



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note** **Uzbekistan: Sexual orientation and** **gender identity or expression (SOGIE)**

**Version 1.0**

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# Executive summary

The Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees rights to privacy, equality, and non-discrimination, but consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men remains criminalised under Article 120 of the 1994 Criminal Code, punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment. This law does not apply to women. No legal protections exist against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and same-sex unions and adoptions are not recognised.

Despite claims by the authorities of non-enforcement, prosecutions under Article 120 persist, with documented cases from 2009 to 2023. Police intimidation, violence, and exploitation against gay and bisexual men and trans people are common, with law enforcement officials often perpetrating abuses. Few, if any, LGBTI rights organisations exist legally due to restrictive laws and criminalisation, forcing them to operate unofficially.

Negative social attitudes towards LGBTI people result in widespread discrimination and limit freedom of expression. Same-sex conduct, especially in rural areas, is taboo, leading individuals to hide their orientation to avoid ostracism. Homophobic and transphobic views are pervasive, with families often seeking 'treatment', including 'conversion therapy', for LGBTI members. Young gay men face expulsion and societal rejection. Public opinion supports criminalising same-sex relations, and violence against LGBTI people is common. Hate speech from authorities and societal figures fuels discrimination. No Pride events or support groups exist, and the environment severely restricts LGBTI activism.

LGBTI people form a particular social group (PSG) in Uzbekistan.

Actual or perceived gay and bisexual men and trans women are likely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.

Actual or perceived lesbian and bisexual women are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

Actual or perceived LGBT people are likely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state actors.

There is little information on the experiences or treatment of trans men or intersex people. Each case must be considered on its facts.

In general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection to a person who identifies as LGBTI.

Given that homophobic attitudes are prevalent throughout the country there is unlikely to be any place in Uzbekistan to which an LGBTI person could relocate without making fundamental changes to their behaviour.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certified as 'clearly unfounded'.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 25 June 2024

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state or non-state actors because of their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

This note provides an assessment of the situation for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, as well as those perceived as such. Sources often refer to LGBTI people collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the note will refer to and consider the treatment of each group discretely.

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed particular social group (PSG).
- 2.1.2 LGBTI people form a PSG in Uzbekistan within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it **and** have a distinct identity in Uzbekistan because the group is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.3 Although LGBTI people form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.1.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

### 3.1 Risk from the state

- 3.1.1 Actual or perceived gay and bisexual men and trans women are likely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.
- 3.1.2 Actual or perceived lesbian and bisexual women are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.1.3 In sources consulted there is very little information on the specific experiences of trans men or people identifying as intersex or the treatment of those perceived as such. Each case must be decided on its facts taking

account of the particular circumstances of the person. The onus on the person to demonstrate why they are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm.

- 3.1.4 The Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees rights to privacy, equality, and non-discrimination, but Article 120 of the 1994 Criminal Code, which criminalises consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men, is punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment. The law does not criminalise same-sex sexual conduct between women. There are no legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, though Uzbekistan stated in 2024 that it has no direct discriminatory provisions against LGBTI people restricting access to education, employment, or healthcare. Same-sex unions and adoption by same-sex couples are not legally recognised. Hate crimes motivated by prejudice cannot be tried as aggravated offences. Although the law provides for gender reassignment, trans women are still impacted by Article 120 (see [Legal context](#)).
- 3.1.5 Uzbekistan has consistently rejected recommendations to decriminalise consensual same-sex relations between men during the past 3 UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycles, citing religious and cultural values as well as public opposition. In 2020, the government stated decriminalisation was not being considered due to the need to combat HIV. In 2021, officials made discriminatory statements against LGBTI people, with one proposing deportation. The draft new Information Code prohibits ‘propaganda of unnatural relations’ in the media. During the 2023 UPR, Uzbekistan rejected 15 recommendations related to LGBTI rights, citing ‘generally accepted norms’ (see [Views of government and public officials](#)).
- 3.1.6 Despite claims by the authorities of non-enforcement, Uzbekistan continues to prosecute and imprison gay and bisexual men and trans women under Article 120 although official figures remain low. In 2021, at least 5 cases were prosecuted, likely due to information sharing between ministries to identify HIV-positive gay men. The government reported that 13 imprisoned men were subjected to ‘conversion therapy’. In 2022, 22 criminal cases involving over 27 men were initiated. ILGA World documented at least 24 enforcement cases over a 14-year period from 2009 to 2023, while official figures show 44 prosecutions from 2016 to 2020. The International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) documented 36 convictions in 2021 (see [Enforcement of the law](#)).
- 3.1.7 Lesbians and bisexual women are not at risk of prosecution or imprisonment for same-sex sexual conduct as it is not a criminal offence. The country information tends to group experiences collectively under LGBTI and the specific examples given generally relate to gay and bisexual men and trans women. There is very little evidence of state mistreatment of lesbian and bisexual women and the evidence that is available is vague and thus appears speculative (see [Enforcement of the law](#) and [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)).
- 3.1.8 Police intimidation and exploitation against gay and bisexual men and trans women, exacerbated by Article 120, appears to be common, according to various reports and submissions by human rights organisations and advocacy groups. Police routinely threaten, detain, mistreat, and extort

bribes from gay and bisexual men under threat of prosecution. According to the Central Asian Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Network (CAGSAN), between 2017 and 2022, law enforcement perpetrated 44% (34) of 77 recorded cases of rights violations against LGBTI people, including beatings, threats, forced anal examinations and bribes. However, CAGSAN did not specify the sex or gender of the persons concerned nor provide a breakdown of the number of violations by type. According to Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM), threats or intimidation, insults, illegal searches and extortion were the most common violations committed by the authorities against gay and bisexual men and trans women in 2023 but did not identify how many people faced such violations by state actors. Entrapment through social media and threats to 'out' victims are common tactics (see [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)).

- 3.1.9 There are few, if any, legally registered LGBTI rights organisations operating in Uzbekistan due to restrictive laws and the criminalisation of same-sex relations. Article 3 of the Law on Public Associations prohibits associations that undermine ethical foundations or infringe on morality. Registration requirements are onerous, allowing denial if an organisation's name offends morality. Unregistered groups risk fines and up to 5 years imprisonment for operating illegally. The few LGBTI groups that exist operate unofficially, as openly identifying risks prosecution under Article 120. Therefore, anyone involved in an unregistered LGBTI group is at risk of prosecution and imprisonment (see [LGBTI organisations or advocates and their ability to operate](#)).
- 3.1.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 3.2 Risk from non-state actors

- 3.2.1 Actual or perceived LGBT people are likely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state actors.
- 3.2.2 While there is little evidence of societal mistreatment of lesbian and bisexual women specifically, risk can be increased due to entrenched gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes towards women in general, alongside the negative societal attitudes towards LGBTI people.
- 3.2.3 In sources consulted there is very little information on the specific experiences of trans men or people identifying as intersex or the treatment of those perceived as such. Each case must be decided on its facts taking account of the particular circumstances of the person. The onus on the person to demonstrate why they are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm.
- 3.2.4 Deeply negative social attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity exist, limiting freedom of expression for LGBTI people and leading to discrimination. Same-sex conduct remains taboo, particularly in rural areas where individuals face intense pressure to conceal their orientation to avoid community discrimination and family ostracism. Homophobic and



transphobic views are pervasive, with many equating being gay to a contagious disease, leading families to seek ‘treatment’, including ‘conversion therapy’ and forcing LGBTI persons into secrecy or straight relationships. Young gay men face expulsion from their homes and societal rejection if their sexual orientation is revealed. According to the government in 2023, public opinion largely supports maintaining or increasing penalties for same-sex relations, reflecting entrenched societal and religious opposition in the majority Muslim population (see [Societal and familial views](#)).

