

# IRELAND

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In May, the Irish energy company SSE Airtricity partnered with the League of Ireland and LGBT Ireland to raise awareness for the National LGBTI Helpline during football matches nationwide, in anticipation of Pride month.

In September, Outhouse, in partnership with Bank of Ireland, launched a series of financial wellbeing workshops at its Dublin centre. The initiative came after a Bank of Ireland survey revealed that fewer than half of LGBTI people feel secure about their financial future over the next year. Additionally, according to the survey, only 59% of LGBTI respondents believed they could cover unexpected expenses, compared to 62% of heterosexuals, and 25% of LGBTI respondents felt they could raise over €3,000 for an emergency, compared to 29% of heterosexuals.

## ASYLUM

In January, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced that Algeria would be added to Ireland's list of 'safe countries' of origin for asylum seekers, despite its anti-LGBTI laws.

In June, the Irish High Court upheld the International Protection Appeal Tribunal's decision to refuse a Ghanaian man's application for refugee status and subsidiary protection. The man had claimed persecution due to his sexual orientation, asserting that he was openly gay and had faced discrimination in Ghana, where homophobic attacks are common. Nonetheless, the tribunal found his account to be lacking in credibility, citing issues with his narrative, including his portrayal of his relationship and realisation of his sexual orientation, which, in the tribunal's view, allegedly lacked emotional depth and common experiences associated with such a process. Further, despite the applicant's assertions of having been attacked three times in his home country, the tribunal ruled that his conduct in living openly as gay in such a hostile context would be "unexpected and unusual."

In August, Taoiseach Simon Harris and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman voiced their commitment to passing hate crime legislation before the end of the current government's term. Their statement followed the publication of a report highlighting a surge in threats and physical attacks against asylum seekers in Dublin, many of whom are living in tents on the streets. In late October, the Dáil passed the 'hate crime' bill with a majority vote of 78 to 52, clearing the way for President Michael D. Higgins to sign it into law. (See also under Bias-Motivated Speech.)

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In June, LGBT Ireland reported a significant increase in threatening and abusive calls, observing a rise in LGBTI-phobic threats and discriminatory prank calls.

In September, Irish Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced that the government would remove the "incitement to violence and hatred" component of the Criminal Justice Bill due to a lack of cross-party consensus on the scope of the bill. Having successfully passed its final stage in the Dáil in April 2023, the bill encountered some setbacks as some supporters, including members of Sinn Féin, have reconsidered their initial stance, citing concerns over potential infringements on freedom of expression. In late October, the Dáil passed the amended bill with a majority vote of 78 to 52, clearing the way for President Michael D. Higgins to sign it into law. Although the amended version does not include protections against hate speech, it will enforce stricter penalties for crimes motivated by an individual's protected characteristics, including gender identity and sexual orientation. (See also under Bias-Motivated Violence.)

In October, the Irish media regulator Coimisiún na Meán published the new Online Safety Code, setting binding standards for social media companies to enhance user protection in Ireland. The code explicitly bans content promoting terrorism, cyberbullying, self-harm methods, and any incitement to violence or hatred, and applies to all video-sharing platforms with European headquarters in Ireland, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Udemy, TikTok, LinkedIn, X, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Reddit.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In late May, a woman was beaten unconscious by a soldier under the influence of alcohol after she asked him to stop hurling homophobic slurs at bystanders. He was given a fully suspended sentence for the unprovoked assault. The perpetrator's guilty plea did not result in a prison sentence, raising concerns about the severity of the response to the attack.

In June, three gay men walking in Dublin's Phoenix Park were pursued by six men wielding knives in what they reported as a targeted attack due to their sexual orientation. After the incident, the Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit collaborated with LGBTI organisations to support the victims. The investigation eventually led to the identification and arrest of a teenager involved in the incident.

Following the announcement that the hate speech provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill would be dropped, the Irish Department of Justice confirmed that the remaining hate crime legislation would still include protections for trans and non-binary people. (See more under Bias-Motivated Speech.)

In December, three individuals were convicted of public order offenses after disrupting a drag storytime event in Tralee, Kerry, in July 2023. Two of the accused also received common assault convictions when they appeared before Tralee District Court.

During the event, a group stormed the event, live streaming their disruption and assaulting event organisers and a security guard. Volunteers were also verbally abused.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In June, leading mental health organisations in Ireland and LGBT Ireland, as the chair of the banning conversion practices [coalition](#), issued a [joint memorandum](#) rejecting conversion therapy.

In August, the Sinn Féin party openly [declared](#) its support to the UK-led temporary suspension of puberty blockers for children and young people in Northern Ireland. In response, activists from several LGBTI organisations gathered outside the party's headquarters in Dublin to protest the party's support of the ban.

