SEARCH ALGORITHMS CONTINUE TO PREFERENCE HARMFUL ANTI-LGBTQ+ CONVERSION THERAPY MATERIAL AND PROVIDERS, ESPECIALLY IN NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Special thanks to the Horizon Foundation Global Faith and Equity Fund for their commitment to achieving change and saving lives, and for making this work possible.

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The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism is a nonprofit organization devoted to building a diverse global community by exposing and countering racism, bigotry, and hate and promoting human rights that are central to flourishing, multicultural societies and democracies. We believe that white supremacy, hate, and far-right extremist movements are existential threats to societies and democracies around the globe. Extremists’ hateful propaganda and actions don’t stop at a country’s borders and neither can those who work to stop it.

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CONTENT WARNING
This report contains offensive and potentially triggering language, specifically in reference to anti-LGBTQ+ practices related to “conversion therapy,” which have in common the belief that a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity can and should be changed. The authors chose to include offensive quotes in the report to illustrate the dangers of this practice and to show how the search engines elevate harmful disinformation. Additionally, it shows how these groups and individuals violate social media and other technology companies’ terms of service and community standards.

TERMINOLOGY
In this report, the term “conversion therapy” encompasses “reparative therapy,” “reintegrative therapy,” and all “SOGIE change practices” that attempt to change sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression change or suppression efforts, regardless of the provider, whether it be medical or mental health professionals, religious personnel, traditional or spiritual healers or practitioners, or other entities such as social or self-help groups. Other terms, such as “ex-gay therapy” and “unwanted same-sex attraction” are employed in our research to document the online ecosystem of conversion therapy. Our definition encompasses all forms of activities to change sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Not all of the organizations and groups described in this report engage in the same activities which include a wide range from support groups or talk therapy to versions of 12-step programs. Other work on conversion therapy has also documented “treatments” including coercive practices and physical abuse. What unifies all these degrading and dehumanizing efforts is the underlying and thoroughly discredited belief that sexual orientation and gender identity can be changed; that being LGBTQ+ is a disorder, illness, or sin that requires treatment or cure; and that cisgender heterosexuality is inherently normal and preferred. There is no question that conversion therapy can lead to harm. Multiple studies around the world have proven that conversion therapy is ineffective and that it can cause extensive mental harm including clinical depression and suicidal tendencies. Conversion therapy is widely condemned by multiple legitimate medical and psychological associations. The list of terms used in this research can be found in the appendix.
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2022 ONLINE CONVERSION THERAPY RESEARCH

In January 2022, the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) published extensive research on the online conversion “therapy” ecosystem. GPAHE looked at searches for terms related to conversion therapy in six countries and in four languages: Australia, Colombia, Germany, Ireland, Kenya in English and Swahili, and in the United States in English and Spanish. Conversion therapy materials were assessed on Google, Bing, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, and in some cases, PayPal and Alexa. In a separate report, the research also documented those conversion therapy providers that surfaced prominently in online searches. The list of terms used in this research can be found in the appendix.

GPAHE’s 2022 research was successfully used to educate tech companies on how they were failing users regarding disinformation about conversion therapy. Though some social media companies already supposedly banned or downgraded this material, it was still widely prevalent in 2022 and a significant number of providers had accounts on the major platforms. After GPAHE’s report, many providers were deplatformed on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, PayPal and Apple, and the algorithmic rabbit holes, the paths driving searchers to more and more disinformation, were mitigated. Search engines Google and Bing also made improvements to their algorithms. An effort spearheaded by GLAAD but employing GPAHE’s 2022 research led TikTok to ban promotion of conversion therapy on the platform, and today the platform seems relatively clear of such material.

These were considerable successes in protecting the public from online conversion therapy disinformation. But challenges remain particularly in the context of non-English languages, in the enforcement of the rules banning conversion therapy online, and in the skill with which promoters use social media to spread their dangerous messages while circumventing social media content moderation rules.

2023 ONLINE CONVERSION THERAPY RESEARCH

This 2023 report is a follow up GPAHE’s 2022 research and examines the same material in Brazil, Benin, Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, Mali, Mexico, South Africa in isiZulu, and the U.S. in English and Spanish. In the case of West Africa, French results were collected, and though local languages were tried, they rarely appeared in search results because of the lack of online material in languages such as Dioula. GPAHE has also added TikTok to its research in some cases.

For the purposes of this report, authoritative results are considered to be research produced by legitimate medical and psychological organizations, such as the World Health Organization, American Medical Association, or American Psychological Association, or research presented in scientific journals such as Psychology Today, Science, or Nature. Journalism or advocacy work that relies on these kinds of sources is also considered authoritative as are U.N. and other government scientific reports. It should be noted that dozens of medical and psychological professional organizations globally, as well as the U.N. special rapporteur on this issue, have condemned the practice.
Also for the purposes of this report, “providers” are considered to be therapists or organized outfits that have an online presence through a website or social media. A vast amount of conversion therapy is conducted in the shadows and offline. A finding of “no providers” in no way implies that conversion therapy isn’t rife in a particular region. This research was particularly looking for providers who were violating online and social media content rules.

GPAHE readily acknowledges that our research does not capture every possible result or every group that promotes conversion therapy. The online material is simply too vast. However, given the number of countries and languages we’ve researched, we are confident that we have identified significant online trends that can provide useful recommendations for protecting users searching for information on conversion therapy.

2023 GENERAL FINDINGS

GPAHE found deficiencies on all of the tech and social media platforms in its 2023 research, with some platforms performing better or worse for different terms and in various languages. We saw noticeable improvement in the U.S. English and Spanish results for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, especially in the form of mitigating rabbit holes, those suggestions that drive people to more and more problematic content. Bing gets a 2023 “most improved since 2022” rating among previously reviewed platforms, with TikTok having the best results overall. But outside the U.S., Google and YouTube generally return the least authoritative results for all search terms in all non-English languages, with YouTube being a disaster.

Extremely disconcerting is the disproportionate number of search and content results for all terms that send the user to American content - discredited studies and American therapists who push conversion therapy, as well as anti-LGBTQ+ faith-based organizations, many of which have been previously profiled by GPAHE. And of course, the vile anti-LGBTQ+ Russian website pro-LGBT.ru, run by Science for Truth, which also links to similar American and other Western outfits, makes several appearances in the results, as it has in research in other countries and many languages.

Once again, searches for the term “same-sex attraction” and “unwanted same-sex attraction” returned dismal results for all platforms in all languages. It appears that none of the tech platforms have made any progress into accounting for that phrase in their algorithms, a term which has been co-opted by anti-LGBTQ+ individuals and groups, and proponents of conversion therapy globally.

Aside from disappointing results in non-English languages, the most notable conclusion from this 2023 research is the general lack of authoritative returns and the lack of amplification of genuine, authoritative resources for people or their families struggling to understand homosexuality, or a nonbinary or transgender identity, or those questioning their place in their faith or contemplating suicide.

In other words, GPAHE researchers might have seen an authoritative result in the form of a news article or academic study in some of the research, but it wasn’t information designed to help LGBTQ+ people, especially young people. It is unclear if this is the result of a lack of authoritative resources in many languages, or simply that the sheer amount of harmful information far outweighs the authoritative in non-English languages. Whatever the cause, the tech platform algorithms are not currently returning authoritative results. In any case, the companies can choose to amplify any support group or site they want in order to ensure quality information is reaching those who have questions. This already happens in English in the US, for example, when YouTube places an information box featuring the Trevor Project when people search for conversion therapy. This could be done in all languages if YouTube so chose. TikTok helpfully returns a page saying the content is related to hateful information when users search for certain conversion therapy terms.
Conversion therapy is abhorrent and has been widely condemned by human rights experts and medical professionals. In July 2020, the UN’s independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity called for a global ban on efforts to “cure” LGBTQ+ people through efforts such as conversion therapy, arguing these practices inflict “severe pain and suffering” on those that experience them.

Victor Madrigal-Borloz wrote, “These interventions exclusively target LGBT+ persons with the specific aim of interfering in their personal integrity and autonomy because their sexual orientation or gender identity do not fall under what is perceived by certain persons as a desirable norm...They are inherently degrading and discriminatory and rooted in the belief that LGBT+ persons are somehow inferior, and that they must at any cost modify their orientation or identity to remedy that supposed inferiority.”

