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Christophe Locatelli · Jun 25, 2021 · 4 min read

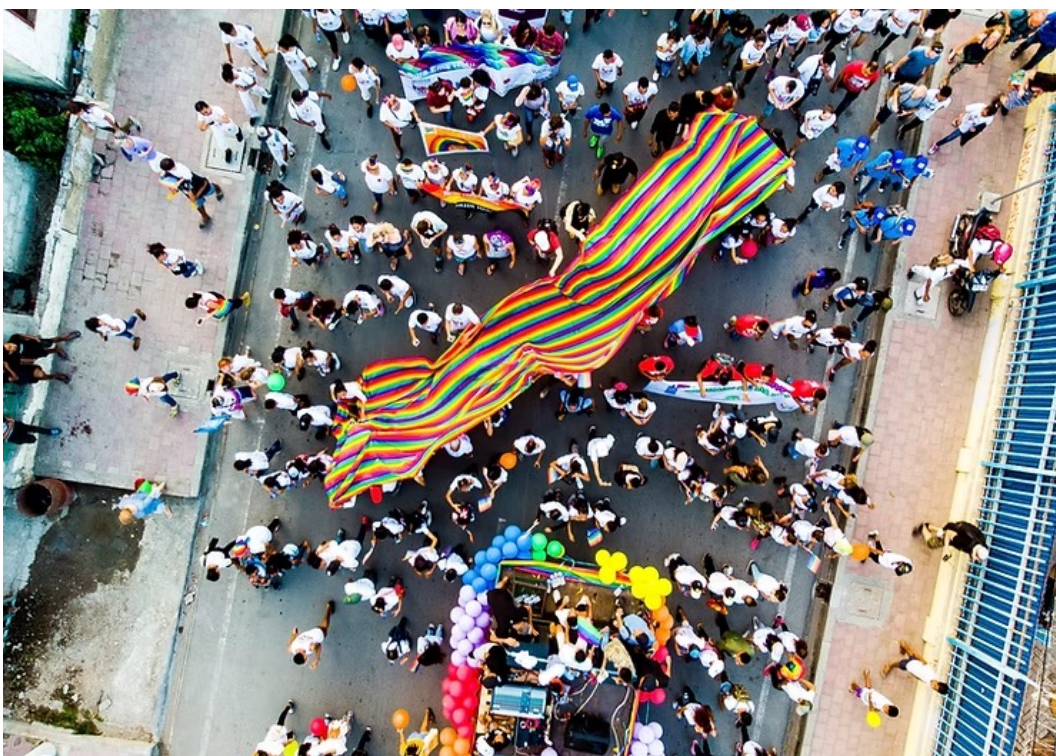


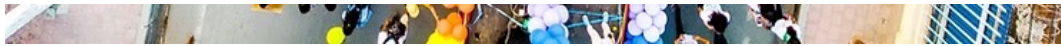
## The History of Pride

Updated: Dec 4, 2021

The LGBTQ+ community and allies celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride throughout June, and events often extend through the whole summer. Pride today is seen as a massive celebration of awareness, festivities, and even major companies now include Pride in marketing campaigns.

In this guide, we will go through the timeline of when the Pride movement started, how it has evolved, and the change that still needs to happen worldwide, as despite what appears to be an ever more tolerant world, the LGBTQ+ community still lacks full rights and equality.





## What is Pride?

'Pride' is about the visibility, self-proclamation, equality and dignity of LGBT+ people.

Each year, across the summer months, the LGBT+ community and their allies come together to celebrate Pride, with parades, parties, educational workshops, and other activities that highlight LGBT+ people's lives and legacies.

Pride is held specifically in June in remembrance of the [Stonewall Riots](#). The Stonewall Riots happened in June 1969, New York City. One of the most popular gay clubs was violently raided by police, but the community stood up and fought back, sparking protests and eventually the first pride parade to demand equal rights and respect.



Aftermath of the Stonewall Riots, 1969

## Was Pride originally a protest?

Stormé DeLarverie, remembered as a gay rights activist and entertainer, was the person whose encounter with the police on the night of the Stonewall Riots allegedly began the moment when people decided to resist the police and spark what we now know as the Stonewall Riots. DeLarverie spoke of the events as a moment in which the LGBT+ community openly protested unequal treatment, ["It was a rebellion, it was an uprising, it was a civil rights disobedience..."](#).

**"It was a rebellion, it was an uprising, it was a civil rights disobedience"**

The Stonewall Riots ignited a fight in the LGBT+ community where they would demand

visible change. Five months after Stonewall, activists began to organise the march which would commemorate the first anniversary of the Raid on the Stonewall bar. The march was planned for the last Saturday in June with "[no dress or age regulations](#)". Activist and Politician L. Craig Schoonmaker suggested "Pride" as the movement name, saying that even though the gay community lacked power, they definitely had Pride.

When the Pride marches began, they were not huge festivals with ticketing systems and corporate sponsorship; they started as political movements. During this time, being gay was still seen as an illness in the US and the UK, and adults were arrested for consensual sexual behaviours.



