



Stonewall

Pride & Progress

GLOBAL EQUALITY REPORT 2026

FRESHFIELDS

Introduction

This resource has been co-produced by Stonewall and Freshfields.

Stonewall's vision is of a world where everyone, everywhere has equal rights. We will work until every person who is lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer+ is living free from discrimination, prejudice and inequality, making our shared future safer, fairer and more prosperous.

Our strategic objectives are to:

- Provide leadership to navigate turbulence for LGBTQ+ issues and; work in coalition to protect and improve LGBTQ+ rights across the four UK nations and beyond.
- Shape a policy and legislative agenda, through working in partnerships, that is focused on improving LGBTQ+ lives day in, day out using data and evidence.
- Support the development of safe and inclusive places where everyone can play and succeed throughout their lives.

For over twenty years we have worked with workplaces helping them to realise the benefits of inclusion. Our [Proud Employers Programme](#) provides holistic, high-quality, evidence-based support to organisations from a range of sectors in the UK and around the globe.

Stonewall is proud to continue its long-standing collaboration with [Freshfields](#) through the launch of this inaugural "Pride & Progress: Global Equality Report". Freshfields is a global firm with over

280 years' experience of anticipating change, setting new standards and shaping the future of law. For years, our work together on our country reports has aimed to provide clarity and guidance for LGBTQ+ individuals and allies across the globe. This new annual report format allows us to offer a more timely and focused analysis of the legal landscape, which, as this report shows, is evolving at a rapid and often unpredictable pace.

This guide is designed to inform you of significant developments in laws affecting LGBTQ+ communities. It provides an overview of the global equality landscape, and highlights countries where there has been progress towards equality, and where significant setbacks have occurred. If you are looking for detailed information about LGBTQ+ communities at country level, the [ILGA World Database](#) provides comprehensive real time mapping of LGBTQ+ rights across the globe.

Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland) Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where every LGBTQ+ person has equal rights. This does not constitute legal advice and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.

▲ **Paris, France.** 26th June 2021. Around 30,000 people participated in the Pride march organised by the Inter-LGBT. *Norbu Gyachung / Unsplash*

“Progress is never linear”

FOREWORD FROM STONEWALL



At Stonewall we are working to make the world a safe and equal place for LGBTQ+ people to live, work and thrive.

This important report, produced with our longstanding partner Freshfields, shows why we believe a focus on protecting and improving rights in the UK and beyond our national borders is so important. We have seen time and again that hard-won rights can be – and are – rolled back. In the US, the overturning of *Roe vs Wade* in 2022 is perhaps one of the most significant examples of how well-established rights remain fragile. Closer to home, here in the UK the Supreme Court’s ruling last year on the definition of “sex” for the purposes of the Equality Act has created a lack of clarity, confusion and concern, including but not limited to the status of those who already have a Gender Recognition Certificate.

Against that backdrop, the LGBTQ+ community and all who love, respect and value equality must stay both vigilant and optimistic as we continue to move forward. And there are reasons to stay positive: Thailand has recently legalised same-sex marriage, the Council of Europe Assembly called on its member states to ban Conversion Practices and in the UK the Crime and Policing Bill has received Royal Assent, changing to make anti-LGBTQ+ hate crime an aggravated offence. And as we go to print we are expecting the UK Government to finally publish the long-awaited bill on banning conversion practices.

Knowledge is power and data is essential as we continue the campaign for universal human rights and continue the long march for equality. That is why this report is so important. It demonstrates unequivocally the recent legal, social and political changes that have and will impact LGBTQ+ communities in the UK and globally. While some of it is a tough read, it helps us clearly understand some of the challenges we face as we navigate a clear path through the omnipresent pushback, populism and polarisation.

Amidst the turbulence it can be easy to overlook progress that has been made and wins secured. This report reminds us that progress is never linear, that together business and civil society have to keep remaking and winning the arguments and be endlessly optimistic about our ability to create an equal future.



I hope this report will play a part in helping us achieve our shared goal of creating inclusive and equal workplaces where everyone in the LGBTQ+ community feels they are safe, equal and thriving.

