The Rainbow Ripple Effect: LGBT Advocacy and Foreign Aid*

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Abstract

What drives countries to promote sexual minority rights through foreign aid? Despite the growing focus on LGBT rights in development cooperation, donor support remains uneven. We argue that donor-based LGBT (international) NGOs drive this variation by offering expertise and advocating for investment in contested norms. Using a novel dataset on LGBT aid from 29 Western donor countries, we find robust evidence that INGOs increase donors' commitments to LGBT rights. Furthermore, we show that the influence of LGBT INGOs is amplified when governments adopt foreign policies that prioritize minority protections. Our findings challenge existing explanations centered on public opinion or domestic political ideology and demonstrate that INGOs are crucial in shaping donor strategies on rights-based aid. We contribute to the literature on civil society's influence on foreign policy, the politics of inclusive development, and the broader understanding of norm diffusion through international cooperation.

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Introduction

Despite decades of progress in human rights, millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals worldwide remain among the most marginalized, facing violence, discrimination, and even criminalization. This gap persists despite years of advocacy from civil society and international organizations to include sexual minorities in human rights and development agendas. Recently, a shift in development cooperation discourse has called for a more inclusive approach to account for the rights of sexual minorities. The historical 2011 UN Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender (UNHRC 2011) officially recognized LGBT rights in international forums, describing sexual minorities as an "invisible minority" whose rights had long been overlooked (Clinton 2011). In 2015, UN member states pledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that "no one will be left behind," and that all people, regardless of their identity, should benefit from and contribute to development (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015; Lange et al. 2022; Flores et al. 2022; Brown 2024). As a result, foreign aid allocations to LGBT rights increased from almost nonexistent in the 1990s to over $430 million annually by 2022.

Yet, translating these commitments into concrete support for LGBT rights has been uneven. Between 2012 and 2022, donors like Sweden and the United States more than tripled their contributions, while Canada and Spain nearly doubled theirs. In contrast, Italy and Germany only modestly increased their allocations, and others—such as Japan and Poland—have not funded any LGBT projects at all. What explains this variation in donor commitments? Traditional explanations, such as public support, domestic normative commitment, or government ideology, provide only partial answers. For instance, while Sweden—a highly tolerant society—ranks as a top donor, the United States, where LGBT acceptance is comparatively lower, is also among the leading supporters of LGBT aid. Meanwhile, countries like Portugal and Ireland, known for their progressive LGBT laws, contribute minimally. Additionally, even conservative governments that do not prioritize LGBT rights domestically continue to fund LGBT projects abroad (Burack 2018).

This variation is puzzling and suggests that other factors are at play in shaping LGBT aid policies. In this study, we argue that donor-based specialized civil society, particularly internationally oriented LGBT non-government organizations (INGOs), are crucial in explaining these differences. We demonstrate that not all non-state actors are equally influential in foreign policymaking. The presence of LGBT INGOs with a transnational focus increases donors' commitment to LGBT rights through foreign aid by providing expertise in areas where emerging norms are contested and by advocating for investments that can be captured by these organizations. Our analysis is the first to systematically examine the role of LGBT INGOs in shaping foreign aid policy. We collect novel data on LGBT aid for 29 Western donors between 1995 and 2022, and we find robust support for our argument. Our findings remain consistent even after accounting for alternative domestic explanations, such as public opinion and donor LGBT-specific policies. We further corroborate our causal claims using difference-in-differences estimates, and also show that the influence of LGBT INGOs in shaped by government foreign policy priorities, that institutionalize civil society engagement in aid decision-making.

Our study contributes to several key debates. First, relying on text-as-data and using a dictionary, we provide the first systematic dataset across donors and years of LGBT aid. Second, we advance the literature on the influence of donor-based INGOs in aid decision-making, distinguishing the impact of internationally oriented organizations from that of specialized domestic-oriented NGOs (Bush 2015). Third, our study adds to a broader debate around inclusive development practices that has often excluded discussion of sexual minorities. Fourth, we contribute to debates around the civil of civil society organizations in foreign aid decisions. Studies of sexual minorities have long recognized the positive role civil society mobilization has in fostering LGBT rights domestically and transnational (Ayoub 2013; Ayoub 2014; Velasco 2018; Velasco 2020). We build on this literature by demonstrating that only INGOs with an international focus are equipped with both the means and the incentives to advocate for rights-focused aid. Finally, our findings offer new insights into the drivers of human rights that have thus remained underexplored in foreign policy and aid research.

Donor-based INGOs and the Promotion of LGBT rights

How do LGBT organizations shape foreign aid policy? Existing scholarship shows that NGOs influence human rights promotion by drawing attention to violators and monitoring international compliance efforts (Risse and Ropp 2013; Creamer and Simmons 2019). However, much of this research has emphasized the punitive side of norm enforcement, focusing on "sticks" rather than "carrots"–that is, the strategic deployment of resources by donor governments to support norms in recipient countries (Murdie 2014). Furthermore, the international advocacy for sexual minority rights remains understudied, with little attention to how these organizations operate within foreign aid frameworks (Burack 2018). Finally, arguments about the influence of civil society organizations on public policy decisions, in particular foreign policy, have ignored the heterogeneity of NGOs, especially regarding the domestic/international focus (Price 2003). This leads us to ask about the role of internationally oriented NGOs in foreign aid decisions, in particular the promotion of LGBT rights.

To date, there is a handful of case studies that examine how sexual minority issues have been incorporated into foreign policy, or, in some countries, like the United States and Sweden, have moved from "pariah to priority" issues (Carlson-Rainer 2021). While these studies are important for understanding the mechanisms through which foreign policy is shaped (Burack 2018; Janoff 2022; Aylward and Brown 2020), we contribute to this emerging literature by arguing that the presence of specialized LGBT INGOs in democracies leads to greater foreign aid to promote LGBT rights abroad.

Our focus on LGBT rights derives from the puzzling fact that the increased attention directed at sexual minorities is at odds with reasons for donors to stay away from promoting their cause. For example, the social acceptance of sexual minorities, compared to other minority groups, is markedly low even among Western countries.[1] Moreover, supporting sexual minorities abroad might cause a backlash against members of this group who are, in many cases, even

[1]Data from the World Values Survey revealed that out of 9 minority groups, homosexuals are the second-most undesired group as neighbors. See section A in the Appendix.

persecuted by their own governments that support their discrimination. And, while there has been some evidence that investments in minorities increase access to jobs, better services, and more secure livelihoods for marginalized communities, leading to better development outcomes (Badgett 2014; Badgett, Park, and Flores 2018), the evidence for the case of sexual minorities remains scant.

Examples of LGBT aid projects include Spain's 2022 funding of the "Collectius LGTBIQ Center Americans Teixint Alliances" (Collectives LGTBIQ Center Americans Weaving Alliances) in Guatemala, for a total amount of $946,000. The project aims to strengthen LGBT organizations in Central America and was channeled through *Calala* and *SUDS*, two Spain-based NGOs, that guided and oversaw the implementation of project activities by five local Guatemalan NGOs. Another example of LGBT aid project is Canada's 2022 support of projects that contribute to inclusive governance, including diversity and LGBTQ2, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Also, in 2021 Germany funded in Türkiye a capacity-building project to improve the organizational and financial management skills and capacities of LGBTIQ+ NGOs in advocacy work. This initiative aimed to develop NGOs' capacity to become effective actors and enable them to participate more actively in democratic policy and decision-making processes.

Our argument focuses on the role of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that specialize in LGBT rights. These organizations have a global rather than local focus in their activities. Although the LGBT transnational activist movement dates back to before World War II (Belmonte 2021), it is only recently that LGBT INGOs have linked LGBT rights and human rights (Kollman and Waites 2009) and activists began using human rights language to advance their agenda (Valocchi 1999). These organizations lobby both their own governments (O'Flaherty and Fisher 2008) and international organizations (Baisley 2016).

Scholars have long studied civil society organizations as key promoters of marginalized communities (Risse and Ropp 2013; Simmons 2009). Because it is difficult to define and measure sexual and gender minorities, systematic research on how civil society shapes LGBT rights

around the world is more scarce and focuses largely on the role of INGOs in countries where LGBT rights are repressed (Ayoub 2013; Velasco 2020). To date, however, little attention has been paid to the link between donor-based LGBT organizations and government decisions to support sexual and gender minorities in development cooperation. We argue that donor-based, specialized LGBT INGOs are important drivers for the inclusion of LGBT people in development cooperation. Our argument builds on existing research on how civil society shapes foreign policy (Price 2003; Risse and Ropp 2013). First, these organizations can leverage their moral authority to raise public awareness of human rights issues, which, in turn, motivates a more attentive public to increase domestic pressure and demand for greater government support of the issues (Dasandi et al. 2022; Heinrich, Kobayashi, and Bryant 2016; Hurst, Tidwell, and Hawkins 2017; Milner and Tingley 2013). LGBT INGOs can shape the public narrative around LGBT rights and the role of donors in promoting LGBT rights through framing tactics (OutRight 2021). For example, INGOs can frame the issue of sexual minorities as a matter of international human rights, social justice, or even national security (by highlighting the vulnerability of LGBT communities to extremism). Other research has shown that naming and shaming of repressive regimes in national news influences government decisions to channel foreign aid support through the recipient government (Dietrich and Murdie 2017; Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers 2000).

Second, INGOs pursue institutional advocacy that allows them to influence policy in institutions that initiate, prepare, legislate, or execute policy (Lang 2014). This form of advocacy is less public and structured around meetings and interactions between civil society organizations and legislators, government officials, or their representatives. During these meetings, advocates can urge that issues get prioritized in foreign policy-decision-making (Carpenter 2011). For example, LGBT INGOs have lobbied Western governments to report on discrimination against sexual minorities as a distinct human rights abuse in their annual human rights reports, which then became part of their countries' policies. Institutional advocacy also serves to identify insider allies or instrumental leaders who choose to champion minority issues in foreign policy making and commit to pushing them into the bureaucracy, resource allocation, and foreign

policy strategy. As Carlson-Rainer (2021) points out, the inclusion of LGBT rights in US foreign policy might have never advanced as far without champions such as then State Secretary Clinton who launched the Global Equality Fund and enforced anti-discrimination rules within the State Department, among other LGBT initiatives. Clinton herself credits LGBT civil society and activists, such for example, the Human Rights Campaign–one of the biggest US LGBT organizations–as pivotal actors that have shaped her policy positions on LGBT issues (Ennis 2016). Compared to public campaigns, institutional advocacy is more cost-effective than public campaigns (Carlson-Rainer 2021). It is also less risky insofar as it is less likely to trigger counter-mobilization among members of the domestic public that oppose LGBT rights in the donor country (Snyder 2020). Public campaigns by LGBT NGOs that condemn the repression of sexual minorities abroad and demand their own governments to take action against the repressive regime can have unintended, negative consequences. For example, Western condemnation of the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda, alongside foreign aid cuts that aimed to pressure President Museveni's government into revoking the bill, produced a defiant reaction among Ugandans, turning the bill into a symbol of national resistance against Western shaming and sanction tactics that further entrenched homophobia (Englander 2011; Carlson-Rainer 2021).

Third, INGOs can impact policy through the provisions of specialized, local knowledge, and expertise in the implementation of aid (Wong 2012; Bush 2015; Cho 2024). This is particularly important in an issue area where even basic data about sexual minorities is lacking and little knowledge and evidence exists about what works best to promote their interests. Compared to development practitioners who often lack detailed knowledge on sexual minority issues, LGBT INGOs know about the lives and challenges faced by sexual minorities in developing countries, many of which are less progressive and outright hostile towards sexual minorities. They know organizations with whom to partner and who could deliver aid. They are also likely to anticipate when LGBT rights issues will lead to a backlash.

For donor governments, developing expertise on issues related to sexual minorities or other new and controversial topics is often costly and inefficient. It requires considerable resources to

stay informed about emerging issues, especially given the diverse social, cultural, and political contexts of recipient countries. Government agencies may struggle to allocate the necessary time and budget to build and maintain this specialized knowledge. Consequently, they might find it difficult to respond effectively to new developments or to tailor their policies and programs to the specific needs of different regions. Additionally, donor specialization can contribute to aid fragmentation (Klingebiel, Mahn, and Negre 2016) and lead to high transaction costs for both donors and recipients, strain bureaucracies (e.g., by 'poaching' or overburdening government officials), and create inefficiencies such as duplication of efforts among donors or gaps in coverage. These issues ultimately result in poorer development outcomes (McKee et al. 2019).

Specialized external knowledge, like the one provided by LGBT INGOs, allows aid officials to understand policy options' risks and benefits. It also helps them target aid projects so that they, given the recipient country's social and cultural context, are more likely to come to fruition and are less likely to produce backlash that may reinforce discrimination and inequality in local power structures. Well-designed and sensibly targeted projects are also more likely to create trust and buy-in from the local community. Finally, civil society has accumulated expertise in the delivery of foreign aid projects and is familiar with aid architecture and rules (Cooley and Ron 2002; Dietrich 2021). Donor-based LGBT INGOs often have a record of working with LGBT groups, communities, or networks in the Global South. In 2010, for example, the Norwegian Organization for Sexual and Gender Diversity invited the Nepali Same-Sex Marriage Committee to strengthen its knowledge base on legalizing gender-neutral marriage legislation. It also used visits by Nepali LGBT advocates to share knowledge and expertise on the issue with leaders in Norwegian society. The Norwegian government also considers the organization a key ally when seeking reliable and efficient partners to implement LGBT aid projects abroad.

