

“We Will Not Bow To Fear”:

Pride Around the World in 2025

June 2026



OUTRIGHT
INTERNATIONAL

Oradea Pride, 2025. Credit: Ark Oradea.

About Outright

Outright International works with partners around the globe to strengthen the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations against LGBTIQ people, and advocate for inclusion and equality.

Founded in 1990, Outright works with civil society organizations, the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies, governments, humanitarian and development institutions, and philanthropic and corporate partners to create lasting change. With staff in over fifteen countries, Outright holds consultative status at the United Nations, where it serves as the secretariat of the UN LGBTI Core Group.

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Glossary

Agender: Someone who does not identify with any specific gender.

Anti-Gender Movements: These are transnational networks composed of diverse actors that oppose “gender ideology,” which they use as a blanket term for social, political, and cultural developments that they perceive as threats to cisheteronormative structures, such as genderaffirmingcare, marriage equality, and sexual and reproductive justice.

Asexual: The word asexual often describes people who experience little to no sexual attraction.

Bisexual: The word bisexual often refers to people who are attracted to women and men and/or to people who are attracted to more than one gender.

Cisgender: Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

Cisheteronormativity: A pervasive belief system that centers and naturalizes heterosexuality and the gender binary to the extent that it is assumed that the only two “normal” ways of being are cisgender heterosexual masculine men and cisgender heterosexual feminine women.

Cisnormativity: A pervasive belief system based on the assumption that every person’s genderidentity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth and that those whose gender identities do not align with their sex assigned at birth are “abnormal.”

Conversion Practices: Practices intended to suppress or change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression based on cisgender, heteronormative indoctrination and/or the incorrect assumption that such persons’ orientation, identity, or expression is not normal. Conversion practices have more often been referred to as “conversion therapy,” a term that incorrectly suggests that treatment is needed for a disorder and that people can be converted to cisgender heterosexuality through such “treatment.”

Gay: A synonym for homosexual in many parts of the world. In this report, gay is used specifically to refer to the sexual orientation of a man whose primary sexual and/or romantic attraction is toward other men.

Gender: The social and cultural codes (linked to but not congruent with ideas about biological sex) used to distinguish between society’s conceptions of “femininity” and “masculinity.”

Gender Expression: Gender expression is how we express our gender through actions and appearance, including attire, speech, and movement. Gender expression is on a spectrum. It can align with social constructs of what it means to be feminine, masculine, androgynous, or any combination thereof. It can also be fluid. For a lot of people, their gender expression aligns with characteristics that our societies deem to be appropriate for their gender or their sex assigned at birth. For other people, it does not. A person’s gender expression is not always linked to the person’s biological sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Gender Identity: A person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being a woman or girl, man or boy, a combination of these, neither, or something else.

Gender Nonconforming: Behaving or appearing in ways that do not fully conform to social expectations based on one’s assigned sex.

Heteronormativity: A pervasive belief system that centers and naturalizes heterosexuality to the extent that it is assumed that the only two “normal” ways of being are heterosexual men and heterosexual women.

Heterosexual: The sexual orientation of a person whose primary sexual and/or romantic attraction is toward men, if they are women, and toward women, if they are men.

Hijra: In South Asia, “hijra” refers to an identity category for people assigned male at birth who develop a feminine gender identity. Hijras are often considered a third gender. Some hijras identify as transgender, but many do not.

Homophobia: Fear of, contempt of, and/or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexuality, usually based on negative stereotypes of homosexuality. Homophobia can be both individual and institutional. Entrenched damaging opinions about same-sex attraction may influence the enactment of discriminatory laws and policies and how individuals, the government, organizations, the media, and society in general behave towards people perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.

Homosexual: The sexual orientation of a person whose primary sexual and/or romantic attractions are toward people of the same sex.

Intersex: An umbrella term that refers to a range of traits and conditions that cause individuals to be born with chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals that vary from what is considered typical for female or male bodies.

Intersexphobia: Fear of, contempt of, or discrimination against persons with biological traits and sex characteristics that are regarded as not within the typical notions of female and male bodies. Intersexphobia, also known as interphobia, often manifests as violence and discrimination, including intersex genital mutilation.

LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer): An inclusive term used to categorize people whose identities or bodies do not meet cultural expectations of endosex, cisgender heteronormativity. Outright uses the term LGBTIQ as an umbrella term that includes people who may not themselves identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer.

Nonbinary: A term to describe the gender identity of someone who does not identify exclusively as a woman or girl or as a man or boy. This term is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “genderqueer.”

Queer: An inclusive umbrella term covering multiple identities, sometimes used interchangeably with “LGBTIQ.” It is also used to describe divergence from heterosexual and cisgender norms without specifying new identity categories. In this report, “queer men” is used to cover gay men, bisexual men, and other men of non-heterosexual sexual orientations, and “queer women” is used to cover lesbian women, bisexual women, and other women of non-heterosexual sexual orientations.

Sexual and Gender Minorities: A category of individuals whose sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics differ from those in most of the population.

Sexual Orientation: The sexual, romantic, and emotional attraction that one has the capacity to feel for others. An individual’s sexual orientation is indicated by one or more of the following: how a person self-identifies their sexual orientation, a person’s capacity for experiencing sexual and/or affectional attraction to people of the same and/or different gender, and/or a person’s sexual behavior with people of the same and/or different gender.

Transgender: A term to describe people whose sex assigned at birth does not conform to their gender identity. A transgender person usually adopts, or would prefer to adopt, a gender expression in accordance with their gender identity but may or may not desire to alter their physical characteristics to conform to their gender identity.

Transgender Men: People designated female at birth but who identify and may present themselves as men. Transgender men are generally referred to with male pronouns.

Transgender Women: People designated male at birth but who identify and may present themselves as women. Transgender women are generally referred to with female pronouns.

Transphobia: Fear of, contempt of, and/or discrimination against transgender, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming people, usually based on negative stereotypes. Transphobia can be both individual and institutional: entrenched damaging opinions about transgender identities may influence the enactment of discriminatory laws and policies and how individuals, the government, organizations, the media, and society in general behave toward people whose identities do not conform to mainstream gender roles.

Two-Spirit: In some Indigenous North American cultures, “two-spirit” is an umbrella term for those who embody feminine and masculine spirits and traditionally occupy important social and spiritual roles in their communities.

Executive Summary

The 2026 edition of *Pride Around the World* is Outright International's sixth serial report tracking the visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) people through Pride events globally. This report documents where and how movements marked Pride in 2025, in celebratory and defiant exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Pride remains a protest, an act of continued resilience and bravery, an avenue for solidarity and community, and a pathway to freedom.

Outright found that in 2025, Pride events centered on exercises and restatements of LGBTIQ people's fundamental rights to express, assemble, associate, and live in dignity:

- Public-facing Pride or LGBTIQ visibility events took place in **101 of 193 United Nations (UN) member states in 2025**. In at least 66 of these countries, Pride was held in multiple cities, reflecting the **decentralization of movements**, authenticity, homegrown ownership, and broadening acceptance.
- In **92 UN member states, no public Pride events were held**. The contexts did not allow for public-facing Pride or LGBTIQ visibility events, and socio-political developments forced activists to remain underground or retreat to prioritize movements' safety.
- Across regions, **state crackdowns** against Pride and the rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression have continued, **becoming more varied and sophisticated**. These crackdowns manifest in the form of bans, permit refusals, arrests and detention, surveillance, intimidation and harassment, and intersecting administrative restrictions. In other cases, far-right groups, religious leaders, politicians, and others have mounted countermobilizations against Pride.
- Framing LGBTIQ organizing and visibility as a public morality issue is **a major threat to fundamental human rights protections**, threatening to cut off marginalized people's access to public space.
- Pride is a **crucial site of democratic participation**, allowing civic engagement and alliance building to challenge state oppression and transform societies.
- **Funding cuts and policy retreats**, stemming from the U.S. government's policy changes, **directly impacted LGBTIQ organizing and visibility in 2025**.
- Through multiple layers of challenges to the ability to exist safely in public, LGBTIQ movements, led by thousands of volunteers, are **adapting creatively** through various mechanisms, including art. However, **adaptation is not the same as freedom**.

The findings of this report are based on 122 survey responses from 59 countries in seven languages, 30 semi-structured interviews with LGBTIQ human rights activists and key informants, and a literature review of online sources, social media, news articles, and reports by state institutions, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations.

The report begins with an analysis of the global data showing where Pride was public in 2025, where public organizing was impossible, and an assessment of the current state of the rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression through the lenses of LGBTIQ organizations and visibility events. It includes a discussion of specific crackdowns on Pride, followed by eight case studies and a “snapshot” demonstrating how Pride played out in different contexts in 2025.

The case studies reveal how movements adapt over time and how different approaches to Pride can shape LGBTIQ human rights protections and long-term sustainability. **Hungary** made global headlines in 2025 for the biggest Pride events ever held in Budapest and Pécs, even after parliament banned Pride events. Based on interviews with Hungarian Pride organizers and activists, we offer an analysis of the sociopolitical context in which Pride became a globally recognized human rights victory despite, or because of, state pushback. In **Viet Nam**, where Pride in 2025 faced state restrictions and event cancellations, activists speak to the challenges of LGBTIQ human rights advocacy in a social context in which there is limited public support for demonstrations and marches. In **Romania**, activists across small and midsize cities brave negative social perceptions, prohibitions, and scarce resources to build community and harness visibility for social change. The case study brings four of these Prides to global audiences.

Outright staff and other activists report on their personal experiences attending **WorldPride 2025**, held in the U.S. capital only months after the federal government wiped out human rights funding and inclusion initiatives and imposed anti-gender policies. In **Tunisia**, activists describe how art contributes to LGBTIQ visibility, strategically making use of the limited space to create awareness and educate the public in a context in which Pride marches are not possible. In the immediate aftermath of a court ruling decriminalizing consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults, Pride in **Saint Lucia** was an exercise in liberation and a guidepost toward advocacy opportunities for further social change. **Soweto Pride, South Africa**, is a movement borne out of political necessity to challenge hate crimes against Black queer people, specifically women. The march and other events in 2025 were intentionally designed to be family-friendly and build cross-movement solidarity.



In **Costa Rica**, activists had to reorganize Pride in 2025 after the Ministry of Culture reclassified the closing event to restrict attendance to people aged 18 and above, on the allegation that it would portray content not suitable for minors. In the wake of Pride, a lawmaker has introduced a bill to ban minors from attending Pride marches and to impose criminal penalties on people performing drag shows where minors are present, reinforcing negative stereotypes about sexual and gender diversity. From the margins of queer movements’ organizing, a case study on **asexual inclusion in Pride** provides insight into how asexual people in countries including Hungary and Italy use Pride as an opportunity to advance visibility and challenge misconceptions.

LGBTIQ movements are resilient, finding ways to be visible, assemble, and safely organize in the face of resource scarcity and even existential threats to their movements and identities. Pride organizers did not bow to fear in 2025, nor did they relinquish hope when confronted by global funding freezes and institutional withdrawal of support. In places where public Pride is not possible and where movements continue to face organized political and legal attacks, global solidarity should attempt to close these gaps. One avenue is through Outright International’s March For All campaign, made possible by generous support from Deutsche Bank. Individuals around the world can sign up to be marched for or to march for someone else, sending a message that the global LGBTIQ movement is united to achieve liberation for all.



Right: Outright staff participating in the March For All campaign at the World Pride International Freedom March on Washington, June 2025. Credit: Ohotuowo Ogbeche for Outright International.

Methodology

This report is the sixth edition of Outright’s Pride Around the World series. It is a result of an online survey in seven languages, semi-structured interviews with LGBTIQ individuals and activists, and a literature review of news reports, social media posts, and reports by non-governmental organizations and institutions. We distributed our online survey using Outright’s network of activists and organizations and on social media, with a focus on collecting information on Prides and LGBTIQ visibility events that took place in 2025. The survey was distributed in seven languages—English, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), French, Indonesian, Portuguese, and Spanish—and responses were allowed in any language. In the survey, we defined Pride in this manner:

Public-facing, open, and visible events that affirm the existence of LGBTIQ people, demand recognition and protection of our rights, and/or celebrate progress. This may include events labeled as ‘Pride’ as well as IDAHOBIT [the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia], Trans Visibility Day, Intersex Awareness Day, Asexual Visibility Day and other similar public-facing events.

Our survey aimed to document the various ways in which LGBTIQ people globally exercised the rights to freedom of association and assembly in 2025. It explored where Pride events were and were not held, including whether they took place outside capital cities; new Pride events in 2025; and personal experiences related to Pride and other forms of queer public organizing, including demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, and similar events. Following up on our case study on inclusion of LGBTIQ people with disabilities in *Show Up With No Shame: Pride Around the World in 2024*, we also sought to determine whether Pride events were disability inclusive in 2025.¹ In addition, we asked about the impacts of shifts within the LGBTIQ funding landscape and how it impacted visibility events. This survey received 122 responses from 59 countries.²

The quantitative data on Pride events around the world in the chapter “Pride by the Numbers” is based on survey responses as well as a literature review. We verified the information in this chapter by contacting activists via email or messaging apps to confirm whether Pride or similar LGBTIQ visibility events had taken place in their countries and what form the events took.

We also relied on the survey data, a literature review of relevant texts, Outright’s institutional knowledge of developments in the global human rights movement, and our participation in events to select the following countries and Pride events for the case studies and snapshot: WorldPride 2025 in Washington D.C., the United States of America; Budapest and Pécs Pride in Hungary; Soweto Pride in South Africa; local Pride events in Romania; public activism events by Mawjoudin in Tunisia; Pride in Saint Lucia and Costa Rica; and asexual Pride events in Hungary and Italy.

Between August 2025 and April 2026, Outright’s research team conducted 30 semi-structured interviews remotely with activists from Costa Rica, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Viet Nam. These interviews, along with survey data on these countries, aimed to provide insights into the legal, political, historical, and social contexts of LGBTIQ organizing in these countries; challenges to the rights to freedom of association and expression; the evolution of Pride events; and the successes of public-facing LGBTIQ organizing. We supplemented the information from these semi-structured interviews and the online survey responses with desk research to verify information on Pride events and the surrounding socio-political contexts.

In terms of limitations, Outright recognizes that interviewees’ and survey respondents’ perspectives on Pride do not necessarily represent their entire countries’ movements or communities. Every participant in a Pride event anywhere in the world has a unique experience and perspective, and beyond this report, there are more stories to be told. Although this report provides an analysis of Pride in every region, respondents to the survey represent only 59 countries, some with a limited number of respondents. For instance, Oceania was not sufficiently represented in the survey responses, with only one response from Australia and no responses from other Pacific islands.

On the language and terminology in this report:

Names and pseudonyms. Outright typically refers to interviewees by their full names on first usage and subsequently by their surname, if they consent and can safely be cited publicly, and by pseudonyms, including a first name and last initial, if preferred by an interviewee for reasons of safety and privacy. In conducting the research for this report, several interviewees and survey respondents expressed other preferences, such as being referred to by their given name or chosen name rather than their surname. Outright has respected these preferences.

Acronyms and identities. Outright typically uses the acronym “LGBTIQ” when referring to movements, laws, or events that are truly relevant to and inclusive of the range of identities included in the acronym. The acronym refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer people and is intended to be inclusive of other identities that represent sexual and gender diversity, including asexual people, whose experiences with Pride are discussed in this report. In some cases, we report on events that, to our knowledge, did not include intersex people, or on laws that only target people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and not based on sex characteristics. In these cases, we use the acronym “LGBTQ,” omitting the “I” for “intersex.” We sometimes use “queer” as an inclusive catch-all. We recognize that our choice of terms and acronyms may be inconsistent and imperfect at times, due to gaps in our knowledge, the complexity and fluidity of our communities, and identities that no term or acronym can perfectly capture. Outright respects the identities and acronyms used by interviewees and in the documents cited in this report to represent their work, organizations, and movements.

I. Introduction

Pride is a protest and a celebration. It is also a state of mind. Since 2020, Outright has tracked the evolution of Pride and LGBTIQ visibility events around the world, noting that progress is not always linear. In the Republic of Georgia, queer visibility events were first held in 2012; now, under an increasingly autocratic government, public expression of queerness and of any form of dissent can pose grave risks to safety. The Georgian organization Tbilisi Pride posted this message on Instagram in June 2025:

As June—Pride Month—comes to a close, we reflect not only on what we’ve endured, but on what we continue to resist.

Another June has passed in Georgia without Pride Week. In a climate of accelerating authoritarianism, repressive laws—including anti-LGBTQ+ legislation—and with over 60 political prisoners, there is no safe space left, physically or mentally, for queer people to gather publicly and express themselves.

And yet, this month is still ours. A time for self-care and solidarity. For imagining freedom—personal and collective. For holding each other close, and refusing to be erased.

Our history is one of resilience and dignified struggle. No regime can take that away.

With the fall of authoritarianism, queer voices will rise again. Until then, we carry Pride in our hearts—and we continue the fight.

For love. For dignity.

For freedom—for all of us.

And yet, this month is still ours. A time for self-care and solidarity. For imagining freedom—personal and collective. For holding each other close, and refusing to be erased.

Our history is one of resilience and dignified struggle. No regime can take that away.

With the fall of authoritarianism, queer voices will rise again. Until then, we carry Pride in our hearts—and we continue the fight.³

Even in the face of hostile legislation and an ever-present threat of violence, queer activists in Georgia will not be silenced: they remind us that this month is ours.

In 2025, Pride events around the world underscored the resilience of LGBTIQ national and grassroots movements. Despite intensifying political hostility, including anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric, funding withdrawals, institutional exclusion, Pride bans, and counterprotests, queer communities reaffirmed that we are here to stay, and that we will not bow down to fear.

II. Pride by the Numbers

Outright identified 101 countries out of the 193 United Nations (UN) member states where public-facing Pride and LGBTIQ visibility events were held in 2025. These events include broader human rights demonstrations led by LGBTIQ people or in which queer people were highly visible. At least 66 of these countries had Prides in multiple locations, beyond capital cities.

In 92 UN member states, no LGBTIQ visibility events were held that fell within Outright’s definition of “public” events. Outright’s tally of these countries is based on our definition of Pride as “public-facing, open, and visible events that affirm the existence of LGBTIQ people, demand recognition and protection of our rights, and/or celebrate progress.”⁴ In several of these 92 countries, to commemorate Pride, the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Trans Day of Remembrance, and other key dates for LGBTIQ people, activists hold safe, private, or semi-private events for which participant lists are thoroughly vetted to ensure safety.

Pride events across the world included art shows, beauty pageants, cultural events, dances, demonstrations, drag shows, fashion shows, film festivals and events, healing events, hikes, marches, panel discussions, parades, parties, plays and performances, poetry readings, protests, sit-ins, spiritual events, sporting activities, and so much more.

Since 2020, we have tracked the number of countries in which Pride or other visibility events are held. In 2021, we also began tracking how many countries have Pride events in more than one city. First-time Pride events taking place beyond capital cities and in small towns can indicate authenticity and localization of Pride, along with increased LGBTIQ acceptance. In 2023, we narrowed our consideration of “countries” holding Pride to include only the 193 UN member states, given that definitions of “countries” outside the UN structure can be subjective. Our analysis shows that the number of UN member states in which Pride events take place has remained fairly consistent, with some apparent growth in the number of countries in which Pride events take place outside a capital city.



