

Prepared for action: Lessons learned from the first year of the HIV Justice Academy

S. Vázquez Villanueva, A. Lahov, A. Symington, E. J. Bernard; HIV Justice Network, Amsterdam, Netherlands

25th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024), Munich, TUPEEF661

**HIV JUSTICE
ACADEMY**

Prepare for action!

**HIV JUSTICE
ACADEMY**

Prêt à l'action!

**HIV JUSTICE
ACADEMY**

¡Prepara la acción!

**АКАДЕМИЯ
ПРАВОСУДИЯ
ПО ВИЧ**

Научись действовать!

BACKGROUND

The **HIV Justice Academy** is a free online platform that provides access to information for advocates and activists working to end HIV criminalisation in three main formats:

ONLINE LEARNING

The HIV Criminalisation Online Course allows beginners through to experts to learn about HIV criminalisation at their own pace and convenience.

ACTION TOOLKITS

The Action Toolkits provide succinct information for successful defences or advocacy.

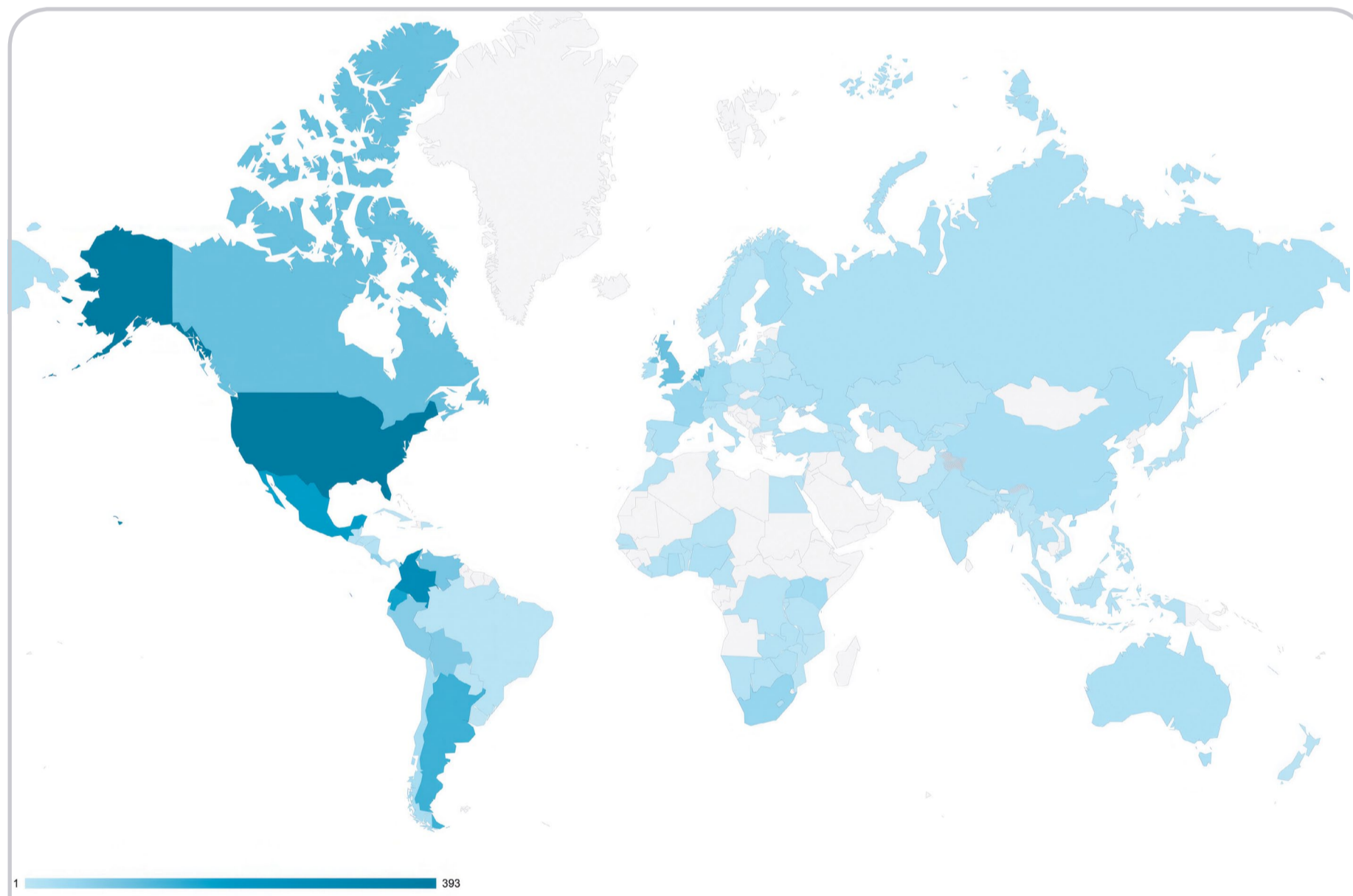
RESOURCE LIBRARY