We expect that the association between donor-based LGBT INGOs and LGBT aid should be driven by two (related) mechanisms, including targeted institutional advocacy and information provision. These two mechanisms create a reinforcing cycle that strengthens a donor country's commitment to LGBT rights. We now illustrate how donor-based LGBT NGOs have

shaped LGBT aid in Sweden and the United States, two countries that are a good pair to compare on foreign aid and minority rights (Bush and Zetterberg 2021). We selected the two countries because their donor-based LGBT NGOs have a global reputation for being leaders in promoting LGBT aid. At the same time, Sweden differs from the United States insofar as public attitudes towards LGBT rights are more contested in the United States. In 2022, the World Values Survey reported that 38% of US respondents did not want to have homosexuals as neighbors, compared to only 8% of Swedish respondents.

Sweden. Over the years, Swedish LGBT NGOs have gradually developed and increased their efforts to prioritize LGBT rights in Swedish development cooperation. RFSL and RFSU are the most visible actors but have been joined by smaller LGBT NGOs. To catalyze broader advocacy efforts by other Swedish LGBT NGOs, the RFSL produces guidance on how to best navigate institutional advocacy for the rights of sexual minorities in Swedish development cooperation and abroad (Piehl and Lenke 2018). Swedish LGBT NGOs shape decision-making through institutionalized advocacy, emphasizing regular, ongoing interactions and exchanging ideas with political leaders in government, relevant agencies, and parliament. RFSL's international advocacy strategy includes "a dialogue with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to share its expertise for increased inclusion and prioritization of LGBTQI rights" (RSFL n.d.). These meetings allow LGBT NGOs to educate leaders on the state of sexual minorities and to persuade them to attribute greater importance to their protection on Sweden's foreign policy agenda (Carlson-Rainer 2021).

Swedish LGBT NGOs have played a significant role in the expansion of LGBT initiatives over the years. Before the mid-2000s, SIDA had only a limited number of LGBT-related projects. In 2005, the Swedish government began to address these issues by publishing studies on the role of LGBT in development (Samelius and Wågberg 2005). Although its 2005 gender equality policy briefly mentioned sexual orientation, it lacked substantial discussion of gender identity (SIDA 2005). Over time, however, the Swedish government has released several inventories of its LGBT-related work.

A turning point came in 2006 when SIDA, in close collaboration with Sweden's largest LGBT NGO, the *Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas, transpersoners, queeras och intersexpersoners rättigheter* (RFSL), adopted an Action Plan on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This plan led to a significant increase in LGBT initiatives in the following years (Nilsson, Lundholm, and Vågberg 2013, p. 7). According to Marie Manson, former International Director of RFSL and liaison with SIDA, RFSL and other LGBT NGOs contributed crucial expertise and concrete proposals that shaped this inclusion plan.[2]

Further, Swedish LGBT NGOs have contributed to a greater knowledge base and expertise of SIDA officials on the issue across different units and departments in the agency. According to a 2014 SIDA report, frequent interactions and exchanges have contributed to a change in attitudes toward LGBT rights among SIDA officials. While, initially, LGBT rights were broadly viewed as too difficult and a low-priority area in development cooperation, most SIDA officials now support LGBT rights to feature prominently in Swedish aid (Nilsson, Lundholm, and Vågberg 2013, p. 27).[3] This shift was associated with a marked increase from 28 Sida LGBT initiatives by 2009 to over 60 initiatives by 2014 (Nilsson, Lundholm, and Vågberg 2013, p. 17).

Over time Swedish, LGBT NGOs have also become regular participants in SIDA deliberations that affect policies and (thematic, regional, and country) strategies that guide Swedish development cooperation and have pushed for the inclusion of LGBT issues in more of them over time. By 2014, a SIDA evaluation had already reported more than a doubling of LGBT issues explicitly addressed in SIDA policy documents (SIDA 2014). At the same time, Swedish LGBT NGOs have been crucial providers of knowledge and capacity about where and how to promote LGBT rights abroad. Because LGBT rights are sensitive and controversial, officials at SIDA and Swedish embassies abroad have, over the years, demanded more training on LGBT rights by Swedish LGBT NGOs (Nilsson, Lundholm, and Vågberg 2013, p. 27). In 2021, Brigitta

[2]See Blog der Hirschfeld-Eddy-Stiftung.

[3]For many years, the issue of sexual minorities has been discussed exclusively in the context of health-related aid projects that target sexually transmitted diseases. However, the RFSL and RFSU advocated that sexual minorities become part of a more comprehensive human rights approach where LGBT rights become integrated as a theme in broader SIDA programs and projects (Nilsson, Lundholm, and Vågberg 2013, p. 28)

Weihahr, a SIDA official working on democracy promotion, with deep knowledge of LGBT issues in development cooperation, suggested that, before 2005, sexual minorities were integrated into aid projects on HIV prevention. But, thanks to "intense advocacy" by established and newer Swedish LGBT NGOs, development cooperation now addresses concerns of sexual minorities.[4] Examples of Swedish LGBT aid projects include, for example, a 2011 grant titled "HBT activist pride," which supported activities organized by local LGBT advocates in Iraq. A 2021 grant to *The AIDs and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa* was also funded by SIDA to support the project titled "My body is not a democracy" that aimed at contributing to the removal of legal, policy, and social barriers to the protection of the rights to bodily autonomy and integrity for all and to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights for LGBTI persons.

Today, SIDA has become a leader in promoting LGBTI rights in the donor community. Together with its LGBT NGOs, SIDA has organized meetings with other bilateral aid agencies on LGBT rights since 2010 that have produced recommendations and follow-up meetings.

United States. The US LGBT movement has shaped US foreign aid policy across different administrations. Compared to Sweden, where social acceptance of sexual minorities is relatively high, LGBT rights have been more contentious and divisive in the United States, requiring LGBT NGOs to coordinate to strengthen their visibility and influence, as is the case through the Council for Global Equality (CGE)–a coalition of US-based NGOs that champion "a clear U.S. voice for the human rights of LGBTQI+ communities around the world."[5] As in Sweden, US LGBT NGOs promote their agenda for US foreign policy largely through institutionalized advocacy. For example, Outright International and the Human Rights Campaign, among other LGBT NGOs, persistently and successfully encouraged government officials to include and globally monitor LGBT rights as a separate human rights category in the State Department's annual human rights report. Official acknowledgment and reporting of LGBT rights form a central pillar of LGBT advocacy insofar as it creates regularly updated information about the living conditions of sexual minorities worldwide. It also increases interactions between LGBT

[4]See Blog der Hirschfeld-Eddy-Stiftung.
[5]See Council for Global Equality.

NGOs and political leaders insofar as these knowledge gains require the government to acquire competency on this topic and to produce responses and policies based on the input and expertise of LGBT organizations (Carlson-Rainer 2021, p. 61). Crediting LGBT NGOs as a main driving force, the US government, during Hillary Clinton's tenure as State Secretary, launched an LGBTI-inclusive international development agenda that required that US diplomacy and foreign aid promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons, as instructed by the 2011 presidential memorandum.[6]

In 2014, USAID launched an LGBT Vision for Action, which guides USAID's commitment to champion sexual minorities as part of a coordinated, whole-of-U.S. government approach. It does so by elevating US LGBT NGOs to crucial partners in LGBT rights promotion and institutionalizing interaction and knowledge exchange between LGBT advocates and USAID officials (USAID 2022). While the Vision fell short of producing a formal government policy, it led to a series of bureaucratic and funding changes that inscribe LGBT issues and rights in US development cooperation. These include, for example, explicit mentions of sexual minorities in USAID country, and regional and thematic strategies. Traditionally, the main channel for US aid to reach sexual minorities had been through HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, or through human rights assistance more broadly. By 2022, the number of country strategies that consider sexual minorities had gone up markedly, from ten to 17; and there was a clear upward trend in funding for LGBT initiatives abroad, nearly tripling in amounts (USAID 2022). During this period, interactions and knowledge exchange between LGBT NGOs and USAID officials were frequent, adding to familiarity and competence with the topic and listening to LGBT NGO leaders' views on sensible LGBT policy and what works best in supporting this vulnerable community. Importantly, USAID LGBT programming and its implementation revolves around expertise and input provided by LGBT NGOs.

In 2021, President Biden signed a memo that committed US government agencies to

[6]Executive Office of the President, "Presidential Memorandum – International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons," Press release, December 6, 2011, available here.

"consider the impact of programs funded by the Federal Government on human rights, including the rights of LGBT people, when making funding decisions, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law" (White House 2021). In 2023, USAID published its first *LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy*, which was drafted in close consultation with the CGE and which formalizes intense collaboration between USAID and US LGBT NGOs through institutional directives that require engagement, consultation and exchange with LGBT NGOs for mapping and analysis of country conditions and cultural contexts (USAID 2022). A prominent example of collaboration includes the Alliance for Global Equality, a five-year program developed in partnership with OutRight International and the Victory Institute that aims to strengthen global LGBT movements (USAID 2023). The drafting of Biden's memo and the 2023 USAID policy resulted from intensive consultation with the CGE on how to strengthen USAID's commitment to supporting the rights of sexual minorities. At the same time, conservative US interest groups and politicians have counter-mobilized. In 2023, for example, U.S. Congressman Matt Gaetz (R-FL) introduced a bill that would abolish USAID because it promoted LGBT rights around the world. The bill noted that USAID "operates several 'capacity building' programs abroad and uses these programs to spread a perverse ideology that is antithetical to (a) functioning, well-ordered society" and "aims to identify and address 'restrictive gender norms and inequalities ... to foster the sustainability of results'" (Lavers 2023). Unlike in Sweden, LGBT rights remain hotly contested in the United States. Compared to less controversial human rights, the promotion of LGBT rights represents a more risky endeavor for governments and thus requires persistent and strategic institutional advocacy by US LGBT INGOs (Carlson-Rainer 2021). However, US LGBT INGOs have positively affected LGBT funding and bureaucratic reforms that ensure continued targeted support.

US aid supports a wide variety of LGBT activities and projects. Examples of them include the 2020 project implemented by the Tunisian Association for Euro-Mediterranean Studies in Tunisia that had the objective of strengthening the advocacy skills of LGBT civil society organizations in the country. USAID also works to promote LGBT rights through health-related

projects, as was the case in Indonesia in 2016 when it assisted the country's Ministry of Health to be able to continue its assistance to civil society organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of the strategic use of antiretrovirals and to expand the capacity of CSOs to reach a greater number of key populations.

In both Sweden and the United States, the number of LGBT INGOs has increased over the years. As their numbers increase, we expect them to better coordinate and form coalitions with other like-minded NGOs to amplify their advocacy and expertise for the promotion of LGBT rights in development cooperation (Carpenter 2014). A larger number of LGBT INGOs also provides a wider range of potential partners for governments, allowing them to select NGOs with the most relevant expertise and experience for specific aid projects. We thus theorize that more LGBT INGOs in donor countries lead to greater levels of funding. This leads us to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *More donor-based LGBT INGOs are associated with more LGBT aid.*

Further, we expect the impact of LGBT INGOs on aid allocation to be more salient when governments have actual policies in place that prioritize support for minorities. Feminist foreign policy (FFP),[7] for example, claims to prioritize human security over state and national security and, by 2022, has been adopted by six donor countries including Sweden, Canada, France, Spain, Germany, and Luxembourg. Our choice of using FFP as a measure of foreign policy priority on minorities relies on the fact that, unlike many domestic policies directed at the domestic level, this policy uniquely operates at the international level, emphasizing human security over traditional concerns of state or national security.

In the context of international development, FFP does not only recognize and protect rights but it also funds projects that empower other minorities to claim their rights. While feminist foreign policies often share a primary focus on women and girls, they also seek to dismantle structures that reproduce all forms of exclusion, discrimination, and injustice faced

[7] FFP is founded on a feminist critique of patriarchal structures that underlie the power hierarchy between the sexes and, beyond that, multiple forms of discrimination and oppression (Amnon and Brummer 2024).

by sexual minorities (Amnon and Brummer 2024, p. 12). For example, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), launched in June 2017, marks the first time that sexual orientation and gender identity have been mentioned in an overarching Canadian aid policy. The inclusion of LGBT in the policy document sent an important signal to domestic and international development partners on the need to consider these sources of discrimination and marginalization (Aylward and Brown 2020). FFPs are created, in part, to produce more coherent frameworks that include sexual minorities across foreign policy areas, including foreign aid.

Finally, FFPs amplify civil society perspectives in foreign policy by requiring that CSOs be consulted for decision-making as well as program design and implementation (Foster and Markham 2024, p. 27). FFPs are in place to incentivize and guide aid officials on how to treat minorities' rights, including those of sexual minorities, as part of their responsibilities to advance human rights, which become central to foreign policy.

We expect feminist foreign policies to have budgetary implications insofar as additional resources are made available for projects targeting women and other minorities, including sexual minorities.[8] Second, we expect aid officials under FFP to be more willing to undertake LGBT projects that, given their sensitive nature, would normally be considered too complicated or risky than aid officials that are not as explicitly directed to help minorities, as is the case with FFP (Foster and Markham 2009). Finally, we expect aid officials to be more proactive and intentional about including LGBT INGOs in their programming and throughout the project cycle as aid officials are not explicitly directed to do so. This leads us us to our second, conditional hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *A greater number of LGBT INGOs in donor countries leads to greater levels of LGBT aid in donor countries that have FFPs than in countries that do not have FFPs.*

Finally, we spell out the scope conditions for our argument. Our theory applies to traditional OECD DAC donor governments receptive to civil society influence. We do not expect

[8]For studies on determinants of broader gender targeting in foreign aid refer to by Dietrich, Donno, et al. (2025), Bau et al. (2025a), and Bau et al. (2025b).

