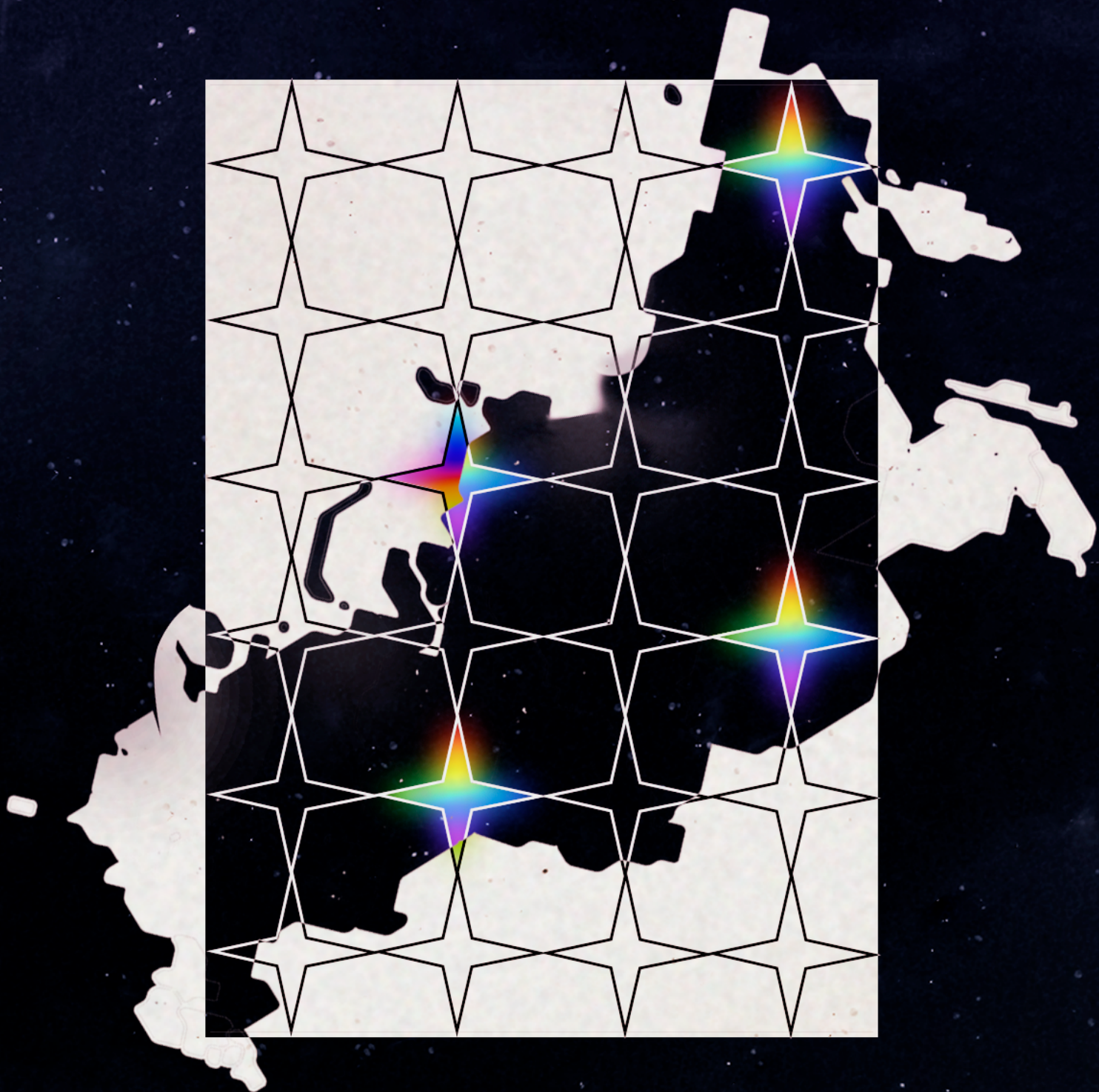


2025



LGBT+ community in Russia. Human rights defenders' perspective

 **COMING
OUT**

 **sphere** 

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LGBTQ+

Non-Profit Organization

Coming Out

Since 2008, Coming Out has been protecting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and helping queer people feel safer in Russia.

Our main goal is to establish equal legal and social rights for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Our psychologists and lawyers provide free consultations for LGBTQ+ people and their loved ones. We monitor discrimination to collect evidence of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Russia and work with the authorities on cases of discrimination and violence. We educate journalists to use inclusive language when reporting on LGBTQ+ issues and consult medical professionals, psychologists, and HR specialists on how to engage with queer communities.

All services we provide are free of charge.

Book a consultation [in our Telegram bot.](#)

Our social media

-  [@comingoutspb](#)
-  [@comingout.global](#)
-  [@global.comingout](#)
-  [@comingoutglobal](#)
-  [@comingoutspb](#)

Contact us

-  contact@comingoutspb.org

Our website

-  comingoutspb.org

Sphere Foundation

Sphere Foundation is a human rights organization that has been supporting the rights of LGBT+ people and organizations since 2011. In 2024, we expanded our mission to include psychological services for straight cisgender women.

We strive to resist the anti-gender movement in Russia and make changes that would protect all people from violence and discrimination motivated by sexuality and/or gender identity.

We provide free psychological and legal consultations, publish reports for international institutions (both individually and in partnership with other organizations), provide legal aid in courts on all levels, run educational events for professionals, and develop our own media.

For legal assistance, mental health support, and emergency services, please use our [Telegram bot](#).

Our social media:

-  [@spherequeer](#)
-  [@spherequeer](#)
-  [@SphereQueer](#)
-  [@spherequeer](#)
-  [@SphereFund](#)

Our website:

-  [spherequeer.org](#)

Glossary

We believe that it is vital to use inclusive language in this report; however, we understand that some readers may be unfamiliar with it. Here are the key terms and abbreviations that have been used throughout the report, the meaning of which may not be as obvious.

Abrosexuality: a term used to describe sexual attraction or sexuality that fluctuates throughout a person's life. At various stages, abrosexual people may feel different kinds of sexual attraction or a complete lack of it. Such fluctuations may happen irregularly and with no apparent cause.

Aromantic people: people who do not experience romantic attraction or experience it only partially.

Asexual people: people who do not experience sexual attraction or experience it only partially.

Bisexuality: experience of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to both men and women, not necessarily in equal measure nor at the same time.

Cisgender people: people whose gender identity corresponds to the sex assigned at birth.

Deadname: the name that a transgender person no longer uses; usually the name given at birth. It can be a legal name (i.e. one listed on their official documents) or simply a "dead" name, one that no longer exists on record if the person's official documents have been changed.

Fake dates: a criminal act with intent of theft, primarily committed against gay and bisexual men. The perpetrator arranges a "date" with the victim online. Upon meeting, the perpetrator extorts money from the victim under threat of outing.

Gay people: people who experience emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction exclusively or primarily towards people of the same gender.

Gender dysphoria: distress caused by a mismatch between a person's gender identity and the sex assigned at birth, as well as between gender identity and their physical characteristics and/or perception of their gender by others.

Gender expression: expression of various aspects of a person's gender identity and/or gender role through appearance, behavior, clothing, and accessories.

Gender identity: a person's individual sense of their gender, their personal relationship to the concept of gender. A person may self-identify as male (boy, man), female (girl, woman), or other gender (non-binary). Gender identity is an internal experience and therefore may not always be visible to others.

Gender non-conforming people: people whose gender expression and behavior differ from those traditionally associated with that gender and do not conform to societal preconceptions around gender characteristics.

Intersex: a term used to describe the experience of a person born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads, reproductive organs, and chromosome patterns) that do not fit the typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex variations may manifest at birth (when a child is born with "atypical" genitals), during puberty (when puberty does not occur or occurs in a different way), when trying to conceive, or later in life. In some cases, a person may never discover that they are intersex.

LGBT+ (LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA+): an established initialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. The plus sign is included to represent additional identities and groups.

Non-binary person: a person whose gender identity cannot be defined within the margins of the gender binary (i.e. a person who does not fully identify as either female or male).

Outing: the act of disclosing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or another stigmatized characteristic without their consent.

Pansexuality: emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender. Pansexual people do not view gender and sexual characteristics as determining factors in forming a relationship ("loving a person, not their gender").

Polyamory: the practice of ethical, consensual non-monogamous relationships involving more than two people.