Year	Countries/UN member states with public Pride events	Countries/UN member states with public Pride in more than one city
Pride before and up to 2020	102 countries	Not tracked
2021	107 countries	50 countries
2022	105 countries	63 countries
2023	101 UN member states	61 UN member states
2024	100 UN member states	65 UN member states
2025	101 UN member states	66 UN member states

Table 1: Pride Around the World: 2020 to 2025

The 2025 total of 101 countries in which we highlighted these events, and the change in countries that had Pride in multiple cities (from 65 to 66) both mark minimal numeric increases. Further analysis indicates progress and continued resilience, as well as the consequences of policy changes. For instance, in Liechtenstein, Pride in 2025 was canceled due to a lack of funding, after three years of events since its first Pride in 2022.⁵ But rather than relinquishing the concept of Pride, the organization held a panel discussion in September 2025.⁶ In Myanmar, amid humanitarian and political crises, LGBTQ activists organized a protest against the military dictatorship in a grassroots liberated area. This event was one of the only queer-led public events of that nature in years.⁷ Trans and gender-diverse people marched along with women’s rights activities across towns in Pakistan, expanding from Lahore, the capital.⁸ In Rwanda, although public Pride was not held in 2024, Pride Africa and other public Pride events took place in 2025.⁹

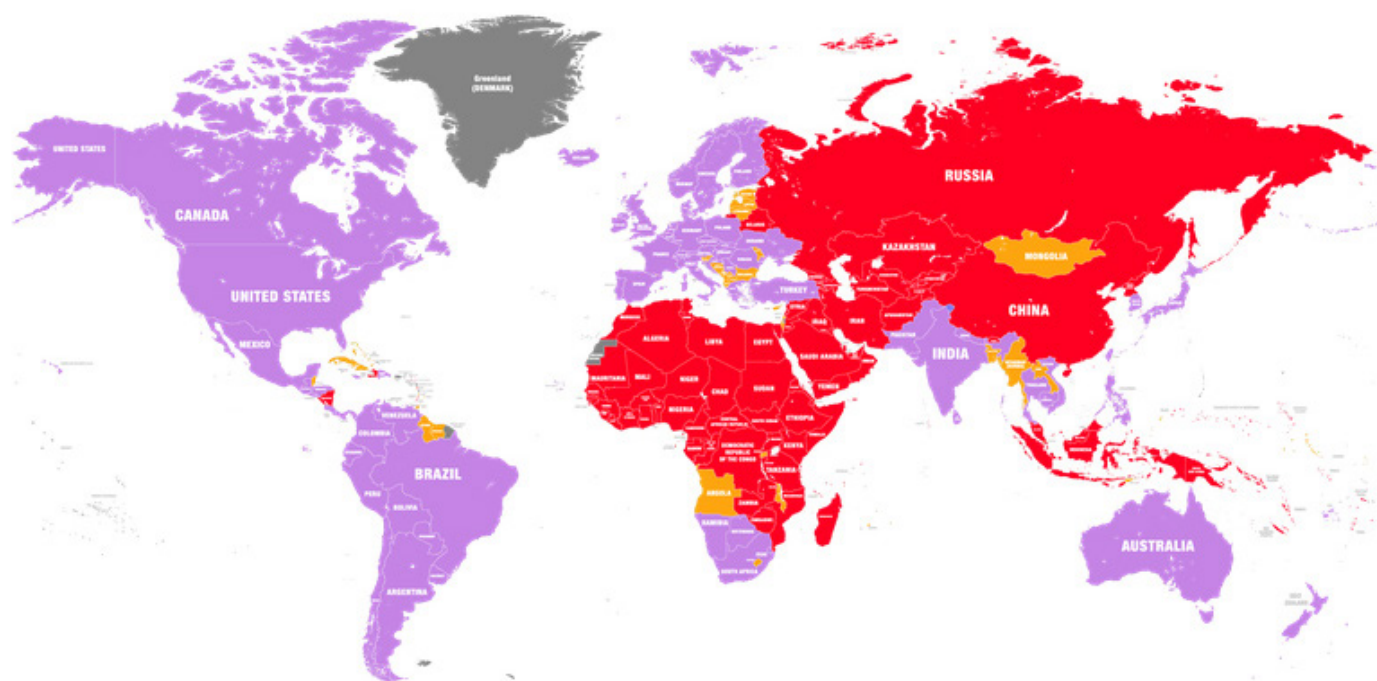
In several places, activists organized and implemented public Pride events in 2025 that faced bans, attacks, counter-protests, and other repression tactics. These include Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Hungary, Türkiye, and Ukraine, and are discussed in depth in the section “Crackdowns on Pride in 2025.”



Right: Trinidad and Tobago Pride, 2025.
Credit: Pride TT, Facebook.

First-time Pride events continue to demonstrate the spread of community mobilization as well as public acceptance. Botswana’s case of Palapye Pride is one such instance. On November 1, 2025, organizers brought together parents, religious leaders, and members of the local community for the first Pride in Palapye.¹⁰ This event marked the decentralization of Pride from its previous sole location in the capital, Gaborone.¹¹ In Chile, Pride marches were held for the first time in Puerto Varas and in the Atacama Region.¹² In the U.S., individuals in Waverly, Iowa, organized Pride for the first time.¹³ “New” Prides sometimes take place in the same city as existing Prides, but nevertheless mark important firsts: in São Paulo, Brazil, where one of the world’s biggest Pride parades is held, there was a first time Pride event in June 2025 organized by and for LGBTIQ people in trade unions.¹⁴

Pride Around the World in 2025



*1. Bangladesh Pride is an online event. 2. Only hijras, transgender, gender-diverse people can publicly celebrate Pride in Pakistan.

III. Pride Around the World in Many Ways

Every year, Outright’s Pride Around the World survey gives respondents the space to describe what Pride means to them, in their own words. The survey is open to respondents in countries where public Pride events can be held as well as those who live in countries where visibility is not possible. Pride serves key purposes globally, as shown in their responses.

Pride as Policy Advocacy

Many Pride events in 2025 articulated specific political demands. In Chile, during the Santiago Pride march, activists demanded laws allowing comprehensive sexuality education and seeking reforms of the “Zamudio law,” which is the anti-discrimination law, to comprehensively protect Chileans.¹⁵ In solidarity with Argentina, Chilean LGBTIQ organization Movilh protested before the Argentine embassy, condemning President Javier Milei’s anti-LGBTIQ discourse.¹⁶

In Mexico, a respondent said that Pride “has helped to highlight urgent needs that must be addressed, including the recognition of gender identity, the recognition of transgender children, and the prohibition of conversion practices.”¹⁷ In Bolivia, Rodolfo Vargas of the Bolivian organization Colectivo TLGBIQ+ said Pride is evolving towards political and legal advocacy:

Pride strengthens the LGBTIQ movement in Bolivia by generating public visibility, organizational cohesion, and political pressure, helping to place our agendas in the public debate and demand responses from the State.¹⁸

Pride as Collective Affirmation

Organizing and participating in Pride events is an ongoing exercise in community mobilization and mutual support. Pride is crucial in raising awareness while contributing to “group cohesion and identity,” a survey respondent from Colombia wrote.¹⁹ For Rodolfo Vargas, an activist from Bolivia, “Pride is a political act of resistance, memory, and collective affirmation, where we reclaim our existence and rights in the face of discrimination.”²⁰ In Peru, an activist described Pride as crucial for community mobilization:



Pride is both a celebration and a political act: it reclaims public space, strengthens community bonds, and keeps LGBTIQ+ demands visible within the broader human rights agenda, playing a central role in sustaining mobilization and advocacy for equality in Peru.²¹

Pride as Resistance

Queer mobilization has always been a form of resistance, and the various faces of that resistance emerged in survey responses. One of the most compelling examples that emerged in 2025 was in Myanmar. Queer organizations began holding public Pride events in Yangon in 2014, but they were forced to curtail public organizing following a 2021 military coup and a lethal crackdown on protests—with queer people among its victims. While sexual and gender minorities were not necessarily targeted in the killings, they have faced punitive sexual violence, tantamount to gender persecution, in detention.²² The military junta has made no secret of its queerphobia, banning seven books by national authors with queer content in 2025.²³ But in “liberated” areas where resistance forces working against the military junta have gained control and in some contested areas, LGBTIQ human rights activism in public can take place with minimal resistance. In one of these contested areas, Salingyi Township in Sagaing region, Pride was held by way of a protest.²⁴ In June 2025, the LGBT Alliance organized a demonstration against the military dictatorship, holding banners bearing the slogan “Unite Our Differences to Uproot the Dictator.”²⁵ As HlaMyat Tu of the Myanmar queer organization Colors Rainbow told Outright, “Our local groups still organize public events, workshops, exhibitions, and protest as long as they can manage even under the risk of air strikes, bombing, and arrests.”²⁶

Challenges such as criminalization and anti-rights movements also provoked resistance. In Nigeria, despite being unable to publicly hold Pride and other LGBTIQ events, activist Bala M. said that underground organizing, which prioritizes safe, solidarity, and community “in the face of state-sanctioned persecution” is itself a form of “resilience and resistance against discrimination.”²⁷ In Bolivia, an activist described Pride events across the country as “a sustained, albeit challenging, exercise of the rights to assembly and association in a context marked by social resistance and anti-rights rhetoric.”²⁸

Pride Beyond the Parade Route

As Pride and LGBTIQ visibility events evolve, organizers exhibit new forms of creativity and ingenuity in their approaches to advocacy for inclusion. For instance, in Bogotá, Colombia, IDAHOBIT was marked with a new cultural initiative at “one of the city’s iconic theaters” with an exhibition of photographs centering transgender people’s experiences through “art, public dialogue, and cultural spaces.”²⁹



Right: DC Dyke March, June 6, 2025. Credit: Ohotuowo Ogbeche for Outright International.

In Jamaica, the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport permitted organizers to hold a Pride party at a local heritage site, Fort Rocky.³⁰ In Peru, new Pride-related events expanded the purview beyond traditional Prides. Outfest Perú, an LGBTIQ+ cultural festival debuted in 2025, and Campamento LGBTI, a community gathering, “created a new space for collective organizing, visibility, and political education outside the traditional Pride march format.”³¹

Pride as Freedom

Around the world, being able to have public Pride is an act of freedom, and activists fight hard to protect this right. In South Africa, a survey respondent wrote that “Pride offers a space for celebration and collective queer joy.”³² In Mexico, veteran activist Gloria Careaga of Fundación Arcoiris described Pride as “the most important event” for Mexico’s queer movements:

The number of participants is growing, as activists come from all over the country. It is an indescribable experience of freedom.³³

Pierre N. (pseudonym), an activist from Madagascar who participated in Pride for the first time in France in 2025, wrote:

The experience was profoundly liberating, being in a space where I truly belonged, surrounded by equality, visibility, and solidarity. For me, Pride represents freedom, acceptance, and the right to exist openly, and this experience strengthened my commitment to the LGBTIQ movement. Even from Madagascar, it gave me hope that visibility and inclusion are possible, inspiring both personal courage and advocacy for our community.³⁴

Where Public Pride Events Cannot Be Held

In some countries, including many of the 65 UN member states in which consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults are criminalized, safe and public Pride events are nearly impossible. Activists in these places adopt approaches that prioritize the safety and well-being of LGBTIQ people, building community within the movement, solidarity with allies, space for temporal liberation, and joy. These forms of Pride remain no less legitimate, even if the metrics in this report focus specifically on the ability of LGBTIQ populations to exercise the freedoms of expression and assembly in public spaces.

In Ghana, a survey respondent said that Pride activities in 2025 “often took the form of low-risk gatherings due to fear of reprisals linked to the reintroduction of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, which has heightened risks for public demonstrations and advocacy.”³⁵ Still, “there was a noticeable increase in online engagement, with activists and groups using social media platforms to share Pride messages, raise awareness,

Right: Soweto Pride March, September 26, 2025.
Credit: Forum for the Empowerment of Women.



and foster virtual community spaces.”³⁶ In Zambia, criminalization leads to Pride events being held in private and online:

As a result, LGBTIQ individuals and activists primarily exercised their rights to association through private, discreet gatherings, online platforms, and small-scale community support activities. These spaces allowed for peer support, information sharing, and advocacy planning while prioritizing the safety and security of participants... While visibility remains limited in public spaces, there is growing community solidarity, increased use of safe private spaces, and more online engagement. This reflects resilience and adaptation, even though broader public participation and geographical expansion remain constrained.³⁷

Taking part in Pride events online and through social media can provide for controlled safe spaces where LGBTIQ people can express and share experiences, as in Cameroon.³⁸ Similarly, in Tanzania, during Pride activities, “digital spaces also became critical for convening, advocacy, and information-sharing, although these too were increasingly monitored.”³⁹ In this context, where LGBTIQ people have experienced threats of and actual violence, including from the Tanzanian police, an activist described the broader civic space in 2025 as:

Marked by heavy restrictions on protests and assemblies, including crackdowns on demonstrations linked to the general elections, arrests of organizers, and even internet shutdowns to suppress dissent. Within this environment, LGBTIQ activists continued to organize cautiously, prioritizing safety and survival while maintaining community support systems and advocacy efforts.⁴⁰

In Côte d’Ivoire, where hostile social media campaigns have advanced an anti-LGBTIQ discourse and where the authorities have prohibited some public protests, human rights activist Marie-Jo L. told Outright that holding private gatherings safely, “without the risk of arrest or being dispersed...is how we exercise our freedom of association.”⁴¹

In Pakistan, apart from the Hijra Festival, public Pride events cannot be held due to legal, societal, political, and religious bias. As a result,

Pride in Pakistan is evolving through adaptation rather than expansion.... Transgender communities continued to lead public visibility efforts, while other LGBTIQ identities remained less visible. Organizers increasingly reframed Pride as cultural or rights-based events to reduce risk. Digital visibility played a larger role, but did not replace public assembly. Inclusion of disabled and other marginalized LGBTIQ groups remains a significant gap.⁴²

In Bangladesh, holding Pride on social media has provided:

a critical platform through which youth are expressing solidarity, sharing Pride-related content, and participating in digital forms of visibility, regardless of geographic location. This indicates a generational shift in awareness and acceptance, with Pride...more rooted in everyday acts of visibility, digital engagement, and localized community resilience.⁴³

IV. Pride and the Rights to Freedom of Association, Expression, and Assembly

LGBTIQ people’s access to the rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression is tenuous. In 2025, numerous countries enacted laws or policies or implemented practices that impeded enjoyment of these rights, impacting Pride, other facets of queer organizing, and even daily existence.

This section focuses primarily on new legislation enacted or proposed in 2024 and 2025 that limits these freedoms, protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous treaty obligations. It also addresses ways in which state actors, with or without a legal basis, sought to impede queer people’s freedoms. The examples are illustrative, not comprehensive; Outright continues to collect data on recent restrictions on organizing.

Freedom of Association

In 2023, Outright’s report *The Global State of LGBTIQ Organizing: The Right to Register and the Freedom to Operate* found that only 94 of 196 countries allowed the open registration and operation of LGBTIQ organizations.⁴⁴ We found that in 74 states, LGBTIQ organizations exist, but operations are hampered by institutionalized queerphobia. In at least 26 countries, many of which criminalize same-sex intimacy and or gender diversity, Outright was not able to identify any LGBTIQ organizations operating.⁴⁵

In some cases, LGBTIQ organizations are banned outright: for instance, a 2014 Nigerian law prohibits “gay clubs, societies, and organizations.”⁴⁶ In other cases, foreign agent laws, other policies restricting non-governmental organization (NGO) registration and operations, and laws against the so-called promotion of homosexuality or gender diversity all contribute to curtailing fundamental rights.

Foreign Agent Laws

“Foreign agent” laws impose restrictions on civil society organizations that receive any funding from international sources.⁴⁷ Although variations of such laws have been in place in some countries for nearly a century, a new wave of foreign agent laws has emerged as a tactic to clamp down on fundamental rights and democracy by crushing civil society. Pioneering modern foreign agent laws have included Ethiopia’s Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009; India’s Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, passed in 2010 and tightened through increasingly restrictive amendments in 2020; and Russia’s 2012 law, which requires any organization involved in “political activity” to register as a foreign agent.⁴⁸ Other governments have followed suit, enacting or proposing such legislation as a means of obstructing civic participation and dissent.⁴⁹

In Paraguay, coupled with a 2024 foreign agents bill, the government enacted a November 2024 NGO law that empowers the government to enforce onerous audits and suspend staff.⁵⁰ Human rights organizations have condemned the law, and a respondent to Outright’s survey expressed concern regarding its likely impact on queer organizing.⁵¹

Lawmakers in Georgia enacted a repressive foreign agents law in 2024, despite mass demonstrations protesting the move and adding to crackdowns on public organizing.⁵² A more expansive and punitive follow-on bill, the Foreign Agents Registration Act, was enacted in 2025, introducing criminal liability for groups and individuals who do not register as foreign agents.⁵³

El Salvador’s May 2025 law requires civil society organizations with funding from international sources to register as foreign agents and disclose detailed information and pay a punitive tax of 30 percent on funds received.⁵⁴ Peru enacted a similar law in 2025 that grants the authorities wide powers to revoke the registration of organizations receiving international funding, purportedly to address vaguely defined notions of “public order” and “security.”⁵⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Republika Srpska enacted a law that requires NGOs that receive funding from abroad to submit detailed financial reports to the state and prohibits them from engaging in “political activity.”⁵⁶ Zimbabwe’s 2025 Private Voluntary Organizations Amendment Act empowers the state to audit or suspend leaders of NGOs from receiving foreign funding, and freeze organizational assets while tightening registration and reporting requirements for these groups.⁵⁷

Foreign agent laws have a particularly deleterious impact on LGBTIQ groups, which are less likely than other social justice movements to be able to fundraise domestically, especially in criminalizing contexts. Further, the misuse of these laws to suppress human rights advocacy, including LGBTIQ work, is well documented. In Uganda, a May 2026 Protection of Sovereignty Bill joined the attempts to constrain civil society and LGBTIQ organizing by requiring recipients of international funding to register and subject themselves to scrutiny.⁵⁸ In Kazakhstan in February 2025, an official called for the passage of a foreign agents law, claiming that Pride and feminist marches were solely a result of foreign funding.⁵⁹

Even when laws governing civil society are intended to be protective, not restrictive, they may be misused by ill-intentioned regimes. In October 2025, Tunisian authorities suspended prominent human rights and feminist organizations on the basis of Decree-Law 88 on associations—supposedly for having received foreign funding, although the law in question does not prohibit them from doing so.⁶⁰



Other Encroachments on the Right of LGBTIQ Organizations to Register and Operate

LGBTIQ organizations face numerous other infringements on the right to attain legal status and to operate without interference.

Outright has written extensively about restrictions China has imposed on queer human rights activists.⁶¹ Government surveillance, censorship, and repression, including “verbal warnings” and “being summoned” to government agencies for “talks” continued in 2025, forcing the cessation of NGO operations and leading activists to go underground.⁶²

A Turkish court ordered the dissolution of the Young LGBTI+ Association in Izmir for “obscenity” based on five social media posts that “could encourage and promote” sexual and gender diversity.⁶³ The court went on to declare that the organization’s very existence was contrary to the moral values of society and constitutional protections of the family. The Izmir public prosecutor has launched criminal proceedings against the association members.”⁶⁴

In Venezuela, the government introduced a 2024 anti-NGO law that imposes such stringent registration requirements that a year and a half later, one survey respondent reported that “less than a dozen NGOs have obtained the registration.”⁶⁵ LGBTIQ organizations in Venezuela are impacted by this regime, with the inability to register impacting access to funding, organizational sustainability, and operations.⁶⁶

In Zimbabwe, a 2025 law introduced mandatory registration of all non-governmental organizations and granted the government broad powers of monitoring and intervention.⁶⁷ Violations could be punished with fines and imprisonment, imposing a climate of fear in Zimbabwean civil society.⁶⁸

In Eswatini, in June 2023, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the government’s refusal to register the Eswatini Sexual and Gender Minorities Association. Three years later, the Ministry of Commerce has still refused to comply, causing the organization to file a new application to address the government’s non-compliance.⁶⁹ Eswatini LGBTIQ human rights activists have continued to organize Pride.⁷⁰

In Tanzania, during the 2025 election period, state authorities surveilled, arrested, and detained LGBTIQ human rights defenders and paid menacing visits to three LGBTIQ organizations. Two groups were forced to suspend operations or relocate due to repeated intimidation.⁷¹ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, LGBTIQ organizing is also fraught with challenges. In July 2025, an armed group vandalized a shelter for transgender people.⁷²

In Kazakhstan, state authorities are using the courts to punish queer rights advocates in order to quell dissent and diversity. In one case, Zhanar Sekerbaeva, co-founder of feminist group Feminita, was found guilty of “battery” and fined after a group of people disrupted a gathering of activists in a cafe, filming them and “shouting anti-LGBT slurs.”⁷³

Even where laws are not overtly prohibitive of LGBTIQ organizing, communities are forced to exist in secret due to overwhelmingly high risks of backlash with visibility. From Madagascar, an LGBTIQ human rights activist, Pierre N., opined that:

The rights to freedom of association and assembly for LGBTIQ people are recognized in law and political frameworks, but their application in practice is inconsistent and often depends on how decision-makers anticipate reactions from society to their decisions. As a result, authorities may act cautiously to avoid potential social backlash, which limits the space for visible LGBTIQ organizing... Overall, LGBTIQ organizing remains low-profile and discreet, shaped by concerns over societal response rather than the legal framework itself.⁷⁴

Freedom of Expression

Governments have also encroached on their populations’ freedom of expression and information on issues related to sexual and gender diversity, targeting both individuals and organizations.