LGBT NGOs to be able to influence authoritarian donors or authoritarian governments to seek NGO advice to implement aid programs. Moreover, our theory applies to LGBT NGOs that are sufficiently capable of mobilizing tangible and intangible resources to influence donor decisions about how to spend foreign aid. We do not expect smaller and grassroots organizations to be able to shape foreign aid priorities.

Research Design

LGBT Aid

To identify projects supporting sexual minorities, we analyzed text data from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Creditor Reporting System (CRS) project-level dataset. Text-based reporting across aid projects includes variables that capture project titles and short and long project descriptions. Using a keyword search approach we selected projects that contain at least one term related to sexual minorities in the title or short and long descriptions. Table 1 lists our dictionary's terms. Because OECD-CRS reporting can be done in national donor languages, the dictionary was translated and implemented across 22 languages.[9]

One concern is the risk of over-counting LGBT projects. We argue, however, that the core aspects of projects are captured given the brevity of titles and descriptions in our corpus. Project titles and short descriptions average 7.5 and 6.6 words, respectively, while long descriptions average 50.9 words.[10] Because these texts are concise, they highlight the key issues a project addresses. Another concern is the potential omission of LGBT projects that lack any of the keywords in our dictionary. Yet, it is difficult to discuss sexual orientation and gender identity without using these terms. Moreover, the OECD's strict reporting guidelines prevent donors from misrepresenting their aid efforts.

[9] We used dictionaries in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Icelandic, Czech, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovak, and Slovenian.

[10] See section B.2 in the Appendix for more information on the length of project titles and descriptions and their similarity in distribution to non-LGBT projects.

asexual	lesbian	bisexual	gay identit*
gender identity	homophobia	homosex*	intersex
lgbt*	anti-gay	queer	same-sex
same sex	sexual minority	sexual identity	sexual orientation
transphob*	transgender	self-identifying	sexual prejudice

Table 1: Dictionary of LGBT keywords used to identify LGBT projects.

Applying this methodology, we identified 6,823 projects supporting sexual minorities.[11] We then aggregated these projects at two levels of analysis: the donor-year, and the donor-recipient-year. For each level, we create a sum of total commitments in constant US dollars. For the donor-year analysis, we included both bilateral and multilateral aid, while in the donor-recipient-year analysis, we included only bilateral projects. Figure A.2 shows the percentage of US dollars committed each year coded as LGBT projects between 1995 and 2022. The trend is positive, indicating that the issue area of sexual minorities has become increasingly important in development cooperation. Since 1995, donors have committed more than $5 billion (in USD constant), with the lion's share of funding being committed after 2010. This amount is similar to the total amount of aid devoted to sectors like statistical and capacity building ($5.078 billion), environmental research ($5.5 billion), and ending violence against women and girls ($4.4 billion) during the same period. Descriptive figures of donors and recipients can be found in section B in the Appendix.

To check whether our measurement of LGBT aid captures projects related to sexual minorities, we validated our data with the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) report (Global Philanthropy Project 2022). The GPP is a collaboration of funders and philanthropic advisors working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of sexual minorities. The GPP report uses donors' self-reported data to show global aid trends toward sexual minorities. We extracted bilateral donors' data from the 2019/2020 report and compared it with ours. Because GPP reports on a biannual basis, we collapsed our data in the two-year periods

[11] Of those, 6,569 projects were identified only with English keywords, denoting the high level of reliance on this language in OECD-DAC reporting.

GPP has information on, 2017-2018 and 2019-2020. Figure 1 plots the positive relationship between GPP reported data and ours. Our numbers of LGBT aid for GPP selected donors sums to $331 million USD while GPP's sums to $214 million. This suggests that our classification of LGBT aid is more comprehensive than the data available by specialized organizations. We also analyzed whether our data predicts GPP numbers at the donor-year level. A bivariate regression shows that our data explains 49% of the variation in GPP reported figures.[12]

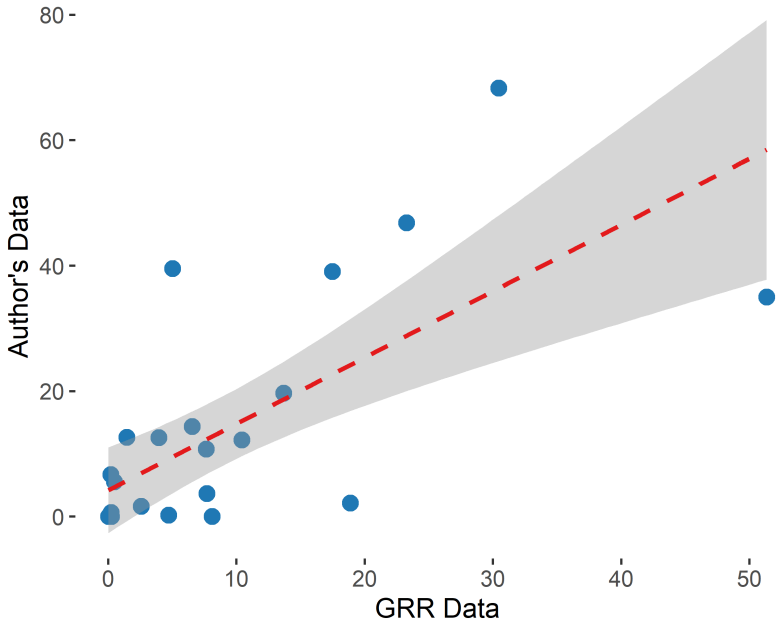
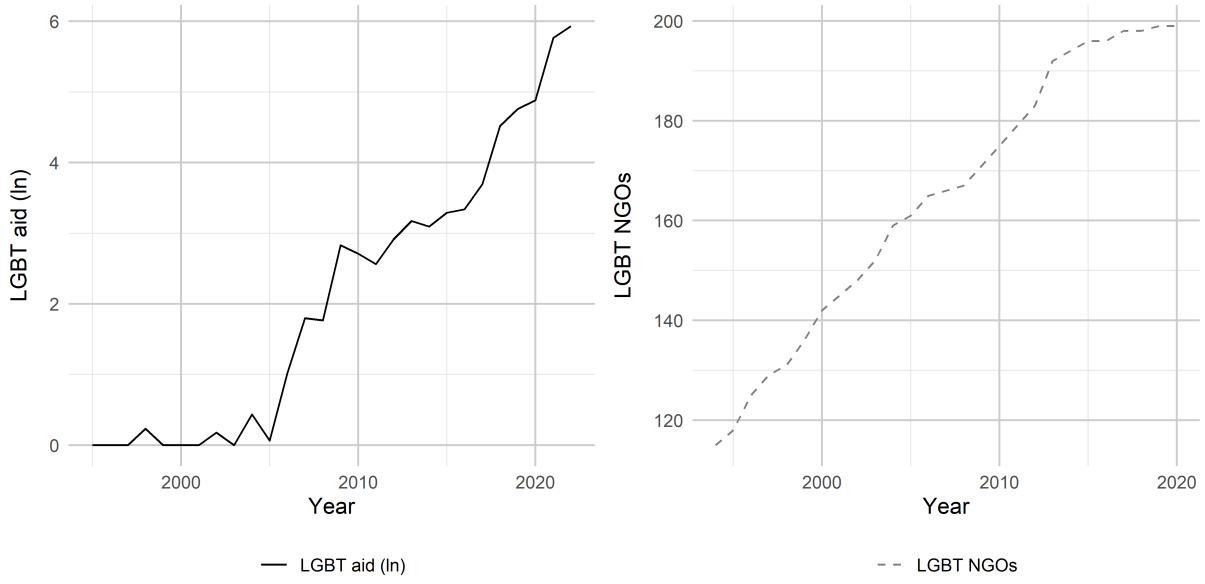


Figure 1: Relationship between GPP's data and author's data.

Donor-based LGBT INGOs

We use data from the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO) to capture the global presence of INGOs specializing in sexual minority rights. We counted the number of INGOs specializing in LGBT rights headquartered in each country of the world in any given year. To do so, we retrieved the headquarters location and founding year of INGOs in the "Homosexual Relationships" or "Sex-Related Questions" second-order subject in the Yearbook of International

[12]See Table A.1 in the Appendix.



(a) LGBT aid). (b) LGBT INGOs.

Figure 2: Evolution of total LGBT aid and donor-based LGBT INGOs, by year.

Organizations. The geographic distribution of LGBT INGOs is mapped in Figure A.6 in the Appendix. The data reveals a dramatic rise in the number of such INGOs since the late 20th century. According to the Yearbook, 118 international INGOs were working on these rights in 1995. By 2020, this number increased by 69% to 199 organizations.[13] We then used a subset of this data: those organizations based in an OECD-DAC donor, and we identified the total number of LGBT INGOs based in each donor country and each year between 1994 and 2022. Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of LGBT aid and donor-based LGBT NGOs in OECD-DAC donors and the total amount of LGBT aid allocated between 1995 and 2022.

We also test for donors' policy priorities by looking at whether a government has declared to have a feminist foreign policy. We consider a government to have a feminist foreign policy (FFP) when they adopt guidelines or handbooks to guide their external action. In particular, a FFP aims at promoting gender-related issues in other countries. At a minimum, this measure captures a government's sensitivity to the rights of minorities. We use the UN Women (2022)

[13]INGO growth rates have leveled off considerably over the last decade (Bush and Hadden 2019).

list of countries with feminist foreign policies.

Alternative Explanations

We identify alternative explanations to our theory. Cross-donor differences in LGBT aid might result from variations in a donor's domestic acceptance of LGBT rights. The relationship between domestic policy changes and international aid dynamics towards sexual minorities (LGBT rights) can be understood through the lens of policy diffusion. When a country undergoes significant domestic policy transformations that expand the rights of sexual minorities, it often reflects a broader ideological commitment to human rights that can extend into its foreign policy agenda. The case of the US State Department under Hillary Clinton exemplifies this mechanism. In 2009, Clinton initiated a comprehensive review of the departmental policies on domestic partner benefits. This directive led to the implementation of policies that recognized and extended benefits to same-sex domestic partners, signaling a significant shift in the institutional stance towards sexual minorities within the US government (Burack 2018, p. 36). This internal policy evolution created a foundation for the US to advocate more robustly for LGBT rights on the global stage.

The policy argument proposes that domestic policy shifts can serve as both a precursor and a catalyst for international advocacy. When a nation aligns its internal policies with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, it bolsters its credibility and moral authority in promoting similar values abroad (Brysk 2009). Consequently, donor countries that enact progressive domestic policies regarding sexual minorities are more likely to increase their aid aimed at supporting LGBT rights internationally. Thus, the influence of domestic policy changes can potentially affect changes in aid for sexual minorities.

We build upon and expand the LGBT Policy Index by Pauselli (2023). This index measures the degree to which a state grants rights to, or discriminates against, LGBT people. Higher index values indicate more progressive laws for LGBT rights. Values range from -3.5 (Malaysia, Mauritania, and Saudi Arabia in multiple years) to 9 (Malta between 2017 and

2020). In the past 25 years, there has been an expansion of protections toward sexual minorities, aligned with an increased importance of this topic in development cooperation. Figure A.7a in the Appendix shows how this index has evolved globally over time. The expectation is that donors with more expansive legislation toward sexual minorities will be more supportive of promoting LGBT rights via foreign aid.

We also consider whether broader domestic acceptance of a norm comes from society's tolerance rather than policy changes. Thus, we include a measure of a society's tolerance toward sexual minorities through public opinion data. We use Woo et al. (2023)'s latent measure of tolerance to homosexuality in the mass public across countries and over time. This variable addresses the alternative argument that more expansive aid budgets to promote LGBT rights are a function of society's more tolerant attitudes.

Controls

We draw on the literature on the domestic politics of aid allocation to control for variables that have been associated with decisions about levels of aid. We include donor GDP to control for the size of donor economies as well as economic factors including donor inflation and unemployment. We would expect inflation and unemployment increases to negatively affect overall aid levels (Abbott and Jones 2021), including projects supporting sexual minorities abroad.

Our models include a series of political variables that have been studied in research on the domestic politics of aid policy. These include, for example, political party ideology for which one may expect left-leaning parties to be more likely to champion aid (Thérien and Noël 2000; Greene and Licht 2018). We incorporate a specific measure from the VDem data set that measures a political party's stance on LGBT social equality Lindberg et al. (2022). The variable captures the level of support a party offers to LGBT equality, with higher values indicating greater support. We identified the governing party in the executive in each country-year observation and used its corresponding score on the LGBT social equality index. Although parties in power in some donors have usually been LGBT-friendly, there is significant variation *within* donors over time.

Figure A.8a in the Appendix shows the evolution of this measure in four OECD-DAC countries. We also include in some model specifications whether the head of government has a rightist economic ideology (Herre 2022).

We control for donor countries' liberal democracy index, how religious a government is, the level of participation of civil society in government's decisions, donor's GDP, and population size from the V-Dem project (Coppedge et al. 2019). We consider whether economic hardship in donor countries affects the level of aid commitment by including the unemployment rate from the International Labor Organization (World Development Indicators). We also include several control variables that help us account for broader trends in human rights aid and donor capacity, including levels of human rights aid (but excluding those related to sexual minorities), measured in constant US dollars, and the total number of donor-based human rights INGOs. Finally, we also include a measure of the number of LGBT NGOs with a domestic focus.[14] Descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis are presented in Table A.3 in the Appendix. Figure A.9 in the Appendix shows the matrix correlation between all variables.

