

Equality beyond Pride: Building a more inclusive society

Building an inclusive society starts with recognising that equality is not only a fundamental right, but also a shared responsibility that benefits individuals, communities and society as a whole. Through its work, the [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) seeks to promote equality and challenge discrimination so that all individuals can enjoy their rights and opportunities on an equal basis.

Over the years, Malta has taken important steps forward in several areas of equality, including the advancement of LGBTIQ+ rights. Changes in legislation, policies and public attitudes have contributed to a society in which more LGBTIQ+ individuals can live openly and enjoy greater recognition and protection of their rights. Recent statistics on public attitudes further support this progress.

According to the [latest National Statistics Office \(NSO\) survey](#), published in August 2026, high levels of comfort were reported towards having neighbours of different ethnicities, religions and political opinions, as well as those identifying as LGBTIQ+. In particular, 88% of women and 81% of men reported being totally comfortable having neighbours who identify as LGBTIQ+.

These figures suggest a high level of acceptance within Maltese society. However, to better understand the extent of this progress, it is also important to consider the everyday experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals and whether this acceptance is reflected in their daily lives.

This was explored in the NCPE's [Qualitative Research Study on LGBTIQ+ Discrimination](#), published in 2022 and carried out as part of a set of initiatives of the EU co-funded project [Empowerment for Diversity \(E4D\)](#). The study examined experiences of discrimination in employment, access to goods and services, and social relationships, focusing on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. It also built on research conducted by the NCPE in 2011, providing an opportunity to consider how experiences and attitudes had changed over time.

The comparison with the earlier research points to positive change. Unlike participants in the 2011 study, participants in the more recent research generally

assumed that they would be accepted by their neighbours and did not feel the need to conceal their same-sex relationships. [One participant](#) linked this greater openness to a change in society's overall mindset:

“There is a change in the way gay men are seen in society. Perhaps, before, it was taken for granted that they are promiscuous. Today, people know that there are gay people in steady relationships. I believe that gay men are more accepted by neighbours because of this.”

At the same time, the research showed that some concerns remain despite this growing acceptance. While participants did not report clashes with their neighbours, some feared that their sexual orientation or same-sex relationship could be used against them if a disagreement arose. This suggests that, although attitudes have improved, greater acceptance does not necessarily mean that prejudice has completely disappeared.

It is within this context that visibility continues to play an important role. Indeed, a participant in the [NCPE's research study](#) emphasised the importance of Pride events, maintaining that *“pride marches and activities are still seen as important to generate awareness about LGBTIQ+ expression in public.”*

This year's Pride theme, *‘[Equality from the Heart](#)’*, therefore provides an opportunity not only to celebrate diversity and the progress achieved, but also to reflect on what equality means in everyday life: in the workplace, at school, when accessing services, within families and communities, and also in online spaces.

Such reflection is particularly important because progress in laws and policies does not always mean that discrimination has disappeared from everyday realities. While Malta has taken important steps forward, LGBTIQ+ individuals may still encounter prejudice and discriminatory attitudes, including offensive or discriminatory comments on social media. As the [NCPE's E4D research study](#) states:

“Social media are widely seen as a double-edged sword, as, on the one hand, they could serve as a medium to transmit accurate information (or a medium through which people could communicate with one another), and, on the other, transmit misinformation or serve as a medium where malicious comments could be circulated.”

This highlights an important distinction between progress at the legal and policy level and the way equality is experienced in everyday life. Malta's strong legal and policy framework represents significant achievement and has placed the country among Europe's leaders in LGBTIQ+ rights. Malta ranks second in [ILGA-Europe's 2026 Rainbow Map](#) with a score of 88%, following ten consecutive years at the top of the ranking. This strong position reflects Malta's sustained commitment to advancing LGBTIQ+ equality. This commitment is also reflected at national level through the [LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027](#), which builds on previous achievements while identifying areas where further action is needed.

Malta also championed human dignity and equality during the Presidency of the Council of Europe. Indeed, the adoption of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2025\)7 on Equal Rights for Intersex Persons](#) in October 2025 marked an important milestone. As the Council of Europe's first comprehensive recommendation specifically addressing the rights of intersex persons, it provides a framework to strengthen their protection from discrimination and safeguard their rights.

These developments show the significant progress Malta has made in advancing LGBTIQ+ equality. However, progress should also be reflected in whether people feel respected and protected, and whether they can participate fully in society without fear of discrimination.

The NCPE continues to contribute towards building an inclusive society by promoting equality, raising awareness, conducting research, providing training and challenging stereotypes and discrimination. It also investigates complaints of discrimination within the areas covered by its remit.

Indeed, reporting discrimination is an important part of addressing unfair treatment. Individuals who believe they have experienced discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in employment, banking and financial institutions, and education are therefore encouraged to contact the NCPE to seek information about their rights and, where applicable, lodge a complaint.

Building a more inclusive society requires a shared commitment to equality, respect and dignity by all. Equality should not only be celebrated during Pride, but it should also be a lived daily experience.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2276 8200, equality@gov.mt or NCPE's social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn - NCPE.Malta)

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