Laws Against “Promoting” Sexual and Gender Diversity

Repressive governments seek to suffocate LGBTIQ organizing through laws outlawing the so-called promotion of homosexuality. Lithuania was a pioneer in this regard, passing a law in 2009 that prohibited sharing information with minors that “expresses contempt for family values;” the law was scrapped in 2024 following a constitutional challenge. In 2013, Russia enacted prohibitions against “propaganda of non-traditional relationships” targeting minors, and expanded this law to encompass all age groups in 2022. Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, and Georgia enacted similar laws between 2021 and 2024. Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 prohibited “normalizing” homosexuality, with penalties of up to 20 years in prison.

In 2025, such laws proliferated rapidly. Russia enacted new legislation punishing online searches of so-called extremist content, which, by the state’s definition, encompasses LGBTQ issues.⁷⁵ The law has contributed to isolation, fear, and self-censorship.⁷⁶ Burkina Faso’s unelected transitional legislature criminalized homosexual acts and behavior that would “promote” homosexuality, through a law that also constrains LGBTIQ civic engagement and public organizing, in September 2025.⁷⁷ Belarusian lawmakers approved a law prohibiting so-called “propaganda of homosexual relations, sex change, childlessness, and pedophilia” in October 2025.⁷⁸ Kazakhstan, after unsuccessful attempts to pass such legislation in 2015 and 2018, enacted a law in December 2025 that prohibits “propaganda of nontraditional sexual orientation.”⁷⁹



In Ghana, members of parliament have reintroduced and passed a bill that aims to prohibit LGBTIQ human rights advocacy and proscribes merely identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, “transsexual,” queer, an ally, pansexual, nonbinary, or “a person of any other sexual orientation or in a sexual relationship that is contrary to the sociocultural relationship between a male and a female.”⁸⁰ Now awaiting Presidential assent, this bill aims to hold organizations and individuals criminally liable for violations.

Prohibiting Public Expressions of Gender Diversity

The right to freedom of expression encompasses the right to express one’s gender as one sees fit. However, in 2025 several countries enacted or proposed legislation to limit public expressions of gender diversity, disproportionately impacting transgender, gender-diverse, and intersex people.

In Vanuatu, following an unsuccessful 2024 parliamentary committee initiative to “ban LGBTQIA+ advocacy and promotion,” the Parliament in 2025 adopted a Constitution that “only recognises the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons who are male or female at birth.”⁸¹ Pride in Vanuatu has not been held since 2023: a 2024 fashion show planned by the LGBTIQ organization VPride was canceled after officials withdrew support and verbally attacked the event, alleging that the organization’s activities contradict Christianity, the Constitution, and Melanesian values.⁸²

In Indonesia, the province of Gorontalo issued a policy in April 2025 that bans “public entertainment activities and festive celebrations involving transvestites [trans women], singers, alcohol, drugs, and gambling.”⁸³ According to Awdy A. (pseudonym), an Indonesian activist, this move “has had quite a negative impact and disrupted the activities of transgender women as artists.”⁸⁴

In Costa Rica, a lawmaker has proposed legislation to criminalize drag where minors are present, with imprisonment and fines.⁸⁵ The context of the bill is discussed extensively in the case study.

Other Restrictions on the Freedom of Expression

Beyond efforts to ban “promotion” of sexual and gender diversity and to prohibit gender expression, governments found other ways to clamp down on actual or alleged LGBTIQ-related speech.

In Libya, Law No. 11 of 2016 prohibits actions “contrary to public morals and the provisions of Islamic law.”⁸⁶ In April 2025, the Internal Security Agency ordered the closure of 10 international organizations that supported migrants, refugees and asylum seekers on the basis of this law, using “homosexuality” claims as a cudgel to attack civic organizing: among other claims, the agency accused the NGOs of promoting “atheism, Christianity, homosexuality and immorality.”⁸⁷

In China, several queer dating apps were removed from the Apple Store in 2025. Prominent queer social media accounts were forced to rebrand or shut down, further weakening digital spaces that had long served as key sites for community connection.⁸⁸ In Saudi Arabia, authorities prohibited the sale of children’s toys and other items with rainbows and banned a film that featured a gay actor.⁸⁹

Freedom of Assembly

While this report primarily focuses on public, visible activism, in some contexts even private gatherings of LGBTIQ people face the risk of surveillance and arrests—imperiling private Pride events along with even more informal efforts to build queer community. In Malaysia, police raided a private wellness center and detained over 200 people in November 2025 on suspicion of homosexuality.⁹⁰ In Indonesia, the police used the 2016 National Pornography Act to raid private gatherings, detaining about 165 people in Jakarta, Bogor, and Surabaya.⁹¹

In Pakistan, a respondent to Outright’s survey reported that several trans “gatherings were challenged or curtailed under local laws, even if some charges were later dismissed.”⁹² In one case, Lahore police arrested “several transgender individuals” in August after a video circulated from a party that the authorities deemed “objectionable.”⁹³ A magistrate court later dismissed charges against them.⁹⁴



V. “No Safe Space Left”: Crackdowns on Pride in 2025

Activists in the Republic of Georgia have, in previous years, organized IDAHOBIT and Pride events against all odds. Since Georgia’s first public queer events were held in 2012, efforts at queer visibility have faced violence on multiple occasions.⁹⁵ In 2024, activists determined they could not safely hold Tbilisi Pride because of acts of violence, especially after a mob of religious fundamentalists stormed the 2023 Pride event.⁹⁶

Once again in 2025, Pride organizers called off the event, citing the “climate of accelerating authoritarianism,” the legal assault on queerness, and the arrests of political prisoners.⁹⁷ As highlighted in the introduction, the group stated that “there is no safe space left, physically or mentally, for queer people to gather publicly and express themselves.”⁹⁸ Later in November 2025, Tbilisi Pride organizers delivered a statement informing supporters that the organization “might soon cease to exist due to the Georgian government’s drastic authoritarian turn and its extremely repressive legislation and practices.”⁹⁹

Amid broad-based efforts to restrict queer people’s rights to freedom of association, expression, and assembly, Pride has become a lightning rod for authoritarians. Crackdowns on Pride in 2025 manifested primarily through bans, permit refusals, arrests, and abuses by law enforcement officials. Whether governments legislate Pride out of existence, allow violent attacks on Pride to take place with impunity, or crack down on Prides as they take place, the end goal is the same: to silence LGBTIQ people and drive entire movements underground.

Bans and Permit Refusals

In 2025, several states blatantly flouted the rights to freedom of expression and assembly through outright bans on Pride and other visibility events.

Three such events are discussed in detail in the case studies in this report. Hungarian lawmakers banned Pride marches in Budapest and Pécs in 2025, leading to widespread outrage within and beyond queer communities in Hungary and globally.¹⁰⁰ Queer Hungarians and their allies marched in spite of the bans, and the Budapest mayor and the Pécs Pride organizer faced separate charges, until prosecutors dropped these on June 4, 2026.¹⁰¹ In Romania, the municipality of Oradea prohibited Pride in 2025 for the third year in a row, although activists continue to hold Pride in defiance of the ban.¹⁰² In Viet Nam, activists had to cancel some Pride events, including the flagship march in Ho Chi Minh City, due to unofficial restrictions imposed by state authorities.¹⁰³

In Moldova, the Chisinau Municipal Council banned Pride.¹⁰⁴ The march went ahead notwithstanding the ban, with police protection, as anti-rights marchers counter-protested.¹⁰⁵ In Çanakkale, Türkiye, the governor’s office banned a queer feminist forum by Çanakkale Pride on the supposed basis of “general morality, public safety, and preventing the spread of violence.”¹⁰⁶

The right-wing controlled municipality in Lima, Peru, refused to issue a permit for Pride requested by organizers, but as activist George Hale reported,

Organizers proceeded with the march, exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and expression. These repeated denials, along with hostile public discourse, functioned as indirect restrictions on civic space, even though Pride and other visibility events were ultimately carried out without major incidents.¹⁰⁷

In some cases, individual anti-rights petitioners have attempted to secure bans on Pride. In Lviv, Ukraine, a deputy on the Regional Council submitted a petition as a private citizen calling on the municipal authorities to ban a planned Pride event, on the grounds that such events cause “destabilization” during the war. The petition garnered 650 signatures, surpassing the 500 signatures in 24 hours that is required for the City Council to consider a petition. The mayor called on the public to “refrain from mass gatherings that stir up society,” but a small public Pride rally proceeded without incident.¹⁰⁸

Arrests and Law Enforcement Action

Each year, there are instances in which law enforcement officers arrest and assault Pride participants. 2025 was no exception.

In Türkiye, authorities have banned Istanbul Pride since 2015, with annual crackdowns and law enforcement actions against Pride attendees.¹⁰⁹ In 2025 police arrested and arbitrarily detained up to 53 people from the Istanbul march for violating the ban.¹¹⁰ Activists chronicled human rights violations including police violence and ill-treatment during arrest and detention at both Istanbul LGBT+ Pride and Trans Pride.¹¹¹ At a women’s march in Izmit, police detained a man for displaying a Pride flag.¹¹²

In Manila, Philippines, during a grassroots protest organized by the group Bahaghari and dubbed “Stonewall Pride,” police used blockades to attempt to prevent the protesters’ passage.¹¹³

According to media reports,

About 2,000 activists marched and were undeterred by the wired barricades that blocked their way as they demanded the passage of the bill on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.¹¹⁴

Police Protection of Prides

Although many people of queer experience have faced violence and harassment from police, law enforcement played a protective role at some Pride events in 2025. In Ukraine, the police successfully prevented queerphobic groups’ attempts to disrupt Pride events in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Ivano-Frankivsk.¹¹⁵ At Kyiv Pride, the police detained counterprotesters from an ultranationalist group, Prava Molod, after their counterprotest escalated into physical clashes with the police.¹¹⁶ In Jamaica, a survey respondent noted that the police provided “free security escorts” for the Pride march in Kingston.¹¹⁷

VI. Impacts of Funding Cuts and Policy Retreats on Pride

In January 2025, the U.S. government froze and subsequently terminated funding for nearly all foreign assistance, including support to global LGBTIQ movements provided through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department.¹¹⁸ Reinforcing its opposition to LGBTIQ equality, the U.S. State Department stated in June 2025, “In compliance with Trump administration policies, American tax dollars will not be funding Pride events abroad.”¹¹⁹ In many countries in which U.S. embassies had participated in Pride events in the past, survey respondents noted their conspicuous absence, including in Timor-Leste, the Philippines, Peru, Chile, and Bangladesh.¹²⁰

Survey respondents from various countries informed Outright that the termination of U.S. government funding hampered their ability to hold LGBTIQ visibility events, leading to scaled-down events in some places and a shutdown of activities in others. Some companies and private donors have also withdrawn support for Pride and diversity initiatives, in some cases fearing “potential blowback from the Trump administration.”¹²¹

In Timor-Leste, due to the lack of resources, a survey respondent from the organization Arcoiris Timor-Leste expressed disappointment over “a scaled down Pride march unlike in previous years” as a result of funding cuts from U.S. and European countries; they noted that previous larger events had constituted a platform for raising awareness.¹²² Further, “the number of diplomats was comparatively low; government representation wasn’t visible.”¹²³ Bolivian Pride organizers, who also felt the impacts of U.S. funding losses, raised funds among themselves and within the community. They built local alliances and sought in-kind support through “spaces, outreach, and volunteers,” while “prioritizing maintaining visibility and mobilization despite the economic constraints.”¹²⁴

In Pakistan, where activists organize private Pride events and a public-facing Hijra festival, domestic donations to LGBTIQ organizations are “extremely limited due to stigma and risk.”¹²⁵ An activist told Outright, “When U.S. government funding or allied donor streams were reduced or delayed in 2025, organizers often had no viable alternative funding source.”¹²⁶



Kenly Pacheco, a Pride organizer with Comité IncluyeT in Mexico City, said that funding shortages in 2025 impacted the safety of Pride participants, with insufficient resources to hire security support staff.¹²⁷ Floats were eliminated from the Pride march “as some companies, due to changes in their policies, have decided to no longer participate in the Pride parade.”¹²⁸ Pacheco added:

In 2025, the number of delegations joining the Pride Parade declined, either due to directives or internal changes within those organizations. Participation by government officials also declined, as in some cases, they join exclusively during election years. As for corporate participation, it decreased significantly, particularly among multinational companies that, due to the political climate, have altered or eliminated their inclusion policies.¹²⁹

In Peru, George Hale of the Center for the Promotion and Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights reported that funding losses did not cause a significant shift because “organizers relied mainly on community-led efforts, volunteer work, and alternative small-scale contributions to ensure that activities could still take place.”¹³⁰ However, political and diplomatic support waned, marking “a negative change in external engagement, while participation from community allies and civil society remained largely consistent.”¹³¹

In Bangladesh, where Pride is held primarily through online events, U.S. disengagement was compounded by other embassies that provided support to Pride organizers, including discreetly. A survey respondent noted,

[Embassies] substantially scaled back their involvement. This reduction appeared to reflect heightened risk sensitivity, evolving diplomatic priorities, and the broader socio-political climate following recent national developments.¹³²

Corporate support for Bangladesh Pride remained minimal and unchanging: most companies do not support Pride “due to reputational and regulatory concerns.”¹³³

In Mongolia, with reduced staff capacity and increased financial constraints due to funding cuts, groups scaled back programming and canceled or reduced the scope of Pride-related activities.¹³⁴ Human rights activist Ankhbayar J. (pseudonym) shared that these cuts fostered anti-LGBTIQ narratives, with critics of queer organizing “framing the reduction in international funding as a ‘victory’ for Mongolia.”¹³⁵ In this more hostile environment, some LGBTIQ people hesitated to attend visible Pride events due to safety concerns.¹³⁶ However, institutional support from the Mongolian National Human Rights Commission and solidarity from feminist and human rights groups helped to legitimize Pride.¹³⁷



In Cameroon, activists can only organize private events, and the inability to express through public Pride is always “an obstacle to the empowerment of LGBTIQ people.”¹³⁸ But even private events were impacted in 2025 by insufficient funding, and event organizers were required “to charge an admission fee to cover their expenses.”¹³⁹

In the U.S. city of St. Louis, Missouri, the company Anheuser-Busch withdrew sponsorship from the Pride festival after 30 years of local partnership, joining other corporate sponsors that stepped back after previously supporting Pride events.¹⁴⁰ The festival organizer, after holding a fundraiser seeking to make up the shortfall, reduced the event size. According to Taylor J. (pseudonym),

Unlike past years, in which Pride was free, there was a fee this year to get into the event, due to the lack of funding. The community really had to step up and put on our own Pride, with or without those organizations that had previously supported us.¹⁴¹

Even in wealthy countries like Switzerland and Norway, visibility events were impacted by anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric flowing from the U.S., as corporate sponsors withdrew support for Pride in 2025.¹⁴² In Canada and Australia, tech giants and other conglomerates withdrew from Sydney Mardi Gras and Toronto Pride.¹⁴³



VII. Case Study.

"I'm Not Only Here for Your Gay Rights": Asexual Inclusion in Pride

Why This Matters

Asexual people are an integral part of queer organizing, and their ability to organize and be visible in public is inseparable from the broader struggle for LGBTIQ human rights. Participating in Asexual Pride and asserting asexual visibility at Pride events are acts of resistance against erasure, exclusion, and the pervasive misunderstanding of what asexuality is and what asexual people need. This case study brings asexual organizing at Pride to global audiences, amplifying asexual visibility efforts through Pride events and LGBTIQ public organizing worldwide.

Background

From online forums in the 1990s to the first in-person Asexual Pride event in 2023, asexual organizing has seen growth and visibility in recent years.¹⁴⁴ Asexual Awareness Week (Ace Week) and International Asexuality Day, launched by activists in 2010 and 2021, respectively, mobilize ace communities and their allies around the world and raise awareness about specific issues affecting asexual people.¹⁴⁵

Some asexual organizers mobilize at Pride events as an entry point to advance visibility and assert their place in queer communities. In 2009, the first-ever asexual contingent marched at a U.S. Pride event when members of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) joined San Francisco Pride.¹⁴⁶ In 2012, ace people organized an international asexual conference for the first time at London WorldPride.¹⁴⁷ Asexual activists have also marched together in Pride for the first time in other parts of the world, such as in Canada (2014), Taiwan (2014), Japan (2014), and Iceland (2017).¹⁴⁸

Asexuality is a spectrum that includes people who experience varying degrees of little or no sexual attraction.¹⁴⁹ Asexual or ace people are disproportionately impacted by conversion practices, sexual violence, workplace harassment, and health care discrimination in some contexts, at higher rates than other sexual minorities.¹⁵⁰

Ace activists have sometimes encountered barriers to participating in Pride and conducting advocacy. The 2011 documentary film *(A)sexual* captured how some attendees of San Francisco Pride “recoiled” from David Jay, the American ace activist who founded AVEN, while others “cheer[ed] him on enthusiastically.”¹⁵¹ British asexual activist Yasmin Benoit, the first ace person to open New York City Pride (2023) and lead Pride in London (2024), has been subjected to hostile comments in person and online, including death and rape threats, for her visible work on ace inclusion.¹⁵² Asexual people have spoken about feeling excluded from Pride and queer communities, though some have noted growing acceptance. As Micheal Dore of AVEN told a media outlet in 2018,

It can feel like being stuck between a rock and a hard place, not fitting in with mainstream society but rejected by elements of the queer community—which most of us consider ourselves part of.¹⁵³

In 2025, asexual communities around the world organized during and beyond Pride. This case study briefly presents asexual Pride organizing in Hungary and Italy.

Hungary: World’s First Asexual Pride Parade

The Hungarian Asexual Community (Magyar Aszexualis Közösség) is the country’s first asexual-led organization, starting as an online community in 2014 and officially registering as an NGO in March 2018. Viktoria Sulyok, one of the group’s founders, told Outright that asexual people in Hungary are invisible, ridiculed, and “more pitied than hated.”¹⁵⁴ The Hungarian Asexual Community has created community spaces, organized workshops, and augmented ace media visibility in order to promote understanding and end discrimination against asexual people.¹⁵⁵ Since 2017, the group has participated in Budapest Pride, organizing workshops, picnics, and community events leading up to the march as part of the official program.¹⁵⁶ The partnership with Budapest Pride extends beyond the march. In 2022, for example, the Hungarian Asexual Community received funding from Budapest Pride to organize workshops on asexuality in rural areas.¹⁵⁷ However, the group remains small and under-resourced.

Sulyok has seen some progress on asexual inclusion over the years. They recounted that when they began participating in Pride, some participants did not see them as part of the queer community:

One time, we joined as a small group of six to seven people in a Pride march. Someone asked us about the asexual flag and told us, ‘It’s so good you are here to fight for my gay rights.’ I responded, ‘It’s a common fight. I’m not only here for your gay rights. I’m also here for my ace rights and the whole community.’¹⁵⁹

While there has been progress in terms of visibility, in Pride marches, “some ace people still prefer not to show their faces in photos or have to lie that they are just joining as allies out of fear of losing their jobs and being rejected by their families.”¹⁶⁰

On April 15, 2023, the organization made history when it led the world’s first in-person Asexual Pride Parade in Budapest, garnering over 160 participants.¹⁶¹ Prior to the event, Sulyok spoke about the importance of asexual Pride:

As asexuals, we want to show that we exist, and that there is nothing shameful about not experiencing (or only rarely, under certain circumstances) experiencing sexual attraction. On one hand, we want to reach non-asexual people, and on the other hand, we want to show asexuals in hiding that they are not alone.¹⁶²

While it was a global feat, organizing Pride did not come without challenges. “We organized it without any money, and people worked in their free time,” Sulyok said.¹⁶³

Right: Asexual Pride Parade, Budapest, Hungary. April 15, 2023.
Credit: Hungarian Asexual Community (Magyar Aszexualis Közösség).