Results

We estimate a set of linear regression models on the total amount of committed LGBT aid. Our main set of analyses is conducted at the donor-year level. We include one-year lags for all time-variant independent variables and include donor and year-fixed effects. The results are similar if we do not include donor fixed-effects (see section C.1 in the Appendix). All models report robust standard errors clustered at the donor level.

Which donors commit greater levels of support to sexual minorities abroad? As we hypothesize, the more donor-based LGBT NGOs, the more LGBT aid a donor commits to. Table 2 summarizes the results of models predicting the total amount of LGBT aid committed by donor countries in constant US dollars. The dependent variable is logged to address the

[14] Data on domestic-focus LGBT NGOs was retrieved from donor countries' Wikipedia sites on the list of LGBT organizations. Data retrieved on July 5th, 2024.

skewed distribution of the data. Subsection C.1 in the Appendix reports similar results with the unlogged dependent variable.

We begin with our base model, which only includes the number of donor-based LGBT INGOs, the general level of protections toward sexual minorities in the donor country (*LGBT Policy*), the level of tolerance to homosexuality in the donor's society (*Societal Tolerance*), and the stance of the donor's party in power towards the LGBT community (*Party LGBT Support*), and the logged amount in USD committed to non-LGBT human rights projects. Models 2-5 include the donor's political regime, population, and logged GDP. Models 3-5 add the total number of donor-based (non-LGBT) Human Rights INGOs and the level of religiosity of the donor's government. In Models 4-5, we include the level of participation of civil society organizations in government decisions (*CS Participation*). Finally, Model 5 incorporates controls for whether the donor's government has a rightist ideology and the level of unemployment in the donor's economy.

The findings suggest a positive association between donor-based international NGOs focused on sexual minority rights and the donor's development cooperation efforts toward LGBT issues. This relationship is statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.001$ level in all models. The more LGBT INGOs based in a donor country, the more resources are directed toward sexual minorities in the donor's aid portfolio. Since the dependent variable is in a logarithmic scale, a word on interpretation of the substantive relationship is needed. Models from Table 2 suggest that one extra donor-based LGBT INGO predicts an increase of LGBT aid between 12% and 18%.[15] This is a significant increase in the level of foreign aid.

As expected, the donor's domestic level of support for sexual minorities is positively correlated with LGBT aid. As donors pass more progressive laws toward sexual minorities, they tend to allocate more resources to promote LGBT rights overseas. The governing party's LGBT social equality stance does not predict changes in LGBT aid. If anything, it seems that political parties that are more positive toward sexual minorities in their discourse commit lower amounts

[15]Specifically, the predicted percentage change in each model is 12% (Model 1), 13% (Model 2), and 18% (Models 3-5).

of aid to promote LGBT rights overseas. However, society's tolerance for sexual diversity seems to affect how active donors are in promoting the rights of sexual minorities in recipient countries: the more tolerant a donor's society is, the more LGBT aid is committed. This relationship is statistically significant in all models.

As for other control variables, domestic LGBT NGOs do not seem to be correlated with LGBT aid. This results is relevant in showing that not all NGOs can equally affect foreign policy decisions. A donor's political regime is not correlated with LGBT aid in Model 2, and weakly correlated in Models 3-4. If anything, it seems that more liberal democracies tend to spend fewer resources on LGBT aid (Model 5). Moreover, the larger the donor's economy size, the more LGBT aid a donor commits to, though this relationship loses its statistical significance in Model 5. As expected, more religious-based governments are less likely to promote LGBT rights through foreign aid. Additionally, the total number of donor-based human rights INGOs is *negatively* correlated with fewer resources for LGBT rights. This suggests that there might be some competition for donor's priorities and resources in the civil society sphere. More importantly, it suggests that our measure of donor-based INGOs does not capture a broader human rights activism. Not surprisingly, when donors face harsher economic conditions, like higher levels of unemployment, they reduce support for LGBT rights abroad.

Finally, the other control variables do not correlate with the amount of LGBT aid committed. These variables are population, civil society participation in the government's decisions, the government's rightist ideology, and the amount of human rights aid.

Table 2: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.12***	0.13***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
LGBT Policy	0.05*	0.04*	0.06**	0.06**	0.07**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party LGBT Support	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Societal Tolerance	1.52***	1.48***	0.86*	0.92*	0.88*
	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.34)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		-0.01	0.02+	0.02	0.02
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Liberal Democracy		-1.05	-1.34+	-1.82+	-1.88*
		(0.84)	(0.77)	(0.91)	(0.90)
Population (ln)		-0.95	-1.30	-1.24	-0.36
		(0.99)	(0.97)	(0.98)	(1.04)
GDP (ln)		0.94*	0.94*	0.93*	0.39
		(0.43)	(0.41)	(0.41)	(0.45)
HR NGOs			-0.09***	-0.09***	-0.09***
			(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Religious government			-1.54**	-1.43*	-1.66**
			(0.51)	(0.54)	(0.54)
CS Participation				1.47	1.72
				(1.50)	(1.50)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.05
					(0.04)
Unemployment					-0.02*

We also estimate the relationship between LGBT NGOs and LGBT aid at the donor-recipient level. The results of this analysis are presented and discussed in section C.2 in the Appendix. These regressions allow us to control for recipient characteristics that we would expect to be associated with levels of LGBT aid. These include the recipient's LGBT policy, society's tolerance for sexual minorities, population, GDP, and the number of human rights NGOs. Research has also shown that shaming by INGOs can influence donors' decisions to allocate human rights aid (Adhikari 2021). Thus, we include a measure of the number of shaming activities by INGOs on LGBT issues a recipient has received. Finally, we include variables at the donor-recipient-year level, such as political affinity between donor and recipient. As in the main models, we lag all time-varying right-hand side variables by one year. Results from these analyses are consistent with the evidence presented below: a greater number of donor-based LGBT INGOs predicts higher levels of LGBT aid.

To further investigate the impact of LGBT NGOs on LGBT aid, we replaced the dependent variable on the total amount of LGBT aid committed by the average size (in USD constant) of LGBT projects. If LGBT NGOs affect donors' priorities, we should observe an increase in the size of projects that promote the rights of sexual minorities. Otherwise, the observed increase in LGBT aid could be the consequence of an increase in the number of small projects, which could reflect a timid rights promotion without investing in large and substantive activities. Our analysis shows that larger numbers of donor-based NGOs predict larger LGBT projects funded by donors. Results of the regression analysis are presented in Tables A.9 and A.10 in the Appendix. We also conduct a placebo test (see Section D.1 in the Appendix) to see whether the number of LGBT NGOs predicts aid on human rights in general. We find that the number of LGBT NGOs is not consistently correlated with higher levels of aid for human rights that do not include the protection or promotion of LGBT rights. Moreover, we also analyze the sensitivity of our results following Cinelli and Hazlett (2020). Results of the sensitivity analysis are presented in Section D.2 in the Appendix. This analysis suggests that our results are not sensible to unobserved confounders.

To test H2, we investigate whether a donor's willingness to support minorities abroad affects the ability of specialized INGOs to influence aid allocation. To do that, we re-ran all regression models presented in Table 2. We included an interaction with an indicator for whether a donor has a feminist foreign policy (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0).

The results from this analysis presented in Table 3 show that the more donor-based LGBT INGOs, the more LGBT aid the donor commits to allocating.[16] This relationship is statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.001$ in all models. However, this relationship is stronger, and significant in all models, when the donor has declared it supports minorities through its foreign policy by declaring having a feminist foreign policy. At the same time, *Feminist FP*'s coefficient is not significant in all models and suggests that having a feminist foreign policy does not generate more LGBT aid without the presence of a domestic LGBT civil society. This means that in the absence of LGBT NGOs, a donor with a feminist foreign policy might support other minorities' rights through aid. As with results from Table 2, we also analyze the effect of LGBT INGOs and feminist foreign policies on the size of LGBT projects (Table A.9 in the Appendix), and at the bilateral level (Table A.8 in the Appendix).

[16] We omitted the rest of the control variables in the regression output. The full regression table can be found in section C.1, Table A.6 in the Appendix.

Table 3: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.12***	0.13***	0.18***	0.18***	0.17***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Feminist FP	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.06
	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.28)
LGBT INGOs x Feminist FP	0.19**	0.21**	0.21**	0.21**	0.20**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.65	0.67	0.69	0.69	0.70
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Robust standard errors are clustered at the donor level.

Figure 3 shows the slope of *LGBT NGOs* for the case where a donor has no feminist foreign policy (value of 0) and when it does (value of 1). Although LGBT NGOs can influence donor aid decisions, this ability is even stronger when the government wants to promote minority rights. Specifically, results suggest that an extra donor-based LGBT NGO increases the amount of LGBT by 11% to 21% when the donor has not implemented a feminist foreign policy. For donors with a foreign policy committed to supporting minorities' rights abroad, one more donor-based LGBT increases LGBT by 36% to 51%.

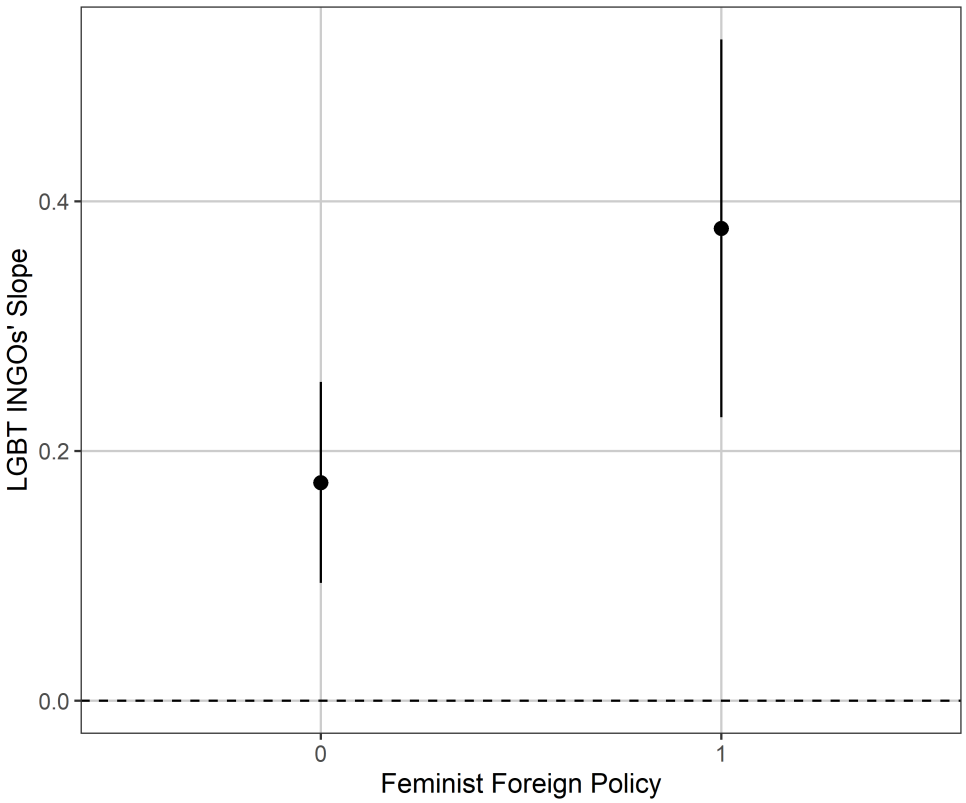


Figure 3: Marginal effects of LGBT NGOs by whether a donor has declared having a feminist foreign policy (Model 5).

Difference-in-Differences Design

The estimated effect of the LGBT NGOs can be biased if LGBT aid in donor countries would have continued pre-treatment trends in the absence of LGBT NGOs. We thus investigate whether the relationship between LGBT NGOs and LGBT aid can be attributed to trends non-attributed to the existence of new LGBT NGOs in a country. In this section, we implement a difference-in-differences (DID) design proposed by Imai, I. S. Kim, and Wang (2021) that estimates the average treatment effect (ATT) for units (donors) that adopt the treatment (new LGBT NGO founding). This "cohort average treatment effect" is then aggregated across states, with treatment fixed at time 0. We match donors on a set of covariates that capture alternative explanations (LGBT policy, and Societal Tolerance) using Mahalanobis distance and propensity score matching to match units.[17] All results are similar regardless of whether we use a matching method or not. Propensity score matching, however, generates estimates with larger confidence intervals.

Figure 4 shows the estimated effect of a new donor-based LGBT INGO on the total amount of LGBT aid with 95% confidence intervals. Importantly, before treatment, the differences in LGBT aid between treated and non-treated countries are not statistically different than zero, suggesting little reason to think that LGBT aid from donors that would eventually have a new LGBT INGO was on a "pre-treatment" upswing. In $t-3$, however, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant without pre-matching and Propensity Score mathign, but previous years suggest no pre-trends. Moreover, the coefficient sizes of the post-treatment period are larger than during the pre-treatment period, are begin to be statistically significant after 3 years of the founding of a new LGBT INGO. This is consistent with the fact that it takes time for new NGOs to build advocacy capacity and persuade governments about the need to allocate more aid to promote LGBT rights.

[17] See section E.2 in the Appendix for a detailed comparison of covariate balance before and after matching between the two matching techniques.

