

*Read for more information on LGBTQ+ rights in Scotland, race and ethnicity, religious diversity, and women's rights*

## **Race, Ethnicity & Identity in Scotland**

The question of 'identity' in Scotland is a complicated topic. Are people Scottish? Or are they British? Can they be both? Or neither? Since the Independence Referendum of 2014, when the people of Scotland voted in favour of remaining in the British Union, it has been a conversation never far from the surface. With Scotland then voting to remain in the European Union in the Brexit Referendum of 2016 but "Leave" winning the overall vote, Scotland now faces a future it didn't vote for amid growing support for a new independence referendum.

While the 2011 Census results indicated growing ethnic diversity in Scotland, it still only put those who identify as ethnic minorities at 4% of the population. Scotland is not immune to systemic racism, and it shows in the employment gap, educational access, and crime; and, microaggressions towards people in the BAME community are present. With the BLM movement, a call to address systemic racism and Scotland's links to slavery is louder and more prevalent than ever. The University of Glasgow has started a significant program on reparative justice that is redressing its links to slavery, as well as contributing substantial scholarships in the name of James McCune Smith: born into slavery, he was the first African American to graduate from Glasgow with a medical degree. Street names, building names, monuments, and statues are being reviewed as links to slavery that need to be addressed, and museums and landmarks are starting to incorporate more information on Scotland's history with race and ethnicity.

Although still predominantly white, increased immigration has allowed ethnic groups to establish and develop large communities in Scotland. The results also indicated that Scottish national identity is more ethnically inclusive than compared to other countries in the UK. An acronym commonly used in the UK is BAME standing for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic. Due to it being a vastly overgeneralizing term, it is only used for self-identification purposes and does not replace distinct experiences.

## **LGBTQ+ in Scotland**

In current day Scotland, same-sex marriage is legalized, same-sex couples can adopt, and there are many spaces, such as bars, bookstores, festivals, clubs, and centers that are centered around the LGBTQ+ community. Through time, the city of Edinburgh was one of the leading cities in continuing the push for equality. Edinburgh was where the first LGBTQ+ bookshop was started, called Lavender Menace; it was also where the first Scottish pride march took place. Moreover, drawing from US history, Edinburgh was where the Stonewall Youth Project originated. Glasgow quickly became another hub for promoting LGBTQ+ rights as it housed the Lesbian Archive in the Glasgow Women's Library, it hosted the second pride march in Scotland, and it was the birth place for the Homophobic Crime Line - a way to report hate crime.

The strides made in the past two decades; however, are thanks to the people who paved the way. Notable figures go all the way back to the early 1800s with Dr. James Barry and Walter Sholto Douglas, two transgender men who were prominent in

their fields of medicine and writing, respectively. While same-sex sexual acts and teaching about the LGBTQ+ movement in schools because illegal acts, the movement pushed on through areas such as literature and theatre. Lindsay Gordon, the first fictional lesbian detective, was created; a play from the perspective of a transgender Jesus was performed, and the author of the poem about the Loch Ness Monster came out.

While a lot of rights for the LGBTQ+ community were only recently legalized in Scotland, and this information is not by any means exhaustive, it is clear a lot has happened in the past couple decades that has drastically changed the discussion.

## Religious Diversity in Scotland

Undeniably, one of the most influential institutions to Scotland history is the Church of Scotland. Soon after the protestant reformation swept through Europe, John Knox created, in the 1560s, the Church of Scotland as a Presbyterian church. With primary focuses around democratic ideals, it quickly became a massive political and social influence in the country. In fact, one of the primary outcomes the Church of Scotland is known for is the strong influence it had on the country's educational system. However, over time, the Church of Scotland has lost a lot of its population size. Many theories have been cited as to why this may be, some of which are: the Church has become democratized to the point of inefficiency and the Church is not progressive enough to inspire or retain the younger generations.

Over time, other religions have become more seen in Scotland and have grown. Due to an increase in immigration, Catholicism and Islam are two of the more prominent minority religions. An even greater, and potentially more surprising change, is the increase of secularism in Scotland. In fact, in the 2011 Census, a greater proportion of the Scottish population declared having no religious affiliation (37%) compared to those who identify as a member of the Church of Scotland (32%). Pretty significant changes have been noticed in the past couple decades surrounding religion in Scotland.

## Women's Rights in Scotland

Up until World War 2, the Suffragette movement was present and active but overall had not made great strides. While women worked on the homefront during the war, they were able to start influencing politics directly and quickly, thus pushing the Suffragette movement forward. In 1918, women over 30 were able to vote, and in 1969, all women over 18 could vote (same as men). However, in the 1918 Act, it only gave 40% of women the right to vote, excluding most working class women and women of color through added exceptions. As an added note, those left out today tend to be people with visual and motor impairments and those who are homeless.

Women's history and equality in Scotland has been shaped by women in literature, politics, art, and science.. Saroj Lal became the first Asian woman to be appointed as a Justice of Peace. In the 1800s, Mary Somerville helped discover the planet Neptune and was the first woman elected to join the Royal Astronomical Society. Also in the 1800s, the Edinburgh Seven, a group of seven women, were the first to complete an undergraduate



degree at a British university. Sophia Jex-Blake, one of the seven, is also notable for her work supporting LGBTQ+ rights.

In the present, there is still a gender pay gap and a lack of gender equality in leadership, as well as a higher rate of domestic abuse towards women. However, in educational settings, there is a push for more gender equality and representation. This movement is shown through the Athena SWAN Awards which are given to universities that have made strides towards gender equality and are continuing to develop their plans to do so.

**Bibliography**

- [LGBTQ Timeline and Information](#)
- [Race and Ethnicity history](#)
- [Microaggressions](#)
- [Religious history](#)
- [Census information & religion](#)
- [Suffragette movement](#)
- [Intersectionality and Women's Rights](#)