One of the first Pride marches, Boston

In 1972, the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Front held the first Pride in the UK. This first Pride event only had 700 participants. Compared to modern-day UK Prides, the numbers were so few because people were scared to be seen, arrested, lose their jobs or be socially ostracised in other ways for being open about their sexual identity. However, the people who did attend wanted to demand change, so that no one would have to fear being open about their sexuality. Famous political activist [Peter Tattchel](#) described the event as showing that the community were "proud, not ashamed. Determined to come out of the shadows and stand up for our rights, we wanted to make ourselves visible and demand LGBT liberation."

**"We were proud, not ashamed."**







Pride, London 1972

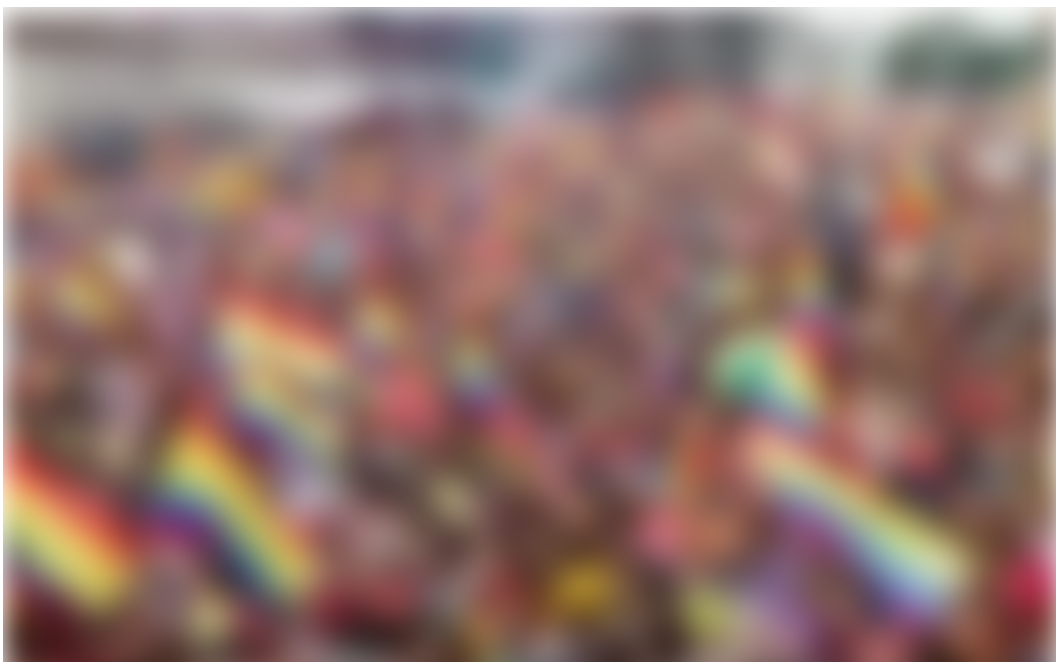
## Why is Pride still important today?

Our freedom to celebrate Pride in countries such as the UK is only a celebration due to the people who came before and protested for the right to celebrate diverse gender and sexual identities. For example, two transgender women of colour, [Marsha P. Johnson](#) and [Sylvia Rivera](#), who are remembered today as two of the first people to resist the police at Stonewall, were key figures in progressing the gay movement in the US. Despite fighting for gay rights, they often faced transphobia from the cisgender white gay community.

Remembering Johnson's and Rivera's legacy is vital when celebrating Pride. Many transgender people, especially transgender people of colour, still do not have full rights or protections worldwide, reflecting the lack of protection and acceptance Johnson and Rivera faced in the 20th century. For example, 2020 saw one of the highest numbers of transgender people murdered on record in the US. In 1992, Marsha P Johnson's body was found in a river; her friends believe it was a homicide.

### "2020 saw one of the highest numbers of transgender people murdered on record in the US"

In the UK today, nearly half of all LGBT+ pupils report being bullied. There are hundreds of homophobic and transphobic related hate crimes reported. Despite the World Health Organisation no longer classing being transgender as a mental health issue, trans people in the UK still must receive a mental health diagnosis before receiving treatment. Once the diagnosis is obtained, transgender people can still wait up to four years before receiving treatment for their [gender dysphoria](#).





Pride is still not able to happen in every country globally. In 71 countries, homosexuality is still illegal. In eleven of those countries, the death penalty is possible for private adult consensual sexual activity. Along with freedom of speech oppression in Russia, significant evidence points to the detention and torture of gay men in Chechnya. Prides held in Poland, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Uganda have been met with violence from the public and the police.

## "Homosexuality is still illegal in 71 countries"

Harrowing statistics of violence against LGBT+ people and lack of rights around the world show that Pride must still be a protest for those who do not have the complete freedom to march, and for all of the LGBT+ community who still do not have full equal rights.

Pride will always be a protest until all of us are truly free to be proud of who we are.

For more resources on this topic, head to our dedicated [LGBTQ+ Rights & Issues](#) section.

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