Simon Blake OBE, CEO, Stonewall

“Hard-won rights can never be taken for granted”

FOREWORD FROM FRESHFIELDS



We are proud to partner with Stonewall on this report.

While it may not always be clear to see, there is much to celebrate when we look at recent developments in LGBTQ+ rights. In a landmark move for Southeast Asia, Thailand has legalised same-sex marriage, granting couples equal rights in marriage, property, and adoption. Similarly, courts have been a powerful force for progress in several nations. Saint Lucia’s High Court decriminalised consensual same-sex relations, striking down discriminatory colonial-era laws. In Kenya, a groundbreaking High Court judgment upheld the dignity of a transgender woman and mandated legal recognition of self-identified gender. And in Lithuania, the Constitutional Court declared a ban on same-sex civil unions unconstitutional, affirming the principles of dignity and equality.

Yet, these victories are set against a backdrop of significant setbacks. In Hungary, new legislation effectively bans Pride events and public displays related to homosexuality. We have also witnessed the recriminalisation of same-sex relationships in Trinidad and Tobago. These and other developments remind us that hard-won rights can never be taken for granted.

Navigating this fragmented global landscape is a critical challenge for multinational employers seeking to create inclusive workplaces for all, for LGBTQ+ individuals making decisions about their careers and safety, and for those working on the front lines of legal reform. By providing a clear and concise summary of these key legislative shifts, we hope this report serves as an essential tool for understanding the risks and opportunities that lie ahead to better understand the legal landscape and to inform and empower action and positive change.

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Michael Rohls, Head of Dispute Resolution Continental Europe, Freshfields



▲ **Bangkok, Thailand.** 4th June 2023.

A couple wearing wedding dresses, celebrating Bangkok Pride 2023. Bangkok Pride is one of the biggest Pride events in Asia with up to 100,000 people expected to join the celebrations along with 38 organizations including National Human Rights Commission, the Justice Ministry, UN agencies and diplomats from various embassies. It is also hoped the event will help Thailand's bid to host the 2028 World Pride event.

Photo: Sipa US / Alamy Live News

▼ **Vilnius, Lithuania.** 7th June 2025. Crowds during the Baltic Pride 2025 celebration in Cathedral Square, for International Pride month.

Photo: Kotrina Sagdijeva / Alamy



▲ **New York, USA.** 14th February 2025. A day after the Trump administration wiped "Transgender" and "Queer" from the Stonewall National Monument's website, military veteran and Trans activist Tanya Asapansa-Johnson Walker speaks at a LGBTQIA2S rally at the Stonewall National Monument in Greenwich Village in New York.

Photo: Sipa US / Alamy Live News

Worldwide LGBTQ+ rights: A complicated picture

Over the past 50 years we have seen remarkable progress towards LGBTQ+ equality across the world. As of 31 March 2026*:

37

countries have legalised same-sex marriage

46

countries have employment protections on the grounds of gender identity

20

countries have legal gender recognition frameworks based on self-identification

19

countries have legal gender markers available for non-binary people

80

countries have employment protections for individuals on the grounds of their sexual orientation

63

countries have hate crime legislation protecting people based on their sexual orientation, with 40 countries protecting people based on their gender identity

However, in many countries across the world LGBTQ+ people face persecution simply for existing. The below figures are taken from the ILGA World Database, but others, such as the Human Dignity Trust, offer varying data.

17

countries only have banned conversion practices

77

countries prohibit legal gender recognition

7

countries, at least, still impose the death penalty for same-sex sexual activity

110

countries have no employment protections for LGBTQ+ people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity

33

countries have legal barriers affecting ability of LGBTQ+ civil society organisations to formally register and operate

36

countries, at least, have criminalised same-sex sexual activity – covering around 2.4 billion people, or around three in ten people of the world's population (29%)



▲ **Zürich, Switzerland.** 17th June 2023. Pride march.
Photo: Kajetan Sumila / Unsplash

For LGBTQ+ communities, the global human rights landscape paints a complicated picture. The legal landscape impacts safety and inclusion when navigating everyday life, such as going to work and getting married.

