Online Safety for LGBTQ+ Young People:
Resources to Enhance Technology and Platform Responsibilities

Key Findings for Tech + Social Media Companies:

" *[LGBTQ+ young people want] separate, moderated, and safe spaces for teens ... I think their relationships to one another can be extremely helpful, as long as they are protected and given privacy and anonymity. I think young queer people need more safe spaces."*

–Latinx transgender young adult woman

44% of LGBTQ+ young people reported feeling very safe in online spaces compared to 9% of young people in person

80% of transgender and nonbinary young people disclose their gender identity online—twice as often as they do in person (40%)

Over 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ young people experienced bullying and teasing online due to their LGBTQ+ identity in the past year.

LGBTQ+ young people **prioritize platform safety**

87% value a **platform's reputation** for being LGBTQ+–friendly

74% considered **formal moderation** important

This resource guide provides key statistics from <u>our research report on LGBTQ+ young people's experiences in online spaces</u>, actionable strategies from focus groups with LGBTQ+ centers across the country, and key takeaways from discussions with LGBTQ+ young people and adult experts in the field.

Source: Price, M., Hopelab, & Born This Way Foundation (2025). "Without It, I Wouldn't Be Here Today": LGBTQ+ Young People's Experiences in Online Spaces. hopelab.org/stories/without-it-i-wouldnt-be-here

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Recommendations from LGBTQ+ Young People + Adult Experts:

Note: Adult experts included academic researchers, educators, practitioners, policy makers, and executives from LGBTQ+ community organizations.

- **Prioritize moderation and online privacy.** LGBTQ+ young people want more active and higher-quality moderation from social media platforms—screening and managing online content to ensure inclusivity without compromising their safety and privacy. Human moderators should be trained to recognize and effectively respond to online hate, while AI-driven tools must be designed to detect and remove harmful content without filtering out LGBTQ+ identities or expression.

- **Provide affirmative spaces for identity exploration.** Many LGBTQ+ young people are utilizing social media to try out new pronouns, explore their identities, and meet other young people in the LGBTQ+ community. It is important to build safer and more affirmative online spaces for LGBTQ+ young people, such as dedicated platforms and chat spaces. Online communities specifically focused on supporting LGBTQ+ young people, such as those found on Discord, have the greatest affirmative impact.

- **Promptly respond to LGBTQ+ online hate.** LGBTQ+ young people value the ability to report harmful or problematic behavior online. Immediate or near-immediate responses to these reports are necessary to ensure their concerns are taken seriously. Safe and inclusive digital spaces can be enforced through a combination of human moderation, artificial intelligence (AI), and/or gatekeeping of LGBTQ+ online discussion groups. Following up after a report is submitted—to acknowledge the concern, outline actions, and provide resources—is essential to building trust and showing LGBTQ+ young people that their safety is a priority.

- **Work collaboratively with LGBTQ+ organizations.** LGBTQ+ organizations are at the forefront of this work and are already offering safer online and in-person spaces for LGBTQ+ young people. Tech and social media companies can support their work by providing funding, seeking consultation, and compensating LGBTQ+ young people involved in these organizations for their input. Together, they can co-create anti-harassment policies that promote accurate information about LGBTQ+ topics.

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Resources for Tech + Social Media Platforms:

Read Partnership on AI's "Guidance for Inclusive AI" guides, which include best practices for developing inclusive AI and moderation systems that reduce harm to LGBTQ+ users.

Developers should consider utilizing Perspective API, a machine-learning Application Programming Interface (API) created by Google, which scores comment toxicity in real-time. This may be useful for flagging abusive language directed at LGBTQ+ users.

Social media companies should leverage CenterLink's Community Center Directory and the Human Rights Campaign's list of LGBTQ+ Professional and Student Associations to identify and partner with LGBTQ+ organizations to design policies that reflect lived experiences.

Review GLAAD's 2023 and 2024 Social Media Safety Index reports to gain insights into platform-specific safety ratings for LGBTQ+ users. These reports offer actionable recommendations for improving policies and content moderation.

Learn from LGBT Tech's expert research on how technology companies can help close the digital divide and make classroom technology safer for LGBTQ+ students. Technology companies should also support LGBT Tech's advocacy efforts grounded in these findings, including public statements and policy filings that challenge homophobic and transphobic tech governance.

Read our full report on LGBTQ+ young people's experiences in online spaces to better understand the importance of online communities for LGBTQ+ young people.

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LGBTQ+ young people turn to online platforms for resources related to mental health. And, safety matters to LGBTQ+ young people. That means:

- Trust and safety teams must listen
- Leaders in tech must prioritize the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people
- Tech and social media platforms must include LGBTQ+ young people in decision making processes and co-create policies and online spaces with the user in mind
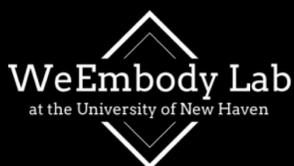
Scan for more resources and information on how to support the LGBTQ+ young people in your life.

This resource guide was created in partnership with:

HOPELAB

Bard Early College

centerlink
THE COMMUNITY OF LGBTQ CENTERS

WeEmbody Lab
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NEBRASKA EVALUATION
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