The Hungarian Asexual Community has not yet been able to organize a follow-up to this pioneering parade. The 2024 edition was canceled because it clashed with a bigger event, although a smaller asexual community event took place on the same day.¹⁶⁴ The group’s application for funding from a foreign embassy to organize asexual Pride events was rejected, with “the embassy stating that they wanted to support a project with a high impact.”¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the 2023 parade marked a significant moment for queer solidarity. “Budapest Pride was a great ally in 2023,” Sulyok affirmed, as the country’s leading Pride organization “shared their experiences in Pride organizing, led a workshop on safety in Pride to train their volunteers, provided volunteers themselves, and gave assistance in handling counterprotestors.”¹⁶⁶ Sulyok described the Hungarian Asexual Community’s relationship with queer organizations as “getting better and better, and it’s easier to work with queer organizations because of younger people.”

Still, asexuality is sometimes left out of queer movement programming, Sulyok said—especially in a context in which queer movements are under attack and overstretched.¹⁶⁷ In 2021, the government of Victor Orban banned “the depiction and promotion” of “diverse gender identities and sexual orientations” in the presence of children. In March 2025, the parliament banned Pride altogether.¹⁶⁸ Although asexuality has not been explicitly targeted in the crackdown, Sulyok pointed out that broader restrictions on sexual and gender diversity can harm asexual people, especially those in same-sex relationships.¹⁶⁹

Through Pride, Sulyok aims to get Hungarian society to talk more openly about asexual people and people in nontraditional relationships, in the hope of “making the next generation [of ace people] a little bit less miserable.”¹⁷⁰

Italy: “Sometimes We Need To Give a Little Push”

The Carrodibuoi Asexual Collective (Collettivo Asessuale Carrodibuoi) is a Tuscany-based asexual-led organization, founded in 2016 as an independent group after years of community-building that began through the Italian-language section of the AVEN forum. The collective is the first asexual organization to sit on a Pride committee in Italy, having joined the organizing structure of Tuscany Pride in 2017.¹⁷¹ The group also supports asexual participation in prides in Bologna, La Spezia, and Puglia.

Asexual people in Italy face a number of human rights issues that overlap with other queer identities, including discrimination in medical settings, said Alessandro Garzi, the group’s co-founder and former president.¹⁷² A 2025 study with 227 asexual respondents surfaced numerous cases in which practitioners “invalidated” asexual people’s identities, urged them to engage in sexual activities, and suggested asexuality was connected with “pathologies, traumas, and medical causes through blameful or intrusive statements.”¹⁷³

Media representation remains poor: “When they start writing about asexuality, they invent, they fabricate information,” Marialuisa Grizzuti, the group’s current president, said.¹⁷⁴ In the media, “after an asexual person speaks, there is always a psychiatrist,” implicitly framing this sexual orientation as a “disorder,” Garzi added.¹⁷⁵ In 2018, a prominent radio personality described asexuality as a “disease,” characterizing as “good news” the idea that “asexual

people definitely don’t reproduce, so they’re a category on the verge of extinction.”¹⁷⁶ This drew a collective response from the broader Italian queer movement in an important moment of solidarity.¹⁷⁷

Asexual people have visibly participated in Italian Prides since 2014, when a contingent marched with asexual flags in Milan Pride.¹⁷⁸ The first formally registered asexual group also marched the following year in Milan. Since then, asexual visibility has grown significantly and has been integral, for many, to asexual identity affirmation. Garzi recounted, “The first time we went to Pride meant I existed. I didn’t have to be anything else.”¹⁷⁹ Grizzuti first described her first Pride in 2017—marching with a banner that read, “Some people are asexual, deal with it”—as the moment she felt she belonged.

The experience was not without incidents. Grizzuti recounted being mocked by bystanders at the 2017 march. “There were people passing by, probably they were okay with gay people, but when they saw us, they told us, ‘ha ha, you don’t get any.’”¹⁸⁰ Since then, her impression was that Pride has become safer, serving as a place of discovery for many asexual people who otherwise cannot be visible elsewhere.¹⁸¹ As Garzi said:

Let’s say before 2020, we only had one group of asexual people in pride parades, marching in Pride. Now you see asexual flags everywhere in the parade. You don’t need to make a single group to be more visible. You can see asexual flags anyway, everywhere.¹⁸²

In 2025, to Garzi and Grizzuti’s knowledge, asexual communities did not receive backlash due to their participation in Pride. However, resistance from some activists persists. “Usually we are welcome, but we are not always included,” Grizzuti lamented.¹⁸³ “Sometimes we’re invited. Sometimes we need to give a little push to include asexual people, but in some LGBT organizations in Italy, there’s still some [exclusion],” Garzi added.¹⁸⁴ For example, the organization has been pushing for Pride events to include their calls in the Pride manifesto for the recognition of chosen families and nonromantic relationships, adoption rights for single people, and an end to the pathologization of asexuality. “Many of our requests get forgotten,” Grizzuti noted, “because it’s considered a minor thing.”¹⁸⁵ In some cases, ace activists have been dismissed by other queer activists, mostly older gay men, as “heterosexuals with blue hair trying to get attention.”¹⁸⁶ The collective has chosen not to engage with such voices.



Right: Asexual and trans rights activist at the WorldPride International Freedom March on Washington, June 8, 2025. Credit: Ohotuwuo Ogbeche for Outright International.

Amid broader backlash against sexual and gender diversity under the Georgia Meloni government, Collettivo Aessuale Carrodibuoi continues to fight for rights and inclusion. In 2025, one of the collective’s members got a seat on the board of Tuscany Pride, demonstrating steady progress. “We are not a group of mad people, or sick people. We are part of something bigger. This is what will give you strength,” said Garzi. Recalling the 2018 radio hate speech incident, he said “the whole community moved.” If asexual people had been alone to protest, “we would have been laughed at; it would be a joke for them.” However, there is strength in solidarity: “the whole LGBT community against you here in Italy” caused the radio program to take notice and discontinue the harassment.¹⁸⁸



Right: Yasmin Benoit, asexual rights activist, at WorldPride International Freedom March on Washington, June 8, 2025. Credit: Yasmin Benoit.

VIII. Case Study.

The Tip of the Spear? Pride, Public Space, and the Threat of Rollbacks in Costa Rica

Why This Matters

Costa Rica illustrates how human rights can come under pressure even in countries with strong democratic institutions and formal legal equality. The 2025 Pride controversy did not involve a full ban on the march, but rather a restriction on minors attending the closing cultural event. This distinction shows how narratives framed around child protection, public morality, and administrative regulations can be used to limit LGBTIQ visibility and human rights. As a result, Costa Rica is an important warning sign. Democratic backsliding can emerge through procedural decisions rather than direct legal prohibitions. This case study highlights the need for continued vigilance, even in contexts widely regarded as progressive on LGBTIQ human rights.

Legal and Social Context

Costa Rica occupies a distinctive place in the Latin American regional landscape of LGBTIQ people’s human rights. It is often described as a stable democracy with strong legal institutions, and in 2020 it became the first country in Central America to recognize marriage equality.¹⁸⁹ Yet this legal milestone sits within a longer and more complex history in which LGBTIQ people have faced criminalization, police harassment, social stigma, and resistance from conservative religious and political actors. Legal recognition has advanced significantly, often through courts and human rights institutions, while social acceptance has moved more slowly and remains uneven.

The country decriminalized same-sex sexuality in piecemeal in 1971, 2002, and finally in 2013, when the Constitutional Chamber unanimously struck down references to “homosexuality” and “prostitution” in the Criminal Code as discriminatory.¹⁹⁰ Early organizing emerged in this hostile environment: the Movimiento para la Liberación Homosexual was founded in 1978, while many people of queer experience continued to rely on private spaces and informal networks to navigate social exclusion.¹⁹¹

During the 1980s, police raids on bars and other gathering places became a catalyst for collective resistance, with activists documenting mass arrests, public humiliation, and employment consequences for those detained.¹⁹² These raids made clear that, for LGBTIQ people, the ability to gather safely, be visible, and occupy shared spaces without fear of police harassment was itself a central political concern. Courts later played an important role in rights claims connected to LGBTIQ people’s lives, including a 1994 ruling against police harassment targeting gay bars and a 1997 ruling requiring access to antiretroviral medication for people living with HIV/AIDS, at a time when the HIV/AIDS crisis deeply affected gay communities and shaped LGBTIQ advocacy.¹⁹³

In the 2000s and 2010s, activism increasingly shifted from private survival strategies to public visibility and legal advocacy. Public diversity festivals preceded the first Pride march, held in 2010.¹⁹⁴

Costa Rica is the only country in Latin America with an official state religion: Article 75 of its constitution establishes the Roman Catholic and Apostolic religion as the state religion. The

Catholic Church has continued to play a crucial role in shifting norms, even as evangelical churches have gained more power, reducing the Catholic Church’s hold.¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Article 7 gives international treaties higher authority than national laws, a provision that has helped make international human rights standards central to LGBTIQ rights litigation and advocacy. This combination of the institutional strength of both religion and human rights helps explain why legal advances have often emerged through courts and international human rights mechanisms, even as conservative religious norms continue to shape public debate.¹⁹⁶

Costa Rica’s most significant legal breakthrough came through the Inter-American human rights system. Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, requested by Costa Rica, affirmed state obligations related to legal gender recognition and the rights of same-sex couples.¹⁹⁷ The opinion placed LGBTIQ people’s rights at the center of national political debate and strengthened the legal pathway toward marriage equality. It also exposed the gap between legal recognition and social acceptance. In January 2018, shortly after Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 became public, a CIEP-UCR poll found strong public resistance: 67 percent of respondents rejected the Inter-American Court’s decision on marriage equality.¹⁹⁸

Despite polarizing public debates spurred by the opinion, which also impacted the 2018 election scene, marriage equality took effect on May 26, 2020, after the Constitutional Chamber found the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage unconstitutional and gave the legislature time to act. When the deadline passed without legislative reform, marriage equality entered into force.¹⁹⁹

Trans people’s rights have also advanced through this rights-based legal pathway, although recognition remains incomplete. Costa Rica’s legal gender recognition framework includes Executive Decree No. 41173-MP, Presidential Directive No. 015-P, and Article 52 of the Regulations for the Registration of Civil Status, amended in 2018. Under Article 52, adults may request a name change before the Civil Registry when their registered name does not correspond with their self-perceived gender identity, although the request can only be made once.²⁰² Minors are not currently allowed to change their gender marker.²⁰¹

Intersex people’s rights remain less developed in Costa Rica’s legal framework. A 2016 Ministry of Health standard on stigma-free and non-discriminatory healthcare for LGBTI people explicitly includes reference to intersex people and requires public, private, and mixed health services to provide comprehensive, rights-respecting, confidential, and informed care.²⁰² However, this framework is limited to non-discrimination in healthcare and does not establish intersex-specific clinical protocols. A 2023



bill on the recognition of trans, nonbinary, gender-diverse, and intersex identities would have introduced protections against non-consensual interventions affecting sex characteristics, but it was rejected by the Legislative Assembly.²⁰³

The 2025 Pride March

Costa Rica’s Pride, first held as the Festival del Orgullo in June 2003, has become the country’s most visible public demonstration, Dayana Álvarez, president of Orgullo Costa Rica told Outright.²⁰⁴ The first event centered on the eradication of discrimination and included music, poetry readings, and theater as tools to raise awareness about the violence and historical inequality faced by LGBTIQ people in Costa Rica. In the years that followed, the festival increasingly became a platform for legal and political demands, including marriage equality.²⁰⁵ Since the festival’s evolution into a march (Marcha del Orgullo) in 2010, Pride has served as a public claim to visibility, safety, and citizenship in San José’s streets and public squares.

In 2025, the theme of Pride was “El Orgullo Nos Une” (“Pride Unites Us”). The march took place on June 29 in San José, beginning near La Sabana, one of the city’s main public landmarks, and moving toward the Plaza de la Democracia in the downtown area, where organizers had planned artistic and cultural activities after the march.²⁰⁶ In the days leading up to the march, the event became the focus of public controversy after the Commission for the Control and Classification of Public Performances, a body attached to the Ministry of Justice and Peace, reclassified the closing event from an activity open to all audiences to one restricted to adults over 18.²⁰⁷

The decision broke the years of practice in which the march’s closing cultural events had been open to all audiences. According to press reports, the Commission had initially approved the closing event for all audiences, but later reversed that classification and required organizers to hold the concert in an enclosed space.²⁰⁸ The Executive Branch justified the measure by referring to the possibility of minors being exposed to “inappropriate clothing” and “sexualized expressions or content not suitable” for them.²⁰⁹

The distinction between the march and the closing event became central to the controversy. Minors were allowed to participate in the march route, as the restriction did not apply to the Pride march as a whole. Doble Check, a fact-checking initiative of the University of Costa Rica’s radio station, later clarified that some media reports had incorrectly claimed that the Constitutional Chamber had prohibited minors from attending the Pride march.²¹⁰

Challenging the Ban Against Minors

Banning minors from the closing event was still viewed as problematic. In response, Dayana Álvarez, the president of Orgullo Costa Rica framed the reclassification as an attack not only on the closing event, but on LGBTIQ people’s public presence and collective history:

This is not just an attack on an event; it is an attack on our existence, our history, and our rights. We will not comply with a resolution based on prejudice. This is not just a stage; it is an affirmation of dignity, culture, and resistance. Because #ElOrgulloNosUne (Pride Unites Us), to resist, fight, exist, and march.²¹¹

Orgullo Costa Rica then filed an *amparo*—a constitutional remedy used to seek urgent protection of fundamental rights—before the Constitutional Chamber challenging the reclassification of the closing event.²¹² The filing required the Court to determine whether the Commission for the Control and Classification of Public Performances had acted within its legal authority when it restricted minors’ access to the post-march activities.

The Constitutional Chamber ultimately rejected the *amparo*.²¹³ In a July 2025 communication, the Court stated that the Commission’s decision had been legitimate and consistent with its legal authority, as it was aimed at protecting the best interests of children and adolescents.²¹⁴ The Court reasoned that the reclassification sought to prevent minors from being exposed to external factors outside the organizers’ control, such as sexualized expressions, clothing, or other manifestations that could be considered inappropriate for minors. It also emphasized that the measure did not amount to prior censorship of how participants could dress or express themselves, and that it did not affect minors’ participation in the rest of the Pride march. According to the Court, the Commission’s authority was grounded in Article 11 of the Law on Public Performances and was compatible with Article 13.4 of the American Convention on Human Rights, which permits prior censorship of public entertainments solely to regulate access for the moral protection of children and adolescents.

The ruling therefore validated the state’s power to regulate access to the closing event while stopping short of authorizing a broader exclusion of minors from Pride. This distinction did not eliminate the broader political concern raised by activists. The premise of the ban showed how arguments framed around the protection of children can be used to regulate queer visibility in public space, especially when the targeted expressions involve drag and gender nonconformity. For activists, this framing risked reproducing the long-standing association of LGBTIQ expression with danger or sexual impropriety.

In practical terms, the reclassification forced Orgullo Costa Rica to redesign the closing event. Rather than holding the stage show as originally planned, organizers cancelled the main stage and moved the artistic program into the march itself. A large float served as a mobile platform, with artists performing along the route and at selected stops during the march. Speeches were also incorporated into the procession, rather than concentrated at the end. The organizers did not hold the full closing show; instead, they redistributed the program across the route, adapting the format, sound, and performance conditions so that the cultural component of Pride could still take place despite the restriction.²¹⁵

The Aftermath

The controversy unfolded against the backdrop of a recent history of tension between Pride organizers and the government. In 2024, the Ministry of Culture had declared the Pride march an event of cultural interest, a form of official recognition granted to activities considered to have cultural value or public relevance. However, on the eve of the march, President Rodrigo Chaves publicly objected to the declaration and the Executive Branch revoked it, arguing that it had been issued without the President’s authorization.²¹⁶ The decision triggered the dismissal of Culture Minister Nayuribe Guadamuz, who had signed the declaration. The Constitutional Chamber later found that the Executive Branch had violated fundamental rights by abruptly withdrawing the declaration of cultural interest without any justification, to the detriment of the LGBTIQ population.²¹⁷

For Dennis Castillo, Executive Director of the Institute on LGBTIQ Migration and Refuge for Central America (Instituto sobre Migración y Refugio LGBTIQ para Centroamérica), the 2024 and 2025 incidents should be read together as part of a broader warning sign.²¹⁸ In his view, these actions are not isolated disputes over administrative classifications or cultural recognition, but early indicators of a possible rollback in rights. As he put it, the events constitute “the tip of the spear toward the rollback of the rights of the LGBTIQ population.”²¹⁹ His assessment reflects a concern shared by other activists: that measures framed as technical or procedural decisions can gradually normalize restrictions on LGBTIQ visibility, participation, and public recognition.²²⁰

The political aftermath reinforced those concerns. In July 2025, shortly after the march, a lawmaker from the conservative Nueva República party introduced bill file No. 25.092, which sought to prohibit minors from participating in Pride marches and to impose criminal penalties on people who showed “drag queen” or *travesti* content to minors.²²¹ The proposal would amend the Law on Public Performances, Audiovisual and Printed Materials to exclude minors from public artistic events deemed unsuitable, including drag and travesti performances, and would add a new criminal provision punishing certain performances before minors with two to four years in prison.

The bill’s language illustrates how the 2025 controversy moved beyond the classification of one closing event. It framed Pride and drag as risks to children and sought to translate that framing into legal restrictions on public participation and artistic expression. The proposal specifically referred to public or mass events such as Pride marches and similar activities where minors might be exposed to allegedly explicit content or performances said to undermine their best interests. It also defined punishable conduct broadly enough to include the personification of male or female sex through clothing associated with another sex, including wigs, masks, or makeup.

For Dayana Álvarez, these episodes are also why Pride remains politically and socially necessary.²²² Álvarez emphasized that Pride in Costa Rica began with around 200 participants and has since grown into a mass public event capable of filling San José’s streets. As she explained, Pride marches are “spaces we have won” and, in the face of ongoing pressure, “spaces we cannot give up.”²²³ The march creates a public space of visibility, safety, and belonging, with clear



demands about why LGBTIQ people gather, what rights they seek, and the future they are trying to build. Its importance, in her view, lies not only in celebration but in correcting distorted public narratives: Pride shows families, allies, and LGBTIQ people claiming equal rights rather than special privileges. As she put it, “We do not want to be treated differently; we want to be treated equally.”²²⁴

LGBTIQ activist Javier Umaña echoed this broader understanding of Pride as a space of collective fight:

The Diversity March, or Pride, around the world has been a platform for celebration, struggle, but above all resistance. In Costa Rica, today more than ever, we must take this resistance and make it our own, regardless of what banner it carries or which community it belongs to.²²⁵



IX. Case Study.

Pride as Resistance and Freedom in Hungary

Why This Matters

In 2025, Pride became a catalyst for a profound shift in Hungary’s democratic and political landscape. The government’s ban on Pride marked a breaking point after years of steadily eroding fundamental rights under the leadership of Viktor Orbán. For LGBTIQ activists, broader civil society, and many ordinary citizens, it became clear that the suppression of one community’s rights threatened the democratic freedoms of all. The overwhelming public response in the face of the ban on Budapest Pride demonstrated that sustained resistance to authoritarianism and human rights repression was possible. That momentum continued through Pécs Pride in September 2025 and carried into the April 2026 general elections, when the ruling party was voted out after 16 years in power. This case study illustrates how Pride can be a site for collective resistance to achieve political transformation. LGBTIQ human rights movements can help shape the course of history.

