



Uganda

Situation for LGBT persons



Uganda: Situation for LGBT persons

This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Executive summary

Since the preparation of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) and after its passing in Parliament in May 2023, there has been an increase in the arrests of persons accused of homosexuality in Uganda. Prosecutions under the AHA, 2023 are, however, rare and no convictions have been recorded between May 2023 and April 2025. Legal experts suggested that the reason for these non-convictions are intentional procedural bottlenecks and lack of evidence of homosexuality. Charges are often reclassified or dismissed, and published court lists do not disclose details about the charge. Access to legal assistance for LGBT persons is limited due to threats against lawyers who accept to defend LGBT persons.

LGBT persons are exposed to violence and threats as well as to evictions from their homes. However, since May 2024, the reported number of incidents of violence and threats have decreased and so has the reported number of evictions.

LGBT individuals in Uganda report fear of arrest, abuse, or further victimisation when they seek protection from the police. The police have in many documented cases exercised extortion and harassment towards LGBT persons. Police officers in Uganda have used forced anal examinations in LGBT-related cases, and there are reports of police involvement in "correctional rape". There are shelters and support services for LGBT persons across Uganda although these services are often unsafe, underfunded and overcrowded.

Originally the AHA, 2023 included a 'Duty to report' section, obliging health workers to report any homosexual clients. This section has since been removed, but it created mistrust among LGBT persons. Although a Ministry of Health circular and a 2024 court decision aimed to restore access to services without discrimination, lack of health worker awareness and the withdrawal of USAID funding still hinder LGBT persons from seeking specific health services.

Young people in school who are suspected of homosexuality are often subjects of rumours and face expulsion, and discrimination, especially in private and boarding schools.

LGBT persons who are outed face the risk of losing their job, of not being hired and of stigma at the work place. LGBT persons have experienced loss of income due to community boycotts and denial of loans, particularly in rural areas.

Transpersons are perceived as the most vulnerable group due to their non-conformity to traditional gender norms. Male homosexuals are reportedly more exposed than female homosexuals. Individuals who publicly support LGBT rights may also face social and professional repercussions regardless of their own orientation. Outings of LGBT individuals are frequent and occur through police disclosures, social media and tabloids. The victims have limited legal recourses and the consequences are often severe.

LGBT persons face widespread stigma and rejection across Christian, Muslim, and traditional religious communities, where non-heteronormative identities are often viewed as immoral.

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Abbreviations

AHA	Anti-Homosexuality Act
ARV	Antiretroviral therapy
COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DIHR	Danish Institute for Human Rights
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
GBQ	Gay, bisexual, queer
HRAPF	Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum
LBQ	Lesbian, bisexual, queer
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, with ‘+’ encompassing additional communities
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
PEPFAR	The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
SMUG	Sexual Minorities Uganda
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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USAID

United States Agency for International
Development

Glossary¹

Bisexual: Sexual orientation of a person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to both men and women.

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

Gay: A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. In the context of this report, the term gay denotes a male person.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

Gender expression refers to a person's presentation of their gender through physical appearance – including dress, hairstyles, accessories, cosmetics – and mannerisms, speech, behavioural patterns, names and personal references. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity.

Gender Identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

Homosexual: Sexual orientation of a person whose sexual and romantic attractions are toward people of the same sex.

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons. Sometimes the term is used for groups and identities and sometimes associated with “sexual and gender minorities.”

LGBTIQA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer persons, asexual, with ‘+’ encompassing additional communities.

Lesbian: Sexual orientation of a woman whose sexual and romantic attraction is toward other women.

“Outing”: The act of disclosing a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent.

¹ This list of terms has been developed with inspiration from glossaries used in HRW, *“They’re Putting Our Lives at Risk” How Uganda’s Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), pp. 11-12 and EUAA, *COI Research Guide on LGBTIQ*, 2023, [url](#), p. 10

Queer: An inclusive umbrella term covering multiple identities, sometimes used interchangeably with “LGBTQ.” Also used to describe divergence from heterosexual and cisgender norms without specifying new identity categories.

Sexual orientation refers to a person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to individuals of a different gender or the same gender.

Transgender (also “trans”) denotes or relates to a person whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity - the gender that they are most comfortable with expressing or would express given a choice. A transgender person usually adopts, or would prefer to adopt, a gender expression in agreement with their gender identity, but they may or may not wish to permanently alter their bodily characteristics to conform to their preferred gender.

Introduction

This report examines the impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 (AHA) on the rights and living conditions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) persons in Uganda. It begins with an overview of the law outlining the main offences defined under the AHA and the associated legal implications.

Following the presentation of the legal framework, the report describes the treatment of LGBT individuals by Ugandan authorities since the enactment of the AHA, with a particular focus on developments in reported arrests, detentions, and prosecutions.

The report further explores the availability of protection mechanisms for individuals fearing harassment or violence, including the role of law enforcement authorities and the avenues for seeking redress through civil society organisations or formal institutional channels.

In its final sections, the report analyses the situation of LGBT persons within civil society, addressing trends in violence and abuse, as well as patterns of stigma and discrimination in urban and rural areas. The report describes access and barriers for LGBT persons to key social services, health and education as well as to housing and employment. It also considers the existence and operational capacity of civil society groups advocating for LGBT rights, including their ability to provide protection and support. Finally, the report discusses the phenomenon of public outings of LGBT persons through media platforms, such as newspapers and social media.

The report follows the basic concepts introduced in the EU Agency for Asylum's (EUAA) research guide, where LGBT persons are defined as persons who are attracted to persons of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or any gender (bisexual). Throughout the interviews, several interlocutors self-identified as queer and they are also included in the group of LGBT persons. Recognising the fact that the terminology to categorise and define LGBT persons varies across countries and cultures, the report also includes a short section presenting the culturally specific definition of LGBT persons.²

The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) developed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the mission in consultation with the defined target users of the report, in particular the Secretariat of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board and the Asylum Division of DIS. The ToR is included in annex 2 of this report. In the process of compiling this report, the delegation interviewed 13 sources representing different types of knowledge. In alignment with the EUAA guidance on LGBTIQ type of sources,³ care has been taken to include specialised organisations representing the LGBT community in Uganda. Therefore, organisations representing gay men as well as an organisation representing lesbian, bisexual and queer women have been interviewed. The list of sources also includes organisations specialised in health, right-based organisations, international organisations, human rights bodies and governmental institutions. Finally,

² EUAA, *Country of Origin Information: Research Guide on LGBTIQ*, 2023, [url](#), pp. 13, 17

³ EUAA, *Country of Origin Information: Research Guide on LGBTIQ*, 2023, [url](#), pp. 34-43

informal meetings with relevant academic/research centres were held in Denmark to get a better understanding of the history and the context. The delegation selected the sources interviewed based on their expertise, merit and experience relevant to the ToR.

The present report is based on information from publicly available written sources, comprised of carefully selected news reports by credible news outlets, books, academic articles and reports published by other Country of Origin (COI) units, other international organisations as well as NGOs and humanitarian organisations as well as data from interviews with multiple sources to ensure a high level of validity and balance of the data. The objective of including a variety of sources is to present a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to ToR at the time of publication.

In order to assess the development in the treatment of LGBT persons since the adoption of the AHA, three figures have been developed for the purpose of this report. The figures show the numbers of arrests, evictions and reported incidents of violence and threats and are based on data collected by the NGO Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF). The data has been manually collected from the monthly reports listed in annex 1. For more information about the quality assurance mechanisms of HRAPF, see interview note with HRAPF in annex 3.

These sources are complemented with information obtained through 13 interviews conducted during a mission to Kampala, Uganda, undertaken by DIS from 22 to 30 April 2025. The minutes of the meetings with the consulted sources are listed in annex 3.

The interviews were conducted in English. Prior to the interviews, all interlocutors were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the mission and the fact that their statements would be included in a report made publicly available. The interlocutors were asked how they wished to be referred to, and all sources are introduced and quoted according to their own wishes. Five out of 13 sources preferred anonymity. All meeting minutes were forwarded to the interlocutors for their approval and amendment, allowing them the opportunity to offer corrections or make comments on their statements. All sources responded and approved their statements. Care has been taken to present the views of the interlocutors as accurately and transparently as possible.

For the sake of reader-friendliness and transparency, paragraphs in the minutes of the interviews have been numbered in a consecutive order, used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. During the interview, the source may have highlighted issues that are not addressed in the ToR. As these issues could be relevant to refugee status determination, they are included in the meeting minutes, but not in the report.

The report has been peer reviewed in accordance with the EUAA COI Report Methodology.⁴ The research and editing of this report was finalised on 3 July 2025.

⁴ EUAA, *Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2023, [url](#)

1. Historical attitudes towards LGBT persons in Uganda

Uganda's legislation and public attitudes toward same-sex relations have been shaped by a combination of colonial legal inheritance and conservative socio-religious norms. Laws prohibiting same-sex conduct were first introduced during British colonial rule and remained in force after independence, even after the UK decriminalised homosexuality in 1967.⁵ Over time, same-sex relations in Uganda have increasingly been framed as contrary to cultural and religious values, and public discourse has often portrayed homosexuality as “un-African” or influenced by foreign agendas.⁶

Religious institutions, particularly Christian denominations, have played and play a significant role in shaping public opinion on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.⁷ Evangelical groups, including some with links to foreign actors, have actively campaigned against homosexuality.⁸ High-profile events and statements by religious leaders have contributed to negative perceptions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons and have influenced political developments, including legislative initiatives.⁹

Public opinion in Uganda remains strongly opposed to same-sex relations.¹⁰ According to Afrobarometer, Ugandans of all education levels continue to express intolerance of same sex relations and to support that these relationships should be illegal, including the fact that they would be willing to report own family members to the police.¹¹ Politicians and religious figures have frequently characterised homosexuality as a threat to children, family values, and national identity.¹² In this context, legislative action such as the adoption of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) in 2023 has received substantial public and political backing.¹³

1.1 Culturally specific definitions of LGBT persons in Uganda

When asked about how most Ugandans refer to LGBT persons, the majority of the interviewed sources suggested ‘homo’ or ‘homosexual’ with no further references to bisexuals or transgender persons being made.¹⁴ Another term from the academic literature, which did not

⁵ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁶ The Guardian, Minister condemns plans for Uganda's first LGBT centre as “criminal act”, 9 October 2018, [url](#)

⁷ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6

⁸ Center for Constitutional Rights, *In Scathing Ruling, Court Affirms SMUG's Charges Against U.S. Anti-Gay Extremist Scott Lively While Dismissing on Jurisdictional Ground*, 9 June 2017, [url](#); DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁹ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹ Afrobarometer, *Uganda a continental extreme in rejection of people in same-sex relationships*, 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹² DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹³ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴ A humanitarian international NGO: 15; UNAIDS: 13

occur among the interviews for this report, is *Kuchu*. According to Luiz Henrique Amodo, who has conducted online ethnographic research among gay Ugandan men on Facebook in 2019 and 2020, ‘*Kuchu*’ is a term for LGBT persons, which is used with pride among LGBT persons in Uganda, e.g. at the platform ‘Kuchutimes’.¹⁵

1.2 Other Relevant Legislation Affecting LGBT Persons

1.2.1. Penal code

The Penal Code Act prohibits “carnal knowledge against the order of nature” and provides for penalties of up to life imprisonment for consensual same-sex acts. Attempted same-sex acts are also criminalised, carrying penalties of up to seven years’ imprisonment.¹⁶

While the law does not explicitly criminalise sexual orientation or gender identity as such, authorities have frequently used related legal provisions—such as those covering “indecent practices,” “common nuisance,” or “personation”—to target individuals perceived as LGBT persons. These laws are often applied broadly and have been used to justify arrests, detentions, and restrictions on assembly and expression.¹⁷

1.2.2. The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Act of 2016

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Act of 2016 further affects organisations working on LGBT issues. The law grants the NGO Bureau discretion to deny registration or suspend organisations deemed to operate contrary to Uganda’s laws or national interests. This has led to increased scrutiny of civil society actors engaged in advocacy related to sexual and gender minorities, with some organisations reporting closures or administrative sanctions based on their perceived support for LGBT communities.¹⁸

¹⁵ Amoedo, L. H., *Kuchu Counterpublic on Facebook: Gay Men’s Challenge to Heterosexist Policies in Uganda*, 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Kuchutimes, *About*, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶ HRAFP: 4; DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁷ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), pp. 8-9

¹⁸ DRC, *Temarapport: Uganda Forholdene for LGBTQI+ personer*, July 2023, [url](#), pp. 9-10

2. Offences under the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023

The Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) was signed into law in Uganda on 26 April 2023.¹⁹ According to the preamble, the purpose of the Act is to prohibit all forms of sexual relations between persons of the same sex, as well as the promotion or recognition of such relations.²⁰ The law introduces a wide range of criminal offences with severe penalties. The following provides an overview of the main offences and their legal implications under the Act.

2.1 Offence of Homosexuality

Section 2 of the Act criminalises sexual acts between persons of the same sex. A person is deemed to commit the offence of homosexuality if they:

- perform a sexual act on a person of the same sex, or
- allow a person of the same sex to perform such an act on them.²¹

The penalty upon conviction is life imprisonment.²² Attempted homosexual acts are also criminalised and punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment.²³ The AHA specifies that mere suspicion as homosexual, without the commission of a sexual act, does not in itself constitute a criminal offence.²⁴

The Act defines a “sexual act” as any stimulation or penetration (however slight) involving the anus, mouth, or sexual organs by a person of the same sex, including the use of sex contraptions.²⁵

Notably, sexual orientation or gender identity is not in itself criminalised in the AHA, 2023.²⁶

2.2 Aggravated Homosexuality

Section 3 introduces the offence of aggravated homosexuality, punishable by death.²⁷ A homosexual act is considered “aggravated” when it occurs under specific circumstances, including when:

- the victim is a child

¹⁹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, [url](#), p. 2

²⁰ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²¹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 2, subsection 1, [url](#), p. 8

²² The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 2, subsection 2 [url](#), p. 8

²³ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 2, subsection 3 [url](#), p. 8

²⁴ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 2, subsection 5 [url](#), p. 8

²⁵ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, [url](#), p. 6

²⁶ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-19

²⁷ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 3, subsection 1 [url](#), p. 8

- the offender is a parent, guardian, or close relative of the victim
- the victim contracts a terminal illness due to the act
- the offender is a serial offender
- the offender holds authority over the victim (e.g., teacher, religious leader)
- the victim is elderly, disabled, or mentally ill (or becomes so as a result of the act)
- the act involves coercion, threats, or deception, or the victim was unconscious or in an altered state of consciousness due to the influence of medicine, drugs alcohol or any other substance that impaired his or her judgement.²⁸

Attempted aggravated homosexuality is punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment.²⁹

It should be reiterated that the law clarifies that suspicion as homosexual, without a sexual act, is not sufficient to constitute an offence under this section.³⁰

2.3 Consent not a Defence

Section 6 of the Act establishes that consent to a homosexual act does not constitute a legal defence. Thus, even mutual, voluntary same-sex relations are criminalised under the Act.³¹

2.4 Use of Premises

Section 9 makes it a criminal offence to permit the use of any premises for the purpose of engaging in homosexual acts or for the commission of any offence under this Act.³²

2.5 Promotion of Homosexuality

Section 11 prohibits the promotion of homosexuality. A person may be convicted if they:

- encourage or persuade another person to commit a homosexual act
- knowingly advertise, publish, broadcast, or distribute material that promotes homosexuality
- provide financial or material support for activities that encourage homosexuality or its normalisation
- knowingly lease, sublease or allow a venue to be used for such activities
- operate or support an organisation that promotes homosexuality.³³

Violation of this provision is punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment.³⁴

In cases where a legal entity (e.g. NGO, business) is involved, penalties may include:

²⁸ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 3, subsection 2, [url](#), pp. 8-9

²⁹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 3, subsection 3, [url](#), pp. 9-10

³⁰ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 3, subsection 4, [url](#), p. 10

³¹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 6, [url](#), p. 11

³² The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 9, [url](#), p. 12

³³ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 11, subsection 2, [url](#), pp. 13-14

³⁴ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 11, subsection 1, [url](#), p. 13

- fines of up to 50,000 currency points³⁵
- suspension of the entity's license for up to 10 years, or
- permanent cancellation of its operating license.³⁶

2.6 Duty to Report

Section 14 introduces a legal obligation to report to the police, if they have reasonable suspicion that a person has committed or intends to commit the offence of homosexuality or any other offence under the AHA. Individuals who fail to report offences committed against children or vulnerable persons may be sentenced to up to five years' imprisonment or a fine.³⁷

Persons making such reports are granted whistleblower protection under the Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2010.³⁸ An exception is made for lawyers, who are exempt under the Advocates Act.³⁹

2.7 False sexual allegations

Section 15 of the AHA establishes that false accusations under the Act are punishable by up to one year in prison if made intentionally and proven to be untrue or malicious.⁴⁰

2.8 Constitutional Court ruling on the AHA, 2023

In December 2023, rights groups in Uganda filed a lawsuit, which challenged the legality of the AHA, arguing that it violated the right to equality and dignity.⁴¹ On 3 April 2024, Uganda's Constitutional Court ruled that the AHA, 2023 complies with the Constitution of Uganda except in four aspects:⁴²

- **§ 3 (2) (c):** Criminalising the unintentional transmission of a terminal illness, including HIV
- **§ 9:** Denying homosexuals access to housing
- **§ 11 (2) (d):** Criminalising the act of renting out housing or accommodation to individuals or organisations that intend to promote homosexuality
- **§ 14:** The provision concerning the duty to report, as it violates the right to privacy, the right to health care, and the freedoms of thought, conscience, and religion.⁴³

³⁵ One currency point is 20,000 UGX, Business Licenses, *Basic Fees for Examination of Air Receivers/Pressurised Vessels*, n.d., [url](#)

³⁶ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 11, subsection 3, [url](#), pp. 13-14

³⁷ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 14, subsection 3, [url](#), pp. 14-15

³⁸ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 14, subsection 4, [url](#), p. 15

³⁹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 14, subsection 4, [url](#), p. 15

⁴⁰ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, section 15, [url](#), p. 15

⁴¹ BBC, *Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act challenged in Constitutional Court*, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴² The Judiciary, *Constitutional Court pronounces itself on the Anti-Homosexuality*

Act, 2023 of Uganda, 3 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1; HRW, *Uganda: Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act*, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴³ The Judiciary, *Constitutional Court pronounces itself on the Anti-Homosexuality*

Act, 2023 of Uganda, 3 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1; HRAFP: 2

According to Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), the Ugandan government has not published a revised version of the AHA in accordance with the ruling. As such, the original version remains on the books. This means that knowledge of the nullified provisions depends on having a deep understanding of the law and legal process. Parliament was expected to ratify the revised version of the law, but this has not occurred as of 21 July 2025.⁴⁴

2.9 Politics of the AHA

The AHA, 2023 functions primarily as a political instrument rather than a substantively grounded piece of legislation. Nevertheless, sources emphasised that its enactment has had tangible and severe consequences for individuals identifying as, or perceived to be, homosexual.⁴⁵

Prior to the AHA, the legal framework was already sufficient to prosecute LGBT persons. Therefore, the AHA was not legally necessary in order to criminalise homosexuality.⁴⁶ Section 145 of the Ugandan Penal Code criminalises “carnal knowledge against the order of nature”, which Ugandan courts have interpreted as same-sex relations.⁴⁷ According to HRAPF. However, the Speaker of Parliament, Anita Among, was embroiled in corruption scandals and allegedly used the AHA to shift public attention by championing it in Parliament.⁴⁸ The day where the AHA was passed through the Parliament, Among posted a video on X (formerly Twitter) where she together with the Deputy Speaker of the parliament, the Minister of Health and the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda held a prayer in her office before the final vote of the AHA.⁴⁹ Justice Singiza shared the view that the AHA was largely a symbolic gesture and elaborated that accusations of homosexuality are used as tools in political campaigns, particularly in local elections. He opined that politicians sometimes attempt to rally support by branding their opponents as supporters of LGBT causes.⁵⁰ In this relation, Rella Women’s Foundation predicted that just like in previous election periods, LGBT groups and persons will be scapegoated to show community interests and conservation of Uganda’s traditions. More politicians have joined the anti-rights movement that is highly funded and organised making them use the phrase of ‘we are going to get rid of the gays’ to boost morale as if they have a point to prove and using this rhetoric to win more voters for their side.⁵¹

⁴⁴ HRAPF: 3

⁴⁵ Justice Singiza: 5; HRAPF: 7-8; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 5;

⁴⁶ HRAPF: 7; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 5; Justice Singiza: 5; a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4

⁴⁷ HRAPF: 4; a human rights organisation: 3; a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4

⁴⁸ HRAPF: 7

⁴⁹ Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as ‘promoting’ with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised ‘key populations for HIV’ under Uganda’s 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2024*, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰ Justice Singiza: 5, 16

⁵¹ Rella Women’s Foundation: 6

However, according to Justice Singiza, many senior political leaders perceive LGBT issues as irrelevant compared to other political topics and prefer that the topic quietly fade away.⁵² This is reflected in the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who stated that all AHA-related cases must be submitted to her office for review.⁵³ This procedural requirement slows down the legal process and effectively prevents prosecutions under the AHA. Singiza considers this as a deliberate strategy by Uganda's political leadership.⁵⁴ Following the intervention by the DPP, authorities have increasingly relied on provisions within the Penal Code to justify arrests, rather than invoking the AHA.⁵⁵

⁵² Justice Singiza: 16

⁵³ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4; a human rights organisation: 3; Justice Singiza: 16; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 15; HRAPF: 12

⁵⁴ Justice Singiza: 16

⁵⁵ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4; HRAPF: 11; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 15

3. Authorities' Treatment of LGBT Persons in Uganda

3.2. Arrests of LGBT Persons

Since the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 (AHA), authorities have acted inconsistently towards the LGBT community in Uganda.⁵⁶

A civil liberties and human rights organisation interviewed for this report explained that immediately following the law's passage, anti-rights movements mobilised persistent protests demanding enforcement, pressuring law enforcement and regulatory bodies.⁵⁷ This led to a surge in arrests of LGBT persons or perceived LGBT persons.⁵⁸ According to the civil liberties and human rights organisation, this spike can be attributed both to the now-defunct duty-to-report clause and to the emboldenment of local communities acting against LGBT persons.⁵⁹ As an example of the strict interpretation and enforcement of the law in the aftermath of the passing of the AHA, the source mentioned an incident in the city Fort Portal in western Uganda where a man was arrested for attempted homosexuality merely because another man entered his home.⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch reported that public figures used homophobic rhetoric to comment on the passing of the AHA and that this rhetoric shaped negative discourse about LGBT people in the public sphere and also correlated with attacks and harassment.⁶¹

Since the spike in arrests immediately following the passing of the AHA, there has been a decrease in the number of monthly arrests. The organisation Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), has issued monthly figures on the number of arrests due to the individual's sexual orientation or gender expression related to the organisation.⁶² HRAPF's documented violations reports only include cases verified and handled by HRAPF or its partner grassroots LGBT organisations. Violations addressed by other community organisations are not included.⁶³

HRAPF operates nationally with a network of trained community paralegals and regional centres across Uganda. The Central region is served by the main legal aid clinic, while regional legal aid desks in the East, North, and West report to the main office.⁶⁴ Table 1 shows that the number of arrests, which have been reported and validated by HRAPF range from 5 in May 2023 to 19 in March 2024 and then a drop to 5 cases of arrests in May 2025.