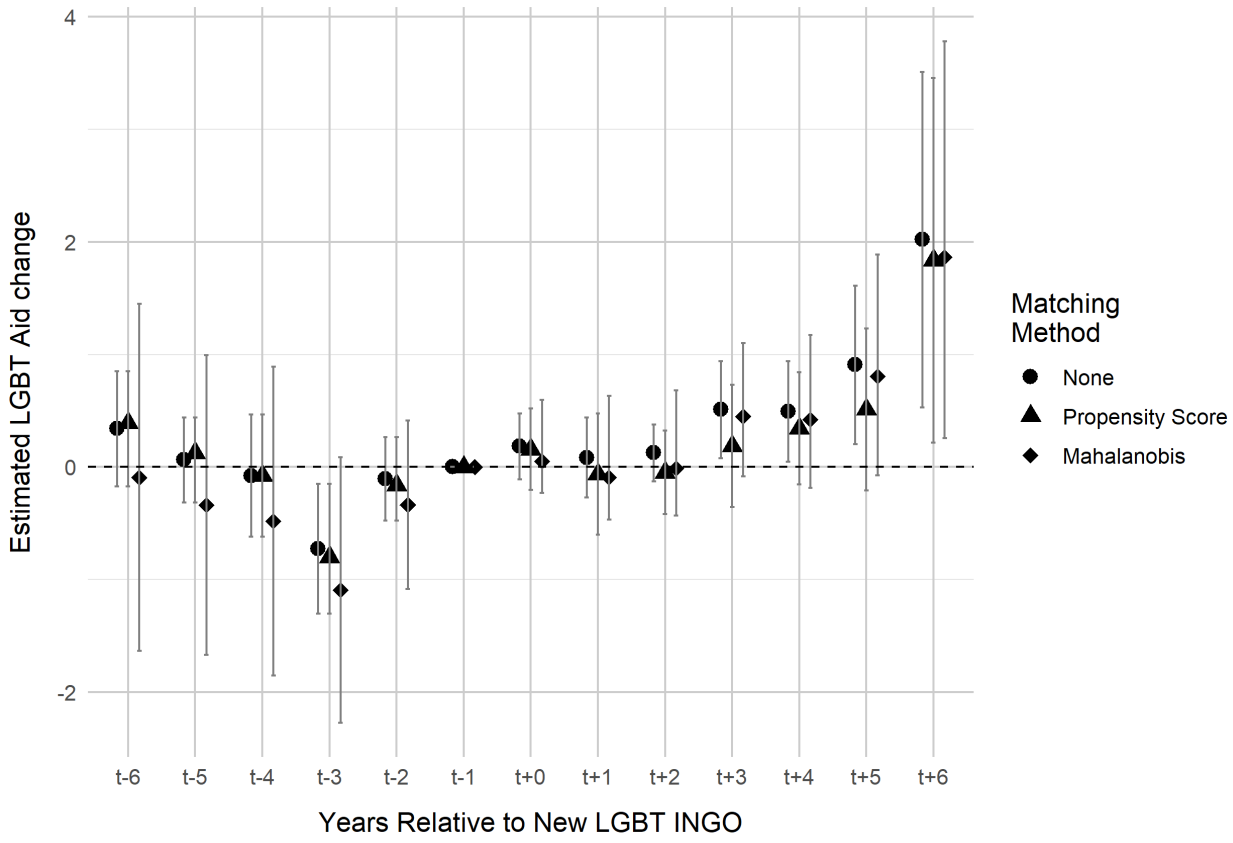


Figure 4: Staggered difference-in-differences on the amount of LGBT aid. Treatment: New LGBT NGO.

Conclusions

Despite growing awareness and some progress, such as the decriminalization of same-sex activity and same-sex marriage recognition in various countries, threats to LGBT rights continue to exist in societies around the world. In particular, in parts of the Global South, sexual minorities are frequently excluded from political participation and development opportunities. In this context, our research investigates the influence of civil society, particularly specialized LGBT NGOs, on shaping foreign aid policy to promote LGBT rights. By examining data from 29 OECD donor countries from 1995 to 2022, we explored whether these NGOs affect the allocation of aid towards the promotion of LGBT rights and how this impact is moderated by government policies prioritizing the protection of minorities in development cooperation.

We argued that decisions to provide LGBT aid are influenced by donor-based specialized civil society. INGOs are specialized actors that both advocate for specific agendas and norms and provide a supply of expertise that is usually lacking in government circles, especially in new issue areas. We thus expected that the larger the number of LGBT INGOs based in a donor country, the more LGBT aid the donor will likely spend. Moreover, when a donor government prioritizes the promotion of minorities' rights abroad, the effect of LGBT INGOs becomes even more significant. We test this argument using new data on LGBT aid and the presence of LGBT NGOs in donor countries.

Our results show a significant and positive association between the presence of international NGOs focused on LGBT rights in a donor country and the donor's allocation of aid towards LGBT issues. This relationship remains robust across various models, indicating that a higher number of LGBT INGOs in a donor country correlates with increased financial support for sexual minorities in the donor's aid portfolio. Moreover, we also identified that a new LGBT INGO affects the level of LGBT aid three years after its foundation.

Our findings highlight the key role of specialized LGBT INGOs in shaping foreign aid policies to support sexual minorities. This indicates that a robust domestic civil society focused on sexual minority rights can effectively channel resources toward international development

efforts for LGBT communities. The positive link between society's tolerance of homosexuality and LGBT aid allocation indicates the need for promoting inclusive attitudes within donor countries to increase support for sexual minorities abroad. Additionally, prioritizing minority rights through foreign policy increases the impact of LGBT INGOs on aid, showing that supportive government policies can amplify the influence of civil society on aid distribution. However, a feminist foreign policy alone doesn't ensure more LGBT aid without the active involvement of specialized INGOs, which reminds us of the role of a collaborative approach between government policies and civil society advocacy. Our findings contribute to broader discussions on inclusive development and the crucial role of civil society organizations in shaping foreign aid decisions, especially for marginalized groups like sexual minorities.

Our study leaves several areas open for future research. First, we have shown in the bilateral analysis that the recipient's LGBT policy is a predictor of LGBT aid allocation. Given that recipient countries are adopting contrasting policies toward sexual minorities, from expanding rights to repression (Pauselli and Urzúa 2024), it is relevant to understand the effect of the recipient's behavior toward sexual minorities on aid allocation decisions. However, it is an open question why this might be the case. Donors could orient LGBT aid toward recipients with better LGBT policies because in more restrictive contexts LGBT aid could be unwelcomed by the recipient's government or there could be no civil society partners to work with (Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash 2016). Alternatively, donors might try to avoid unintended consequences of LGBT aid –e.g. making things worse for sexual minorities and activists on the ground–, or they might prefer to channel LGBT aid through multilateral agencies.

Second, LGBT rights have become a key pillar of contestation with spillover effects in development cooperation. How recipients' behavior toward sexual minorities affects the allocation of aid is still an open question. The fact that donors have begun to react to recipients' policies toward sexual minorities is worth studying. For example, in August 2023, the World Bank decided to suspend all new public financing to Uganda over concerns with the country's anti-homosexuality law (World Bank 2023). Future research should investigate the effects of

anti-LGBT policies on foreign aid decisions, including allocation, sectoral focus, and channeling.

Finally, and related to the allocation of aid, future research should explore the trade-offs faced by donors when allocating LGBT aid through bilateral versus multilateral channels. This is especially relevant to understand during times when international organizations face resistance and backlash in donor countries' societies (Walter 2021) but bilateral aid on sensitive issues is seen as an intrusion on domestic affairs by recipient countries' governments (Murdie and Bhasin 2011).

This article contributes to a growing research agenda focused on understanding how advocacy influences foreign policymaking and aid distribution (Corell and Betsill 2001; Y. Kim 2017; Tallberg et al. 2018). While our study centers on LGBT rights, future research should extend to other areas to understand the areas where civil society organizations play a crucial role in shaping donor policies, such as environmental protection, women's rights, and indigenous rights. By analyzing multiple policy areas, we can better understand the role that organized civil society groups play in promoting inclusive development and shaping foreign aid decisions.

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Appendix

A Public Opinion on Minority Groups

Sexual minorities are among the most unwanted groups in Western countries. This claim is supported by public opinion data from the European Values Survey (2018). When respondents were asked to identify the groups that they would not like to have as neighbors, homosexuals came as the second-most unwanted group among 9 minority groups. Figure A.1 reveals the percentage of respondents in 44 Western countries.[18]

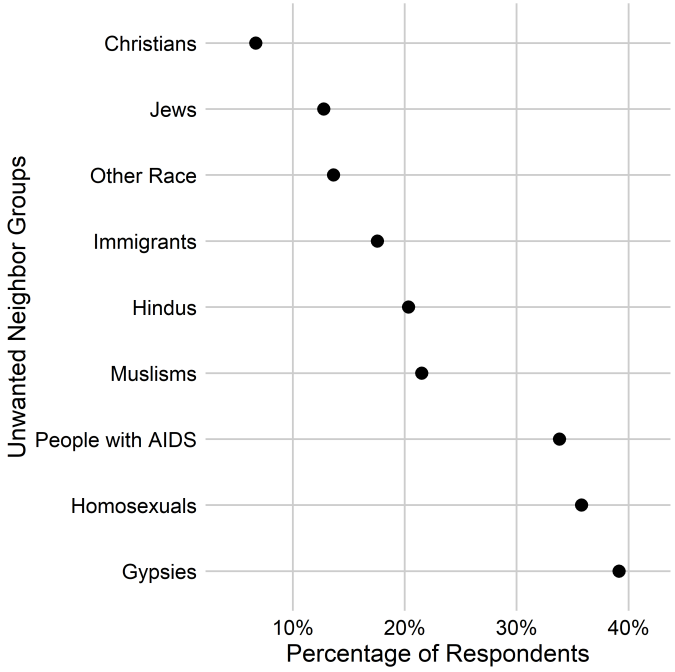


Figure A.1: Percentage of respondents that do not want members of a minority group as neighbors.

B Descriptive Statistics

In this section, we present descriptive figures of the distribution of LGBT aid by donors and recipients. We focus on country donors.

B.1 Evolution of attention to LGBT rights

Figure A.2 shows the evolution of the percentage of books in English that contain LGBT keywords. Since the 1970s, the presence of LGBT topics in English literature has increased expo-

[18] Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United States.

nentially, reaching a local maximum in the mid-1990s, and increasing again in the mid-2000s until today.

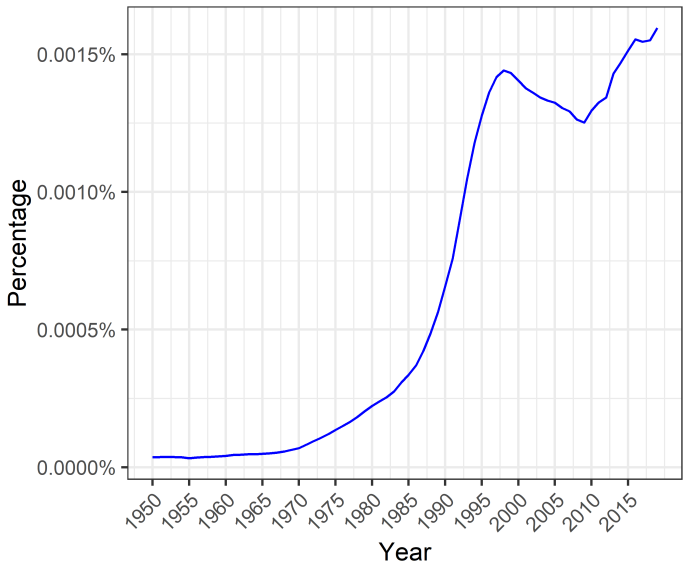


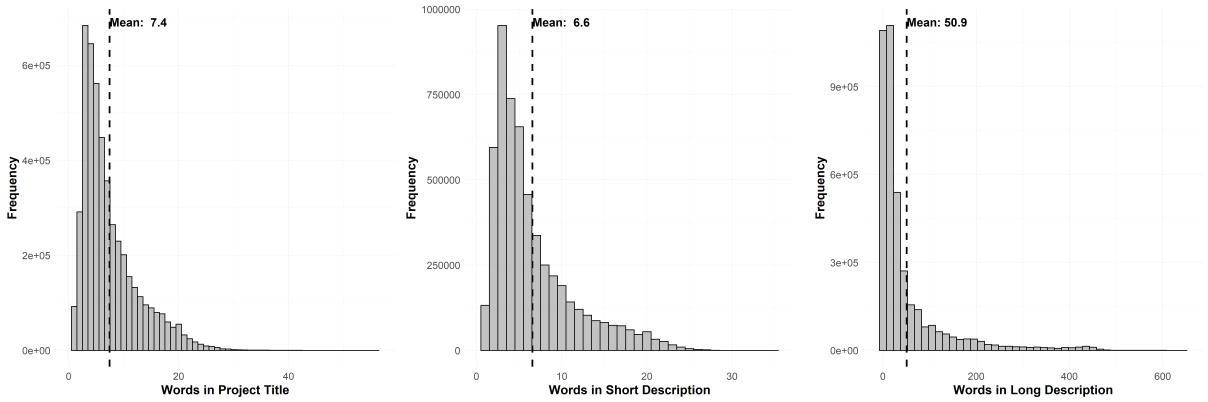
Figure A.2: Percentage of books in English that contain LGBT keywords, by year (1950-2019). Keywords include: LGBT, LGBTQ, sexual orientation, homophobia, sexual minorities, lesbian, bisexual, gender identity, and transgender. Data retrieved from Michel et al. (2010).