- 3.2.5 Although no official data on hate crime is available, according to data submitted by LGBTI rights groups to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) there were at least 32 cases of threats and/or violence against gay men and trans women between 2019 and 2022 by non-state actors. Information provided by ECOM stated that at least 101 people (94 gay men, 3 trans women, 1 bisexual woman and 3 straight people by association) in 2022 and 209 people (136 gay men, 50 bisexual men, 7 other men who have sex with men (MSM), 10 trans women, 4 lesbians and 2 straight people by association) in 2023 were victims of some form of human rights violation, including violation of equality, abuse of power and authority, and extortion, mostly due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI). However, ECOM did not identify how many people faced such violations by non-state actors nor specify the type of violation by sexuality or gender (see [Violence, harassment and discrimination](#)).
- 3.2.6 Government agencies, religious representatives, and civil society members contribute to a culture of hate speech, increasing homophobia and transphobia. Perpetrators of rights violations include relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. According to authorities, a 2021 mob attack on perceived LGBTI persons was caused by blogger advocating for the decriminalisation of same-sex conduct (see [Violence, harassment and discrimination](#)).
- 3.2.7 No Pride events were identified in 2022 or 2023 and there were not known to be any clubs or organisations supporting LGBTI people legally operating. The legal framework and societal attitudes hinder LGBTI activism, making it nearly impossible (see [Meeting places and events](#) and [LGBTI organisations or advocates and their ability to operate](#)).
- 3.2.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person who fears the state is unlikely to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 A person who fears a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor is unlikely to obtain protection from the state. This is because, in general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection.
- 4.1.3 Uzbekistan has a criminal justice system that is formally structured with law

enforcement agencies, courts, and correctional facilities. However, corruption is a significant problem, affecting all levels from police to judiciary. The judiciary is not fully independent and is often influenced by political considerations (see [Access to justice](#)).

- 4.1.4 LGBTI persons are hindered from accessing justice or reporting discrimination, as they risk facing prosecution under Article 120. This deters many from seeking help, leading to unreported crimes. Police officers themselves may perpetrate harassment, exploitation, or violence against LGBTI persons, including forced anal examinations. Only one case of punishment against law enforcement officials for rights violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity has been recorded, according to sources consulted (see [Access to justice](#)).
- 4.1.5 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 Given that homophobic attitudes are prevalent throughout the country there is unlikely to be any place in Uzbekistan to which an LGBTI person could reasonably relocate without making fundamental changes to their behaviour.
- 5.1.3 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **25 June 2024**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Legal context

### 7.1 Same-sex relationships

- 7.1.1 The Constitution guarantees the right to privacy, equality and non-discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, and social status<sup>1</sup>. However, Uzbekistan retained legislation criminalising consensual same-sex conduct between men<sup>2</sup>.
- 7.1.2 Article 120 of the 1994 Criminal Code of Uzbekistan criminalises 'Besoqolbozlik (Homosexual Intercourse)', described as 'voluntary sexual intercourse of 2 male individuals', which is subject to imprisonment of up to 3 years<sup>3</sup>. A translation of the Criminal Code, published by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) anti-discrimination database, provided a literal translation of the term besoqolbozlik as: 'sexual intercourse with a besoqol ("a handsome unbearded youth")'. However, the article envisages penalty for any male homosexual intercourse irrespective of the age of the partners. (Translator's Note).<sup>4</sup>
- 7.1.3 A joint call by LGBTI rights groups to decriminalise same-sex relations, published in March 2021, noted that 'Due to the widespread failure to understand the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity by state and non-state actors in Uzbekistan, [Article 120] negatively impacts all of the LGBT community.'<sup>5</sup>
- 7.1.4 Despite calls by the UN and human rights groups to repeal Article 120<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup>, the draft of a new Criminal Code (yet to be enacted at time of publication of this CPIN) kept the provision and reclassified it as a crime against family,

<sup>1</sup> Constitution.uz, [Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan](#) (Articles 19 and 31), 30 April 2023

<sup>2</sup> OHCHR ADS Database, [Criminal Code of Uzbekistan](#) (Article 120), 22 September 1994

<sup>3</sup> OHCHR ADS Database, [Criminal Code of Uzbekistan](#) (Article 120), 22 September 1994

<sup>4</sup> OHCHR ADS Database, [Criminal Code of Uzbekistan](#) (Article 120, page 37), 22 September 1994

<sup>5</sup> TGEU, [Human Rights groups call for Uzbekistan to decriminalise same-sex...](#), 5 March 2021

<sup>6</sup> UNHRC, [Uzbekistan: Compilation of information prepared by the...](#) (paragraph 8), 24 August 2023

<sup>7</sup> UNHRC, [Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Uzbekista...](#) (paragraph 120), 23 August 2023

morality, and children under Article 154<sup>8 9</sup>.

- 7.1.5 Consensual same-sex sexual conduct between women is not criminalised<sup>10</sup>  
<sup>11</sup>.
- 7.1.6 The ILGA World December 2020 report noted that there was no legal recognition of same-sex civil unions or marriages, and same-sex couples cannot adopt children<sup>12</sup>.

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## 7.2 Discrimination

- 7.2.1 The ILGA World ‘State-Sponsored Homophobia Report’, a world survey of laws relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, dated December 2020, stated that there were no laws in Uzbekistan protecting people against discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity<sup>13</sup>.
- 7.2.2 In March 2020, at a Human Rights Committee meeting on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), a state representative of Uzbekistan said that there were ‘... no laws restricting the employment or health care of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community.’<sup>14</sup> This was repeated in information received from Uzbekistan in April 2024 regarding the follow up to the [concluding observations](#) on its the third periodic report, which highlighted the absence of any direct discriminatory provisions for LGBT people to impede their access to services like education, employment and medical care<sup>15</sup>.
- See also [Access to services](#)
- 7.2.3 A submission to the [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\) – Uzbekistan](#) Fourth Cycle by The PACT, a coalition of over 152 youth organizations working in the global HIV response, dated April 2023, stated in regard to LGBTI that ‘There is no provision for hate crimes, and crimes that are motivated by hatred based on prejudice cannot be tried as aggravated offenses.’<sup>16</sup>
- 7.2.4 According to the November 2023 ILGA World report, ‘Other elements of the Criminal Code are also regularly invoked by authorities [against LGBTI people], such as Article 113 (which makes it an offense for someone who is knowingly HIV-positive to put another at risk of infection), and Article 130 (which prohibits the production, import, or dissemination of “pornographic” products).’<sup>17</sup>
- 7.2.5 In another ILGA World report, published in June 2024, it was noted that ‘In December 2022, the Draft Information Code (2022) was announced for public discussion. Article 45 of this draft prohibits the “promotion of unnatural relationships between same-sex couples”. However, no major updates on

<sup>8</sup> HRW, [Uzbekistan: Draft Criminal Code Offers Little Meaningful Reform](#), 3 October 2021

<sup>9</sup> OHCHR, [Mandates of the Independent Expert on protection against violence...](#), 4 March 2021

<sup>10</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>11</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 6), 2022

<sup>12</sup> ILGA World, [State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020](#) (page 328), December 2020

<sup>13</sup> ILGA World, [State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020](#) (page 328), December 2020

<sup>14</sup> UNHRC, [Consideration of reports submitted by States parties...](#) (paragraph 50), 5 March 2020

<sup>15</sup> CESC, [Information received from Uzbekistan regarding the...](#) (paragraph 26), 16 April 2024

<sup>16</sup> The PACT, [Universal Periodic Review of Uzbekistan 44th Session](#) (paragraph 27), April 2023

<sup>17</sup> ILGA World, [Our Identities Under Arrest](#) (page 220), November 2023

the progress of this law were noted in 2023.<sup>18</sup> No further information on the progress of this draft law was found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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### 7.3 Gender recognition

7.3.1 In regard to legal gender recognition the USSD HR Report 2023 stated ‘The law provided a pathway for someone to legally change their gender, although transgender and gender-nonconforming Uzbeks reported difficulty in finding willing medical providers. Individuals reportedly were able to successfully undergo gender reassignment surgery and change their gender on their national identity documents.’<sup>19</sup>

7.3.2 The 2022 ECOM report noted in regard to legal recognition of gender that: ‘Article 149 of the Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan [RUZ] “On approval of the rules for registration of acts of civil status” allows a person to change their gender marker when they change their sex. However, the legislation does not regulate the concept of “sex change” and the requirements for trans\* people to change their gender marker may vary. Additionally, Article 229 of the Family Code of RUZ establishes the possibility of “making amendments following a sex change, only at the conclusion of health authorities”.

