesbian identity may increasingly be treated as comparatively normalized or even privileged. Spain is suggestive because its documented lesbian and gay victimization does not translate linearly into programmatic autonomy; Canada shows an explicit decision of symbolic priority in moving 2S to the front; and U.S. philanthropy shows a pronounced concentration of specific money in TGNCNBi.

That hypothesis cannot yet be causally separated from need, legal history, organizational evolution, or demographic differences. Population size, material need, and rights already won still need to be controlled more carefully. The evidence does, however, justify asking a more precise question: what mechanism decides when a population should continue to exist as a specific political subject, and when inclusion within the general category is considered sufficient?

16. The Political Meaning of the Back Row

The metaphor of the back row does not require claiming that gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals have become irrelevant, nor does it describe legal exclusion or the absolute absence of policy. The data support a more precise proposition: they matter increasingly through the collective and less frequently through themselves. Their history continues to be politically useful. Their participation continues to be necessary. Their presence continues to enlarge Pride, social legitimacy, electoral claims, and the size of the coalition.

But when the movement converts moral claims into specific programs, differentiated strategies, targeted resources, and dedicated institutional architecture, LGB is increasingly likely to remain inside the general category. This creates a peculiar political position. LGB is too central to the genealogy to be removed, too numerous to be ignored as coalition mass, and increasingly considered too normalized to require an institutional foreground of its own. The movement still needs LGB at the front when telling the story of where it came from. It needs LGB at the front much less often when deciding where its next targeted program will go.

Conclusion: Still Inside, No Longer in Front

Between 2010 and 2026, the political subject represented by major LGBT institutions changed substantially.

The strongest longitudinal result is discursive. L/G/B-specific subjects fell from roughly three quarters of thematic institutional headlines at the beginning of the period to about one twentieth at the end. An independent recoding reproduced the change. The space was filled overwhelmingly by general umbrella categories rather than by a simple replacement with trans or nonbinary subjects.

The second result is institutional. When contemporary systems choose to go beyond the umbrella and create subgroup-specific structures, policies, or funding streams, the distribution of specificity is asymmetrical. In the seven-country substitution test, T/NB/I/2S-specific infrastructure survives everywhere when L/G/B is removed; non-biomedical L/G/B-specific infrastructure does not. The third result is material. In U.S. LGBTQ philanthropy, specifically targeted TGNCNBi funding in 2024 was several times larger than

specific funding for gay/queer men and lesbians/queer women combined. Canada shows a similar pattern in a conservative coding of federally funded projects.

The fourth result is political. Spain demonstrates that subgroup-specific institutional architecture cannot simply be read off the distribution of victimization, because lesbian women and gay men appear prominently in the evidence the state itself invokes without receiving equivalent strategic autonomy, even though the trans-specific strategy rests on a statutory mandate and a stated rationale that deserve to be weighed.

The transformation is therefore best described as a shift from subject to umbrella. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals increasingly function as the historical and demographic substrate of a political subject larger than themselves. Their experiences continue to legitimate the collective, their numbers continue to enlarge it, and their history continues to explain why it exists. But the capacity to be named separately, funded separately, programmed separately, and institutionally recognized as a population requiring its own political attention is now far less evenly distributed.

LGB still provides the history. LGB still provides the crowd. Increasingly, LGB provides the umbrella. And less and less often is its own name written underneath it.

Methods and Limitations

The headline corpus is exploratory and non-probabilistic. Wayback Machine coverage is uneven, organization-period cells are small and vary in size, historical availability is not uniform, and the original coding was conducted by a single coder. The endpoint audit was added specifically to test whether the main finding depended on the original classification. It did not. Even so, it does not turn 74.5% and 5.2% into exact estimates for the whole Western movement; they are magnitudes observed in a broad but incomplete institutional corpus.

