

**Stonewall**

**PUBLIC ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS TRANS PEOPLE  
RESEARCH BRIEFING**

**At Stonewall, we stand for all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning, and ace (LGBTQ+) people. Stonewall has been part of the fight for LGBTQ+ rights for more than 30 years since we were set up to campaign to overturn Section 28.**

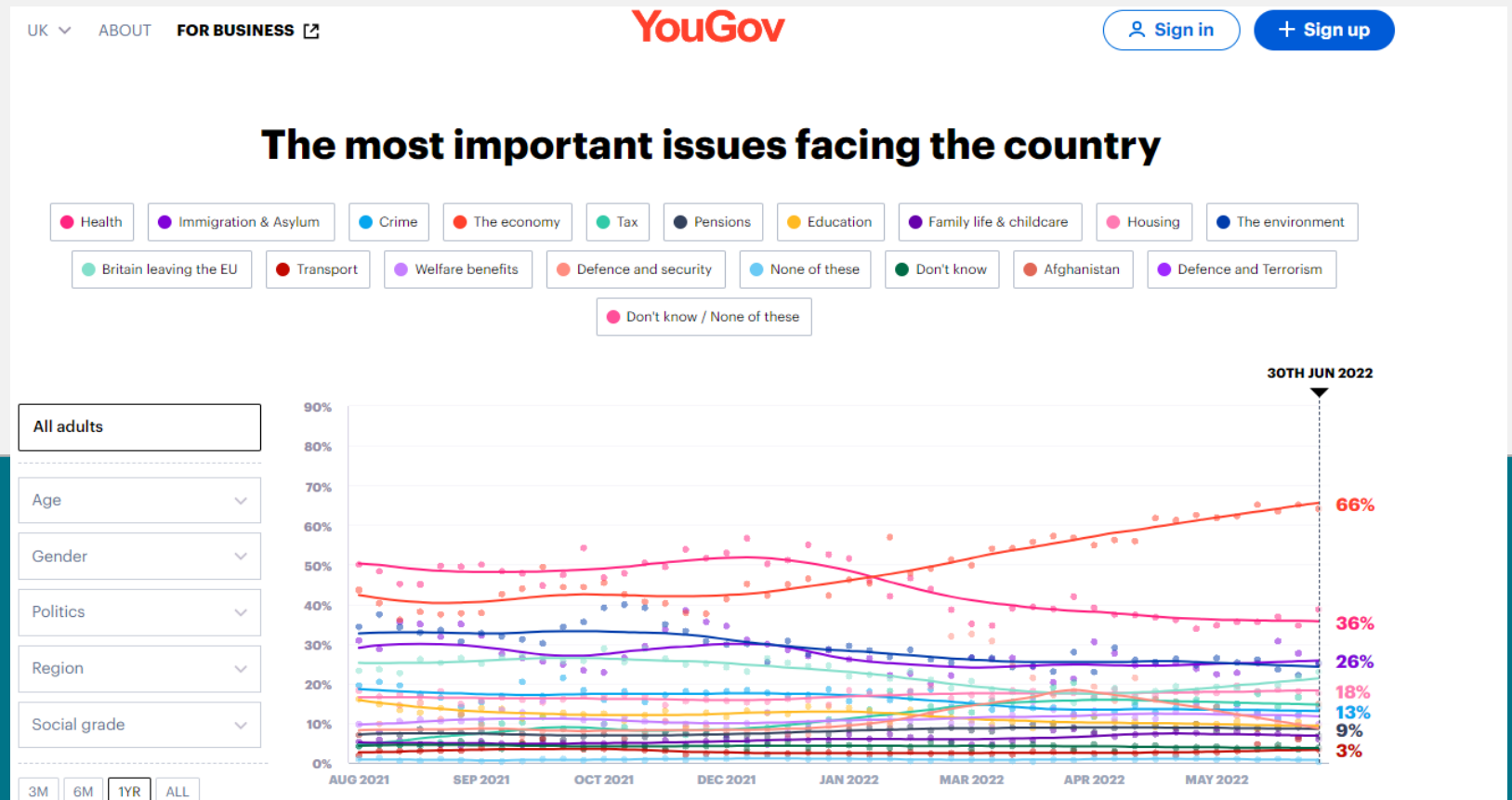
**We imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere are free to be themselves and can live their lives to the full.**

**Journalists and politicians  
think that trans people are a  
big 'issue'. But do the British  
public agree?**

## Research briefing

# No. The British public is clear and consistent about the issues that matter to them.

The British public has been concerned about issues like health, education, security, and housing for more than 40 years. This is what they want to see political action on.