‘There is no legally established protocol for changing one’s gender marker in official documents. Amending documents involves a long process, which includes a differential diagnostician with mandatory observation in a psychoneurological dispensary, after which a final decision on the diagnosis is made by an advisory board. Following this, the person can begin hormone therapy. Taking hormone therapy prior to diagnosis and living as a trans\* person for at least 2 years is grounds for diagnosis. After the diagnosis is made, the doctor has the right to issue a certificate attesting that a sex change using hormone therapy was carried out, after which the trans\* person can change the gender marker in their official documents on the basis of this certificate.’<sup>20</sup>

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## 8. State treatment and attitudes

### 8.1 Views of government and public officials

8.1.1 A joint submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle by the Central Asian Gender and Sexual Rights Action Network (CAGSAN) and ILGA-Europe, based on a range of sources, dated 15 March 2023, noted that:

‘For the past 14 years and the last three UPR cycles, Uzbekistan has ignored recommendations to decriminalize consensual homosexual relations between men... In the third UPR cycle in May 2018, 11 recommendations were received regarding the improvement of the rights of the LGBT+ community, but all were rejected. The rejection was based on the argument

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<sup>18</sup> ILGA World, [Laws on Us](#) (page 85), June 2024

<sup>19</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>20</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of gay men, other MSM...](#) (page 6), 2023

that “Uzbekistan, like all other member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, seeks to preserve family values and therefore does not plan to amend Article 120 of the Criminal Code” and “Uzbekistan... took note of 14 recommendations that it cannot implement, either for legal and constitutional reasons or because of their inconsistency with the normative content, meaning, and practice of applying current legislation, and the national interests of the country.”<sup>21</sup>

- 8.1.2 At a meeting on the CCPR in March 2020, a state representative of Uzbekistan said, regarding LGBTI people and the calls to repeal Article 120 of the Criminal Code, that:

‘Although that lifestyle was not approved by Islam and was not in keeping with the Uzbek mindset, no radical measures had been taken against persons belonging to that community. The proposal to decriminalize same-sex relations by repealing article 120 of the Criminal Code had met with strong public opposition, and not only from Muslims. Given the specific religious and cultural context in Uzbekistan, the issue needed to be thoroughly discussed by civil society before any decision was taken.’<sup>22</sup>

- 8.1.3 In April 2020 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) asked Uzbekistan to describe what steps had been taken to decriminalise same-sex sexual conduct between men<sup>23</sup>. In a September 2020 response, the government stated ‘The decriminalization of homosexuality has not been considered owing to the pressing need to combat the spread of HIV.’<sup>24</sup>

- 8.1.4 In March 2021, an article published in the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs by Anvar Latipov, New York-based Uzbek LGBTQI activist, and Ryan Schweitzer, Oxus Society research assistant, stated that:

‘... in a public announcement, Komil Allamjonov, chairman of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of the National Mass Media, proclaimed LGBTQ rights to be inherently wrong for Uzbekistan. He claimed that decriminalizing homosexuality in the country would result in more mob violence. Allamjonov appealed to the media and bloggers to stop reporting on the LGBTQ issue as it tarnishes Uzbek morality and could corrupt young people...

‘Member of the Parliamentary Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan Rasul Kusherbayev recently said he would reform all human rights in Uzbekistan, except for those that are against human nature and that he “spits” on the right of the LGBTQ community to live equally and freely. A statement released by deputy of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of Uzbekistan Alisher Kadyrov said “We will do everything in our power so that Uzbekistan becomes a country where LGBT people cannot live.”’<sup>25</sup>

- 8.1.5 In June 2021, Alisher Kadyrov, head of political party Milliy Tiklanish and ally

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<sup>21</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPRI\]...](#) (paragraph 7), 15 March 2023

<sup>22</sup> UNHRC, [Consideration of reports submitted by States parties...](#) (paragraph 50), 5 March 2020

<sup>23</sup> CESCR, [List of issues in relation to the third periodic report...](#) (paragraph 7 ), 6 April 2020

<sup>24</sup> CESCR, [Replies of Uzbekistan to the list of issues...](#) (paragraph 65), 13 November 2020

<sup>25</sup> Latipov A and Schweitzer R, [Uzbekistan: Reforms Evade LGBTQ Community](#), 31 March 2021

of the President and ruling party<sup>26</sup>, proposed the deprivation of citizenship and deportation of gays, lesbians and transgender people, which would force other countries to offer them refuge. In an interview posted on the Alter Ego YouTube channel, Kadyrov accepted that Uzbekistan was undergoing a process of social transformation, but asserted that the public would never change its mind on LGBTI rights ‘even after 1,000 years.’ Kadyrov stated that he did not support violence against LGBTI people, adding that 26 countries already practiced deportation, though he did not specify which countries maintained such a policy, or explain how his proposal would work in practice<sup>27 28</sup>.

- 8.1.6 The joint submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle by CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe noted that ‘On December 14, 2022, the new Information Code was published for public discussion; the draft has already been approved by 50 relevant ministries and departments. According [to] Article 54 of this document, “Abuse of mass media freedom”, “propaganda of pornography, and unnatural relations between representatives of the same sex is not allowed” in the media.’<sup>29</sup>
- 8.1.7 Reporting on [recommendations](#)<sup>30</sup> made to Uzbekistan during its UPR Fourth Cycle, held on 8 November 2023, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted: ‘Over a dozen countries commented on rights issues pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity... The Uzbekistan government supported all the recommendations expressed by states, except for the 15 recommendations related to the rights of LGBT people. The government official’s reference to “generally accepted norms” to deny LGBT people’s rights deflects responsibility for abusive state practices and laws that exclude LGBT people from accessing their basic human rights...’<sup>31</sup>
- 8.1.8 In its submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle, CAGSAN and ILGA Europe stated that the new draft Criminal Code, which retained criminal penalties for same-sex sexual conduct between men, ‘... reinforces the state’s discriminatory stance against the LGBT+ community and accuses them of illegal actions against society.’<sup>32</sup>
- 8.1.9 Information received from Uzbekistan in April 2024 regarding the follow-up to the concluding observations on its third periodic report stated: ‘... propaganda of homosexuality in one form or another poses a serious threat in our society today. An open demonstration of non-traditional sexual relations will lead to a deliberate revolution in the national culture and the foundation of human relations.
- ‘The decriminalization of article 120 of the Criminal Code runs counter to the traditions of the multi-ethnic people of Uzbekistan, the values of the institution of the family and national customs that have developed over

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<sup>26</sup> Gazeta.uz, [Milliy Tiklanish party endorses Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s candidacy](#), 31 May 2023

<sup>27</sup> Eurasianet, [Uzbekistan: Top lawmaker calls for deporting the LGBT community en...](#), 7 June 2021

<sup>28</sup> Them, [Uzbek Leader Calls For Mass Deportation of LGBTQ+ People Following...](#), 8 June 2021

<sup>29</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 46), 15 March 2023

<sup>30</sup> OHCHR, [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic...](#) (page 23), 18 December 2023

<sup>31</sup> HRW, [Uzbekistan: Take Action on Rights Abuses Raised at UN Review](#), 15 November 2023

<sup>32</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 15), 15 March 2023

thousands of years.<sup>33</sup>

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## 8.2 Enforcement of the law

- 8.2.1 In its submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle, CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe stated that ‘In April 2021, the Central Penal Correction Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs admitted that Article 120 is still enforceable, despite previous claims by state representatives in all previous UPR cycles that the article being [sic] inactive and not enforced de facto. Every year, several individuals are convicted under Article 120.’<sup>34</sup>
- 8.2.2 The US Department of State 2022 human rights report for Uzbekistan (USSD HR Report 2022) noted regarding the application of Article 120 that: ‘Authorities enforced the law. Human rights defenders reported at least five cases of persons who faced prosecution in 2021. They speculated this could be due to information sharing between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice that was ostensibly intended to enable the Ministry of Justice to monitor HIV-positive individuals to prevent the spread of disease. Human rights defenders believed authorities used this information to identify, charge, and prosecute gay HIV-positive men.’<sup>35</sup>
- 8.2.3 The same report noted that ‘The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that 13 men convicted of performing same-sex sexual acts were serving prison sentences and being subjected to “conversion therapy” or psychological treatment of the “disorder of homosexuality” to “eliminate repeat crimes and offenses.”’<sup>36</sup>
- 8.2.4 In its HR report covering 2023, the USSD stated that ‘The government reported that during the year authorities initiated 22 criminal cases for same-sex sexual relationships among men, with more than 27 men involved in these cases. The government had not reported the number of men incarcerated for same-sex relations.’<sup>37</sup>
- 8.2.5 The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) report ‘Our Identities Under Arrest’, published November 2023, which provided a global overview of the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, covering around the past 25 years up to 30 June 2023, based on a range of sources<sup>38</sup>, noted that: ‘ILGA World has been able to collect information on at least 24 examples of criminal enforcement in Uzbekistan between 2009 and 2023. However, information released by the government shows that this is only a fraction of the actual number of cases. In effect, Uzbekistan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs reported in April 2021 that there were least 49 individuals detained in penal colonies across the country for “sodomy” under Article 120 of the Criminal