SOGIE: sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

Transgender people: people whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Research Methodology

This study is based on interviews with various experts working with LGBT+ people: human rights defenders, lawyers, staff members of LGBT+ initiatives, journalists, and researchers. We spoke with them about the key events of 2025 affecting LGBT+ people, the application of repressive legislation and its broader consequences, the levels of violence and discrimination driven by homophobia and transphobia, anti-LGBT+ censorship, the state of the human rights sector, as well as the impact of global political processes (such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the rightward shift in the US and Europe, and global migration policies) on Russian LGBT+ people.

Nineteen interviews were carried out with various experts. Most experts were located outside of Russia, working remotely with and for the Russian LGBT+ community; only 5 people continue to work in Russia. The purpose was to speak with human rights defenders addressing different issues within the LGBT+ community across various regions of Russia. However, people located outside of Russia were more willing to agree to interviews, and their contacts were easier to find. The underground or semi-underground nature of volunteering inside Russia obstructed contact with those continuing their work in different regions. Consequently, regional differences were less fully captured this year than last year.

As with any research method, expert interviewing has its limitations. Experts' responses may be influenced by their personal experiences, views, and beliefs, which makes the results subjective. It is expected that the most complete picture of the situation of LGBT+ people in Russia can be obtained by comparing expert assessments with each other, as well as with our [quantitative data](#) obtained through a survey.

For the safety of the experts who participated in the interviews, names, organization names, and locations are revealed solely with their consent.

The interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics:

- »» Overall assessment of the situation in 2025 (compared to 2024).
- »» The state of the human rights sector in general, and of specific initiatives/ organizations/independent activists.
- »» Practices of applying repressive legislation.
- »» Raids on clubs and their consequences.
- »» Denunciations of LGBT+ people.
- »» The position of transgender people and the consequences of the ban on gender transition.
- »» Censorship and the state of queer culture.
- »» The economic position of LGBT+ people.
- »» Discrimination in employment and education.

-
- »» Hate-motivated violence.
 - »» LGBT+ people's access to healthcare.
 - »» The position of LGBT+ parents.
 - »» The position of LGBT+ adolescents.
 - »» The impact of international political processes (war, rightward shifts) on LGBT+ people.
 - »» 2026 prospects.

Key Changes in 2025

Experts note a deterioration in the situation of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2025, observing the routinization of repression, further development of criminal prosecution practices, the limitation of the legal personality of LGBT+ individuals, and the social exclusion of the community.

Experts describe a shift from the shock of 2024, which followed the designation of a certain “international LGBT movement” as an extremist organization, to a **“routinized catastrophe,”** in which constant restrictions and persecution have become the norm, and public reactions to them have weakened. This is reflected in people adapting to repressions and a decrease in publicized/publicly visible persecution cases.

“To me, the main issue is the routinization of catastrophe. That is, what was horrifying for the first, perhaps, year or two, is now an everyday reality, much like the war.”

– Dmitry Dubrovsky, researcher

“Given that “LGBT+ extremism” was a new concept for the queer community in Russia in 2024, there was a lot of panic, hysteria, emotion, fear, and apprehension. As for 2025, it became, in my view, the year when people began to grow accustomed to the new repressive reality. Public outlash cases are few and far between. For me, if 2025 were to be characterized by certain tags, they would be: underground, silence, escapism, and freezing behavior..”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

Experts involved in news monitoring have pointed out a new challenge this year: **the lack of public reaction and publicity in general is restricting experts' access to data on violations of the rights of LGBT+ people.**

“The main problem I see is this: not only have there been fewer news reports in 2025 – significantly fewer – but it is also unclear why that was. I think there might be several reasons why fewer reports are being written. Very often, when yet another fine is issued against, say, an online streaming service, people no longer want to write about it or bother to figure out how huge of a fine it is; it has become a matter of habit. In addition, people have grown afraid to speak about such things, so I am never certain as to whether there are no news reports because none ever existed, or simply because no one has reported on events that did, in fact, occur.”

– Itil' Tyomnaya, the Crime 6.21 project

In 2025, the first criminal sentences were handed down in “extremism cases”, and the practice of **criminal prosecution** took shape. Cases against LGBT+ activists emerged.

“In 2025, the criminal prosecutions practice grew and was established as a means of persecuting individuals - essentially for their identity - under the guise of punishing them for unlawful activity.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

“2025 was the year when the LGBT+ community in Russia began to go fully underground, and the prosecution practices have already started to take shape, taking into account the ruling of the Supreme Court. That is, at present, the majority of rulings in initiated criminal cases have occurred precisely in 2025. While 2024 saw targeted, demonstrative repressions and arrests, 2025 marked a transition from the fight against ‘propaganda’ to full-fledged criminal prosecution specifically for participation in an ‘extremist’ organization.”

– Katya, Head of the legal aid program, the Sphere Foundation

“In 2025, there have been six verdicts in extremist cases. That is, all of the verdicts we currently have were issued in 2025. Cases were launched against LGBT+ activists – that is, against those who we expected would be targeted. When the Supreme Court issued its ruling designating ‘the international LGBT public movement’ as an extremist organization, absolutely everyone said that this ruling is ultimately directed against the nation as a whole, not only against activists, one

way or another. But the first cases launched were not against activists; activists were left alone for the time being. It was only in 2025 that a number of cases against them appeared, and these can no longer be considered random.”

– Itil’ Tyomnaya, the Crime 6.21 Project

Furthermore, experts note persecution of **book publishers and bookstores** for the “LGBT propaganda” as a new trend in 2025.

“In 2024, the most heavily fined entities, in terms of the total sum of fines, were streaming services, which were penalized for the so-called ‘LGBT propaganda.’ In 2025, this flurry of fines did not disappear entirely, but became noticeably smaller, and book authors and publishers came under threat. I think that the case that has been launched against a publisher will not be the only one, because there seems to be a trend: inspectors come to bookstores, seize certain books, and subsequently turn their attention to the organization that has published those books. Moreover, this is entirely legal activity. These are books that are not on any extremist lists.”

– Itil’ Tyomnaya, the Crime 6.21 Project

Censorship and state-imposed restrictions on access to online resources are another systemic issue highlighted by experts.

“First and foremost, this refers to the shrinking of the Russian internet that is currently underway. In 2025, a full-scale trend emerged, whereby people have increasingly fewer opportunities to use any applications, internet resources, and communication platforms that are not the ‘Max’ messenger. This trend is very alarming, because we fear that at some point people will simply lose access to alternative information and to resources for help – not only ours, but those of other organizations as well.”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

Experts also draw attention to a **rise in violence and cases of blackmail, perpetrated both by law enforcement agencies and by third parties, including family members.**

“There have been more hate crimes involving serious violence. For example, in 2025, 7 serious hate crimes were registered. Moreover, in two of the cases, law enforcement authorities did not take action at all. We are not talking street beatings, but murders, kidnappings, and

robberies. There have also been instances of excessive use of force by officials, with violence motivated by SOGIE. Three murders have been documented. In one of these cases, there is no information suggesting that any investigation was conducted. There has been one attempted murder motivated by SOGIE. In terms of more serious incidents, the numbers have grown by only a few cases. However, due to the gravity of each of these incidents, a change in quality is noticeable.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

“Cases of fraud and blackmail targeting LGBT+ people have increased dramatically. Sting operations using fake dates have grown far more common. Even relatives and friends are now blackmailing each other and extorting money, because they are confident that a queer person will not go anywhere, that they are too frightened. There have been a great many such cases.”.

– Regina Dzugkoeva, The Russian Far East

Overall, experts note a steady increase in **pressure on LGBT+ people** in Russia since 2022, which is assessed as an expected trend.

“It seems to me that 2025 was a year of confrontation. Pressure on LGBTQ+ people is intensifying every year. The sums of fines are growing, just like the number of criminal cases, the number of charges is growing, and queer representation in culture is shrinking. Many trends that began in 2022 with a complete ban on ‘LGBT propaganda’, and intensified with the designation of the community as “extremist”, continue to escalate. At this moment, it feels as though nothing fundamentally new has happened.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama Project

The consolidation of pressure and repressions lead to **social isolation in LGBT+ people and has psychological consequences**: chronic stress, anxiety, burnout, and exhaustion.

“I think that in due time, we will see the consequences of something called ‘minority stress’, and an increase in mental health conditions within queer communities in Russia.”

– Natalia D., The Southern Federal District, civic activist

“We can see that in 2025, there have been many more cases where people reached out to us for help and then disappeared. We have no way of knowing what happened to them afterwards. Perhaps they have

resolved their situation, perhaps, lacking the mental strength to continue seeking help, they have just withdrawn into their own little world, hoping that all of this will go away somehow. Or perhaps something bad has happened to them. But since we have no further information about them, we cannot help them either – because they have simply gone off the grid. Such cases have become far more common in our requests for assistance – where people seem to have neither the strength nor even the physical means to continue receiving help, if they are in danger. We observe this especially in our psychological aid services. It feels as though people no longer have the energy to take care of their own mental wellbeing so poorly they're doing”.

