

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in England and Wales



Read for more information on LGBTQ+ rights in England & Wales, race and ethnicity, religious diversity, and women's rights

LGBTQ+ in England & Wales

The UK is, in general, an open, safe and welcoming place for the LGBT+ community, but this was not the case until the past couple of decades. While homosexual acts were decriminalised in 1967, many of our UK staff can still remember Section 28 - a law that made it illegal for schools and local authorities to “promote” anything other than heterosexual relationships. This was not repealed until 2003, so those who went to school in the UK before this were often made to feel that being LGBTQIA+ was something to be ashamed or frightened of - it wasn't even covered in sex education! In response to Section 28, a charity called Stonewall was founded in England that works to provide access to LGBTQ-inclusive education for all students. A lot of the universities we partner with are Stonewall Diversity Champions, continuing to enact policy and take action to promote LGBTQ+ equality.

The Church of England, the country's official church, has undergone many internal disagreements over LGBT+ rights within the church for many years, and has been largely resistant to change - it is still not possible for a same-sex couple to marry in a Church of England church. However, outside of the Church of England, things have moved on significantly in recent years with marriage being extended to same-sex couples in 2013 as well as the ability to adopt children in the same way as heterosexual couples. In 2005 the Gender Recognition Act came into effect, giving trans people full legal recognition in their appropriate gender. It allowed trans people to acquire a new birth certificate, although gender options were still limited to 'male' or 'female'. During [LGBT History Month](#), in February, LGBT history is celebrated and explored at events throughout the country. Most large cities now celebrate [Gay and Trans Pride events](#), with huge events in London and Manchester in particular. Larger cities often have a vibrant LGBT+ scene, with bars, clubs, bookshops and resources. In fact, some of our staff and former students recently shared their favourite queer spaces in a [blog post](#)!

Race and Ethnicity in England & Wales

Great Britain's rich, complicated and sometimes difficult history - an island invaded many times that was later known for doing an awful lot of invading of its own - is responsible for much of its diversity. While much immigration to the UK is associated with the last 100 years, as more countries gained independence from British colonial rule, there was already an Indian population numbering over 40,000 by the mid-19th century. The 19th century also saw a lot of migration from those fleeing persecution in other parts of Europe - during this period the Jewish community in the UK grew from 46,000 to over 250,000. The 20th Century saw an increase in immigration both from Commonwealth countries and beyond, particularly after the Second World War when many people came from the Caribbean - now known as the [Windrush Generation](#) - to help revitalize the economy. Many more came from EU countries to work, study and sometimes to live permanently, with almost 4 million applying to remain here after the UK left the EU.

Evidence shows Black people have been living in the UK since Roman times, possibly even before that. Consequently, there have been many prominent Black Britons in public life over the centuries. That said, it is often pointed out that many have

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heard only of their White counterparts, and there have been attempts in recent years to rectify this and [teach a curriculum that does not erase black history](#). Discrimination on the grounds of race is illegal in the UK under the [Equality Act](#). However, as in the US, there is, sadly, still inequality evident in the UK - studies show that black graduates are paid around 23% less than white graduates, and black Britons are 8 times more likely to be stopped by the police than white Britons. Increasing awareness of this inequality, though, has led to strong support for the Black Lives Matter movement, with demonstrations and protests, particularly over the death of George Floyd, taking place across the UK in 2020, and calls for statues of prominent figures who were involved in the slave trade to be removed. [Black History Month](#) (in October in the UK) is growing every year, with hundreds of events across the UK and online

The UK nowadays is an extremely diverse country. While it is still a predominantly white country, a significant proportion of the population come from non-white backgrounds:

- 3% of the population is black, including 14% of the population of London
- 7% of the population are from Asian backgrounds, including Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Chinese
- In London, 44% of the population come from non-white backgrounds
- Many cities in the UK also have high ethnic minority populations. For example, in Bradford, 20% of the population is Pakistani

Additionally, each region of the UK has its own distinct culture and identity, and even its own language - if you are visiting or studying in Wales it's likely you will hear Welsh being spoken as well as English. The extent of diversity in the UK means that you can buy food from almost any country in the world in London, choose from an array of [Chinese restaurants](#) (many in London, Manchester and Oxford, where Arcadia programmes are based) or [have an authentic curry](#). You'll be able to attend Diwali celebrations, observe Rosh Hashanah with new friends and celebrate Chinese New Year in London's Chinatown. You'll be able to learn about our rich cultural history at the [Migration Museum](#), [Jewish Museum](#) and countless exhibitions at museums throughout the UK, from the [Museum of Liverpool](#) to the [Museum of London](#).

Religious Diversity in England & Wales

Officially, the UK is a Christian country, and the Church of England is the official state church in England, with the queen being its Supreme Governor. In the past, the status of the Church of England as the national religion meant that those of other faiths did not have equal rights in terms of access to university or even some job roles. However, nowadays the UK is a multi-faith and largely secularised society, with the most recent census indicating that members of the population affiliate to a wide range of Christian denominations and other religions, and many others define themselves as atheists. You can find numerous faiths represented in the UK. While the UK is officially a Christian country, only 59% of the population identify as Christian. In England, 5% of the population is Muslim, almost 2% are Hindu 0.5% are Jewish, and 28% have no religious affiliation. The Equality Act prevents discrimination on the grounds of religious belief and freedom of religion is respected. London is particularly diverse, with a wide choice of places to worship, whatever your faith. A large proportion of the UK's Jewish community can be found in London, particularly up in Golders Green, where you can find many kosher shops and restaurants. Feel free to check out this student blog on [celebrating Hanukkah in London](#).

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Women's Rights in England & Wales

In general, the UK is a safe place for women, and gender discrimination is prohibited by the Equality Act. Women in the UK face the same challenges as in other western democracies, such as a persistent gender pay gap (Britain was recently ranked 13th in the world in PWC's Women at Work report, below a number of European countries, New Zealand and Canada.) The #metoo movement was taken up strongly in the UK, and conversations around sexual assault and harrassment have been consistently in the news since then - recently a law was passed to make upskirting (taking unsolicited photographs underneath a person's skirt) a crime. Culturally, there has been a focus on focusing more on women in history - as of 2017 Jane Austen now appears on the £10 note after criticism that mainly men were featured.

In higher education, the [Athena SWAN Charter](#) was created to promote Women's equality in STEM departments, in leadership, and promote a more inclusive and safe culture. Recently, the Charter has changed to incorporate equality for all genders and has broadened to develop equality in all departments. Most of the universities we partner with have been awarded an Athena SWAN Bronze and/or Silver award for their achievements in promoting policy and taking action towards the Charter's principles.