



PRIDE MONTH 2026

Suggested questions:

- The Government's Equality Impact Assessment of the Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations, is clear that the Code will have a significant negative impact on people with the protected characteristics of gender reassignment and that some of the mitigations are problematic. Does the Government agree that we now need legislation to remedy these negative impacts and ensure the UK is compliant with its human rights obligations regarding privacy and legal gender recognition?
- Following the King's Speech, can the Government give a detailed timeline for the introduction of the draft bill to ban conversion practices?
- Will the UK Government call on the authorities in Türkiye to drop all charges against Turkish LGBTI human rights defender Defne Güzel for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association?
- What steps has the UK Government taken to support the important work of LGBTI human rights defenders around the world?

PROGRESS FOR LGBTI RIGHTS INCREASINGLY UNDER PRESSURE

Following decades of important, if uneven, progress on the protection of human rights and the removal of discriminatory laws and societal attitudes towards LGBTI people, the world is witnessing an unmistakable movement in the opposite direction. 65 countries still criminalise homosexuality and powerful and well-funded anti-rights movements are campaigning to reverse progress made. Anti-rights actors can count on huge and growing financial resources, without strings attached. In 2021 the European Parliamentary Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Rights estimated that annual 'anti-gender' spending in Europe has increased by a factor of four starting from USD 22.2 million in 2009 to 96 million in 2018. The Global Philanthropy Project has found that, in the period 2013- 2017, LGBTI movements worldwide received a third of what the anti-gender movement received (USD 1.2 billion, and 3.7 billion respectively).

The UK is not immune from this regressive trend. It now ranks 22nd in Europe for LGBTI Equality down from 1st just ten years ago, in 2015. The regression of protections for trans people, the lack of a ban on conversion practices and the treatment of LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers are the three key factors contributing to this worrying change.

LGBTI RIGHTS IN THE UK

Legal gender recognition and human rights of trans people in the UK

In April 2025, in response to a case started in 2018 by the 'gender critical' group For Women Scotland against the Scottish Government's interpretation of the Equality Act in relation to achieving gender parity on public boards, which included trans women with a Gender Recognition Certificate, the Supreme Court

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ruled that the definition of 'sex' in the Equality Act should be understood as "biological sex" or sex assigned at birth, for the purposes of sex discrimination. While the Supreme Court reaffirmed that trans people are protected from discrimination under the characteristic of gender reassignment and the case only concerned the Equality Act, the scope of legal gender recognised has been greatly reduced, if not made redundant.

On the 20th of May the Government presented the updated Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) [Code of Practice](#) to Parliament. There are some improvements to the first version, specifically the reassurance that associations can be trans inclusive by serving both the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment. This is good news for associations such as the Women's Institute, GirlGuding and any association that may form in the future.

However, the Code does not provide clear, workable support to lawfully run trans inclusive services even though it recognises that trans people of the opposite sex (e.g. trans women) may be at a disadvantage if excluded from single sex services for women. The recommendation to provide third spaces for trans people, if they exist, puts them in a third sex category and, as recognised in the Equality Impact Assessment, could have repercussions for disabled people's access to facilities such as toilets.

The [Government's Equality Impact Assessment](#) rightly recognises structural flaws in the code including:

- 'Double exclusion', for example a trans man would be excluded from men's spaces but could be excluded from women's too, if his appearance causes concern to others.
- Policing of gender if service providers must assess what a person's sex assigned at birth is and how this can impact women 'who are deemed not to meet cultural and social expectations of femininity'.
- Involuntary disclosure if trans people must 'out' themselves to access third spaces.
- Safeguarding risks for trans women using men's services.

It is positive that the Government has a better understanding of what the implications are compared to the EHRC, however the amendments the Government said it requested to the EHRC do not allay these concerns. It is also concerning that on 1st June in her statement the Minister [said](#): 'Most people have the common sense to step in when necessary, when a person of the opposite biological sex enters a single-sex facility in error for example, or to know when to alert a member of staff'. What else is this if not policing of people's appearance when the Code says that 'evidence of such concern might include the individual's physique or physical appearance, behaviour or concerns raised by other service users'?

Such circumstances could lead to many trans people self-excluding for fear of being humiliated or harassed. For example, the trans man who 'passes' and is perceived by others as a man, cannot go in the men's changing room but cannot go in the women's either because of how he looks. This leaves him in the position of having to ask for a third space, therefore outing himself. Or consider a trans woman who has been going to the same gym for years and has disclosed that she's trans to the staff. She would have to use the men's changing room or reconsider whether to go to the gym at all. Or suppose a masculine cis woman goes to a leisure centre and other users raise concerns about her appearance; she could be asked what her sex assigned at birth is. Even if she confirms that she's a cis woman how does she know that no one else over time will raise concerns again, and would the staff have to ask her again?

The Code's focus on safety, privacy and dignity does not extend to trans people or cis people who are gender non-conforming. The Code is not upholding anyone's safety, privacy and dignity. To be workable the Code relies on trans people self-excluding and relegating themselves outside of social spaces. Trans people

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who do not 'pass', non-binary people and gender non-conforming people face the risk of being questioned repeatedly on whether they can use a single sex space.