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

At the same time, despite the declining situation, some experts note that **new grassroots initiatives emerge,** showing that people still have a desire to engage in activism and continue their resistance.

“New people. New initiatives. New attempts to somehow resist, after all. New ideas. In other words, people are not giving up. They want to engage in activism.”

– Regina Dzugkoeva, The Russian Far East

“I am absolutely certain that grassroots initiatives exist, and yes, there should be more of them. When it is forbidden to gather openly, people gather in private. When there is no activism happening, people get together to have tea. That, too, is activism in our current reality, one of the few remaining ways to resist. People may not even call it activism out loud, but it seems to be the most therapeutic thing they can do right now – something they would not be doing in another, unbarred reality.”

– Itil' Tyomnaya, the Crime 6.21 Project

One of the most common requests from people reaching out to LGBT+ organizations remains that for **assistance with leaving the country.** At the same time, some experts emphasize that those making such requests are now better informed.

“The most common request is for us to help emigrate. Notably, emigration requests have become more interesting in nature, much better articulated. That is, there are far fewer inquiries about how to leave in general, and far more requests concerning specific difficulties with leaving and how to resolve them. People have clearly done some self-education in the area.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Furthermore, experts note that in light of a shrinking space for public expression and queer-friendly establishments shutting down steadily, LGBT+ people in Russia have a strong **demand for spaces where they can communicate**.

“Many prominent community centers and platforms that were welcoming to queer people have closed, and some social ties have been disrupted because some [people] have left the country while others have stayed – this has a significant impact on those who stay in Russia. There is a need for spaces, for special gathering points, where people can interact safely.”

– Tatyana Kalinina, expert on women’s and queer rights protection

“This is about chat groups, about community, about how people are frightened and do not want to be left alone with their feelings, and so they seek out allies.”

– Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

At the same time, experts note that **the human rights sector in Russia is going through a crisis**: funding cuts are leading to reduction or shutdowns of assistance programs (in particular, emergency aid programs).

“As a result of Donald Trump’s lawmaking initiatives, many organizations have reduced or ceased their support of queer people in Russia. This continues into 2026. It is becoming difficult to tell people who to ask for help and where they can turn in a time of need. You sit there and think – who can actually provide assistance when no one has a budget to operate? That is the main thing that changed in 2025. Fatigue gets in the way of human rights activism, along with a shortage of resources.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

Thus, 2025 is described by experts as a period of consolidation of the repressive system and the community’s adaptation to it. Pressure on LGBT+ people has become routine: criminal prosecution took shape as an established practice, public life moved into the shadows, and fear and self-restriction have become basic survival tools. Against this backdrop, the community is simultaneously becoming atomized while seeking new, less visible forms of connection and support.

Regional Features: North Caucasus

This year, data were collected only on the specific position of LGBT+ people in The North Caucasus. Unfortunately, other regions did not receive adequate coverage in the dataset.

As has been noted in studies from previous years ([2024](#), [2023](#)), The North Caucasus constitutes a space of heightened social normativity, where control over sexuality and gender is exercised not only by the state but also by the family and religious bodies.

Among the features highlighted this year by Lyusya Shtein, a staff member of the NC SOS Crisis Group – an organization that helps LGBT+ people and women who have suffered violence in The North Caucasus – is **the specific nature of denunciation**. While in other regions, denunciations have become a tool of blackmail and social control, in The North Caucasus they are the result of forced confessions extracted from those who fall into the hands of the siloviki, *“In our context, a denunciation most often appears as testimony given under torture against another person. There are chain arrests, where, for example, a person is caught in a staged meeting and is then forced to disclose who he met with or who he knows about. Or one is forced to participate as bait, so to speak, in these staged meetings. As for deliberate denunciations among relatives – that generally does not happen, because it would bring shame on the family, and that shame is usually not taken outside the home but is resolved within the family.”*

Conversion therapy practices were addressed by experts primarily in the context of the North Caucasus.

“There are very many such stories, predominantly in The North Caucasus. These are various treatment centers in different republics – The Chechen Republic, the republics of [Dagestan, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia–Alania] – or, alternatively, relatives summon imams to their children, who then ‘exorcise’ imaginary ‘jinns’. They also perform various rituals, forcing them to drink herbs (of unclear origin), for instance. So, there is a great deal of this in The North Caucasus. But I am also aware of people who have encountered such practices in central Russia as well.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners Show

Lyusya Shtein describes the practices of conversion therapy characteristic of The North Caucasus in greater detail: ***“Two main variations exist. One is religious conversion therapy, where a person is taken to a mullah. This practice is applied not only to queer people but to anyone who fails to conform to norms, does not observe the adat, or attempts to renounce Islam. Gender expression also falls into this category – even if a person is not homosexual, for example, but looks somehow unconventional. Such people are taken to a mullah, where various ‘jinn exorcism’ practices are performed – people are beaten with sticks, the Quran is recited, and so on. Then there are rehabilitation centers that operate under the guise of treating alcoholism, drug addiction, and so forth. Perhaps some people there are genuinely being treated for those conditions, but it seems to me that the practitioners do not always hold a medical license. This is, in essence, torture.”***

Thus, conversion practices in The North Caucasus represent a persistent form of violent “correction” targeting sexual orientation and gender identity, one that is embedded within religious and pseudo-medical institutions.

Another important specificity of beneficiaries from The North Caucasus is a distinct **demand for psychological assistance**. As Lyusya Shtein states, ***“It is usually with PTSD that people turn to psychological service. That is, these are typically individuals who have experienced physical violence, torture, or deprivation of liberty. In fact, more often than not, they do not seek psychological help on their own. Some do, but this is the exception. Due to this, we usually offer psychological support to those who approach us for other matters.”***

At the same time, the primary request in The North Caucasus does not differ from the most common request made by beneficiaries of queer organizations across the entire country, ***“The main request is to help them leave.”***

An important new trend of 2025, highlighted by Lyusya Shtein, is that **violence against LGBT+ people and women from the North Caucasus is extending beyond the region and acquiring a cross-border character**, ***“Ensuring safety abroad is also quite problematic. Last year, two murders of women occurred. One woman was abducted in Georgia and killed in The Chechen Republic; another woman was killed in Armenia¹. We consider these to be instances of cross-border persecution and are engaging in dialogue with the countries on this matter. The authorities of these countries***

¹ In October 2025, 23-year-old Ayshat Baimuradova, a native of The Chechen Republic who had fled domestic violence with the help of human rights defenders, was killed in Yerevan. In November 2025, 33-year-old Aliya Ozdamirova was forcibly or deceptively transported from Georgia – where she had fled with the support of human rights organizations – back to Russia, and a few days later, her death was reported.

treat such incidents as some sort of intra-family or diaspora feuds among refugees, but it is important to understand how this actually operates. In essence, the actor behind the persecution is the state. This is not some private initiative by individual people; at the very least, the Chechen authorities are calling for it, inciting it, and may even be the instigators of such persecution – especially of women fleeing The North Caucasus – and there is a systematic nature to it, meaning it is a consistent policy of the authorities. Therefore, we consider this to be cross-border persecution.”

Thus, violence against LGBT+ people and women from The North Caucasus outside of Russia should not be viewed as isolated criminal episodes or “private conflicts,” but rather as **a systematic form of persecution**, in which the key actors are state structures of the region that coordinate or initiate violence beyond Russia’s borders.

Thus, according to available data, The North Caucasus in 2025 continues to present itself as the most specific and most repressive region, where control over LGBT+ people is exercised simultaneously through state practices of violence, family coercion, and religious institutions. At the same time, a new trend of cross-border persecution is being documented, pointing to an expansion in the geography of violence and the region’s state structures continuously taking the central role within the persecution system.

Applied Repressive Legislation In Practice

The practice of applying repressive legislation against LGBT+ people in 2025 is characterized not so much by emergence of new legal norms as by a shift in the ways such norms are used. Expert interviews indicate that **law enforcement in this area is selective, unpredictable, and expansive in its interpretation.**

The key characteristics of law enforcement in this context are arbitrariness and the vagueness of legal categories. Experts emphasize that **the boundary between “propaganda” and “extremism” is effectively nonexistent and is determined situationally** by siloviki. The same actions can be qualified differently, and escalation may occur: a case may begin as prosecution for “LGBT propaganda” but then reclassified as “dissemination of extremist symbols.” This creates legal uncertainty and expands possibilities for exerting pressure.