Overwhelming evidence shows that the practice is harmful and can lead to clinical depression and an increase in suicide attempts, in addition to other possible effects. Nearly every reputable medical association has said the same, including the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Pan American Health Association (part of the World Health Association), the World Psychiatric Association, the Psychological Association of Ireland, Australian Medical Association, Royal College of Psychiatrists, English National Health Service, Brazilian Council of Psychologists, and dozens of similar bodies across the globe.

Many of these professional organizations, including the AMA, have endorsed banning the “therapy.” In sum, there is worldwide agreement among medical and psychological professionals that conversion therapy is dangerous and causes harm to LGBTQ+ individuals. Those who promote or support the practices are spreading dangerous medical disinformation which should not be prominent online.

As of August 2023, 26 countries have some form of a ban on conversion therapy, and many of the bans passed in 2022 and 2023. Another eight countries, mostly in Europe, are considering bans. Eleven countries–Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Malta, New Zealand and Spain–ban the practice by any person. In some cases, these bans apply to medical professionals, essentially ending their role in the practice, as is the case in Brazil, and in other cases they carry criminal penalties. Parts of Mexico, Switzerland and Australia also ban the practice. Bans against the practice being used on minors are in place in 22 U.S. states plus Washington, D.C., where it also applies to adults, and 115 U.S. municipalities. An additional five states and Puerto Rico have partial bans.

This is great progress in a short period of time, but conversion therapy is still globally offered by counselors and religious-based institutions. Some programs trick people into participating, some use unlicensed individuals, some use fear of being in sin or losing one’s family, and all exacerbate any conflicted or negative feelings one might have about their identity or orientation.

Although in 2020, more than 400 faith leaders worldwide, including the late anti-apartheid campaigner Desmond Tutu, called for countries to overturn bans on same-sex relations and end LGBTQ+ conversion therapy and Pope Francis has shown concern about the practice, though the Catholic Church’s leadership varies in its response, it is still rife and largely under the radar especially among far-right evangelicals globally.

For the most part, it is Christian evangelical churches who emphasize the idea that being LGBTQ+ is a sin, or in other cases, it isn’t a sin but acting on it is. Large American social conservative far-right organizations such as Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council are avid proponents of conversion therapy.

One month after GPAHE published its 2022 research, a coalition of pro-conversion therapy groups posted an “International Declaration on ‘Conversion Therapy’ and Therapeutic Choice” calling on “our governments, local authorities, human rights, media and religious organizations, to recognise that the right to self-determination is an established principle of international law, and therefore must include the right to shape and develop one’s own sexual identity, feelings and associated behaviors, and to receive support to do so.”

As of October 2023, it had more than 1,600 signatories. The declaration is co-sponsored by anti-LGBTQ+ groups including Family Watch International (FWI) as well as a host of conversion therapy providers and supporters of the practice. FWI is particularly notorious for having...
coached “high-ranking Ugandan politicians and religious leaders for years to support their extreme and oppressive positions on gender and sexual diversity.” Uganda recently passed an Anti-Homosexuality Act, which calls for death for “aggravated homosexuality.”

Sadly, the U.S. has experienced backsliding on the issue of conversion therapy in the past two years, often coming from these extreme social conservative organizations and their elected allies on the far right. Indiana has prohibited local jurisdictions from banning conversion therapy and Alabama, Georgia, and Florida are in federal court with a preliminary injunction currently preventing enforcement of local jurisdictions’ conversion therapy bans.

This injunction is the result of a case brought by two conversion therapists against local bans in Florida. Finally, the new American Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, has long supported conversion therapy and once gave legal advice while serving as a lawyer for ADF to Exodus International and partnered with the group to put on an annual anti-LGBTQ+ event aimed at teens.

Exodus shut down in 2013 and its founder posted a public apology for the “pain and hurt” his organization had caused. In some progress, the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ American legal powerhouse, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), lost its appeal to the Supreme Court of a Ninth Circuit Appeals Court ruling that found bans on licensed therapists practicing conversion therapy legal.

There should be no confusion as to the motivation of groups like ADF and Family Watch International. They and groups like them are determined to dehumanize the LGBTQ+ community, strip them of their civil and human rights, and emphasize that members of the community are living outside biblical and moral standards.

This is a key tactic to push the U.S. towards Christian Nationalism. And this is a key tactic in their attempts to colonize other countries and cultures with their worldview. For example, on the African continent, homosexuality is often considered to be outside religious bounds and “unAfrican,” and as of 2019, OutRight Action International estimated that 75 percent of conversion therapy was conducted for religious and cultural reasons. Another OutRight study in three African countries showed that after family, religious leaders were the most common motivators to engage in conversion therapy.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Most online platforms consider conversion therapy to be hate speech or violative of their content rules, but GPAHE research again finds that while progress has been made, particularly regarding groups or individual conversion therapy promoters, there is much to be done by the search engines and social media that we rely on. These recommendations reflect the need to specifically address different aspects of the online ecosystem to ensure that users have access to authoritative material and information.

• All companies must use common sense when evaluating whether content violates rules on conversion therapy and remember that it is dangerous, and sometimes deadly, to allow pro-conversion therapy material to surface. It is quintessential medical disinformation.

• All companies must invest in non-English, non-American cultural and language resources. The disparity in the findings for non-English users is stark.

• All companies must elevate authoritative resources in the language being used for the terms found in the appendix.

• All companies must incorporate “same-sex attraction” and “unwanted same-sex attraction” into their algorithm that moderates conversion therapy content and elevate authoritative content.

• All companies must create or expand the use of authoritative information boxes about conversion therapy, preferably in the language being used.

• All online systems must keep up with the constant rebranding and use of new terms, in all languages, that the conversion therapy industry uses.

• All companies must refrain from defaulting to English content in non-English speaking countries where possible, and if this is the only content available it must be authoritative and translatable.

• All companies must avail themselves of civil society and subject matter experts to keep their systems current.

• Additional recommendations from previous GPAHE research.
Search results for conversion therapy or related phrases will often link to Wikipedia as an authoritative source. In English and other major languages, that tends to be generally fine as content is heavily edited and vetted by the Wikipedia community with reliable sources. But GPAHE’s research has found that Wikipedia pages vary widely by region and language.

For example, our previous research in Kenya in Swahili for the term “homosexuality” returned disinformation and disparagement of the LGBTQ+ community while the English entry was considerably more authoritative. Since the Kenyan research was published, the Swahili entry has been improved with the addition of some authoritative content, but much of the previous harmful information remains and clearly anti-LGBTQ+ sites like the Daily Signal and LifeSite News are cited.

By comparison, the South African Wikipedia entry is in English and highly authoritative. Wikipedia should implement global procedures that mandate inclusion of medically accepted information in entries through the application of their community standards or terms of service. Wikipedia should take a hard look at its material on conversion therapy and the LGBTQ+ community in all languages.
BRAZIL (PORTUGUESE)

Conversion Therapy Online in Brazil

LGBTQ+ people in Brazil have broad legal protections, if not lived equality, including a ban on conversion therapy since 1999 through the Council of Psychologists, which forbids therapists from this practice. This ban was upheld by the Brazilian Supreme Court in 2020 and is enforceable through licensing restrictions and criminal fraud procedures.

The Council has also recently issued guidance cautioning therapists from allowing their religious beliefs, that might be opposite of this prohibition, from seeping into their work. Still, Brazil has one of the highest murder rates of LGBTQ+ people in the world with a vocal anti-LGBTQ+ minority, both in politics and in the general populace, exacerbated by the election of President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 and his homophobic rhetoric, which contributed to a backlash against the LGBTQ+ community.

Brazil is the largest Catholic country and there is a very active and growing evangelical movement (evangelicals are expected to outnumber Catholics by 2032) which supports the idea that being LGBTQ+ is a sin and which pushes “faith-based” conversion therapy practices. (This movement has also been connected to religious bigotry, particularly against Afro-centric religions, a tiny segment of the religious community.)

As a result, most of the promotion of conversion therapy comes from the faith community, with most of the contemporary discussion centered around the long-standing ban and how it should be overturned, certainly for therapists of faith.

Despite legal protections, Brazilians seeking reliable information and resources related to conversion therapy will not find them online. In our research into the Brazilian conversion therapy online ecosystem in Portuguese, we found no referrals to reputable support organizations. In fact, there was very little content, whether news articles or websites, affirming being LGBTQ+ and providing support for those in need. The only exception was for ads to Better Help, an online therapy service, which do not explicitly affirm or state a position on conversion therapy.

The U.S. Wikipedia page for conversion therapy and related terms is quite authoritative, calling it a discredited pseudoscience. The version of a Wikipedia page found in Brazil is actually the page from Portugal which is at best, neutral, with only side references to criticism presented as a reasonable debate.