Background

For 16 years, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his ruling party, Fidesz, fostered an anti-human rights and anti-democracy climate in Hungary, with a particular focus on silencing people of queer experience and rolling back hard-earned rights.²²⁶ Same-sex marriages are not recognized, legal gender recognition is prohibited, and freedom of expression and assembly is severely curtailed, particularly following the passage of a 2021 law that prohibited the promotion or portrayal of homosexuality or gender transition to minors.²²⁷ On March 18, 2025, parliament passed a constitutional amendment that expanded upon the 2021 law, effectively prohibiting Pride events by restricting any events, targeting audiences of any age, that portray “divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality.”²²⁸

Undeterred by the ban and the accompanying hateful political rhetoric, activists proceeded to organize Pride in Budapest and Pécs, making history in Budapest with the largest Pride march the country had seen.²²⁹ This concerted act of resistance against a government that intended to cripple human rights and dismantle civil society spurred defiance that continued through the April 2026 elections.²³⁰ The Hungarian people voted Orbán and Fidesz out of office, with Pride and the attacks on fundamental freedoms serving as an epicenter of progress and a wake up call for many. The LGBTIQ movement was at the center of shifting political history in the nation.²³¹

Prohibiting Pride Through Legislation, the Police, and the Court

Transgender Day of Visibility is celebrated around the world on March 31. In 2025, this was just two weeks after Hungary’s parliament passed a constitutional amendment to ban Prides. Despite having received approval for a march in January 2025, the constitutional amendment led trans activists to withdraw plans to peacefully demonstrate in public. The trans demonstration would have been the first LGBTIQ visibility event in Hungary in 2025, and it was risky to expose a small team of trans human rights defenders to the potential political onslaught. As activist Victoria Nadasdi said:

We didn’t feel safe to be the first to defy the ban and so we decided to just march with Budapest Pride. If we went ahead to defy the ban, the dead name of the organizer on the notice would have been public and we didn’t want that.²³²

Human rights groups including Amnesty International Hungary, Háttér Society, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and the Society for Civil Liberties decided to test the law, with events scheduled for May 17, IDAHOBIT.²³³ At an IDAHOBIT march of just 25 people, the police provided security for the marchers.²³⁴ After this, organizers notified the police of their intent to hold Pride in Budapest with a march of about 2,000 people on June 1. The police then relied on the law to ban the event, prompting the organizers to file a claim before the Supreme Court.²³⁵

The Court ruled that the police could not lawfully ban the event, but the police only acknowledged the court’s directions a few hours before the event was scheduled.²³⁶ The group therefore postponed Pride to June 28. But on June 3, claiming they were responding to a “new notification,” the police again issued a ban on the planned event.²³⁷ The organizers went to court again, and the court once again quashed the ban.²³⁸ Based on the court order, the police initiated another round of negotiations and issued a third ban on June 13, this time based on arguments the police submitted, including a claim that the march would cause harm to minors by “[taking] a stand on the right of transgender people to change their gender and name.”²³⁹ The Court also found that the human rights organizations applying for the march “did not give clear answers to the questions asked” by the police about the assembly’s purpose.²⁴⁰

Insistent, LGBTIQ civil society groups then notified the police of a plan to demonstrate against the unlawful violation of the right to freedom of assembly—“on the same route at the same time” as the previously banned event.²⁴¹ In response, on June 21, the police responded with a ban on this planned assembly. Over the following days, legal maneuvers on both sides continued before the court.²⁴²

Zsolt Szekeres, human rights defender and attorney with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, described the series of bans as a “clear violation of Hungary’s obligations under EU law and international law” to protect people’s fundamental right to assemble, associate, and express. The human rights groups testing the law, including Háttér Society, Amnesty International, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, filed complaints before the Hungarian Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights in defense of these rights.²⁴³

Where a member of the European Union acts against EU law, the European Commission can initiate a legal action against that country before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), called an infringement procedure.²⁴⁴ The 2021 Hungarian law that prohibited the promotion or portrayal of homosexuality or gender transition to minors was already the subject of an infringement procedure, filed in 2022.²⁴⁵ When the March 2025 law expanded upon this earlier restriction, effectively banning Pride, one of activists’ objectives was to trigger the European Commission to begin a new set of infringement procedures. They hoped this would allow the Commission to obtain interim measures from the CJEU preventing Hungary from implementing the law pending a final ruling. Action before a regional court was necessary, activist Victoria Radványi said, given that the Orbán government had “dismantled local checks and balances” and “courts are not independent.”²⁴⁶ However, the Commission did not commence legal proceedings against Hungary in this instance.

The Makings of the Biggest Pride March in Hungary

As hope faded that the European Commission would commence infringement procedures against the Hungarian government for the ban on assemblies before the Pride march, Viktória Radványi, Budapest Pride’s president, mobilized support from international bodies and EU officials. Radványi sought to get them to attend Pride as a security strategy, in preparation for a situation in which the police would not protect Pride marchers from antagonism by far-right groups:

We wanted to have as many VIPs in the crowd as possible, international politicians, especially members of other countries’ governments whose presence in Hungary would require the police to protect them wherever they go.²⁴⁷

Radványi’s team also worked with LGBTIQ groups in other countries to push their governments to speak up in support of fundamental rights in Hungary and send representatives to Pride. Importantly, “we wanted to have a political win and to do that, we needed to organize the biggest Pride march ever in Hungary. That was now our goal.”²⁴⁸

Organizers also found an alternative way of marching within the ambit of the law—“a cultural event organized by the Budapest local government,” which was dubbed “Freedom Day.”²⁴⁹ They engaged with the Budapest Mayor from the progressive Green Party, Gergely Karacsony, who was not running in the April 2026 elections and therefore had limited political risks.²⁵⁰ Shifting the Pride march to a municipality was an extremely difficult decision and shrouded in tactical secrecy.²⁵¹ Activists feared that announcing the plan early could give room for the government to enact a decree targeting municipality events. As a result, Radványi said,

By the time we announced that we are doing it as a municipal event, there was such a big momentum behind Pride because we had brought mainstream society into it, that I think [the government] politically could not afford to rule against municipal events by decree.²⁵²

Activists also had to scramble to fund the event. Radványi told Outright that, following the Pride ban, the vast majority of corporate sponsors pulled sponsorship from Pride:

We had had to spend years of relationship building with the multinational companies to get them to give us, like, 500 euros or something. I think it was a big lesson for many Pride movements in the world that you cannot trust companies, or you cannot be very dependent on corporate sponsorship.²⁵³



Right: Mayor Gergely Karacsony at the 2025 Budapest Pride march.
Credit: Beáta Betföldi; Budapest Pride, Facebook.

In addition, Budapest Pride had lost U.S. funding for special projects due to the U.S. foreign aid freeze, a blow to activists’ efforts. Crowdfunding became a key strategy, without which a safe demonstration of that size would have been impossible. Budapest Pride overhauled its funding platform to allow donations from outside Hungary, as the global community rallied to confront Fidesz’s increasing authoritarianism.

As activists fought legal and administrative battles, they also prepared and disseminated communications on rights and risk, while gearing “to provide mass legal aid for participants, if need be.”²⁵⁴ Szsekeres and other lawyers volunteered to be legal observers, a security tactic which deters perpetrators of violence.²⁵⁵

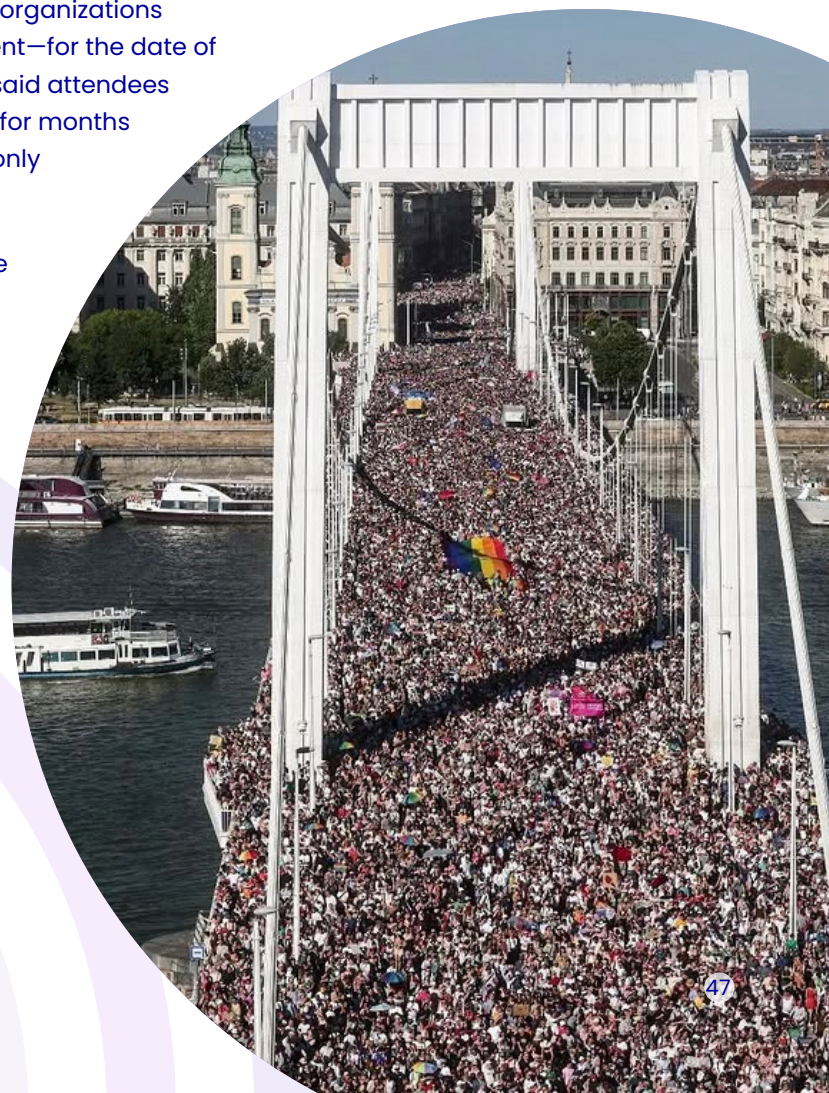
By this time, it was clear to organizers as well as the police and government that Budapest Pride would be big, with “at least 100,000 people.”²⁵⁶ The police, nonetheless, issued a statement on June 18, 2025, banning the municipality-hosted Freedom Day celebration, and the mayor faced prosecution by the state for hosting a banned event, until the charges were dropped on June 4, 2026, following the decision of the European Court of Justice that Hungary was in breach of EU law.²⁵⁷

Resilience and Solidarity in Numbers at Budapest Pride

Ezster Polgári, Director of Háttér Society’s Legal Program, told Outright that these administrative blockages created significant uncertainty about how Pride would proceed and which routes might be used, especially after “extreme right-wing organizations announced demonstrations”—authorized by the government—for the date of Pride.²⁵⁸ The actual routes were kept secret, and Radványi said attendees were essentially asked to “just trust us. We were mobilizing for months without any concrete information. And the day before, we only shared the starting point.”²⁵⁹

Radványi affirmed that organizers knew people would have safety concerns, especially given doubts about the intent of the police to protect Pride marchers and the risk that state authorities might use facial recognition software to identify attendees and impose fines. The historical context and the widespread societal abhorrence of police violence offered some reassurance, in Radványi’s view: “We knew that there is a certain line that the police will not cross, because it would politically backfire on them.”²⁶⁰ But for Polgári, significant uncertainties remained: “We didn’t know... we couldn’t be sure that nothing would happen. We didn’t know how much the extreme right was mobilized. So, we didn’t know how many people would attend.”²⁶¹

Right: Hundreds of thousands at Budapest Pride March on June 28, 2025.
Credit: telex; Budapest Pride.



Budapest’s popular mayor encouraged people to attend, indicating that the march was now a mainstream human rights event supported by a public official.²⁶² European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, in her opening statement at the European Council Meeting in Brussels on June 27, urged Hungary’s government to ensure that Pride in Budapest could proceed without any criminal or administrative sanctions.²⁶³

The day of the march, June 28, people came out en masse to protest and exercise their fundamental rights to assemble and express. Estimates by organizers suggest that there were about 350,000 marchers at Budapest Pride, although international press put the numbers between 100,000 to 200,000.²⁶⁴ The mood was ebullient. “People were in a good mood,” Polgári recalled, and “nobody was impatient,” despite delays caused by difficulty moving such a large group of marchers into the streets from the small meeting point.²⁶⁵ Some people came to Pride because their lives were personally, directly impacted by the government’s institutionalized queerphobia. Trans activist Victoria Nadasdi described how trans people came out in large numbers, bearing flags and wearing trans colors, in defiance against the clampdown on gender diversity and the ban on legal gender recognition.²⁶⁶ Queer Hungarians living abroad “came home just for the Pride, so it was a big reunion,” said Viktória Radványi.²⁶⁷ Other people participated in Pride as allies; not only to support LGBTIQ people, but because the Orbán government’s ban on queer-themed public assemblies was seen as one step too far in the encroachment of fundamental rights.²⁶⁸

Lawyer Szekeres described meeting many people:

...who said that they had never even considered coming to Pride, and they may not necessarily be very comfortable at a Pride event. But this is about freedom of assembly, so they have to be there, because that right is not up for negotiation.²⁶⁹

Polgári agreed: “Now that freedom of assembly was being curtailed, it became a joint problem.”²⁷⁰ For queer and straight, cis and trans people alike, “Pride was a celebration of freedom.”²⁷¹

The crowds present at Pride also comprised foreign government officials, including Spain’s Equality Minister, the State Secretary for Education in the Netherlands, and the European Commissioner for Equality.²⁷² Pride brought in, according to Radványi,

73 Members of the European Parliament, leaders from 16 major European cities, many parliamentarians, and delegations of activists from 32 countries. We also had people from institutions like the Fundamental Rights Agency and the UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity. All these put extra pressure on the police.²⁷³

Despite expecting “a lot of people” in Budapest, the reality of hundreds of thousands was a shock. Polgári shared that Hungary has never seen such turnout for a human rights demonstration. The turnout—greatly surpassing previous years’ numbers of around 35,000—was a testament to the commitment, hard work, and unshaken faith of Hungarian civil society.²⁷⁴

There was no direct confrontation with the counter-protestors demonstrating. At the march,

The extreme right-wing Mi Hazánk political party and Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom civil society organization tried to block the route by organizing several counterdemonstrations, but the Budapest Pride March took a different route at the end through a neighboring bridge, so the couple of dozen counterdemonstrators did not cause any problems.²⁷⁵

Radványi and team knew that they would be leading the march away from the far-right protest on the bridge:

The police did not know. Nobody else knew. And when we were approaching the bridge, we just turned right and crossed the river using the next bridge. And the far-right activists were left standing there without being able to interact with us. The police did not let them come off the bridge. They were small in number, and we were very happy. They felt ashamed and couldn't leave, so they had to stand and watch about 350,000 people march in front of them. They tried to hide their faces with their banners.²⁷⁶

Polgári reminisced that “there were so many people leaving the march, it was difficult to meet someone who was not coming or going or related to the march in the city that day.”²⁷⁷ As the peaceful march wrapped up, the team received a congratulatory message from the city's head gardener, thanking them for not stepping on the flowers. Radványi said, “the whole thing was happy, cheerful, and peaceful.”²⁷⁸

Police did arrest up to 36 people by 8:00 p.m on the day of the march, on issues related to “the prohibited march,” according to a statement by Budapest Police Headquarters on June 28, 2025.²⁷⁹

A layer below the day's cheer was steely determination: Hungarians had had enough, and Pride was a trigger for boldly challenging the Fidesz government. This momentum carried on through the April 2026 elections.²⁸⁰ Pride in Budapest and eventually Pècs, as discussed below, were restatements of how pivotal fundamental human rights of LGBTIQ people, and by extension all peoples, are, and how states must protect them.



Right: Members of the organizing committee at Budapest Pride March on June 28, 2025. Credit: Horog Enikő; Budapest Pride.

Pécs Pride 2025: “We Will Not Bow To Fear”

The 2025 Ban on Pécs Pride

Pécs Pride is the only Pride event outside the capital city in Hungary.²⁸¹ It celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2025, coinciding with Budapest Pride’s 30th anniversary.

Organizer Géza Buzás-Hábel submitted a written notification of the march to the Pécs police via their Client Portal system on September 4, 2025, and met with police the same day. During the meeting, police asked organizers for information about the content of speeches, connections to Budapest Pride, whether minors would participate, and whether there would be depictions of “homosexuality in any form.”²⁸² Organizers shared that they would be addressing LGBTIQ people’s fundamental rights to assembly and expression, among other rights. They requested to hold the march on October 4. The following day, police issued an order banning the march, and the Supreme Court upheld this ban on September 14.²⁸³

Notwithstanding the ban, human rights defenders decided to proceed with Pécs Pride.²⁸⁴ Géza Buzás-Hábel, the main organizer, took responsibility for holding the event despite knowing “from the very beginning that he might face criminal prosecution.”²⁸⁵ His attorney, Zsolt Szekeres, told Outright that Buzás-Hábel’s decision to organize Pride was based on the belief in his “fundamental right to organize an assembly, and if that right is infringed, then the only way to fight against it is to directly defy this ban and notify the police that he’s holding the assembly.”²⁸⁶ Szekeres described this as a “grave personal risk” under the circumstances.²⁸⁷

Despite the police interdiction, Pécs Pride was held as planned on October 4. The theme was “We Will Not Bow to Fear.” Indeed, thousands of people stood up to resist oppression, facing legal bans, police permit refusals, and anti-Pride protesters.²⁸⁸ While activists took security precautions like those before Budapest Pride, Szekeres said, “many people showed up not caring about the possible legal consequences.”²⁸⁹

The police had also attempted to ban another, unrelated demonstration scheduled on the same day, the purpose of which was to protest the impacts of the overpopulation of wildlife in the town. The court had reversed the ban. As a result, when Pécs Pride marchers also flooded into the streets, police found themselves at a loss: they could not differentiate those who came for Pride and those who were at the wildlife event, and were unable to carry out arrests. In the end, the police did an “exemplary job in protecting the march,” Radványi said.²⁹⁰ For instance, police arrested a counter-demonstrator who physically attacked a Pride participant, charging the attacker with a hate crime.²⁹¹ Szekeres, whose organization provided legal aid for the victim, said the police responsiveness stood in sharp contrast to the “initial reluctance” police normally exhibit in cases impacting queer victims.²⁹²

The march saw a large turnout, with about 6,000 participants of diverse sexualities and gender identities, against its previous numbers of about two to three thousand in a small city of 100,000 people.²⁹³ Despite popular support for the march, the Pécs District prosecutor’s office ultimately charged the main organizer, Géza Buzás-Hábel, with organizing a banned assembly.²⁹⁴ Radványi told Outright that Buzás-Hábel was also fired from his job as a teacher. In her view, the backlash against Pride in Pécs was “worse” than in Budapest because the rural authorities were more determined to deter people from these areas from participating in Pride. She also speculated that Buzás-Hábel’s Roma ethnicity contributed to the retribution against him—a view shared by Buzás-Hábel himself in a media interview in which he commented

sardonically, “it is fascinating how unusually fast Hungarian authorities can move when it comes to policing intersecting minorities and racialized groups.”²⁹⁵

The judge overseeing Buzás-Hábel’s case had suspended it, asking the Constitutional Court to determine whether the law that establishes the ban on Pride is constitutional. The judge in the Budapest mayor’s case has also asked the Constitutional Court for its opinion.²⁹⁶ On June 4, 2026, prosecutors in both cases dropped the charges against Buzás-Hábel and Gergely Karacsony, the mayor of Budapest.²⁹⁷

The Aftermath

The euphoria following the mass participation in both Prides was accompanied by new challenges. Radványi said:

We were in the press a lot. We had to invest in security cameras for some of our members’ homes and Faraday bags for cybersecurity. It was difficult, and many people were burnt out, and it was my personal goal to have the team intact, so we kept switching tasks among the team and got group and individual mental health support. We prepared for serious backlash like midnight arrests. They did not happen.²⁹⁸

Victoria Nadasdi, an activist with the trans organization Prizma, said visibility from Pride brought more attention to her organization’s work, which was a mixed blessing; the organization experienced increased public support alongside derogatory email messages and negative reactions on online platforms.²⁹⁹

Ultimately, the Pride events and the public conversations they sparked have helped engage members of the public around LGBTIQ people’s rights and human rights more broadly, including for Roma people.³⁰⁰ Pride also almost certainly contributed to Orbán’s downfall.