⁵⁶ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 1

⁵⁷ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 1

⁵⁸ HRAPF: 9; UNAIDS: 3; Rella Women's Foundation: 7; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 1

⁵⁹ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 3

⁶⁰ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 1

⁶¹ HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶² See Annex 1

⁶³ HRAPF: 25

⁶⁴ HRAPF: 26

The reports disaggregate violations and indicate the number of victims. A single victim may experience multiple violations, but the victim count reflects the number of individuals affected, not incidents.⁶⁵

Sources attribute the recent decline in reported LGBT-related cases to several factors:

- Many cases likely go unreported⁶⁶
- Police may be prosecuting LGBT individuals under non-LGBT-related charges⁶⁷
- Some cases are handled within local communities and never reach the authorities⁶⁸
- Public interest in LGBT issues has subsided since the peak during the AHA debate.⁶⁹

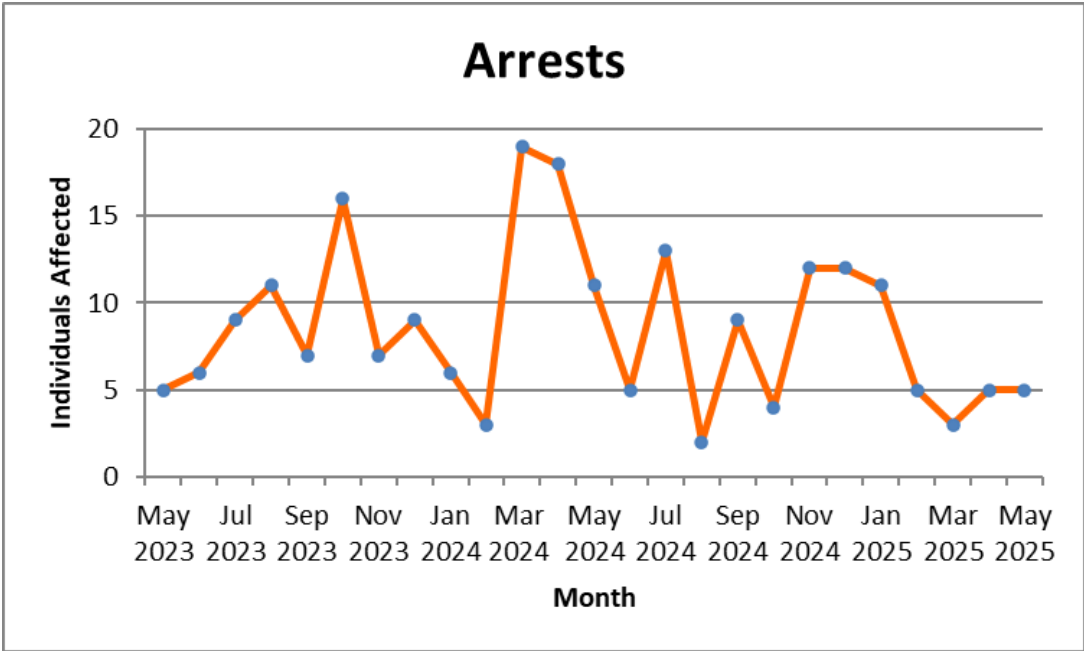


Table 1: Evolution of arrest cases handled by HRAPF on the basis of LGBT-related allegations⁷⁰

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), however, maintains that arrests are legally grounded and non-discriminatory, a perspective not widely supported by other organisations.⁷¹

⁶⁵ HRAPF: 27
⁶⁶ HRAPF: 16; Ugandan Equal Opportunities Commission: 2
⁶⁷ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4; HRAPF: 16
⁶⁸ HRAPF: 16
⁶⁹ HRAPF: 16; Justice Singiza: 5; A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 5
⁷⁰ See Annex 1
⁷¹ Ugandan Human Rights Commission: 4

3.3. Detentions and Conditions in Custody

Two sources pointed out that because the burden of proof is challenging to meet in LGBT cases, the police often resort to forced anal examinations as a means to collect ‘evidence’ of whether an accused man or transgender woman has engaged in homosexual activity.⁷² This was echoed by another rights organisation interviewed for this report, who described this as degrading and essentially amounted to torture.⁷³

HRAPF has documented complaints of police brutality and cases where arrested LGBT individuals were denied access to legal counsel and family contact, resulting in relatives not knowing their whereabouts for extended periods. Some detainees have been held for weeks, even though police custody is legally limited to 48 hours. According to HRPAF, in practice, there is no realistic way to challenge prolonged detention, despite a formal procedure existing.⁷⁴ The civil liberties and human rights organisation noted that moral outrage has also led to people arrested on LGBT charges spending longer periods of time in remand prison than others, even though it is against the law.⁷⁵

HRAPF has also handled cases of so-called “correctional rape” of LGBT persons. A widespread belief exists that exposing lesbian women or trans persons to heterosexual intercourse will “convert” them. Such assaults have, in some cases, been carried out by police officers.⁷⁶

UNAIDS assessed that there is very limited access to healthcare services for anyone in remand custody.⁷⁷

3.4. “Safe houses”

According to two sources, the Ugandan police maintain and operate informal and unmarked detention facilities commonly referred to as “safe houses.” These facilities are reportedly used primarily for the purpose of torture and the detention of individuals without due process. However, the sources emphasised that, to their knowledge, such facilities are not typically employed in the targeting or detention of LGBT persons, but rather are used predominantly against political opponents and individuals considered hostile to the government.⁷⁸

3.5. Police Outings and Search Warrants

The police frequently disclose to the public who has been arrested and on what charges, either at line-ups where individuals who have been arrested are showed, at press conferences or in

⁷² A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 8; SMUG: 8

⁷³ A human rights organisation: 8; A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 8; SMUG: 8

⁷⁴ HRPAF: 13

⁷⁵ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 16

⁷⁶ HRAPF: 24

⁷⁷ UNAIDS: 8

⁷⁸ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 11; A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 15

response to media inquiries. In cases involving LGBT individuals, this functions as a public outing, with charges of homosexuality quickly circulating on social media.⁷⁹ However, sources agreed that the Ugandan Police do not use or publish search warrants when searching for an LGBT suspect.⁸⁰

The Ugandan police do not issue or publish formal search warrants in the printed or online media when conducting searches in cases involving individuals suspected of being LGBT.⁸¹

If a person is outed in this way, the damage to their public reputation is already done, regardless of whether they can later prove that they are not LGBT persons. Such an outing may lead to the expulsion of the individual from their community and even family. Furthermore, an outing could lead to the LGBT person losing their job and being evicted.⁸²

This assessment was echoed by the civil liberties and human rights organisation, who elaborated that there is no legal mechanism to clear a person's name after such accusations. In Ugandan public opinion, there is no presumption of innocence. Attempts to contest accusations often reinforce public belief in guilt due to low trust in the judiciary and widespread corruption.⁸³

Section 15 of the AHA criminalises false sexual allegations. However, the organisation believed this section was intended to protect elites and will not be enforced to clear the name of ordinary citizens.⁸⁴

As stated above, outings frequently occur through social media and tabloid newspapers, particularly *Red Pepper* - a daily tabloid newspaper. Although *Red Pepper*, which has also faced criticism by the government,⁸⁵ was once sued by an NGO, it remains difficult to hold social media platforms accountable. High Court judge Justice Singiza stated that freedom of speech provisions in Uganda further complicate content moderation.⁸⁶

According to Justice Singiza, there have been no convictions of individuals who have falsely outed others as homosexuals on social media. Such outings often lead to devastating personal consequences, including social ostracism and loss of employment.⁸⁷ For more on outings, see section 5.10.

⁷⁹ A representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 20-21; HRAPF: 17

⁸⁰ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 10; HRAPF: 21

⁸¹ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 10; HRAPF: 21

⁸² A representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 22

⁸³ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 22

⁸⁴ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 23

⁸⁵ Africanews, *Uganda's 'Red Pepper' newspaper back on stands*, 13 August 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Justice Singiza: 15

⁸⁷ Justice Singiza: 14

3.6. Prosecution and Court Outcomes

Prosecutions under the AHA are rare.⁸⁸ The aforementioned requirement that all AHA charges be submitted for review by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has created a bottleneck that effectively prevents cases from proceeding.⁸⁹ A revised ODPP circular (No. 2/2024) allowed some decentralisation to regional prosecutors, although the volume of AHA prosecutions remain negligible.⁹⁰

No convictions under the AHA occurred between May 2023 and April 2025.⁹¹ Even where charges are filed, they are typically dismissed for lack of evidence, but some cases under AHA are still pending in court.⁹² Rella Women's Foundation speculated that one explanation of the lack of convictions under the AHA could be that alleged LGBT persons are charged with something unrelated to homosexuality, e.g. the use of illegal drugs. Rella further explained that assumptions or accusations related to sexual orientation or gender identity are often unsupported by evidence.⁹³

A civil liberties and human rights organisation noted that they had provided legal assistance and raised the posted bail for the defendants. Bail in cases of LGBT can be very high because the people who post bail are morally outraged by LGBT persons.⁹⁴

3.7. Criminal Cause Lists

The government is required to publish lists identifying individuals and their crimes for which they have been convicted., but since there has been no convictions under the AHA, no person has been placed on such a list. There are no such lists displaying the names of accused persons.⁹⁵ The Danish Institute for Human Rights stated that the judiciary has published lists of pending cases, but elaborated that these lists do not contain information of the charges, just the names of the charged persons. As such, one would have to be very familiar with the circumstances of the specific case to use this information.⁹⁶

3.8. Legal Assistance and Avenues for Redress

Access to legal assistance for LGBT persons is limited. The civil liberties and human rights organisation stated that it is difficult to assist people in LGBT cases, as many lawyers are reluctant or refuse to take on these cases because they fear that they will be accused of being LGBT. The organisation's lawyers have encountered such incidents, and in some cases, their

⁸⁸ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4; a human rights organisation: 3; Justice Singiza: 16; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 15; HRAPF: 12

⁸⁹ A representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 4; a human rights organisation: 3; Justice Singiza: 16; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 15; HRAPF: 12; UNAIDS: 2

⁹⁰ UNAIDS: 2; a civil liberties and human rights organisation: 13,15; HRAPF: 12

⁹¹ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 20; HRAPF: 14; Rella Women's Foundation: 7; Justice Singiza: 4

⁹² A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 14

⁹³ Rella Women's Foundation: 8

⁹⁴ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 13

⁹⁵ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 20

⁹⁶ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 8

family members have been subjected to harassment and abuse due to the lawyers' accept to defend LGBT persons. Some lawyers have needed personal protection due to taking on these cases, and there have been near incidents of mob violence in front of the courthouse in LGBT cases.⁹⁷ The organisation further assessed that LGBT cases are the most dangerous to take on as a rights organisation compared to e.g. environmental cases or land rights cases, because the stigma associated with LGBT.⁹⁸

Because promotion of homosexuality is criminalised under the AHA, funding to organisations that provide legal service to LGBT persons is constrained.⁹⁹ One human rights organisation stated that such organisations face police raids, harassment, eviction, attacks on staff and premises, and denial of registration.¹⁰⁰

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) explained that while the demand for support by LGBT persons has increased since the introduction of the AHA, the funding has decreased now that USAID funding has disappeared.¹⁰¹

Civil society groups must navigate strict regulatory scrutiny, which is exercised by the authorities. An international NGO and UNAIDS noted that NGOs have adopted vague or coded language in official documents to avoid deregistration.¹⁰²

3.9. Protection for Individuals Facing Harassment

LGBT individuals in Uganda face significant barriers when attempting to seek protection from the police or authorities.¹⁰³

According to the representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda, there are no known cases where LGBT individuals have independently approached the police to request protection against harassment from members of the local community.¹⁰⁴ Instead, LGBT persons report incidents to supporting organisations, which may then contact the police on their behalf. In some cases, these intermediated requests result in police protection, but the response is highly dependent on the personal attitudes and discretion of individual officers. Some officers may provide assistance, while others refuse to intervene, leaving LGBT persons vulnerable when seeking protection directly.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, HRAPF has handled only a few cases in which LGBT individuals have sought police protection. In these cases, the requests for protection were generally framed as general human

⁹⁷ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 17

⁹⁸ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 19

⁹⁹ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 18; SMUG: 2

¹⁰⁰ A human rights organisation: 11

¹⁰¹ SMUG: 5

¹⁰² UNAIDS: 11; International NGO: 6

¹⁰³ HRAPF: 19; A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 18; Justice Singiza: 6; a human rights organisation: 17-19; Rella Women's Foundation: 12

¹⁰⁴ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 18

¹⁰⁵ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 18

rights violations rather than as LGBT-specific rights, often involving the support of human rights organisations to advocate on behalf of the victims.¹⁰⁶ This statement was backed up by Justice Singiza, who explained that while in principle LGBT persons may attempt to seek protection, the effectiveness of this legal avenue is highly limited,¹⁰⁷ not least due to the criminalisation of same-sex conduct.¹⁰⁸ In this relation, HRAFP mentioned that they conduct human rights training sessions for police officers. The goal is to humanise marginalised individuals by drawing parallels to common experiences of marginalisation of the participants so that they can relate to the suffering of marginalisation. However, HRAFP has experienced backlashes when addressing LGBT rights in such sessions. Some police officers became offended and felt that HRAFP was secretly promoting LGBT rights during these trainings, which in some cases worsened the police officers' attitudes.¹⁰⁹

There is a general distrust by LGBT persons towards the police, primarily due to fear of arrest, harassment, or further victimisation.¹¹⁰ A human rights organisation interviewed underlined that persons who fear persecution by the state are unlikely to obtain effective protection.¹¹¹ Even where protection is theoretically possible, it often proves ineffective in practice due to the criminalisation of same-sex conduct and the general unwillingness of authorities to protect LGBT individuals.¹¹² As such, the human rights organisation assessed that many LGBT persons avoid seeking help from law enforcement altogether due to these concerns.¹¹³

Rella Women's Foundation provided several examples of situations where LGBT individuals attempting to seek police assistance faced harassment, intimidation, or outright abuse.¹¹⁴ According to Rella, even when officers initially appear receptive, they frequently shift to coercive questioning and threats, pressing the complainant on why they "do not conform" and attempting to persuade them to change their sexual orientation.¹¹⁵ In cases involving correctional rape, for instance, victims reporting to the police have been met with minimising responses or outright dismissal, with police officers sometimes asking, "So, did it help? Are you straight now?".¹¹⁶ In some cases, police officers have themselves engaged in sexual violence against detainees, attempting to blackmail female detainees into sex in exchange for early release.¹¹⁷

Rella Women's Foundation further documented that police corruption and extortion directly undermine LGBT individuals' access to protection. For example, following the raid of Rella's

¹⁰⁶ HRAFP: 19

¹⁰⁷ Justice Singiza: 6

¹⁰⁸ A human rights organisation: 18; Justice Singiza: 6

¹⁰⁹ HRAFP: 20

¹¹⁰ A human rights organisation: 17; Rella Women's Foundation: 12

¹¹¹ A human rights organisation: 17

¹¹² A human rights organisation: 18

¹¹³ A human rights organisation: 19

¹¹⁴ Rella Women's Foundation: 12-15

¹¹⁵ Rella Women's Foundation: 12

¹¹⁶ Rella Women's Foundation: 14

¹¹⁷ Rella Women's Foundation: 14

office in 2022, police officers demanded payments from the organisation in exchange for not facilitating further raids, effectively turning protection into a system of blackmail.¹¹⁸

3.10. Support Offered by Civil Society Groups

According to a recent study by Human Rights Watch, the government's clampdown on civil society organisations has led to a very restricted space for any NGOs working for LGBT persons' rights and social protection.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the withdrawal of USAID funding to civil society organisations in Uganda — particularly those working on LGBT rights — has severely impacted protection and advocacy.¹²⁰

Several organisations have experienced that the space for their activities have been considerably reduced after AHA, 2023 came into force.¹²¹ One of the most prominent and internationally known LGBT organisations in Uganda is the umbrella organisation SMUG.¹²² In August 2022, SMUG was closed by the NGO Bureau. This intervention obviously impaired the organisation's ability to offer food, mental health support, counselling and handing out rent support to LGBT persons.¹²³ As of May 2025, SMUG continues to operate as a movement with partnerships rather than as an NGO. SMUG has been denied registration as an NGO and has appealed that decision to the Supreme Court. To continue the work as a movement is their way of showing resistance.¹²⁴

Organisations such as Uganda Key Populations Consortium (UKPC) have been forced to suspend services, while two NGOs, HRAFP and Chapter Four, temporarily scaled back legal support. Although some funding has since resumed, access to life-saving services remains limited for many community members.¹²⁵

3.11. Case Framing and Judicial Strategies for LGBT-related Cases

In 2024, a ruling by the Constitutional Court affirmed that the Ugandan Constitution does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation.¹²⁶ Legal strategies must therefore

¹¹⁸ Rella Women's Foundation: 12

¹¹⁹ HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), p. 51

¹²⁰ A human rights organisation: 21

¹²¹ SMUG: 1; A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 1; Rella Women's Foundation: 1

¹²² Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 2025, [url](#), p. 7; HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), p. 52

¹²³ SMUG: 1; HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), p. 51

¹²⁴ SMUG: 3

¹²⁵ A human rights organisation: 21

¹²⁶ UNAIDS: 4

rely on alternative constitutional protections—such as freedom from torture or unlawful detention.¹²⁷

A notable example of this was shared by High Court judge, Justice Singiza who successfully ruled in a case where a local community leader had detained 32 LGBT individuals and subjected them to what Singiza labelled torture. The legal argument in that case focused on the prohibition of torture—not on the victims’ sexual orientation. When the case was filed, many judges were hesitant to take it due to its association with LGBT persons. In Uganda, association with LGBT rights can damage one’s professional reputation and hinder career advancement. The cause is often associated with European values, which are perceived by some as foreign or degenerate.¹²⁸

Bringing an LGBT-related case before the court requires strategic thinking—both in terms of framing the legal issue and identifying the accused. In the above-mentioned case, it was widely known that local police officers had facilitated the torture. However, Justice Singiza chose not to prosecute the police, as doing so could have led to government intervention and the case being shut down. Instead, he prosecuted only the local leader. The case succeeded, and the leader was ordered to pay compensation to the victims.¹²⁹

There remains a significant presence of conservative and religious judges in Uganda. To advance an LGBT-related case—considered controversial in these circles—one must secure allies within the system. Success is more likely when the case is framed in terms of general human rights violations rather than sexual orientation.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Justice Singiza: 6-8

¹²⁸ Justice Singiza: 7

¹²⁹ Justice Singiza: 8

¹³⁰ Justice Singiza: 9

4. Treatment of LGBT Persons by Civil Society

4.2. Violence and Threats of Violence

Following the adoption of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA), 2023, civil society actors, neighbours, and even family members had reportedly become increasingly hostile towards individuals perceived as homosexuals.¹³¹ A human rights organisation echoed this assessment and added that there had also been a rise in online attacks against LGBT persons in the aftermath of the passing of the AHA.¹³² Public attention towards LGBT persons and issues, which had intensified around the time of the AHA’s enactment, has since subsided. Correspondingly, the reported levels of violence and threats against LGBT individuals have also decreased.¹³³

This trend is reflected in the monthly reports published by HRAPF on the impact of the AHA on the LGBT community. Table 2 shows that the number of reported cases of violence and threats, which have been validated by HRAPF range from 23 in June 2023 to nearly 40 in August 2023 and then to under 5 in May 2025.