For multinational workplaces, restrictive legislation can pose challenges to performance. Open for Business recognise that LGBTQ+ inclusion has an impact on Economic, Business, and Individual Performance^[1]; put simply, countries, workplaces and individuals perform better when LGBTQ+ equality is embedded in law.

*Please note that these statistics refer to nationwide laws and (in some cases) state or sub-jurisdictions.

Sources:

ILGA World Database, accessed on 9 April 2026,
<https://database.ilga.org/en>

^[1] Open for Business: Strengthening the Economic Case (2018)

Proud Employers

Stonewall's sector leading programme is designed to support organisations in creating truly LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces.

As a member, you get access to expert consultancy, evidence-based training materials, accreditation tools and peer networking. All designed to help you embed inclusion across your entire ecosystem.

▼ **Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.** Pride march.
Photo: Jan Budomo / Unsplash



Pride & Progress: Global Equality Report 2026

This section takes a deeper dive into 14 countries where there has been significant movement on LGBTQ+ rights, either through making positive progress towards equality, or where existing protections have been rolled back.

Thank you to Freshfields for working with local partners across the world to develop this information.

Austria: Ban on conversion practices

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1971
Same-sex marriage	2019
Legal gender recognition	Yes – since 2014
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2004. No protections for gender identity
Population	9,107,266
Market	EMEA

Austria is in the process of introducing legislation to ban so-called conversion practices. In May 2025, several draft bills for a Conversion Measures Protection Act (“Konv-Sch-G”) were introduced in the Austrian Parliament. These proposals aim to prohibit practices intended to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity, particularly regarding the protection of minors. However, parliamentary deliberations (committee stage and readings) have been postponed multiple times, meaning the law has not yet been finalised or passed.

As of March 2026, Austria has not adopted a nationwide ban on conversion practices.

Canada: Hate crime legislation

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1969
Equal marriage	2005
Legal gender recognition	Yes
Non-binary recognition	Yes – since 2019
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 1996. Gender identity and gender expression since 2017
Population	40,412,302
Market	NAM

In May 2025, the Government of Canada announced plans to introduce new legislation to strengthen hate crime protections, including enhanced measures addressing offences motivated by hatred based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The contemplated legislation, Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act was introduced in Parliament in September 2025.

The Combatting Hate Act would amend the Criminal Code to create specific hate motivated offences, namely: “(a) intimidation intended to instil fear and deter access to religious, cultural, and other specified places; (b) intentional obstruction of lawful access to such places; (c) a distinct offence denouncing hate-motivated crime; and (d) wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group – including groups distinguished by sexual orientation, gender identity or expression – through the public display of certain hate or terrorist symbols.”

It would also define “hatred” as an emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation. The Combatting Hate Act passed its third reading in the House of Commons on 25 March 2026, and is now before the Senate for final review, consideration, and potential amendment.



◀ **Tbilisi, Georgia.** 8th July 2023. Police block Georgian opponents of gay rights as they try to interfere in a Pride party in Tbilisi. Photo: AP Photo / Zurab Tsertsvadze

Georgia: Removal of gender identity protections

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 2000
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2014. No protections for gender identity
Population	3,805,993
Market	EMEA

In April 2025, Georgia enacted a comprehensive package of legislative amendments aimed at removing the terms “gender” and “gender identity” from the entirety of Georgian legislation. The reform renames the “Law on Gender Equality” as the “Law on Equality between Women and Men” and dismantles existing gender related institutional structures, including the Parliament’s Gender Equality Council.

The initiative entails a comprehensive revision of terminology across 16 laws, replacing references to “gender” with “woman and man” or “sex”. Terms such as “gender issues”, “gender sensitive”, and “intolerance based on gender” are replaced with wording based on equality between women and men or sex-based criteria. These changes effectively remove gender identity and gender expression as legally recognised concepts.

Hungary: Pride ban

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1962
Equal marriage	No – but civil unions since 2009
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation and gender identity since 2004
Population	9,600,101
Market	EMEA

In March 2025, Hungary amended its law on the right of assembly to prohibit gatherings that would violate the restrictions set out in The Child Protection Act 2021, thereby banning assemblies that “promote or portray a deviation from one’s sex at birth, gender reassignment, or homosexuality”. To enforce the new rules, authorities may use facial recognition technology to identify participants in unauthorised gatherings and both organisers and participants themselves can be held liable for violating the law.