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<sup>33</sup> CESC, [Information received from Uzbekistan regarding the...](#) (paragraphs 27, 28), 16 April 2024

<sup>34</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 16), 15 March 2023

<sup>35</sup> USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 20 March 2023

<sup>36</sup> USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 20 March 2023

<sup>37</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>38</sup> ILGA World, [Our Identities Under Arrest](#) (pages 12 and 13), November 2023



Code. The Ministry stated that between 2016 and 2020 at least 44 individuals had been prosecuted on that basis – six in 2016, 15 in 2017, seven in 2018, seven in 2019, and nine in 2020. Furthermore, a report published by the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) in 2021 informed that a total of 36 people were convicted under Article 120 that year. 16 of those convicted were sent by the court to “general regime prisons”, five to “strict regime prisons”, and four to “correctional prisons”. The remaining 11 were put on probation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs where they were banned from leaving their homes after dark. For some of them, they were banned from drinking alcohol, talking to certain individuals, using the internet and changing their place of residence.<sup>39</sup>

8.2.6 The same report noted in regard to same-sex conduct between women that ‘In 2019 a local activist informed ILGA World that even though only sex between adult men is explicitly criminalised, women who have sex with women are also targeted under Article 120 of the Criminal Code. This is due to the social effect of this provision, which condemns “homosexuality” in general without distinction of the involved person’s gender.’<sup>40</sup> No examples of how lesbian or bisexual women were targeted under Article 120 could be found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

8.2.7 The Association for Human Rights in Central Asia (AHRCA), the Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM), and International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), wrote a joint report dated 2022 (2022 AHRCA joint report), based on a range of sources including court documents and social media videos, data documented by ECOM of over 100 cases of ‘human rights violations’ against gay men and trans people since 2017, IPHR interviews and communications received from at least 12 gay and bisexual men, 2 trans people and their friend or family members since 2019, and several years of monitoring and documenting cases by AHRCA<sup>41</sup>. The report primarily focused on the situation for gay and bisexual men and trans people ‘because they are particularly vulnerable to serious human rights violations in Uzbekistan.’<sup>42</sup> Whilst the report did not provide any specific instances of human rights violations against lesbians or bisexual women, it noted that:

‘Consensual same-sex relations between women are not punishable under the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan, although they are nevertheless vulnerable to extortion by police as well as human rights violations such as discrimination, torture and ill-treatment.

‘While not at risk of imprisonment for their sexual orientation, lesbians, and bisexual women do face an increased risk of human rights violations stemming from widespread homo- and transphobia in Uzbekistan.’<sup>43</sup>

8.2.8 The 2022 AHRCA joint report referred to a photo that appeared in a telegram [multi-platform messaging service<sup>44</sup>] group in February 2022:

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<sup>39</sup> ILGA World, [Our Identities Under Arrest](#) (pages 220 to 221), November 2023

<sup>40</sup> ILGA World, [Our Identities Under Arrest](#) (page 221), November 2023

<sup>41</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 5), 2022

<sup>42</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 6), 2022

<sup>43</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 6), 2022

<sup>44</sup> Android Authority, [What is Telegram Messenger and why should I use it?](#), 22 August 2023

'The photo depicts a letter on official letterhead, signed by the head of the Dzhizzak [Jizzakh] Regional Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, dated 18 February 2022. The letter, which appears to be genuine, informs district and city police departments that the Dzhizzak Regional Department has opened preliminary investigations into a number of crimes including consensual same-sex relations between men ("sodomy", Article 120), "spreading a venereal disease or HIV infection/AIDS" (Article 113) and "production, import, dissemination, advertising and presentation of pornographic products" (Article 130) targeting people who "conduct propaganda for homosexuality" in two named telegram groups that functioned as meeting platforms for gay and bisexual men in the Dzhizzak region. According to the letter, "active participants of the group, their nicknames and private details of those who have AIDS, must be provided to the Department tasked with confidential cases within ten days" and "their whereabouts have to be monitored by way of GPS."<sup>45</sup>

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### 8.3 Violence, harassment and extortion

8.3.1 In its concluding observations on the third periodic report of Uzbekistan, the CESCR expressed its concern at 'The criminalization of sexual relations between consenting male adults, under article 120 of the Criminal Code, and the prevalence of intimidation, harassment, violence and stigma against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, which hinder their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.'<sup>46</sup>

8.3.2 The 2022 AHRCA joint report noted that 'Police are ... known to exploit the fear of being labelled as "gay", an accusation perceived as extremely shameful in Uzbekistani society, by extending the threat of imprisonment under Article 120 to heterosexual and pious Muslim men. The authors of this report are aware of such cases, but cannot publish them for fear of jeopardizing the security of the victims.'<sup>47</sup>

8.3.3 According to the same report:

'Police officers play a key role in the persecution of homosexual and bisexual men and trans people in Uzbekistan. They detain those whom they suspect of violating Article 120, send them for anal examinations, which are in themselves recognised as a form of ill-treatment, and are frequently implicated in torturing and ill-treating their victims.

'As in the broader society, homo- and transphobic views are widespread within the police force, and there are officers who actively seek out and aggressively target LGBT people on a perceived mission against "sin". Others exploit the criminalization of homosexuality and the shame that is associated with homosexual behaviour in society for their own financial benefit. They threaten to "out" gay or bisexual men – to family members, neighbours, colleagues or on social media – and to charge them with Article 120, unless the victim pays a bribe. Torture and ill-treatment are often used to punish and humiliate gay and bisexual men and to increase the victim's

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<sup>45</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 10), 2022

<sup>46</sup> CESCR, [Concluding observations on the third periodic report...](#) (paragraph 20(b)), 31 March 2022

<sup>47</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 8), 2022

readiness to pay a bribe in order to regain their freedom.’<sup>48</sup>

8.3.4 The 2022 AHRCA joint report further stated that ‘The authors of this report are aware of many cases when gay or bisexual men or trans persons were subjected to torture or ill-treatment in police detention in recent years.’ The report cited 3 separate incidents of maltreatment by police that occurred in 2018 and 2021, where gay or bisexual men were physically and verbally abused and forced to pay bribes to avoid criminal prosecution<sup>49</sup>.

8.3.5 The same report noted, regarding extortion by police:

‘Research conducted by the authors of this report indicates that police often use threats of opening a case under Article 120 in order to extort money from gay and bisexual men, in addition to threats of disclosing their sexual orientation to family members, neighbours, colleagues or on social media. In the cases documented by the authors of this report, police did not press charges when victims paid the requested bribe but victims often remained scared for years - not knowing whether police will keep their promise.’<sup>50</sup> The report cited 2 such cases<sup>51</sup>.

8.3.6 The 2022 AHRCA joint report cited 2 cases of entrapment, noting that ‘The organizations jointly issuing this report have documented many cases where police officers actively contacted gay and bisexual men through social media posing as gay men to entrap their victims or entice and coerce them to collaborate with the police. Officers typically threatened that they would open a criminal case under Article 120 and that family members would be informed of their sexual orientation if they did not cooperate.’<sup>52</sup>

8.3.7 In its submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle, CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe stated that:

‘In 2017-2022, 77 cases of rights violations and crimes committed against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity were recorded in Uzbekistan [the data, based on information collated by CAGSAN, did not specify the sex or gender of the individuals concerned]. Law enforcement officers were the main perpetrators in 44% (34 cases) of these incidents.