The Resource Library contains an archive of the HIV justice movement's most important resources.

With the HIV Justice Academy, you can

- join the HIV Criminalisation Online Course as an individual and complete it at your own pace;
- coordinate a cohort of learners to regularly exchange views;
- conduct a group discussion using the materials from the HIV Justice Academy;
- inform your research with the Resource Library;
- organise decriminalisation campaigns using the Action Toolkits for advocacy;
- be court ready with the Action Toolkits for legal defence.

HIV JUSTICE ACADEMY VISITORS IN 2023



In 2023, the HIV Justice Academy website received 2600 visitors from 110 countries.

THE HIV CRIMINALISATION ONLINE COURSE

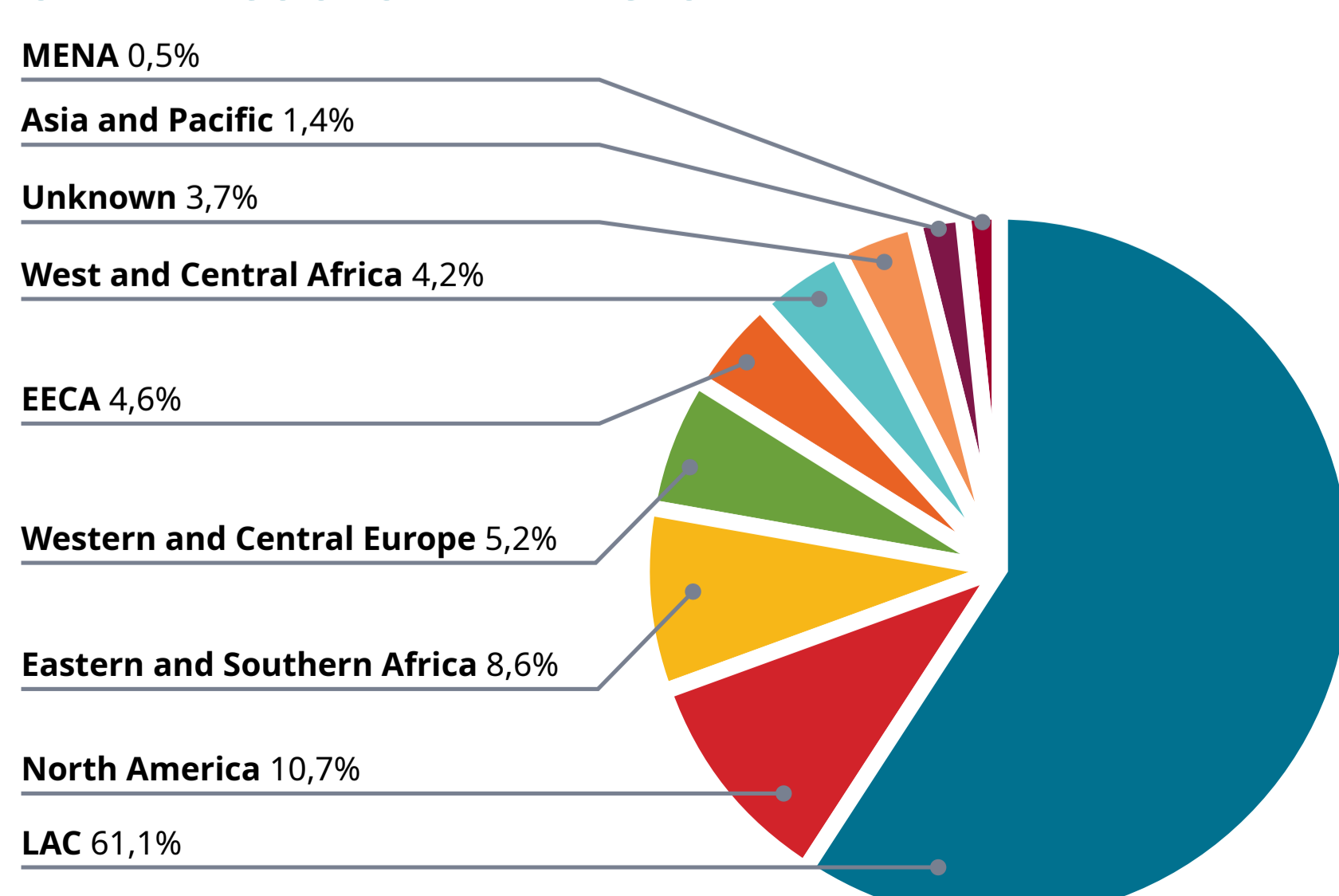
Most of the webpage visits go to the Online Learning section, where we currently offer our flagship **HIV Criminalisation Online Course**, and will soon present additional, complementary courses.