GPAHE has found the lack of Wikipedia accuracy on this issue in other countries and other languages, especially those spoken by fewer people.
SEARCH ENGINES

On Google, “same-sex attraction,” as found in other countries and languages, returns dismal results. GPAHE found zero authoritative results until the end of the second page of search results, and this was only a news article about the conversion therapy legal debate in Brazil.

The first two pages return a disproportionate number of results referencing American studies and providers like Joseph Nicolosi, Sr., the so-called “father of conversion therapy” who says in his video that same-sex attraction can be repaired safely. There were also links to Facebook pages, international conversion therapy providers, entries emphasizing that homosexuality is a sin, and that therapeutic help is available.

The terms “ex-gay therapy” and “reparative therapy” return mixed results with some sites affirming that being LGBTQ+ is not a mental disorder and others sending users to Nicolosi videos and books or to Joel 2:25 International. One of the more authoritative sites is from Portugal rather than from Brazil but none send a user to genuine resources. “Gay cure” therapy results on the first page brings generally authoritative results except for a video from Courage International preaching chastity in order to live without sin.

Again these are news articles related to the court cases but not referrals to genuine resources. By the second page, the results are poor.

As previous GPAHE research has found, the term “conversion therapy” returns mostly authoritative results. Here the first entry is from Brazil’s public prosecutor site stating that “conversion therapy was born out of bigotry.” However, the rest of the results are news articles and a 2019 video of the Israeli Ministry of Education defending conversion therapy and one on how former American President Donald Trump appointed a proponent of conversion therapy to be secretary of health and human services.

The phrases “Is it a sin to be gay” and “I don’t want to be gay” bring disturbing results. For the first, most links are to a Brazilian book in Portuguese titled “Boys don’t cry” about a young gay boy who is struggling with the idea that being gay is a sin. “I don’t want to be gay” brings more problematic results, sending users to sites that will “help them” not be gay. The first return on the second page is a video “Libertação’ de Gay na TV da ‘Igreja Universal’” (Gay ‘Liberation’ on ‘Universal Church’ TV) depicting a religious event “freeing” a young boy from homosexuality with whips and chains. There is a YouTube video embedded but it leads to a page saying YouTube has removed the channel.

On Bing, the term “same-sex attraction” is just as bad as it is on Google, if not worse, with more than two pages of returns devoted to a single site denying the naturalness of being LGBTQ+ and offering solutions to stop being LGBTQ+. By page three of results, Bing is returning only Spanish and Italian results. Searches for the term “ex-gay” are mostly authoritative but the sources are news articles and include two Wikipedia entries, one in Spanish. Again, there are no links offering genuine resources.

“Conversion therapy” returns surprisingly authoritative results from official sources and news articles condemning the practice, including a Bing generated flag at the top of the page. A knowledge box on page three unfortunately has information supporting conversion therapy. “Reparative therapy” brings published study results at the top of the page and an article about conversion therapy being banned in Brazil. Page two results quickly deteriorate. “Gay cure therapy” begins with authoritative sources but when Bing pushes its videos the results deteriorate bringing mixed results.

The side knowledge box provides authoritative information. One video from Rede Tv has a reporter on the street asking people if they believe that being gay can be cured. When most say no, they’re introduced to two pastors who describe how they’ve been cured. “Is it a sin to be gay?” and “I don’t want to be gay” bring several references to what the Bible says, mostly that it is not a sin to be gay but it is if one acts on it. Neither bring resources about how to find support.
SOCIAL MEDIA

Of all the platforms, only Facebook returned mixed results for a search for “same-sex attraction” but none were actually authoritative, instead returning unrelated results in addition to others pushing people to convert or not live as LGBTQ+ people. “Ex-gay therapy” on Facebook returned mostly religious pages in Spanish and English but two Brazilian pages have testimonies from “ex-gay” people. Several groups in Portuguese appeared but mostly about general therapy with two others promoting the stories of ex-gay people. “Gay cure” therapy returned mixed results.

Searching for “conversion therapy” brings generally good results with only three posts and videos encouraging conversion therapy including one from Joseph Nicolosi, Sr. “Reparative therapy” turned up Nicolosi videos and one Mexican page, Reparative Therapy for Teens. For “is it a sin to be gay,” Facebook elevates very disappointing results with almost all encouraging people to believe that living a LGBTQ+ life is a sin, meaning that being LGBTQ+ isn’t a sin but acting on it is. “I don’t want to be gay” showed mixed results with most encouraging a life of chastity rather than living as an LGBTQ+ person.

Searches on Twitter for all terms mostly returned individual tweets. “Conversion therapy” tweets were mostly positive. “Reparative therapy” generally promoted the need for conversion therapy. For “same-sex attraction,” there were many posts supporting conversion therapy and recommendations for where to get help changing one’s orientation. “Ex gay therapy” returned results in Spanish and Italian, mostly about how ex-gay therapy doesn’t work, but it would be better if those results were in Portuguese.

“Gay cure therapy” on Twitter had few results, but the Catholic ex-gay provider, Courage International, showed up asking users to watch their videos. Similarly, “is being gay a sin” tweets said it isn’t but acting on it is. And “I don’t want to be gay” had few results but one video pushed chastity in order to live with God.

As mentioned above and in previous GPAHE research, YouTube is generally a disaster when it comes to conversion therapy content. The exception is searching specifically for “conversion therapy” in the U.S. where one can reasonably expect to see the information box directing the user to Wikipedia or the Trevor Project, where the practice is accurately debunked. Results deteriorate for other terms even in the U.S. The term “same-sex attraction” brings a host of disinformation in the videos with testimonials from people who have been “cured,” therapists insisting that orientation and identity can be changed although it is very hard work, and Joel 2:25 International providing “support for overcoming sexuality,” and multiple videos from Joseph Nicolosi, Sr., and another that promotes North Star Saints, an organization founded by men who had been involved in People Can Change and Journey into Manhood, now called Brothers Road, an American conversion therapy organization.

Searching for “ex gay therapy” mostly returned videos saying that conversion therapy doesn’t work, but unfortunately several were in English and there were no YouTube information boxes. One video says that one can choose to follow the Bible and “stop doing gay things” and emphasizes the need to “fight the rest of your life against the flesh.” “Conversion therapy” displayed mostly videos saying that it doesn’t work but the second video on the page actually promotes conversion therapy. “Gay cure” therapy returned many videos supporting the idea of change, mostly encouraging chastity.

There was a disturbing video from Rede Tv with participants talking about how “homosexuals are evil spirits” and “God will set you free.” “Reparative therapy” returned a mix of results but they were largely in English and Spanish with more links to Nicolosi, Sr., Joel 2:25 International and a link to Joseph Nicolosi, Jr.’s reintegration therapy. The videos about “is being gay a sin” initially give users comfort that it isn’t, only to learn that acting on homosexuality is a sin, and people must live in chastity. “I don’t want to be gay” returned several videos about being chaste and not acting on LGBTQ+ sexual desires and testimonials from “ex-gay” people.
GPAHE profiles the groups that appear most frequently in our research on the conversion therapy ecosystem. In Brazil, the overriding themes were that homosexuality is a sin and one must be chaste or live a heterosexual life in order to be in God’s grace and that psychologists should be able to offer conversion therapy to clients, which has been banned since 1999 because Brazil does not consider being LGBTQ+ a mental disorder. Practice of these “cures” can be prosecuted as fraud.

Many groups appeared while researching Brazil, including **previously profiled groups** like Joel 2:25 International in Portuguese, Courage/Encourage International from a Catholic priest, Exodus Global Alliance, Brothers Road, and of course Joseph Nicolosi, Sr. and Jr.

Additionally, references to discredited American studies on homosexuality promoted by groups like NARTH and IFTCC were quite prominent. Exodus Brazil of course came up, but they have announced their closing (although social media is still active) and recommended their followers to look to David Riker (Movimento SER), Andrea Vargas (Alavanche Missões), and Willy Torresin (Paz com Deus).

All these organizations are active and interconnected, jointly announcing events, courses, or partnerships, and these individuals generate a substantial amount of online content. Through the research, it seems clear that the following are also leaders in the anti-LGBTQ+ and conversion therapy movement: Débora Fonseca (Luz na Noite), Juliana Ferron (Ministério Calvário Sexualidade), and Saulo Navarro (Ministério Búsola Sexualidade – Support Group “Fonte de Jacó”).