‘These officers were found to use physical and psychological violence, including beatings, threats, and bribes, when detaining LGBT+ individuals. In investigations, the accused were subjected to physical and mental pressure, including beatings, anal examinations, corrective rape, starvation, sleep deprivation, tying victims up and hanging them by their hands, threats of violence against relatives or forcing victims to work for law enforcement. Also, law enforcement agencies threaten to disseminate collected information about the private lives of LGBT+ individuals without their consent in order to blackmail and extort them. They use personal correspondence as evidence of the homosexuality of LGBT+ individuals when filing charges

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<sup>48</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (pages 9, 10), 2022

<sup>49</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (pages 10, 11), 2022

<sup>50</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (pages 12, 13), 2022

<sup>51</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 13), 2022

<sup>52</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 13), 2022

under Article 120.<sup>53</sup> The number of incidents per violation was not recorded.

8.3.8 The 2022 AHRCA joint report stated in regard to anal examinations that:

‘In Uzbekistan, law enforcement officers often order anal examinations in order to obtain “evidence” for prosecutions for same-sex conduct under Article 120 of the Criminal Code. The World Medical Association, composed of physicians around the world who work for the highest possible standards of ethical behaviour and care, adopted a resolution condemning the use of forced anal exams to substantiate same-sex sexual activity as “unscientific”, “futile” and “amounting to a form of torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.”

‘In its December 2021 letter, IPHR asked Akmal Saidov, the head of the governmental National Centre for Human Rights, whether Uzbekistan was planning to abolish anal exams citing the World Medical Association’s conclusions. In its reply of February 2022, the National Centre for Human Rights failed to address these concerns, but stated that in Uzbekistan “in the conclusions of a forensic medical examination there is only a reference to a possible sexual act and the word ‘sodomy’ is not mentioned. That question falls to courts to decide.”

‘International human rights groups and AHRCA documented nine cases where forced anal exams were carried out in Uzbekistan between 2017 and 2021. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported in August 2021 that two Uzbekistani Interior Ministry officials, who spoke to them on condition of anonymity, said that anal exams of male detainees are among the most common forms of abuse in the country’s detention centers and prisons.<sup>54</sup>

8.3.9 See also HRW’s August 2021 news release: [Uzbekistan: Forced Anal Testing in Homosexuality Prosecutions](#)<sup>55</sup>.

8.3.10 In 2023, 3 gay men shared their experiences after being convicted under Article 120 and spending between one to two-and-a-half years in prison or correctional facilities. Their treatment involved torture, including solitary confinement, forced anal examination, electric shock, rape, beating, forced HIV testing, extortion, blackmail, theft of private property and money, humiliation, verbal abuse, and inhumane conditions<sup>56</sup>.

8.3.11 The USSD HR Report 2023 stated that ‘Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) community reported being arrested and then released, or being threatened with arrest by law enforcement officers unless they paid a bribe.’<sup>57</sup>

8.3.12 According to the 2023 ECOM report, ‘Based on an analysis of violations of the rights of gay men, trans people and other MSM committed by government agencies, it can be seen that violations related to threats/intimidation, insults, illegal searches and, as a consequence of these activities, extortion of a monetary bribe or other items of material value are

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<sup>53</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPRI\]...](#) (paragraphs 20, 21), 15 March 2023

<sup>54</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 11), 2022

<sup>55</sup> HRW, [Uzbekistan: Forced Anal Testing in Homosexuality Prosecutions](#), 5 August 2021

<sup>56</sup> Unit, [“In Prison, They Named Me Rayhon”](#), 31 July 2023

<sup>57</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 1d), 22 April 2024

most common.<sup>58</sup>

8.3.13 HRW noted in its 2024 World Report, covering 2023 events, that:

‘Police target gay and bisexual men and transgender women with arbitrary detention, prosecution, and imprisonment. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people face discrimination and harassment from state and non-state actors. Uzbek police and courts have relied on the conclusions of forced anal examinations in prosecutions of gay men for consensual same-sex relations. Such exams are a form of violence and torture, according to the World Health Organization.’<sup>59</sup>

8.3.14 ECOM’s report on violations of LGBTI rights in 2022 (2022 ECOM report), published 2023, noted that ‘The main violators of the rights of LGBT people are representatives of law enforcement agencies ...’<sup>60</sup> However, of the 90 perpetrators of rights violations cited, only 23 were recorded as law enforcement representatives and the remainder were given as relatives and other members of society<sup>61</sup>. ILGA Europe noted in its 2022 and 2023 annual reviews of the human rights situation for LGBTI people, that the police were the most common perpetrators of violence, including extortion, against LGBTI people<sup>62 63</sup>, though did not quantify this statement.

8.3.15 On 4 October 2023, the European Parliament issued a resolution on Uzbekistan, which amongst other things noted that Article 120 ‘... not only violates the human rights of gay and bisexual men, but also further marginalises the broader LGBTIQ community, creating a hostile and discriminatory environment, hindering their ability to access basic rights and services and making it challenging for them to live their lives freely and openly.’<sup>64</sup>

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## 8.4 Access to justice

8.4.1 Uzbekistan has a criminal justice system that is formally structured with law enforcement agencies, courts, and correctional facilities<sup>65</sup>. However, corruption is a significant problem, affecting all levels from police to judiciary<sup>66</sup>. The judiciary is not fully independent and is often influenced by political considerations<sup>67 68</sup>. Due process is often not observed, with defendants frequently denied access to legal representation and fair trial procedures<sup>69</sup>.

8.4.2 The 2022 AHRCA joint report noted that ‘In Uzbekistan, Article 120 poses a constant threat to gay and bisexual men in their daily lives and makes it very

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<sup>58</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 29) 2024

<sup>59</sup> HRW, [World Report 2024 – Uzbekistan](#), 11 January 2024

<sup>60</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of gay men, other MSM...](#) (page 26), 2023

<sup>61</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of gay men, other MSM...](#) (page 26), 2023

<sup>62</sup> ILGA Europe, [Annual Review ... January to December 2022](#) (page 158), 2023

<sup>63</sup> ILGA Europe, [Annual Review ... January to December 2023](#), 2024

<sup>64</sup> European Parliament, [... resolution](#) (paragraph W), 4 October 2023

<sup>65</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 1), 22 April 2024

<sup>66</sup> Global OIndex, [Uzbekistan](#) (section 9), 2023

<sup>67</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report Uzbekistan](#) (Rule of Law), 19 March 2024

<sup>68</sup> Global OIndex, [Uzbekistan](#) (section 9), 2023

<sup>69</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 1), 22 April 2024

risky for them to lodge complaints with the authorities about homophobic abuse and discrimination, for fear of revealing, and being subsequently prosecuted for, their sexual orientation...<sup>70</sup>

8.4.3 In its submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle, CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe stated that ‘Article 120 makes it difficult for homosexual and bisexual men to seek justice or report discrimination or rights violations based on their sexual orientation, as they risk facing charges under this article themselves. As a result, many offenses and crimes go unreported and unpunished.’<sup>71</sup>

8.4.4 The same report noted that:

‘The existence of Article 120 also indirectly impacts women who engage in same-sex relations, perpetuating homophobic attitudes in society and deterring lesbians and bisexual women from reporting discrimination or rights violations. In fact, 47% of surveyed LBT women [according to CAGSAN, though no methodology was provided<sup>72</sup>] have experienced violence or discrimination, but avoid seeking help from the courts due to the criminalization of same sex relation between men. The repeal of Article 120 is also crucial for meaningful protection of the rights of LBT women.’<sup>73</sup>

8.4.5 According to the same source:

‘The existence of Article 120 is beneficial for law enforcement officers, since it often serves as a means of personal enrichment (56% of such cases involve extortion) and career advancement, and is also a means of applying pressure in criminal cases, for example, refusing to open a case if the victim is suspected of being LGBT+, or obtaining a confession by threatening to prosecute a suspect under Article 120. To date, only one case of punishment (dismissal) for law enforcement officers guilty of rights violations based on SOGI has been recorded.’<sup>74</sup>

See also [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)

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## 9. Access to services

### 9.1 Education and employment

9.1.1 As noted in the USSD HR Report 2023:

‘The law did not prohibit discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services, such as health care. The law did not explicitly recognize LGBTQI+ couples and their families, nor grant them rights equal to the rights of other persons. Social and employment discrimination were reported by LGBTQI+ individuals ... LGBTQI+ individuals reported having difficulties maintaining steady employment, since most workplaces were hostile towards them.’<sup>75</sup>

9.1.2 In its report covering 2022, ILGA Europe stated ‘LGBT people continue to

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<sup>70</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (page 8), 2022

<sup>71</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 17), 15 March 2023

<sup>72</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (page 8, endnote xviii), 15 March 2023

<sup>73</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 18), 15 March 2023

<sup>74</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 22), 15 March 2023

<sup>75</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

face discrimination and violence if their SOGI is revealed at work.<sup>76</sup> However, the report did not provide any examples of this.