On April 21, 2026, just days after Orbán’s defeat at the polls, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that the 2021 “propaganda” law violated EU rules on the freedom to provide and receive communication services; the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including the right to human dignity; Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union; and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).³⁰¹

In the wake of the elections and the CJEU ruling, lawyer and civil society organizer Eszter Polgári hopes for more concrete change, including meaningful legal and policy reforms. The new Prime Minister, Péter Magyar, sworn in on May 9, 2026, has restated the duty of the state to protect fundamental rights and the rule of law.³⁰²

Meanwhile, Pride will continue in Hungary, notwithstanding the legislative ban in the Assemblies Act, which has not yet been revoked. Budapest’s next Pride parade is set for Saturday, June 27, 2026.³⁰³

X. Case Study.

Pride for Grassroots Advocacy in Romania

Why This Matters

The decentralization of Pride beyond capital cities is a strong indication of progress. Pride events organized in localities reflect authenticity and diversity. At the same time, these efforts often unfold in challenging circumstances. Across Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, and Brașov, Romanian activists continue to organize despite police hostility, limited legal protections, administrative blockages, social stigma, counterprotests, chronic underfunding, and limited organizational capacity. Activists around the world might see their experiences mirrored in this case study: grit and determination can sustain LGBTIQ movements even in the face of adversity. The central message is that Pride should not exist only in capitals or large cities. Pride belongs everywhere.

Background

In Romania, while the law protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation, other rights related to sexual and gender diversity are limited. Same-sex marriages or civil unions are not recognized. Access to legal gender change for transgender people is inconsistent, often inaccessible and requires surgical transitioning.³⁰⁴ In 2024, the European Court of Justice ruled that Romania had violated a transgender man’s rights by refusing to recognize his gender identity, levying a fine.³⁰⁵ ILGA Europe’s Rainbow Map 2025 places Romania near the bottom in a ranking of EU countries’ LGBTIQ human rights protections: it stands at 19 percent, lower than Poland and Bulgaria, both at 21 percent.³⁰⁶

Negative social perceptions of sexual and gender diversity are fueled by religious conservatism, and harassment and hateful language are common in social interactions.³⁰⁷ Religious leaders from Orthodox, Catholic, and Pentecostal churches have issued open communications to adherents that disparage sexual and gender diversity, and frame the use of “special pronouns” as causing “negative and destabilizing outcomes.” They further urge Romanians to reject what they characterize as foreign influences.³⁰⁸

During the 2024 and 2025 elections, LGBTIQ people in Romania were “at the forefront of attacks.”³⁰⁹ Right-wing political parties instrumentalized queerphobia in their campaigns, online and offline, although Romania also made history with its first openly gay candidate for member of parliament.³¹⁰

Local Prides Across Romania in 2025

Pride activists have organized Pride in Bucharest, the capital, since 2005. In recent years, Pride marches have spread across the country through efforts by community-based organizations to transform society beyond the capital.

Oradea Pride

Pride in Oradea, a city with approximately 183,000 residents, is organized by Ark Oradea, an organization that was founded in 2023 and that undertakes policy advocacy and LGBTIQ community-building. Ark Oradea has limited funding and depends entirely on volunteers.

Ark Oradea entered the space to immediate backlash. After announcing its first Pride festival, which was to be held in private space, citizens launched a petition to ban the event, garnering 9,000 signatures. Consequently, organizers requested that City Hall officials provide support and protection for the Pride attendees.³¹¹ This request was refused twice. Meanwhile, religious organizations reserved “all the public spaces” for their use on the same day, according to Oana Iacob-Le Roy, a human rights activist with Ark Oradea.³¹² Ultimately, Ark Oradea was unable to hold a public Pride event in 2023, but organized privately given the restrictions.

In 2024, Ark Oradea submitted an application to use a public park for Pride. The authorities again refused the request on the grounds that “there were already approved events at the same time for the same slots. These were all religious-related events.”³¹³ Organizers visited these locations at the times the events should have been held, and they were empty—suggesting a concerted effort to block Pride from happening. This spurred a spontaneous protest of about 100 people in front of the town hall. In response, the city fined the organizers 5,000 leu (about US\$1,000).³¹⁴ The group also faced difficulties finding venues for private gatherings and parties, due to reluctant property owners.

Oradea Pride in 2025 was therefore the first public Pride in the city. Multiple conflicting national and local regulations make the available window to submit notifications for public events quite short, and Ark Oradea’s first official notification was denied on the grounds that it was submitted too early. Iacob-Le Roy explained:

So, of course, in the time lapse between us submitting the first notification and the response, other notifications had been submitted for the routes we had targeted on the same days. We did submit a second notification right after receiving the refusal with about 11 routes, showcasing that we were happy to explore alternatives with the town hall.³¹⁵

After these refusals, the municipality began to announce new construction projects along some of the routes that Ark Oradea had proposed, and meetings with the approval committee showed neither goodwill nor room for compromise, from the perspective of the Pride organizers.³¹⁶ Iacob-Le Roy recalled being told that if the march was not approved, the police “would not assume responsibility for ensuring the safety of participants...so this really raised concerns from our perspective regarding the authorities’ obligation to protect peaceful demonstrators.”³¹⁷

After a third refusal, the police summoned the group and announced that they would physically block the march, disperse participants, and impose fines.³¹⁸ All alternative proposals were rejected without consideration.

Pride organizers proceeded with the scheduled march, but police had blocked the entrance to the communicated route, forcing them to divert approximately 500 marchers through cramped side streets beset by ongoing construction, narrow sidewalks, and gaping potholes. At every intersection where the route could lead to the main street, the police blocked marchers’ access.³¹⁹ The police then surrounded the marchers, preventing people from leaving, “even though there were a few participants who showed medical distress, which was caused by extreme heat and the tension,” Iacob-Le Roy said.³²⁰ Participants were held for about an hour in an exposed, shadeless square, standing in the full heat of the sun.³²¹

Tensions mounted as attendees were not permitted to leave even to get water, triggering panic and health concerns. Verbal confrontations erupted, and at one point, Iacob-Le Roy told Outright that an officer physically pushed an activist.³²² When marchers were finally allowed to leave the square, they were barred from advancing toward the town hall and forced to march back toward their starting point.

After the march, several organizers were fined for holding a prohibited public demonstration. Ark Oradea later learned that things could have been even worse. The group learned that, during the march, police officers discussed using teargas and beating up attendees, all the while verbally harassing the participants.

Ark Oradea reported that the police officers surrounding marchers conversed among themselves during the Pride march, with at least four gendarmes talking about how to form a cordon and forcefully clear a path among Pride attendees. The gendarmes also mentioned that if they used tear gas on participants, Pride attendees would not stand a chance. In addition, they discussed beating marchers with their fists. In another conversation, the gendarmes were heard referring to a participant holding a megaphone as a “crazy” woman.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, 2025 Pride was a historic event. “You don’t usually see a lot of demonstrations at the local level,” said Iacob-Le Roy. “And it’s something that made the 2025 Pride March even more historic, because it was a rather big protest for the city. Five hundred people is quite a lot.”³²³ The march brought together young people, a few families, allies, and LGBTIQ people from other cities, the majority of whom were not aware of the intense interactions with the police and did not understand why the movement was halted until they were blocked in.

Pride in Oradea will not stop, and activists are strategizing ways to safely yet visibly exercise the right to peaceful assembly in 2026.

Timișoara: Marșul Pride

In Timișoara, a city of about 300,000 people, the group “Identity.Education” organizes Pride events with the aim of making the city “accessible and safer” for LGBTIQ people.³²⁴ Pride in this context is homegrown, encompassing locally produced and internationally acclaimed exhibitions and performances.³²⁵ A performance piece produced by Identity Education, “TransLucid,” won the British Council Award at Romania’s 2023 national theater awards ceremony, the UNITER Gala.³²⁶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the group also broadcast its productions on mainstream TV and online platforms.³²⁷ Presently, it digitalizes its art exhibitions for general access, helping to educate the public about sexual, gender, and ethnic diversity.³²⁸

Identity Education focuses on transgender and gender-diverse people, which sometimes leads to transphobic backlash. Even within the queer movement, the group has at time confronted efforts to “prioritize” same-sex marriage over other advocacy efforts.³²⁹

Members of an extremist political party, Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), disrupted a small Pride event in Timișoara in 2023. Radulescu told Outright, “We were having a workshop, discussing Romanian literature and translations of gender-diverse characters in Romanian literature.”³³⁰ AUR staged a demonstration against same-sex marriage in the same neighborhood where the workshop was occurring; as protestors passed by the meeting room windows, Radulescu reported, “some of the people from the parade stopped, started hitting on the windows, banging on the windows, spitting and cursing us from the outside.”³³¹

The workshop organizers filed a harassment complaint with the police.³³² Throughout 2024, the police provided no updates, despite Radulescu writing “every two to three months, asking for updates on our case.”³³³ Eventually the police closed the case, telling Identity Education that the Pride event attendees were the ones against “the free speech of the people at the parade.”³³⁴ Radulescu remarked, “It took 26 months just to receive this answer.”³³⁵ When they contested this police decision in court, the court ordered law enforcement officials to conduct a proper investigation, which appears to remain open as of this writing.

Organizing Pride and conducting advocacy remains challenging in Timișoara due to insufficient funding and staff capacity—the group is not able to hire more than one full-time staff member, and other staff work full-time jobs in addition to their roles. Nevertheless, the group works overtime to ensure its events are effective—and inclusive. The 2025 events, including a Pride march that drew 1200 people, were “built around encounter and belonging.” One Pride event featured documentaries “made from within the queer, Roma and sex worker communities.”³³⁶ The group also aimed for queer disability inclusion. Andre Radulescu, president and founder of Identity Education, said:

We handed out earplugs before the march. During the outdoor events following the march, we organized a space specifically for sensory-sensitive and/or neurodivergent people, away from the workshops and music. On the event grounds, we have accessible washroom facilities, and we positioned all workshops around wheelchair accessible pathways.³³⁷

Identity Education has also partnered with an organization that supports people with intellectual disabilities, “working together in approaching intersectional topics and trying to build a network, at least on a local level.”³³⁸

Cluj Pride

In Cluj-Napoca, a city with about 300,000 inhabitants, Asociația Pride organizes queer community and visibility events that aim to be representative across sexual and gender identities.³³⁹ As in Timișoara, knowledge about LGBTIQ people is limited. Since the first Pride march in Cluj-Napoca in 2018, Asociația Pride has sought to use queer visibility to fill this gap. While the



Right: Marșul Pride March in Timișoara, June 28, 2025.
Credit: Identity.Education

national march in Bucharest often centers advocacy on same-sex civil partnerships, Pride in Cluj-Napoca is more focused on safety, access, and inclusion for LGBTIQ people locally.

As a small organization, Asociația Pride navigates several challenges. The group has limited operational funding and relies on donations from individuals and small corporate sponsors.³⁴⁰ It has formed alliances with the feminist movement in Cluj-Napoca, but few other movements or sectors have publicly aligned themselves with the cause of queer equality and inclusion. Given the lack of institutional support for Pride, organizers “have learned to manage our expectations.”³⁴¹ The local authorities have never approved the organization’s preferred center street for the march, so they have resorted to requesting other routes for which the authorities will give approval.³⁴²

Visibility during Pride week can contribute to an increase in harassment. Participants at the marches in 2024 and 2025 reported being accosted while wearing rainbow colors or flags. In some cases, organized groups of “football fans” came to Pride locations wearing masks, chanting death threats, and seeking to intimidate attendees.³⁴³ Others entered Pride event locations and asked aggressive questions like “Why are you here? Why do you have to be here?”³⁴⁴

Significantly, however, Pride in Cluj-Napoca has begun a discussion that previously was ignored by society:

We now have a presence at least once a year in our city, in our country. People are at least aware that the community exists and that we have needs, we have demands.³⁴⁵

Braşov Pride

In Braşov, a city of about 240,000 people, no public Pride march has been held. Ioana Fotache, a nonbinary activist who founded the TransCore Association in 2022, explained to Outright that this is because people in Braşov are “extremely private.”³⁴⁶ Instead of organizing their own local Pride march, members of TransCore actively participate in Pride events and Trans Day of Visibility in other cities.

Still, TransCore hosts multiple events for its target beneficiaries within Braşov, facilitating Pride, Trans Day of Visibility, and community building through cultural activities, hangouts, games, outdoor events, sports, art events, and more. The association was the lead organizer of Pride events in Braşov for three years; in 2025, these events included arts activities and poetry readings.³⁴⁷



TransCore is deeply invested in conducting advocacy for increased human rights and legal protections, along with access to inclusive healthcare for trans and gender-diverse people in Braşov.³⁴⁸ Pride and community events are only part of the group’s programming as they work to provide mental healthcare, shelter services, and information on accessing gender-affirming care despite the lack of legal recognition. Shelter services, for instance, address a significant concern, especially for transgender people groups: national research indicates that 30 percent of trans people who live in rental homes have experienced homelessness and are at risk of being homeless again.³⁴⁹

Funding—or the insufficiency of funds—remains critical across city Prides in Romania. In Braşov, activists organize Pride in survival mode, working multiple jobs while running the organization, “with hundreds of beneficiaries and projects being run, with or without money.”³⁵⁰



Right: Braşov Pride flag flown at Bucharest Pride in 2025. Credit: HBraşov.

XI. Case Study.

Saint Lucia Pride

Why This Matters

Decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations is not the endpoint in the struggle to protect LGBTIQ people’s human rights. Following the 2025 ruling of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court that struck down Saint Lucia’s buggery and gross indecency laws, Pride became a space for celebration, with many within the movement feeling a renewed sense of freedom and visibility. Yet significant challenges remain. Activists still face funding constraints while advocating for parliamentary codification of the ruling and broader societal acceptance of LGBTIQ people. This case study is ultimately one of celebration and hope. Pride serves not only as a moment of joy to celebrate wins, but also as a reminder that legal victories must be accompanied by sustained efforts toward comprehensive human rights protections. For activists working in similar contexts, the story underscores a shared struggle and collective aspiration: the liberation and dignity of LGBTIQ people everywhere.

Background

In 2025, Saint Lucia decriminalized consensual same-sex conduct between men through a decision by the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court that declared the country’s colonial “buggery” and “gross indecency” provisions unconstitutional.³⁵¹ While the laws were rarely enforced, they fostered anti-LGBTIQ hostility and exclusion.³⁵²

The decriminalization ruling followed the 2022 passage of a Domestic Violence Act that uses gender-inclusive language and can be applied to protect people in same-sex relationships. The law prohibits discrimination against victims of violence based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among other factors.³⁵³ Outright’s research suggests that the Domestic Violence Act is the most progressive piece of gender-based violence legislation in the English-speaking Caribbean.³⁵⁴

Religious institutions such as the Catholic Church, the Saint Lucian Christian Council, and the Seventh Day Adventist church have been vocal in portraying sexual and gender diversity as immoral, and are influential in driving social perception of queer and trans people.³⁵⁵ In response, activists have worked with religious bodies to conduct advocacy for LGBTIQ inclusion.³⁵⁶ Despite challenges, some activists describe a growing sense of safety and acceptance.³⁵⁷ While working toward eliminating stigma, including through public education campaigns and media engagement, LGBTIQ organizing in Saint Lucia also includes service provision and community building.³⁵⁸

758 Pride

Founded by Jessica St. Rose, 758 Pride organized Pride in Saint Lucia for the first time in 2019.³⁵⁹ Pride in Saint Lucia does not consist of a march or parade but rather a series of public activities, St. Rose reported:

All our activities are in public spaces, and we usually have fairs—health and educational fairs in the city on a Saturday when it is busy, and people are all around. There is music on a big stage, and everything is decorated in Pride colors. We have people within the community who are dancers, singers, and vendors, showcasing their talent and wares. We also collaborate with bodies like the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Gender Affairs, and the police. The police is very supportive, making sure we’re safe at all activities.³⁶⁰

The events include a drag show, headlined in 2024 by RuPaul’s Drag Race All Star 4 winner, Monét X Change, a Saint Lucian and U.S. citizen who grew up in both countries.³⁶¹ Randall Theodule of the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE), a regional organization with Saint Lucian affiliations, told Outright the drag show is often attended by many non-LGBTIQ members of the public, who “really enjoy it.”³⁶²

To create more awareness, organizers expand their reach by coordinating with a television network to air a panel discussion on a relevant topic. Theodule told Outright that these panel discussions center on emerging issues and struggles faced by LGBTIQ people and are heavily marketed as public education campaigns.³⁶³

Pride events have been intentionally welcoming of allies. Theodule told Outright, “Our space has been welcoming in for everybody, and people come, they have fun, they see the community and understand the community through their own eyes and their own perspective.”³⁶⁴ St. Rose confirmed that these efforts have contributed to increased awareness, sharing that “the public has gotten to a place of respect” for LGBTIQ people’s human rights.³⁶⁵

Pride and Decriminalization

St. Rose recalled that the first year activists held public Pride activities in Saint Lucia, in 2019, they experienced visible backlash, including from churches that organized a press conference to condemn Pride events.³⁶⁶ In subsequent years, institutional backlash has diminished, although hostile comments persist in both mainstream and social media.³⁶⁷

When Saint Lucian activists challenged the country’s colonial-era buggery law in the courts in 2021, the visibility that the movement had leaned into through Pride became more pronounced—presenting risks as well as opportunities. Theodule was one of the claimants in the case, exposing him to a flood of attention that contributed to a point of overwhelm: “I was actually scared of leaving my home.”³⁶⁸

The decriminalization challenge remained pending in the courts for over four years. During this time, momentum built in the region as other Caribbean countries decriminalized consensual same-sex acts in rapid succession, including Antigua and Barbuda in July 2022, Saint Kitts and Nevis in August 2022, Barbados in December 2022, and Dominica in April 2024.³⁶⁹

On July 29, 2025, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court issued the long-awaited ruling.³⁷⁰ The court found that the buggery and gross indecency laws violated the rights of LGBTQ people to life, privacy, liberty, security of the person, freedom of expression, and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, guaranteed by the Saint Lucian Constitution.³⁷¹



Right: Flag flying ceremony during the 2025 Pride in Saint Lucia.
Credit: 758 Pride.

For Theodule, the ruling took a weight off his shoulders: now, he told Outright, he can “live comfortably, be open about it, speak to individuals about the case and challenge individuals who also have a different perspective on the case.”³⁷² And as with all cases of this nature, the benefits of criminalization extended well beyond the claimants to the entire community of queer people.³⁷³ Kenita Placide, Executive Director of the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE), a regional organization sprouting from Saint Lucia, described decriminalization as “the foundation for building a society where every LGBTIQ person can live openly, safely, and freely.”³⁷⁴

Still, the ruling resulted in some backlash, including from members of the public who misconstrued the decriminalization ruling as legalizing same-sex marriage. In response, St. Rose said:

We had to do a lot of campaigning and education, holding several public meetings and letting people know that this is not about marriage or any special rights. This is about the decriminalization of the buggery law. As much as we have come a long way, we still have people who would react negatively. And, being an election year, the government did not address it, as they feared it could have affected their chances of winning.³⁷⁵

On August 29, a month after the court ruling, activists publicly raised the Pride flag for the first time in Saint Lucian history at an event hosted by the French Embassy, under the Pride theme, “Seen, Supported and Valued.”³⁷⁶ Other Pride activities, such as a welcome party, wellness sessions, and a boatride, prioritized community building.³⁷⁷ 758 also organized a human rights symposium to educate LGBTIQ people and allies about the court decision, assess the shifting legal and policy landscape for LGBTIQ populations, and strategize around backlash.³⁷⁸

The decriminalization ruling transformed the experience around Pride, Theodule said:

The victory was worth celebrating and made Pride even better for us because now we’re at a space where we don’t necessarily have to feel afraid to be who we are. So, I would say Pride last year was more liberating in that sense...This heavy weight is off our shoulders; we don’t have to necessarily watch our backs.³⁷⁹

Still, 2025 was a bittersweet year for Saint Lucian LGBTIQ activists. U.S. Government funding cuts have adversely affected queer organizing in Saint Lucia. Due to increasing financial constraints, organizers scaled down Pride, depending largely on fundraising within their own small LGBTIQ community.³⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the court ruling does not erase discrimination, and queer Saint Lucians are still coming to terms with existing freely and publicly. Further, parliament has not yet enacted the decision into law.