In April 2025, a constitutional amendment reinforced this approach by defining people strictly as “a man or a woman” and prioritizing child protection above most other rights.

Several subsequent police bans on events linked to Budapest Pride were appealed. Despite some being sent back for reassessment, Hungary’s Supreme Court ultimately upheld the prohibition, noting that the new constitutional and statutory rules leave no room to override the law. Despite all of this, Pride events were held in Budapest and in Pécs, leading to the public prosecutor’s office filing charges against the mayor of Budapest and the organiser of Pécs Pride.



► **Budapest, Hungary.**
25th March 2025. A rally in Budapest, on Liberty bridge, against the law banning Pride.
Photo: Aboba / Alamy

Kenya: High Court ruling on upholding dignity of trans people

Same-sex sexual activity legal	No
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	Only for Intersex people
Employment protections	No
Population	58,356,506
Market	EMEA

In August 2025, the High Court in Eldoret issued a landmark judgment in favour of a transgender woman, finding that her rights were violated during detention after invasive, non-consensual “gender determination” procedures, strip searches, and the leaking of her medical records.

The court recognised her as a transgender person, ruled that the treatment she received, along with broader state-imposed limitations on her core rights — including dignity, privacy, equality and non-discrimination, and freedom from cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment — were unconstitutional, and awarded her compensation. It directed the State to legally recognise transgender people’s self-identified gender and ordered Parliament to enact a Transgender Protection Rights Act, or alternatively amend the draft Intersex Persons Bill 2024, to close gaps in the law.

As of March 2026, no further legislative action or implementation measures by Parliament have been reported in this regard.

► **Mombasa, Kenya.** 15th September 2023. Members of the anti-LGBTQ movement hold placards as they chant slogans during a protest against a ruling by the Kenyan Supreme Court for upholding the National Gay and Lesbians Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) to register the association. The anti LGBTQ members converged at the famous Makadara Grounds, where they deliberated the way forward and said the three judge members who gave the verdict went against the will of the Kenyans.

Photo: AP Photo / Gideon Maundu





◀ **Vilnius, Lithuania.** 4th June 2022. The Baltic Pride march. Photo: Alexander Shelegov / iStock

Lithuania: Same-sex civil unions ban deemed unconstitutional

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1993
Equal marriage	No – but civil unions since 2025
Legal gender recognition	Yes – since 2017
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2000. No protections for gender identity
Population	2,808,978
Market	EMEA

On 17 April 2025, the Constitutional Court ruled that Civil Code Article 3.229, which limits civil partnerships to a man and a woman, is unconstitutional. The Court found that such restrictions discriminate against same-sex couples and violate constitutional principles of human dignity, privacy protection, equality, and family protection.

It clarified that although marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman, the constitutional concept of family is gender-neutral and protects all stable relationships characterised by mutual responsibility and emotional affection. It also held that Parliament’s 24-year delay in creating partnership procedures was “unreasonably long” and breached constitutional requirements of legal certainty (i.e., the period since the Civil Code’s partnership provisions were adopted but never implemented). Consequently, until the legislature establishes a procedure for registering partnerships, individuals may exercise their right to enter into a partnership by applying to the court.

While the court’s decision is a significant step, a comprehensive legal framework for the implementation and protection of same-sex civil unions is still under discussion by the Lithuanian Parliament, and no formal rules specifying the registration procedure have yet been established.



◀ Amsterdam, Netherlands.
3rd September 2018.
Photo: Robin Benzrihem / Unsplash

Netherlands: Ban on conversion practices

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1811
Equal marriage	2001
Legal gender recognition	Yes – since 2002
Non-binary recognition	Only for Intersex people
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 1992. Gender identity and gender expression since 2019
Population	18,434,330
Market	EMEA

In the Netherlands, the House of Representatives approved legislation in September 2025 banning conversion practices, i.e., practices aimed at changing or suppressing a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

The bill would criminalise the performance of such practices when carried out in the exercise of a public office, profession or business, or within the framework of an organisation, against minors or against adults through abuse of a position of factual dominance. Publicly offering conversion services, or directly offering such services to a minor, would also be prohibited. Healthcare professionals acting in accordance with applicable professional standards are exempt.