In 2025, prosecution for dissemination of extremist symbols under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation **has consistently been combined** with simultaneous prosecution for ‘LGBT propaganda’ under Article 6.21 of the same Code.

“Although our statistics still show that the so-called ‘LGBT propaganda’ cases remain the most numerous, there is a very fine line between ‘LGBT propaganda’ and ‘LGBT extremism’ – specifically with regard to administrative articles on ‘LGBT extremism.’ What may begin as a propaganda case – for example, if a photograph taken ten years ago is discovered – can later transform into an extremism case, namely, display of extremist symbols. Thus, this line is rather ephemeral. I am not sure that representatives of law enforcement themselves understand it well. At times, one gets the impression that they apply the law as they see fit. Additionally, although less frequently, we do observe that cases can overlap with one another. Alternatively, there are simply threats from law enforcement representatives, along the lines of, ‘If you do not do this or do not confess to that, we will add this other article against you.’”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

At the same time, it is impossible to draw a clear line between where “LGBT propaganda” as an administrative offense ends and where “participation in the activities of an extremist organization” as a criminal offense begins, given that the same actions that are in some cases classified as “LGBT propaganda” in other cases do not lead to any proceedings whatsoever, and in isolated instances result in criminal prosecution and a prison sentence.

“This decision belongs to siloviki. However they perceive propaganda or extremism, so it will be deemed. It seems to me that this is an entirely intuitive matter, and the distinction is very unstable. Everything depends directly on the officers who handle a given case or investigate a given individual.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

Experts note that in 2025, “extremist activity” in practice often encompasses the organization of **queer events** – ranging from large gatherings in clubs to private house parties. In this context, law enforcement serves not only a punitive function but also a demonstrative one, reinforcing the notion that any public or semi-public expression by LGBT+ people may be classified as extremism.

“Any organization of any queer parties, even private ones, is absolutely considered by them to be extremist activity. We saw that in Ulyanovsk, these were literally house parties – they were large, but it was not even a club; it took place in some apartment. This is the main pattern: that people working in LGBT+ entertainment are in grave danger.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, and blogger

“From what I can say about 2025 specifically regarding extremism, it has become clear that the authorities are rather pursuing the goal of demonstrating that there is a ruling by the Supreme Court, and that following this ruling, any public activity – such as organizing a sex party, running a gay club, or anything similar – may be equated to extremist work.”

– Vladimir, lawyer, Moscow

The first known **verdict** in a case involving “LGBT extremism” was handed down on February 19, 2025, to an already convicted prisoner: an additional six years in a penal colony were added to his sentence, allegedly for attempting to recruit others for the activities of “the international LGBT movement,” which had been designated as extremist.

K., lawyer, LGBT+ Group Coming Out, comments on this verdict as follows, ***“The individual is in a strict-regime penal colony, deprived of any means of disseminating information, with no access to the internet. He cannot***

engage in any public, organizational, or informational activity. He is serving a sentence for certain sexualized acts involving minors. That is, it is clear that his status within the penitentiary system is not such that he could impose any ideology on those around him.

Therefore, on the one hand, we do not know how exactly he could have involved other inmates in the activities of an extremist organization, nor in what form such involvement might have manifested itself. On the other hand, from the context alone we understand that it could not have manifested itself in any way. This could not have been activism, nor could it have been organizational activity. All that could have occurred was an expression of SOGIE within the conditions of imprisonment. In this case, essentially, it appears that an individual was situated within a repressive system that was itself reproducing the very discriminatory practices present in society at large. And this individual has been subjected to additional criminal liability within that same system that produces discrimination and violence. In this instance, given that he could not have manifested incriminating behavior in any way other than through self-expression – even without access to the case files, without access to the verdict – it is evident that this is a punishment for self-expression and nothing else.”

Thus, the case above demonstrates the utmost expansion of the practice of applying extremist legislation: even in conditions of complete isolation, where neither public nor organizational activity is possible, the very expression of sexual orientation effectively becomes the basis for persecution. Moreover, in such cases, SOGIE de facto turns into an instrument of the repressive system itself. For the system, it matters little whether the individual actually possesses a non-heteronormative identity or not, given that what proves decisive is not identity as such, but rather a vulnerable status of the person within the prison hierarchy and the possibility of using that status for additional persecution.

An important new trend of the past year has been **an expansion of anti-extremist law enforcement into the private and online spheres of life**. BIn 2025, cases involving “LGBT extremism” have been documented based on messages in closed chats and comments on Telegram.

K. describes each case in detail and comments on its consequences: *“Take the case of Pavel Ivanyuk. It was initiated in February 2025, and the verdict was handed down in September 2025. He received a suspended sentence of two years. What was he charged with? Participation in the activities of an extremist organization. Why? There was some group in the Telegram messenger that he himself did not create, and Pavel posted materials there calling for LGBT+ people to fight for their rights,*

and he organized meetings for men at his own home. These actions were classified as ‘participation in the activities of an extremist organization’. The issue with his public calls for actions is more or less understandable, but hosting meetings at one’s own home is an entirely private matter. This reproduces the pattern of expansive law enforcement. What becomes criminally significant is not the existence of some organizational structure or real activity – the kind that the state might deem ‘extremist’ – but rather a mere collection of social practices interpreted as a form of participation in the activities of the ‘international [LGBT] movement.’

Comments on Telegram. Two years and six months, to be served in a general-regime penal colony. The case was initiated in February 2025, with the verdict handed down in December 2025. The individual posted comments on Telegram from which his SOGIE simply followed. What did the court say? That the individual posted comments in which he ‘disseminated ideas inconsistent with the spiritual and moral values of Russian society’. Responsibility was placed on him not for creating this platform, not for organizing this activity, but simply for participating in a discussion there. No specific quotations are available; the case is classified. And other people have no way of knowing at what exact point they themselves become subject to criminal liability.”

Both of these cases demonstrate that in 2025, prosecution under “extremism” charges has expanded to cover everyday and private forms of communication – from discussions in messengers to gatherings in personal spaces. At the same time, the boundaries of punishable conduct remain unclear: **liability may arise not for organizing or directing activities, but rather for statements or even the mere fact of participating in communication**. Consequently, legal uncertainty takes hold, in which any expression of identity or interaction within the community – whether in private or online – may be interpreted as extremist activity.

Experts also note a selective application of general criminal provisions to LGBT+ people – for instance, prosecuting them for ‘distributing pornographic materials’. The emergence of such cases was discussed in detail in last year’s **study**: a court ruled the exchange of intimate photographs in a private correspondence between two men to be dissemination of pornography. Such precedents have created grounds for **blackmailing** LGBT+ people – threats of prosecution under extremist articles or related charges have become **a tool of coercion**.

“There has been an increase in cases of online persecution – harassment and blackmail. What I would call ‘fake online dating’ has become more widespread, where it is enough for a person to send a photograph, for instance, and this is then used to threaten subsequent crim-

inal prosecution and to extort money. This is due to the expansion of the range of threats that can be used for coercion. Whereas previously it was only outing, now there is the threat of initiating criminal cases under extremist articles and, above all, under the article on the distribution of pornographic materials. In other words, the emergence of these general criminal provisions, which are now applied selectively specifically to LGBT+ people, has a very significant impact on the social climate.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Another issue raised by experts is **the inability of LGBT+ people to receive protection from law enforcement**. Experts describe situations in which victims of crimes themselves become targets of persecution – for instance, in “pornography” cases following the leak of their intimate materials. This creates a persistent pattern whereby turning to the police carries a risk of punishment rather than offering any guarantee of protection.

“Instead of providing assistance, law enforcement officials tell a person, ‘We will open a case against you because you are a queer person.’ Or they actually do open such cases. We see this in situations involving what is called ‘digital crime.’ This is, for example, when information such as intimate photos or videos is leaked against a person’s will – in other words, a form of ‘revenge porn.’ We saw at least one case last year where law enforcement, rather than helping the individual, instead opened a case against them for distributing pornography. That is, they did not pursue the person who leaked the information – the actual perpetrator – but rather pursued the victim of the crime, simply because that victim was depicted in the photos. So we are seeing more and more of a trend in this direction. And, of course, as a result, people are increasingly less willing to seek help from law enforcement.”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

“People do not report to the police after encountering violence because they fear that the very fact of their appeal may be classified by law enforcement as ‘propaganda’.”

– Katya, Head of the legal aid program, the Sphere Foundation

As a result, **a persistent and well-founded distrust of protection institutions** takes hold: the real risk of becoming a target of persecution makes any appeal to the police potentially dangerous, which further exacerbates the vulnerability of those who have suffered hate-motivated violence.