- 9.1.3 Published in Euronews in May 2023, an article by M V Lee Badgett, Professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts, discussed the need to promote economic inclusion of LGBTI people. Badgett stated that there was ‘... little research on how young LGBTI people survive their schooling in Uzbekistan or on how much discrimination LGBTI people face in the workplace or other marketplaces. However, it is reasonable to think that LGBTI people are also vulnerable to maltreatment in those settings in Uzbekistan.’<sup>77</sup>

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## 9.2 Healthcare, including for HIV and gender reassignment surgery

- 9.2.1 The government of Uzbekistan stated in its September 2020 response to the CESCR that:

‘Article 13 of the Health Care Act stipulates that the State provides citizens with health care regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, language, attitude to religion, social origin, beliefs or personal or social status.

‘The State guarantees protection from discrimination for its citizens, regardless of any illness they may have. Persons who violate this provision are held liable in accordance with the procedures established by law.’<sup>78</sup>

- 9.2.2 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘The law prohibited discrimination against those infected with HIV and provided for free health care.’<sup>79</sup> However, according to the same source:

‘Persons known to be HIV-positive reported social isolation and discrimination by public agency workers, health personnel, law enforcement officers, landlords, and employers after their HIV status became known. The military summarily expelled recruits in the armed services found to be HIV-positive. Some LGBTIQ+ community activists reported that hospital wards reviewed the personal history of HIV-positive patients and summarily categorized them as drug addicts, homosexuals, or engaged in commercial sexual exploitation. Hospital officials reportedly sometimes marked some HIV-positive patients’ files as “homosexual” and referred them to police for investigation.’<sup>80</sup>

- 9.2.3 The USSD HR Report 2023 further noted that:

‘The Ministry of Health reportedly considered compulsory HIV testing of men who had sex with men as a response to rising HIV rates. Additionally, activists and media reported that the Ministry of Health had an information-sharing agreement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and regularly identified HIV-positive individuals to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for compulsory testing. Activists have noted this caused HIV-positive individuals

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<sup>76</sup> ILGA Europe, [Annual Review ... January to December 2022](#) (page 157), 2023

<sup>77</sup> Euronews, [Uzbekistan needs a new economic approach that includes the LGBTQ...](#), 17 May 2023

<sup>78</sup> CESCR, [Replies of Uzbekistan to the list of issues...](#) (paragraphs 61, 62), 13 November 2020

<sup>79</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>80</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

to not report their status to the Ministry of Health.<sup>81</sup>

- 9.2.4 The [HIV Justice Network](#) provided information on Article 113 of Uzbekistan's Criminal Code, which makes it an offence to 'expose' another to HIV.

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## 10. Societal treatment and attitudes

### 10.1 Societal and familial views

- 10.1.1 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted 'Deeply negative social attitudes related to sexual orientation and gender identity limited the freedom of expression of the LGBTQI+ community and led to discrimination. Society generally considered same-sex sexual conduct a taboo subject.'<sup>82</sup> The same report noted that 'LGBTQI+ individuals from rural areas especially reported facing intense pressure to keep their orientation secret for fear of discrimination and harassment in their communities, and risk of abuse and ostracism from their families if they were outed.'<sup>83</sup>

- 10.1.2 The 2022 AHRCA joint report noted that:

'Homo- and transphobic views are widespread in Uzbekistan where many people believe that homosexuality is like a contagious disease that spreads and destroys the very fabric of society if it is not prohibited and punished. When families know or suspect a relative of being gay, lesbian or trans, they often force them to conform to societal expectations and consult with medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, mullahs or other religious figures for "treatment". In many cases gay or bisexual men and trans people try to hide their sexual orientation and gender identity for fear of "tarnishing" their family's reputation, losing contact with their loved ones and being ostracized. Many lead double lives in heterosexual relationships...

'The organizations issuing this report are aware of many cases of young gay men whose families drove them from their homes because they did not accept their sexual orientation and/or felt ashamed after neighbours found out. In many cases parents have confiscated their son's passport in order to put pressure on him to "change" and to make it impossible for him to leave the country and live an independent life.'<sup>84</sup> The report did not directly quantify the term 'many'.

- 10.1.3 In its submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle, CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe stated that Article 120 '... contributes to the perpetuation of homophobic attitudes in society, leading to violations of LGBT+ people's rights in various settings such as the family, work, and everyday life.'<sup>85</sup>

- 10.1.4 According to information from Uzbekistan in April 2024 regarding the follow-up to the concluding observations on its third periodic report:

'Same-sex sexual relations are frowned upon by the religion of Islam and other faiths. Decriminalizing same-sex relationships will be widely opposed

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<sup>81</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>82</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>83</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>84</sup> AHRCA and others, [Like living on a different planet: Gays, bisexual men...](#) (pages 6, 7), 2022

<sup>85</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraph 14), 15 March 2023



by the population, 97% of whom are Muslim, and will lead to stigma, an increase in hate crimes, and may have negative consequences for certain groups or individuals due to their sexual orientation and gender identity.

‘At the same time, a public survey conducted on 17–21 May 2023 among respondents in Uzbekistan aged 18 and over (57.1 per cent of men, 42.9 per cent of women) showed that 67.4 per cent of respondents supported the need to toughen punishment, 25.8 per cent of respondents supported the need to maintain the current criminal liability for sodomy, and 5.6 per cent of respondents refused to answer or remained neutral. Respondents who believe that it is necessary to exclude this responsibility from the Criminal Code make up only 1.2%.’<sup>86</sup>

- 10.1.5 Regarding general societal attitudes towards women, and thus also reflecting on the status of lesbians and bisexual women, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) concluding observations on Uzbekistan’s sixth periodic report, dated March 2022, highlighted several concerns regarding gender stereotypes in Uzbekistan. The Committee noted the persistence of deep-rooted gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes that perpetuate discrimination against women in various spheres of life. These stereotypes were particularly evident in media portrayals, educational materials, and within the family structure<sup>87</sup>.
- 10.1.6 The World Bank’s [Country Gender Assessment Report \(CGA\) 2024](#), which ‘... examines gender equality in Uzbekistan across several domains, including education, health, economic activity, protection from gender-based violence, marriage, divorce, and participation in public life’ and ‘considers social norms, assessing cultural attitudes and practices influencing rights and perceptions of women in Uzbekistan’s society ...’<sup>88</sup>, highlighted Uzbekistan’s significant progress on gender equality since 2017, including rights to equal pay, improved access to education and health services, and the introduction of criminal penalties for domestic violence. However, the CGA also noted ‘entrenched gender norms, where women are primarily responsible for caregiving and household duties ...’<sup>89</sup>

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## 10.2 Violence, harassment and discrimination

- 10.2.1 A 2023 report by LGBTI rights group Outright International, which assessed the ability of LGBTI people to register associations and build movements, based on a range of sources, noted regarding Uzbekistan that:

‘In 2021, a mob attacked a “group of fans of Japanese animation films and Korean K-pop music” whom they perceived to be gay. Police responded to the incident by blaming the attack on alleged provocations by Miraziz Bazarov, an independent blogger loosely linked to the fan group who had publicly urged the decriminalization of consensual same-sex conduct. Later that same day, unknown assailants brutally attacked Bazarov; he

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<sup>86</sup> CESCR, [Information received from Uzbekistan regarding the...](#) (paragraphs 29, 30), 16 April 2024

<sup>87</sup> CEDAW, [Concluding observations on the sixth periodic...](#) (paragraphs 13, 19, 29) 1 March 2022

<sup>88</sup> World Bank, [World Bank Country Gender Assessment Report: Uzbekistan](#), 17 June 2024

<sup>89</sup> World Bank, [World Bank Country Gender Assessment Report: Uzbekistan](#), 17 June 2024

subsequently said he believed his assailants were from the State Security Service. [LGBTI-rights activist] Alsu A. said that the police baiting of Bazarov set off a chain of events in which LGBTIQ people were targeted both by the authorities and members of the public:

“This led to demonstrations by Islamic extremists, gathered at the main square in Tashkent, the capital city, demonstrating their hatred for the LGBTIQ people. There were also police raids targeting our communities. Any positive statement or public support for LGBTIQ rights immediately puts our entire communities at risk. It provokes a very extremist, radical reaction by people who are ready to attack and even kill us.”<sup>90</sup>

10.2.2 The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which published annual hate crime data submitted by 57 participating States, civil society and international organisations, observed that Uzbekistan had not submitted data on hate crimes to ODIHR since 2015<sup>91</sup>. However, data provided by LGBTI rights groups to the ODIHR described at least 32 incidents of threats and/or assaults against mostly gay or bisexual men and trans women by non-state actors between 2019 and 2022<sup>92</sup>. According to the data, around 18 incidents occurred in 2022<sup>93</sup>.

