



The Equality Act and LGBT+ rights

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Coming out in the 70s was not a good place to be. You could be called names and beaten up. Nothing would be done as the police didn't want to know. It felt like we were the scourge of the planet.

The pubs & clubs were underground and in some, gay women were not allowed in without a member to sign you in. The 'member' had to be a man.

At work you dare not come out as you could lose your job, if you went out on a works do, you had to take a male friend as a cover. This was a time before the Equality Act came in. The LGBT+ community had virtually no protection at work.

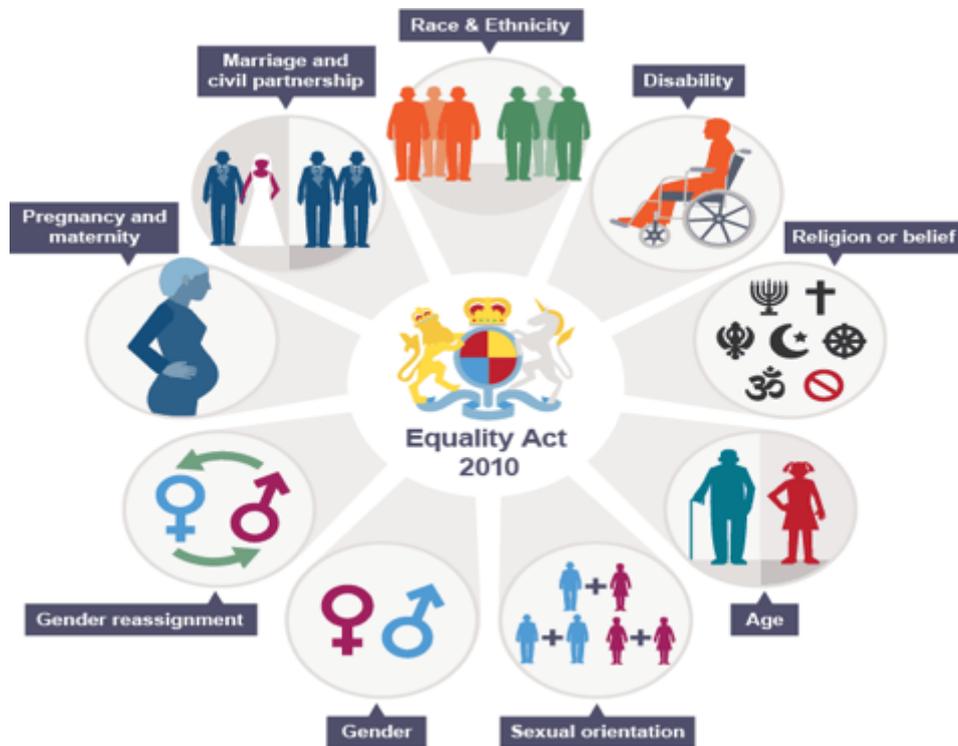
We had to try & fight for our rights to be accepted. That is, if you were brave enough to stand up & be counted as been arrested was a strong possibility.

If you weren't out to your family, you had to lie where you were going. Many people also tried different ways to cover up the fact that they were LGBT+. A lot of gay men referred to each other with women's names. The gay community also had its own language called Polaris. This was used so that straight people didn't know you were gay and just thought it was a foreign language.

All of this was a cover. A hang on from the time when it was illegal for men to be gay and they could have been sent to prison, All of this was to try and keep safe.

As the years went on things, did get better, in 1967 an act came in that lowered the age of consent to 21. Before that gay men could go to prison for life.

In 2010, a lot changed as the Equality Act come into place. This was a revelation you could no longer be discriminated against for your personal characteristics as set out in the picture below:



It was hard for everyone as it was so new, but this is where the unions came into their own. We were there to tell employers they could no longer treat their staff as outcasts, and the union's membership grew.

Even staff in the workplace, had to get their head around the fact that it was unlawful to be sacked or be bullied just because you were LGBT+.

GMB have come on leaps and bounds around supporting and encouraging members to start up their own Self Organised groups right across the union.

We now have National Strand leads and we have just started a national Trans & Non-Binary group. We are now having meetings with the LGBT+ leads from each of Regional Equality Forums across all 9 Regions

I am proud to be a member of the GMB Union. My branch, B01, supports all our LGBT+ campaigns, as does my region, Birmingham & West Midlands. I am even prouder to be the National LGBT+ Stand Lead, and be the support for our LGBT+ Members..

Our GMB union is going from strength to strength and will lead the way for the LGBT+



community and for other Unions to follow.

Happy Birthday, Equality Act!