As previously noted in the preceding chapter, the number of administrative cases under the “LGBT propaganda” article against streaming services has decreased. However, experts primarily attribute this to self-censorship and the removal of all potentially dangerous materials from the public domain.

“In 2025, we are seeing a decline in this trend: the number of propaganda-related cases against legal entities in Russia accounts for less than 25%, if I am not mistaken, in our statistics. This is lower than in 2024. I can attribute this to the fact that various streaming platforms and other legal entities that were pursued under this article have simply adapted to the market and to state requirements, engaging in self-censorship. The growth of self-censorship in 2025 was driven precisely by the persecution that had occurred earlier. All content that could be associated with queer people was simply deleted, although occasionally something is still found. If it is not deleted in time, fines are still imposed, providing easy money for the state.”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

Thus, experts attribute the decline in the number of administrative cases under the “LGBT propaganda” article against legal entities not to a weakening of law enforcement, but rather to **the effects of adaptation and self-censorship**. Platforms remove potentially sensitive content in advance, seeking to avoid sanctions – a practice that leads to reduced public visibility of LGBT+ topics. At the same time, large fines persist as both a tool of state influence and a source of budget revenue. In combination, this reinforces the overall trend of pushing LGBT+ people and themes out of public space and entrenches practices of preventive censorship.

In 2025, the practice of applying repressive anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in Russia intensified not through introduction of new legal norms, but rather through selective and expansive use of existing ones. Vague legal formulations allow siloviki to interpret everyday actions – from online communication to private gatherings at home – as extremism. For LGBT+ people, merely filing a complaint with law enforcement in the event of a hate crime can be potentially dangerous, thereby increasing their vulnerability. Furthermore, instances of blackmail and extortion have become more frequent, given that the range of threats of prosecution has expanded.

Police Raids

In 2024, police raids on queer spaces and queer events became a widespread phenomenon: throughout the year, at least 34 raids were [documented](#) in 12 regions of the country. At the same time, it is important to note that in the absence of official statistics, experts rely on data from open sources, media reports, and their own calculations — a circumstance that renders any quantitative estimates incomplete and dependent on the visibility of the events in question.

In 2025, experts note [a change in the public visibility of raids](#): information regarding such incidents has become significantly scarcer. However, this does not allow for a definitive claim that their actual number has declined. As Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, and blogger, states, ***“There have been fewer. At the very least, there has been less news about them. Whether there truly have been fewer, we do not know.”***

Data from LGBT+ Group Coming Out indicate 18 documented raids in 2025, which may point to a genuine decrease compared to the previous year.

Experts attribute the decline in the number of police raids primarily to the impact that the previous year’s raids had on LGBT+ spaces. Criminal cases were opened against the owners or employees of some queer spaces that had been raided in 2024, which significantly affected the infrastructure of leisure activities oriented toward LGBT+ people, driving it underground. Consequently, many queer spaces either closed or changed their operating models – for instance, they stopped positioning themselves as LGBT+ spaces or LGBT-friendly.

“Based on our requests for assistance and our database on discrimination and persecution in Russia, we observe that there have been fewer raids. This does not mean that the trend has disappeared entirely. Rather, all the establishments that law enforcement targeted in 2024, when the raids were widespread, have either closed down, restructured their operations, or ultimately had cases opened against them – specifically in connection with extremism, and these are criminal cases.”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

“I know that many clubs have essentially stopped positioning themselves as LGBT clubs in the way they used to. Various precautionary measures, including bans on video recording and photography, have begun to be introduced. Some clubs have, in a sense, closed down and reopened under a new name with a new concept.”

– Natal’ya, Ural Federal District

Furthermore, experts note that some raids have become “invisible” due to the lack of media coverage. Experts learn about certain raids only through indirect evidence – for instance, from cassation court rulings that mention a raid on an event that was not publicly known.

“Were there police raids on clubs for New Year’s Eve? It is unknown. Such raids took place in 2024, and again in 2023. Did they occur in 2025? No one knows. However, I do know that on February 14 of 2026, they did take place. We have evidence from two cities: Yakutsk and Murmansk. This actually suggests that they may have occurred in other cities as well, given that clubs exist not only in Yakutsk and Murmansk. As for New Year’s Eve, there is no news whatsoever. But again, it is unknown – perhaps they did occur, and we simply do not know about them, because the clubs themselves may also be concealing such incidents. The further people are from activism, the less willingness they generally have to speak publicly or bring matters to public attention. Many people are worried, ‘What if something bad happens? If I speak now, even more pressure will be put on me.’”

– Itil’ Tyomnaya, the Crime 6.21 project

“We learn about many raids from leaks originating from the siloviki themselves. They film the raids and send the footage to Telegram channels they support. In Krasnodar, there was no such information at all – until a ruling appeared in cassation proceedings in which a fine was upheld. Only from that document did we learn that a raid had taken place at some club where clearly a women’s party was being held, given that only women were detained. Moreover, there is no certainty that other such raids did not occur. A certain number of raids went unnoticed for the simple reason that the particular siloviki involved did not have their own Telegram channel. The courts are in no hurry to disseminate information, and neither are the siloviki.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, and blogger

Experts note that there are **virtually no safe spaces left** where LGBT+ people could gather and spend time together. Even closed private parties – including events held in private apartments – remain at risk of being disrupted by siloviki, as individual cases demonstrate. This exacerbates the isolation of the community and affects the sense of self of LGBT+ people.

“As of 2025, it can be said that no offline events – not even closed private gatherings in people’s homes – will continue to exist. House parties are unsafe for the gathering of queer individuals. So this situation, in which there are essentially no safe spaces left for the queer commu-

nity, is of course very dire. This demonstrates the isolation of people, the fact that they cannot feel safe anywhere.”

– Dilya Gafurova, Head of the Sphere Foundation

At the same time, experts note that **the range of targets for police raids have expanded significantly**. A trend that began as early as 2024 continues: siloviki now conduct raids not only on queer events but also on any events related to sexuality (BDSM parties, kink parties). In 2025, a tip-off could lead to raids on book festivals, bookstores, events held by political parties, and private house parties. The sources of the siloviki's information often remain unknown; consequently, it is nearly impossible to anticipate the risks.

“It seems to me that raids have ultimately spread very widely to absolutely any events connected in any way with sex, sexual freedom, and liberation. People who organize kink parties – even if these are kink parties for heterosexual cisgender individuals – are still at risk. Law enforcement has already come to such events, made everyone lie face down on the floor, and demanded to see the attendees’ passports.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

“Direct state violence has come to affect not only LGBT+ spaces, given that raids now occur in those environments as well as anywhere suspicion arises. According to our data, 18 raids were documented in 2025. These included, for instance, BDSM venues. Cases of ‘LGBT propaganda’ were recorded in bookstores, at book festivals, in private apartments, and at events organized by political parties. At the same time, propaganda was indeed discovered in some instances – not because anyone was actively engaging in it at the event, but rather, for example, on the phone of an attendee who had come there and was, by and large, completely uninvolved.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Thus, the number of police raids on queer events – or those carried out for reasons linked to “LGBT propaganda” – that became publicly known decreased over the course of 2025. Experts attribute this to shifts within the very infrastructure of the LGBTQ+ community: clubs are closing down or going undercover, offline events are disappearing, and safe spaces have become nearly inaccessible. At the same time, the targets of repression continue to expand. Not only LGBT clubs are at risk, but also any spaces associated with sexual freedom – including BDSM events and kink parties – as well as bookstores, festivals, and private apartments. Information about police raids that do take place is becoming increasingly scarce, making it impossible for experts to speak with confidence about any real decline. The key effect of these raids, which have been ongoing since late 2023, lies not so much in direct criminal prosecution of event organizers and participants (the number of criminal cases remains isolated) as in the resulting fear, uncertainty, and self-censorship. This, in turn,

leads to a profound isolation of LGBT+ people, dismantling of public forms of queer visibility, and destruction of safe queer spaces.

ДОНОСЫ

Experts diverged in their assessments of changes related to the spread of denunciations targeting LGBT+ people. Some suggested the number of the reports was increasing, while others observed close to no change compared to 2024. A number of experts, on the contrary, noted a decline in the activity of public figures who specialize in denunciations.

“It looks as if these mass informers have grown tired, or have exhausted the resources they used to find grounds for denunciations. They seem to have become less active in public reporting on their activity recently.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

Another expert who also observed a decrease suggests it may be just a subjective perception as denunciations have become too common:

“When talking about the year 2025, I would say it seems like there are fewer of those – or maybe we have grown so used to denunciations that we no longer notice.”