As of June 2024, more than 600 learners enrolled in the online course. While studies have found that online learning services usually register an average completion rate below 13%, the **average completion rate of the HIV Criminalisation Online Course has been around 20%**.⁽¹⁾

The HIV Criminalisation Online Course has learners registered from all over the world.

Latin America is the region with the most registered learners, followed by **North America**, and **Eastern and Southern Africa**.

LEARNERS REGISTERED FOR THE HIV CRIMINALISATION ONLINE COURSE PER REGION



LESSONS LEARNED

LEARNERS' FEEDBACK

Feedback received through a post-course survey shows that learners have significantly benefited from the HIV Criminalisation Online Course, finding it relevant, interesting, and engaging. Key findings include:

- **Human perspective:** Learning from personal video testimonials has been essential to further understand the implications of HIV criminalisation.
- **Easy to follow for beginners and experts:** Plain language explanations of scientific and legal terminology are essential for learner engagement whilst experts appreciate a knowledge update and refresh.
- **Available in four languages:** Making content available for multiple languages has allowed us to reach a wide audience. Originally produced in English, global engagement increased as the French, Spanish and Russian versions came on-line.
- **Importance of peer networks:** New learners discovered the HIV Justice Academy through social media and local networks, creating communities of learners and advocates in new locations.

COMMENTS FROM LEARNERS

"Although I have been working on HIV discrimination for years, it was spectacular to refresh the memory, update the information and see how the information provided was spectacularly clear."

"The course met my expectations fully, that is to say, there is a good amount of information I did not have before taking the course even as on the ground I have been working on the issue but as of now I really indeed feel strongly equipped to continue doing my community work."

"The course provided various forms of addressing and handling HIV criminal laws, and in countries where there are no specific laws."

"The course took a holistic approach to explaining HIV criminalisation. It lends legal, scientific, and social perspective, it also went further to touching on how I could be an advocate."

HOW HAVE PEOPLE LEARNED ABOUT, AND USED, THE ACADEMY AND THE ONLINE COURSE?