As of March 2026, the bill is currently before the Senate, where it remains under scrutiny by the Standing Committee on Justice and Security. The Standing Committee on Justice and Security has raised additional questions to the bill’s sponsors and the government regarding, among other things, the scope and enforceability of the proposed offence and the added value over existing criminal law. Responses are pending.

Poland: Recognition of same-sex marriages performed internationally

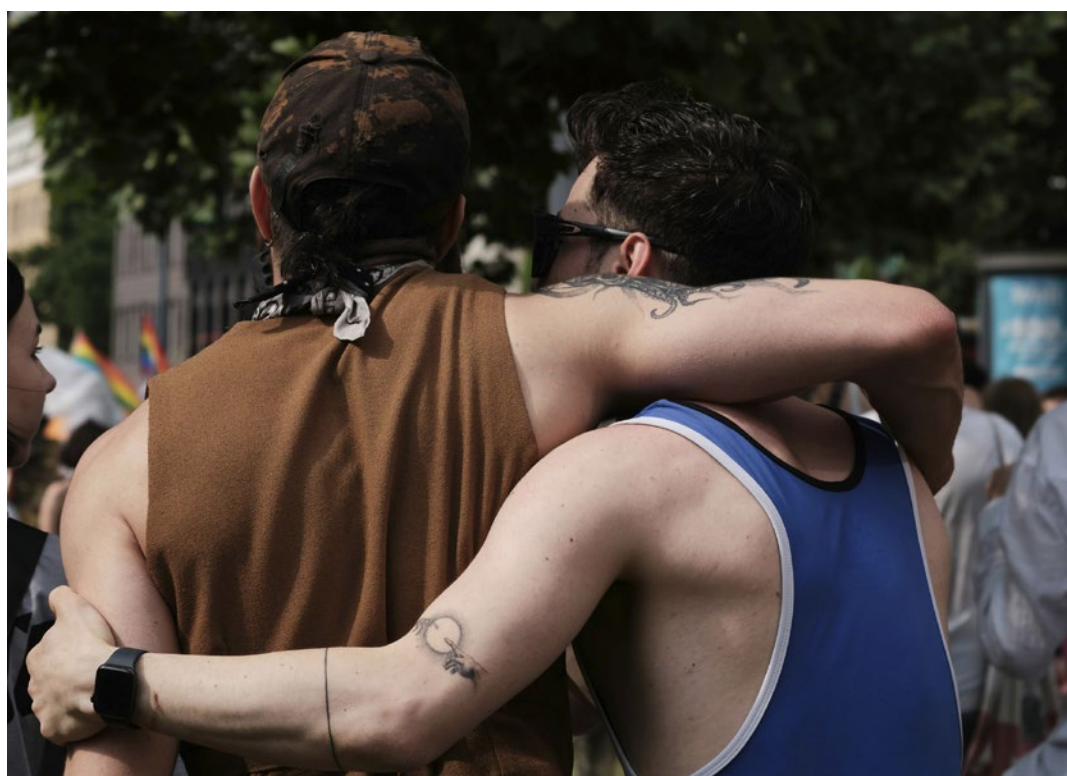
Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1932
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	Yes – since 1991
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 1992. No protection for gender identity
Population	37,850,021
Market	EMEA

On 30 December 2025, the Government adopted and submitted to the Parliament a draft law on the status of a “closest person”, which has since undergone its first reading and is currently subject to further legislative work. The proposal, intended to enter into force on 1 January 2027, would allow individuals in non-formalised relationships to conclude a civil law agreement defining mutual rights and obligations in property, family, and personal matters, including formal recognition through a notarial deed registered with the civil registry.

This initiative reflects increasing European legal pressure. In 2023, the European Court of Human Rights found that Poland’s lack of recognition for same-sex couples violates the Convention, a position also supported by the former Polish Ombudsman. This trend continued in 2025, when the Court of Justice of the European Union required Poland to recognise the effects of same-sex marriages concluded abroad.