– Vladimir, human rights defender

It is hard to assess the number of denunciations objectively, since we can't always tell precisely what caused a case opening, a ban, or some other episode of attention from law enforcement agencies.

“We don't know how many of the widely known cases resulted from denunciations. And we don't know how many denunciations are filed and how often they proceed to become real cases – this kind of information is not disclosed to the general public.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

Other experts noted the changes concerning not the number of filings, but the nature of the denunciation itself:

“We noticed a higher number of public denunciations – when people publicly call for law enforcement to investigate something. Based on the results of our monitoring efforts, public denunciations have be-

come more widespread than private ones. In 2025, we recorded 20 public denunciations related to propaganda or extremism, and only 9 non-public ones.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Furthermore, while it is difficult to gauge an actual trend concerning the number of denunciations, experts were definitive in their observation of growing anxiety and fear levels generated by the atmosphere of omnipresent denunciations:

“We don’t track the number of denunciations as such, so we can only make an assessment based on what people say, on how they speak about their fears of being denounced. And judging by a “fear scale,” anxiety has grown significantly in 2025.”

– Katya, Head of the legal aid program, the Sphere Foundation

Experts noted that denunciations and accusations of “LGBT+ propaganda” were used against people who did not belong to the LGBT+ community as a way to threaten them and damage their reputation.

“These complaints are being used as a means of settling scores, of public pressure – including against public and political figures – without any connection to their SOGIE. An accusation of “LGBT+ propaganda” in itself serves as a stigmatizing label, and it can be used to settle accounts with inconvenient people. For example, an environmental activist faced a public demand to strip her of parental rights, ostensibly for “LGBT+ propaganda.” If I am not mistaken, she was forced to leave the country in the end. Such complaints trigger a mechanism of both public pressure and self-discipline, where the formal application of the law is secondary to reputational damage and fear.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

As noted in previous sections, experts observed that blackmailing as well as threats of prosecution for “LGBT propaganda” and “LGBT extremism” were becoming increasingly frequent, with denunciations or threats of denunciation serving as leverage over LGBT+ people. Experts also recorded a growing number of cases where denunciation or threat of denunciation was used to resolve property disputes.

“In 2025, it has become a widespread way of resolving private conflicts. For instance, when there’s a family dispute over the use of property, inheritance, the sale of property, or anything else of that kind, denunciations were a way of pressuring those who hold rights over that property.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Overall, expert assessments pointed not to a definite change of trend in the number

of denunciations in 2025, but rather to a shift in their functions, forms, and social significance. In the absence of reliable statistics and transparency in law enforcement, quantitative trends remained uncertain and largely a matter of subjective perception: some experts noted fatigue and declining activity among “professional” informers, while others linked the perceived decrease to an effect of habituation – denunciations having become an everyday phenomenon. At the same time, qualitative changes were more clearly visible: denunciations were becoming an instrument not only of legal prosecution but also of reputational pressure. They increasingly relied on the SOGIE context, in which the persecution of LGBT+ people and their limited means of defense were instrumentalized as a universal stigmatizing mechanism against “inconvenient” individuals, and as a tool for resolving private conflicts, including property disputes. A pivotal effect of denunciations rising was not so much their actual effectiveness – which is difficult to assess – as the growth of anxiety, fear, and self-discipline, registered by experts through the requests they received from individuals. Thus, denunciations in 2025 functioned not just as a form of complaint to law enforcement agencies, but as a widely used instrument of social pressure, embedded in everyday and public practices of control and coercion.

Hate-Motivated Violence

The experts we interviewed offered no single assessment of the trend, but they all agreed that the level of such violence remained high and showed a general tendency for growth in 2025. On the one hand, some experts pointed to a stable level of violence:

“I can’t even say that the level of violence is growing – it has been roughly the same over the past few years. There are cases transphobia, homophobia, and various everyday incidents, and their numbers are approximately the same; I haven’t seen any sharp increase.”

– Lawyer, St. Petersburg

On the other hand, many experts noted or assumed an increase in violence not only towards LGBT+ people, but overall in Russian society too:

“I believe violence is definitely growing. Our internal monitoring shows there are more requests specifically concerning violence. However, we have no other way to track the trends except for internal monitoring systems we and other similar organizations have: in case of domestic abuse or street violence people simply don’t go to the police. And not only are the chances that people will take such a case to the police low, but even if they do, it’s unlikely a case will actually be opened against the perpetrator. I believe the levels of homophobia and transphobia are growing, as people who commit such attacks and engage in violence in general face no consequences.”

– Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

Evgeny Zhuravlev from Center T highlighted an important issue: the violence that LGBT+ people faced on a daily basis was largely invisible. In the absence of official statistics, protection from law enforcement agencies, and access to justice, there was no way to objectively assess the true numbers and scale of hate crimes.

The sense of impunity was one of the key factors driving the growth of violence, since potential perpetrators increasingly perceived their actions as permissible:

“Homophobes who are itching to throw a punch now feel practically free to do so.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

Violence was increasingly accompanied not only by a sense of impunity but also by internal justification. Perpetrators attributed ideological meaning to their actions and perceived them as socially sanctioned:

“We notice that such people are increasingly prone to describing themselves as ‘forest wardens’ — those who deliberately choose LGBT+ people as their victims, because they believe they are acting in accordance with state policy, and that this will work in their favor should they encounter any problems with the law.”

— Vladimir, lawyer, Moscow

The growth of violence against LGBT+ people was viewed by experts in the broader context of the militarization of Russian society, in which violence in general was becoming more familiar and socially acceptable:

“I would say that the general level of violence in Russia is growing — towards many different categories of people, and this is mainly due to “combat veterans” returning from the front. Every day, we read news of some “veteran” having killed or raped someone.”

— Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

To summarize expert assessments, hate-motivated violence against LGBT+ people in Russia in 2025 was characterized not so much by a sharp spike, as by a steady rise against the backdrop of a general increase in societal aggression. The key change was that violence was increasingly ideologized and normalized, perceived as permissible. At the same time, victims of violence were losing access to protection and justice — particularly given a real risk that those who approach the police may face prosecution themselves. The state and law enforcement bodies simultaneously served as a source of violence and a factor of impunity. As a result, violence became less visible and more systemic.

Position of Transgender People in Russia

The position of transgender people in Russia in 2025 was characterized by structural vulnerability manifested through restricted access to healthcare, social services, legal protection, and additional difficulties in any interaction where revealing their identification papers is required.

Limited access to social services for transgender people has a systemic nature and is especially prominent in the healthcare sector, where even obtaining basic medical assistance requires significant additional effort and constantly overcoming various barriers:

“People do encounter everyday transphobia, of course. It is important to understand that transgender people have to put in more effort to get the same help as cisgender individuals. For example, if someone’s gender marker is male in the passport but they need gynecological care, getting assistance becomes a real ordeal. They have to fight harder to access care and explain their circumstances to potentially hostile people. So yes, of course there are more difficulties in store for them.”

— Lawyer, Saint Petersburg

The growing distrust towards medical professionals and fear of seeking healthcare have become the key consequences of the institutional barriers faced by transgender people:

“Of course, this situation affects the fact that people are generally afraid to seek medical help of any kind. Because documents may mismatch. A person may have a gender non-conforming appearance.”

— Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

Restricted access to legal hormone therapy and quality healthcare directly contribute to the **development of illegal practices and emerging “grey” and “black” markets for medications**.

This, in turn, increases health risks and worsens legal uncertainty for transgender people: *“I think that in Russia the market for illegal hormones is definitely growing. These are some underground mechanisms, underground drugs distribution. Which means that we cannot guarantee their safety in any way at all. Hormone therapy is also something that needs to be*

monitored, and most likely, for a large number of people this has now turned into some kind of DIY scheme.”

— Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

“The number of transgender people seeking assistance has increased, which can be highlighted as a separate category, because people lack access to quality healthcare, and they cannot receive hormone replacement therapy legally. Those for whom it is indicated for life and who cannot obtain it legally turn to the black market, purchasing medications illegally, which also carries major risks, because it may involve criminal prosecution for illegal circulation of potent substances. However, so far I have not encountered criminal cases under this article involving LGBT+ people, so I have yet to see such a trend.”

