

Global LGBT milestones

There are 195 countries in the world today. Here are some key facts on progress on LGBT rights around the world over time, which we hope might inspire you as you think about your plans for LGBT History Month.

- 🌐 In 1791, France became the first country to decriminalise homosexuality. Today, all but 69 countries have followed suit – some of the most recent additions in the last few years were Angola, Gabon and Botswana.
- 🌐 The first LGBT rights organisation in history, the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, was established in Berlin in 1897.
- 🌐 In 1972, Sweden became the first country to legalise medical transition for trans people, as well as legal gender recognition. 31 other countries now allow gender recognition for trans men and women – although many of these laws put major barriers in place.
- 🌐 The world's first Member of Parliament publicly known to be LGB was Coos Huijsen in The Netherlands, elected in 1972.
- 🌐 The first out LGB person elected as a head of government was Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, who became Iceland's Prime Minister in 2009. This makes her one of only two out lesbian heads of state in history, and one of only five out gay heads of state.
- 🌐 The world's first out trans MP was Georgina Beyer in New Zealand in 1999, four years after she became the world's first out trans mayor. There have been no out trans heads of state.
- 🌐 In 1988, Sweden became the first country to introduce anti-discrimination laws on the basis of sexual orientation. Now, 57 countries provide broad protection against discrimination and 81 provide employment protection based on sexual orientation.
- 🌐 Denmark became the first country to legalise same-sex unions in 1989, while the first to legalise same-sex marriage was the Netherlands in 2001 – since followed by 29 other countries.
- 🌐 In 1992, the World Health Organisation declared that homosexuality was not an illness.
- 🌐 The Netherlands was the first country to fully legalise joint adoption by same-sex couples in 2001. The figure now stands at 32 countries, as well as a number of Mexican states and British territories.
- 🌐 Self-declaration for legal gender recognition was introduced in Argentina in 2012, followed by 14 countries and parts of several others.
- 🌐 Non-binary legal recognition was introduced in Malta in 2017 and Uruguay in 2018, joining parts of Canada and the USA.
- 🌐 In 2019, the World Health Organisation announced that being transgender would no longer be classed as a “disorder”.