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to get comprehensive information on these groups so there are only two full profiles. The rest illustrate the online presence of those promoting conversion therapy. The online material is written carefully so as to not run afoul of Brazilian laws or social media rules, and GPAHE could find very few news articles on them.

The groups that surfaced have large social media presences and most are connected to a church and to each other. Several offer classes and counseling on sexuality, **some for a fee**, although it’s unclear how they are able to do this given the law. Participation in the classes requires multiple steps of verification.

Yet, they are all very connected, with each referring to the others, recommending others, and appearing together at events.
Ministério Bussola Sexualidade
(Sexuality Compass Ministry)

Curitiba, Brazil

https://pibcuritiba.org.br/aconselhamento/
https://bio.link/bussolasexualidade
https://www.youtube.com/@bussolasexualidade
https://www.instagram.com/bussolasexualidade/?hl=en
https://www.facebook.com/ministeriobussola

The Sexuality Compass program is a project with certified therapists of the Primeira Igreja Batista de Curitiba (First Baptist Church of Curitiba) and has a stated mission of “ministering restoration in identity and sexuality, through the promotion of knowledge that brings prevention, correction and positioning actions in the face of the challenges of post-modernity.”

In other words, the program will help one leave the homosexual or transgender life and be restored to heterosexuality as God intended. For a fee, people can enroll in its 12-module class on sexuality including modules titled “reflections on a diseased sexuality” and “strategies and prevention” which is designed to teach children how not to be LGBTQ+.

One of the support groups is the “Fonte de Jacó” (Jacob’s Fountain) group, aimed at fathers, mothers and relatives of people who are in conflict with their identity and sexuality. Another is the Identity Support Group which is for men and women seeking help with their sexuality or identity.

The program and its class on sexuality feature prominently in the Brazilian conversion therapy space and is referenced or connected to nearly all groups and programs that GPAHE researched for this report.

One of the psychologists involved in the Compass program and a member of the First Baptist Church is Deuza Maria Avellar who is opposed to “gender ideology” and has openly defended attacking the LGBTQ+ community and the “gay cure,” saying that homosexuality is the product of brainwashing by the media and is only a temporary condition. She has also been associated with the MEGB- Ex-Gays Movement of Brazil.
Missão Luz na Noite

(Mission Light in the Night)

http://luznanoite.com.br/
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrCsx7mVyXwwkNMG3IwiYug
https://www.facebook.com/LuzNaNoite/?locale=pt_BR
https://www.instagram.com/luznanoite/
https://twitter.com/LuzNaNoite
https://open.spotify.com/show/6rqLA8t8Iuxrs5XLJytcW
http://luznanoite.com.br/cursosexualidade-m1/
https://www.facebook.com/LuzNaNoite/?locale=de_DE
http://luznanoite.com.br/quemsomos/

Formed in 2001 by Débora Fonseca e Cunha and Húdson de Lima Pereira, and Chrystine Pereira Viana and Lenildo Viana, under the name, Luz na Orla (Light on the Edge) as a project of the Presbyterian Church of Jardim Camburi, the original mission was conducting outreach to “transvestites, prostitutes, and call boys.”

That same year they hosted its first seminar on Homosexuality with Exodus Global Alliance, Exodus Brazil (which has now closed its doors) once called Exodus International before it was changed in 2013, to reawaken the Church to the sinfulness of homosexuality and the need to minister to the LGBTQ+ community.

The mission is to “support those who wish to voluntarily abandon the practice of homosexuality.” Working with Exodus was a longstanding partnership, later joined by Avalanche Ministry, and they would go on to hold seminars on the “Causes of Homosexuality” and “Roots of Homosexuality” and a broad conference focused on “Gender Ideology.”

Today, Missão Luz na Noite hosts courses on sexuality and Christian counseling for those who wish to leave homosexuality. The Missão Luz na Noite website offers many resources, among them papers titled “Nobody is born gay” and “The Role of the Church in the Face of Homosexuality.” Missão Luz na Noite is vigorously anti-LGBTQ+, wants to deny medical care for transgender people, and notes that the movement for LGBTQ+ rights is an effort to move away from the church and interfere with freedom or religion.

The organization continues to be led by Débora Fonseca and is partnered with other anti-LGBTQ+ groups like Avalanche Missions, Jocum Vitoria, and First Baptist Church of Jardim Camburi which hosts the Sexualality Compass program.
Renovo (Renew) RENEW emotional support for Christians in the process of restoring their sexuality.

https://twitter.com/renovo_advec?lang=en
https://www.facebook.com/renovoapoioemocional/
https://www.instagram.com/renovo_advec/?igshid=MzRlODBBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

ADHT - Associação para Defesa da Heterossexualidade (ADHT - Association for the Defense of Heterosexuality)

https://twitter.com/renovo_advec?lang=en
https://www.facebook.com/renovoapoioemocional/
https://www.instagram.com/renovo_advec/?igshid=MzRlODBBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

Ministério Libertas Por Jesus (Freed By Jesus Ministry)

https://www.facebook.com/ministeriolibertasporjesus/
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0oOVMAlfitaFm8tuKvwTQ
https://www.instagram.com/somoslpj/?igshid=gecry7h2mblg
Ministerio SER (Ministry- SER Sexuality and Restoration)

https://www.facebook.com/ministerioseroficial/
https://www.facebook.com/david.riker.54
https://www.facebook.com/ministerioseroficial/videos/1615202961909716/
https://www.facebook.com/ministerioseroficial/?locale=he_IL

Ministério RPII (RP2 - Redemption Pedro II)

https://ministeriorp2.com/
https://www.facebook.com/ministeriorp2/?ref=embed_page
https://www.instagram.com/ministerio_rp2/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZAI3D3D

Os ex-gays (The ex-gays)

https://www.oexgays.com/
https://www.facebook.com/Osexgays/?ref=embed_page
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCn-g8k_sXdqIaQaJkXRemA
Abusados na Infância (Abused in Childhood)

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSQCatfa8fwBMiQMnTbYlW
instagram.com/abusadosnainfancia

Courage Brasil

https://www.instagram.com/courage_brasil/?hl=en
https://www.youtube.com/c/CourageBrasil
https://www.facebook.com/brasil.courage

Avalanche Missões

https://avalanchemissoes.org/
https://avalanchemissoes.org/aconselhamento-em-sexualidade/
https://www.instagram.com/avalanchemissoes/?hl=en
https://www.facebook.com/avalanchemissoes/
https://www.facebook.com/avalanchemissoes/?locale=pt_BR
https://www.youtube.com/user/Avalanchemissoes
https://www.linkedin.com/company/avalanchemissoes/about/
https://twitter.com/SouAvalanche
https://open.spotify.com/show/5S3A7E4w3wehravVwhcEbZ
https://www.facebook.com/Exgayexiste
https://www.facebook.com/groups/126703141368372?locale=pt_BR

MEGB - Movimento Ex Gays Brasil

https://www.facebook.com/Exgayexiste
https://www.facebook.com/groups/126703141368372?locale=pt_BR

Robson Staines

https://www.instagram.com/robsonstaines/?hl=en
https://www.facebook.com/robsonstainesofc/
https://www.youtube.com/@robsonstaines5957
https://www.tiktok.com/@robsonstaines
Ministério Libertos por Deus by Flavio and Andréia (Freed by God Ministry)

(Group for “exit” release from sexual captivity - 11 administrators from multiple organizations)

https://www.youtube.com/@flavioamaraleandreiacastro
facebook.com/flavioamaraltransformadopordeus
https://www.facebook.com/groups/libertospordeus/?locale=pt_BR
instagram.com/prflavioamaral/?hl=pt-br
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClsGDumM_CmC2ab0jeOTOHg
https://www.instagram.com/libertosdeus/?igshid=MzRI0DBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

Joel 2:25 Portuguese

https://www.joel225portugues.org/
https://www.joel225portugues.org/em-que-cremos
https://twitter.com/Joel225Intl
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxfQrTAkn7Pz6-Y3aMYMYZw
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PL4K_I9lo5wnrWtJ2IKVg4WLvgMiER6X2b
https://rumble.com/c/c-538343
https://m.facebook.com/Joel225Intl/
https://m.facebook.com/joel225portugues/events/?ref=page_internal
https://www.paypal.com/donate?token=fjgWOEt5rvkYHbBFaUwYugaxpDeDwkcspbsVzUVKyxNyOqS1DQYk0YvXnqAU_5bDwYomkdxr0EN2kTjb
**MEXICO (SPANISH)**

**Conversion Therapy Online in Mexico**

Generally, material about conversion therapy in Mexico was authoritative, perhaps the result of this practice being banned in many Mexican states while a federal ban is under consideration. As a result, there are news stories and a conversation about the practice in the country. But as in many settings the term “unwanted same-sex attraction” returned the most problematic results.