— Katya, Head of the Legal Aid Program, the Sphere Foundation

Faced with systemic barriers and limited access to safe, quality healthcare, transgender people rely on informal networks and NPOs instead, which became the primary way for LGBT+ folks to find trans-friendly specialists: *“People often come to us when they are already looking for a doctor. We have a database of friendly doctors, not only endocrinologists, but also therapists, general practitioners, dentists, psychiatrists, and so on.”*

— Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

“I know that there are simply adequate doctors whose contacts are shared through support organizations operating inside Russia. They cooperate with trans organizations. Trans organizations simply know that they can refer people to them. And this is probably the most reliable way to get this information right now. In addition, the trans community has its own separate communities within the broader community.”

— Tatiana Kalinina, expert on women's and queer rights protection

A separate category of requests from transgender people to NPOs in 2025 were **issues related to military registration and interactions with military enlistment offices**. These issues are widespread and specifically gender-related:

“And of course, we have many trans people who have approached us regarding issues related to obtaining military ID documents. Everything connected to the military enlistment office. And there are specifically more requests from transgender people than from cisgender homosexual men. People have huge concerns regarding the military enlistment office.”

— Regina Dzugkoeva, Far East

Experts also raised concerns regarding justice and fair treatment of transgender people in Russia in 2025. As Vladimir, a lawyer from Moscow, notes, transgender people regularly face bias in judicial decision-making. **Transgender identity may become a factor leading to increased control and harsher responses from the judicial and penal systems.** The expert also reports cases in which, instead of receiving suspended sentences or fines, transgender people are subjected to compulsory medical measures on the basis of questionable expert assessments and evaluations of their appearance and behavior.

“I hope that your research will address the problem of the need to expand the understanding of political prisoners not only as people serving sentences because of political activity or prosecution under political charges. Moreover, deprivation of liberty in our country also occurs in what I consider a truly outrageous form. This is when a person is denied the right to a fair trial, and instead of receiving some kind of suspended sentence or judicial fine, trans people are repeatedly sent [for compulsory treatment], based on some absolutely absurd expert evaluation, where literally the only thing noted is that the person appeared, so to speak, disheveled, untidy, bad smelling... This was the attitude toward one of my clients. Essentially, solely on this basis the investigator petitions, instead of pursuing a fair judicial process, to place the person under compulsory medical measures. And in situations where there could have been a suspended sentence, the person is instead sent for compulsory treatment in a psychiatric hospital. Whereas previously we had only three such cases, in the past year alone another three cases appeared. Therefore, it seems to me that the situation in which trans people are subjected to compulsory medical measures is becoming more and more relevant.”

— Vladimir, lawyer, Moscow

Transgender people in Russia **continue to face systemic discrimination** in educational, professional, and social environments. This discrimination manifests not only through formal procedures, but also in employment practices, where even correctly updated documents do not guarantee equal treatment from employers: *“We had a case where a person changed their documents, updated their passport photo, everything was fine, but at the second stage of the interview they started questioning the person about being transgender, found old photos, an old name, old documents, all of that. And basically, the person was interrogated at a prospective workplace. This is a common scenario.”*

— Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

In 2025, experts observed changes in the nature of requests related to detransition. Whereas previously such requests were more often described as emotionally driven

and crisis-related, they are now increasingly institutionalized and legally formalized, with these decisions being approached as strategic legal instruments.

“In 2025, detransition is a periodically occurring request, a solvable request. Courts consider such cases and satisfy the claims. There are definitely more such requests now. People understood that this is possible, that the issue is solvable, and they began to approach it more instrumentally than before. It is no longer a panic reaction like, ‘I want to reverse everything just so they leave me alone.’ They think about when to do it. How to deal with military obligations. They approach it in a more considered way. And this is no longer so much fear that ‘something will happen to me because I transitioned,’ but rather a fairly conscious decision.”

— K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Overall, the situation of transgender people in Russia in 2025 can be characterized as a **structurally vulnerable state**, shaped by the combination of institutional barriers in access to healthcare, justice, employment, and social services, as well as the constant need to overcome discrepancies between identity documents, gender identity, and government procedures. These restrictions systematically complicate access to basic assistance and create additional barriers even in routine interactions with the healthcare system, where transgender status results in the constant need to “prove” and explain one’s condition. An additional factor of vulnerability arises in interactions with state institutions such as military enlistment offices and the judicial system, where transgender identity may become grounds for heightened attention, additional scrutiny, and increased legal uncertainty. Altogether, this creates a situation in which even formally updated legal status does not guarantee social or institutional security, and the transgender experience is marked by the constant necessity of adapting to unstable and often hostile conditions of interaction with the state and society.

Income, Employment, and Education of LGBT+ People

Regarding the economic situation of LGBT+ people in 2025, experts emphasize **the universality of the economic difficulties** faced by the entire population of the country.

“Queer people, like all other citizens of the Russian Federation, are suffering from inflation, rising prices, and the disappearance of certain products they are accustomed to. And, of course, the cost of living is increasing in all areas.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiner show

LGBT+ people are embedded in the broader macroeconomic processes of the country; their economic situation is shaped not only by specific factors of vulnerability but also by the wider context of declining living standards characteristic of Russian society as a whole.

Tatyana Kalinina, an expert in the field of women’s and queer rights protection, notes **a significant demand among LGBT+ people in Russia for topics related to financial literacy and income growth**, *“The economic situation has a very strong impact on how life inside Russia is experienced. Based on our observations, for example, the topic of money interests a great many people – how to save money, how to earn it in general.”*

Experts describe not only the general deterioration of the economic situation but also the specific **additional costs associated with LGBT+ identity**.

“Colleagues produced a piece about a lesbian couple in which one partner became pregnant and gave birth in Russia, and they do not want to leave. And there was a very good quote, ‘Being a lesbian is expensive.’ It is clear that, in general, LGBT+ couples who wish to have a child have to spend a great deal of money anywhere in the world – but in Russia, one must also make considerable efforts to avoid being reported or denounced, to ensure access to LGBT-friendly doctors and queer-friendly environment, all of which also costs extra money. Find-

ing such good doctors requires spending a certain amount of resources. And overall, of course, it seems to me that LGBT+ people spend more money in part to protect themselves.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiner show

The economic costs incurred by LGBT+ people arise not only from basic living needs but also from **the necessity of building a safe infrastructure of everyday life**. This refers to additional expenses associated with finding loyal specialists, cultivating a “safe” social environment, as well as the resources spent on minimizing the risks of denunciation, outing, and institutional pressure. Consequently, these expenditures take on a preventive character: such costs are aimed not at improving quality of life, but at reducing threats.

Another significant factor influencing the economic behavior of LGBT+ people is **the widespread orientation toward possible emigration**. Experts note that even in the absence of immediate plans to leave, many view emigration as a prospect that requires financial preparation.

“Additionally, many also hope to potentially move somewhere at some point in the future. People are saving money for emigration. This, accordingly, also impacts their finances. They are forced to live under conditions of austerity in order to save for future emigration.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiner show

Thus, LGBT+ identity in contemporary Russian conditions becomes an independent economic factor that increases the cost of living. Furthermore, the orientation toward potential emigration shapes a distinct pattern of economic behavior in which current expenses are deliberately reduced in favor of long-term savings.

Experts note that in 2025, a significant transformation is taking place in the informal norms governing the presence of LGBT+ people in educational and professional institutions. Whereas a model of tacit coexistence based on the principle of invisibility previously existed, under current conditions this model is breaking down.

“The tacit agreement that existed is changing, as far as I understand. Previously, it was essentially a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ arrangement. In academic circles especially, things were more or less organized around the principle that ‘everyone understands, but no one speaks.’ Now, it is better not to understand. This understanding is changing very significantly, because now even a potential queer person – if they can be suspected in any way – becomes a problem that the supervisor and administration will have to address in some manner. Consequently, people try to minimize this situation as much as possible, so to speak. Because, roughly speaking, whereas before it was dangerous for one person, now it is dangerous for everyone.”

– Dmitry Dubrovsky, researcher

Against this backdrop, experts emphasize that the intensifying pressure on LGBT+ people is driven not only by the personal attitudes of institutional representatives but also by **a broader logic of institutional fear**.

“From this educational and employment dynamic, it is evident that the cause of pressure stems not only from the personal views of certain educational or commercial organizations, but also from perceived – and at times entirely unfounded – fears of pressure from the state due to the presence of an LGBT+ employee or student, as well as from attempts to mitigate that pressure.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Thus, the key mechanism of discrimination is no longer primarily the ideological position of specific employers or administrations, but rather their **desire to minimize risks associated with possible external sanctions**. Under these conditions, dismissals, restrictions, or pressure on LGBT+ employees and students often function as a form of preventive self-protection on the part of organizations.