10.2.3 The 2022 ECOM report noted that during 2022:

‘... 80 cases of violations of the rights of LGBT people were registered in 8 regions of Uzbekistan and in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The victims included 94 gay men or other MSM [men who have sex with men], 3 trans\* women, and 1 bisexual woman. In addition, 1 heterosexual man and 2 heterosexual women faced violations of their rights due to political persecution or their association with the LGBT community.

‘Most often, violations were committed due to the SOGI of the victims. Grounds for the violation of rights also included HIV status and involvement in sex work.

‘Article 141 CC RUz [[Criminal Code of Uzbekistan](#)] “Violation of the equality of citizens” was violated in 47 cases, Article 206 CC RUz “Abuse of power and authority” in 24 cases, and Article 165 CC RUz “Extortion” in 21 cases...

‘... the prevalence of fake dates, when people meet with LGBT people to further subject them to extortion and violence, is directly linked to [Article 120] ...

‘Cases show the prevalence of hate speech in society, by both government agencies and religious representatives, and even by representatives of civil society. This affects the general level of homophobia and transphobia in the country, which in turn affects local LGBT people. Reported cases of domestic violence are particularly brutal, including one case of murder and several cases of conversion therapy.

‘... in 22 cases, violations were committed by relatives of the victims; and in

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<sup>90</sup> Outright Int., [The Global State of LGBTIQ Organizing...](#) (page 66), September 2023

<sup>91</sup> OSCE ODIHR, [Uzbekistan](#), 2022

<sup>92</sup> OSCE ODIHR, [Overview of Incidents](#) (Uzbekistan, Anti-LGBTI hate crime), 2016 to 2022

<sup>93</sup> OSCE ODIHR, [Overview of Incidents](#) (Uzbekistan, Anti-LGBTI hate crime), 2016 to 2022

19 cases, by neighbors and acquaintances of the victims. In 14 cases, hate groups were organized that purposefully persecute LGBT people; while in 12 cases, LGBT people themselves violated the rights of the community, most often for the purpose of extortion.<sup>94</sup>

10.2.4 In its report covering 2023, ECOM recorded 191 cases of human rights violations based on SOGI across 10 regions of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Karakalpakstan<sup>95</sup>. The report noted that:

‘The total number of victims according to the recorded cases is 209 people, of which 193 are gay men and other MSM (gay men — 136, bisexual men — 50, MSM — 7), 10 trans women, 4 lesbians, and 1 heterosexual man and 1 heterosexual woman who faced a violation of their rights due to their association with the LGBT community and accusations of LGBT propaganda. Most often, violations were committed due to the sexual orientation and/ or gender identity of the victims. In addition, cases were recorded in which HIV status and employment in sex work served as the basis for the violation.’<sup>96</sup>

10.2.5 The 2023 ECOM report noted that violations committed by private individuals, employers, the media, bloggers and religious figures included instances of:

‘... abusive language – 88 cases; assault motivated by hate – 76 cases; death threats – 24 cases; threats not related to murder – 80 cases; blackmail – 37 cases; intimidation – 21 cases; rape – 11 cases; deliberate outing<sup>13</sup> – 23 cases; extortion – 12 cases; illegal restriction of freedom – 9 cases; attempts at conversion therapy by relatives – 11 cases; theft - 5 cases; harassment – 3 case. In certain cases, several types of violations were recorded simultaneously: hate speech – 3 cases; illegal dismissals – 6.’<sup>97</sup>

10.2.6 According to ECOM, most human rights violations in 2022 and 2023 took place in Tashkent and Tashkent region<sup>98 99</sup>. (see also [Internal travel](#), for the number of violations across the country)

10.2.7 The submission to the UPR Fourth Cycle by CAGSAN and ILGA-Europe noted that according to a survey conducted by CAGSAN (no details of the survey methodology was provided<sup>100</sup>):

‘Young LGBT+ people often experience domestic violence (5% of all cases). Some are beaten by their relatives after a voluntary or forced coming out. Others are kicked out of their homes or placed under house arrest.

‘As a result of a homophobic society, LGBT+ people are most often subjected to: beatings (12% of all cases) and outings (10%). In other cases, LGBT+ people faced harassment, threats, insults, denial of medical care, discrimination in the workplace, and so-called “corrective rape” due to their

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<sup>94</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of gay men, other MSM...](#) (page 26), 2023

<sup>95</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 28) 2024

<sup>96</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 28) 2024

<sup>97</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 29) 2024

<sup>98</sup> ECOM, [Uzbekistan 2022](#) (page 5), 2023

<sup>99</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 28) 2024

<sup>100</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (page 8, endnote xxi), 15 March 2023

SOGI.<sup>101</sup> Regarding the ‘other cases’, the source provided no information on what percentage of survey respondents experienced such treatment.

10.2.8 The USSD HR Report 2023 stated that:

‘Reports of societal harassment and discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons continued. Alleged perpetrators of violence against LGBTQI+ persons were not investigated or prosecuted. LGBTQI+ persons reported that the rise in religiosity in the country also contributed to an increase in restrictions and harassment. LGBTQI+ youth reported being sent to imams for corrective help with their “conditions,” only to be subsequently sexually abused by the imams.’<sup>102</sup>

10.2.9 Regarding violence against LGBTI persons, Uzbekistan’s report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture (UNCAT), dated February 2024, stated that ‘Hate speech, hate crimes, other forms of insults or physical violence, along with discriminatory practices by both individuals and organizations, are ... not tolerated.’<sup>103</sup>

10.2.10 ECOM recorded the number of human rights violations by region in 2022 and 2023, based on a person’s SOGI, though the source did not indicate the nature of the violations, or who the perpetrators were<sup>104 105</sup>:

City/Region	Number of violations	
	2022	2023
Andijan and Andijan region	3	5
Bukhara and Bukhara region	1	10
Fergana and Fergana region	2	3
Jizzakh and Jizzakh region	10	22
Namangan and Namangan region	19	28
Navoi and Navoi region	1	45
Qarshi and Qarshi region	-	4
Republic of Karakalpakstan (city of Nukus)	2	1
Samarkand and Samarkand region	3	23
City/Region	Number of violations	
	2022	2023
Tashkent and Tashkent region	39	49
Urgench and Xorazm region	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>191</b>

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## 11. Civil rights groups and activities

### 11.1 LGBTI organisations or advocates and their ability to operate

11.1.1 In relation to LGBTI rights groups, a report published on 31 March 2022 by the UK House of Commons Library noted ‘There are few organisations in Uzbekistan working to promote equality and LGBT+ rights.’<sup>106</sup> And that

<sup>101</sup> CAGSAN/ILGA Europe, [Joint Submission to the \[UPR\]...](#) (paragraphs 24, 25), 15 March 2023

<sup>102</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

<sup>103</sup> UNCAT, [Sixth periodic report submitted by Uzbekistan...](#) (paragraph 269), 8 February 2024

<sup>104</sup> ECOM, [Uzbekistan 2022](#) (page 5), 2023

<sup>105</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of LGBT people...](#) (page 28) 2024

<sup>106</sup> House of Commons Library, [LGBT+ rights in south and central Asia](#) (page 41), 31 March 2022

‘In Uzbek law (Article 3, Law on Public Associations), the formation of an association “whose activity is directed towards the destruction of society’s ethical foundations or general humanistic values” is prohibited. The same article also states that “the formation and activity of a public association that infringes upon the health and morality of the population and the rights and legally guaranteed interests of citizens will be prosecuted”.’<sup>107</sup>

11.1.2 The September 2023 report by Outright International on the ability to register LGBTI organisations noted that:

‘When Outright conducted research in 2018 for our first report on the right to register, we could not identify any LGBTIQ organizations in Uzbekistan. For this report, we were able to contact three activists representing two different organizations. The legal and political environment still makes it extremely difficult for such organizations to operate, and neither organization identified by Outright is legally registered.

