



UNITED KINGDOM

ASYLUM

The [Illegal Migration Act](#) was [adopted](#) in July. Lawmakers vowed it would not be used to expel LGBTQ+ asylum seekers to their home or a third country, but civil society is [concerned](#) that it [will](#) do just that.

In September, Home Secretary Suella Braverman [said](#) asylum seekers “pretend to be gay” to receive status and that facing discrimination because of being a woman or LGBTQ+ person is no grounds to get protection. A protest was [held](#) in London and over 200 human rights groups [signed](#) a joint letter to PM Rishi Sunak, demanding that the UK government respect and protect women and LGBTQ+ people. UNHCR [warned](#) the UK should not restrict its asylum definition.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT hate speech remained common (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Following his [visit to the UK](#), the UN Independent Expert on SOGI (IE SOGI) [expressed](#) deep concern about the growing toxic and hostile environment that LGBT and particularly trans people face in the UK, attributing much of the hate to politicians and the media. In this environment, the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) continued to fail trans people this year (see under Equality and Non-discrimination).

Politicians also continued the crackdown on trans rights (see [here](#)), including in connection with the Scottish Gender Recognition Act (see under Legal Gender Recognition, see [here](#) and [here](#)) and the [definition](#) of ‘sex’ in equality legislation. PM Rishi Sunak and others [made](#) transphobic [comments](#) at the Conservative Party conference in October. Earlier in June, a leaked video also [showed](#) him mocking trans people.

In July, [Mermaids](#) [lost](#) its [appeal](#) against the Charity Commission approving the registration of the anti-trans ‘LGB Alliance’ as a public charity.

There were several incidents of hate speech at football games (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). From January on, the Football Association [could take](#) disciplinary action against clubs if their supporters chanted homophobic slogans. In February, the Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) [said](#) the team’s new leadership should respect the rights of LGBTQ+ fans.

A former Belfast councillor, Jolene Bunting, who compared a drag queen to a wolf in make-up, lost her [appeal](#) against being fined for breaking a court order barring her from harassing the performer. Seven police officers were [dismissed](#) from Humberside Police following a series of sexist, homophobic and racist WhatsApp group exchanges.

A gender-critical (anti-trans) campaigner [won](#) a £100,000 (117,000 EURO) lawsuit after she was fired for tweeting her views.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A rainbow crossing in Derry was [vandalised](#) in August, in what the mayor [called](#) an attack against the entire city.

The UK Home Office’s annual hate crime statistics [highlighted](#) that homophobic hate crimes decreased by 6% in England and Wales the past year, the first fall in numbers since 2013. Transphobic hate crimes increased by 11%, [marking](#) the highest number of anti-trans crimes (4732) since 2012. The report attributes the rise in transphobic hate crimes in part to anti-trans media reporting and discussion about trans issues by politicians.

In October however, Galop’s 2022 Hate Crime Report [highlighted](#) that over the past year there was a 65% increase in LGBT+ victims of hate crime reaching out for support. Galop also noted that while a 11% increase sounds small, anti-trans attacks have nearly doubled since 2020/21; that victims do not have access to adequate support; and that the police are failing in holding perpetrators to account.

The new Scottish [hate crime law](#), which covers LGBTI people as protected groups and strengthens protections was given a provisional [commencement](#) date of April 1, 2024. The Crown Office (COPFS) published its annual [Hate Crime in Scotland](#) report in June, finding that the number of homophobic hate crimes increased by 2% and transphobic crimes had decreased since last year (from 86 to 55) but still remain the second highest since 2010.

In Northern Ireland, the annual police report [shared](#) that homophobic incidents and crimes fell; transphobic incidents increased but crimes fell the past 12 months.

Several young trans people committed suicide this year (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

BODILY INTEGRITY

Despite [years](#) of civil society [advocacy](#) and [government promises](#), the process of banning so-called ‘conversion practices’ continued to be [stalled](#) this year in most of the UK. In [January](#) and [June](#), PM Sunak vowed that the bill would be back to parliament and cover both sexual orientation and gender identity, but with an exception for ‘consenting’ adults. The EHRC also [called](#) for a ban in October, but a group of Tory MPs



[urged](#) Sunak to drop the ban. The topic was then [missing](#) from the newly crowned King's speech in November. In November, a bipartisan bill on the ban [made it](#) to the House of Lords, but this is not the government's initiative.

The process has been delayed in Scotland also. As part of the mandatory legal process, the Scottish Government will consult publicly on the details of a bill, most likely in January 2024. The [process](#) in Northern Ireland is also [stalled](#) until the Executive is restored.

DATA COLLECTION

The results of the 2021 census in England and Wales (not including Scotland and Northern Ireland) were [released](#) in January, [showing](#) that 1.5% of the population identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual; 0.5% identified with a gender different from their sex assigned at birth; 165,000 people identified as queer, pansexual, asexual, or other.

EDUCATION

Civil society expressed [grave concern](#) about the government's planned trans guidance for schools in England, which could forcibly out trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming students to their parents, place a blanket ban on social transitioning, and allow single-sex schools to refuse trans children (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). The government [did not consult](#) LGBT+ groups about the guidance.

Due to [delays](#) in the guidance, NHS England [took it upon itself](#) to say students [should not](#) be allowed to socially transition, i.e. change names, pronouns, or decide which bathroom to use, without parents' knowledge and [consent](#).