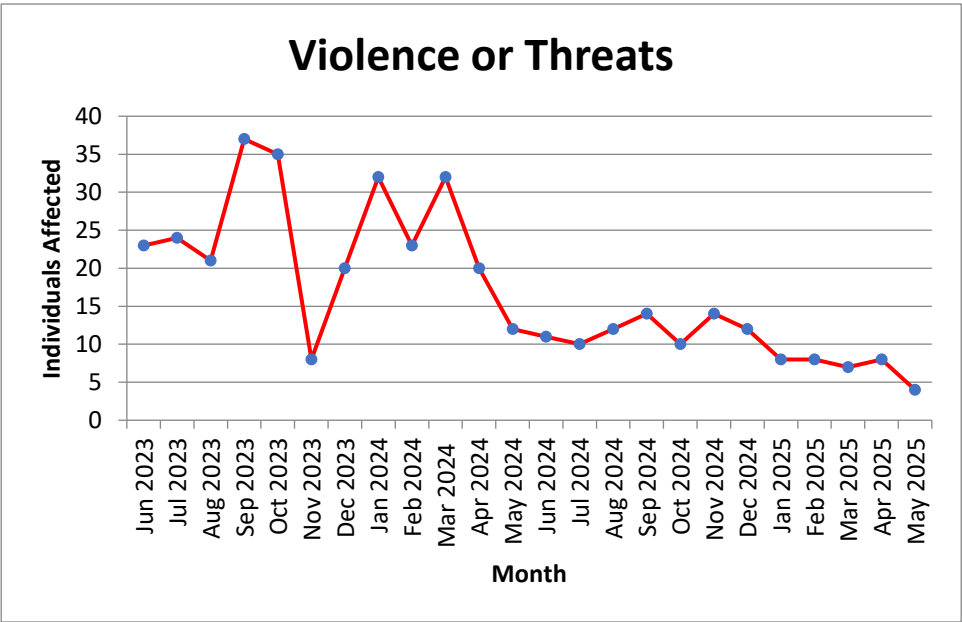


Table 2: Reported incidents of violence and threats to HRAPF¹³⁴

¹³¹ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 3; A human rights organisation: 16; a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 2; HRAPF: 8, 13

¹³² A human rights organisation: 16

¹³³ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 3; a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 2; HRAPF: 8, 13

¹³⁴ See Annex 1

While the number of reported incidents of violence and threats to HRAPF has declined since the initial period following the enactment of the AHA, Landinfo highlights that HRAPF's statistics indicate a significant surge in such cases immediately after the law was passed in 2023. In 2021, HRAPF registered 30 cases of violence or threats against LGBT persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In contrast, the organisation registered 302 such cases in the year following the adoption of the AHA. The majority of perpetrators were non-state actors, including neighbours, landlords, and family members.¹³⁵

Landinfo further argues that it is likely that the actual number of incidents is substantially underreported compared to the number of arrests. Several sources note that individuals often refrain from reporting threats or acts of violence due to fear of exposing their affiliation with the LGBT community, which in turn could lead to suspicion of having violated provisions of the AHA.¹³⁶

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) observed that individuals have exploited the prevailing legal framework and societal attitudes to report members of their local community—such as neighbours or family members—during personal disputes. A representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda similarly reported cases of extortion, in which individuals were pressured to pay large sums of money to avoid being accused of homosexuality. This pattern was particularly pronounced during the period surrounding the enactment of the AHA.¹³⁷

Stigmatisation of LGBT persons is widespread and often leads to social isolation, mental health challenges, and loss of employment or education. A 2021/22 Afrobarometer survey cited by a human rights organisation found that 94–95% of Ugandans would report a friend, family member, or colleague to the police if they suspected them of being involved in a same-sex relationship.¹³⁸ HRAPF observes that public accusations alone are sufficient to cause irreversible social damage, even without legal consequences. Once accused of being LGBT, a person may be fired from their job, evicted, or shunned by their community.¹³⁹ For more on this, See [5. Discrimination of LGBT persons](#)

4.3. Correctional Rape

The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda stated that correctional rape of female LGBT persons does take place in Uganda. There is a rather common perception among the general population and the police that if LGBT persons would only experience heterosexual sex, then they would be converted, and therefore some believe that they are doing the LGBT person a favour. Others rape a LGBT person as a form of punishment.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Landinfo, *Temanotat Uganda: Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), pp. 20-21

¹³⁶ Landinfo, *Temanotat Uganda: Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 20

¹³⁷ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 11

¹³⁸ A human rights organisation: 15

¹³⁹ HRAPF: 22

¹⁴⁰ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 16; Rella Women's Foundation: 12

UGANDA: SITUATION OF LGBT PERSONS

In the rural parts of Uganda, the local community or even the family can be the organiser of a gang rape as a way of converting the homosexual, if it becomes known that the person in question is in fact homosexual. The representative has worked with such cases in a previous position.¹⁴¹ Both the representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and DIHR stated that correctional rape is not a common practice in Uganda.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 17

¹⁴² A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 17

5. Discrimination of LGBT persons

5.2. Legal framework for healthcare service provision

The original AHA, 2023 contained a section with a so-called ‘Duty to report’ stating that:

*A person who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a person has committed or intends to commit the offence of homosexuality or any other offence under this Act, shall report the matter to the police for appropriate action.*¹⁴³

This clause obliged health workers to report any client that they suspected of homosexuality without concerns for confidentiality. It caused many international reactions, including from the three major funders of health care services in Uganda: UNAIDS, the Global Fund and The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). These three organisations issued a joint statement where they warned against the stigma and discrimination associated with the AHA. They condemned the fact that the AHA had already led to reduced access to treatment services and emphasised that the lack of trust and confidentiality in healthcare would be particularly hard for LGBT persons, as this group would fear for their safety when they entered a health clinic.¹⁴⁴ According to research conducted in Uganda by medical and cultural anthropologist Austin Bryan, LGBT persons began to view public healthcare providers as potential informants for law enforcement after the adoption of the AHA. This mistrust immediately led to avoidance of healthcare services.¹⁴⁵ This observation was confirmed by UNAIDS who found that the adoption of the AHA resulted in a drop in number of HIV positive clients at health clinics where they previously had gone regularly to pick up their antiretroviral (ARVs) medicines.¹⁴⁶ Landinfo's findings also confirm a decrease in demand for healthcare services after the adoption of the AHA, especially by transpersons.¹⁴⁷

In August 2023, just three months after the passing of the AHA, the Ugandan Minister of Health issued a new circular “Provision of services to all people without discrimination” (Circular ADM:180/01),¹⁴⁸ which stated that LGBT persons ‘in their diversity’ are entitled to equal access to health care services in public and private facilities.¹⁴⁹ According to UNAIDS, it was in particular the detrimental effects on the HIV/AIDS response of the AHA that led the Minister to issue that circular.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, Section 14, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ UNAIDS, *Joint Statement by the Leaders of the Global Fund, UNAIDS and PEPFAR on Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023*, 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as ‘promoting’ with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised ‘key populations for HIV’ under Uganda's 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2024*, [url](#), pp. 1-2

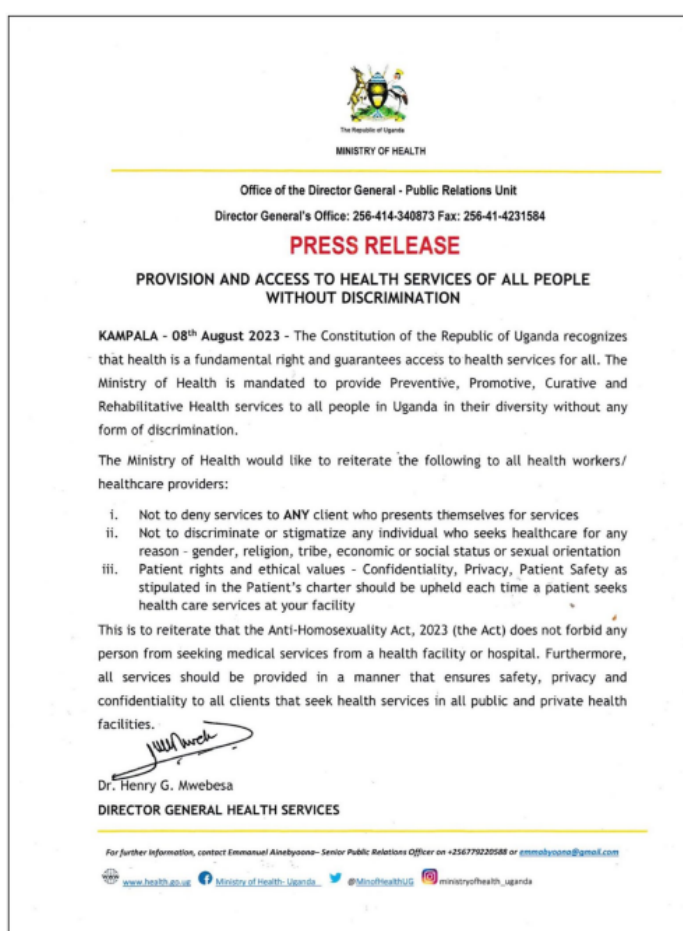
¹⁴⁶ UNAIDS: 1

¹⁴⁷ Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁴⁸ UNAIDS: 1; SMUG: 16; Rella Women's Foundation: 27

¹⁴⁹ Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as ‘promoting’ with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised ‘key populations for HIV’ under Uganda's 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2024*, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁵⁰ UNAIDS: 1



This ‘Duty to report clause’ was in effect until April 2024 when the Justices on Uganda’s High Court decided to nullify this clause (as well as two others).¹⁵¹ For more, see [2. Offences under the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023](#).

In principle, LGBT persons now have the same legal right to healthcare services as the Ministry of Health circular specifically mentions that sexual orientation may not be used as a justification for withholding a patient’s right to services, confidentiality, privacy or safety.¹⁵² According to one LBQ organisation, the above-mentioned circular and the partial court reversal in 2024 have made access to health care services slightly easier for LGBT persons. However, the organisation finds that the damage to public health, research integrity, and community safety has been substantial and long-lasting. The organisation mentioned that it was in particular the access to

¹⁵¹ Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as ‘promoting’ with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised ‘key populations for HIV’ under Uganda’s 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2024*, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁵² Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as ‘promoting’ with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised ‘key populations for HIV’ under Uganda’s 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2024*, [url](#), p. 5

HIV services, which had suffered after the adoption of the AHA.¹⁵³ An international NGO confirmed that there have been fewer LGBT clients at drop-in centres for sexual and reproductive health services.¹⁵⁴ In alignment with this assessment, the Ugandan Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) found that a considerable number of health workers have not been made aware of the court reversal. As such, health workers had denied LGBT persons treatment due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. This lack of awareness about equal rights to healthcare is more prevalent in rural areas of the country. However, EOC are aware of such incidents from across the country.¹⁵⁵

5.3. Stigma and discrimination in the health sector

Stigma in the health sector is not a new phenomenon to LGBT persons in Uganda. There are many examples even before 2023 of health workers meeting LGBT persons, and other marginalised groups (e.g. unmarried young women) with inappropriate questions.¹⁵⁶

The following examples of health workers who have been hostile towards LGBT clients were shared:

- In the city of Gulu, a bisexual woman was denied healthcare services at a local clinic [in connection with reproductive health issues] because she was not accompanied by a man as her partner but by a woman.¹⁵⁷
- A pregnant masculine presenting person showed up in labour at a hospital and was met by a health worker who told them to go back, change clothes and put on a dress before they would be accepted in the hospital.¹⁵⁸
- Transpersons who are in treatment with hormone therapy now fear to show up at a health clinic. They ask other persons to pick up their hormonal therapy medicines, at the risk of not getting their medicines.¹⁵⁹
- At one occasion, products perceived to be used by LGBT persons were placed by the authorities at a health care facility, only for the authorities to detain the people who came by and collected the products.¹⁶⁰

It is well established that criminalisation of same-sex behaviours has a negative effect on LGBT persons' access to health care services and is linked to higher HIV prevalence and lower rates of diagnosis and viral suppression.¹⁶¹ In a study of ten African countries, it was found that homosexual men living in countries with criminalisation of homosexuality had five times the

¹⁵³ Rella Women's Foundation: 27-28

¹⁵⁴ International NGO: 2

¹⁵⁵ EOC: 8

¹⁵⁶ Rella Women's Foundation: 25; International NGO: 3; Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁵⁷ Rella Women's Foundation: 25

¹⁵⁸ Rella Women's Foundation: 26

¹⁵⁹ Rella Women's Foundation: 27

¹⁶⁰ EOC: 9

¹⁶¹ Rella Women's Foundation: 28

odds of being HIV infected compared to men who lived in countries without criminalisation. In countries with recent prosecutions, the likelihood of being HIV infected was even higher.¹⁶² The negative effect on health service delivery has also affected Uganda.¹⁶³

5.3.2. *Effects of criminalisation and stigmatisation on health workers*

Public health workers have also been directly affected by the criminalisation of homosexuals under the AHA, 2023. A qualitative study from 2024 shows that 6 out of 17 interviewed public health workers reported confrontation with the police over the past five years. The confrontations included police showing up at the clinic to question the health workers about their work with HIV/AIDS affected patients. Most of the interviewed health workers had never been arrested for alleged promotion of homosexuality but they referred to the vague language of the AHA 2023, as well as the AHA, 2014 and the Penal Code as a source of tension with the police and the local community.¹⁶⁴

Stigma towards LGBT persons also affect health workers: there are widespread signs of homophobic attitudes in the Uganda population and these attitudes affect those health workers, including peer educators that provide services to homosexuals. One organisation had experienced that their health centres received an increasing number of anonymous phone calls from people asking, which kind of sexual health services they provide. The health workers fear that the anonymous caller may be someone seeking to lure them into saying that they offer illegal activities.¹⁶⁵

5.3.3. *Effects of criminalisation on research and research participants*

One organisation mentioned that the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, which oversees research in the country, issued a statement in October 2023, which contradicted the non-report clause of the Ministry of Health. The UNCST circular mandated that researchers may be required to report criminal offenses—including those linked to sexual orientation—effectively waiving participant confidentiality.¹⁶⁶ As homosexuality remains a criminal offense, this would imply that medical researchers should breach confidentiality for LGBT persons who participate in for example HIV/AIDS research.¹⁶⁷

5.3.4. *Effects of the ending of USAID programmes*

During the time of data collection for this report (May 2025), the national media reported alarming shortages of HIV medicines as well as other life-saving medicines across Uganda due

¹⁶² Lyons et al., *Associations between punitive policies and legal barriers to consensual same-sex sexual acts and HIV among gay men and other men who have sex with men in sub-Saharan Africa: a multicountry, respondent-driven sampling survey*, 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁶³ Mujugira et al., *Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act undermines public health*, 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶⁴ Bryan, A., *Stigmatised as 'promoting' with a duty to report: public healthcare workers providing services to criminalised 'key populations for HIV' under Uganda's 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act*, 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 6, 7

¹⁶⁵ An international NGO: 5, 8

¹⁶⁶ Rella Women's Foundation: 28-29

¹⁶⁷ Research Professional News, *Fear over safety of researchers and study participants in Uganda*, December 2023, [url](#)

to the ending of USAID funded health programmes. According to media reports, USAID and PEPFAR funding covers the widely used HIV combination medicines of tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/lamivudine/dolutegravir; efavirenz/lamivudine/ tenofovir; and Abacavir.¹⁶⁸ UNAIDS assessed that the stock of antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) to treat HIV/AIDS was sufficient to cover the immediate needs until the end of 2025. However, the distribution chain has been disrupted so that ARVs do not reach the clinics and there are reports of stock-outs at facility level.¹⁶⁹

5.4. Education opportunities

Section 4 of the AHA, 2023 is entitled ‘Punishment for child offender’. This clause criminalises a minor who is found guilty in homosexual acts and stipulates that:

*"A child who is convicted of an offence under section 2 or 3 of this Act shall, instead of the punishment prescribed under the relevant section, be liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years."*¹⁷⁰

Section 1 of the AHA identifies a child as a person below the age of 18.¹⁷¹

There is widespread discrimination against pupils who are suspected of being homosexuals or engaging in same-sex acts.¹⁷²

One organisation shared the following examples of measures taken against pupils suspected of LGBT-related behaviours:

- One school informed the parents as well as the local police that a number of pupils at the school had been suspected of having engaged in homosexual acts. They were then expelled from the school and arrested.¹⁷³
- In April 2025, a school informed the parents of a young girl that their daughter was “associating with students exhibiting antisocial behaviour”, which was a veiled reference to her friendship with queer peers. In an effort to protect its reputation, the school targeted students perceived to be homosexual, fearing that their presence might deter other families.
- A group of close school girls drew the suspicion of a teacher, who reported them to the police. As a result, five of the girls were arrested on allegations of homosexuality, despite a lack of any concrete evidence of same-sex conduct.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ The Observer, *Drug shortages turn clinics into death traps*, 2025, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ UNAIDS: 14

¹⁷⁰ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁷¹ The Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023*, 26 April 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁷² Justice Singiza: 10; SMUG: 18; EOC: 11

¹⁷³ Rella Women’s Foundation: 31

¹⁷⁴ Rella Women’s Foundation: 33

- One school had put up a sign, right after the passing of the AHA, saying ‘no LGBT-students allowed’.¹⁷⁵

Much of the repressive action against suspected homosexual minors occur at private schools and/or at boarding schools.¹⁷⁶ Rumours play an important part in school leaders taking action against their pupils: the schools are afraid of being perceived as ‘LGBT friendly’, and parents and the expelled student are too ashamed and do not want to draw further attention to the matter, so they mostly stay silent.¹⁷⁷ Due to the stigma related to homosexuality, any expulsion from school based on sexual orientation is done quietly.¹⁷⁸

According to Rella Women’s Foundation, the long-term impact of the enforcement of the AHA within educational institutions is likely to result in a growing number of young people being permanently cut off from formal education. Many queer students are being expelled during their teenage years solely based on suspicions or accusations related to their sexual orientation or gender expression. These expulsions often occur without proper evidence and deny these young people the opportunity to sit for crucial national exams, such as the Uganda Certificate of Education or Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education. As a result, they are deprived of the qualifications required for pursuing higher education or accessing vocational training.¹⁷⁹

5.5. Evictions

Evictions, and possibly also expulsions from the neighbourhood, are a lived experience of many of those LGBT persons who have been outed.¹⁸⁰

Below is a figure showing the number of evictions of LGBT persons from May 2023 (66 cases) to April 2025 (9 cases) across Uganda. The graph is based on cases collected by the NGO Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAAPF) through their extended web of trained community paralegal volunteers. HRAAPF receives the complaints through their regional offices but only includes them in their data set after having checked each complaint thoroughly.¹⁸¹

Table 3 show that the number of evictions, which have been reported to and then validated by HRAAPF, range from over 65 in May 2023 to 10 in May 2025.

¹⁷⁵ A humanitarian international NGO: 7

¹⁷⁶ Rella Women’s Foundation: 31; EOC: 11

¹⁷⁷ EOC: 11

¹⁷⁸ SMUG: 18

¹⁷⁹ Rella Women’s Foundation: 35

¹⁸⁰ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 11; SMUG: 17; Rella Women’s Foundation: 3; EOC:12; 13; A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 2-3; A human rights organisation: 10, 11; UNAIDS: 3, 6

¹⁸¹ HRAAPF: 25-27; Annex 1



Table 3: Reported evictions of LGBT persons, May 2023 to April 2025¹⁸²

According to the numbers in the above shown graph, the level of evictions was highest immediately after the passing of the AHA, in May 2023. This is confirmed by observations of an NGO.¹⁸³ Then from March 2024 to September to May 2025, the level of reported evictions has dropped. UNAIDS assessed that as of May 2025, the number of evictions has begun to stabilise compared to the situation immediately after the passing of the AHA where the rhetoric against LGBT persons was very hostile and aggressive.¹⁸⁴

One example of an eviction was shared by the LBQ organisation:

- In 2024 in the city of Jinja, a group of queer women (a mixture of feminine, masculine and gender fluid queer persons) met in a private house. Some people slept in the car in the compound. The following morning, the neighbour reported to the police that there were homosexual and drug activities happening in the home. The neighbour claimed that the queer women played loud music and made funny noises in the night. The police came and searched the house and the car and did not find anything to prove the allegations. They, however, brought the queer women to the police station to give their

¹⁸² See Annex I

¹⁸³ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 2-3

¹⁸⁴ UNAIDS: 6

statements. The person who had hosted the group of queer women for the night was evicted that very day, and had to leave her home after their release.¹⁸⁵

In some cases, landlords have received anonymous threats over the phone because they offered accommodation to an allegedly homosexual tenant.¹⁸⁶ Rumours and hearsay play an important role in the evictions as there is rarely any evidence of a person engaging in homosexual acts.¹⁸⁷ The wording of the AHA, one organisation explained, has given the landlords a repertoire to explore accusations of homosexuality if they wish to evict an unwanted tenant.¹⁸⁸ However, to end a rental contract before time with reference to the AHA, a landlord must show some evidence of homosexual activities if the case is brought to court. In some cases, the Ugandan Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has managed to muster a legal defence in time for the person put on eviction notice to be able to stay in their home based on lack of evidence.¹⁸⁹

Evictions are not a new phenomenon in Uganda but has been well documented in previous reports where LGBT persons have been thrown out of their homes or student dormitories, sometimes with very short notice, because of neighbours' or school head masters' reluctance of living near a homosexual person.¹⁹⁰

5.6. Employment opportunities

Section 12 of the AHA is disqualification from employment upon conviction. This section forbids any person who has been convicted of homosexuality from employment in a childcare institution:

*“A person who is convicted of the offence of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality shall be disqualified from employment in a child care institution or in any other institution which places him or her in a position of authority or care of a child or a vulnerable person until such a time as a probation, social and welfare officer determines that the person is fully rehabilitated or no longer poses a danger to a child or a vulnerable person.”*¹⁹¹

The Anti-Homosexuality Law has had a negative effect on LGBT persons' access to employment in general;¹⁹² but it is in particular section 12 on disqualification from employment, which has far-reaching effects. Once convicted of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality, a person is barred from working in any childcare institution or institution involving vulnerable persons—essentially excluding them from a wide range of employment sectors, including education, healthcare, and social work. This restriction persists indefinitely until a state-appointed officer deems them rehabilitated. Moreover, the mandatory disclosure of past convictions when

¹⁸⁵ Rella Women's Foundation: 9

¹⁸⁶ Rella Women's Foundation: 3

¹⁸⁷ EOC: 12

¹⁸⁸ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 2

¹⁸⁹ EOC: 12

¹⁹⁰ Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁹¹ Republic of Uganda, *The Anti-Homosexuality Act*, 2023, section 12, [url](#)

¹⁹² SMUG: 17; Rella Women's Foundation: 36; EOC: 10

applying for such jobs further entrenches stigma and discrimination. Failure to disclose a conviction leads to further criminal charges and imprisonment, compounding the legal and social penalties.¹⁹³

The EOC stated that it is likely that any person who is suspected of homosexuality will be fired from their job and that knowledge of or suspicion of a person's homosexual orientation will also jeopardize their chances of getting a new job.¹⁹⁴

Another effect of the AHA is that international NGOs have begun to reformulate their job announcements: organisations used to include a non-discriminatory clause in the vacancy notices where candidates of all background and sexual orientations were encouraged to apply for the job. The organisations had been advised by their lawyers to remove that language and replace with a vaguer inclusivity clause.¹⁹⁵

Human Rights Watch describes an overall loss of income for LGBT persons following the anti-LGBT rhetoric, which has accompanied the AHA. Businesses of LGBT persons – or of family to LGBT persons – has suffered: Human Rights Watch has interviewed a female business owner who signed an open letter to President Museveni in support of her LGBT child. After this letter was published in a national newspaper people stopped buying things from her shop.¹⁹⁶ This potential loss of income was also described by an LBQ organisation with examples from the rural areas: a queer farmer in Lira, a town in the northern region of Uganda, had her produce rejected by buyers who were aware of her sexual orientation, despite having been a regular supplier up until then. According to this organisation, it is often so in rural areas that once someone is identified or suspected to be queer, fellow villagers often boycott their goods.