When returning unauthoritative results, in the Mexican context, many were links to Mormon Church articles, the Catholic ex-gay ministry Courage, and the anti-LGBTQ+ Spanish organization, CitizenGO, and religious institutions in Latin America. For the most part, social media had no links or pro-conversion therapy materials, excepting YouTube.

**SEARCH ENGINES**

The results for searches on both Bing and Google in Mexico (Spanish) on many conversion therapy terms gave somewhat similar results to those in English in the U.S., and often gave results in English. For terms returning unauthoritative material, the results were generally worse than in the U.S. and there were far more links to problematic materials. Google and Bing searches for “conversion therapy,” “sexual orientation,” “why am I gay,” “gay cure,” and “I don’t want to be gay,” return almost entirely authoritative results but most were in English. Interestingly, the term “conversion therapy” returned authoritative results, but mostly in Spanish, perhaps reflecting that the topic is in the news currently as Mexico is moving to adopt a federal law against the practice, which is already banned in 16 states.

As in the U.S., search terms involving “same-sex attraction” are a different matter entirely, resulting in significantly less authoritative results. On Google, “overcoming same-sex attraction” returns two top results from the Mormon Church and one from the Catholic ex-gay ministry Courage. Another Google link is to the Lausanne movement, which vows to contrast “the purity of God’s love with the ugliness of counterfeit love that masquerades in disordered sexuality and all that goes along with it.” Bing’s results are dominated by Mormon Church articles, The Gospel Coalition, and several Catholic sites. “Unwanted same-sex attraction” returns similarly suspect results on Google including at the top the U.S. Catholic Medical Association’s 2018 study, published in the Linacre Quarterly, supporting conversion therapy’s efficacy.

Only two results on the first page link to authoritative sources, and the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Spanish organization, CitizenGO, is on page two. The CitizenGO link is to their page protesting the World Psychiatry Association’s (WPA) designation that same-sex attraction is not a treatable condition. The article is accompanied by a petition against WPA with more than 43,000 signatures since 2016. A Bing search for the term shows only two relevant authoritative links and otherwise duplicates many of the links from Google as well as a link to Good Reads offering for sale a book in Spanish by Nicolosi, Jr.

A Google search for “same-sex attraction” returns links to the Mormon Church material, Courage International, Juan Varela’s evangelical Institute of Family Formation based out of Spain, and Notivida from Argentina, which links to the U.S. Catholic Medical Association. Bing presents only two authoritative results, with the rest leaning heavily to Mormon Church and Catholic sites. For “reparative therapy,” Google’s top two links are to Catholic sites. Another site of note is the National Front for the Family, Mexico, a coalition of more than 1,000 organizations formed after Mexico attempted to legalize same-sex marriage in 2016.
This link offers a PDF of Nicolosi, Sr.’s book Reparative Therapy of Masculine Homosexuality. Bing links to a two-hour interview with conversion therapist Richard Cohen. For “reintegrative therapy,” the first three Google results are links to reintegrativetherapy.com, the outfit of Joseph Nicolosi, Jr., and for which GPAHE previously exposed a Mexican connection. Google also links to the Apple podcast, “A Way Beyond the Rainbow,” that discusses LGBTQ+ Muslims and features an interview with a principal at Nicolosi, Jr.’s Breakthrough Clinic.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook searches led to very few results by conversion therapy providers or other disinformation, and rabbit holes hopping from one provider to another are no longer extant. A search for “same-sex attraction” returned pages from Courage International and Courage Latino, both Catholic-based conversion therapy providers. “Reparative therapy” linked to a video advocating conversion therapy from a Mexican Catholic psychotherapist, an interview with Nicolosi posted by the Paraguayan group Movimiento Para la Vida y La Familia (Movement for Life and Family), and a clip from Peruvian psychologist Lola Sheen de Vergara, who is connected to NARTH, in support of conversion therapy.

Much like in the U.S. case, Twitter results appear to be almost patternless and only a few search terms point to conversion therapy providers, though these are problematic. There are no more rabbit holes, as searches on Twitter don’t often make recommendations for similar content and seem dominated by whatever is in the news at the time of the search. Most of the search terms returned posts in Spanish that were unrelated to the topic at hand, a few returned a post or two that was anti-LGBTQ+, but generally the material was unconnected.

“Unwanted same-sex attraction” did return problematic material including links to Nicolosi material, Mormon Church conversion therapy material, and links to Richard Cohen material posted by @yopuedocambiar (@icanchange). “Overcoming same-sex attraction” led to several posts from Amor en Movimiento, an Ecuadorian group. Another individual posted the petition from the conversion therapy group previously profiled by GPAHE, International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice, in which “experts” from 23 countries’ ask governments for support of conversion therapy. “Reparative therapy” led to multiple posts either by or about Nicolosi and Courage Brasil, but they were mixed in with posts supporting the LGBTQ+ community. “Reintegrative therapy” was the most problematic, with multiple links to Nicolosi, Jr., material, interviews and videos.

As was the case in the U.S. in both English and Spanish, TikTok was the cleanest platform in Mexico, returning no unauthoritative results for conversion therapy, and often no results at all. It also displayed a warning about hateful material on certain search terms, including “conversion therapy.” The only problematic material surfaced on TikTok came after a search for “is it a sin to be gay.” It returned a video from Yadira Leandry, who has 50,000 followers. The video condemns “homosexuals” as unnatural, along with abortion, in the eyes of God, basing her opinions on Bible verses.

YouTube searches for conversion therapy terms turn up worse results than they do in the U.S. context. Some terms returned authoritative sources, such as “ex-gay therapy;” and others, such as “reintegrative therapy” gave unrelated results. A YouTube search for “same-sex attraction” leads entirely to links to religious individuals and groups. Of note is Pentecostal Generation, which has a very active social media presence and is focused on teens. One video features an interview with Sam Allberry, Spanish pastor Itiel Arroyo (video has more than 50,000 views) who advocates for celibacy, EWTN, HM (Home of the Mother) TV, and Life Action Ministries, among others. “Unwanted same-sex attraction” on YouTube only turns up two relevant authoritative links.

A search for Nicolosi Jr.’s “reintegrative therapy” was particularly problematic. YouTube videos on this search term almost always are prefaced by a label about the dangers of conversion therapy, but yield many links to groups and individuals promoting the practice.
These include Reintegrative Therapy Stories, a YouTube channel with 70 subscribers hosting 17 short personal pro-reintegrative therapy stories, apparently a rebranding of the Reintegrative Therapy channel that saw several videos deplatformed as a result of the 2022 GPAHE research. YouTube also hosts the channel for International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice featuring Tim Long, a California Reintegrative Therapist, trained under Nicolosi, Jr. In an interview with Nicolosi Jr. hosted by the anti-LGBTQ+ Ruth Institute, Nicolosi claims that fear of women is a result of a domineering mother or fathers who are dismissive of a sons’ feelings. Another video features Andrew Rodriguez, host and reparative therapist (Integrity Christian Counseling, Pottstown, PA), who plays the “Free to Love” documentary (banned by YouTube) by the Reintegrative Therapy Association and splices in commentary. Another video from Rodriguez details his 2022 presentation at the 2nd conference of the ACHHS (Association of Christians in Health & Human Services).

**MEXICAN PROVIDERS**

GPAHE’s research on conversion therapy in Mexico did not return links to providers in the region, although this is not an indication of the frequency of conversion therapy efforts, only a lack of online presence. Most of the links went back to prominent American providers such as Joseph Nicolosi, Jr., or to evangelical and “pro-family” organizations, some in Mexico and other parts of Latin America.
WEST AFRICA: BENIN, BURKINA FASO, MALI AND IVORY COAST (FRENCH)

Conversion Therapy Online in West Africa

GPAHE conducted research in four West African countries in French. The search results returned a mix of French, often Canadian sources in that language, and English sources. It is important to note that although being LGBTQ+ is legal in all four countries, there are no protections from discrimination and rights are restricted including those of adoption, same-sex marriage, and housing, among others. Conversion therapy is allowed in all four countries.

Common local languages like Dioula did not return results, as there is very little content on the search engines in those languages on many topics. Interestingly, the results across the four countries were essentially the same, indicating that search engines may treat all of these countries as part of one region, something that doesn’t happen in many other parts of the world. For example, results from GPAHE’s Mexican research are significantly different from those in Spanish in the U.S.