- By analysing user activity and feedback from learners who have completed the course we know that communication among peers is key in disseminating the course.
- These networks are very active in pushing back against new initiatives that propose to criminalise HIV, including in Ecuador in early 2024, or in Puebla, Mexico, in late 2023.
- Downloadable materials, such as video transcripts, discussion guides, and checklists and worksheets for organising advocacy or defence available in the HIV Justice Academy provide great alternatives for communities where face-to-face learning is preferable.
- Some users have incorporated the materials into their own training programmes. For example the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW) and the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA) included materials from the HIV Justice Academy in their workshops, including with government officials and society representatives in Argentina and Eastern Europe and Central Asia respectively.
- Knowing that personal interaction provides a great incentive for participants' learning, we devoted great efforts to having a space to exchange experiences and information among visitors and learners registered for the HIV Criminalisation Online Course. However, although we incorporated a multilingual chat room within the website, it has rarely been used, even though most respondents to the post course survey have shared they learnt about the HIV Justice Academy through community chats via WhatsApp and other social media.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY TO ENSURE THE ACADEMY REACHES PEOPLE WHERE LEGAL CHANGE IS NEEDED?

- While there are reasons to suspect that low access to the internet might be a relevant limitation for people in remote areas to join an online course, there might also be an added value in providing materials for face-to-face activities.
- Most HIV criminalisation cases continue to be reported in the EECA region. In contrast, only 27 learners have so far registered from the EECA region despite a Russian language version being available from 2023.
- Historically, among the LAC countries, Brazil has reported the most HIV criminalisation cases, but so far no learners registered in Brazil, suggesting we may need to find funding to translate the Academy into Portuguese.
- Few learners have as of yet registered from the MENA region, or from China, suggesting we may need to find funding to translate the Academy into Arabic and Mandarin.

CONCLUSIONS / NEXT STEPS

Ending HIV criminalisation requires ongoing learning and global collaboration. We launched the HIV Justice Academy in 2022 to fill an unmet need and appetite to gain knowledge on how to advocate and defend against HIV criminalisation.

We have found that so far the Academy has filled this gap and users and learners are **extremely positive about the content**, finding it relevant, interesting, and engaging. **They especially liked the video content and personal testimonies** in the HIV Criminalisation Online Course which they tell us brought the issues to life. And we heard from both **beginners and experts alike that the course was pitched right for them.**

We are committed to continue updating and nourishing existing content and to **develop new materials** and courses to assist advocates and activists in their efforts to end HIV criminalisation. We currently have the infrastructure set to **develop new courses**, and we plan to shortly finalise a **new module covering the intersectionality of HIV criminalisation with other forms of criminalisation.**

We also plan to continue **improving our communications with potential users and learners** and will continue making efforts to reach and engage learners where change is needed, **especially amongst Russian-speaking advocates and activists in the EECA region.**

We also **welcome partnerships to develop focused learning cohorts**, provide **additional learning materials** and **funding to make the content more accessible translation into Arabic, Mandarin and/or Portuguese.**

ACADEMY.HIVJUSTICE.NET

The HIV Justice Academy is produced by the HIV Justice Network on behalf of HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE (HJWW), an international coalition created to build the capacity of people living with HIV, human rights defenders and other actors against the overly broad use of the criminal law against people living with HIV.



**HIV JUSTICE
NETWORK**



**HIV JUSTICE
WORLDWIDE**

(1) According to Borrella et al (2022), who compare global studies on online learning to analyse successes and areas of opportunity, the completion rates of online courses "has been reported to be lower than 10% or even 5%." Other comparisons conducted before 2020 had found average completion rates of 12 or 13%.

Inma Borrella, Sergio Caballero-Caballero, Eva Ponce-Cueto, (2022). Taking action to reduce dropout in MOOCs: Tested interventions, Computers & Education. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104412>