Similarly, to be known as an LGBT person has an effect on people's possibility to benefit from various loan schemes: in the city of Mbale, a group of LBQ women running an economic empowerment project linked to climate change was denied access to credit when they applied for loans despite presenting all the required documentation. The organisation describes this denial as an effect of systemic bias hindering LGBT persons' participation in economic life.¹⁹⁷

5.7. Differentiated exposure to harassment

5.7.2. *Trans persons*

Transpersons are perceived as 'the face' of the LGBT community in Uganda¹⁹⁸ and several organisations opined that transpersons are most vulnerable and more likely to be harassed than other members of the LGBT community.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Rella Women's Foundation: 36

¹⁹⁴ EOC: 10

¹⁹⁵ A humanitarian international NGO: 8

¹⁹⁶ HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), pp. 56-57

¹⁹⁷ Rella Women's Foundation: 42

¹⁹⁸ UNAIDS: 9; Rella Women's Foundation: 10

¹⁹⁹ HRAPF: 23; Rella Women's Foundation: 10; UNAIDS: 9; Uganda Human Rights Commission: 13

One organisation explained that it is the openly nonconformity to traditional gender norms, which is perceived as a threat to moral values. Thus, it is the fact that a feminine gay man or a masculine lesbian woman stands out compared to other people that makes them vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and arrest.²⁰⁰ These observations are sustained by findings from Landinfo's recent report on LGBT persons in Uganda: people with a distinct non-conforming appearance in behaviour or way to dress are perceived as a challenge to local gender norms. They are likely to encounter problems.²⁰¹ Following this logic, the authorities often target transgender persons, masculine-presenting women, and feminine-presenting men more harshly because their gender expression visibly challenges traditional norms,²⁰² and because transgender persons are more easily identifiable compared to homosexual men and women.²⁰³

5.7.3. *Homosexual persons*

It is considered more scandalous to be a gay man than to be a lesbian woman;²⁰⁴ two organisations opined therefore that male homosexuals are more vulnerable and more likely to be arrested than female homosexuals.²⁰⁵ Generally, intimate relationships among women and among girls are more frequent and also more tolerated. If two males were to appear intimate in public, this would stand out compared to if females acted similarly.²⁰⁶

UNAIDS observed that the formal data shows that most reports of violations and of violence are made by homosexual men. This might be due to the fact that homosexual men stand out as the most empowered group within the LGBT community and therefore are more likely to have the strength and skills to report incidents of violence.²⁰⁷

Landinfo, however, notes that gay persons, who are straight-acting, are not protected from being harassed: as soon as they are outed via exposure in the media or by members of their family or others, they could also be subject to harassment.²⁰⁸

5.7.4. *People associated with LGBT persons*

One LBQ organisation emphasised that those persons who stand out as allies of the LGBT cause, for example an activist, a feminist or a person who says something positive about a gay person, can be targeted as a homosexual, regardless of sexual orientation, and may begin to lose social network as well as work relationships.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁰ Rella Women's Foundation: 10

²⁰¹ Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 28

²⁰² Rella Women's Foundation: 10

²⁰³ Uganda Human Rights Organisation: 13

²⁰⁴ Judge Singiza: 12

²⁰⁵ An international NGO: 9; Rella Women's Foundation: 9

²⁰⁶ A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 9

²⁰⁷ UNAIDS: 9

²⁰⁸ Landinfo (Norway), *Uganda; Forhold for LHBT-personer*, 10 April 2025, [url](#), p. 28

²⁰⁹ Rella Women's Foundation: 24

5.8. Urban / rural differences

5.8.2. *The villages*

The organisations had different views on whether it would be safer for an LGBT person to reside in a village or in a larger city.²¹⁰ One organisation emphasised that villages are small places where an LGBT person will stand out and therefore LGBT persons are more likely to be outed in the rural areas. The same organisation pointed out that most cases of so-called correctional rape has happened in villages. It is also more difficult for the existing LGBT organisations to mobilise a support system around LGBT persons in the rural areas.²¹¹

5.8.3. *The cities*

By contrast, another organisation opined that it would be safer to be an LGBT person in the rural areas of Uganda. In the rural areas, people are more confronted with problems and suffering in daily life rather than questions of same-sex relations. In the rural areas, there are so few LGBT persons that they would be effectively invisible. In Kampala, there would be more LGBT persons and therefore the members of the community are more likely to stand out and be visible.²¹² UNAIDS noted that there are more reports about harassment of civil society organisations in Kampala than in other parts of the country and explained that this high level of reporting may be due to the fact that it is easier to mobilise and to receive legal support and solidarity in the city. People in urban areas are more likely to report cases of violations than people in rural areas are because people in the cities are more empowered. This does not mean violations are not happening in the towns.²¹³

In Kampala, both gay men and lesbian women have fewer spaces where they can socialise and unwind.²¹⁴ LBQ women often attend ‘ladies’ night events’, which are generally considered safer environments for connection and enjoyment. While there are no officially gay-friendly pubs, there are informal gathering spots—commonly referred to as hangouts—where LGBT persons can meet discreetly. However, the same organisation found that due to increasing surveillance and targeted attacks, particularly through dating apps like Grindr, private gatherings remain the safest option.²¹⁵

5.9. Situation across religious communities

According to Rella Women’s Foundation, children who identify as LGBT face similarly high levels of stigma and rejection regardless of whether they are raised in Christian, Muslim, or traditional spiritual households. In all three contexts, deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs often frame non-heteronormative identities as immoral, unnatural, or shameful. These families may

²¹⁰ A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 26

²¹¹ Rella Women’s Foundation: 47-48

²¹² A humanitarian international NGO: 12

²¹³ UNAIDS: 11

²¹⁴ SMUG: 11; Rella Women’s Foundation: 50

²¹⁵ Rella Women’s Foundation: 50

attempt to "correct" a child's identity through coercive religious practices, traditional rituals, or forced conformity.²¹⁶

Protestant bishops of the Church of the Ugandan Christian churches have been vocal on the LGBT topic and issued statements in favour of the AHA. By contrast, the Catholic episcopal conference has refrained from making any statements in support of the AHA, 2023 in spite of many Catholics wishing the Church would do so.²¹⁷ In January 2023, a bishop and prominent figure in the Born-Again Pentecostal Church of Uganda publicly said that he would 'fight all forms of homosexuality' at the annual meeting of Pentecostal churches.²¹⁸

According to the LQB organisation, there are mosques in Jinja, a city in the Eastern region of Uganda, and in Arua, a town in the northwestern part of the country, that actively try to teach people 'how and what homosexuals look like' in order for people to know that 'if they see a person dressed like this, get them'. These mosques have raided a shelter in Jinja for homosexual men and made an activist relocate in Arua with accusations about her behaviour.²¹⁹ In February 2024, thousands of people participated in a so-called 'Muslims against homosexuality' protest march in Jinja.²²⁰

Between 2019 and 2021, the location of the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center was repeatedly targeted by local churches and mosques. During morning devotions, religious leaders often cited the presence of LGBT individuals at the centre as the cause of societal misfortunes such as theft and COVID-19. This rhetoric incited hostility and led to violent attacks against LBQ persons residing at the shelter. The organisation received threatening letters, was subjected to police investigations, and endured acts of harassment, including people throwing faeces and urine in polythene bags onto the premises. There were also multiple break-in attempts. Eventually, the centre was raided and forcibly shut down, making it impossible to continue operating in that area.²²¹

5.10. Shelters

There are shelters in Uganda but, according to one organisation, they are not safe for LGBT people: if the location of a shelter is revealed to the authorities this could alert the police and put the residents as well as the staff and volunteers at risk. The neighbours of a shelter may complain to the police and the consequence of such a report have been arrests and detention. Furthermore, the same organisation found that the existing shelters are often overcrowded and of low quality.²²²

²¹⁶ Rella Women's Foundation: 46

²¹⁷ A humanitarian international NGO: 11

²¹⁸ HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), pp. 23-24

²¹⁹ Rella Women's Foundation: 45

²²⁰ HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), p. 24

²²¹ Rella Women's Foundation: 44

²²² A human rights organisation: 20, 22

Rella Women's Foundation runs a rehabilitation centre, which is open to LBQ women who need assistance with health problems, homelessness, financial struggles, etc.²²³ The delegation did not visit this shelter and was therefore unable to describe the capacity of this facility.

5.11. Outings and harassment in the media

LGBT organisations and LGBT persons are often victims of online harassment.²²⁴

The LQB organisation had observed that when raids on queer people had happened, the raids seemed to have been well planned as they have often been accompanied by the media to capture the incident.²²⁵ Uganda Human Rights Commission stated that TikTok, Facebook and X (Twitter) are social media that have been used to out persons as gay many times. One infamous example of this was the effective campaign against the leader of SMUG.²²⁶

Online meeting culture has become very strong within the LGBT community: social media, especially dating apps, such as Grindr, are used for meeting new people and partners rather than meeting physically. Dating has become dangerous and one SMUG representative observed that there is evidence of some people disguising on dating apps as community members, seeking to meet someone. Once contact is established and they have met, they have kidnapped the person, taken their phone and searched for contacts on the phone. Then the police have called the names on the contact list and asked them for money or lured them into a fake romantic meeting and extorted them for money. One officer has blackmailed more than 10 people.²²⁷

However, the LQB organisation also observed that homosexuality has also become an accusation, which people may use on social media in private disputes as a means to get revenge, including in romantic relationships. If a named person is accused of being a homosexual on social media, regardless of whether the claim is true or false, this information can be exploited by the public and by anti-rights groups in Uganda. There are also cases where the two partners had a fight and then one of them went to the police and accused the other one of being homosexual as a form of revenge. Eventually, according to this organisation, it always gets both complainants arrested.²²⁸

Further to the above-mentioned accusations made in the private sphere, allegations about homosexuality are also used in political campaigns, particularly in local elections. Politicians

²²³ Rella Women's Foundation: 51

²²⁴ Rella Women's Foundation: 16; SMUG: 1; A civil liberties and human rights organisation: 21; a Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights: 20; Judge: Singiza: 15; HRW, *"They're Putting Our Lives at Risk" How Uganda's Anti-LGBT Climate Unleashes Abuse*, 2025, [url](#), pp. 42-44

²²⁵ Rella Women's Foundation: 16

²²⁶ Ugandan Human Rights Commission: 14

²²⁷ SMUG: 12

²²⁸ Rella Women's Foundation: 16-17

sometimes attempt to rally support by framing their opponents as supporters of LGBT causes.²²⁹

5.12. Social media as a space for activism

The examples of outings and anti-homosexual discourse on social media are frequent. However, one researcher, Luiz Henrique Amoedo, has found that the social media platforms also offer an important space for information, discussion and agency for LGBT persons in an otherwise very hostile environment. Amoedo has conducted online ethnographic research among homosexual men in Uganda and he shows that they use Facebook to express themselves as queer; to create lists of safe virtual friends; to encourage each other to report human rights abuses; and to maintain attention to their cause from national and international NGOs. Ugandan LGBT activists efficiently used social media to draw the attention to abuse by local police committed in November 2019 where 67 guests at a gay-friendly bar in Kampala had been arrested, detained and subjected to anal examinations. Then LGBT activist began to post pictures, live video and commentaries from a protest on Facebook.²³⁰

The practice of using social media as a means to capture agency was also observed by the LBQ organisation, which opined that they had ‘embraced’ the social media as a way to explore their authentic selves rather than being silenced.²³¹

In an environment of hostility towards civil society organisations, SMUG drew the attention to the fact that the effect of the AHA, 2023 had been different on national compared to international support and that online presence played a role in maintaining support: SMUG had lost many local partnerships right after the AHA, 2023 was adopted; by contrast, the international partners remained by their side and had not left after 2023.²³² In an academic study, it was emphasised that an online presence with posts on social media about human rights abuses in Uganda was critical in order to cultivate new supporters for Ugandan sexual and gender minorities’ rights issues.²³³

²²⁹ Judge Singiza: 16

²³⁰ Amoedo, L. H., *Kuchu Counterpublic on Facebook: Gay Men’s Challenge to Heterosexist Policies in Uganda*, 2021, [url](#), pp. 21-23, 28

²³¹ Rella Women’s Foundation: 16

²³² SMUG: 2

²³³ Amoedo, L. H., *Kuchu Counterpublic on Facebook: Gay Men’s Challenge to Heterosexist Policies in Uganda*, 2021, [url](#), p. 28

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Authorities' treatment of LGBT persons

1. Development since 2023 in arrests, detainments and prosecutions of LGBT persons, including court verdicts and the extent to which the authorities implement the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023.
 - Any differentiations in the situation for homosexual men, lesbians, bisexuals and transpersons.
2. Extent of negative consequences for persons, organisations or activists with knowledge of LGBT persons who have not reported a LGBT person to the authorities.
3. Search warrants and “police appeals” issued by the authorities, including those published in newspapers.
4. Possible protection by authorities for persons fearing harassment.
5. Avenues to seek redress offered by civil society organisations or authorities, including the existence and capacity of shelters for LGBT-persons
6. Discrimination of LGBT persons (access to health care services, education opportunities, employment at the formal job market or evictions).

Situation for LGBT persons in civil society

7. Development since 2023 in violence and abuse of LGBT persons.
8. Stigmatisation of LGBT persons in urban and rural areas, respectively.
 - Any differentiations in situation for homosexual men, lesbians, bisexuals and transpersons.
9. Existence of civil society groups supporting LGBT persons' rights, and their capacity to offer protection and support
10. Media outings of LGBT persons (e.g. in newspapers or on social media)

Annex 3: Meeting Minutes

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG)

28 April 2025

This Ugandan NGO advocates for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people with the purpose of supporting for sexual minorities Uganda. It is located in Kampala, Uganda. The NGO has been required by the Ministry of NGO to suspend hosting workshops along with the closing of the SMUG headquarters and the in-country website.

Changes in the situation for LGBT persons after AHA, 2023

1. SMUG Uganda has offered education on sexuality and advocated for health services for LGBTQ people since 2004 as movement, not as an NGO. SMUG is an umbrella organisation with contact to more than 100 other organisations and associations. Prior to the introduction of the AHA, 2023, there was already a high amount of disinformation and misinformation that circulated on the conventional media as well as on social media about civil society organisations working with LGBT issues. Therefore, the law enforcement forces were already alert on the activities of these organisations. In that process, SMUG was shut down in August 2022. SMUG Uganda was banned by the Uganda's National Bureau for Non-governmental Organisations for not having registered properly with the bureau even though SMUG identified as a movement and not as an NGO and therefore should not have been required to register. The police have investigated other organisations also working on LGBT people's human rights and the Bureau leaked a report with the names of organisations that were planned to be shut down. The authorities investigated SMUG and asked them for names of their partner organisations.
2. When the AHA was finally introduced in 2023 after years of preparation, SMUG lost many local partnerships and many national partners felt intimidated and reluctant to collaborate with them. By contrast, SMUG's international partners have not left after 2023.
3. The space for SMUG's activities has been considerably reduced. As of May 2025, SMUG continues to operate as a movement with partnerships rather than as NGO. SMUG has been denied registration and has appealed that decision to the Supreme Court. To continue the work as a movement is their way of showing resistance. Their website was hacked many times and SMUG got the impression that there was a search of names of their collaborators. Consequently, SMUG decided to shut down their Ugandan website as a safety measure.
4. SMUG offers litigation and supports coalition building as well advocacy for LGBT persons' rights. Their activities include training in how to report and to document violations via the internet. SMUG does not run shelters but SMUG refers people in need of protection to existing shelters and take them there so they can get mental

support by psychologists and food at the shelters. SMUG also visits LGBT persons in prisons and offers them legal support.

5. The demand for support by LGBT persons has increased since the introduction of the AHA; but the funding has decreased now that USAID funding has disappeared. After having provided immediate assistance such as first aid and counselling, SMUG looks into long-term perspectives for their users, e.g. mitigation with family, education plans, etc. Mitigation with families is rarely successful because of resistance in the family.
6. SMUG write statements and letter of supports to people who have a documented need of going abroad for protection. SMUG has seen examples of forged letters that were falsely stamped as SMUG letters. SMUG does not offer logistic support to persons wishing to go abroad.

Harassment of LGBT persons

7. The need for legal assistance has increased, well beyond the capacity of SMUG. SMUG has one lawyer who is willing to defend LGBT persons. Chapter Four and HRAPF also provide legal assistance to LGBT persons. When LGBT persons have been arrested, they tend to be very private and very much interested in keeping their arrest a secret because their arrest also becomes an outing of their homosexuality. Therefore, many of them do not wish to be represented by a lawyer with a connection to an LGBT organisation. Some LGBT persons who have been arrested have called SMUG to ask for advice about legal representation by a private lawyer under the condition that their request remained a secret. These people have preferred to pay the lawyer themselves.
8. The police have conducted illegal anal examinations on LGBT persons during their detainment in the belief that such examinations could prove whether the detained persons had had sex. SMUG then informed the police that these examinations are illegal and are a form of sexual violence and torture and also does not prove anything. Only after a phone call by a foreign ambassador to the chief police inspector did the police officers at this police station stop these examinations.
9. There is a community of LGBT persons in Uganda but it is not very big. Currently, 'the LGBT community' is constituted of people who are part of one or the other organisation or association. Before, people in community tended to just meet informally in bars or in hang-outs as friends. Those in the community will tell others about organisations such as SMUG that can provide them with assistance and that can help them complain about violations and abuse.

Social organisation

10. More and more people within the LGBTIQ organise themselves: more and more lesbian and queer women form their own organisations; men who have sex with men also form new organisations.
11. LGBT people are no longer able to meet freely at bars and pubs after the passing of the AHA. Gay friendly bars and restaurants that existed in Kampala have been shut down

by the police after 2023 and some have changed theme on the decision by the owners and are no longer gay friendly.

12. Online meeting culture is very strong now. Social media are used for meeting new people and partners rather than meeting physically. Dating apps, such as Grindr, has become very dangerous. There is evidence of some people disguising on dating apps as community members, seeking to meet someone. Once contact is established and they have met, they have kidnapped the person, taken their phone and searched for contacts on the phone. Then the police have called the names on the contact list and asked them for money or lured them into a fake romantic meeting and extorted them for money. One officer has blackmailed more than 10 people and has been reported by SMUG.

Hate speech

13. The level of discrimination has increased after the introduction of the AHA because of the high level of public attention to the matter. The level of hate speech in the public, including from prominent members of the Parliament was very high. Whenever a politician or a church leader says something hateful, there are many more cases of stigma and discrimination. Now the level of attention has decreased and stigma and discrimination has also dropped a bit.
14. Politicians have used anti-gay rhetoric to divert the attention of the public from other matters that they did not want to debate. Most of the Ugandan population is homophobic and respond quickly to this rhetoric. As Uganda moves towards election, it is very likely that LGBT-issues will be used as a trigger for the population and as an instrument to control the public debate
15. Self-stigmatisation is very widespread within the group of LGBT persons.

Access to social services

16. The original version of the Anti-Homosexuality law had a provision to discriminate people in health services based on their sexual orientation. The Minister of Health issued a statement forbidding discrimination in access to health care services. However, some health workers still discriminate gay people.
17. There has been a wish by the authorities to outlaw people who employ a gay person or who provide housing to gay persons. People are being denied services, are being evicted from their homes and lose their employment. There have been many cases about eviction and ending of work contracts.
18. This organisation has no documentation about discrimination in the education sector but has heard of many cases about pupils being expelled from schools. Because of the stigma related to homosexuality, any expulsion from school based on sexual orientation is done quietly.

Rella Women's Foundation, LBQ organisation

Kampala, 25 April 2025

1. There have been set-backs for the LGBTIQ community since the passing of the AHA, 2023. These set-backs are related to the way people relate to members of the LGBTIQ community and to the fact that many organisations have withdrawn their support to local LGBTIQ-associations. This particular organisation works with lesbian, bisexual and queer persons (LBQ) in Uganda. The organisation has experienced that many organisations withdrew from partnerships from service delivery to advocacy support after AHA, 2023.
2. People have also withdrawn from working with this organisation out of fear of being outed or of repercussions. Some have explained that they were afraid that if they worked with this organisation, their CVs would be damaged from any association with an LGBT organisation that has been accused of having 'promoted homosexuality' by the prime minister of the country. As a consequence, people who had previously wanted to collaborate, now feared that they would have trouble getting new jobs for staff and mainstream and government partnerships for civil society organisations.
3. There have been 419 evictions of LGBT persons and organisations from their leases. Landlords have received anonymous phone calls with threats of being exposed for housing homosexuals and some have been black mailed for renting offices or spaces for shelters to LGBT organisations. This particular organisation has been a victim of being evicted instantly after the AHA, 2023. They have further got landlords after the first or two of renting the space, come back to increase rent with reasons like they are risking a lot.
4. A right to privacy has become a myth as people have used their assumptions of who they are to misinform neighbours and by spreading rumours. This has caused fear to community members as rumours tend to escalate into raids and mobs that have violated the rights to privacy of LBQ persons and this has been fuelled by the passing of the AHA as neighbours even think they have a right to act as per their assumptions and rumours. At Rella WF, many times rumours have got the organisation investigated by police and local council chairpersons have paid visits to their premises with allegations of community concerns on what goes on within the premises.
5. There has been an increase in the number of LGBT persons who have been outed by their family members after the passing of the AHA, 2023. There is a clause in the law giving the duty to report acts of homosexuality the anti-rights movement used this clause to pressure families to chase their queer kids from home.

"A person who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a person has committed or intends to commit the offence of homosexuality or any other offence under this Act, shall report the matter to police for appropriate action."

While parents with queer children wrote a letter to the government on the law, their cry to protect their queer children fell on deaf ears. Others have been forced to openly say that their child is queer so more families can accept their children too than before when they chose 'to get rid of' their queer children. With time after the initial focus on the AHA, parents have become more tolerant or accepting of their queer children vis-à-vis their queer children accepting to go back home after all the violence faced and endured. Queer children are still facing many risks of losing contact with their families, their homes or even their access to education and parental guidance as 'everything is still happening simultaneously'. Some parents have further weaponised this clause:

"A child who is convicted of an offence under section 2 or 3 of this Act shall, instead of the punishment prescribed under the relevant section, be liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years."

as a way to force children into conversion therapy of face being arrested for many years.

6. As the 2026 elections are approaching, the members of this organisation predict that just like in previous election periods LGBT groups and persons will be scapegoated to show community interests and conservation of Uganda's traditions. It will be 'the worst time ever'. Such threats are backed by the continued push for regressive laws under the guise of "African family values" that threaten not only their communities but also the fundamental principles of human rights and dignity for all. More politicians have joined the anti-rights movement that is highly funded and organised making them use the phrase of 'we are going to get rid of the gays' to boost morale as if they have a point to prove and using this rhetoric to win more voters for their side.