The biggest problem with these results overall is that, although there wasn’t a lot of disinformation on the issue of conversion therapy, there also wasn’t a lot of information period about what conversion therapy is, its dangers, and how it has been discredited by medical and psychological associations.

This leaves users without an accurate picture of the practice, and thus uninformed and able to be influenced in other ways. Finally, the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian site, pro-LGBT.ru, keeps turning up in results, a problem found in many countries both in GPAHE’s earlier research and its 2023 research.

SEARCH ENGINES

On Google, the results for “conversion therapy” are entirely authoritative on the first page. There are links to research reports and news stories from Quebec, Belgium and France and an accurate Wikipedia page in French on the topic. The results for “reparative therapy” are also surprisingly authoritative. Only one result on the first page links to a report that defends the therapy.

Searching for “sexual attraction fluidity exploration in therapy” returns some authoritative results and often links to French Canadian results, including news stories and research from universities in the region, many hosted on erudit.org, but the second result links to the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian site, pro-LGBT.ru.

It also led to a page on Christian Counselor Directory touting American conversion therapist Rober Vazzo’s work. “Overcoming same-sex attraction” led to two top results from the Mormon Church, as well as additional ones on the first page. One link was to a Catholic conference in Quebec calling on LGBTQ+ people to be treated with dignity, but remain celibate. Only one result from 2012 was an authoritative Canadian press report in French that discussed how Americans David Pickup and Rabbi Aryeh Dudovitz would charge $12,000 to turn people straight.

Results for “is it a sin to be gay” returned mostly sites saying yes it is, but it isn’t a crime, which is the Pope’s position. Results centered around the Pope’s words and Catholic sites affirming his views. Nothing was returned regarding conversion therapy. After the first page, the results degrade quickly, returning several biblical sites. The remainder of the search terms largely returned unrelated material.
A West African search on Bing in French for reintegrative therapy returned as its second result the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian site, pro-lgbt.ru.

Google results from West Africa in French were generally authoritative or completely unrelated to the issue of conversion therapy. This may be because most of the results originated from Quebec, Canada, France and Belgium.

Many reflected the Pope’s views that homosexuality is a sin, but not a crime. Though “overcoming same-sex attraction” returned the most problematic results, the fact is that in the region unauthoritative results were less likely than in other parts of the world GPAHE studied.

This is not necessarily a good result; although there wasn’t a lot of disinformation on the issue, there also wasn’t a lot of information period about what conversion therapy is, its dangers, and how it has been discredited by medical and psychological associations. This leaves those who search without an accurate picture of the practice, and thus uninformed and able to be influenced in other ways.

On Bing, “reintegrative therapy” returned as first a link to cairn.info, an academic publisher of French language materials, but unrelated issues. But the second result was to the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian site pro-lgbt.ru touting Nicolosi, Jr.’s therapy. On “unwanted same-sex attraction” the second result was a Quebec pro-life page reporting on Nicolosi Jr.’s therapy as being successful. Other results were unrelated to the issue.

“Same-sex attraction” returned several pages by the Mormon Church holding their position that homosexuality is a sin and must not be acted on.

There was one authoritative result from a French medical site on issues regarding being LGBTQ+, but it did not address conversion therapy. “Sexual attraction fluidity exploration in therapy” returned as its first result a Quebec Pro-Life site featuring Nicolosi, Jr.’s therapy. The rest of the results were unrelated.

“Is it a sin to be gay” returned results on the Pope’s views that being LGBTQ+ is a sin, but not a crime. An authoritative Wikipedia page in French on various religious views on the issue also came up on the first page.
SOCIAL MEDIA

On YouTube, the results for “ex-gay therapy” returned largely authoritative results, including a news report on ex-gays that called the therapy ineffective, another on the deficiencies of the “therapy,” and a first-person report by a man who was put through an exorcism by his parents to change his sexual orientation. There was one video by people who claimed to have been cured of their homosexuality. None of the videos had any disclaimers about the practice of conversion therapy, which is more often displayed on English materials.

“Overcoming same-sex attraction” returned multiple videos arguing that conversion therapy works, none with a disclaimer. “Sexual attraction fluidity exploration in therapy” returned some of the exact same pro-conversion therapy videos.

Search on Facebook did not lead to rabbit holes or any material related to the issue of conversion therapy. The only site that came up for an affiliated organization was the page for PFOX, Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays, which claims it “strives to end discrimination against ex-gays” and help “parents and friends of gays who want help, hope and community.” PFOX argues no one is born gay and advocates for conversion therapy.

In 2010, LGBTQ+ rights advocate Wayne Besen described PFOX as being “as sickening as it is scandalous,” alleging that PFOX has been tied to “an eliminationist campaign, worldwide, against gay people” including advocating for an earlier version of the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which was finally passed in 2022 and calls for death for those involved in “aggravated homosexuality.” GPAHE did not conduct research on Twitter and TikTok in West Africa.

WEST AFRICAN PROVIDERS

Searches in West Africa did not unearth an online presence for local providers of the practice, but given the context of conversion therapy practices in Africa, this in no way suggests that the practice isn’t rife. It is simply that they do not have a significant web or social media presence. Some results did return providers in other regions. One link went to the Association of Biblical Counselors which says it is “a comprehensive listing of Professional and Pastoral therapists who aspire to strong principals, ethics, and Christian faith. We ask all our participants to be either a board certified or state licensed professional or pastoral therapist who has earned at least a graduate degree in counseling, psychology, or related field.”

The specific page that surfaced in the West African research was a page for Robert L. Vazzo, an American provider. It noted that Vazzo’s interests include “professional interests include working with men, many of whom present with issues such as ego dystonic homosexuality, transvestic fetishism, hebephilia/ephelophilia and pedophilia as well as pornography addiction and personality disorders” and that he “speaks French fluently, has lived and worked in France, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey and maintains an active interest in multicultural counseling.”

It is unclear how many conversion therapists are on the site as there is no search mechanism for keywords; rather one can only search for therapists in their areas. However, links to their foundational beliefs are clearly anti-LGBTQ+.

There were also links to the French group, Torrents de Vie (Torrents of Life, TdV) a conversion therapy provider that provides several courses as well as counseling groups in multiple cities including Avignon, Bordeaux, Bourgogne Franche Comte, Ile de France Sud, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Paris, Normandy, Nimes, and Nantes. TdV was founded in July 1995 by Swiss pastor Werner Loertscher, who at that time ran a Protestant church in Belleville, after he attended a seminar with American evangelical Andrew Comiskey.
France banned conversion therapy in 2022 and after a hidden camera investigation in 2023 by a journalist at BFM TV into TdV, Bérangère Couillard, Minister Delegate for Equality between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination, referred their activities to the public prosecutor. Sonia Backès, Secretary of State for Citizenship, asked for a study into possible sanctions.

Torrents de Vie says on its website that it is a member of the Conseil National des Evangéliques de France, or National Council of Evangelicals in France. On September 12, 2023, the CNEF decided to launch an internal investigation into the organization.

**Torrents Of Life**

https://torrentsdevie.fr/

Torrents de Vie (Torrents of Life, TdV) provides several courses as well as counseling groups in multiple French cities including Avignon, Bordeaux, Bourgogne Franche Comte, Ile de France Sud, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Paris, Normandy, Nimes, and Nantes. TdV was founded in July 1995 by Swiss pastor Werner Loertscher, who at that time ran a Protestant church in Belleville, after he attended a seminar with American evangelical Andrew Comiskey. Torrents of Life’s program was initially written by Comiskey, and the group claims “to help homosexual Christian people, who feel uncomfortable with their identity, to find resources in Jesus.”

Cominskey is an American conservative Christian activist and the founder of Desert Stream Ministries (profiled by GPAHE in its 2021 research), a former ministry of the now defunct conversion therapy outfit Exodus International, which was shuttered after its founder apologized for all the hurt it had done. Cominskey has written several books, many sold on the Torrents of Life website, based on his experience with avoiding homosexual relationships and behaviors, and gives seminars to those who wish to be free from such relationships and behaviors.

Torrents of Life’s programs claims to combine “the Word of God with elements of psychology. The steps of this program have proven their effectiveness for many other situations of sexual or relational malaise.” The group says it welcomes “Christians in identity or relational malaise, sexual dependents or in a dysfunctional experience.” France banned conversion therapy in 2022 and after a hidden camera investigation in 2023 by a journalist at BFM TV into TdV, Bérangère Couillard, Minister Delegate for Equality between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination, says she has referred their activities to the public prosecutor.