## Research briefing

# Conservative members simply do not view trans issues as a concern or a priority.

When Opinium presented more than 500 Conservative members with a closed list of 28 issues they are passionate about, trans issues (with trans participation in sport listed separately) came 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> with just 3% of respondents identifying these as issues they are passionate about when given up to four issues they could choose.

*(Opinium, 6 – 8 July 2022. Base: 511 Conservative Party members)*

**There are many more salient issues that Conservative Party members want to see action on than policy relating to trans people.**

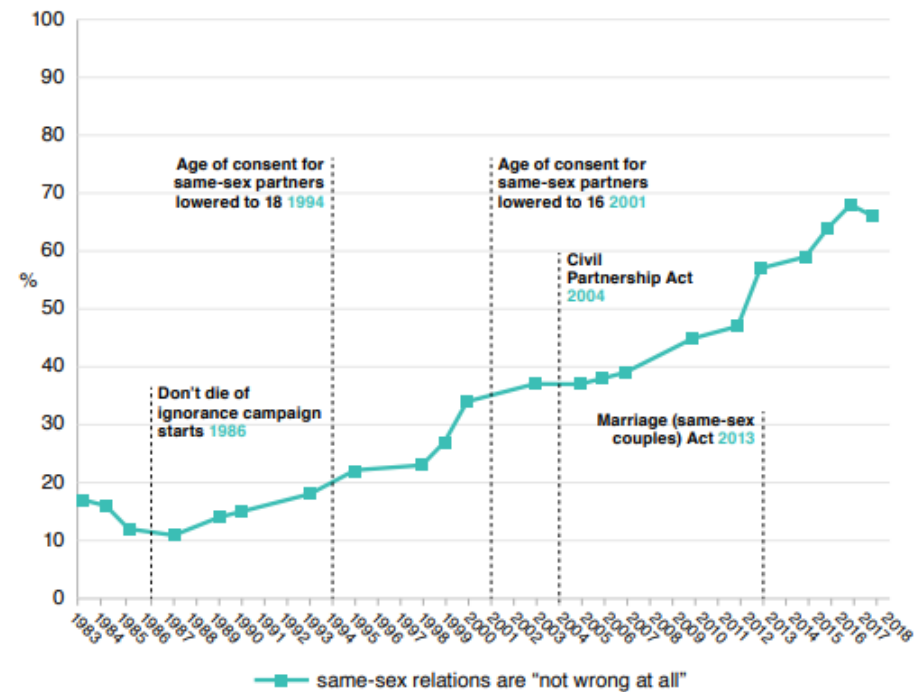
## Research briefing

# When Margaret Thatcher introduced Section 28, she was supported by public attitudes.

But attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people have shifted significantly as Britain has become firmly established as a socially liberal community. As a country, we believe in people's freedom to be who they are and to thrive.

*(British Social Attitudes 36, National Centre for Social Research, 2019)*

Figure 4 Sexual relations between two adults of the same sex are "not wrong at all", 1983-2018



# Now 1 in 4 of Britons is close to a trans person.

- **24% of us know a trans person, and this increases to 48% of 18–24s and 31% of 25–34s. At least 1 in 5 people knows a trans person in every region of Great Britain.**
- **74% of us know a lesbian, gay and bi person as a friend, family member or colleague.**
- **Public attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bi people shifted as more people got to know us.**

*(Public First poll for More in Common, Nov 21. Base: 2,046 18+ adults, Great Britain)*

**Trans people are a tiny minority population, but a growing number of people across the country know and care for trans people.**

## Research briefing

# The British public is four times more likely to feel positive about trans people as they are negative.

- 31% of the public say they feel 'respect' towards trans people and 21% say they feel 'admiration', compared to 8% who feel 'disgust' and 4% who feel 'fear'
- This compares with 38% who feel 'respect' towards lesbians, 37% towards gay men and 32% towards bi people; 19% who feel 'admiration' towards lesbians and gay men and 16% towards bi people; 7% who feel 'disgust' towards lesbians, and 9% towards gay men and 8% towards bi people; and 4% who feel 'fear' towards lesbians and gay men and 3% towards bi people.