Authorities' treatment of LGBT persons after the passing of the AHA

7. There have been no convictions referring to AHA, 2023 but there have been 184 arrests as documented in HRAPF's Report on Cases of violence & violations based on real or presumed SOGIE. Every time a person comes out after having been arrested, there is a set-back and a damaging experience for that person. Some arrests happen in public spaces putting the person's sexuality. This leaves them homeless and jobless as they will be evicted even before they come out of jail and will lose their jobs as a result of their sexualities. These interlocutors have experienced this damage themselves as they have been arrested. Some arrests happen in the open and the person's identity is damaged and she may very likely be evicted from her home and lose her job and her livelihood. This clause:

"A person who is convicted of the offence of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality shall be disqualified from employment in a child care institution or in any other institution which places him or her in a position of authority or

care of a child or a vulnerable person until such a time as a probation, social and welfare officer determines that the person is fully rehabilitated or no longer poses a danger to a child or a vulnerable person.”

further limits chances and makes it impossible to get jobs in some institutes, legally disqualifying anyone convicted under the Anti-Homosexuality Act from employment in roles involving children or vulnerable persons, reinforcing stigma and institutional exclusion based on sexual orientation.

8. The reason for the non-convictions on grounds of homosexuality with reference to AHA, 2023 may be that the charges are changed to something unrelated to homosexuality, e.g. the use of illegal drugs, an example is a case in 2019 when they raided a gay bar (Ram Bar) they arrested 125 people during the raid at Ram Bar and Restaurant on 10th November 2019 and convicted on grounds of “Public nuisance,” “unlawful assembly,” or “indecentry”. Assumptions or accusations related to sexual orientation or gender identity, often unsupported by evidence. Violations of Uganda’s anti-LGBTQI+ laws, which are selectively enforced and often used to justify harassment, extortion, or persecution, in order to cover the real grounds for the convictions. Another reason for non-convictions may be that in order to have a conviction under AHA, 2023 there must be evidence of the sexual act, which there rarely is as they rarely catch anybody in action. An example from December 2024 was shared, where the police came looking for a person that they accused of having influenced a girl who had left home. They accused this person of having stolen money from the family, took her to the police station and pressured her to confess that she had stolen the money so she could be sent to jail. In reality, this woman was accused of her sexuality and influencing their daughter but without ever producing any evidence of sexual practices.
9. There are examples of the police misusing and being misguided on sex consumables and using them as evidence to justify arrests and raids. When the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center was raided from Bukoto Ssebagala Road in 2022, things like a trans woman owning a shaving machine and a trans man wearing a binder, having magazines that tell queer stories, lubricant and condoms, in dormitories, were taken in as evidence and homosexual practices. Another example was shared from the beginning of 2024, when a group of queer women came together in Jinja. It was a mixture of feminine, masculine and gender fluid queer persons they, shared laughter and jokes and left before it got dark. Because the space was little some people slept in the car in the compound. The neighbour in the morning called the police and reported that there homosexual and drug activities happening in the home. She claimed that the queer women played loud music and made funny noises in the night. The police came and searched the house, the car and did not find anything to prove the allegations. They however still decided to take the queer women to the police to give their statements, here they were taken to meet the OC who questioned their reasons for being in Jinja and later on told the queer women to go park their things and leave the

premises she also told the queer women that the female neighbour had reported them for homosexuality. The person who had hosted us for the night was evicted that very day, and had to leave her home after their release.

10. Authorities often target transgender persons, masculine-presenting women, and feminine-presenting men more harshly because their gender expression visibly challenges traditional norms. In societies with rigid gender roles, such nonconformity is seen as a direct threat to cultural and moral values, making these individuals more vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and arrest than those who appear to conform outwardly, such as feminine gay men or masculine lesbian women.
11. People living with disabilities who are queer have also been targeted by the authorities because it seems inconceivable to the authorities that a person can be disabled and gay at the same time. In the AHA, 2023 it is stated that people with mental illness or who are living with disabilities cannot be gay or queer so if they are found to be in a homosexual relationship there are grounds for accusing the other party of aggravated homosexuality:

“ a person suffering from mental illness or any other form of disability against whom the offence of aggravated homosexuality has been committed; or (c) any other person against whom the offence of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality was committed- (i) by means of threats, force, fear of bodily harm, duress, undue influence, intimidation of any kind or through misrepresentation as to the nature of the act; or (ii) while unconscious or in an altered state of consciousness due to the influence of medicine, drugs, alcohol or any other substance that impaired his or her judgment;” People with disabilities are believed to be unable to consent to a same sex relationship.

One example of police abuse was mentioned: an older man who was disabled and used a wheelchair was in a relationship with a young man who was mentally unstable. When the police came to arrest them, one officer said ‘Now, who is more vulnerable than the other?’ Both were taken to detention and the older man was released and the boy detained even though the boy was sitting on top of the disabled man when they were found.

Possibility for seeking protection by the police

12. It is not possible for a queer person to show up at a police station and say that they fear violence of any kind or eviction from their landlords and disowned by their families and then to obtain protection and support from the police. Even though the police officer at duty may, at first, appear to listen to the complaining queer person, the police officer will soon exercise some form of persuasion or threat over the person asking them why they are the way they are and why they just do not conform. E.g. in cases where correctional rape is practiced by uncles and cousins as a form of conversion therapy,

victims cannot access safe abortion services and when they go to police, they seek to minimise the fear of the complainant or will seek to convince the complainant to keep whatever they fear a secret in order to control the situation, in brutal times they ask the victims if they are now changed and will have a man. In the Ram Bar case, to be released for the false arrested they were to pay 100,000 SHS per person, as the police officer asked for money in form of police bond to be released and they blackmailed us to take us to prison which they did and also inform their parents of the kind of place they were arrested from.

13. When this Rella WF's offices were raided in 2022, the policeman that accompanied us to collect their property to prevent community raids and mob justice, at came at a later point and suggested that the organisation should place him on the payroll so that the premises were not raided again; the police blackmailed the organisation saying the same way they got to us today will be the same way they get to us next time. Other organisations were mentioned to have the same program for police men but this was a form of persuasion.
14. There are several examples of 'correctional rape' committed by members where the local police have refused to intervene to protect the victim. In some instances, the police who hear about complaints about so-called correctional rape have replied 'So, did it help? Are you straight now?' to the complainant. There are also examples of 'correctional rape' committed in the policy custody where police officers have tried to blackmail a woman to have sex in order for her to be released early.
15. Refuge spaces such as homes, police stations, churches, and local councils (LCs) are often unsafe for queer Ugandans. There have been instances where young queer women were raped by relatives in their own family homes or colleagues in workplaces sexually harass colleagues who have been outed yet they remain silent for fear of losing their jobs. In churches, individuals seeking support and refuge have faced religious forms of conversion therapies after opening up about their struggles. When queer individuals report rape to the police, they are frequently dismissed or ignored. Police officers may treat such cases as "understandable" or even justified, framing them as "correctional rape a needed conversion therapy to make lesbians straight again." This same violence is commonly inflicted on sex workers, especially during night time arrests where they are told to shut up and bear it as it's their job either way.

Exposure on social media

16. When raids are happening on queer people, they are very well planned that most times they come with media to capture the raid. Society has used the media as a way to out and expose queer people. Before they were traumatised with the whole media thing

but today the community has embraced media as a way of showing off their authentic selves and not be silenced.

17. However, community members have also missed using social media too as a means to get revenge between partners after a romantic relationship they tend to expose their vulnerabilities online. This information is most times misused by the public and anti-rights groups in Uganda. There are also cases where the two partners had a fight and then one of them could go to the police and accuse the other one of being homosexual as a form of revenge. However, it always gets both of them arrested.
18. On December 19th, 2024, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja issued a directive during the parliamentary plenary sitting for the investigation and de-registration of Rella Women's Foundation (@RellaWFug), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) operating in Uganda. The directive followed concerns raised by Sarah Opendi, the Member of Parliament for Tororo District Women Representative (DWR), who highlighted alleged activities by the organisation promoting lesbianism in the country.
19. Opendi drew attention to a job advertisement posted on Rella Women's Foundation's social media platforms, which she claimed raised concerns about the organisation's activities and objectives. The directive from the Prime Minister aimed to address these allegations, leading to an investigation into the activities of Rella Women's Foundation and potential de-registration.
20. This decision has sparked widespread debate concerning the freedom of NGOs to operate without political or social interference, particularly those working on marginalised issues such as the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda. It highlights ongoing tensions regarding the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ+ individuals in the country, as well as the role of NGOs in advocating for such communities.
21. According to Clause 11(3) of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023, if Rella Women's Foundation is found guilty of promoting homosexuality, the organisation risks being fined UGX 1 billion (approximately USD 270,000) and may have its license cancelled or activities suspended for a period of 10 years. The law stipulates:

"A person promotes homosexuality where the person; (i) provides financial support, whether in kind or cash, to facilitate activities that encourage homosexuality or the observance or normalization of conduct prohibited under this Act. (ii) operates an organization which promotes or encourages homosexuality or the observance or normalization of conduct prohibited under this Act."
22. This legal provision adds a layer of risk to Rella Women's Foundation, amplifying concerns surrounding the organisation's ability to continue its operations in Uganda. The outcome of the investigation and subsequent developments remain uncertain;

however, they could have significant implications for the organisation's future and the broader rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in the country.

23. Rella Women's Foundation has previously shared stories of LBQ individuals to amplify their voices and lived experiences. While the organisation takes precautions before publishing such content, it has recognised that once a story is public, it becomes difficult to protect the person featured or control how the story is used—especially when it is shared or twisted in harmful ways. The organisation lacks the resources to counter misinformation or harmful narratives that may spread online. Members have also noted that even engaging positively with LGBT-related posts can lead to damaging rumours, with individuals being assumed to be homosexual simply for expressing support.
24. Many activists and feminists have been accused of being lesbians because, any person who says something positive about a gay person - in the sense of being an ally or an advocate – will be targeted as a homosexual and will begin to lose personal and work relationships on that account. An example of this was shared: A former Rella Staff had taken a client to Alivee Medical Service (a then queer friendly space) to get medical support, she was seen by the auntie who called that person's father and told her that her daughter is a lesbian because she has spotted her at a queer friendly clinic with a masculine representing person.

Access to basic social services, health

25. Before and after the AHA 2023, there are many examples of health workers with stigmatising attitudes towards queer persons and unmarried young women. There are many examples of inappropriate questions asked, which make it difficult for queer persons to give birth and start families. In Gulu, services were denied from a bisexual woman because she did not go with a man as her partner but a woman.
26. There are still health workers with hostile and stigmatising attitudes towards queer persons. One example was shared with a masculine presenting person who was pregnant. When they showed up at the hospital in labour, the health worker told them to go back and change clothes and put on a dress before they would be accepted in the hospital. Therefore, access to health services for any LBQ person depends very much on the attitudes of the individual health worker on duty.
27. Access to health care services were 'a little bit better' before 2023 as they were able to have conversations with health workers and share their lived realities and challenges to access health care service. However, when the law came it gave health workers reasons not to care. A circular by the Ministry of Health was shared re-enforcing the right to health care by all persons, which made it easier for queer persons to access medical care even though the owner of the facility has a right to refuse to offer treatment. However, transpersons in need of hormone therapy with testosterone fear to go to a health clinic now more than ever as they will be outed. Transpersons try to have

another person go and pick up the hormonal therapy medicines for them rather than show up in person which sometimes works but not always.

28. The Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) of 2023 severely impacted key populations (KP), including LGBTQ+ individuals, by limiting access to vital HIV services and driving people into hiding or out of the country. This regression threatens Uganda's progress in HIV prevention and care, weakens trust with global health partners, and endangers critical funding. Criminalizing same-sex behaviour has been linked to significantly higher HIV prevalence and lower rates of diagnosis and viral suppression. The AHA has also disrupted ethical health research, increased societal stigma, and pushed some into survival sex work, creating conditions that fuel rather than fight the HIV epidemic. Despite a partial court reversal in 2024, the damage to public health, research integrity, and community safety has been substantial and long-lasting.
29. In August 2023, the Ugandan Minister of Health issued a directive affirming that health services must remain accessible to all individuals without discrimination. However, this stance was soon contradicted by an October 2023 circular from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), which oversees research in the country. The circular mandated that researchers may be required to report criminal offenses—including those linked to sexual orientation—effectively waiving participant confidentiality. This contradiction placed health professionals and researchers in a difficult ethical position, torn between upholding the Hippocratic Oath to "do no harm" and complying with government demands that could endanger key populations.

Education

30. The AHA law says

"A child who is convicted of an offence under section 2 or 3 of this Act shall, instead of the punishment prescribed under the relevant section, be liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years."

The inclusion of children under the punitive provisions of the Anti-Homosexuality Act has severe implications for education in Uganda. When a child is convicted under sections 2 or 3 and sentenced to imprisonment for up to three years, **their** access to education is abruptly and often permanently disrupted. This incarceration not only removes them from the classroom but also stigmatises them, making reintegration into schools and society extremely difficult. Fear of criminalisation may also discourage children from attending school altogether if they are perceived as queer or gender non-conforming, further deepening educational inequality and exclusion. Such legal measures directly undermine children's right to education, personal development, and future opportunities.

31. Schools like Seroma Christian High School have informed parents and police of children who have been suspected of homosexual acts. Expelling them from school and

arresting them with no evidence whatsoever. These outings mainly occur in boarding schools. Boys that are too friendly and touchy are accused of being gay and girls who share beds have been accused of being lesbians.

32. When the AHA had just been passed, the Ugandan government's investigation into alleged LGBTQ activities in schools had fuelled fear and intensified discrimination against queer youth and educators. Prompted by public outcry and political pressure, these probes framed as a defence of morality legitimised homophobia and triggered moral panic, especially targeting students expressing non-conforming identities. Organisations like Rella WF continue to advocate for dignity for all and right to education for all despite the hostile climate. While some citizens demand protection of "traditional" family values, others recognise the need for acceptance in a changing world. However, this climate of suspicion and surveillance in educational spaces undermines both student safety and learning, making schools unsafe for LGBTQ youth and pushing them further into isolation and fear.
33. In April 2025, a school informed the parents of a young girl that their daughter was "associating with students exhibiting antisocial behaviour" a veiled reference to her friendship with queer peers. In an effort to protect its reputation, the school targeted students perceived to be homosexual, fearing that their presence might deter other families. In another recent incident, a group of close school girls drew the suspicion of a teacher, who reported them to the police. As a result, five of the girls were arrested on allegations of homosexuality, despite a lack of any concrete evidence of same-sex conduct.
34. These incidents have a chilling effect on education and student well-being. They foster fear, discrimination, and stigma within schools, making queer students feel unsafe, isolated, and unwelcome. The threat of expulsion or arrest discourages students from forming supportive friendships, expressing themselves, or even attending school altogether. Such actions undermine the right to education and violate children's rights, leading to long-term psychological harm and disrupting academic progress for those targeted.
35. According to Rella Women's Foundation, the long-term impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Act and its enforcement within educational institutions is likely to result in a growing number of young people being permanently cut off from formal education. Many queer students are being expelled during their teenage years solely based on suspicions or accusations related to their sexual orientation or gender expression. These expulsions often occur without proper evidence and deny these young people the opportunity to sit for crucial national exams, such as the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) or Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). As a

result, they are left without the qualifications required for pursuing higher education or accessing vocational training. This not only limits their future economic opportunities and employment prospects but also entrenches cycles of poverty, exclusion, and marginalisation. The psychological toll of such systemic rejection combined with the loss of academic and social support can be devastating, pushing already vulnerable youth further to the margins of society with little hope for recovery or redress.

Employment

36. The AHA states

"Disqualification from employment upon conviction. A person who is convicted of the offence of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality shall be disqualified from employment in a child care institution or in any other institution which places him or her in a position of authority or care of a child or a vulnerable person until such a time as a probation, social and welfare officer determines that the person is fully rehabilitated or no longer poses a danger to a child or a vulnerable person. 13. Disclosure of sexual offences record (1) A person convicted of an offence under this Act shall disclose the conviction when applying for employment in a child care institution or any other institution which places him or her in a position of authority or care of a child or other vulnerable person. (2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years and the employment of that person shall terminate."

These provisions have far-reaching effects on individuals convicted under the law. Once convicted of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality, a person is barred from working in any child care institution or institution involving vulnerable persons—essentially excluding them from a wide range of employment sectors, including education, healthcare, and social work. This restriction persists indefinitely until a state-appointed officer deems them “rehabilitated”, a subjective and stigmatising process that can reinforce the perception of LGBTQ+ identity as deviant or criminal. Moreover, the mandatory disclosure of past convictions when applying for such jobs further entrenches stigma and discrimination. Even after serving their sentence, individuals face continuous exclusion and loss of livelihood. Failure to disclose a conviction leads to further criminal charges and imprisonment, compounding the legal and social penalties. These regulations ensure that affected individuals remain trapped in cycles of unemployment, marginalisation, and poverty, with few paths to reintegration or dignity.

37. The risk of being outed is so high, that an LGBT-person’s chance of obtaining a job is minimal from changing dress code to conforming to expectations such as bearing

sexual harassment. This adds to the vulnerability of having been expelled from school at an earlier stage of life thereby having fewer chances of qualifying for jobs. If an LGBT person has a job in the formal sector, they will be unlikely to be promoted on equal terms with colleagues. Instead, they will be given lower assignments under mindering their potential and pushing them to the verge to quit.

38. Therefore, Rella Women's Foundation encourages LBQ individuals to pursue entrepreneurship and hands-on skills as a path to financial independence due to widespread discrimination in formal employment. The risk of being outed often leads to harassment, job loss, or workplace abuse. Many have already faced school expulsions, limiting their qualifications. Even when employed, they are often denied promotions or given demeaning tasks. Starting their own businesses allows LGBTQ+ persons to create safer, more empowering work environments and reduce reliance on discriminatory systems.
39. The enactment of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2023 has significantly impeded the ability of LGBTQ+ individuals to register businesses, access financial services, and participate in trade unions. The law's criminalisation of same-sex relationships and the promotion of homosexuality has fostered a climate of fear and discrimination, leading many LGBTQ+ persons to go into hiding.
40. This hostile environment has made it exceedingly difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals to engage in formal economic activities. Financial institutions, wary of potential legal repercussions and societal backlash, often deny loans and other services to those suspected of being LGBTQ+. Similarly, trade unions and professional associations may exclude LGBTQ+ members to avoid contravening the law or attracting negative attention.
41. The compounded effect of these barriers is the economic marginalisation of LGBTQ+ individuals, limiting their opportunities for financial independence and social mobility. Without access to essential economic resources and support networks, many are forced into informal or precarious employment situations, further exacerbating their vulnerability.
42. An example is a queer farmer in Lira whose produce was rejected by buyers solely because of her sexual orientation, despite being a regular supplier. In rural areas, once someone is identified or suspected to be queer, fellow villagers often boycott their goods. Similarly, in Mbale, a group of LBQ women running an economic empowerment project linked to climate change faced discrimination when applying for loans. Despite presenting all the required documentation, they were denied access to credit

underscoring how systemic bias hinders LGBTQ+ persons from participating fully in economic life.

Situation across religious affiliations

43. Between 2019 and 2021, the location of the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center was repeatedly targeted by local churches and mosques. During morning devotions, religious leaders often cited the presence of queer individuals at the centre as the cause of societal misfortunes such as theft and COVID-19. This rhetoric incited hostility and led to violent attacks against LBQ persons residing at the shelter. The organisation received threatening letters, was subjected to police investigations, and endured acts of harassment, including people throwing faeces and urine in polythene bags onto the premises. There were also multiple break-in attempts. Eventually, the centre was raided and forcibly shut down, making it impossible to continue operating in that area.
44. There are more examples of preaching against same-sex relations and in favour of traditional family norms in Churches stating that a child growing up in for example a family with two fathers would not be loved. Homophobia is disguised as education and guidance but is in reality often a way to break the person.
45. In Jinja and Arua there are mosques that actively try to teach people 'how and what homosexuals look like' in order for people to know that 'if they see a person dressed like this, get them'. These mosques have raided a GBQ shelter in Jinja and made an activist relocate in Arua with accusations that she is recruiting.
46. According to Rella Women's Foundation, children who identify as LGBTQ+ face similarly high levels of stigma and rejection regardless of whether they are raised in Christian, Muslim, or traditional spiritual households. In all three contexts, deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs often frame non-heteronormative identities as immoral, unnatural, or shameful. As a result, queer children frequently grow up in environments where they are subjected to emotional neglect, physical punishment, or spiritual condemnation. These families may attempt to "correct" a child's identity through coercive religious practices, traditional rituals, or forced conformity. The consistent thread across these faith backgrounds is the lack of acceptance and the pressure to suppress or hide one's true self, which can severely impact a child's mental health, self-esteem, and overall development. This widespread and cross-cutting rejection leaves many LGBTQ+ youth with few safe spaces to seek support, particularly within their own families.

Rural/urban differences

47. It is more likely for an LGBT person to be outed quickly in a village because it is much smaller and any person becomes more visible there. In 2024, a transwoman who did not know she was a transwoman was beaten and undressed, she was supported by HRI

to access safe housing and medical care. Most correctional rape cases happen in villages.

48. While Rella Women's Foundation continues to explore safer methods of protecting LBQ persons, they have observed that organising or housing multiple queer women in a rural or village setting often draws unwanted attention. In such close-knit communities, deviations from social norms are easily noticed. When several women are seen living together—especially without male partners—locals may become suspicious or accusatory, assuming they are in same-sex relationships. This visibility increases the risk of gossip, discrimination, or even targeted violence. As a result, efforts meant to provide safety and community can unintentionally expose LBQ persons to greater scrutiny and danger, making rural organising more complex and riskier than in more anonymous urban environments.
49. In the city, there is a sense that “you create your own village where you live,” which can offer a form of protection and anonymity for LBQ persons. Urban life allows individuals to form chosen families and support networks and resources within their neighbourhoods, often without attracting the same level of scrutiny as in rural settings. People in cities tend to be preoccupied with their own lives and daily struggles, which can reduce direct interference or judgment. However, cities are not without their risks. The dense populations mean that once someone is outed or targeted, the impact can be widespread and fast-moving. High levels of policing, surveillance, and general insecurity in some urban areas also make them unsafe, particularly for marginalised groups. Therefore, while cities offer a degree of freedom and self-determined community building, they also come with their own complex set of dangers.
50. In Kampala, both GBQ and LBQ individuals have limited but valued spaces where they can socialise and unwind. LBQ women often attend ladies' night events, which are generally considered safer environments for connection and enjoyment. While there are no officially gay-friendly pubs, there are informal gathering spots—commonly referred to as hangouts—where LGBTQ+ persons can meet discreetly. However, due to increasing surveillance and targeted attacks, particularly through dating apps like Grindr, private gatherings remain the safest option. The presence of LGBTQ+-affirming organisations like Rella Women's Foundation and secret events helps foster a sense of community, but caution is still essential given the persistent risks.