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SOUTH AFRICA (ISIZULU)

Conversion Therapy Online in South Africa

GPAHE conducted research in South Africa in isiZulu in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and its Inclusive Governance Initiative. South Africa’s post-apartheid Constitution was the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation, and South Africa was the fifth country in the world and the first in Africa to legalise same-sex marriage. LGBTQ+ people have constitutional and statutory protections from discrimination in employment, the provision of goods and services and many other areas. Nevertheless, LGBTQ+ South Africans face horrific violence, including so-called “corrective rape,” and hate crimes.

Additionally, conversion therapy is not banned in South Africa, though in April 2023, in coordination with OutRight International, the Psychological Society of South Africa met in Johannesburg with mental health professionals from across the African continent to speak out against conversion therapy.

Regardless, the practice is widespread and horribly damaging. In one monstrous example from 2015, owners of a conversion therapy camp were found guilty of murder, child abuse and assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm after three teens were found dead at their camp. The teens, reportedly, were punched, beaten with spades and rubber pipes, chained to their beds, not allowed to use the toilets at any time and were forced to eat soap and their own feces, all with the aim of “curing” their homosexuality.

The research concentrated on search only, and though LGBTQ+ South Africans may have official legal protections, they are disparaged horribly in the online space. The sheer amount of disinformation about the LGBTQ+ community and conversion therapy was frankly astonishing.

Additionally, many terms in isiZulu relating to conversion therapy returned disturbing results. The first was from a Jehovah’s Witness website that talks of how the Bible rejects same-sex relations and compares being LGBTQ+ with the choice to smoke or engage in aggressive behavior, and calls it “unclean.”

Overall, there is limited information on the LGBTQ+ community in isiZulu on Google, and most of it is disparaging disinformation. Results for the isiZulu term that broadly covers conversion therapy, “Ukukhipha ubutabane,” also returned problematic results. After one authoritative result, the Russian anti-LGBTQ+ hate site pro-LGBT.ru was the second result, with a link to an entry that describes being LGBTQ+ is a mental illness, and then the Jehovah’s Witness post.
Another isiZulu term for conversion therapy, “Ukushintsha ubutabane,” brought more authoritative results, with links to news articles including one reporting on an incident where traditional leaders expressed opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, but a the political party Democratic Alliance disagreed. Another article reported on a clash between the UK and Qatar on LGBTQ+ rights in the context of the World Cup.

Interestingly, other search terms on Google for “gay cure,” “conversion therapy,” and “reintegrative therapy” basically turned up nothing related to conversion therapy. Though at least there were no links to disinformation about the practice or providers, the results also provided no authoritative research about the widely-condemned practice itself. In other words, those searching on the topic would not know that it has been denounced by most medical and psychiatric professional organizations, but at least searchers weren’t driven to discredited providers or sites.

A search for “is it a sin to be gay,” turned up a couple of authoritative sites, but also one about priests who claim to have holy water that can turn an LGBTQ+ person straight. The term “Izinkonkoni,” also for homosexuality, returned a Twitter thread on the history of the term, an authoritative opinion article (News24) on homosexuality, the law, and violence against LGBTQ+ people. The third and fourth results were social media posts by LGBTQ+ people with LGBT hashtags.

Another was a YouTube video of a traditional healer who claims that children are born gay because a parent had an abortion before they were pregnant with the “gay” child and the “unborn/aborted” child was of an opposite gender. The healer claims that the spirit of the unborn possesses the child and turns them LGBTQ+.

Bing’s search results returned the same dehumanizing material as Google’s for the words “ubutabane” and “ubungqingili,” meaning homosexuality. The remaining terms weren’t much better. “Izinkonkoni” returned one authoritative paper by academics from Stellenbosch University and the University of KwaZulu Natal, and additional results were for truck companies, and a lodge.

The rest of the terms returned nothing relevant. As with some Google searches, in isiZulu often there are not meaningful results, thus leaving those doing research without authoritative information about conversion therapy.

GPAHE did not conduct research on social media in South Africa.
Conversion Therapy Online

SEARCH ENGINES

First page search results on Bing were considerably more authoritative than when GPAHE conducted its research in 2022 (GPAHE met with Bing’s engineer in 2022 to discuss the prior dismal results). Nearly every search term returned authoritative results from sites including WebMD, Psychology Today, the United Nations, and reports from medical associations, and very few conversion therapy providers surfaced in Bing’s results.

The term that was most problematic, as everywhere, was “overcoming same-sex attraction,” where the top five results were links to a handful of providers including Brother’s Road and Live Hope, as well as a report from the private Christian university Biola. Interspersed were legitimate sources from Psychology Today, the APA and New Scientist.

A search for “reintegrative therapy” did lead to Nicolosi Jr.’s website, but it was at the bottom of the page. Some of the results returned pornographic videos. Google’s results were much less authoritative than Bing’s. Many led directly to conversion therapists or “resources” from the Mormon Church or pro-conversion therapy organizations such as Focus on the Family, the Florida Family Policy Council, and the Family Research Council. Particularly unauthoritative were the results for “unwanted same-sex attraction,” which in the first five results only provided one authoritative link from the National Institutes of Health.

The others, including the first result, were conversion therapy providers or supporters. A search for “overcoming same-sex attraction” resulted in the top three results coming from pro-conversion therapy organizations.

A search for reintegrative therapy led directly to Nicolosi Jr.’s website, and other top results were for conversion therapy providers such as David Pickup. It even gave a link to Nicolosi, Jr.’s, TikTok page, a page that appears to violate TikTok’s policies. Generally, Google’s English results were far less authoritative than those

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook is far more authoritative in terms of search results than it was in 2022, and searches for conversion therapy terms do not lead down rabbit holes with more and more of this content and providers served up to users. Not only has the site deplatformed at least seven providers, all but one of GPAHE’s search terms returned authoritative results and often links to survivors’ groups and calls for bans on conversion therapy.

The only search term, similar to what has happened on Bing and Google, that returned unauthoritative results was “overcoming same-sex attraction.” As to Instagram, again rabbit holes don’t exist on the site, but it does have pages for certain providers including Ireland’s Core Issues Trust, the Catholic conversion therapy network Courage International, and Exodus Brazil, which appears to be defunct since GPAHE’s last research but still maintains an Instagram page.

Unlike in 2022, results on Twitter as of October 2023 do not seem to follow much of a pattern, perhaps due to the many changes to online safety in the wake of Elon Musk’s takeover. That said, generally searches for conversion therapy returned a few authoritative results in a sea of unrelated materials.

TikTok helpfully warns users that a search for “ex-gay therapy” may be associated with hateful behaviour

No results found

This phrase may be associated with hateful behavior. TikTok is committed to keeping our community safe and working to prevent the spread of hate. For more information, we invite you to review our Community Guidelines.
TikTok appears to have invested in its ban on conversion therapy terms. A search of the site for GPAHE’s terms found no results and more importantly, searching for “ex-gay therapy” and “conversion therapy” returned a page that said the search terms may be “related to hateful material.”

You Tube returns the worst results of the major platforms, and, troublingly, videos purporting conversion therapy works are monetized on the site. The company claims it labels conversion therapy content with a banner, and prohibits content “which alleges that someone is mentally ill, diseased, or inferior because of their membership in a protected group including sexual orientation,” but that application is sparse and highly uneven. Searches only found the label on “conversion therapy” and “reparative therapy,” the latter ironically placed just above videos by Nicolosi Jr., who, though his videos were banned from the site after GPAHE’s original research, still has videos on the site renamed Reintegrative Therapy Stories. A search for the term “gay cure” returns videos from the Christian group Focus on the Family, the Christian right “news” program The 700 Club, and similar materials.