Against this background, on 20 March 2026, the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland issued a landmark judgment. Referring to the Court of Justice of the European Union’s ruling of 25 November 2025, it held that Polish Civil Registry Offices should allow the transcription of foreign same-sex marriage certificates. As a result, same-sex couples who married abroad may be able to have their marriage certificates officially registered in Poland, thereby facilitating the recognition of certain rights and administrative matters.

► **Warsaw, Poland.** 17th June 2023. Pride march.
Photo: Andrew Keymaster / Unsplash



Saint Lucia: Same-sex sexual activity legalised

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 2025
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2006. No protection for gender identity
Population	180,453
Market	NAM

Saint Lucia decriminalised consensual same-sex relations in July 2025, when the High Court of Justice declared sections 132 and 133 of the Criminal Code unconstitutional for criminalizing consensual sexual acts between adults in private.

The decision upholds the right of LGBTQ+ people to protection of the law, privacy, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, and equal protection under the law, as guaranteed by the Constitution. The decision removes colonial era provisions that had long fuelled discrimination and creates conditions for safer access to HIV prevention, testing, and treatment.

Slovakia: Constitutional amendment to the recognition of ‘sex’

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1962
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation and gender identity since 2008
Population	5,451,504
Market	EMEA

In September 2025, Slovakia passed a constitutional amendment that recognises only two sexes—male and female – which critics warn may impact human rights guarantees such as access to legal gender recognition for trans and intersex people.

The amendment also restricts adoption to married heterosexual couples only, thereby banning same-sex couples from adoption, and prohibits surrogacy altogether (for both same-sex and heterosexual couples). Prime Minister Robert Fico described the amendment as a “dam against progressivism and preservation of traditional values,” while human rights organisations criticised it particularly for undermining human rights and other fundamental rights, its direct impact on LGBTQ+ individuals and its potential conflict with democratic principles and international obligations.



◀ **Bangkok, Thailand.** 1st June 2025. Pride march.
Photo: ruelleruelle / Alamy

Thailand: Legalisation of same-sex marriage

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – since 1957
Equal marriage	Yes – since 2025
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2004. No protections for gender identity
Population	71,584,396
Market	APAC

Recent legal developments in Thailand have marked a significant step forward for LGBTQ+ rights, most notably with the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

Legislation amending Thailand’s Civil and Commercial Code, which came into effect in January 2025, introduced gender-neutral terminology such as ‘spouses’. This change grants same-sex couples rights related to marriage, divorce, marital property, and other financial and medical rights, as well as equal rights to jointly adopt children.

In addition, the interpretation of the term “spouse” for the purpose of exercising leave rights related to childbirth under the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998), as amended now includes spouses of the same sex. Equally, same-sex marriages of foreign nationals are now legally recognised, granting marital rights while staying in Thailand. Thailand is the first country in Southeast Asia to pass an equal marriage law.

Despite this notable progress, challenges remain, particularly for the transgender community. Thai law does not currently allow individuals to change their legal gender from the sex assigned at their birth. Consequently, trans parenthood is not legally recognised, as parenthood on birth certificates is recorded based on the parent’s sex at birth. While trans people can legally change their name, official titles such as “Mr.” or “Miss” remain tied to their sex assigned at birth and cannot be changed. Although public opinions are being sought regarding the change of official titles, this issue continues to be widely debated in Thai society, and there are no further developments at this stage.

This may also lead to difficulties for trans foreign nationals staying in Thailand for work. While legislation banning discrimination based on gender identity exists, critics point to the limited practical enforcement of the law. As such, legal protection of trans people has gaps in coverage. e.g., there are no specific laws explicitly mandating trans access to facilities matching their gender identity.

Trinidad and Tobago: Same-sex relationships being recriminalised

Same-sex sexual activity legal	No
Equal marriage	No
Legal gender recognition	No
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	No
Population	1,513,656
Market	NAM

In March 2025, Trinidad and Tobago’s Court of Appeal reestablished the criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations, overturning a 2018 High Court ruling that had found Sections 13 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act unconstitutional. The reinstated provisions now impose penalties of up to five years’ imprisonment.

