



UNITED KINGDOM

ASYLUM

Civil society launched the [#NoPrideInDetention](#) campaign, calling for an end to the detention of LGBTQI+ people.

In April, the UK government [announced](#) plans to process asylum claims and set up reception centres in Rwanda, which LGBTQI+ asylum support groups [highlighted](#) could be a detrimental move for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-trans rhetoric continued to cause serious damage in the UK again this year, with continued hostile [reporting](#) in mainstream newspapers. Mermaids for instance was at the centre of some of these attacks (see under *Human rights Defenders*). Two trans journalists [pulled out](#) of working with the Guardian's coverage on Pride, due to its transphobic articles and posts online.

Politicians also continued the crackdown on trans rights. Former PM Boris Johnson announced that trans people would not be included in the so-called 'conversion therapy' ban (see under *Bodily Integrity*). In June, Johnson also [expressed](#) support for the ban on trans women competing in elite swimming. Following Johnson's resignation, [several](#) PM candidates [weaponised](#) trans rights. Incoming PM Rishi Sunak's previous anti-trans statements, including "trans women are not women", were covered by media after his appointment in October.

While anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ hate continued rising in the UK, and despite previous [calls](#) from civil society, the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) continued to fail trans people this year (see under *Equality and Non-discrimination*). In February, leaked emails showed that the EHRC held private meetings with anti-trans organisers.

Mermaids [appealed](#) against the Charity Commission [approving](#) the registration of the anti-trans 'LGB Alliance' as a public charity [began](#) in September.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes against LGBT people in the UK have reached dramatic numbers. The UK Home Office's

annual hate crime statistics report [highlighted](#) that homophobic hate crimes increased by 41% and transphobic hate crimes by 56%, in England and Wales. This marks the starkest annual increase since 2012. The report attributes the rise in transphobic hate crimes in part to anti-trans media reporting. Galop's 2022 Hate Crime Report [echoed](#) these numbers and the reasons behind them.

The new Scottish [hate crime law](#), which covers LGBTI people as protected groups and strengthens protections, is yet to be brought into force. The Crown Office (COPFS) published its annual [Hate Crime in Scotland](#) report in June, finding that the number of transphobic hate crimes increased by 87% in just one year.

In Northern Ireland, there were more hate incidents recorded across each hate motivation strand when compared with the previous twelve months (with the exception of faith/religion incidents) with 15% increase in homophobic and 24% in transphobic incidents. Research carried out by The Rainbow Project in 2021, has shown that 51% of those who had experienced hate crime had not reported it to the Police Services of Northern Ireland. The most common response was that they are still not confident that their complaints will be taken seriously, some unaware that PSNI can take action and were fearful of repercussions.

The Northern Ireland Department of Justice launched a consultation on a proposed new Hate Crime Bill, which will [include](#) "age, sex/gender and variations in sex characteristics", and trans people under "sex/gender". This initial consultation which was split into two parts took place in early 2022. A second part of the consultation is expected in early 2023.

Galop's report '[LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family Members](#)' highlighted that 29% of LGBT+ people have experienced abuse from family members - 60% attributed this to them being LGBT+. 63% of the victims were under 18 when they first faced violence at home. Galop's adjoining report [warned](#) that support services for LGBT+ victims are rare and insufficient. Galop also published its '[LGBT+ People & Sexual Violence Report](#)' on the basis of almost 1,000 LGBT+ survivors. More than half thought that the



violence was inflicted upon them due to them being LGBT+ and most reported detrimental consequences on their mental health.

BODILY INTEGRITY

Despite years of civil society advocacy and government promises, the process of banning so-called ‘conversion therapies’ continued to be stalled this year in most of the UK. In March, a leaked report revealed that the government wanted to drop the process altogether. A few hours later, the government announced that the ban would cover sexual orientation, but not gender identity - later affirmed by the Queen’s Speech. The announcements sparked outrage among civil society, protests were held across the country, and 80 organisations pulled out of the UK’s LGBT+ conference ‘Safe to be Me’ planned for 29 June. In the end, the government cancelled the conference, which many interpreted as an attempt to avoid civil society backlash (see more under *Equality and Non-discrimination*). In April, the UK’s first LGBT+ Business Champion resigned from his role as a form of protest. In May, the parliament had to address a petition with over 140,000 signatures demanding a comprehensive ban, but only reaffirmed its previous position.

The Scottish Labour party featured a candidate this year who is a proponent of ‘conversion therapies’, which was met with firm criticism by many.

The Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices was set up by the Scottish Government in March and presented its final report and recommendations in October. The Scottish Government has committed to consulting publicly early in 2023 on proposals to end conversion practices and to introduce legislation by the end of 2023.

On 21 April, Northern Ireland Assembly passed a non-directive motion on a ban on conversion therapy practises. The Department for Communities alongside two researchers from Queens and Ulster University in Belfast (directed by a steering group of LGBTQIA Sectoral Partners) has conducted research in regards to the experiences of victims and survivors of so-called ‘conversion therapy’. This research work, which

will continue in 2023, will be essential in drafting legislation.

Intersex NGOs have no clear pathway to funding which suffocates activists working on this field. A report by IntersexUK and Pride Sports based on national data and intersex people’s responses on medical interventions, mental health and inequalities was not authorised to be printed by Sport England, which had funded the project.

DATA COLLECTION

The anti-trans group Fair Play for Women began court action in 2021 to challenge the 2022 Census in Scotland, which would allow trans people to self-identify their sex. In February, the court ruled that the Scottish Government acted in their power when approving the self-identification guidance - civil society welcomed the ruling.