B.2 Length of Project Titles and Descriptions

Project titles and descriptions in the OECD-CRS microdata are relatively concise. On average, project titles have 7.4 words, with 90% of titles falling between 2 and 18 words. Short descriptions average 6.6 words, with 90% ranging between 2 and 17 words, while long descriptions average 50.9 words, with 90% spanning 3 to 223 words. This brevity suggests that the words used to name or describe projects likely reflect their primary goals and purposes. When identifying LGBT projects, we can reasonably assume that there will be few, if any, false positives—projects that mention LGBT keywords but aren't actually focused on LGBT rights. Additionally, due to the strict reporting guidelines in the OECD-DAC, we are confident that there are few, if any, false negatives—projects related to LGBT rights that our method might miss.

B.3 Top Donors and Recipients of LGBT Aid

Figure A.4a highlights the top ten donors, based on the total aid committed to sexual minorities between 1995 and 2022. The United Kingdom is the top donor of LGBT aid, followed by Sweden, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands. On the other hand, some donors have not committed a single dollar to LGBT rights. These donors are Hungary, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, and South Korea. Figure A.4b shows the ten recipient countries receiving the highest percentage of resources allocated to sexual minority projects. Colombia



(a) Distribution of Number of Words in Project Title. (b) Distribution of Number of Words in Short Description. (c) Distribution of Number of Words in Long Description.

Figure A.3: Number of Words in Projects' Text.

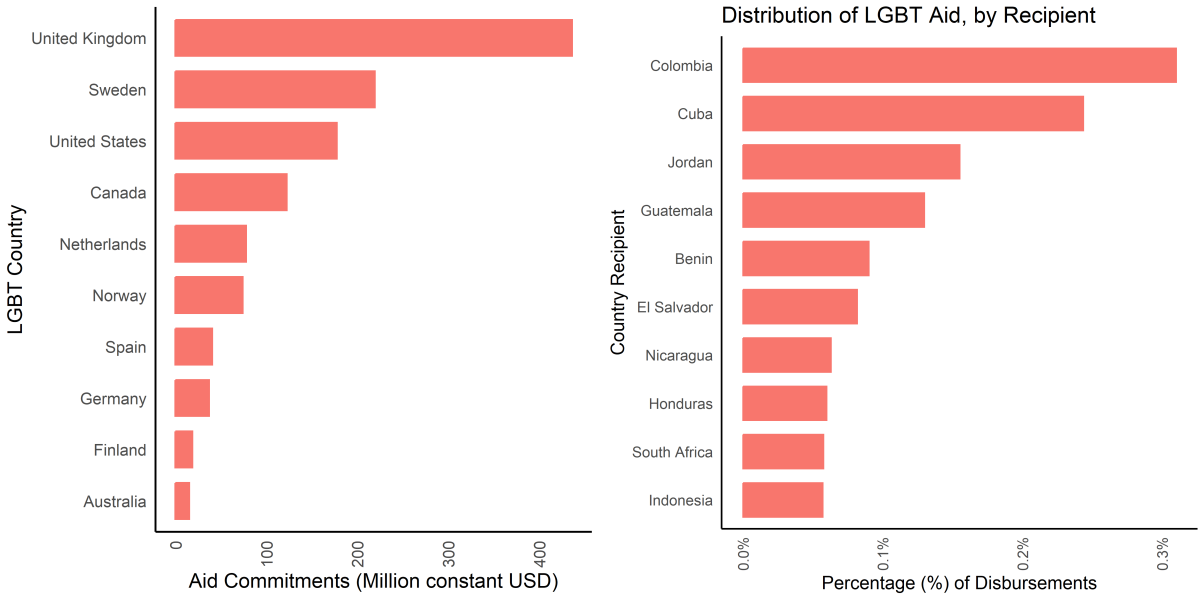
tops the list, having received $416.7 million (USD constant), a 0.31% of all aid received between 1995 and 2022. Notably, most recipients are located in Latin America, with South Africa, Indonesia, Moldova, and Thailand rounding out the list.

B.4 Sectorial Distribution

Foreign aid to support and protect sexual minorities is heavily related to the promotion of human rights. Figure A.5 shows the distribution of LGBT aid committed by bilateral donors in 1995-2022 by the OECD's sector classification. A third of all LGBT aid has human rights as its main purpose, followed by sexually transmitted disease control, democratic participation, and civil society participation. Other sectors include gender, health, and population policy.

B.5 Data Validation

Table A.1 presents the results of a regression analysis where we predict the amount of funds committed by bilateral donors according to the GPP report using our own generated data. Results show a strong relationship between our measure and the reported data from the Global Philanthropy Project's report.



(a) Distribution of LGBT Foreign Aid, by Donor. Top 10 Donors (1995-2022).

(b) Distribution of LGBT Foreign Aid, by Recipients. Top 10 Recipients (1995-2022).

Figure A.4: Top LGBT Aid Donors and Recipients.

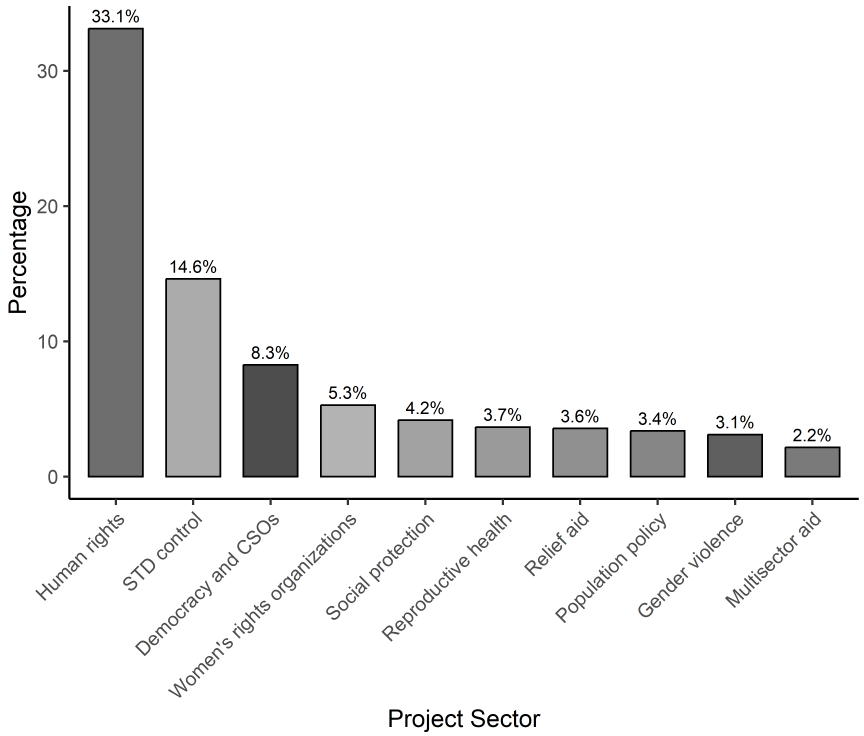


Figure A.5: Distribution of LGBT Foreign Aid, by Sector. Top 10 Sectors.

Table A.1: LGBT Aid (GPP report)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LGBT Aid (Author's measure)	0.46***	0.46	0.46**	0.46**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Num.Obs.	25	25	25	25
R2	0.489	0.496	0.489	0.496
# Observations	25	25	25	25
2 Year Period FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
FE: '2 Year Period'		X		X

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Robust standard errors. Models 3-4 report SE clustered at the donor level.

B.6 International LGBT NGOs

Figure A.6 maps the number of international LGBT NGOs by country in a world map. The United States stands out as the country with the highest number of NGOs working on LGBT rights headquartered in the country with 69 organizations. It is followed by the United Kingdom (25), Belgium (21), and the Netherlands (20). Although most countries with large numbers of LGBT INGOs are based in the Global North, among the top 10 countries with the largest number of international NGOs there are two states located in the Global South: South Africa, and Kenya. In 2020, NGOs working on LGBT rights had headquarters in 51 different countries. Of those, 18 are OECD-DAC donors.

Table A.2 presents the total number of INGOs whose main area of focus is on sexual orientation and minority rights in 2020 by OECD-DAC donors. The United States was the country with the highest number of LGBT NGOs, followed by the United Kingdom, and Belgium.

B.7 Other LGBT Control Variables

The LGBT Policy Index follows Pauselli (2023)'s methodology of construction of a measure of state policies toward sexual minorities. The index consists of thirteen different federal policies, policies that are progressive in nature are coded as +1, and policies that are restrictive are coded as -1. The issue areas considered are the death penalty for same-sex sexual acts, (de)criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults in private, legal barriers to freedom of expression on sexual and gender diversity issues, legal barriers to the registration or operation of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on sexual and gender diversity issues, constitutional protection, broad protections and employment protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, prohibition of incitement to hatred, violence or discrimination, bans on conversion therapy, same-sex marriage, partnership recognition for same-sex couples, joint adoption by same-sex couples, and second parent adoption by same-sex couples.

The index can range from -4 to +9. For the OECD-DAC donors in the period 1995-2020,

Table A.2: Number of LGBT INGOs by Donor, 2020

Donor	LGBT INGOs
United States	69
United Kingdom	25
Belgium	21
Netherlands	20
Germany	10
Canada	8
Australia	8
France	7
Italy	6
Switzerland	5
Sweden	5
Austria	4
Spain	3
Poland	3
Finland	2
Denmark	1
Japan	1
New Zealand	1
Ireland	0
Luxembourg	0
Portugal	0
Hungary	0
Czechia	0
Slovakia	0
Slovenia	0
Greece	0
Norway	0
Iceland	0
South Korea	0

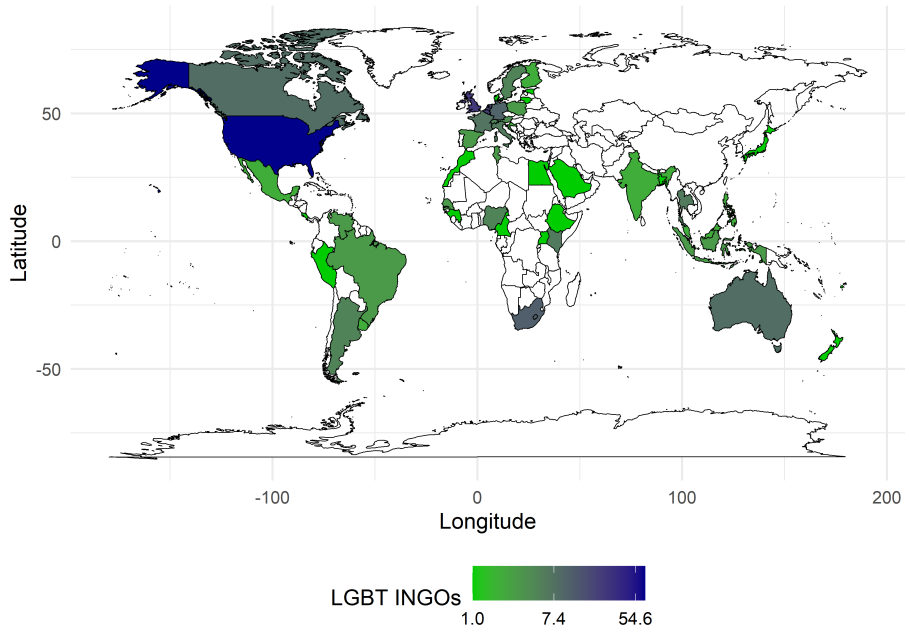
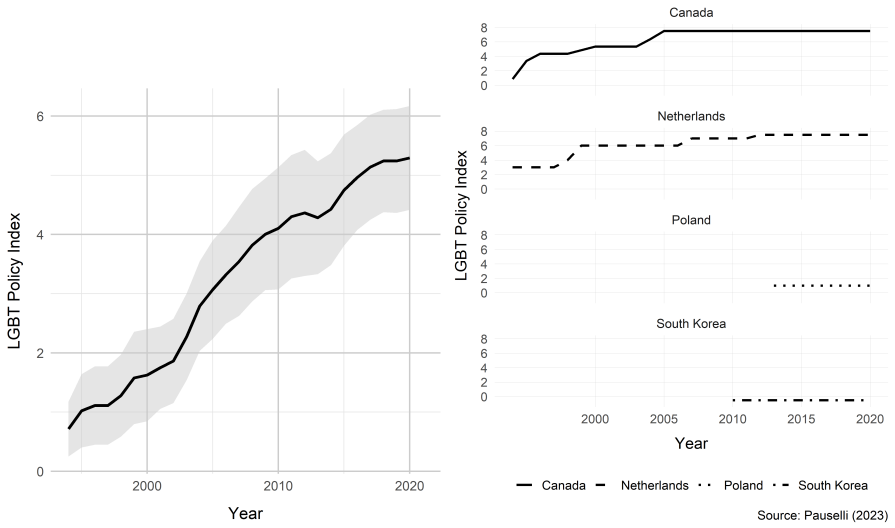


Figure A.6: Geographic Distribution of LGBT INGOs in 2020, by country of headquarters.

the minimum value is −0.5 (South Korea) and the maximum is 8 (Sweden 2011-2020, Portugal 2016-2020, United Kingdom 2019-2020) with a mean of 3.46. Figure A.7a shows the evolution of the LGBT Policy Index for OECD-DAC donors. For each year, only OECD-DAC members at the moment are considered. Figure A.7b illustrates the evolution of the LGBT Policy Index for four selected donors: Canada, Netherlands, Poland, and South Korea.