Shelters

51. Rella Women's Foundation is changing the narrative from silence to voice, from isolation to community, from stigma to power. Their work dares to dream of a future where every LBQ human has the tools to heal, grow, make money, the strength to rise, and the freedom to define their own destiny. Rella Women's Foundation creates social, economic, and legal empowerment of LBQ women through their House of Hope, Hebwa, Hana Matata, and Movement Building Programs where they have created an

impact in over 200 displaced LBQ women's life by creating a safe housing option, they enhanced entrepreneurship and soft skills of 300 LBQ women creating opportunity for economic empowerment (90% of beneficiaries have expressed receiving financial independence, access to basic needs and a stable housing status after), and they created advocacy for inclusiveness reaching over 100 institutions, leaders and community support groups to support the rights of LBQ women especially in Uganda.

52. Rella Women's Foundation provides urgent crisis response and emergency support to LBQ individuals in distress. Prior to the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA), the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center operated with a more open-door policy—individuals in need could quickly access shelter and support by simply dropping by for a conversation. However, in response to heightened risks and security concerns, the intake process has since become more stringent. Those seeking refuge are now required to present a national ID or provide trusted references before being admitted. These measures were introduced after instances where individuals attempted to infiltrate the shelter with the intent to harm the organisation and its members.
53. Once a person is accepted into the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center, they are initially given a few days to rest and regain stability in a safe environment. They can stay for up to six months, during which time they receive holistic support aimed at restoring their independence and well-being. This includes training in financial literacy to equip them with the skills necessary to manage their finances and build a sustainable livelihood. Many residents also participate in family reconciliation programs to mend strained relationships and rebuild support networks. Additionally, basic vocational skills are taught to enhance their employability and open pathways to formal or self-employment. Recognizing the deep impact of trauma and discrimination, the centre provides mental health counselling and therapy, helping residents heal emotionally and psychologically. With a capacity of 15 to 25 individuals, the centre plays a vital role in empowering LBQ persons to break free from cycles of homelessness, unemployment, and mental health challenges. Through specialised projects like the Empower Project, Village of Care, Home Volunteer Hosting, and Safe Living initiatives, the centre offers a comprehensive framework combining skill-building, crisis response, family mediation, advocacy, and community support—all aimed at fostering resilience, independence, and dignity for LBQ persons. They have created an impact in over 200 displaced LBQ women's life by creating a safe housing option, they enhanced entrepreneurship and soft skills of 300 LBQ women creating opportunity for economic empowerment (90 % of beneficiaries have expressed receiving financial independence, access to basic needs and a stable housing status after), and they created advocacy for inclusiveness reaching over 100 institutions, leaders and community support groups to support the rights of LBQ women especially in Uganda.

54. Many shelters have closed after the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) of 2023 because the law intensified scrutiny and risks associated with providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals. Increased government surveillance, fear of legal repercussions, and threats from hostile communities made it difficult for shelters to operate openly and safely. Some shelters faced raids, harassment, or were forced to shut down to protect both their residents and staff. Additionally, stricter security measures and the need for careful vetting of residents increased operational costs and logistical challenges, which many shelters could not sustain. As a result, the total number of functioning shelters in Uganda has become uncertain, with many operating underground or at reduced capacity to avoid detection and maintain safety.
55. Rella Women's Foundation is developing a sustainability plan to build Rellatopia, a community hub featuring the Rella House of Hope Rehabilitation Center, a comprehensive facility for LBQ persons in Mpigi District. This hub will include a Vocational Institute offering training in technology, business, and skilled trades; a Medical Centre providing health care services to LBQ individuals and the surrounding community; and a Recreational & Capacity-Building Facility designed for events, team-building activities, and empowerment workshops.

Ugandan Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

Kampala, 29 April 2025

Mandate of the Commission

1. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament Cap 7 to effectuate Article 32(3) and Article 32 (4) of the Constitution of Uganda. The Equal Opportunities Commission is mandated to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons on the ground of sex, age, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, health status, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability, and take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them, and to provide for other related matters.²³⁴

Anatomy of cases

2. The overwhelming majority (around 90 %) of the complaints cases submitted to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) concern issues of land rights and land grabbing. Around 3 % of the cases concern LGBT issues. This proportion of LGBT cases compared to the total number of submitted cases has remained stable since before the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023. However, it is the perception of the EOC that there is a considerable number of individuals who are facing discrimination on LGBT grounds and out of fear, fail to report issues of discrimination and marginalization on their sexual orientation.
3. As an example of the types of cases the EOC received related to LGBT issues, they mentioned a case where a person, who identified as a man, was not allowed to register as such, when the person was trying to enrol in a college course because the person was born with female genitalia.
4. In such cases, the EOC mediates between the two parties concerned in the complaints in order to facilitate a safe environment for complaints to be lodged and processed and eventually resolved. Furthermore, the EOC protects the identity of the plaintiff and ensures confidentiality.

EOC and the Anti-Homosexuality Act

5. The EOC stated that the AHA – along with the implications of it – is a very sensitive matter. It is the view of the EOC that while the legal framework must satisfy the majority, it must not marginalise certain parts of the population with threats of very disproportional penalties that includes death penalty.
6. When the bill was being drafted in Parliament, the EOC intervened. The EOC stated that in their view, the law is poorly constructed because it is very difficult to enforce by

²³⁴ Equal Opportunities Commission, *What Is EOC?*, n.d., [url](#)

the authorities on one hand and, on the other hand, it creates fear in the LGBT community, which then drives them to operate underground. Also, policing bedroom issues among consenting adults whose numbers are not known makes enforcement of the law very difficult, if not impossible.

7. The AHA is currently pending in the Supreme Court and the EOC has been part of the research team, which has put forward recommendations. These recommendations have centred on the diversity, equality and inclusiveness of the legal framework in Uganda in general and the AHA in particular.

Access to health care

8. The EOC has also done an audit focusing on access to health care services, including malaria and TB medicines as well as access to antiretroviral for HIV-positive patients, including LGBT persons. In this audit, EOC found out that a considerable part of the health care workers was not aware of the statement from the Minister of Health, which stated that every Ugandan has a right to health care treatment without any discrimination. As such, health workers had denied LGBT persons treatment because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This lack of awareness about equal rights to health care is more prevalent in rural areas of the country, but EOC are aware of such incidents from every part of the country.
9. The EOC has heard of one incident where products perceived to be used by LGBT persons were placed by the authorities at a health care facility, only for the authorities to detain the people who came by and collected the materials. These cases were from registered in 2024 from across the country health reports.

Access to employment

10. Access to employment makes up to largest part of the complaints the EOC receives. The EOC stated that if a person is suspected as an LGBT person, it will likely lead to them being fired from their job. Furthermore, this will in all likelihood exclude the person from the job market going forward since it is associated with so much stigma.

Access to education

11. The EOC has not received any cases related to education, but they are aware of schools which are quick to expel students rumoured to be LGBT or even affiliated with the LGBT cause. The schools are afraid to be labelled as an LGBT friendly school, and parents and the expelled student are too ashamed and do not want to draw more attention to the matter, so they mostly stay silent. This behaviour is mostly prevalent at private and boarding schools across the country.

Evictions

12. EOC has received complaints of evictions and has succeeded on behalf of the plaintiff. The eviction notice is typically 30 days and, in some cases, the EOC has been able to

muster a legal defence in time for the person put on eviction notice to be able to stay in their home. This is because the property owner almost never has any concrete evidence but merely acts on rumours and hearsay because they do not want to be known as someone who houses LGBT persons. However, this requires the plaintiff to be rather well versed in their legal rights because landlords are known to give only two days' notice.

13. The EOC believes that there is a considerable number of evictions which are not reported to the Commission.
14. The law allows EOC to urgently make interventions in special cases, and these tend to be more successful and the more prolonged cases. On the immediate interventions, the mediations can be rather informal with disputing parties.

Lack of reach

15. EOC only has offices in Kampala, and this means that it is difficult for people in the countryside to reach EOC, and it is difficult for the EOC to intervene and do research on cases far away from Kampala.
16. The EOC is mandated to have satellite offices in four regions across the country, but the lack of funding prevents them from effectively operating. This puts the marginalised and discriminated groups of persons at great disadvantage to seek redress in case of violations of rights.

A civil liberties and human rights organisation

Kampala, 28 April 2025

Civil liberties and human rights organisation is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organisation dedicated to protecting civil liberties and promoting human rights for all in Uganda.

Incorporated in 2013 under Ugandan law, this organisation functions as a robust and coordinated mechanism for legal responses to civil liberties violations. The organisation provides legal interventions through representation, litigation, and counsel, focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society.

Authorities' Treatment of LGBT Persons

1. Since the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 (AHA), authorities have responded inconsistently. Immediately following the law's passage, anti-rights movements mobilised persistent protests demanding enforcement, pressuring law enforcement and regulatory bodies. This led to a surge in profiling and targeting of civil society organisations providing critical health and legal services to the LGBT community and arrests and detentions of individuals, such as an incident in Fort Portal where a man was arrested for attempted homosexuality merely because another man entered his home. This case illustrates the overly strict interpretation and enforcement of the law at that time.
2. The post-AHA period also saw increases in extortion, blackmail, and forced evictions. The law's wording and the prevailing sentiment toward LGBT individuals have made it easy to exploit mere accusations. The organisation has documented cases where non-LGBT persons were extorted or arrested based solely on accusations.
3. The spike in evictions can be attributed both to the now-defunct duty-to-report clause and to the emboldenment of local communities acting against LGBT persons.
4. In one Kampala hotel case, a man stole electronics from a hotel manager after drugging him. Despite clear evidence of theft, the accused claimed the manager was gay, shifting the police investigation toward the manager. After confirming that both men had spent the night together, both were imprisoned.
5. During the parliamentary debate on the AHA, only one MP opposed the bill and was promptly labelled a "homosexualist" by other MPs, including the bill's sponsor, the Speaker. The term implies complicity in the LGBT cause. This illustrates the intensity of public agitation at the time. Although such agitation has since reduced, fear remains. International pressure, including the World Bank's announcement to suspend

infrastructure projects in Uganda, contributed to the drop in arrests and abuses, but the legal risks persist because the law is still in force.

6. Civil society has pushed back, notably rights organisations. Eight mothers of LGBT individuals published an open letter urging President Museveni to end dehumanising rhetoric. The organisation notes that Museveni appeared to be touched and surprised by this letter.²³⁵
7. There have been no convictions under the AHA or under the Penal Code's "unnatural offenses" provision inherited from British colonial law for cases that involve consenting adults. Reasons for the absence of convictions include: no accused individuals have pleaded guilty (in part due to legal support from civil society), and the difficulty in proving same-sex activity involving consenting adults. As a result, the law is nearly impossible to prosecute, and yet deeply harmful.
8. The lack of evidence has led authorities to use torture, especially through use of forced anal / rectum examinations, which the police consider as proof despite medical consensus to the contrary. In 2015, the organisation's research revealed that such examinations are routinely used when LGBT suspicion arises. This practice increased with post-AHA arrests.
9. Even a prominent pastor with presidential access underwent such an examination after being accused by a rival Pentecostal faction.

Police Warrants

10. Police do not publish search warrants when suspects cannot be located.

"Safe Houses"

11. Informal, unmarked detention centres known as "safe houses" are used by the police, primarily for torture. The organisation is unaware of LGBT persons being held there; instead, political opposition figures are targeted. These facilities exist in Kampala, Wakiso, and on islands in Lake Victoria and are more common around election periods.
12. Safe houses have also been used to extort wealthy Ugandans in the guise of fighting crime and protecting the ruling government's interests.

AHA and the Legal System

13. Although there have been no convictions, several AHA-related cases have gone to court. The organisation has provided legal aid and posted bail. Bail amounts are often

²³⁵ Daily Monitor, *Open Letter to President Museveni from mothers of LGBTQ+ individuals*, 28 March 2023, [url](#)

inflated in LGBT cases due to moral outrage, though it is difficult to quantify this difference precisely.

14. Most AHA cases in court have been dismissed due to lack of evidence, although some are ongoing.
15. In one case of aggravated homosexuality, the organisation provided legal assistance. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) intervened, directing that charges be changed from aggravated homosexuality to unnatural offenses under the Penal Code in an apparent attempt to ease pressure against the regressive provisions of the AHA.
16. Individuals accused under LGBT-related charges tend to spend longer in remand prison due to societal stigma, despite this being unlawful.
17. Legal representation in LGBT cases is difficult, as many lawyers fear being labelled LGBT themselves. The organisation's attorneys have faced harassment and threats, including toward their families. Some have required personal protection, and there have been near-mob incidents outside court hearings.
18. Because AHA vaguely criminalises promotion of homosexuality, it constrains funding for organisations offering legal or health services to LGBT individuals. Distributing items like lubricants can jeopardise registration status. The organisation has documented over 50 cases where civil society organisations or leaders were accused of promoting homosexuality, leading to deregistration or defunding threats. This fosters widespread self-censorship.
19. The organisation considers LGBT-related cases the most dangerous for rights organisations to handle, compared to environmental or land rights cases, due to prevailing stigma.

Criminal Cause Lists and Outings

20. The government is required to publish lists of convicted individuals under the AHA, but since no one has been convicted, no names have appeared. There are no such lists for accused persons.
21. However, the media frequently reports arrests of LGBT individuals. The police conduct "media parades," revealing suspects and charges to the press, including photographing them. These reports quickly circulate on social media and are devastating due to LGBT stigma. Print media also engages in such outings to boost sales.
22. There is no legal mechanism to clear one's name after such accusations. In Ugandan public opinion, there is no presumption of innocence. Attempts to contest accusations often reinforce public belief in guilt due to low trust in the judiciary and widespread corruption.

23. Section 15 of the AHA criminalises false sexual allegations, but the organisation believes it was intended to protect elites and will not be enforced for ordinary citizens.

Hierarchy of Vulnerability

24. According to the organisation, gay men are the most vulnerable within the LGBT community, followed by transgender individuals. Lesbians are also at risk, though to a lesser degree. Vulnerability increases when individuals visibly deviate from traditional gender norms.
25. Ugandans generally do not distinguish between LGBTQI+ identities, instead referring to all as "homosexuals" or "the gays."
26. It is difficult to determine whether rural or urban areas are more dangerous for LGBT individuals, as risk levels vary greatly depending on individual circumstances.

Uganda Human Rights Commission

30 April 2025

The adoption of the AHA, 2023

1. The AHA, 2023 has been overwhelmingly supported by all members of Parliament. There was only one member of Parliament who opposed the bill but this member lost the fight for changing the bill and chose to devote his attention to work, unsuccessfully, for changing the level of punishments for homosexuality; punishments that this member argued were excessive. After its adoption, the law has been reviewed by the Constitutional Court, which decided that the law in itself was not in opposition to the Constitution but that certain sections should be struck out (sections 3 (2) c; 9; 11 (2) d and 14). Now the law is subject to one final appeal in the Supreme Court.
2. The law was presented in Parliament as a matter of urgency and the Ugandan Human Rights Commission (UHRC) was not invited to give comments before the passing of the law. The members of the Commission were only able to observe the debate via the media and was not granted audience with the President before the law was passed.
3. Given that the law is now in place, the Ugandan Human Rights Commission (UHRC) finds that the law is redundant and has not been enforced in the sense that there have been no convictions. The Ugandan Director of Public Prosecution has not sanctioned any prosecutions under neither the Penal Code nor the AHA on LGBT grounds.
4. There has been arrests of LGBT persons. UHRC stated that LGBTQI persons, like all individuals, may be arrested on reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence. However, sexual orientation, in itself, is not a lawful ground for arrest.

Stigma and discrimination

5. When police have arrested an LGBT person, the police officers have threatened to blackmail the person in order to extort money from them. UHRC has only received a few isolated reports alleging blackmail or extortion by police officers targeting suspected LGBTQI persons. These reports are not widespread and should be presented as such.
6. Many LGBTIQ persons have internalised negative beliefs about themselves and the level of self-stigmatisation is very high. These self-perceptions have turned into depression in many cases and other forms of mental health challenges.

Response by the Commission

7. The Commission has established an LGBTI desk to be able to work directly with and for LGBTI persons as a direct response to the AHA, 2023. It is the first of its kind in Africa. That caused resentment from particular groups in society, including from religious groups. The members of this unit have met with gay men, lesbian women, trans persons and intersex persons. It is possible to lodge a complaint about a human rights violation to this desk. The desk has a staff of two persons in the Kampala office. 11

complaints have been received by the Kampala desk as of April 2025, the majority of those complaints about lack of access to health care services. One complainant – a trans person – required surgery following an assault. Another complainant had been arrested and had been denied legal representation. Five others had asked to be taken to safe places abroad (in the US or Canada, which the Commission was unable to accommodate). Other Ugandans had contacted the Human Rights Commission in Kenya asking for protection and these cases had been referred back to the Ugandan Commission. Finally, some had contacted the commission asking for counselling because they had been chased out by their parents or kicked out of school.

8. The Commission collaborates with civil society organisations, in particular with HRAPF. This collaboration is done within the law, in the Ugandan context and in line with government policy and in harmony with international human rights standards. This is an exercise of finding a fine balance.
9. The Commission has conducted training in human rights with the uniformed forces such as the police. The effect of this training on for example the police officers varies. The messages about human rights of LGBT persons are perceived on a background of already very well-established social norms and values. Therefore, training about sensitive issues such as LGBT persons' human rights may very well need to start with a process of 'de-learning' of old ideas followed by contemplation and the sharing of examples which relate to the situation of the individual: for example, some families have known at least one gay person who has been a victim of abuse. However, it should be noted that LGBT persons in Uganda make up a relatively small proportion of the general population. The training should relate to such experience and bring in the community for the participants to change attitudes and understand that some persons are born different but that they have an equal right to be tolerated by the police. The police officers may be very uncertain about where to put a transwoman because they are confused about the gender of the person.
10. There have been cases of police officers who in previous years had undressed and then filmed detained LGBT, in particular transwomen, persons for public viewing, in spite of all rights to privacy. That practice has not been common within the recent years.
11. Anal examinations are illegal but have been carried out by police officers in an attempt to find evidence of penetration. The training on human rights has focused on this illegal practice and this has contributed to a reduction of this practice. A statement has been issued to stop this practice.
12. Members of the LGBT community are in general reluctant to seek protection from the police for any form of violations because they fear secondary victimisation.
13. Transgender persons are the most vulnerable because they are easily identifiable compared to gay men or lesbian women. There are NGOs such as HRAPF and DefendDefenders that can provide assistance.

Outings on social media

UGANDA: SITUATION OF LGBT PERSONS

14. Social media is an issue and there is a great need for 'responsible media'. TikTok, Facebook and Twitter are social media that have been used to out persons as gay many times. One infamous example of this was the effective campaign against the leader of the NGO Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG).

A humanitarian international NGO

Kampala, 24 April 2025

This NGO works with vulnerable groups in Uganda and the interlocutor has several years of experience with civil society organisations on the ground in Uganda.

Authorities' treatment of LGBT persons after the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023

1. Right after the adoption of the AHA, there was much attention on the topic of LGBT in Uganda and a number of LGBT persons were arrested and presented in court. However, after some time the topic of LGBT 'went silent' in the Ugandan population. The law is active and can be used by law enforcing authorities but the implementation has not been pushed. However, there might have been arrests unknown to the public. The act has been approved and the law, which is discriminatory, may be used by the authorities. Traditionally and culturally for Uganda, the AHA is acceptable to the population as they general population has other more immediate problems to overcome.
2. The AHA has been pushed by external factors; primarily US based Christian protestant groups, which have financed the lobbying for this law and this external pressure has created a high level of international attention and positions against the law. Because of this high level of international attention, the media coverage of any arrest was relatively high meaning that some information about the authorities' treatment of LGBT persons would trickle down to civil society organisations. Currently, there is very limited media coverage of authorities' treatment of LGBT persons in the media and it has become 'a non-issue' for everybody who is not directly affected. A typical Ugandan person has other problems to deal with in their daily lives such as accessing basic social services, getting their children to school and overcoming challenges of corruption in the country.
3. The president of Uganda has stated that the AHA, 2023 was put in place also 'to safeguard children' from abuse and paedophilia. The president applies a discourse of social protection as a motivation for the passing of the AHA. Abuse of children exists, including in schools, independently of homosexuality, and such abuse is already criminalised in the penal code.
4. There was 'an issue', which caused concern among international NGOs in terms of service delivery. The concern arose around paragraph 14, which stipulated that if a health service provider encounters any LGTBQ+ person, the service provider must inform the authorities. They could then initiate a process leading to the arrest of the person. This obligation would obviously put the provider in a dilemma between the client's right to privacy, data and confidentiality on the one hand and the law on the other hand. If the service provider failed to provide, there could be consequences for the organisation. Initially, it was misunderstood among service providers that they

were not allowed to provide services to an LGBT person but that they should refer the person directly to the authorities. It has later been clarified that it is the right of any person to access health services but that the organisation must not 'promote homosexuality', defined as 'activities that are "pro-LGBTIQ+"'. That could be understood as advocacy for LGBTIQ+, which would put the organisation at risk.

5. The Chief Justice of the High Court has deemed paragraph 14 ('promotion of homosexuality') unconstitutional. However, that decision 'went silent'. Therefore, it is unclear whether this decision will have any effect, as the law in itself has not been issued in a new version. The AHA, 2023 has so many grey areas that it can be used by politicians in any situation of political tensions against civil society organisations to shut them down. The grey areas of the law can also be used against organisations that align with parties of the opposition to freeze their accounts, eventually shut them down.

Access to social services

6. In principle, all vulnerable groups including LGBT persons have the right to access health care services. A single man coming to a health clinic in need of treatment for a sexually transmitted infection would be treated and so would a transgender person.
7. One Anglican school had put up a sign, right after the passing of the AHA, saying 'no LGBT-students allowed'.
8. In terms of employment, the international NGOs have been affected because in order to avoid ambiguity a reformulation of the job announcements was necessary. Organisations used to include a non-discriminatory clause in the vacancy notices where candidates of all background and sexual orientations were encouraged to apply for the job. The organisations had been advised by their lawyers to remove that language and replace with a vaguer inclusivity clause.
9. This interlocutor did not have information about possible evictions from housing.
10. There are hotels who welcome persons of same sex sharing a room. However, right after the passing of the AHA, there were media reports about people who had informed the police about two females shared a room for the night. The room was stormed, sex toys were allegedly found in the room, the two guests were arrested and so was the hotel manager. The media reports revolved around the so-called scandalous nature of 'the act' of same sex relations.