While challenges lie ahead, Pride in itself holds profound meaning for activists. Theodule told Outright the events made him feel a sense of connection to the Black and queer ancestors who began the human rights and queer liberation movements in the Caribbean, creating space for future generations to experience liberation. He also draws on solidarity with queer contemporaries: “I’m surrounded by community, I’m surrounded by people who are just like me, I’m surrounded by people who went through the same experiences that I went through to get to that point.”³⁸¹ For Jessica St. Rose, seeing the change in society “really brings me joy. My community gives me so much strength.”³⁸²

XII. Case Study.

Centering Black Queer and Trans People in Soweto Pride

Why This Matters

In South Africa, Black lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, as well as trans and gender-diverse people continue to face hate crimes rooted in the intersecting realities of racism, misogyny, and queerphobia. Soweto Pride emerged from this lived experience as a necessary and deliberate response to the chronic marginalization and invisibility of these sexual and gender minorities within broader LGBTIQ organizing and mainstream Pride spaces. This case study reconnects Pride to its political roots: the resistance of Stonewall, the first Pride march in South Africa in 1990, and the struggle against apartheid and systemic gender inequality. Soweto Pride is remembrance and resistance. In 2025, as attacks on LGBTIQ rights persist globally, this case study reminds us that Pride remains, fundamentally, a protest.

Background

South Africa is a beacon of legal and policy progress for LGBTIQ rights, with one of the most constitutionally robust frameworks for equality and non-discrimination in the world. It decriminalized consensual same-sex relations between adults in 1994, and in 1996 became the first country to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in its constitution.³⁸³ Transgender and intersex people have been able to amend their sex markers since 2003, although it requires medical evidence.³⁸⁴

South Africa was the first country in Africa and the fifth country globally to achieve marriage equality in 2005.³⁸⁵ A 2005 amendment to the the Promotion of Equality and Unfair Discrimination Act clarified that protections against discrimination, harassment, and hate speech on the basis of “sex” include intersex people.³⁸⁶ The 2024 Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Act, includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics as protected categories.

Despite these laws, implementation is marred by insufficient capacity in law enforcement, gaps in data collection, and stigma-related barriers to reporting acts of discrimination.³⁸⁷ Violence against queer and trans people in South Africa is prevalent, with many murders reported in township communities in recent years.³⁸⁸

Pride in South Africa was first organized by the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand in 1990.³⁸⁹ Outright’s reporting on Pride Around the World in 2023 discussed the roots of South African queer organizing in the anti-apartheid movement, profiling alternative Prides that fill representational and ideological gaps left by the larger-scale Pride events in Cape Town and Johannesburg.³⁹⁰

Soweto Pride in 2025: 21 Years of Centering LBQ Perspectives

Soweto is an acronym for the collection of South-Western Townships in the province of Gauteng, South Africa. It was in Soweto that protests against the apartheid regime grew, including the 1976 Soweto Uprising.³⁹¹ Soweto continues to house movements for Black and queer liberation.

In 2002, the organization Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) emerged as a direct response to the chronic invisibility of Black lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women within the broader human rights movement.³⁹² The group launched Soweto Pride in 2004, centering the experiences of Black women. Over 20 years on, Soweto Pride remains the foremost Pride in South Africa whose organizing logic is rooted entirely in the township—a distinction that stands in sharp relief against Johannesburg Pride, also in Gauteng but oriented toward a very different constituency.

The lived reality for LBQ women in Soweto and other townships diverges sharply from the constitutional and legal promise.³⁹³ Hate crimes against lesbian and gender non-conforming women, including bias-motivated rape, remain a persistent and underreported crisis. FEW designed Soweto Pride to confront that gap directly: to make queer women’s lives visible in the communities where they most need to be seen.³⁹⁴

Soweto Pride takes place every September during South Africa’s Heritage Month, using this timing where the country commemorates its cultural identities to assert that being queer and being African are not mutually exclusive identities. In 2025, the march was held in Vilakazi Street in Orlando West on September 26. The location carries deep historical weight: it is the only street in the world to have housed two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, and has long been a symbol of resistance against apartheid.³⁹⁵ Zandile Mabaso, events and logistics coordinator at the Forum for the Empowerment of Women, told Outright that the organization does not separate queer politics from the history of the land it marches on: “Having our pride in Vilakazi Street is meaningful because of the apartheid history of this area. It is a place that holds a lot of history, and we march through it.”³⁹⁶

The march route also passed by the location in which Hector Pieterse, a 12-year-old boy who became a symbol of the anti-apartheid movement, was killed by police during the student protests known as the 1976 Soweto Uprising.³⁹⁷

According to Jade Madingwane, executive director of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women,

Soweto Pride is not a celebration for comfort; it is a call to conscience. We march because Black queer women and gender-nonconforming people deserve to live, love, lead, and exist without fear, violence, or silence.³⁹⁸



iSango Le Nkululeko—The Gates of Freedom

The week-long program for Soweto Pride created opportunities for participation among LBQ, trans, and, intersex communities and the broader queer movements across Southern Africa, with participation from Malawi, Mozambique, and Namibia. Moving from its previous single-day format to a series of events, organizers designated the overall theme “Key to Empowerment,” with the celebration day carrying the Zulu title iSango Le Nkululeko—“The Gateway to Freedom”—reflecting the event’s mission of building power among Black, queer, and gender-minority communities.

Flowing from this, Soweto Pride initiators invited civil society partners to shape and lead their own events under the Soweto Pride umbrella, allowing autonomy while working in solidarity. According to Madingwane, the organization’s approach throughout Pride in 2025 reflected its broader principles by focusing on the issues that directly affect marginalized communities.³⁹⁹ FEW and SHE convened a panel discussion on LBQ and trans solidarity, with institutional backing evidenced by an opening statement from Commissioner Leigh Ann Van Der Merwe of the government Commission for Gender Equality.⁴⁰⁰ They also hosted photo exhibitions featuring photos taken by and of LBQ and trans people, allowing these multiply-marginalized communities to tell their own stories. In addition, FEW also hosted a human rights dialogue on campus with the University of Johannesburg Queer Society, which explored the intersection of campus activism and township-based organizing as well as the particular pressures faced by young LGBTIQ people navigating institutional environments not designed for them

Soweto Pride events also included a games day organized by the South African Intersex Forum organized to educate Pride attendees about intersex people and bodies in an accessible and non-clinical fashion.⁴⁰¹ The games broke down intersexphobia, challenged stigma, and contributed to learning in an informal and engaging manner which formal advocacy settings rarely facilitate.⁴⁰²

Further manifesting its commitment to intersectionality marginalized groups, Soweto Pride integrated refugee and migrant speakers into the march program. As Madingwane said, “building a platform for migrant LGBTIQ+ voices is consistent with, not a departure from, that mandate.”⁴⁰³

Another notable event was the “Bring Your Father or Uncle to the Soweto Pride March” campaign, the brainchild of Parents, Families and Friends of South African Queers (PFSAQ) in partnership with two other organizations, Newcastle Prideful Legends and Intersexions.⁴⁰⁴ According to Virginia “Ninji” Magwaza,



BE A BEACON OF
ACCEPTANCE. OUR
HOMES ARE SAFE FOR
ALL

founder of PFSAQ, the goal was primarily “to challenge all parents, mostly fathers, to be part of our activities, and also learn how to love and support their LGBTIQ+ loved ones.”⁴⁰⁵ The campaign centered on male family acceptance, on the premise that cultural perceptions of masculinity make cisgender men essential to any holistic intervention against gender-based violence. As Magwaza said, with regard to gender-based violence,

Some of its roots lie in fathers opposing LGBTIQ+ women and fighting mothers who accept their children. We hope our fathers will become public advocates for dignity, equality, and social inclusion, starting from home [and extending] to communities.⁴⁰⁶

Family members’ visible participation at Pride—marching alongside queer people, holding placards with affirming messages, and speaking publicly about acceptance—helped demonstrate both the existence and the promise of positive masculinity and allyship.⁴⁰⁷

Soweto Pride organizers understand that transportation costs can be a barrier to participating in Pride. In response, they collaborated with the City of Johannesburg to provide buses for participants traveling from outlying areas, such as Orange Farm, Midrand, and Alexandra—communities where LGBTIQ residents often endure greater isolation and have fewer opportunities to experience Pride.



Right: Soweto Pride March, September 26, 2025.
Credit: Forum for the Empowerment of Women.

XIII. Case Study.

Art for Pride in Tunisia

Why This Matters

As state oppression forces LGBTIQ people and organizations away from public spaces, the ability to organize safely has become a central concern for queer movements globally. In parallel, activists continue to resist creatively. In Tunisia, resilience is reflected in a vibrant queer arts scene that includes theatre productions, film festivals, art exhibitions, and ballroom performances. Despite state surveillance and restrictive anti-NGO policies, these spaces have become powerful platforms for expression, solidarity, and visibility. This case study offers insight into the possibilities for sustaining activism, community, and cultural resistance even under conditions of heightened repression. It further demonstrates that queer visibility does not rely on Pride marches—it can be achieved through performance, drawing in audiences that may be resistant to traditional advocacy.

Background

In Tunisia, same-sex sexual activity is criminalized under article 230 of the Penal Code and the authorities regularly use this provision to arrest, prosecute, and harass people of queer experience.⁴⁰⁸ LGBTIQ people and organizations face violence, discrimination, and routine institutional backlash against human rights advocacy.⁴⁰⁹ Prevailing social attitudes remain largely hostile, shaped by widespread misconceptions about sexual and gender diversity.⁴¹⁰ In this environment, public expression of sexual and gender diversity is risky, and LGBTIQ people cannot always safely exercise the rights to freedom of assembly and association. While no Pride marches or demonstrations are held, queer civil society groups ensure visibility through art.

State Interference and Crackdown

Registered as a nongovernmental organization in 2014, the group *Mawjoudin*—meaning “We Exist” in Arabic—seeks to attain “justice, equality, and respect for bodily and sexual rights.”⁴¹¹ It provides services and a safe space for LGBTIQ people and conducts human rights advocacy through campaigns and art for activism, or activism.⁴¹² In its early years of operating, the group was generally able to avoid state surveillance. Tunisian police visited Mawjoudin during a 2015 capacity strengthening activity, but officials told Ali Bousselmi, Mawjoudin’s co-founder and executive director, that they only wanted “to confirm that we are registered as an association.”⁴¹³ At the time, there were no further issues with the authorities, and staff of Mawjoudin “could forget that we were in Tunisia with a society where the majority are homophobic. We were prioritizing our safety and security, but civil society was strong,” Bousselmi said.⁴¹⁴

From 2016 to 2021, the organization’s activities, including popular art festivals and film productions, were highly visible and well-attended. Staff members and volunteers organized meetings and training sessions that served as safe spaces to discuss sexual and gender diversity among people of queer experience. The group also began to strategize on legal and policy advocacy toward the repeal of laws criminalizing same-sex sexual acts.⁴¹⁵

Unfortunately in 2021, “everything changed,” said Bousselmi. In July 2021, protests sparked up in multiple locations, due to widespread frustration with the economy and the COVID-19 response.⁴¹⁶ President Kais Saied reacted to the protests with repression, suspending parliament and dismissing the prime minister, Hichem Mechichi.⁴¹⁷ The following day, Saied ordered a police raid on Al Jazeera TV, which had reported on the protests and Saied’s internal “coup,” marking the beginning of a series of attacks on media and civil society.⁴¹⁸

In September 2021, Saied partially suspended the Tunisian constitution, calling for a referendum on a new constitution, which passed in 2022, consolidating his power.⁴¹⁹ This dissolution of the rule of law was accompanied by a “wave of prosecutions targeting opposition figures, journalists, civil society activists, and former officials,” which has continued, with varying degrees of intensity, through the present.⁴²⁰

With increased state surveillance of civil society actors, Bousselmi “started hearing about people who got arrested from other NGOs, our friends” in feminist, queer rights, and mainstream human rights organizations.⁴²¹ Jay N., also of Mawjoudin, said, “any organization working on objectives that do not align with the objectives of the state have been scrutinized since 2021. Many activists are now in jail.”⁴²² State actors have also seemingly identified organizations that fund human rights and restricted bank transfers from them into Tunisia—even arresting people who received money from those identified.⁴²³

These arrests on trumped-up charges have continued for over five years, with some high profile cases.⁴²⁴ Saadia Mosbah, leader of the anti-racism group Mnèmti, was arrested in May 2024, sentenced to eight years in prison and fined US\$35,000 for “money laundering and illicit enrichment.”⁴²⁵ Lawyer, human rights activist, and commentator Sonia Dahmani was arrested and arbitrarily detained in May 2024, prosecuted under the country’s Cybercrime Act, and released in November 2025.⁴²⁶ Charges are pending against her for “disseminating false news likely to undermine State security,” because she condemned racism in Tunisia via broadcast.⁴²⁷

In another case, Sherifa Riahi and her colleagues at NGO Terre d’Asile were arrested in 2024 and detained for about 20 months for “facilitating irregular stay and providing shelter to migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in an irregular situation,” until their release in January 2026.⁴²⁸ As Jay N., an agender and asexual human rights activist and psychologist with Mawjoudin, told Outright, the publicly declared motive for detaining activists is “never political opinions. It is always financial and compliance issues.”⁴²⁹



At protests, beginning in 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that police “singled out LGBTI activists for particular mistreatment at protests” based on knowledge or perception of their queer identities and activism.⁴³⁰ In some of these instances, police physically assaulted protesters, refused access to lawyers for those detained, and threatened that they would sexually assault or kill them.⁴³¹ Prosecutions of LGBTIQ people have continued, at times in the form of mass arrests: Amnesty International documented that between September 2024 and January 2025, law enforcement “arrested, arbitrarily detained and prosecuted” at least 84 people “solely based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.”⁴³² Five of the 84 were content creators who were convicted for so-called public indecency and “dissemination of content contrary to good morals.”⁴³³

Mawjoudin has not escaped the crackdown. In early 2024, after an event on racism affecting people from Sub-Saharan Africa and issues of queer and other asylum seekers in Tunisia, Bousselmi and other Mawjoudin staff were briefly detained, then released without charge.⁴³⁴ Several months later, a state official visited his home “to double check if our association works on asylum seekers and migrants in Tunisia.”⁴³⁵ Bousselmi surmised that civil society was being disallowed from working on any issues surrounding the asylum of people from Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴³⁶

In October of 2024, after the first detention and the visit to his home earlier in the year, the police summoned Bousselmi for an investigation into the organization’s work. Fearing imminent arrest and harm, he tried to leave the country, but police detained him at the airport. They subjected him to interrogation over three days, allowing him to leave police custody each evening and return in the morning, accompanied by a lawyer. During the interrogation, the police requested all the organization’s documents—“financial reports, narrative reports, audits, all of it”—and questioned Bousselmi about his family, his political affiliations, and collaborations with other organizations. “They didn’t find any problems,” Bousselmi told Outright, “but it was hard for us to immediately continue our work.”⁴³⁷ Further, law enforcement officials added Bousselmi to “the S17 list,” a requirement for additional screenings at the borders, which can amount to a travel ban, including across cities in Tunisia.⁴³⁸ He contested the ban with the Ministry of Interior in November 2024 and was eventually successful in 2025.

However, Mawjoudin confronted other challenges. Starting in January 2025, Mawjoudin’s bank blocked deposits from foreign-based accounts into the organization’s account.⁴³⁹ In this period, Mawjoudin could not pay salaries, or conduct any activities. State agencies also continued to surveil staff and members of the organization.⁴⁴⁰ Eventually, staff found alternative means of raising money, although with more complications. In the same year, the property owner from whom they rented their offices evicted them out of fear of the risks that hosting a queer rights nonprofit might pose to them.

Mawjoudin has begun to take steps to reduce their visibility, including by limiting public advertisements of the theater production *Flagranti*, discussed in further detail below, to avoid attracting attention. Mawjoudin canceled the queer-inclusive parties previously held at bars: “we heard that if we keep doing it, they will arrest us,” Bousselmi said.⁴⁴¹ Restrictions have also led the organization to center most of its activities in the capital, reducing its presence in smaller towns where organizing might attract more backlash due to a lack of safe spaces.⁴⁴² The safety of participants has become a primary concern in all organizing decisions.

Creation and Adaption: Queer Theater and Arts in Tunisia

Human rights groups working for LGBTIQ rights advancement in Tunisia have long relied on art as an integral element of their advocacy. The queer feminist organization Chouf Minorities hosted a feminist art festival in Tunis from 2015 through 2018, including works that challenged cisheteronormativity.⁴⁴³ In 2018, Mawjoudin launched a Queer Film Festival, the first in Northern Africa, with second and third editions in 2019 and 2022.⁴⁴⁴ Mawjoudin has also hosted art exhibitions and a podcast, alongside more traditional advocacy and community-building activities for people of queer experience.⁴⁴⁵ As Ali Bousselmi put it, “We don’t do art for art. We do art to advocate and effect change.”⁴⁴⁶ In the Tunisian context, centering activism has been a safer approach to human rights advocacy than visibility strategies such as Pride marches, which expose participants more directly to risk; it has also been deeply impactful.⁴⁴⁷

Queer theater has become a crucial tool in Tunisian activists’ toolbox for social change. This phenomenon dates to 2019, when the Tunisian human rights group Zanoobyia launched *TranStyX*, rendered in English as “Crossing” and described as “the first unapologetically Tunisian Queer play.”⁴⁴⁸ Written by activist Moncef Zahrouni, the play addresses being trans in a context in which “even gender expression through outfits can sentence people to jail.”⁴⁴⁹

The critically acclaimed production was performed 27 times between 2019 and 2022 and inspired several follow-up outputs. These included a *TranStyX*-inspired fashion show in 2021 and a play released digitally the same year, the *Church of Euthanasia*, which Zahrouni described as the second installment under the *TranStyX* Trilogy. In 2023, the group released *TranStyX* as a film. Zahrouni also published the script in book format in Arabic and English, including two interviews with trans people in Tunisia, an article, illustrations, and original song lyrics.⁴⁵⁰ Although these productions were publicized, Zahrouni did not report significant backlash.

Inspired by *TranStyX*’s success, Mawjoudin, which had partnered with Zanoobyia in the release of *TranStyX*, debuted a new queer theater production in May 2022. Written and directed by playwright Essia Jaïbi, *Flagranti Délit* addresses the lived realities of queer people, discussing social stigma, criminalization, arbitrary arrest, forced anal examinations, and the value of queer friendships.⁴⁵¹ *Flagranti Délit* (meaning “caught in the act”) ran annually until its final cycle in 2026. As Bousselmi described the play, it analyzed “the political situation, the government, the president, the violence, the police, everything,” with the goal of changing mindsets and building a constituency for inclusion.⁴⁵² *Flagranti* provided room for people who “know nothing about queer people and human rights in general” to become aware.⁴⁵³



From 2022 through 2024, *Flagranti* was performed annually, usually for a week, and run without incident. But on opening night in 2025, after the authorities had begun to target Bousselmi and Mawjoudin for judicial harassment, as discussed above, two police officers arrived with tickets to see the show and then started filming on their phones.⁴⁵⁴ Organizers brought in hired security personnel and a lawyer to insist that recording the play was forbidden. Bousselmi and the Mawjoudin team were particularly concerned about filming because of a scene with two same-gender characters kissing. They successfully prevented the filming, although the officers remained throughout the performance.

After the opening night, Mawjoudin requested a meeting with the police. As they discussed the play, Bousselmi said, “We insisted that we would continue with the play as is and would not change anything. It was difficult, but we were able to achieve no censorship of the play. We were very proud of that.”⁴⁵⁵ Visible community support and a full house on opening night bolstered the production team’s confidence that the public had their back.