‘... all organizations that are not registered are considered illegal. Active participation in an illegal organization is subject to a fine and a prison sentence of up to five years. Registration requirements are onerous, and the law allows the authorities to refuse to register an organization if its name offends the “morality, national or religious feelings of citizens.” Once registered, an organization must submit extensive activity reports to the Ministry of Justice, and must provide the Ministry with an astonishing level of detail in advance of holding any event...

‘Under these circumstances, and in the context of continued criminalization of same-sex intimacy under the Penal Code, Uzbek LGBTIQ organizations are disinclined to even attempt to register, despite the risks associated with operating without registration. LGBTQ activism in Uzbekistan is “almost impossible” as a result of intimidation from both the authorities and members of the public. Sergey D., an activist interviewed by Outright who works for an LGBTIQ organization that focuses on mental health, physical health, and human rights, said that although no provisions expressly outlaw LGBTIQ CSOs, they cannot attain legal status openly because article 120 creates security risks for anyone engaging openly in LGBTIQ organizing. Vitaliy S., an activist with another LGBTIQ organization founded in 2019 that also focuses on providing mental health services, shared this impression.’<sup>108</sup>

11.1.3 The 2022 ECOM report noted that ‘... it is impossible to register an organization working with LGBT people, even in the field of HIV prevention.’<sup>109</sup> And in its 2022 report analysing Uzbekistan’s legislation relating to LGBTI people and HIV (2022 SOGI/HIV report), ECOM noted that ‘To date, there are no officially registered LGBT organizations in Uzbekistan.’<sup>110</sup> ILGA Europe’s annual review of LGBTI rights in 2023 noted for Uzbekistan that ‘Civil society reported that there are few organisations that provide social assistance and support to LGBT.’<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> House of Commons Library, [LGBT+ rights in south and central Asia](#) (page 41), 31 March 2022

<sup>108</sup> Outright Int., [The Global State of LGBTIQ Organizing...](#) (pages 63 to 64), September 2023

<sup>109</sup> ECOM, [National report on violations of the rights of gay men, other MSM...](#) (page 4), 2023

<sup>110</sup> ECOM, [Analysis of the national legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan...](#) (page 3), 2022

<sup>111</sup> ILGA Europe, [Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay...](#), February 2024

## 11.2 Meeting places and events

11.2.1 According to an article in Open Democracy, an activist who supported gay men to get HIV tests said in 2020 that even prior to COVID-19 social distancing rules, ‘... gay Uzbeks did not form public or organised communities. They don’t have gay clubs or organisations that support them like shelters. They don’t gather in large groups in public places.’<sup>112</sup>

11.2.2 ECOM noted in its 2022 SOGI/HIV report that:

‘A decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures to further improve the procedure for organizing and holding mass events” is in effect in the country. According to the decree, organizers are not only obliged to notify the authorities of their intent to hold a peaceful assembly, but also do not have the right to publish information about the planned event before it is approved. Thus, the authorities of Uzbekistan can prohibit the holding of a peaceful assembly, and also ensure that information about planned assemblies will not be available.

‘Paragraph 59 of the decree states: “during a mass event, participants are prohibited from using emblems, symbols, flags, banners and other items, which are aimed at destroying the moral foundations of society...”

‘LGBT symbols or banners that call for equality and non-discrimination for LGBT people may be considered by authorities as symbols that undermine the moral foundations of society.’<sup>113</sup>

11.2.3 In its report on global Pride events, Outright International noted that Uzbekistan was one of 91 countries in which it did not identify any public Pride events in 2022<sup>114</sup>. No Pride events were identified by CPIT in 2023 (see [Bibliography](#) for sources consulted).

## 12. Freedom of movement

### 12.1 Demography

12.1.1 Uzbekistan is approximately 447,400 sq km in area<sup>115</sup>, with a population of over 36.5 million (2024), the majority of whom are Muslim (88%, mostly Sunni)<sup>116</sup>. No information on the number of people who identified as LGBTI could be found amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

12.1.2 The country is divided into 12 [regions](#) (Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Sirdarya, Surkhandarya, Tashkent, Fergana, Khorezm), and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan<sup>117</sup>. There are 162 districts and 118 cities<sup>118</sup>. Just over half the population live in urban areas. Major population centres are in the

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<sup>112</sup> Open Democracy, [Meet the Uzbek activists using apps to connect gay men...](#), 20 May 2020

<sup>113</sup> ECOM, [Analysis of the national legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan...](#) (page 10), 2022

<sup>114</sup> Outright Int., [We Remain Resilient: Pride Around the World In 2022](#) (page 54), June 2023

<sup>115</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook – Uzbekistan](#) (Geography), 15 May 2024

<sup>116</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook – Uzbekistan](#) (People and society), 15 May 2024

<sup>117</sup> Invest in Uzbekistan, [Major cities](#), no date

<sup>118</sup> Invest in Uzbekistan, [Major cities](#), no date

easternmost part of the country, including the capital, Tashkent, which has a population of about 2.6 million<sup>119</sup>.



Source: CIA World Factbook<sup>120</sup>

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## 12.2 Internal travel

- 12.2.1 According to article 32 of the Constitution, ‘... everyone lawfully present in the territory of Uzbekistan has the right to freedom of movement throughout the country and to choose his or her place of stay and residence, with the exception of restrictions established by law.’<sup>121</sup>
- 12.2.2 A 2020 report by the World Bank outlined changes to Uzbekistan’s propiska (residency permit) system since 2017. According to the report, while temporary registration was easier than in the past, those lacking a local propiska faced numerous restrictions, including in areas such as employment, education, and housing. The enforcement of propiska rules involved local authorities and occasional document checks. Reforms in January 2019 allowed individuals to apply for jobs outside their registered region and obtain temporary status upon employment, but acquiring permanent registration in Tashkent based on employment remained limited<sup>122</sup>.
- 12.2.3 According to the Freedom House Freedom in the World 2024 report on Uzbekistan, ‘Permission is required to move to a new city, and bribes are commonly paid to obtain the necessary documents. ....’<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook – Uzbekistan](#) (People and society), 15 May 2024

<sup>120</sup> CIA, [The World Factbook – Uzbekistan](#) (Country map), 15 May 2024

<sup>121</sup> OHCHR, [Common core document...](#) (paragraph 124), 25 July 2023

<sup>122</sup> World Bank, [Policy Research Working Paper 9107...](#) (pages 19 to 20), January 2020

<sup>123</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 Uzbekistan](#) (G1), 2024

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
  - general anti-discrimination provisions (and inclusion or absence of reference to LGBTI people)
  - same-sex sexual behaviour
  - same-sex couples, including civil union and marriage
  - gender reassignment/transition, and recognition of gender identity of trans people
  - relevant significant court cases and caselaw
- State attitudes and treatment
  - statements made by government figures and public officials
  - government policies/programmes that assist or discriminate against LGBTI people
  - restrictions/enforcement of law against LGBTI people /organisations
  - other state treatment, such as harassment, blackmail, bribery, corrective therapy
  - access to public services
- Societal attitudes and treatment
  - public opinion/views/surveys, including anti-LGBTI movements and public demonstrations
  - prevailing cultural and family attitudes to male/female relationships, family and non-conforming behaviour
  - religious group attitudes, statements and actions
  - media representation, language and discourse
  - treatment by the public, including family members
- LGBTI people and their lives
  - LGBTI organisations (including possibility to operate openly)
  - Meeting places and events for LGBTI people

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **17 July 2024**

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section**

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## Changes from last version of this note

First version

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

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## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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