EDUCATION

Media reported in February that the government pressured the Equality and Human Rights Commission to withdraw its guidance resource for schools on supporting trans students in 2021. The guidance could have helped schools prevent bullying and support children.

LGBT Youth Scotland’s ‘Life in Scotland’ report found that 57% of trans students, 58% of bisexual students, and 70% of lesbian and gay students had experienced bullying in school. Only 10% of LGBT youth thought that school was a “good place” for LGBT students.

EMPLOYMENT

A 2021 letter written by Minister for Women and Equalities Kemi Badenoch was leaked in July, in which she urged the Financial Conduct Authority to drop its trans inclusion policy, which the FCA did a month later. Badenoch was one of the PM candidates this year.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 2417(2022) on ‘Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in



Europe’, highlighting the alarming developments in the UK, alongside countries like Poland, Russia, and Hungary.

After over 80 organisations pulled out of the UK’s LGBT+ conference ‘Safe to be Me’ in April, civil society launched the #NotSafeToBeMe campaign, drawing attention to the UK’s regression on LGBT+ rights.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission stated that trans people can be excluded from single-sex services if there are “justifiable and proportionate” reasons at play, “for reasons of privacy, decency, to prevent trauma or to ensure health and safety”. In February, the media reported that the Commission wanted to restrict bathroom access to trans people with a gender recognition certificate, which roughly 1% have. A 2021 leaked and unpublished guidance recommended businesses and organisations to bar access to trans people, in order to “protect women”. Former PM Liz Truss responded to this reporting by saying this was not what the government wanted.

Following Boris Johnson’s resignation in July, Liz Truss took over as Prime Minister for a short period, followed by Rishi Sunak. Civil society is alarmed about Sunak’s statements made in November that the revised Equality Act should clarify that “sex means biological sex rather than gender”.

The gender-critical group, For Women Scotland lost their case when the court affirmed on 13 December that a trans person’s sex, for the purposes of the Equality Act, is the sex shown on their gender recognition certificate.

LGBT Youth Scotland’s ‘Life in Scotland’ report found that the rate of LGBTI young people thinking Scotland was a “good place for LGBTI young people to live” dropping from 81% to 65% in just five years (see more under *Education*). The Scottish Minister for Equalities, Christina McKelvie vowed to work on the issues highlighted.

HEALTH

An interim Cass report was published in July, making a series of recommendations to the NHS on how it should reform care for trans youth. The NHS’s

response includes plans to decentralise care, close down and replace Tavistock with regional centres by spring 2023. In October, the NHS presented its proposals for care provision and launched a consultation. Civil society expressed serious concern about some of the proposals, which include preventing trans children from social transitioning unless diagnosed with “clinically significant distress”, mandatory participation in research when a child is provided puberty blockers, the introduction of an extra phase before a child is placed on the waiting list, the quasi prohibition of families seeking care outside the NHS. Mermaids held community consultations and published several concerned responses from trans youth.

In August, civil society organisations published a joint letter to the Health Research Authority regarding the Cass report’s plans to conduct quantitative research and look into 9,000 Gender Identity Development Services (GIDS) records without explicitly asking trans people to willingly participate.

In June, Mermaids launched a report gathering the voices of trans youth on their experiences in trans healthcare.

Access to gender-affirming healthcare for trans adults in Northern Ireland continued to be almost completely non-existent. The waiting list is still over 700 and the waiting times average three to five years.

The Scottish Government continued to work on improving trans healthcare in Scotland, over 2022 and 2024. They provided a grant to support a full-time Lived Experience Coordinator to feed in the experiences of trans / non-binary people to the Gender Identity Healthcare Reference Group.

A joint civil society report about the impact of the Bell v Tavistock case highlighted that nine out of ten people said the ruling had negatively affected their mental health, that parents felt powerless and guilty that they could not help their child more, and that people feared the case would further increase transphobia in the UK.



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Mermaids was targeted by an unprecedented smear campaign this year and received threats and abuse phone calls to the extent that it had to shut down its helpline for a few days. Mermaids reported that some of its funders were intimidated and had to launch a fightback fund to continue its work.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, the UK parliament rejected the plea of over 137,000 people who signed a petition calling for legal gender recognition (LGR) on the basis of self-determination and available for non-binary people as well.

In March, the Scottish Government presented a bill to amend the Gender Recognition Act to allow recognition by self-declaration, and to reduce the minimum age from 18 to 16. The law was adopted on 22 December and was widely welcomed by civil society, the United Nations, and the Council of Europe. The law does not allow for the recognition of non-binary people. Soon after the adoption, news was leaked that the UK government might block the law.

In July, the Scottish Government hosted Working Group on Non-binary Equality presented 35 recommendations for improving non-binary equality, to which the government responded.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Civil society organisations launched an open letter urging national sporting bodies to support trans-inclusive policies after a number of them adopted trans bans this year.

PUBLIC OPINION

The 'Britons and Gender Identity: Navigating common ground and division' study highlighted that the hostile political discourse against trans people is not in sync with public attitudes in the country. Most agreed with a 'live and let live' approach, wanted schools to be safe and inclusive and talk about trans issues, and agreed that trans women were women and trans men were men. Respondents were more divided on bathroom access and sports.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Although abortions were legalised in Northern Ireland in 2020, services remain inaccessible. The Department of Health has failed to issue any guidance to health and social care trusts on the provision of abortion services, including when and in what circumstances medical staff may exercise their freedom of conscience when delivering a service. In December, Secretary of State Chris Heaton-Harris said that the UK Government would act and he instructed Stormont's Department of Health to press ahead with setting up the service.

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