## DATA COLLECTION

In January, LGBT Ireland released a [shadow report](#) evaluating the National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy. The report highlighted success in areas such as integration and family matters, but underscored shortcomings on issues like the timely access to healthcare for trans people.

A [study](#) conducted by insurance broker Reassured placed Ireland in the top ten best countries for LGBTI residents.

[Research](#) released in June revealed that 20% of LGBTI people in Ireland's Midlands feel unsafe. The study, commissioned by the Midlands LGBTI Project and funded by Healthy Laois, examines both the advancements and persisting issues faced by LGBTI people in counties including Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, and Kildare.

[Research](#) from University of Limerick and Belong To showed a willingness amongst primary school staff to be LGBTI inclusive but limited knowledge about how to translate inclusivity into practice. (See also under Education)

Associate Professor Dr. Aideen Quilty in collaboration with Belong To, and with funding from the Community Foundation Ireland, conducted a [research study](#) on trans and non-binary people's access to gender-affirming care and healthcare related to gender identity in Ireland. The research highlighted critical barriers to accessing trans healthcare, revealing that essential services are effectively unavailable for many in this community. Key findings showed that one in three trans adults had to wait at least three years for an initial appointment, while only 14% of trans youth were able to successfully access trans healthcare in Ireland.

[Research](#) from RESIST highlighted a rise in organised attacks and threats against LGBTI people and organisations in Ireland. The research pointed to a critical juncture for LGBTI communities,

who are reportedly the second most targeted group for hate crimes and hate-related incidents in the country.

The [Census Pilot Survey](#), launched by the Civil Service Organisation (CSO), was conducted throughout September, introducing new questions related to mental health, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

## EDUCATION

This year 45 post-primary schools stepped up to work with Belong To, to create a safe space for LGBTI students in Ireland's first whole-school community safe and supportive schools project, the LGBTI Quality Mark.

In May, the 'Belong to Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools' research, conducted by Belong To in partnership with the University of Limerick, highlighted a gap between the willingness of school staff to be LGBTI inclusive and their confidence in how to do so. The research involved over 1,000 primary educators with a view to assessing the knowledge levels, views and professional needs of primary school staff in Ireland regarding LGBTI inclusivity.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, Sport Ireland released an [advisory document](#) aimed at guiding sporting bodies on policies for trans and non-binary athletes. The document notably emphasised the need for national governing bodies to proactively develop policies for the inclusion of trans and non-binary people in sports.

In June, LGBTI activists [marched](#) in Dublin to oppose instances of anti-trans rhetoric, advocating against misinformation about trans healthcare.

A [report](#) by UCD's School of Information and Communication Studies, supported by LGBT Ireland and the trade union Fórsa, highlights the impact of anti-LGBTI library demonstrations on the staff of these establishments. Since 2022, a coordinated campaign by anti-LGBTI agitators, opposed to the presence of LGBTQ+ reading material, has targeted public libraries across Ireland. These protests have led to harassment of library staff, with many reporting feeling unsafe and being verbally abused, including being called "paedophiles" or "groomers."

## FAMILY

In January, the Labour party introduced a new [bill](#), aimed at addressing legal gaps and ensuring equality by targeting key issues in the legal framework affecting same-sex families. In June, the Irish Dáil approved the [Assisted Human Reproduction Bill](#), which addresses surrogacy and family relationships, and

was signed into law in July. In October, the Irish Government agreed to introduce a second [Bill](#) aimed at addressing remaining gaps in existing legislation. Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly secured approval to draft amendments to the current Assisted Human Reproduction Act, focusing on providing legal clarity for Irish residents and citizens who undergo donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR) procedures abroad. This legislation seeks to ensure that families formed through these procedures outside of Ireland are afforded the same legal recognition and protections as those established within the country, addressing concerns about legal parentage and other associated rights.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, Wicklow Pride was forced to [cancel](#) an event for young LGBTI people due to threats from protesters. The organisers later announced that the event would be postponed until a safer location was secured; however, it has not yet taken place.

## HEALTH

In March, following England's NHS decision to discontinue routine prescriptions of puberty blockers to children, Ireland's HSE announced its own plans to conduct a [clinical trial](#) to evaluate the use of these blockers in trans healthcare.

Following the release of the Cass Review in the UK, Senator Michael McDowell called for an [immediate halt to the prescription of puberty blockers](#) in Ireland's public health service.