The American College of Pediatricians, one of the largest purveyors of lies about the LGBTQ+ community, and an avid advocate for conversion therapy, has a YouTube channel. A search for “overcoming same-sex attraction” led to pro-conversion therapy videos from the far-right Daily Signal, Focus on the Family, and several far-right ministries. Among videos that promote conversion therapy and are monetized are two Christian Broadcasting Network reports on “Former LGBTQ Members Say Their Changed Lives Prove Homosexuality Isn’t Permanent,” and “Former LGBTQers Testify: If You No Longer Want to be Gay or Transgender, You Don’t Have to Be,” another video by Victor Novitchi, “How I OVERCAME Homosexuality,” and Focus on the Family’s “Leaving Homosexuality.” Many providers remain on the site and have channels, including IFTCC, and Church Militant, a group denounced for racism and hate by the Archdiocese of Detroit, has a video promoting conversion therapy. The site also hosts channels for rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ groups, including Family Watch International, whose leader Sharon Slater supported Uganda’s law mandating death for engaging in gay sex.
UNITED STATES (SPANISH)

Conversion Therapy Online

SEARCH ENGINES

Bing’s search results in Spanish in the U.S. are less authoritative than those in English. A search for “same-sex attraction” returned links to Mormon church articles and pornography. A search for “I don’t want to be gay,” returned Mormon Church materials and pornography before authoritative results, as did “overcoming same-sex attraction.” The other search terms returned authoritative results.

On Google, “same-sex attraction” was just as problematic as it was on Bing, returning pro-conversion therapy results from the Church of Jesus Christ, and the Evangelical Coalition.

A search for “I don’t want to be gay” resulted in a full page of religious pro-conversion therapy links and a link to the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian website, pro-lgbt.ru. And “overcoming same-sex attraction” returned pro-conversion therapy religious sites. Both companies must make investments to produce more authoritative results in Spanish when it comes to conversion therapy.

A Spanish Google search for reintegrative therapy returns as its second result a link to the rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ Russian site, pro-lgbt.ru.

UI Health
https://hospital.uillinois.edu/terapia...

Programa de Reintegración Comunitaria: Terapia Grupal
Terapia Grupal: Este grupo lo anima a enfocarse en los problemas actuales y a participar en la resolución de problemas, ofreciendo apoyo y aprendizaje de las ...

Terapia de reintegración: el cambio es posible
Oct 15, 2018 — En la terapia de reintegración, el cliente tiene un papel de liderazgo. Un psicoterapeuta con licencia ofrece al cliente tratamientos basados ...
SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook’s search results in English are generally authoritative, but there are problems with Spanish. A search for “same-sex attraction” returns as the first result a link to Courage, a Catholic ex-gay ministry. “I don’t want to be gay” also directs to a religious institution. The remainder of the search terms however return authoritative or unrelated results.

But the rabbit holes of conversion therapy providers that existed in 2022 are gone. So, too, for Twitter, where providers are no longer displayed as options on the site when searching for conversion therapy terms. In addition, most search terms in Spanish on Twitter return unrelated results for the matter at hand.

Generally, there was no distinguishable pattern to the Twitter results, but that is a great improvement on the situation in 2022 even if it may be an unintended effect of the site’s systems no longer functioning adequately. YouTube’s results in Spanish were actually better than those in English in the U.S. Most of the search terms resulted in authoritative results or unrelated results.

However, “unwanted same-sex attraction” returned an ad from the far-right and conspiratorial Epoch Times entitled, “Gender Transformations: The Untold Realities,” which attacks the transgender community. That search also returned videos from pro-conversion therapy ministries, including Courage, the Changed Movement, and IFTCC.

TIKTOK

GPAHE did not include TikTok in its initial round of research. Following the publication of our 2022 research, our advocacy helped to shape TikTok’s policy to ban conversion therapy references on the platform. In October 2023, it was found that no phrases used in GPAHE’s research returned any results on conversion therapy or its providers in English or Spanish in the U.S.

Even more importantly, many of GPAHE’s search terms returned a TikTok page that specifically said that the terms being searched for may be “related to hateful material.” The only conversion therapy outfit GPAHE found on the site in the 2023 research was Joseph Nicolosi, Jr.’s Reintegrative Therapy Association.

“IN ADDITION TO BEING DETRIMENTAL FROM A CLINICAL AND HUMANISTIC STANDPOINT, CONVERSION THERAPY AND ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTHS IN THE U.S. ARE ESTIMATED TO COST BILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR. THIS [STUDY] FOUND THAT THE TOTAL ANNUAL COST OF CONVERSION THERAPY AMONG MORE THAN 4 MILLION LGBTQ+ YOUTHS IS ESTIMATED AT $650 MILLION, WITH ASSOCIATED HARMs, SUCH AS SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS, TOTALING AN ESTIMATED TOTAL ECONOMIC BURDEN OF $9 BILLION.”

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION - PEDIATRICS 3/7/22
APPENDIX

Search Terms and Phrases Employed in Research

**BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE SEARCH TERMS**

- TERAPIA EX-GAY (EX-GAY THERAPY)
- TERAPIA DE CONVERSÃO (CONVERSION THERAPY)
- TERAPIA CURA GAY (GAY CURE THERAPY)
- É UM PECADO SER GAY (IS IT A SIN TO BE GAY)

**ENGLISH SEARCH TERMS**

- EX-GAY THERAPY
- GAY CURE
- REINTEGRATIVE THERAPY
- REPARATIVE THERAPY
- UNWANTED SAME-SEX ATTRACTION
- SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

**SPANISH SEARCH TERMS**

- TERAPIA EX-GAY (EX-GAY THERAPY)
- TERAPIA PARA CURAR GAY (GAY CURE THERAPY)
- ES UN PECADO SER GAY (“IS IT A SIN TO BE GAY?”)
- ES UN PECADO SER HOMOSEXUAL (“IS IT A SIN TO BE HOMOSEXUAL”)
- TERAPIA DE REINTEGRACIÓN (REINTEGRATIVE THERAPY)

**ENGLISH SEARCH TERMS**

- SEXUAL ATTRACTION FLUIDITY EXPLORATION IN THERAPY
- OVERCOMING SAME-SEX ATTRACTION
- CONVERSION THERAPY NEAR ME
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**SPANISH SEARCH TERMS**

- SUPERAR LA ATRACCIÓN AL MISMO SEXO (OVERCOMING SAME-SEX ATTRACTION)
- FLUIDEZ DE ATRACCIÓN SEXUAL (SEXUALLY FLUID ATTRACTION)
- ORIENTACIÓN SEXUAL (SEXUAL ORIENTATION)
- TERAPIA DE CONVERSIÓN (CONVERSION THERAPY)

- NO QUIERO SER GAY (“I DON’T WANT TO BE GAY”)
- POR QUE SOY GAY (“WHY AM I GAY?”)
- REINTEGRATIVE THERAPY
### French Search Terms

- **Thérapie pour les ex-gays** (Therapy for Ex-gays)
- **Guérison des homosexuels** (Healing Homosexuals)
- **Thérapie de réintégration** (Reintegration Therapy)
- **Thérapie réparatrice** (Restorative Therapy)
- **Attirance non désirée pour le même sexe** (Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction)
- **Fluidité de l’attirance sexuelle exploration en thérAPIe** (Fluidity of Sexual Attraction Exploration in Therapy)
- **Surmonter l’attirance pour le même sexe** (Overcoming Same-Sex Attraction)
- **Thérapie de conversion près de chez moi** (Conversion Therapy Near Me)
- **Efforts de changement d’orientation sexuelle** (Sexual Orientation Change Efforts)
- **Thérapie de conversion** (Conversion Therapy)
- **Safe-T** (Safe-T)
- **Je ne veux pas être gay** (I Don’t Want to Be Gay)
- **Est-ce un péché d’être homosexuel/gay?** (Is It a Sin to Be Homosexual/Gay?)
- **Mon enfant gay est-il de ma faute?** (Is My Gay Child My Fault?)
- **Chercher à changer d’orientation sexuelle** (Seeking to Change Sexual Orientation)
- **Guérisseurs des homosexuels** (Healers of Homosexuals)
- **Efforts de changement d’orientation sexuelle** (Sexual Orientation Change Efforts)
- **Guérisseurs des homosexuels** (Healers of Homosexuals)
- **Médicaments pour guérir l’homosexualité** (Medicines to Cure Homosexuality)
- **Soigner les homosexuels** (Treating Homosexuals)

### Isizulu Search Terms

- **Ubutanabe** (Homosexuality/LGBTQ)
- **Ubungqingili** (Homosexuality/LGBTQ)
- **Ukukhipha ubutanabe** (Conversion Therapy, Reparative Therapy, Re-integrative Therapy, Gay Cure, Sexual Orientation Change Efforts)
- **Chercher à changer d’orientation sexuelle** (Seeking to Change Sexual Orientation)
- **Ubutanabe** (Conversion Therapy)

### French Search Terms

- **Marabout qui guéri les homosexuels** (Marabout (Folk Healer) Who Heals Homosexuals)
- **Surmonter l’attirance pour le même sexe** (Overcoming Same-Sex Attraction)