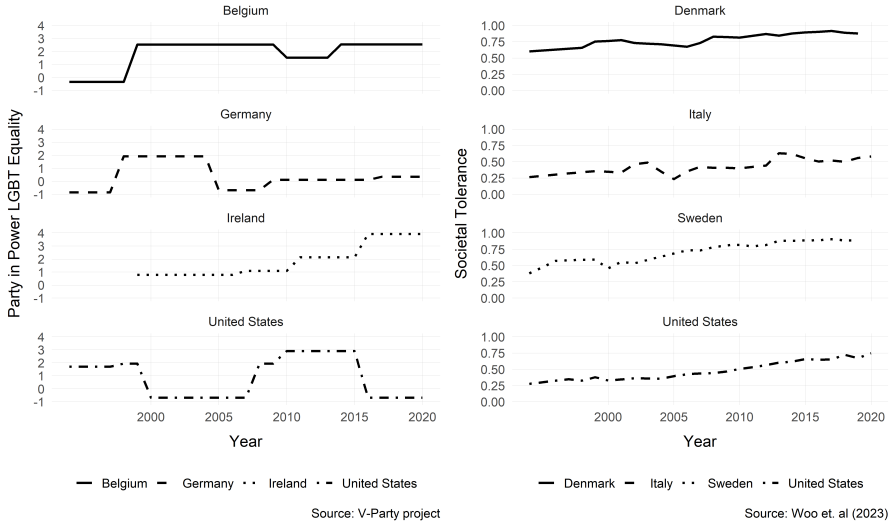
The variable *Party LGBT Support* is retrieved from the VParty's project's variable `v2palgbt`. This measure captures the party in power's position toward social equality for the LGBT community. Lower values are related to opposition to social equality and higher values represent support for LGBT social equality. Figure A.8a shows the evolution of this measure in Belgium, Germany, Ireland, and the United States. The variable *Societal Tolerance* measures the level of tolerance by society to sexual minorities. Figure A.8b illustrates the evolution of this measure in four donor countries: Denmark, Italy, Sweden, and the United States.



(a) Evolution of the LGBT Policy Index at the global level (1995-2020).

(b) Evolution of the LGBT Policy Index in selected donors (1995-2020).

Figure A.7: Top LGBT Aid Donors and Recipients.



(a) Evolution of the level of support for LGBT rights by party in power (1995-2020).

(b) Evolution of the level of society's tolerance to sexual minorities (1995-2020).

Figure A.8: Top LGBT Aid Donors and Recipients.

Table A.3: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
LGBT Aid	653	1.899	12.478	0.000	238.863
LGBT INGOs	653	6.798	12.687	0	69
LGBT Policy	624	3.458	2.588	−0.500	8.000
Party LGBT Support	653	0.910	1.327	−2.584	3.917
Societal Tolerance	609	0.590	0.173	0.180	0.940
Domestic LGBT NGOs	653	4.856	11.644	0	71
Human Rights Aid	653	29.068	46.512	0.000	463.280
Liberal Democracy	653	0.806	0.067	0.350	0.898
GDP	595	178,710.800	347,331.400	1,569.146	2,118,706.000
Population	595	4,285.263	6,821.036	34.759	34,961.290
HR NGOs	653	16.962	24.546	0	118
Religious government	653	0.087	0.154	0.000	0.714
CS Participation	653	0.911	0.076	0.546	0.989
Economy Ideology: Right	624	0.513	0.500	0	1
Unemployment	653	7.171	4.022	1.805	27.686
Feminist FP	653	0.032	0.177	0	1

B.8 Summary Statistics

B.9 Correlation Matrix

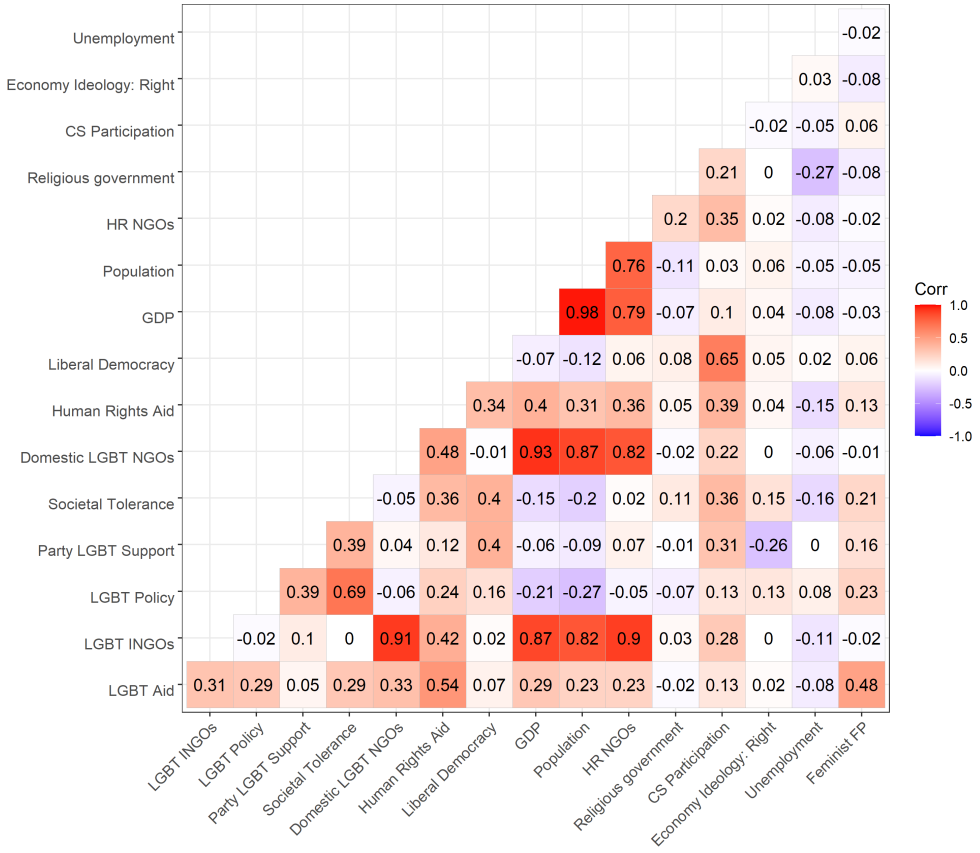


Figure A.9: Correlation Matrix.

C Alternative Model Specifications

C.1 Donor Level Analysis

Table A.4 replicates the analysis presented in Table 2 but with the unlogged dependent variable as well as the unlogged amount of USD committed to human rights projects. Results are consistent with the idea that the more LGBT INGOs are based in a donor country, the more aid to support sexual minorities abroad. Coefficients of *LGBT INGOs* are positive and significant

in all models except Model 1, where it is negative but not significant, and Model 2, where it is positive, and significant only at the 0.1 level.

Table A.4: LGBT Aid

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	1.02*	0.69***	1.01***	1.01***	0.98***
	(0.46)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)
LGBT Policy	0.45	0.20*	0.32**	0.24*	0.31*
	(0.32)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Party LGBT Support	-0.41	-0.11	-0.16	-0.19*	-0.39**
	(0.32)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.13)
Societal Tolerance	11.54*	7.03**	3.44+	4.26*	4.20*
	(5.30)	(2.01)	(1.83)	(1.93)	(1.94)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		-0.14*	0.07	0.03	0.04
		(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Liberal Democracy		-14.23+	-15.60*	-22.87*	-23.74*
		(7.92)	(7.32)	(8.83)	(8.84)
Population (ln)		1.67	-0.18	0.59	4.41
		(4.65)	(4.61)	(4.61)	(5.04)
GDP (ln)		1.51	1.50	1.39	-0.65
		(2.28)	(2.19)	(2.14)	(2.50)
HR NGOs			-0.51***	-0.47***	-0.47***
			(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Religious government			-7.94**	-6.41*	-8.08**
			(2.77)	(2.62)	(2.69)
CS Participation				21.57*	23.04*
				(9.20)	(9.35)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.80*
					(0.31)
Unemployment					-0.08+
					(0.04)
Human Rights Aid	-0.01	0.02+	0.02+	0.02	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.19	0.45	0.48	0.49	0.50
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Robust standard errors are clustered by donor.

Table A.5 replicates results from Table 2 in the main text without including donor-fixed effects. This model specification addresses the concern that, given the small number of donor countries and variation in the number of INGOs in some years, the identified effect of LGBT INGOs could be overstated by including donor-fixed effects. Results without such fixed effects are similar to those with donor FEs: more donor-based LGBT INGOs predict higher levels of LGBT aid.

As for the control variables, when donor FEs are not included, donor LGBT policy and Party LGBT Support become even more statistically significant. Societal Tolerance, on the other hand, loses significance, suggesting that, across donors, the level of tolerance by society does not predict different levels of funding for LGBT projects. Liberal democracy flips the sign of its coefficient and becomes statistically significant in all models. In other words, the more liberal a democracy is, the more funds will be allocated to LGBT rights abroad. Except for HR NGOs, all other control variables are not statistically significant, including Religious government, and civil society participation.

Table A.5: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.01***	0.00	0.01**	0.01**	0.01*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
LGBT Policy	0.06***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party LGBT Support	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.09***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Societal Tolerance	0.42**	0.36+	0.38+	0.38+	0.40*
	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Liberal Democracy		0.84*	1.17**	1.24*	1.49*
		(0.41)	(0.41)	(0.50)	(0.56)
Population (ln)		0.04	0.01	0.00	-0.01
		(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
GDP (ln)		0.00	0.06	0.07	0.09
		(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)
HR NGOs			-0.01***	-0.01***	-0.01***
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Religious government			0.27*	0.26+	0.28*
			(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
CS Participation				-0.15	-0.10
				(0.42)	(0.44)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.10+
					(0.05)
Unemployment					0.00
					(0.00)
Human Rights Aid (ln)	0.13***	0.10***	0.09***	0.09***	0.08***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.44	0.44	0.46	0.46	0.46
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Robust standard errors are clustered by donor.

Table A.6 presents the full results of models that interact *LGBT NGOs* with *Feminist Foreign Policy*. Results from these models suggest that donor's LGBT policy and the level of society's tolerance toward sexual minorities are positively correlated with the amount of LGBT aid committed. However, the level of support for LGBT rights by the party in power is not associated with the outcome of interest. If anything, there seems to be a negative relationship between these two measures.

Other variables with statistically significant coefficients are the donor's population, GDP, and civil society participation. They suggest that less populous donors, richer donors, and donors where civil society participate *less* in government's decisions allocate more aid for LGBT rights.

Table A.6: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.12***	0.13***	0.18***	0.18***	0.17***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Feminist FP	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.06
	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.28)
LGBT INGOs x Feminist FP	0.19**	0.21**	0.21**	0.21**	0.20**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
LGBT Policy	0.05**	0.04*	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party LGBT Support	-0.04*	-0.03+	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Societal Tolerance	1.47***	1.51***	0.93**	0.94**	0.90**
	(0.31)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		-0.01	0.02+	0.02+	0.02+
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Liberal Democracy		-1.33	-1.74*	-1.80+	-1.83+
		(0.82)	(0.75)	(0.91)	(0.90)
Population (ln)		-1.42	-1.80+	-1.79+	-1.12
		(0.96)	(0.91)	(0.91)	(0.95)
GDP (ln)		0.98*	1.00*	1.00*	0.57
		(0.39)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.40)
HR NGOs			-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.08***
			(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Religious government			-1.72**	-1.70**	-1.84**
			(0.55)	(0.57)	(0.58)
CS Participation				0.20	0.41
				(1.26)	(1.26)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.01
					(0.04)
Unemployment					-0.02*
					(0.01)
Human Rights Aid (ln)	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.65	0.67	0.69	0.69	0.70
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.2 Donor Recipient Year Level Analysis

Table A.7 presents the findings from a linear regression analysis conducted at the bilateral level. The models incorporate measures for both donor countries (D) and recipient countries (R), when applicable. Additionally, we include Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2014)'s measure of political affinity based on UNGA ideal points to capture the level of bilateral affinity between donors and recipients, and a measure of the number of instances of shaming by international NGOs on LGBT rights to the recipient country. All models control for donor, recipient, and year effects with robust standard errors clustered at the dyad level.

Our findings reveal a strong positive correlation between the number of international NGOs headquartered in a donor country and working on LGBT rights and the amount of LGBT aid provided by that donor. This relationship is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) in all models. Interestingly, the presence of international LGBT NGOs in recipient countries does not attract more aid to their home nations (coefficients omitted from Table A.7 for presentation purposes. Additionally, the level of protection for sexual minorities in the donor country appears to influence aid allocation. Similarly, the level of protection in the recipient country also attracts more aid, while countries with worse records of protecting sexual minorities receive less aid. This counter-intuitive relationship might be a function of donors avoiding funding projects where doing so could generate backlash or put at risk recipients of funds. Finally, the analysis suggests a possible link between the donor's society's level of tolerance for sexual minorities and the amount of aid it receives.

Table A.8 presents the analysis at the dyad level that includes an interaction between donor-based LGBT NGOs and Feminist Foreign Policy. Results suggest that the effect of donor-based LGBT NGOs increases when the donor has a feminist foreign policy.