For its closing event following the production of *Flagranti* in 2025, Mawjoudin sought to hold a drag ball—a queer cultural event where drag queens and kings perform music, dance, host pageants, and more—at a bar. The selected venue informed Mawjoudin that it would need authorization from the Ministry of the Interior for any event involving live performances; the ministry, in turn, said its authorization was contingent on Mawjoudin allowing the police to attend “for security.” Based on previous experiences with police “visits” and restrictions of events involving drag, the organizers determined police attendance would be too risky—“anybody in the event could have been detained,” surmised Jay N., one of the organizers.⁴⁵⁶

Mawjoudin therefore canceled the ball and incorporated the drag show into a separate cultural event and awards show. This shift allowed them to work within the context of an event already approved by a different regulator, and Tunisian drag artists were able to perform without the required police attendance. “It was different than envisioned, but it still worked out in the end,” said Jay N.⁴⁵⁷

Working With “The Protection of Art”

Activists involved in both productions pointed to one element of theater that can make it a safe space for queer civic education: raising LGBTIQ issues through a play allows room for “plausible deniability,” said Jay N. of Mawjoudin, as it is performed by actors who are “mostly advocates and allies, rather than visible queer people.”⁴⁵⁸ Malek M. (pseudonym), project coordinator for *TranStyX* and volunteer with Mawjoudin, added that presenting queerness through theater is a protective mechanism: it is performance, not reality. “If I’m acting as a gay person or trans person, or kissing another man in the scene, it’s not me. I’m acting. We always have the protection of art.”⁴⁵⁹ Through activism, he said, “we have been able to provide a space for discussing these issues safely.”⁴⁶⁰

Despite the contextual challenges, the Tunisian activists involved in queer activism describe their experiences as deeply rewarding. Bousseelmi described producing *Flagranti* as “an amazing experience over the years.”⁴⁶¹ Attendees have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, sharing how the performances have influenced queerphobic people in their lives. “Even very homophobic people are challenged by the piece of theatre and the more than 100 people watching,” which challenges their perspectives, said Malek M.⁴⁶²

Malek M. added that the art performances through film and theater production contribute to societal change on “multiple levels.” In the first instance, professionals working on the sets

have real interactions with queer people and are exposed to the harms queer people face in society. These challenge the myths and misconceptions they hold about queerness. On the second level, people bring acquaintances who have no idea of the experiences of queer people and they learn. In addition, for queer people themselves, we have learned a lot from these art projects. We suffer a lot from internalized queerphobia and discrimination, and watching the films and plays with other queer people helps to address these biases. They understand the safety embedded in the spaces through interactions made without judgment. These are significant changes for society.⁴⁶³

Despite the challenging circumstances, Malek M. declared that, “we are here. I would love to invite people to discover queer life in Tunisia and dispel stereotypes. We are doing our best to continue and live our lives.”⁴⁶⁴ Jay N. told Outright that within the vibrant queer community in Tunisia,

We’re trying our best to maintain an open space where we can have at least workshops, introductory and little events for people to get together, stay informed and have a little bit of grasp on what it is like to have a community in Tunisia because that’s the most difficult part of being queer, not being visible and not knowing anybody else going through the same things. We’re trying our best to make sure that the community still has a space for these ‘little’ things.⁴⁶⁵



XIV. Case Study.

Pride Under Pressure in Viet Nam

Why This Matters

LGBTIQ human rights defenders in Viet Nam have continued to push for policy advances despite operating within a civil society space marked by limited opportunities for institutional engagement and pervasive state surveillance. In response, the Vietnamese LGBTIQ movement has developed adaptive strategies that have helped expand social acceptance and sustain public organizing within state-imposed constraints, while continuing to raise awareness and build cross-movement solidarity. This case study illustrates the ways in which our movements continue to evolve, adapt, and resist strategically.

Background

Viet Nam has made progress on LGBTIQ people’s human rights in the last decade. In 2015, it officially removed same-sex unions from a list of “forbidden relationships”, although it did not legalize same-sex marriage; and parliament updated the civil code to remove a prohibition on transgender people changing their first name and legal gender in 2015.⁴⁶⁶ In 2022, as a result of civil society advocacy, the Ministry of Health officially recognized that same-sex attraction and transgender identity are not mental health conditions and do not require curative measures, and it issued directives to healthcare practitioners on providing adequate care to homosexual, bisexual, and transgender people.⁴⁶⁷ A proposed Gender Affirmation Law has been under consideration in parliament for many years, with little progress toward passage.⁴⁶⁸

Social perception of LGBTIQ people is improving, with growing public support for same-sex marriage, family recognition, and gender diversity.⁴⁶⁹ Even so, LGBTIQ people in Vietnamese society continue to face discrimination, stigma, and family pressure to conform to cisheteronormative lifestyles.⁴⁷⁰

LGBTIQ organizing is visible, and human rights defenders work openly on issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Among LGBTIQ populations, groups differ in terms of access to funding and visibility, with lesbian grassroots groups being less visible than established organizations, and intersex people even less visible.⁴⁷¹

Formal registration as nongovernmental organizations is near impossible given government priorities, so these groups typically achieve legal status through business registrations instead.⁴⁷² Like other NGOs, the queer movement has faced a rise in government surveillance in the last decade. Environmental justice activists, labor rights defenders, journalists, and other human rights defenders have been arrested on trumped up charges, such as tax evasion.⁴⁷³ Linh Ngô, director at the ICS Center in Ho Chi Minh City, one of the main organizations working on LGBTIQ people’s rights, described facing summons by law enforcement, the forced cancellation of a Pride event in 2016—the venue called the organizers the day of the event “saying that someone from the government is making things difficult for them and that they shouldn’t have let us organize events”—and another incident in 2016 in which the electricity was cut at a venue where human rights advocates organized a convening, “to stop us from organizing.”⁴⁷⁴

State surveillance extends to LGBTIQ human rights defenders’ personal relationships and use of social media. Owen Nguyễn, ICS’ project and social campaign officer, is vigilant while texting or speaking in public, to ensure they are seen to be acting within the boundaries of the state: “I am not trying to do any harm, but if I show that my work is not aligned with their agenda, they might have an excuse to capture me, or it can affect my family members in their everyday lives.”⁴⁷⁵

Hanoi Pride: We Are Definitely Being Watched

The Hanoi-based organization iSEE, established in 2007 as the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment, is a research and advocacy organization working with LGBTIQ people, ethnic minorities, and youth groups for policy and social change.⁴⁷⁶

Given the restrictions for civil society advocacy, Phong Vuong, deputy director of iSEE, states that “there are very limited channels through which we can influence policies.”⁴⁷⁷ The organization has implemented public-facing campaigns to mobilize support for same-sex marriage, legal gender recognition, and the Ministry of Health policy depathologizing sexual and gender diversity.⁴⁷⁸ In recent years, iSEE has taken on efforts to eradicate conversion therapy practices and intersex genital mutilation. Vuong hopes that the LGBTIQ human rights movement can remain self-sustaining through institutional crackdowns until they achieve greater rights protection.

Organizing Pride in Viet Nam is a strategic endeavor that requires obtaining permits from the Department of Culture and Sports or the Provincial People’s Committee.⁴⁷⁹ Live musical and art performances, workshops and conferences, fashion shows, festivals, contests, require permission from other authorities.⁴⁸⁰ In addition, while LGBTIQ issues might be gaining acceptance, protests have less public support, Vuong said: “Pride is a demonstration, and in Viet Nam a lot of people don’t have a good view on demonstrations in general.”⁴⁸¹ Organizers of Pride strive to find alternatives to marches that do not appear to be in opposition to the state.

While LGBTIQ issues may be gaining broader acceptance, Pride events face a different challenge. As Vuong explained, “Pride is a demonstration, and in Viet Nam a lot of people don’t have a good view on demonstrations in general.”⁴⁸² Organizers therefore strive to avoid any appearance of opposition to the state.

This shapes nearly every aspect of how Pride is organized, as Bao L. (pseudonym), one of the organizers of Pride in the region, explained. Pride organizers in Viet Nam often adopt strategies that emphasize community celebration, cultural participation, and locally-led organizing. Public communications tend to avoid adversarial framing and instead focus on maintaining constructive relationships with relevant authorities and stakeholders.

Organizers may also carefully consider the visibility of foreign diplomatic participation in order to reinforce perceptions of Pride as a locally rooted initiative. Here, Pride organizers reported instances in which potential partners, vendors, and supporters became hesitant to engage with Pride-related activities after interactions



with local authorities.⁴⁸³ Like counterparts in Ho Chi Minh City, discussed below, Bao L. told Outright that they work in an environment where monitoring and scrutiny of Pride organizers are ongoing realities. As a result, risk assessment, organizational security, and long-term sustainability have become important considerations in Pride planning and community organizing efforts.

Ho Chi Minh City Pride: “The Most Challenging Pride Season Ever”

In 2025, Ho Chi Minh City Pride was marred by unofficial restrictions by state authorities, leading to cancellations. As in Hanoi, activists are careful in how they frame Pride events in a context where demonstrations and assemblies are perceived as inherently anti-government and therefore dangerous.

Outright spoke with Owen Nguyễn and Linh Ngô, both of ICS Center in Ho Chi Minh City.⁴⁸⁴ Founded in 2008 and registered in 2013, the organization began with the goal of transforming societal perspectives around queerness.⁴⁸⁵ It evolved to take on legal and policy advocacy, including on marriage equality, as well as service provision, trainings, and stakeholder engagement.⁴⁸⁶ ICS began organizing Pride in Ho Chi Minh City in 2013 and has since collaborated with other community-based organizations to coordinate Pride.⁴⁸⁷

ICS staff told Outright they were aware that members of the police attended past Pride events in plain clothes, and they have experienced other forms of state monitoring and surveillance related to their work in LGBTIQ human rights protection. Ngô remarked that “I usually say we all have our own security guards. I think we were all aware of it when we chose this kind of work in Viet Nam.”⁴⁸⁸

But 2025 was different: in what organizers termed “the most challenging Pride season ever,” Vietnamese law enforcement overtly clamped down on Pride.⁴⁸⁹

On the first day of Pride month, which takes place in September in Viet Nam, city police visited venues where Pride events were planned, questioning the owners and managers about their permits for Pride workshops and performances.⁴⁹⁰ These mostly ununiformed law enforcement personnel did not provide any official authorization for their questioning, but suggested that they could revoke the venues’ business licenses. Some of these events were coffee shop conversations and would not ordinarily require permits. Other events included drag queen performances and workshops for small groups. ICS reported that law enforcement officials told venue owners that the government agenda right now does not allow discussion of sexual and gender diversity, and so “you are not allowed to work with them.”⁴⁹¹



Seeking to facilitate a smooth running of Pride month, Owen Nguyễn of ICS told Outright, the team “asked officials for the process so we could try to follow their requirements, but they wouldn’t confirm the correct process and in the middle of communication, they would just ghost us. It was very weird.”⁴⁹² As a result, several flagship events were canceled, although other events took place as planned.

Ngô herself was summoned to the police in 2025 under the guise of a personal matter, but was then questioned about her work. She shared publicly available information about ICS’s work because, she said, “there’s nothing to hide.”⁴⁹³

Nguyễn commented on the irony of the Vietnamese authorities’ approach to Pride. Before the September 2025 crackdown, during international Pride month in June, the state had sponsored videos on the National English Channel, showcasing people in the drag scene, and with videos from the marriage equality campaigns, “to show how open and comfortable the government is with the LGBTQ human rights movement.”⁴⁹⁴ Ordinary Vietnamese people do not have access to this channel. This propaganda, presumably aimed at foreign governments or corporations, continued in January 2026, with news channels “interviewing drag queens in town, making it seem like the city is open and everyone is free to express themselves.” Yet for most Vietnamese people of queer experience, that freedom remains out of reach.



XV. Snapshot.

World Pride 2025: "Fabric of Freedom"

WorldPride is a large-scale LGBTIQ Pride festival and series of events coordinated by InterPride, a network of 375 Pride organizations in at least 70 countries.⁴⁹⁶ Different cities host WorldPride each year, selected through a bidding process among InterPride members.⁴⁹⁷ The first WorldPride was held in Rome, Italy in 2000 and it has since been hosted in cities including London, Toronto, Madrid, New York City, and Sydney. WorldPride’s mission is to create a platform for celebrating diversity and inclusion of LGBTIQ people through a global movement.

In 2025, WorldPride was held in Washington, D.C., coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Pride in the U.S. capital and hosted by Capital Pride.⁴⁹⁸ WorldPride was pulled off successfully although with significantly decreased global participation, owing to the anti-LGBTIQ hostility of President Donald Trump’s administration, in the wake of the executive orders scapegoating transgender and intersex people and attacking diversity, equity, and inclusion.⁴⁹⁹ The event had the full institutional support and sponsorship of the D.C. Mayor’s office; and despite the Trump administration’s policies, Capital Pride sought to reassure attendees that the city “is, and will remain, one of the most progressive and inclusive cities in the world, with a strong and vibrant LGBTQ+ community.”⁵⁰⁰

The federal administration did not acknowledge WorldPride, and the “unpredictable climate” led to attendance plummeting.⁵⁰¹ Speaking at the human rights conference on June 4, 2025, the former Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons at the U.S. Department of State, an office now expunged under the Trump administration, gave a formal welcome to global attendees.

Travel to the U.S. after the Trump administration created multi-level restrictions posed a number of risks, especially for transgender and nonbinary people as an executive order of January 20, 2025, mandated that U.S. citizens’ travel documents must indicate “female” or “male.”⁵⁰² Some were afraid to enter the U.S., and many LGBTIQ activists took extra precautions following multiple travel advisories issued by organizations and foreign embassies.⁵⁰³

But trans activists would not be silenced. At WorldPride, trans rights issues were center stage, raised by U.S. and foreign activists throughout the human rights conference, drag performances at the conference closing ceremony, and other forms of visibility at WorldPride and side events.⁵⁰⁴ Senator Carla Antonelli, the first openly transgender woman elected to the Spanish Senate, was a featured conference speaker.

In addition, WorldPride was notable for asexual inclusion, with ace groups, individuals, and flags visible during the conference, parade, march, and an asexuality-specific event in the main Pride week.⁵⁰⁵ Ace activist Yasmin Benoit, who spoke at a human rights conference plenary session, told Outright that Pride presents a strategic opportunity to foster ace visibility and build partnerships, despite her experience with exclusion at some previous Pride events.⁵⁰⁶

Outright International at WorldPride

Outright took the stage at the WorldPride plenary, with Neela Ghoshal and Ohotuowo Ogbeche, who lead Outright’s research on Pride Around the World, presenting on Outright’s findings over five years of research. They spoke alongside U.K.-based asexual activist Yasmin Benoit; Spanish Senator Carla Antonelli; and Hanna Katrín Friðriksson, the Icelandic Minister of Industries and Innovation. Outright also participated in a side event, Community Conversations at Howard University, with partner panelists from Burundi, Kenya, and Namibia.

Two of Outright’s staff shared their perspectives on the poignancy of Pride in D.C. at this time:

Participating in WorldPride 2025 in Washington, D.C. brought together people from across communities and countries at a time when LGBTIQ rights face significant challenges in the United States and globally. Despite this context, the atmosphere still felt like a celebration, an opportunity to come together, show solidarity, and affirm the strength of this community. Being part of the marches and representing Outright among a diverse array of LGBTIQ organizations and activists reinforced the sense that Pride continues to be a crucial moment of visibility and a reminder of the importance of collective action.

Attending the Human Rights Conference alongside the celebrations added an important dimension. Much of Outright’s work focuses on international contexts, so it was particularly useful to connect with activists and advocates working within the U.S., to hear directly about their priorities and experiences, and be reminded that the movement within the U.S. is diverse and resilient. These exchanges helped me identify links between domestic and international advocacy and highlighted how shared challenges can create opportunities for collaboration and learning, hence the importance of spaces such as WorldPride.

— Whitney Pfeifer, program manager, Global LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Democracy

There was much uncertainty ahead of WorldPride 2025 in Washington, DC, with fears of federal suppression at the forefront of many of our minds as the event approached. Companies pulled their sponsorships, and many [international activists] decided to cancel their travel because of concerns around safety. However, once we realized that everything would be moving forward with the event, the background of the Trump administration’s executive orders only fueled our passion to march for equality, visibility, and the rights of everyone in the LGBTIQ community. Celebrating love and joy during WorldPride in 2025 made me feel closer to the radical origins of the original Pride protest in 1969, because we refused to allow state-sponsored bigotry—attacks that were meant to destroy our resolve—to stop us from coming together and unapologetically loving one another.

— Andrew Schlager, development officer

Indigenous Queer Events at WorldPride 2025

Crushing Colonialism is an international Indigenous arts, media, and storytelling organization that works on uplifting the voices of Indigenous people, including queer Indigenous people. Crushing Colonialism organized a two-day side event, “Decolonized Beatz Indigenous World Pride,” on the margins of WorldPride 2025. This event brought together IndigiQueer people from many countries, including Brazil, Canada, Fiji, Finland, Gambia, Palestine, and the U.S., to share stories through the creative arts.⁵⁰⁷ The group also hosted a creators’ market and a medicine bundle—a table with public health supplies including dental dams, COVID-19 tests, face masks, and hand sanitizers.⁵⁰⁸

Crushing Colonialism led a human rights conference panel addressing storytelling in arts and media, to include and amplify the voices and experiences of Indigenous queer people.⁵⁰⁹ The group also led the land acknowledgement at two WorldPride events.⁵¹⁰ Land acknowledgements are official statements to recognize the traditional ownership of Indigenous territories taken over by colonialism.⁵¹¹

Outright spoke with Jen Deerinwater, the founding executive director of the organization who is a Two-Spirit, bisexual, and disabled citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Deerinwater told Outright that in 2022, upon learning that WorldPride would be held in D.C. in 2025, the group immediately began planning for the inclusion of Indigenous queer people’s perspectives at this global stage. Deerinwater explained:

We knew from far too much experience that if we don’t organize for ourselves, then no one will, and we will not be included. And if we are, it’ll always be very last-minute, culturally inaccurate, and sometimes outright offensive. If we don’t plan something, there will be no Indigenous representation.⁵¹²

The Trump administration’s anti-diversity policies played a direct role in reducing the resources Crushing Colonialism was able to access for Pride. At the onset of President Trump’s second term, Crushing Colonialism had a residency at the Kennedy Center, a storied, government-affiliated arts institution in Washington, D.C., and the group had planned to hold Decolonized Beatz Indigenous World Pride at the center.⁵¹³ However, “Trump got into office and took over the Kennedy Center and we were one of the very first people dropped,” Deerinwater said. Moreover, “with the rising tide of fascism, it is definitely harder now to raise funds.”⁵¹⁴

Having made it to WorldPride, Crushing Colonialism sought to center community safety and inclusion. The group’s events catered to underserved communities, especially “our youth and elders.” The events were hybrid, to include people who could not be present



Right: Decolonized Beatz Indigenous World Pride, 2025.
Photo by Washington Talent. Credit: Crushing Colonialism.

in D.C., and prioritized disability and language justice, incorporating accessibility tools and interpretation.⁵¹⁵ Crushing Colonialism provided internal security at events, medics on site, planned escape routes, human rights training beforehand, and established contacts and immigration lawyers at ports of entry used by the people traveling into the country for Pride. Deerinwater told Outright that these steps taxed the group’s resources, yet the context necessitated this much planning to safely implement a queer, indigenous arts and performance event in the nation’s capital.

Ultimately, Crushing Colonialism was able to ensure indigenous queer visibility throughout WorldPride. These spaces not only allow for Indigenous queer people to celebrate, be safe, seen, and heard— they also produce paid job opportunities.⁵¹⁶ According to Deerinwater,

Every chance we get, we do everything to move funds back to the community. Whether it’s getting food from certain restaurants or the attorneys we hire. We try to put every last dime back into Indigenous hands or tribal-owned business, and we work with Black and Brown and queer and disabled people and women, to give opportunities to people who have historically and in the present day, not been given opportunities or are punished when trying to take opportunities.⁵¹⁷

The group’s visible presence at WorldPride provided an opportunity to amplify Indigenous queer voices, facilitate connections, and expose more people to the organizations’ work. Indigenous queer representation in mainstream events is particularly meaningful in a global context marked by political efforts to eradicate sexual and gender diversity. With many tribes recognizing more than two genders, Deerinwater said, queerness is woven into the histories of Indigenous peoples, “since the beginning of time.”⁵¹⁸



Right: Outright International at the World Pride International rally and March on Washington for Freedom, June 8, 2025. Credit: Outright International.

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Annex: Status of Pride Around the World in 2025

In 2025, activists in the following 101 UN member states around the world implemented at least one public Pride or LGBTIQ visibility event: Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, the Bahamas, Bangladesh (online only), Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam.

Among these 101 UN member states where Pride was held in 2025, activists in at least 66 countries were able to hold Pride events in more than one city: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam.

In the following 92 UN member states, Outright did not identify any public Pride or LGBTIQ visibility events in 2025: Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Micronesia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Republic of the Congo, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, São Tomé and Príncipe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

End Notes

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³⁹⁹*Ibid.*

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