A primary school in Glasgow [became](#) the first to introduce a comprehensive education curriculum that covers LGBT issues, history and culture, based on the [toolkit](#) provided by the government. Scotland is currently [consulting on new sex education guidance](#), which is separate from LGBT inclusive education in the broader curriculum.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission [found](#) that many schools currently teach students that 'homosexuality' is wrong, shaming and stigmatising young people.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In April, the EHRC [recommended](#) that the Equality Act be changed to define 'sex' as 'biological sex'. The position is in line with PM Sunak's 2022 [statements](#). The Scotland and Wales

Committees of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) firmly [condemned](#) the recommendations, saying they would have a detrimental impact on trans people. In May, over 30 LGBTQ+ organisations [sent](#) a joint letter to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) about the harm that the EHRC has been causing to trans people. In 2022, GANHRI [recommended](#) that the EHRC increase efforts to protect trans people and consult with LGBTQ+ groups.

In November, another ruling in Scotland [affirmed](#) that trans women who have legally transitioned are included in the definition of 'women'. Wales is set to [update](#) its Gender Quotas Bill with a trans-inclusive definition for women.

A leaked government guidance for the UK's 500,000 civil servants [made](#) headlines in July because it would mandate the protection of pro-trans and anti-trans beliefs on an equal footing and ban trans people who had not changed their legal gender from using the bathroom matching their identity. Both trans and cis civil servants [responded](#) with alarm.

In Scotland, a civil servant who argued that his employer's diversity and inclusion policies are an ideological imposition, [lost](#) his court case. The policies covered race, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Post Office [removed](#) gendered titles from its forms this year.

The Stonewall report, *Ace in the UK* [found](#) that asexual people face discrimination and harassment in work and healthcare and many hide their identity.

In November, the Scottish Government published its [Non-binary Equality Action Plan](#), a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of non-binary people.

In February, the Welsh Government published an [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#), which includes banning conversion practices, investing in hate crime prevention, providing trans guidance for schools and local authorities, and supporting the family lives of LGBTQ+ people. An [LGBTQ+ Action Plan tracker](#) was published, so that anyone in Wales can monitor updates and progress against each action and activity in the Plan.

FAMILY

The *Queer Parent*, a book to help LGBTQ+ families was [published](#) this year, following the successful podcast *Some Families*.



FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

As of June, women who had been persecuted for homosexuality could also [apply](#) for the Disregards and Pardons Scheme.

The LGBT Veterans Independent Review, about the experiences of LGBTQ+ soldiers before the ban on their participation in the military was lifted in 2000, was [submitted](#) to parliament in May. Over 20,000 soldiers were [fired or jailed](#). In July, PM Rishi Sunak [issued](#) an apology to LGBTQ+ veterans for past abuse, violence, imprisonment, bullying and harassment they endured.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A trans-themed poster was [removed](#) from the V&A children's museum before its opening.

HEALTH

In May, NHS England [announced](#) that their plans to decentralise trans healthcare, [close down](#) and [replace](#) Tavistock with regional centres, would only materialise in 2024. Previously, the plan was to put the new system in place by spring of 2023. In the meantime, only those already in the system would [receive](#) care - no first appointments will be given out.

Following the consultation in 2022, in June the NHS England [published](#) an interim [guidance](#) on trans healthcare provision for minors. The NHS [maintains](#) its [stance](#) that minors, and only a [limited number](#) of them, should only be able to access hormone blockers if they participate in long-term [research](#). The NHS [set up](#) a national Children and Young People's Gender Dysphoria Research Oversight Board for this purpose.

Waiting times for a first trans healthcare appointment remained extremely long. Four trans people, including two minors, sued the NHS over this, but [lost](#) in their case in July.

In October, the health secretary [announced](#) that trans women would be banned from female NHS wards in England, despite a [complete lack](#) of evidence of any issues.

The Scottish Government continued work on improving trans healthcare over 2022-2024. Work this year included developing national standards for gender identity services, and a knowledge and skills framework for health care providers working with trans people. Despite some important progress, waiting times continue to be extremely long, and there has been less progress on service redesign than hoped for.

In November, Scotland [launched](#) its updated Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses Action Plan, including new opt-out HIV testing pilots in A&Es.

INTERSECTIONALITY

A report about older LGBT+ people was [published](#) in a news outlet. A TV [report](#) on abuse of LGBT+ people in care homes was broadcast.

Ajamu's *Patron Saint of Darkrooms* exhibition, celebrating black queer bodies and pleasure activism, was [shown](#) in London.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In December 2022, the Scottish parliament [adopted](#) amendments to the Gender Recognition Act to allow recognition by self-declaration, and to reduce the minimum age from 18 to 16. The move was widely welcomed by civil society, the [United Nations](#), and the [Council of Europe](#). In January this year, the UK's Prime Minister [decided](#) to use an order under [Section 35](#) of the Scotland Act for the first time ever to [block](#) the implementation of the law. The Scottish Government has [challenged](#) the order in court, [arguing](#) it is unlawful and irrational.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Instead of a blanket ban, Swim England [introduced](#) an 'open' category for trans/non-binary athletes; trans people can compete in amateur and recreational races on the basis of self-ID. UK Athletics also [seeks](#) a similar 'open' category, which while would allow trans women to compete, would [ban](#) them from the women's category. British Rowing [did](#) the same after a membership vote. Several others adopted similar bans this year.

TRUK United FC [made headlines](#) as the first trans-masculine football team in the world.

Mermaids' Young People and Sport report [found](#) that over a half of trans youth felt their gender identity impacted their participation in sport; over a half were worried about exclusion; 63% said exclusion from sport had [worsened](#) their mental health.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A number of police commissioners and constables [apologised](#) to the LGBTQ+ community for past homophobic persecution (see [here](#) and [here](#)).



PUBLIC OPINION

A study by the Policy Institute at King's College London and Ipsos UK [found](#) that only 1% of the population thinks trans issues would be a deciding factor in the 2024 elections.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Scotland is consulting on legislation for Safe Access Zones (buffer zones) around abortion providers to prevent harassment and a [Bill](#) to this effect is in its first stage at the Scottish Parliament.



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