Table A.7: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
LGBT INGOs (D)	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
LGBT Policy (D)	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
LGBT Policy (R)	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Society's Tolerance (D)	0.019***	0.019***	0.017**	0.017**	0.017**	0.013*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Party LGBT Support (D)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.002**
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Liberal Democracy (D)			-0.069+	-0.069+	-0.069+	-0.106*
			(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.053)
Population (D, ln)			0.038+	0.040+	0.040+	0.079**
			(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.027)
Population (R, ln)			0.013*	0.012*	0.013*	0.014*
			(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
HR NGOs (D)						-0.002***
						(0.000)
Religious government						-0.032**
						(0.011)
CS Participation						0.082+
						(0.045)
Economic ideology: Right						-0.004***
						(0.001)
Unemployment						-0.001***
						(0.000)
# Observations	28383	28383	28259	27971	27971	27971
R2 Adj.	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05
Donor & Recipient FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Robust standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. Variables with coefficients that are consistently not statistically significant are omitted from the table: SOGI NGOs (R), Societal Tolerance (R), Liberal democracy (D), GDP (D), and GDP (R). Human Rights Aid (ln) is positive and statistically significant in all models, but also omitted from the table

Table A.8: LGBT Aid (ln)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
LGBT INGOs (D)	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.003***	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Feminist FP	0.018+	0.018+	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.018+
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
LGBT INGOs (D) x Feminist FP	0.004*	0.004*	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**	0.004*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
LGBT Policy (D)	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
LGBT Policy (R)	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Society's Tolerance (D)	0.021***	0.020***	0.019***	0.019***	0.019***	0.015**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Party LGBT Support (D)		-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.001*
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Liberal Democracy (D)			-0.079*	-0.079*	-0.079*	-0.109*
			(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.053)
Population (D, ln)			0.024	0.025	0.025	0.057*
			(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.028)
Population (R, ln)			0.012*	0.012*	0.013*	0.014*
			(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
HR NGOs (D)						-0.001***
						(0.000)
Religious government						-0.037***
						(0.011)
CS Participation						0.055
						(0.046)
Economic ideology: Right						-0.003***
						(0.001)
Unemployment						-0.001**
						(0.000)
# Observations	28383	28383	28259	27971	27971	27971
R2 Adj.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Donor & Recipient FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Robust standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. Variables with coefficients that are consistently not statistically significant are omitted from the table: SOGI NGOs (R), Societal Tolerance (R), Liberal democracy (D), GDP (D), and GDP (R). Human Rights Aid (ln) is positive and statistically significant in all models, but also omitted from the table

C.3 Average Project Size

Table A.9: LGBT aid per project

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.02**	0.01	0.02*	0.01*	0.01*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
LGBT Policy	0.02**	0.02**	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party LGBT Support	-0.01**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Societal Tolerance	0.34***	0.25***	0.18*	0.16*	0.16*
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		0.00	0.01+	0.01+	0.01*
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Liberal Democracy		0.05	0.11	0.35	0.34
		(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Population (ln)		0.47	0.48	0.45	0.46
		(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.38)
GDP (ln)		-0.04	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
		(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
HR NGOs			-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.01**
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Religious government			0.01	-0.05	-0.06
			(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)
CS Participation				-0.75*	-0.74*
				(0.35)	(0.36)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.01
					(0.01)
Unemployment					0.00
					(0.00)
Human Rights Aid (ln)	0.01	0.01	0.01+	0.01+	0.01+
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.29	0.35	0.35	0.36	0.36
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Robust standard errors are clustered by donor.

Table A.10: Avg. LGBT project

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.02***	0.01	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Feminist FP	0.12	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.07
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)
LGBT INGOs x Feminist FP	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
LGBT Policy	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party LGBT Support	-0.01**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Societal Tolerance	0.34***	0.26***	0.19*	0.16*	0.16*
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		0.00	0.01+	0.01*	0.01*
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Liberal Democracy		0.02	0.08	0.35	0.34
		(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Population (ln)		0.41	0.42	0.39	0.39
		(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.37)	(0.40)
GDP (ln)		-0.04	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05
		(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
HR NGOs			-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.01**
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Religious government			-0.01	-0.07	-0.08
			(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)
CS Participation				-0.83*	-0.82*
				(0.36)	(0.37)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.01
					(0.01)
Unemployment					0.00
					(0.00)
Human Rights Aid (ln)	0.01	0.01+	0.01+	0.01+	0.01+
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.29	0.35	0.36	0.36	0.36
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Robust standard errors are clustered by donor.

D Robustness Checkss

D.1 Placebo Test

To further analyze whether LGBT NGOs are driving changes in LGBT aid, we run a placebo test. Table A.11 tests whether the number of local INGOs working on LGBT rights predicts aid on human rights issues more broadly. In other words, here we are interested in testing whether our measure of LGBT NGOs is capturing a broader phenomenon of support toward human rights in general in a donor country. Results from this analysis suggest that, although LGBT NGOs are positively correlated with Human Rights aid, this relationship is not statistically significant in most model specifications.

Table A.11: Human Rights Aid Committed

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LGBT INGOs	0.07**	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
LGBT Policy	-0.10**	-0.09**	-0.09**	-0.09**	-0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Party LGBT Support	0.07**	0.08*	0.08*	0.08*	0.06+
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Societal Tolerance	-1.14	-1.55*	-1.43+	-1.46+	-1.54*
	(0.71)	(0.74)	(0.75)	(0.75)	(0.74)
Domestic LGBT NGOs		0.03	0.02	0.02	0.03
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Liberal Democracy		-0.64	-0.85	-0.59	-0.65
		(0.83)	(0.94)	(1.22)	(1.22)
Population (ln)		-0.56	-0.61	-0.64	1.32
		(1.47)	(1.50)	(1.50)	(1.64)
GDP (ln)		0.12	0.18	0.19	-1.04
		(0.59)	(0.62)	(0.61)	(0.70)
HR NGOs			0.02	0.02	0.02
			(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Religious government			-0.22	-0.28	-0.72
			(0.73)	(0.75)	(0.76)
CS Participation				-0.80	-0.25
				(1.76)	(1.76)
Economic ideology: Right					-0.06
					(0.07)
Unemployment					-0.05**
					(0.01)
Total Aid	0.11***	0.11**	0.11**	0.11**	0.11**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
# Observations	605	589	589	589	589
R2 Adj.	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84
Donor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Robust standard errors are clustered at the donor level.

D.2 Sensitivity Analysis

We conduct sensitivity analyses on models from Table 2 to evaluate the potential effect of unmeasured confounders on the amount of SOLGBTGI aid committed by donors and how it could affect the significance of our coefficients of *LGBT NGOs*. In other words, we are interested in analyzing whether our results might be driven by potential hidden bias (Hazlett and Parente 2023). We quantify the increased effect of hidden bias compared to the relationship already identified with observed data and evaluate how such bias would affect the identified relationship between LGBT NGOs and LGBT aid. In other words, we are interested in the potential effect that unobserved variables might have in the identified relationship between LGBT INGOs and LGBT aid. How much of the effect of an already observed variable should an unobserved variable have in order for the relationship found between our main explanatory variable (LGBT NGOs) and LGBT aid to disappear? We focus on covariates that appear to be consistently significant across models: LGBT Policy, Societal Tolerance, HR NGOs, Religious government, and Unemployment.

We follow (Cinelli and Hazlett 2020) in implementing an omitted variable bias framework. The plots in Figure A.10 reveal that the null hypothesis of zero effect would still be rejected given confounders as strong as different benchmark covariates. The identified effect presented in Table 2 is not sensible to unobserved confounders that explain 1, 2, and 5 times what observed confounders are explaining. Our results are, however, more sensible to unobserved confounders that would explain more than 50% of what *HR NGOs* already explain. In other words, if there's something that we do not measure that explains half of what *HR NGOs* already explains, then the relationship between *LGBT NGOs* and LGBT aid will lose statistical significance. This is possibly the consequence of the high correlation between *LGBT NGOs* and *HR NGOs*, as shown in Figure A.9.

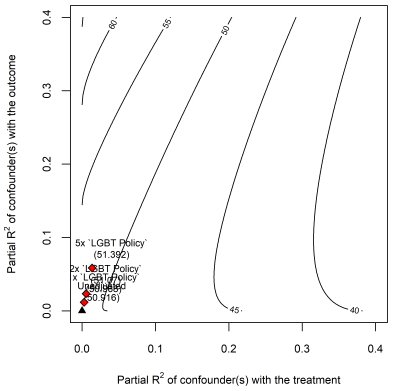
E Difference-in-Differences

E.1 Treatment Display

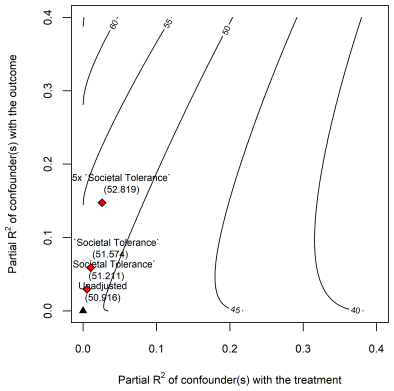
Figure A.11 shows the distribution of treatment (new LGBT NGO) by donor across time.

E.2 Covariate Balance Pre- and Post-Matching

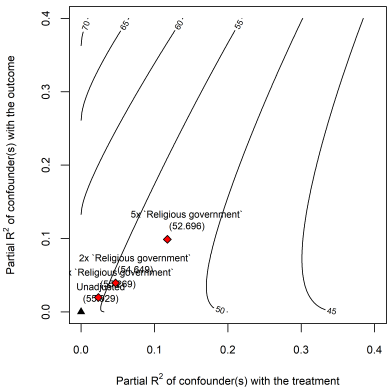
Figure A.12 shows the covariate balance pre- and post-matching using two different matching techniques. Both Mahalanobis distance and propensity score matching significantly improve covariate balance. However, propensity score matching seems to improve covariate balance slightly more than Mahalanobis distance.



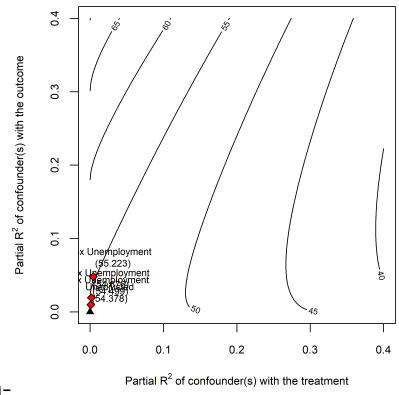
(a) Model 1 (LGBT Policy).



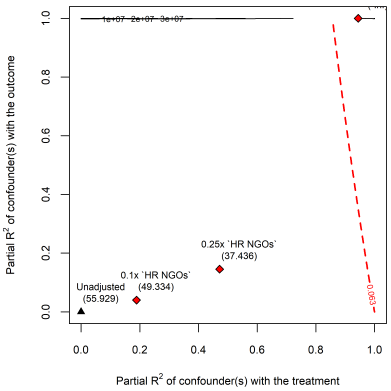
(b) Model 1 (Societal Tolerance).



(c) Model 3 (Religious government).



(d) Model 5 (Unemployment).



(e) Model 3 (HR NGOs).

Figure A.10: Sensitivity Analysis based on selected benchmark covariates ($1 >= \gamma <= 5$).

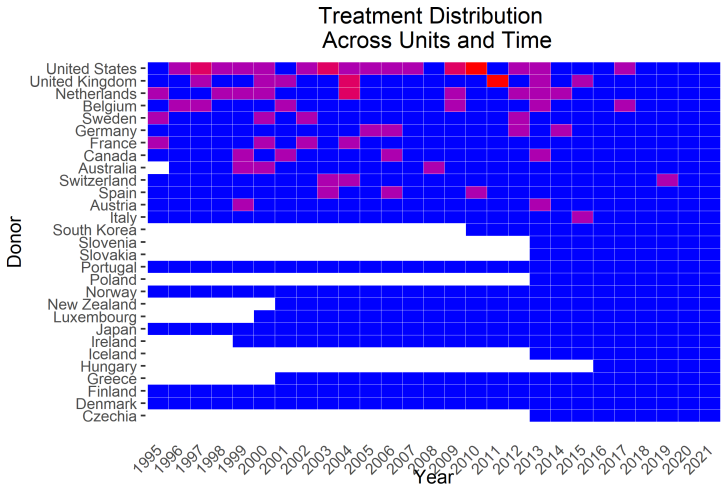


Figure A.11

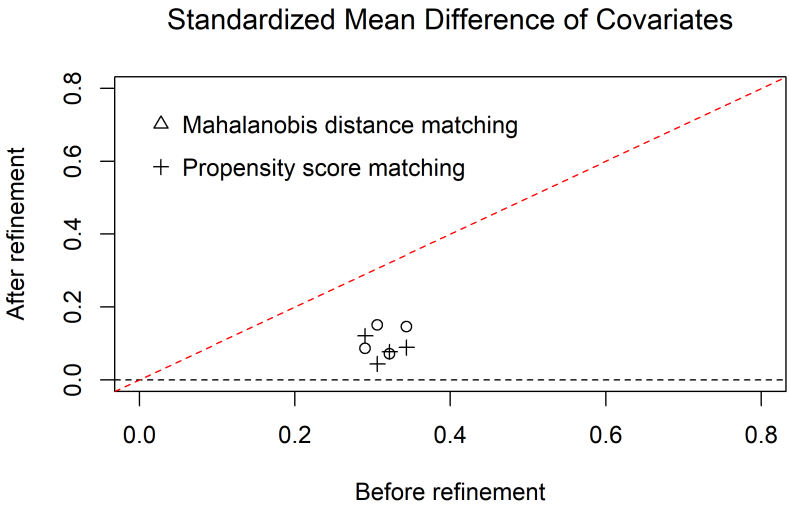

Standardized Mean Difference of Covariates
Mahalanobis distance matching
Propensity score matching
After refinement
Before refinement
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8

Figure A.12