Amnesty International UK has traced a [growing anti-trans movement](#) in the UK which has been organising since 2018 to stop the proposed reform of the Gender Reform Act. Only 3 anti-trans groups existed before 2017 and now there are 51. 'Gender critical' anti-trans narratives have been normalised by the press. Just four major UK newspapers published 17000 articles on so-called 'trans issues' between 2020 and 2025, an average of 9 a day. In the reporting trans people were mostly invisible in issues that affect their lives while prime ministers and party leaders were mentioned consistently suggesting that trans rights have been made a high political priority despite the size of the trans population (less than 0.5% of the population), their role in society and the low public interest in these issues. Indeed, ahead of the 2024 General Election, issues related to trans rights or 'sex' and 'gender' [did not figure in the top 16 concerns of voters](#) but were by far the most reported by the media amongst ['culture war' issues](#).

Conversion Practices

The Government has repeatedly committed, including in the last King's Speech, to bring forward a draft bill to ban conversion practices. Conversion practices are any practice which tries to change or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. This may be committed by family members, community members or groups, religious leaders or organisations, health workers, counsellors/therapists, or other practitioners within the well-being sector. Too many LGBTI people are still subject to these abhorrent practices, which can amount to inhumane and degrading treatment. Amnesty International UK has [identified](#) at least 12 groups promoting conversion practices in the UK, half of which are registered charities. Worryingly, some groups promote specific training for counsellors. Four of these groups, for which financial accounts were available, spent £2 million between 2019 and 2023, an increase of 165%. The Government's draft bill cannot come soon enough and it must be trans inclusive.

LGBTI RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

In the past year there has been some progress on LGBTI rights, for example Saint Lucia struck down a colonial-era law criminalizing same-sex intimacy and now five Caribbean islands have now successfully challenged criminalization through the courts.

However, the trend across the world is one of regression as more governments are scapegoating LGBTI people to create fertile ground for a broader erosion of human rights protections. Scapegoating does not happen because of polarisation in society, rather, it is used to fuel polarisation and to distract the public from critical issues that affect their lives as part of a broader ['authoritarian playbook'](#). Ultimately these tactics aim at building political power by winning elections: the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner has documented how attacks against LGBTI people tend to intensify [ahead of elections](#) in many European countries, from Armenia to Russia and Poland and the UK.

Türkiye

Defne Güzel is a trans woman human rights defender working on documenting LGBTI human rights violations and combating hate crimes and discrimination. She is also known for her work on the rights of LGBTI people living with HIV and is a member of several other human rights organisations and platforms. Güzel is being criminalised in Türkiye for her legitimate human rights work as the president of the 17 May Association, a civil society organisation working on LGBTI rights. She is currently facing criminal prosecution over content published on the organisation's website and social media platforms, with authorities alleging that the materials fall outside the association's lawful objectives and violate broadly defined penal code provisions related to morality and social development. If convicted, she could face one to three years' imprisonment and judicial fines, and the organisation itself could face dissolution as a result. This

case represents an unjustified restriction of the rights of freedom of expression and association under international human rights law.

Russia

Authorities continue to criminalise the expression of LGBTI identity, expanding their crackdown on LGBTI rights through criminal prosecutions, arrests and fines targeting individuals, private gatherings and media platforms.

In November 2025, a court posthumously found Andrey Kotov, owner of the tourist company Men Travel, guilty of participating in an “extremist organisation – LGBT movement” and using minors to distribute pornography. He had been arrested in November 2024 and complained of torture and other ill-treatment during his arrest and detention. The following month, his lawyer was informed that Andrey Kotov had taken his own life in detention.

In December 2025, a court placed three people under house arrest charged with “organising and participating in the activities of an extremist organisation” for holding closed LGBTI-themed parties and drag shows. Also in December 2025, sex educator and LGBTI activist Sasha Kazantseva was sentenced in absentia to nine years’ imprisonment on charges including spreading “false information” about the Russian Armed Forces and alleged participation in an “extremist LGBT movement.”

By the end of 2025, at least 23 criminal cases had been opened on “extremism” charges related to LGBTI activities.

Authorities have also relied on heavy fines to suppress support for LGBTI rights. In February, three cases for alleged “LGBT propaganda” were filed against Yevgeny Pisemsky, founder of the banned Parni+ media project and Phoenix Plus, an NGO that earlier was labelled a “foreign agent” and subsequently chose to disband. In the same month, journalist Vadim Vaganov was fined 100,000 rubles (US\$1,300) also for “LGBT propaganda” – his third such fine. Also in February, journalist Yaroslav Rasputin received two separate fines of 200,000 rubles (US\$2,600) for social media posts under the “LGBT propaganda” laws.

Raids on LGBTI-friendly venues have continued. In January 2026, drag performer Aleksandr Knyagin fled Russia after being placed on a federal wanted list following an earlier police raid on a venue hosting an LGBTI event in November 2025. Bookshops, publishing houses, media and online cinemas face censorship and have had to take cultural works out of circulation, redact them or face fines. Book publishers have been arrested and placed under house arrest on extremism-related charges over alleged “LGBT propaganda” in books published by affiliated printing houses.