Differences across religious communities

11. Protestant bishops of the Church of the Ugandan Christian churches have been vocal on the LGBT-topic and issued statements in favour of the AHA. However, the Catholic episcopal conference did not make any statements in support of the AHA, 2023 and has refused to do so even though many Ugandan Catholics have called for such a statement.

Urban / rural differences

12. It would be safer to be an LGBT person in the rural areas. In the rural areas people are more confronted with problems and suffering in daily life rather than questions of same sex relations. Also, in the rural areas there would be so few LGBT persons that they would be invisible. In Kampala, there would be more LGBT-persons and therefore the members of the community are more likely to stand out and be visible.
13. In Kampala, in the past there were places – such as ‘hang-outs’ where LGBT people go for drinks. There are less pubs and bars that are visibly ‘gay friendly’ compared to the situation 20 years ago. There is an evident element of fear related to being a gay person as it has become a taboo. A parent with a gay daughter, who accepts her orientation, would most likely try to leave Uganda out of fear for the safety of their child.

LGBT civil society organisations

14. There are some associations (minor organisations) that remain explicitly pro-LGBTQI even now. They are tolerated by the authorities but if they are perceived to go against the law by seeking to organise demonstrations or gay prides, they will encounter trouble and be repressed.

LGBT-terminology

15. In common Ugandan terminology ‘homo’ (man-man or female-female) is used to refer to any member of the LGBTIQ+ community. There is no widespread knowledge of the existence of bisexuals or transgender persons. In local languages, the English term ‘homo’ is commonly used.
16. In society, gay women are perceived to be more scandalous than gay men.
17. Holding hands in the public or in the office among men is culturally acceptable and normal as a sign of friendship and trust (‘I’m with you’), as it is among women. Sharing a room for two men and two women can also be acceptable if there are no sexual connotations.

A human rights organisation

Kampala, 25 April 2025

Restrictive legislation

1. In May 2023, the Anti-Homosexuality Act was passed. It provides for the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality” and criminalises the “promotion of homosexuality.” Same-sex consensual sex for men and women is illegal, as is same-sex marriage. The Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 (AHA 2023) criminalises same-sex sexual acts, imposing the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality” and up to 20 years in prison for “promotion of homosexuality.” Since 2023, violations of the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons committed by state actors as well as by family and other people, have increased. 2023 was a dangerous year for LGBTIQ+ persons. Since then, the level of public attention and effect related to LGBTIQ+ issues has somewhat decreased.
2. On 3 April 2024, the Constitutional Court of Uganda upheld the provisions of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act. While the court struck down sections that restricted healthcare access for LGBTIQ+ people, criminalised renting premises to LGBTIQ+ persons, and created an obligation to report alleged acts of homosexuality (in defiance of international law), it ruled that the Act does not violate fundamental rights to equality, non-discrimination, privacy, freedom of expression, or the right to work. An appeal is pending before the Supreme Court and there have been no convictions under the Act. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has instructed that no person should be charged under the AHA, 2023 without her express consent. However, the police still harass LGBTIQ+ persons and may use the Penal Code to prosecute LGBTIQ+ persons.
3. Same-sex sexual acts are also proscribed under the Penal Code Act as “unnatural offences” and “indecent practices” and are punishable by up to life imprisonment.
 - Section 145 on “unnatural offences” states: “Any person who—(a) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; (b) has carnal knowledge of an animal; or (c) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature—commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life.”
 - Section 146 states: “Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in section 145 commits a felony and is liable to imprisonment for seven years.”
 - Section 148 on “indecent practices” states: “Any person who, whether in public or in private, commits any act of gross indecency with another person, or procures another person to commit such an act, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act, commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for seven years.”

UGANDA: SITUATION OF LGBT PERSONS

- There are six social groups that are particularly vulnerable to harassment in Uganda and those group are (in no particular order):
 - LGBTIQ+ -rights HRDs
 - People involved in promotion of environmental rights
 - Women who are human right defenders
 - Journalists who cover corruption and elections
 - Election observers and people who are in other ways directly involved in the elections
 - Human rights defenders working in situations of armed conflict
- 4. The law does not recognise gender change. Trans and gender-diverse persons have been indirectly criminalised under offences such as “personation” (false representation), public indecency, and through the criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct. The law allows intersex persons (referred to in legislation as “hermaphrodites”) to register a change of sex.
- 5. Article 36 of the Registration of Persons Act (2015) allows adults to change their name by deed poll. Applicants must publish their intention in the Official Gazette at least one week before submitting the required forms to the registry. Although technically open to all, the law is not trans-specific, and trans and gender-diverse persons face a heightened risk of targeting by authorities under the prevailing legal environment.
- 6. Uganda does not have legislation allowing legal gender recognition. However, Article 38 of the Registration of Persons Act (2015) provides that a “child born a hermaphrodite [sic]” who undergoes surgery to change from female to male or vice versa, and is certified by a medical doctor, may be assigned a new gender marker.
- 7. LGBTIQ+ people are occasionally arrested and prosecuted under anti- LGBTIQ+ laws, but convictions and imprisonment are rare. Individuals are also arrested under other penal provisions, often without charges. Police have carried out mass arrests at pride events, LGBTIQ+-friendly bars, and homeless shelters, often on dubious grounds. Some detainees have been subjected to anal examinations, considered a form of cruel, degrading, and inhuman treatment amounting to torture.
- 8. HRAPF recorded 49 cases in March 2025, up from 41 in February 2025. Of these, 16 cases involved direct targeting of individuals due to their perceived LGBTIQ+ identity, amounting to 32.6% of all cases in March 2025. The number of victims in March was 19, identical to February.
- 9. Among the 16 targeted cases in March, six involved physical violence or threats thereof, five involved evictions, three involved arrests due to sexuality-related allegations, and two involved other forms of violence and discrimination against suspected LGBTIQ+ persons.

Civic space

10. Civil society groups supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and other sexual and gender minorities (LGBTIQ+) are not permitted to operate. Organisations advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights risk suspension and investigation by state authorities.
11. Such organisations face police raids, harassment, eviction, attacks on staff and premises, and denial of registration. Under the AHA 2023, NGO activities on behalf of LGBTIQ+ persons are criminalised as “promotion of homosexuality.”

Risk

12. LGBTIQ+ persons are at risk of persecution and serious harm from both state and non-state actors.
13. State officials, religious leaders, and media figures have employed homophobic rhetoric, reinforcing anti- LGBTIQ+ sentiment.
14. On 16 March 2023, Voice of America reported that President Yoweri Museveni described gay people as “deviants” and called for medical investigations into homosexuality. He was quoted saying: “Western countries should stop wasting the time of humanity by trying to impose their practices on other people.”
15. Societal homophobia and transphobia remain widespread. A 2021/22 Afrobarometer survey found that 94 % of Ugandans would “somewhat dislike” or “strongly dislike” having a homosexual neighbour, and 94–95 % would report a friend, colleague, or family member to the police if they were engaged in a same-sex relationship.
16. Amnesty International reports a rise in online attacks against LGBTIQ+ persons, linked to the passage of AHA 2023. The law has created a climate of impunity, forcing individuals and organisations to alter how they express themselves online. Offline stigma, violence, and discrimination are mirrored and amplified in digital spaces.

Protection

17. Persons with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm by the state are unlikely to obtain protection.
18. Even where protection is theoretically possible, it is often ineffective in practice, as same-sex conduct is criminalised and the state is generally unwilling to protect LGBTIQ+ persons.

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19. LGBTIQ+ people often distrust law enforcement and avoid seeking help due to fear of arrest or reprisal. Where complaints are made, police are frequently reported not to act.
20. Shelters in Uganda are of low quality, they have degraded and they are furthermore not particularly safe for people who stay there. Those people who work there, as volunteers or as staff, are also exposed to risk and there are several who have been arrested and taken to prison.

Internal relocation

20. Internal relocation is unlikely to be a viable option. The state exercises effective control throughout Uganda, and societal homophobia and transphobia are widespread, manifesting in violence and discrimination across the country.

Impact of reduced funding for CSOs working on LGBT rights

21. The withdrawal of USAID funding to civil society organisations in Uganda — particularly those working on LGBTIQ+ rights — has severely impacted protection and advocacy. Organisations such as UKPC were forced to suspend services, while HRAPF and Chapter Four temporarily scaled back legal support. Although some funding has since resumed, access to life-saving services remains limited for many community members.

Shelters

22. The human rights organisation generally regards shelters for LGBT persons as unsafe. They are easily identified by the authorities and therefore, people living in such shelters are in a very vulnerable position and often have to move location frequently because the location of the shelter is revealed, e.g. by neighbours complaining. Furthermore, the shelters are often very basic and overcrowded as well as lacking basic facilities.

Interventions

23. Between January 2023 and the present, this human rights organisation has provided 390 grants to human rights defenders (HRDs) and at-risk organisations working on LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda. Since January 2025 alone, 22 of these grants were awarded. Beneficiaries include trans persons, who are particularly vulnerable due to their identity.

UNAIDS

Kampala, 29 April 2025

1. Immediately after the promulgation of the AHA, 2023 quite a lot of violence against members of the LGBTIQ community occurred. Quite a number stopped going to the health clinics for their antiretroviral medicine or for other preventive services including access to PreP ('Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis'), lubricants and condoms. However, soon after the adoption of the AHA, the Ministry of Health issued a directive for "Provision of services to all people without discrimination" (Circular ADM:180/01) which made it clear that the AHA should not result in discrimination of key populations, including LGBTIQ people, from receiving services. The Ministry seemed to understand the negative impact of the AHA on the HIV/AIDS response.
2. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) on 25 August 2023 also issued Circular No.18/2023 that tried to bring guidance on how cases under the AHA would be brought to justice, in particular stating that to bring any case to court under the AHA it required authorisation from the DPP to carry the case forward to prosecution. It ensured that all charges preferred under the AHA are first submitted to the ODPP headquarters with a written legal opinion for further guidance before any decision to charge is made. The ODPP issued another Circular, No.2/2024, on 4 April 2024, following the decision of the Constitutional Court in the brought against the AHA.²³⁶ The ODPP Circular No.2/2024 slightly modified the terms of the original Circular in so far as it allowed Regional Officers to handle cases related to the AHA, as opposed to having them forwarded to ODPP headquarters.
3. There continues to be reports of harassment, evictions and arrests of LGBTIQ persons. One organisation collects monthly data on violations against the LGBTI community. Reading the data, we see a slight decrease in violations after the Constitutional Court decision.
4. In deciding on a petition brought challenging the constitutionality of the AHA, the Constitutional Court in April 2024 upheld the Act, stating it justifiably limited rights to equality and non-discrimination, citing the Constitution's lack of protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and the need to uphold public morals, societal values, and family protection. It found no violations of rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, or economic rights, including the right to work.
5. However, the Court found partial violations of privacy and health rights, particularly in view of the mandatory reporting requirements (Section 14) and criminalisation of terminal illness transmission (Section 3(2)(c)), which could include unintentional HIV transmission. Sections 9 and 11(2)(d), prohibiting "the use of premises for homosexual activities", were deemed unconstitutional for violating the rights to mental health and adequate housing. **However, the rest of the AHA remains enforceable.**

²³⁶ Hon. Fox Odoi-Oywelowo & 21 Others v Attorney General & 3 Others (Consolidated Constitutional Petitions Nos. 14, 15, 16 and 85 of 2023) [2024] UGCC 10 (3 April 2024).

6. The number of evictions with reference to the AHA has, for example, begun to stabilise compared to the situation immediately after the passing of the AHA where the rhetoric against LGBTIQ persons was very hostile and aggressive. In other words, there has been a slight stabilisation in the violations against LGBTIQ persons in Uganda. However, the development community is conscious of the fragility of those gains. With the shift in US funding and the strong US position in defence of LGBTIQ persons' rights there is a renewed sense of fear and caution in the LGBTIQ community.

Access to health services

7. The elimination of the 'duty to report section' has offered some protection for organisations to provide health services to LGBTIQ persons. Before that, some health workers feared that if they treated a homosexual person without reporting that person to the police, they would be on the wrong side of the law because they would be seen as 'promoting homosexuality'. There is a slight shift in this and we are seeing a bit more willingness to engage with KPs by health workers who are employed at health centres and hospitals. In addition, the data shows a steady return to care by LGBTIQ persons. While peers and volunteers have steadily been able to return to providing services, do not benefit from the same level of formal and recognised protection and they are more exposed to arbitrary hostility and accusations. According to reports from LGBT associations, peer educators are still victims of threats and attacks within the communities. Peer educators and volunteers form an important part of the outreach programmes. They are very concerned with safety and security.
8. There is very limited access to health services for anyone in remand custody. Access to health care services is slightly better for persons who have received a conviction.

Diversity within LGBTIQ

9. Transpersons tend to be 'the face' of the LGBTIQ community. They are the most visible and the most vulnerable group. According to members of the transgender networks, they bear the brunt of the violations. However, the formal data shows that most reports of violations and of violence are made by homosexual men. Homosexual men stand out as the most empowered group within the LGBTIQ community.

Space for civil society organisations

10. Any NGO needs to register for it to be allowed to operate legally in Uganda. The state tends to be very 'particular' in registering organisations that clearly are working on LGBTIQ issues. There is a famous case of the Sexual Minorities in Uganda (SMUG) organisation that was refused registration because of its work. In response, other organisations generally remain vague in the description of their activities if they fear they might be considered as being in conflict with the AHA. They describe their organisations as working with vulnerable groups without being explicit about who the

vulnerable groups are. There seem to have been no new cases of deregistration of NGOs because of the AHA.

11. At the promulgation of the AHA many drop-in centres (DiCs) that provided LGBTIQ friendly services were either directly targeted or closed after the passing of the AHA for safety and security reasons. There have been reports of raiding of NGO offices and DiCs in Kampala. There are more reports about harassment of civil society organisations in Kampala than in other parts of the country because it is easier to mobilise 'to make noise' and raise awareness about police raids on NGOs in Kampala and receive legal support and solidarity. People in urban areas are more empowered and better equipped; therefore, they are more likely to report cases of violations than people in rural areas are. This does not mean violations are not happening in the districts.

Enactment of stigma and discrimination

12. Stigma manifests itself in obvious ways, for example in community meetings where LGBT people are not allowed to speak because they are simply not regarded as a part of the community. Landlords may exercise their right to choose between different possible tenants and disregard LGBT persons on the basis of their dislike of them.
13. The most commonly used term to designate any member of the LGBTIQ community is 'homo'.

The closure of USAID

14. As of May 2025, the stock of antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) to treat HIV/AIDS is sufficient to cover the needs 'for now'. Reports say the country has enough stocks to the end of the year. However, the distribution chain is disrupted so that ARVs do not reach the clinics and so we are hearing some reports of stock-outs at facility level. It appears the information about the closure of USAID also made some clients go to the pharmacies and get a high amount of medicines, which may also contribute to shortages at facility level. It is reported that there are sufficient stocks of condoms but the number of lubricants and of Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PreP) is scarce.

Data

15. The data for assessing the development in LGBT related incidences is not robust. Care should be taken when analysing the existing data and translate them into trends and conclusions. To what extent is there a fatigue of reporting violations in the community? How strict are the case definitions of, for example, evictions? What is the capacity of the organisations that collect data to verify the data? These are factors that should be taken into consideration when analysing data.

International NGO

28 April 2025

This international NGO provides health services to the general population, including to vulnerable groups, across Uganda. The NGO offers family planning services, screen for and treat sexually transmitted infections, provide counselling and testing for HIV along-side other sexual and reproductive health services at a number of health clinics and drop-by centres across the country. The NGO trains health workers and peer educators so that they can provide quality, integrated reproductive health services to all clients, including to LGBT-persons.

Effects of the passing of AHA, 2023

1. The AHA, 2023 has had a very strong negative impact on sexual and reproductive health in Uganda in terms of reduced access to health services especially the Key population groups. The AHA has also affected this particular NGO negatively as it has reduced the partnerships with other NGOs for this organisation. Access to sexual and reproductive health services has been reduced for vulnerable groups, such as LGBT persons, because of increased levels of fear and stigma among both the clients and the providers. The fact that it is unclear to which the extent the law is implemented and interpreted after the passing of the AHA, 2023 is also a major factor.
2. There has been reduced number of LGBT-clients at the drop-in centres for reproductive and sexual health services and the reason given is fear. A number of drop-in centres have now closed. The closure of these specific centres, with health workers trained in receiving LGBT-clients- will be particularly negative for LGBT-persons access to reproductive and sexual health services. Their access to key commodities such as lubricants will be particularly limited in the near future.
3. Before 2023, vulnerable groups, such as LGBT persons, already experienced stigma and fear when they tried to access sexual and reproductive health services. The fear and stigma extend to the Peer educators whose landlords have pushed them rented house.
4. Health care providers in public and private facilities including the IPPF clinic have been trained in treating all patients equally without discrimination regardless of their sexual orientation and the health workers have also received mentoring so in general health workers now have an open mind towards all clients, including those from vulnerable groups such as LGBT-persons. However, after the passing of the AHA, 2023, a generalised fear of being 'on the wrong side of the law' has grown among health workers. The fear has been nurtured by the fact that it is unclear how the law should be interpreted. However, there is a hope for a positive development after the Ministry of Health has issued guidance stating the health care providers must offer services to all clients without any form of discrimination. This statement has helped. The effect of this guidance has been that the initial tension has been eased a bit.
5. There are widespread signs of homophobic attitudes in the Uganda population. These attitudes also affect those health workers, including peer educators that provide services to homosexuals. In addition to that, there is also widespread self-

stigmatisation among homosexuals in Uganda. One example was shared of a peer educator who had been victim of stigmatisation. This particular peer educator was a regular churchgoer and also a member of the choir and of the band. In his church, rumours began about him practicing 'behaviours that were not good for the community' based on the fact that he worked for this particular organisation. He was then asked to no longer sing in choir, to not play any instruments in the church band and he was asked not to show up at the compound again out of fear of him grooming young people in the church. He left this particular town to come to Kampala, but after a while, he returned because life in Kampala turned out not to be any easier than in the rural areas.

6. This INGO has feared having their registration withdrawn because of their service delivery to LGBT-clients as well as to other key population such as sex workers and truck drivers. They have received legal counselling advising them to work on the language in their project documents and Memorandum of Understanding so that the language was neutral in terms of which target groups they receive. As of now, the term 'key populations' cover all categories of 'sensitive' clients.
7. At one clinic, the community alerted the authorities that they suspected that the health workers 'promoted homosexuality' because it was evident that the clinic handed out lubricants and under the first anti-homosexuality law that was the same as promoting homosexuality. Then the district health official intervened and declared that lubricants may be used by other people than homosexuals.
8. This INGO has noted that their health centres received an increasing number of anonymous phone calls where the organisation was asked, which kind of sexual health services they provide. The health workers fear that the anonymous caller may be someone seeking to lure them into saying that they offer illegal activities. The managers have told the health workers to invite any anonymous caller to show up in person at the clinic and then offer them the choice of services in the privacy at the clinic.

Most vulnerable groups among the LGBTIQ+

9. Gay men are the most stigmatised group among the LGBTIQ+ persons. People are very judgmental towards men who dress in a certain non-forming way or who appear to transgress traditional social norms. Gay men are more frequently arrested than lesbian women are. According to the health workers on the ground, the lesbian women are the most vulnerable group because they are exposed to multiple risks and underserved in terms of services.
10. Transgender persons are not very forward coming, their needs are not well documented and therefore not accounted for. Therefore, their exposure to risk and harassment remains unknown. The number of transgender persons is unknown but there is a community of transgender persons in the cities.

Conditions for civil society organisations

11. Some civil society organisations working with LGBT persons have been ‘deregistered’ by the authorities. Before 2023, the authorities published a list of organisations that worked with ‘the promotion of homosexuality’ and thereby forced to shut down. If these organisations made efforts to reappear, they had to come back with a new name and a new focus of their activities in order to be in alignment with AHA, 2023. Obviously, the deregistrations impact on the continuity of health services to vulnerable groups.
12. The peer educators working with LGBT persons have reported an increased amount of emotional and psychological stress and need for mental health support including counselling, psycho-social support, livelihood and economic empowerment. They reported that the community around them is ‘harsh’ and that they constantly fear that their landlords will chase them out. This pressure wears the health workers down and cases of mental break down have occurred.
13. The shut-down of USAID and the loss of their important funding to sexual and reproductive health services is another major factor that will affect service delivery negatively. The reduced funding has affected procurement and access to essential commodities such as lubricants, pads, medicines that are critical to ensuring quality medical services to key populations.

A Danish NGO operating in Uganda and Danish Institute for Human Rights

Kampala, 24. April 2025

Changes in the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023

1. In April 2024, the Constitutional Court struck down sections 3 (2) c; 9; 11 (2) d and 14 of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. As such, these sections are currently not in effect. However, the government has not published a revised version of the law and a group of NGOs have appealed the decision. Many organisations and individuals are not aware of this change and they are therefore acting in accordance with AHA in its original state. It is unclear when a verdict is expected, but the sources assessed that it could be after the elections in 2026.

Authorities' attitudes towards LGBT persons

2. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda stated that they had not noticed a significant difference in the authorities' attitudes towards LGBT persons since the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2023. Around the time of the passing of the bill, there was a lot of attention on the topic of LGBT persons and homosexuality in general and there was a lot of debating in the Parliament and the public space. This intensive debate put the LGBT community at greater risk because both the general public and the police took an increased interest and that caused a spike in harassment. After the bill passed into law, the scrutiny from the general public fell.
3. Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) stated that their knowledge of the topic primarily stems from generally publicly available information, including civil society organisations working on LGBT rights. DIHR agreed that there was an increased focus on LGBT issues around the time of debating and passing of the bill, and that this attention has somewhat died down since then. No convictions have been reported and people who were arrested with reference to the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 are stilling awaiting their day on court, and the press is less concerned with the issue.
4. However, the Ugandan Human Rights Commission had reported that they had received 12 complaints concerning LGBT matters from December 2024 to March 2025. Furthermore, according to data compiled by the Ugandan Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), the number of cases of human rights abuses of LGBT persons had not reduced since the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. Rather, LGBT persons are charged under the penal code with offenses similar to offenses listed in the Anti-Homosexuality Act. According to DIHR, the director of public persecutions had issued a statement, directing that all cases involving offenses under the Anti-Homosexuality Act, should be forwarded to her office for advice before the trial itself. This process is very cumbersome, and would involve long periods of detention of the suspect. Instead, charging people under the penal code with for example '*unnatural offenses*' circumvents this process.

5. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda echoed this assessment and elaborated that while the attention around the topic in the media and general public sphere has somewhat died down since the aftermath of the passing of the AHA, the crackdown and harassment of the LGBT community still continues from authorities and the public. The authorities use other provisions than the AHA to target LGBT persons. The actions against LGBT persons do not receive as much coverage as previous.
6. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda further stated that activists have argued that the AHA should be nullified since it is redundant in the sense that the penal code clearly already offers the legal framework to take action against grooming of children and even to go against the LGBT community. During the time when AHA was challenged in court, LGBT activists argued that the AHA should be nullified all together. This claim was ignored.
7. The co-existence of two different legal frameworks for prosecution of LGBT persons makes it more challenging to track and monitor the extent of the crackdown from the authorities. Moreover, the representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda stated that the somewhat vague wording of the legal framework can mean that in some cases the offense is unclear just as it is unclear whether the detained person has actually been detained on the grounds of LGBT offenses, or not.
8. DIHR stated that the judiciary has published lists of pending cases, but elaborated that these lists do not contain information on the charges, just the names of the charged person. As such, one would have to be very familiar with the circumstances of the specific case to use this information. Other organisations compile data of the number of arrests, detention and cases against LGBT persons.
9. Both sources stated that they did not possess concrete information as to whether the authorities target specific LGBT profiles more than others, but they both agreed that generally male homosexual are more vulnerable than female homosexuals because generally, intimate relationships among women and among girls are more frequent and more tolerated in the first place. If two males were to appear intimate in public, this would stand out compared to if females acted similarly.
10. Given the current legal framework and attitude from the authorities, very little “evidence” is needed for people to report alleged LGBT persons or for authorities to act. Even two people of the same gender entering the same house and staying for the night in the same room can be enough for people or the police to act.
11. Furthermore, DIHR stated that people also use the existing legal framework and attitudes from the authorities to report people within their local community (e.g. neighbours or even family members) if they have a conflict with them. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda also knows of cases of extortion of people where they were told to pay a high amount of money not to be accused of being homosexual. This pattern was especially prevalent around the time of the passing of AHA. If a person is accused of being homosexual, this has devastating consequences for the accused. It is almost impossible for an accused to shake off these accusations, and they are therefore very stigmatised in their communities and even

within their families. Furthermore, the treatment by the police can be very rough. It is difficult to legally prove that a person is homosexual as the evidence that is required should be that two persons of the same sex are caught in 'the act'. There were therefore very low conviction rates, even before AHA 2023. And so far, no convictions have been made with reference to AHA, 2023. However, in the court of public opinion, once you have been accused of being homosexual it is almost impossible to be acquitted, and this has very severe impact on the person. Being accused could lead to eviction from the person's home and to expulsion from the neighbourhood or village. Sometimes police investigations can be dragged out by bribing and this leads the accused to go through even more hardship.

12. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda stated that the treatment of an accused by the police depends very much on the individual police officer. A police officer with a conservative mind-set without any training in human rights will likely be much rougher than a more open-minded officer who is aware of human rights.

Professional Standards Unit

13. The Ugandan Police Force has a Professional Standards Unit, which handles cases of misconducted by the police, but DIHR is not aware of any cases related to the PSU concerning LGBT persons. It is not clear whether LGBT persons can trust the police enough to report cases of misconduct to the PSU.
14. Around the time when the AHA was being challenged in the Constitutional Court, there was a rumour that the President's Office had sent out an instruction to the police to go slow with the arrestment of LGBT persons due to the international backlash the AHA received. The sources have not been able to confirm this rumour.

Torture houses

15. The sources did not know, whether LGBT persons had been taken to so-called torture houses (unmarked detention facilities, sometimes referred to as *safe houses*) since the passing of AHA. However, both sources confirmed the existence of such facilities. It is known, however, that political prisoners – especially from the opposition - have been taken to the torture houses. In general, it is difficult to know what goes on inside these facilities and who are taken there, given their clandestine nature.

Correctional rape

16. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda stated that correctional rape of female LGBT persons does take place in Uganda. There is a rather common perception among the general population and the police that if LGBT persons would only experience heterosexual sex, then they would be converted, and therefore some believe that they are doing the LGBT person a favour. Others rape a LGBT person as a form of punishment.

17. In the rural parts, the local community or even the family can be the organiser of a gang rape as a way of converting the homosexual, if it becomes known that the person in question is in fact homosexual. The representative has worked with such cases in a previous position. These cases are rarely reported to the police since the victim is so ashamed and stigmatised that they would rather avoid any form of attention to them and their sexuality than to prosecute the perpetrators. Family members will likely pressure the raped woman into not reporting the case. Both sources stated that this behaviour is not common.

LGBT persons seeking protection

18. The representative of a Danish NGO operating in Uganda does not know of cases where LGBT persons themselves ask the police for protection e.g. against harassing members of the local community. But they do know of cases where LGBT persons have complained about violent behaviour or harassment to supporting organisations, which then have reached out to the police and asked them to provide protection. This has been somewhat common, but it very much depends on the mind set and personality of the officer. Some will help and some will not. This means that an LGBT person is very vulnerable if they were to ask the police for protection.

Access to legal advice

19. Both sources agreed that LGBT persons have access to lawyers in court.

Outings

20. Public outings, e.g. on social media, are a huge problem for LGBT or alleged LGBT persons. There was a case with a popular radio host on the northern part of Uganda who was arrested because he had been accused of being homosexual by an individual on social media. He was then arrested by the police and they did a press release with a video and photo of the host stating that he had been arrested on LGBT grounds. This was then circulated on social media.
21. In general, outings mostly occur in social media. However, as in the afore mentioned case, police will sometimes call a press conference when they have arrested a suspect of LGBT persons and will also lead to the outing. This is not common for LGBT persons.
22. If a person is outed this way, the damage is already done regardless of whether they later can prove that they are not homosexual. Such an outing may lead to the expulsion of the individual from their community and even family. Furthermore, an outing could lead to the LGBT person to lose their job and get evicted.

Access to health services

23. According to DIHR, health is the only area where the authorities have been somewhat open to LGBT persons through the lens of HIV/AIDS prevention. DIHR representative attended a workshop hosted by the Ministry of Health before he joined DIHR, where

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they openly talked about the vulnerability of LGBT persons. This workshop was before AHA, and he assessed that such a workshop would not take place in the same manner now because of AHA.

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

Kampala, 24 April 2025

HRAPF is a non-governmental human rights advocacy organisation whose mission is to promote the respect and protection of the human rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations through enhanced access to justice, research and advocacy, legal and human rights awareness, capacity building, and strategic partnerships.

Access to Legal Assistance

1. It is difficult to access a lawyer or other legal assistance as an LGBT person, or in cases concerning LGBT rights, because many lawyers are unwilling to take on such cases for fear of being stigmatised or accused of being LGBT themselves or promoters of homosexuality. HRAPF has itself been accused of promoting LGBT rights in Uganda because it has taken on such cases. When the Anti Homosexuality Act, 2023 was being debated in Parliament, the NGO Bureau the authority charged with regulation of NGOs in Uganda, leaked a report with a list of organisations suspected to be involved in the promotion of LGBTIQ activities in the country.

Changes to the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023

2. In April 2024, the Constitutional Court nullified the following four provisions of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA):
 - **§ 3 (2) (c):** Criminalising the unintentional transmission of a terminal illness, including HIV providing for the death penalty upon conviction.
 - **§ 9:** Denying homosexuals access to housing
 - **§ 11 (2) (d):** Criminalising the act of renting out housing or accommodation to individuals or organisations that intend to promote homosexuality
 - **§ 14:** The provision concerning the duty to report, as it violates the right to privacy, the right to health care, and the freedoms of thought, conscience, and religion
3. Since the ruling, the Ugandan government has not published a revised version of the AHA. As such, the original version remains on the books. This means that knowledge of the nullified provisions depends on having a deep understanding of the law and legal process. Parliament was expected to ratify the revised version of the law, but this has not yet occurred.

The AHA and the Penal Code

4. The Penal Code is a colonial-era law inherited from British rule. It has remained largely unchanged since its adoption in 1950. Section 145 criminalises “carnal knowledge against the order of nature”, which Ugandan courts have interpreted as same-sex relations. This section has been used to prosecute—or attempt to prosecute—such relations. As such, many individuals have been arrested and prosecuted for being actual or perceived to be LGBTQ.
5. There have been arrests under Section 145, but no successful prosecutions or convictions. Individuals simply end up being persecuted, ashamed before their relatives, friends and communities.
6. In Uganda, no real distinction is made between identities within the LGBTQI+ community—they are all generally referred to as “homosexuals” or “the gays”. As such, all suffer under the same umbrella of being homosexuals. Intersex and Queer and gender nonconforming folks have been arrested for being homosexuals.
- Prior to the AHA, the legal framework was already unfavourable and sufficient to prosecute LGBT persons and prohibited LGBT activities in their diversity. In 2024, the Court of Appeal upheld the refusal by the Registrar of Companies to reserve and to register the name Sexual Minorities Uganda on grounds that its objectives contravened the penal code as it sought to promote same sex relations which were criminalized. HRAPF is also handling at the Court of Appeal, Civil Appeal No. 195 of 2014, which is an appeal against the decision of the High court in ***Kasha Jacqueline and 3 others v Attorney General and Another***, that upheld the actions of the then Minister of Health Hon. Rev. Simon Lokodo in closing a skills empowerment workshop of LGBTQI+ activists on grounds that it was for a group criminalised under S.145 of the Penal Code Act. This appeal has been pending before the Court of Appeal since 2014.
7. Therefore, the AHA was not legally necessary. However, the politics of the day which embroiled many politicians and members of parliament in corruption scandals used the AHA to shift public attention by championing it in Parliament and in the public discourse.

Effects of the AHA

8. Although the AHA may have served a political purpose, the consequences for the LGBT community have been real. Immediately after the law passed, evictions of suspected LGBT persons surged. Landlords, neighbours, family members and co-tenants have reported individuals to the police and to other local leaders. Prior to the Constitutional Court’s intervention, the provisions of the AHA including on the provisions of housing and accommodation to LGBT persons was vague, leading to evictions based on minimal suspicion. Even people who were not LGBT were evicted due to personal disputes or misunderstandings. HRAPF emphasised that once someone is labelled LGBT, the stigma remains.

9. HRAPF has investigated and brought some of these cases to the police. The organisation notes that the number of such cases has declined slightly since late 2023, possibly due to increased awareness about legal protections. However, HRAPF believes that many evictions still go unreported. It should, however, be emphasised that since the enactment of the AHA, HRAPF has received, verified, handled and documented a total of 1,743 cases involving LGBTIQ persons across its legal aid network, of which 844 cases (48.4%) targeted LGBTIQ people clearly on the basis of their sexuality, affecting a total of 1,072 persons.
10. The nullification of the duty to report has had only a modest impact on the number of monthly evictions, as many people—including landlords—are unaware that the provision was struck down.
11. The number of arrests of LGBT persons has increased since the AHA was enacted. However, many of these arrests are made under other laws, such as the Penal Code, to bypass a directive from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), which requires her office to examine all AHA-related cases before they proceed. It should however be noted that almost every month, there are arrests of actual or perceived LGBTQ persons on sexuality related reasons. In April and May this year 3 arrests were made each month under the AHA. In two of the three cases in May, the victims were charged with homosexuality under the Anti- Homosexuality Act, 2023, while the other the charges were under S.145 of the Penal Code Act for unnatural offences, another testimony of how the two legislations are concurrently used to prosecute perceived or actual LGBT persons.
12. According to HRAPF, the DPP adopted this practice to reduce the number of prosecutions under the AHA and demonstrate that the law is redundant.
13. Physical assaults and violence also increased following the AHA's passage, though the rate has since declined. Perpetrators include both members of the public and the authorities. HRAPF has documented complaints of police brutality and cases where arrested LGBT individuals were denied access to legal counsel and family contact, resulting in relatives not knowing their whereabouts for extended periods. Some detainees have been held for weeks, even though police custody is legally limited to 48 hours. In practice, there is no realistic way to challenge prolonged detention, despite a formal procedure existing. Many times, HRAPF has had to apply to court for *habeas corpus* for orders that the suspects in police custody be produced before court. These orders are usually granted by courts but even after securing them, the bureaucracies at policies especially requiring that the Attorney General must interpret and advise on each order ensures that the victims still remain in detention for more days awaiting clearance from the relevant offices.

14. There have been no convictions under the AHA due to the high burden of proof. However, the damage is already done once a person is outed as LGBT: stigma follows in their family, community, workplace, and across their social life.
15. Decline in access to other essential services including health services. The debate during the enactment of the AHA emphasized that service providers should stop extending services to LGBT folks, and if they do, then they should report them to police after attending to them. This gave the justification for the mandatory reporting provision in S.14. Clearly, a number of LGBT folks stopped going for some services including health services for fear of being reported. Some service providers who were not willing to report, then declined to attend to them. It required clarifications from the ministry of health assuring health service providers that they shall not be prosecuted and requiring them to offer services without discrimination. But the communication from the ministry could not replace the already obvious law. Awareness sessions on the implication of the Constitutional Court Judgement are still ongoing – HRAPF with support from the ministry of health still carry on these sessions.
16. HRAPF attributes the recent decline in reported LGBT-related cases to several factors:
 - Many cases likely go unreported
 - Police may be prosecuting LGBT individuals under non-LGBT-related charges
 - Some cases are handled within local communities and never reach the authorities
 - Public excitement around LGBT issues has subsided since the peak during the AHA debate
16. Nonetheless, the AHA and the broader LGBT issue could resurface for political purposes in the future. For HRAPF and similar organisations, it remains a constant balancing act, advocating for rights without provoking any backlash.

The police and the AHA

17. The police frequently disclose who has been arrested and on what charges, either at line-ups for press conferences or in response to media inquiries. In cases involving LGBT individuals, this functions as a public outing, with charges of homosexuality quickly circulating on social media.
18. The Ugandan Police has a Professional Standards Unit that allows the public to lodge complaints against police misconduct. However, whether this is an effective recourse depends on the nature of the complaint and the rank of the implicated officer. Complaints against lower-ranking officers are more likely to be addressed, though complainants may face repercussions.

19. HRAPF has handled a few cases in which LGBT individuals sought police protection from threats in their communities. These cases were typically framed as general human rights violations—not LGBT-specific rights—and were usually supported by human rights organisations.
20. HRAPF has also conducted human rights training sessions for police officers. These typically last two days and are organised in collaboration with the Ugandan Police Force. The goal is to humanise marginalised individuals by drawing parallels to common experiences of marginalisation in Ugandan society. However, HRAPF has experienced backlash when addressing LGBT rights in such sessions. Some officers became offended and felt that HRAPF was secretly promoting LGBT rights, which in some cases worsened their attitudes.
21. The police do not publish search warrants in newspapers related to LGBT suspects.

Outings on social media

22. Many LGBT individuals in Uganda have been outed on social media. In some cases, non-LGBT individuals have been falsely outed due to personal disputes. HRAPF stresses that once a person is outed—whether correctly or not—it is irreversible. Stigma is long-lasting. There is even a belief that denying the allegations too strongly "proves" they are true. HRAPF advises individuals who are outed to ignore the incident and wait for the attention to pass, as defending oneself is often counterproductive.

Hierarchy of vulnerability

23. Trans persons are considered the most vulnerable group within the LGBT community.
24. HRAPF has also handled cases of so-called "correctional rape" of LGBT persons. A widespread belief exists that exposing lesbian women or trans persons to heterosexual intercourse will "convert" them. Such assaults have, in some cases, been carried out by police officers.

HRAPF methodology

25. In the documented violations HRAPF report, they do not take into account violations handled by other community organisations except the LGBT grassroots organisations that host their regional centres. The reports are therefore restricted to only violations that HRAPF can independently verify and respond to.
26. When it comes to LGBTQ+ work, HRAPF has a national presence. HRAPF has a network of trained community paralegals across the entire country who handle and report cases to HRAPF. HRAPF also has regional centres in all regions of the country. The Central region is served by the main legal aid clinic, HRAPF have a regional legal aid

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desk in the East, the north and western parts of the country that report and are directly supervised from the main office.

27. The reports have the violations disaggregated and the number of victims indicated. Therefore, the number of violations may overlap, as one victim may suffer several violations, but the number of victims will only speak to the actual number of direct victims.

Justice Douglas Singiza Karekona, Chairperson, Judicial Service Commission of Uganda

Kampala, 30 April 2025

The Judicial Service Commission (JSC) of Uganda recommends qualified individuals to the President for appointment as judges and registrars. It is also responsible for appointing judicial officers to various magisterial positions, and for confirming and promoting them throughout their careers. The JSC equally receives and processes complaints and disciplines proven judicial misbehaviour. The JSC is also mandated to conduct civic education programmes to raise public awareness of legal rights and responsibilities, and works to improve access to justice for all citizens.

History of LGBT Criminalisation in Uganda

1. Uganda has a long history of de facto criminalisation of homosexuality. This criminalisation of sex between two persons of the same gender was first introduced by the British colonial authorities, who superimposed their legal system onto Ugandan society. Prior to British colonial rule, there were no laws or customary practices that criminalised homosexuality. However, LGBT persons were often referred to as “living dead” — a term describing people who, though alive, are socially, legally, or psychologically treated as if they were dead. In other words, prior to colonialism, LGBT persons were socially excluded and stigmatised but not legally sanctioned. Legal sanctions were introduced with the 1950 Penal Code.
2. Since the introduction and later passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 (AHA), there has been ongoing debate about whether the law is inherently African or simply a legacy of colonial rule.

Persecution of LGBT Persons since the AHA

3. Even before the enactment of the AHA, very few cases of LGBT persecution were recorded, and the authorities largely ignored the issue. Following the law’s passage, there was a temporary spike in such cases, but numbers have since declined. However, the psychological trauma faced by LGBT persons—or those perceived to be LGBT—remains significant. Coming out or being outed poses real risks, including eviction, denial of health care, school expulsion, and other forms of exclusion. These consequences are not necessarily the result of legal proceedings, but rather of deep-rooted social prejudice.
4. Although there have been no convictions under the AHA, LGBT persons continue to experience increasing levels of community-based persecution and harassment.

5. According to Justice Singiza Douglas Karekona (a judge who, prior to his appointment as the chairperson of the JSC, made a finding in favour of tortured individuals on allegation that they were gay) the AHA may not be as effective as had been touted. The legal framework for persecuting LGBT persons was already in place prior to the Act. The AHA may be considered as a largely symbolic, piece of legislation that was designed to appeal to conservative and religious segments of the population, but of little legal significance.

Legal Avenues for Protection

6. In principle, LGBT persons may seek protection through the judicial system. However, Uganda's Constitutional Court has ruled that LGBT individuals cannot invoke the equality doctrine. As a result, it is not possible to seek redress in court on the grounds of discrimination based on sexual orientation.
7. Consequently, LGBT persons must find alternative legal approaches to seek justice. As a High Court judge, Singiza successfully ruled in a case where a local community leader had detained 32 LGBT individuals and subjected them to torture. The legal argument in that case focused on the prohibition of torture—not on the victims' sexual orientation. When the case was filed, many judges were hesitant to hear it due to its association with LGBT persons. In Uganda, association with LGBT rights can damage one's professional reputation and hinder career advancement. The cause is often associated with European values, which are perceived by some as foreign or degenerate.
8. Bringing an LGBT-related case before the court requires strategic thinking—both in terms of framing the legal issue and identifying the accused. In the above-mentioned case, it was widely known that local police officers had facilitated the torture. However, Singiza chose not to focus on minimal role of the police, as doing so could have led to potential backlash from the government. By focussing mainly on the local government leaders, the case succeeded, and the political leader as well as the municipality were ordered to pay compensation to the victims.
9. There remains a significant presence of conservative and religious judges in Uganda. To advance an LGBT-related case—considered controversial in these circles—one must secure allies within the system. Success is more likely when the case is framed in terms of general human rights violations rather than sexual orientation.

LGBT and Education

10. The topic of LGBT issues features prominently in the education system. Students have been expelled for allegedly supporting or sympathising with LGBT causes. In one case from Jinja, former students were charged with spreading “hateful propaganda” due to perceptions that they promoted LGBT rights. The case was eventually dropped.

LGBT and Customary Law

11. As noted, there are no punitive measures in traditional Ugandan customary law targeting LGBT persons. While LGBT persons may be stigmatised or excluded from public events such as weddings, particularly in rural areas where customary law holds sway, they are not formally punished under those customs.
12. Generally, it is considered more scandalous to be a gay man than a lesbian woman, which is consistent with social perceptions across other parts of Africa, including South Africa.

Legal Challenge to the AHA

13. In April 2024, the Constitutional Court ruled that certain provisions of the AHA were unconstitutional. The case is currently pending before the Supreme Court. It remains unclear when the Court will deliver a ruling, as a panel of justices has yet to be appointed. Some judges involved in the Constitutional Court ruling now sit on the Supreme Court and are therefore barred from participating in this case. Court politics heavily influence the composition of the bench, making the outcome uncertain.

Outings

14. There have been no convictions of individuals who have falsely outed others as homosexuals on social media. Such outings often lead to devastating personal consequences, including social ostracism and loss of employment.
15. Outings occur frequently through social media and tabloid newspapers, particularly *Red Pepper*. Although *Red Pepper* was once sued by an NGO, it remains difficult to hold social media platforms accountable. Freedom of speech provisions in Uganda further complicate content moderation.
16. Accusations of homosexuality are also used as tools in political campaigns, particularly in local elections. Politicians sometimes attempt to rally support by branding their opponents as supporters of LGBT causes. However, according to Singiza, many senior political leaders see LGBT issues as irrelevant and prefer that the topic quietly fade away. This is reflected in the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who stated that all AHA-related cases must be submitted to her office for review. This procedural requirement slows down the legal process and effectively prevents prosecutions under the AHA. Justice Singiza believes this is a deliberate but wiser strategy by Uganda's political leadership to ensure that no more controversy is generated around sexual orientation.