LGBTQ+ advocates strongly criticised the ruling, describing it as a significant regression that once again renders LGBTQ+ individuals “unapprehended criminals” in the eyes of the law.

International human rights bodies also expressed concern. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) stated that “reinstating criminal provisions penalising consensual same-sex relations is incompatible with international standards, particularly the rights to privacy, equality, and non-discrimination”. It added that “the continued existence of such laws, even when not enforced, contributes to a discriminatory environment that legitimises prejudice and violence and undermines the enjoyment of other human rights”. An appeal has been initiated to the UK Privy Council.



► Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. 18th August 2022.

Pride march.

Photo: Wayne Lee-Sing / Unsplash

► **Glasgow, Scotland.** 24th January 2023. Hundreds gather to protest the blocking of the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill.

Photo: Thiago Rocha / Unsplash



United Kingdom: Supreme Court ruling on definition of ‘Sex’ in the Equality Act

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – between 1967 and 2001
Equal marriage	Yes – between 2014 and 2020
Legal gender recognition	Yes – since 2005
Non-binary recognition	No
Employment protections	Sexual orientation since 2003. Gender reassignment since 1999
Population	69,857,419
Market	EMEA

In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that: “The terms ‘man’, ‘woman’ and ‘sex’ in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex”. Following the judgment, holding a Gender Recognition Certificate does not change a person’s sex for the purposes of the Equality Act. The Court went on to stress that, under the Equality Act 2010, trans people are protected from discrimination on the ground of gender reassignment.

The UK Supreme Court’s 2025 ruling was made in the context of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, pursuant to which only “biological females” may now be counted toward the statutory 50% target for women on public boards in Scotland.

Whilst the judgment itself was limited in scope, it has had a much wider significance across British society. Public authorities and private organisations have reached differing conclusions when reviewing policies to ensure alignment with the law. Many employers have framed access to positive action schemes aimed at women by reference to ‘biological sex’ – which on the one hand has in some cases led to a freezing of such schemes, or has led to trans-specific schemes being set up.

United States of America: Executive orders affecting LGBTQ+ people

Same-sex sexual activity legal	Yes – between 1962 and 2003
Equal marriage	Yes – between 2004 and 2015
Legal gender recognition	Varies state-by-state
Non-binary recognition	Varies state-by-state
Employment protections	Sexual orientation protections introduced between 1973 and 2020 Gender identity protections introduced between 1993 and 2020
Population	348,645,153
Market	NAM

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Since commencing his second term, President Trump has signed a series of Executive Orders that restrict the rights of LGBTQ+ people and particularly seek to reverse certain legal rights and recognitions afforded to transgender people.

Executive Order 14168 (“Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government”)

On January 20, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14168. This order mandates that all federal agencies recognise sex as an “immutable biological classification” determined at birth, and interpret any federal laws or regulations referencing “male” or “female” to refer only to those individuals assigned such sexes at birth. It also effectively eliminates the use of “gender identity” in federal policy, requiring the replacement of “gender” with “sex” in all official documents and halting federal funding for the “promotion of gender ideology.” Consequently, the Department of State has been directed to remove “X” gender markers from passports, ensuring all federal identification reflects only sex assigned at birth.

Executive Order 14173 (“Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity”) and Executive Order 14151 (“Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing”)

Parallel to this, federal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy was reshaped through Executive Orders 14173 and 14151, both issued in early 2025. These orders, which remain enforceable while challenged through litigation, remove DEI programs and requirements from federally funded institutions, including universities, eliminate DEI focused positions within federal agencies, and have already resulted in paused or withdrawn research funding.

Executive Order 14173 specifically directs the federal government to “encourage” the private sector to end DEI practices, mandating a quota of federal “investigations” into the DEI practices of publicly traded companies, non-profits, universities, among others.