In April, Trinity College Dublin and Belong To released the findings of '[Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland](#)' the largest study on the mental health and wellbeing of the LGBTI population in Ireland to date. The survey underscored that the wellbeing of the LGBTI population has significantly decreased since 2016, with a 17% increase in symptoms of severe depression, and a 30% increase in symptoms of severe anxiety.

In late September, members and allies of the trans and intersex community [gathered](#) outside the Dáil in Dublin, demanding urgent reforms to the Irish healthcare system. The rally, organised by Transgress The NGS, drew participants from various activist groups, seeking to pressure the Health Service Executive and the National Gender Service to address significant barriers faced by trans and intersex people in accessing medical care.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, Joe O'Brien, the Minister of State for Community Development, Integration, and Charities, [announced](#) that 18 projects would be awarded funding through the National Integration Fund 2023.

Duncan Smith, Labour TD for Dublin Fingal, has [criticised](#) Health Minister Stephen Donnelly for failing to engage with trans

advocacy groups. Smith also called for an engagement of trans advocacy groups in the appointment of the clinical lead for the National Gender Service's new care model.

In May, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced the development of a new [strategy](#) to succeed the National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy. The upcoming strategy aims to establish multilevel [consultation processes](#) with interested community members to enhance LGBTI inclusion, safeguard rights, and improve the overall quality of life for LGBTI people.

In June, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman, [unveiled](#) €1.3 million in funding to support LGBTI communities and launched the 2024 LGBTI Community Services Funding Call. This financial commitment is part of a broader effort to advance equality in Ireland, with an emphasis on new national strategies aimed at supporting LGBTI inclusion. The announcement included a 62% increase in funding for LGBTI initiatives, aimed at strengthening the national LGBTI infrastructure. Additionally, the budget of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has been increased by €1.021 million. In December, the Department [announced](#) the allocation of funding to 24 LGBTI projects under the 2024 LGBTI Community Services Funding Call and the LGBTI Youth Fund. A total of €1,398,916 will be distributed to support various organisations across Ireland.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In October, Health Minister Stephen Donnelly announced an [expansion](#) of the free IVF scheme as part of the upcoming budget. The expansion will focus on enabling couples who require donor assistance—those in need of donor eggs or sperm—to access publicly funded IVF, and on expanding the scheme to include couples experiencing secondary infertility, where couples who already have a child face difficulties in conceiving again.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In Ireland's recent general election, eight LGBTI TDs (Members of Parliament) were elected to the Dáil, marking the highest number of LGBTI representatives in the country's history.

In October, far-right agitators in Ireland were [reported](#) to be planning a campaign to gather LGBTI books from libraries across the country and burn them, as indicated in posts shared on Facebook. The individuals involved are believed to be the same group that previously targeted libraries, harassing staff and threatening to destroy LGBTI literature.

In November, 18 LGBTI organisations in Ireland [launched](#) a manifesto urging election candidates to commit to LGBTI rights.

Key priorities included strengthening rights, investing in health, and tackling hate speech. In response, political parties like Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, and the Green Party expressed varying levels of support, with commitments on healthcare, anti-bullying, and trans rights.

A Presbyterian minister in Dublin, resigned after facing multiple disciplinary actions linked to her support for the LGBTI community. She had previously been censured in 2021 for allowing a same-sex married man to serve as a council member. In 2023, she participated in a religious service with LGBTI Christians for RTÉ's Pride coverage, leading to further complaints and a formal rebuke from the church.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In March, after two recent referendums – one concerning legal definition of family in the Constitution and one concerning the introduction of more inclusive language in the definition of family duties – were rejected, Fine Gael Minister of State Peter Burke stated that the government must assess whether the views of campaigning NGOs reflect those of broader Irish society. Burke pointed out the significant involvement of state-funded organisations in promoting the 'Yes' votes in both campaigns.

In April, research from Trinity College Dublin and Belong To shared that public attitudes towards the LGBTI community in Ireland are mostly positive, with areas for consideration including one fifth of adults agreeing that being LGB is a phase, a choice, or that people can be convinced to be LGB, and 19% stating that accepting trans people is difficult.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A student who assaulted a gay couple and directed homophobic slurs at them while involved in a dispute with his girlfriend has been given a two-and-a-half-year prison term, suspended entirely on the condition that he remains law-abiding during this time.

Irish former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar suggested that Ireland might need to adopt policies akin to Scotland's regarding the housing of trans women in prisons.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In September, the Professional Association for Trans Health Ireland (PATHI) was officially launched. Funded by the Irish Research Council, PATHI is a new multidisciplinary organisation that brings together professionals from various fields, including healthcare, law, policy, advocacy, community organising, and education, all working towards advancing the health, rights, and wellbeing of trans and gender-diverse communities in Ireland.



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