The cross-national institutional review is a documentary audit, not a complete census of every national and subnational LGBT program. “Not identified” therefore means not identified in the reviewed material, not proof of nonexistence. The policy corpus mixes different institutional forms: a law, a grant, a commission, and a campaign do not carry the same material weight. The counts are useful for identifying asymmetries of specificity and for formulating substitution tests, not for calculating how much each group “matters” in absolute terms, and the absence of a dedicated strategy does not prove absence of attention within general policies. Biomedical targeting was separated from non-biomedical institutional specificity because gay men and MSM remain highly visible in sexual-health policy.

The funding data are not equivalent across countries. The U.S. figures are published national tracking data from Funders for LGBTQ Issues. The Canadian project comparison is an author coding of the official 2025 WAGE list, not an official Canadian subgroup statistic, and it has not yet undergone a second independent coding. Its value is to suggest a test, not to settle a controversy with two bars.

The article distinguishes description from causation. The evidence supports a substantial decline in L/G/B-specific institutional discourse and a contemporary asymmetry in subgroup specificity. It does not by itself prove that any single ideological mechanism caused the shift. Rights saturation, organizational expansion, differential policy needs, and changing vulnerability hierarchies may all contribute simultaneously.

Verification of Primary Sources

On 4 October 2026, the following sources were checked against their official texts: Law 4/2023 (BOE-A-2023-5366; Articles 10, 16.2, and 52, and Final Provision 11), Royal Decree 1034/2025 (BOE-A-2025-22956; BOE no. 273, 13 November 2025; in force 14 November 2025), the Council of Ministers' approval of the two state strategies (22 July 2025), the Instituto de las Mujeres study (published 25 April 2025), and Uruguay's Law 19.684 (Articles 2 and 10 to 13 and 17). The remaining sources, including the Canadian, German, Brazilian, Portuguese, Argentine, British, and U.S. materials, were not re-verified in this edition.

Original Data and Coding

Institutional headline corpus. 389 headlines from HRC, GLAAD, Stonewall, Egale, FELGTB/FELGTBI+, FALGBT, LSVD, ILGA Portugal, Grupo Gay da Bahia, and ABGLT, reconstructed from institutional pages and Wayback Machine captures and grouped into four periods from 2010 to 2026. Each headline was coded by its principal subject.

Independent coding audit. A blind sample of 80 records, followed by all 175 headlines from 2010–2013 and 2022–2026, independently recoded using the same principal-subject framework. LGB/non-LGB agreement was 93.7% and Cohen's kappa was 0.824.

Cross-national institutional audit. Legislation, strategies, programs, grants, reparations, administrative structures, and selected organizational materials were coded by target population and by whether the instrument was general, subgroup-specific, biomedical, historical/reparative, or restrictive. The comparative corpus comprised 31 specific non-biomedical instruments (11 L/G/B-specific and 20 T/NB/I/2S-specific) in Canada, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Portugal.

Targeted sample on gay men. Search of 2023–2026 institutional appearances of “gay men,” GBHSH/GBMSM, *homens gays*, or *schwule Männer*: 17 cases, 11 linked to sexual health or a sexual-health survey.

All charts in this article were generated from the study datasets or from the external sources explicitly identified in each caption.

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Archival and Institutional Sources

Archived organization home pages and news pages were retrieved primarily through the Internet Archive Wayback Machine for the longitudinal headline and acronym analyses. The institutional sample included HRC, GLAAD, Stonewall, Egale, FELGTB/FELGTBI+, FALGBT, LSVD, ILGA Portugal, Grupo Gay da Bahia, and ABGLT.

Primary legal and policy sources consulted in the broader audit included government and legislative databases in Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, France, Italy, Sweden, Australia, and the United States, among them Argentina's Law 26.743 (2012), Portugal's Law 7/2011, Brazil's Decree 11.471/2023, and the Brazilian Ministry of Women's agreements for LesboCenso (2024–2026). The cross-national audit was designed as a comparative documentary test rather than a complete inventory of every national or subnational intervention. Where no specific instrument was identified, that absence was treated as “not identified in the reviewed corpus,” not as proof of nonexistence.