Executive Order 14183 (“Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness”)

Executive Order 14183 disqualifies all people from military service if they have a current or historical diagnosis of gender dysphoria, or if they “exhibit symptoms consistent with” gender dysphoria. It also explicitly bars transgender individuals who have undergone any hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or transition-related surgery for the purpose of gender transition, regardless of their current health, fitness, or ability to meet military standards. There are no exceptions for service members who transitioned before application to the military. The order directs the Department of Defense to discharge any transgender personnel who cannot comply with sex-based standards applied according to their sex assigned at birth. While initially challenged, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the administration to begin implementing these restrictions in early 2025 while legal battles proceed in lower courts.

Executive Order 14201, (“Keeping Men Out of Women’s Sports”)

The Trump Administration has also issued certain executive orders relating to LGBTQ+ youth. Executive Order 14201

prohibits transgender female athletes from participating in girls' and women's sports teams. It threatens to withdraw federal funding from elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions that allow transgender girls to participate in girls' teams.

Executive Order 14190 (“Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling”)

Executive Order 14190 halts federal funding for K-12 schools that promote “gender ideology” and prohibits schools from facilitating a minor’s social transition without parental consent. Additionally, Executive Order 14187, (“Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation”) seeks to prevent gender-affirming care for youth by withholding federal funding and directing agencies to prevent surgeries, hormone therapy, and puberty blockers for patients younger than nineteen.

▼ **Washington D.C., USA.** 3rd June 2025. A person holds a sign supporting transgender veterans at the Unite For Veterans rally. Photo: Dominic Gwinn / Middle East Images / StringersHub / Sipa USA



Shaping global inclusion work

The picture remains complex, evolving and uncertain for LGBTQ+ rights around the globe. Multinationals can ensure their work is locally relevant and sensitive in a number of ways, these include:

- Engage with local and regional LGBTQ+ organisations to understand the impact of legislation on the ground.
- Work with in-country legal experts to understand how you can apply inclusion within the context of local legislation.
- Introduce policies and procedures that detail your approach to LGBTQ+ equality at work.
- Set up local chapters of your LGBTQ+ or Equality Resource Groups to support the development of inclusive spaces.
- Develop mobility policies that specifically outline the support available to LGBTQ+ employees who travel for work, specifically to locations where LGBTQ+ communities are criminalised.
- Consider committing to the [UN Global LGBTI Standards of Conduct for Businesses](#); these standards set out a clear framework, calling for global employers to work closely and in collaboration with local civil society.
- Participate in the Proud Employers Accreditation to assess and progress LGBTQ+ inclusion in your workplace. It's designed to support multinational employers to foster safe and inclusive work environments where everyone can thrive.

Further support

The following organisations and resources may be useful when researching LGBTQ+ rights across your global operational footprint.

Please be aware that organisations and resources are shared for signposting purposes. Stonewall is not affiliated with these organisations or responsible for the content of external websites.

- [ILGA Europe – Rainbow Map](#)
- [ILGA World Database](#)
- [Human Dignity Trust](#)
- [Open For Business](#)
- [Kaleidoscope Trust](#)

Thank you

The LGBTQ+ community across the world has always faced turbulence; the path to LGBTQ+ equality has never been linear. As the information in this guide shows, whilst there are governments that are regressing established LGBTQ+ rights, others are taking huge strides to ensure all LGBTQ+ people are treated equally. We hope you found this resource useful and that it's given you an insight into the current state of play for LGBTQ+ rights across the world.

The legislative frameworks highlighted in this guide are not necessarily a reflection of local cultures, customs and perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community in the countries we have highlighted. Each location will have variable factors that impact on the lives of the people living, working and visiting them. LGBTQ+ people living in countries

with progressive legislation will still face discrimination in everyday life and those living in countries where their identities are criminalised will also be finding ways to survive, thrive, build community and push for change.

If you would like support to understand how your workplace can ensure an inclusive environment where all LGBTQ+ can thrive, please reach out to our expert team via proud.employers@stonewall.org.uk. We are always happy to help you.

This resource has been made possible to the generous support of Freshfields and their partners across the world. We thank them for their unwavering support of LGBTQ+ people and commitment to inclusion for all.



◀ **London, UK.** 25th June 2022. Pride march.
Photo: Ian Taylor / Unsplash

▼ **London, UK.** 5th July 2025. Pride march.
Photo: Stonewall



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