*(Opinium for Stonewall, Dec 21. Base: 2,001 adults 16+, United Kingdom)*

**The British public, across every region, nation and age group, is socially liberal on LGBTQ+ rights, including trans rights.**



## Research briefing

# Women are more likely to feel positive about trans people's rights and accept them.

- 35% of women say they feel 'respect' towards trans people, compared to 28% of men
- 24% of women say they feel 'admiration' towards trans people, compared to 18% of men
- 6% of women say they feel 'disgust' towards trans people, compared to 11% of men
- 4% of women say they feel 'fear' towards trans people, compared to 5% of men

*(Opinium for Stonewall, Dec 21. Base: 2,001 adults 16+, United Kingdom)*

**Narratives that are hostile to trans people or challenge their existence don't resonate with most women.**

**Anti-trans discourse is out of touch with public opinion.**

**Journalists and politicians must avoid making the same mistakes that led to Section 28.**

## Research briefing

# Hostility and attacks on trans people LGBTQ+ rights are toxifying people's views of political parties.

- In October 2021, only 29% of the British public trusted the Government to protect LGBTQ+ rights.

*(nfpSynergy LGBTQ+ Charity Engagement Survey, Oct 21. Base: 1,001 adults 16+, Britain)*

**When 1 in 4 of us know trans people, and 3 in 4 know lesbians, gay and bi people, these impressions matter.**

# Transphobic stances don't win votes.

- In the 2022 Australian General Election, Scott Morrison's Liberal party focused on trans rights, particularly regarding sports, as an attack on the Labor Party's trans inclusive position. The Liberal / National coalition lost 18 seats, half previously safe or fairly safe, giving the Labor Party a majority. Attacking trans rights did not benefit the centre-right party, nor negatively impact the centre-left.
- In the 2022 Scottish local elections, the Alba Party ran as an alternative independence party, with a pledge to 'to 'push women's rights to the top of the agenda' by criticising the SNP's plan to reform the Gender Recognition Act. Alba received 0.7% of the vote and no seats.
- The Scottish Conservative Leader, Douglas Ross, also campaigned on trans rights, arguing 'trans women are not women'. The Scottish Conservatives lost 62 seats in the local elections, being displaced as the second largest party by Scottish Labour. The trans-inclusive Scottish SNP, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Parties all increased their vote share and seats.

**Because trans rights issues do not have salience with voters and 1 in 4 of us knows a trans person, anti-trans stances do not win votes.**

# Public support for trans policy action is strong.

- 62% of the public believe that **conversion therapy targeted at trans people should be banned**. This includes 58% of people who intend to vote Conservative voters and 62% of people who voted Conservative in 2019; and 68% of people who intend to vote Labour and 69% of Labour's 2019 voters. *(YouGov, April 2022. Base: 1,826 18+ adults, Great Britain)*
- 41% of the public think **schools should have a specific policy to tackle transphobia**, including 31% of people who voted in Conservative in 2019 and 52% of people who voted Labour in 2019. *(Public First poll for More in Common, Nov 21. Base: 2,046 18+ adults, Great Britain)*
- 57% of the public in Scotland support proposals to **make it easier for trans people to legally change their gender** compared to 20% who oppose. This includes 31% of Conservative voters and 62% of Labour voters supporting the policy objectives in Scotland. *(Savanta ComRes for BBC Scotland, Jan 2022. Base: 2,038 people aged 16+, Scotland)*

**As well as positive feelings towards LGBTQ+ people outweighing negative feelings, there is broad support for trans-specific policies.**



Lifting of UK Ban on LGB people in the military

Equalisation of Age of Consent in England, Scotland and Wales

Repeal of Section 28 in England and Wales

Civil partnerships & same-sex adoption in England and Wales

Equalisation of Age of Consent in Northern Ireland

Equality Act

Same-Sex Marriage England and Wales

Same-Sex Marriage Scotland

Same-Sex Marriage Northern Ireland

Section 28 Legislation

1988

2000

2003

2005

2008

2010

2013

2014

2020

**We've come a long way since Section 28.  
Let's not go backwards.**