Therefore, the economic position of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2025 is shaped at the intersection of two interrelated processes. On the one hand, their everyday economic vulnerability is largely determined by general macroeconomic conditions: inflation, rising prices, and the overall decline in the population’s purchasing power. On the other hand, LGBT+ identity becomes a factor of additional costs, including the need to invest resources in one’s own “safety” (for example, seeking LGBT-friendly doctors in private clinics) and the constant setting aside of money for potential emigration – resulting, consequently, in living under perpetual austerity. As a result, the lives of LGBT+ people take on the character of a double burden, in which basic material hardships are compounded by the necessity of constantly managing risks.

At the same time, the analysis shows that the spheres of employment and education are undergoing institutional changes driven by the growing logic of preventive control and institutional fear of persecution by the state. LGBT+ identity becomes a problem not only for the person concerned but also for organizations, which exacerbates caution, surveillance, and exclusion on the part of employers and educational institutions.

The Position of LGBT+ Families and LGBT+ Adolescents

In 2025, the position of LGBT+ families was characterized by deepening vulnerability linked not only to legal restrictions but also to growing everyday risks, social stigmatization, and pressure from the state and immediate social environment. The family was becoming a space not only of support but of potential threat, as well as an object of external control.

Experts stressed that the everyday lives of LGBT+ parents were now determined to an even greater degree by the need for constant self-censorship and control over their own visibility. This applied to adults' behavior in public, to how communication with children was structured, and to what strategies for conveying information about the family were deemed safe.

“LGBT+ parents are censoring themselves very heavily now. Sometimes it’s frightening to even sit next to each other in a café. God forbid someone realizes who we are. And of course one major problem for queer parents is how and what to say to a child so that they don’t let something slip at kindergarten or school. Most of them don’t intend to leave. Clearly, some queer parents looked at all this and left. But others say: “No, I’ll stay here, I’m not planning to leave, but I need to understand how to act at kindergarten, at school, how to handle all of this, what to say, how to instruct the child.” There are loads of such requests.”

– Regina Dzugkoeva, activist, The Russian Far East

The central factor that led to near-total concealment among LGBT+ parents was **the fear of losing parental rights**. This fear created constant tension and affected every aspect of family life, including interaction with educational and medical institutions.

“The restriction of parental rights and the constant sense of fear that someone could come and take your children away at any moment – if someone found out anything about your personal life – are two threats that strongly affect queer parents, because people simply don’t feel protected. They ask their children not to mention the family situation, not to say that they have two moms or two dads, and this of course

has a strong psychological effect on children, and it is very difficult, because the person also feels isolated. I think it strongly affects both the children and the parents – the question of how to manage communication with the school administration, and so on. It is a whole separate strand, a strategic plan for queer parents.”

– Tatyana Kalinina, expert in the field of women’s and queer rights protection

Experts noted that the sexuality of LGBT+ parents was increasingly weaponized in legal and family conflicts. It could be used as an argument in court proceedings, as well as a means of blackmail and coercion in communication with former partners. As a result, the vulnerability of LGBT+ parents was intensified not only at the level of the state but also in private life, where legal and social mechanisms began to work against them.

“The parent’s identity – primarily the mother’s – is used by the biological father of the child to exert pressure. There have been cases where it was used to take the child away, to get out of paying child support or to make the mother renounce her claims to a share of the jointly-owned property under threat of losing her child if she refuses. Similar situations are used to force a woman to withdraw a divorce petition and continue to remain in a sexual relationship with a man.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

LGBT+ parents faced additional barriers when attempting to emigrate:

“In order to leave the country, you need to take the child with you. For that, it shouldn’t be prohibited by the other parent. Then, for any form of legalization other than refugee status, you need the consent of the second parent. As a result, LGBT+ parents find themselves in a situation where they are forced to use the route of seeking international protection in order to emigrate. Moreover, even this option is severely hampered for them: in order to request international protection, you need to travel to the country, and for that you need a visa. To obtain a tourist visa, you once again need the consent of the second parent.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Thus, even the strategy of leaving an unsafe environment became obstructed in situations where the second biological parent used their legal position to block the child’s departure, refusing consent or resorting to pressure and threats.

As expert assessments showed, **the vulnerability of LGBT+ adolescents was complex in nature**: the risks were not confined to any one sphere, but reproduced simultaneously in the family, the educational environment, and among peers. Moreover, different forms of pressure mutually reinforced one another, creating a situation in which the adolescent had virtually no safe space. An additional factor was the risk of

outing, including through institutional contacts, which made any attempt to seek help potentially dangerous and heightened the overall level of fear and insecurity. Thus, Regina Dzugkoeva, an activist from the Far East, described what LGBT+ adolescents faced on a daily basis:

“Violence at school. Violence in the family. Blackmail from classmates.”
– Regina Dzugkoeva, *The Russian Far East*

K. listed the requests with which LGBT+ adolescents approach Coming Out’s legal service:

“Domestic violence, threats of conversion therapy and forced placement in “rehab,” outing, risks of outing, contact with law enforcement that creates risks of being outed to parents. Fear of violence in the event of coming out. Fear of violence from relatives who have gone to fight in the war. And of course persecution at school for any disclosure of SOGIE: demands to leave school under threat of a report to the police about “propaganda,” and actual reports to the police from school management and parents of other students.”
– K., lawyer, *“Coming Out” LGBT Group*

Experts separately emphasized that in addition to direct forms of violence and pressure, a key factor in the vulnerability of LGBT+ adolescents in 2025 was informational and social isolation. In a context of intensifying stigmatization and hateful state rhetoric, adolescents found themselves in a situation where seeking information and support required additional effort and carried risks, while the sense of loneliness became a constant feature of their everyday experience.

“They desperately need content, they desperately need to belong to the community, they desperately need to feel that they are okay, that they’re not alone, that there are lots of people like them. And I think queer teenagers are the group that has truly been hit hardest by all these laws. Those of us who lived through the 2010s – or even the 2000s, the 1990s – experienced some kind of normal era. It was not ideal: homophobia was always present, clearly we had no rights, no marriages, no parades or anything else. But we weren’t treated as criminals. And that was already something. Whereas these teenagers grew up to find themselves in a situation where at first glance there’s nowhere for them to turn, nowhere to go, no one to talk to, nothing to read. In reality, of course, all of that exists, but they have to put in effort to find it. And the state propaganda has also intensified – LGBTQ+ people are somehow not right, they’ve come from the West, it’s imposed values, it’s perversion, and so on. Of course, a young person grows up in this, absorbs information that damages their psyche. And adolescents are

left in a very vulnerable position, and there are very few LGBTQ+ organizations willing to work with adolescents at all.

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

Experts linked the conditions described above to a **sustained deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of queer adolescents**. Chronic stress, the absence of a sense of safety, and the inability to discuss their identity freely were directly reflected in mental health outcomes:

“Of course, this means increased risk of depression and anxiety disorders among adolescents.”

– Evgeny Zhuravlev, Center T

Despite the overall context, experts were **increasingly recording cases of support for LGBT+ adolescents from parents or relatives**.

“This year there have been more requests not from LGBT+ people themselves but from people who are somehow connected to them. There are requests from parents of LGBT+ people – both adolescents and adult children. Siblings, people directly connected to them who are trying in some way to protect their loved ones from the state – or from pressure by private individuals. This is quite interesting and genuinely heartwarming to see. There was a unique case this year: parents legally changed the name of their transgender child. They came to us to plan further steps. They reported that the child is still experiencing bullying at school.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

“One mother told me about her daughter – how a neighbor sniffs at her because her daughter looks masculine. The daughter is a lesbian, the neighbor knows this and sort of sniffs. The daughter couldn’t care less, but it offends and upsets the mother, and she feels that no neighbor has the right to sniff at her daughter.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of the Glitter and Carabiners show

Overall, the position of LGBT+ families in Russia in 2025 was characterized by intensifying multi-layered vulnerability. LGBT+ parents were forced to construct complex strategies of concealment, controlling not only their own behavior but also their children’s communication – accompanied by a persistent fear of losing parental rights, it produced chronic tension and a sense of legal defenselessness. This vulnerability was further intensified by the fact that sexuality could be used as an instrument of pressure in judicial and family conflicts, and could create obstacles when attempting to emigrate, when the second parent’s consent became a critical blocking factor preventing a safe exit from an adverse environment.

LGBT+ adolescents found themselves in a situation of complex risk with virtually no “safe zone” in their daily lives. These risks were compounded by the threat of outing and a deficit of access to supportive information and communities, which reinforced feelings of isolation and social invisibility. Taken together, this contributed to a deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of LGBT+ adolescents.

At the same time, experts recorded increasingly frequent instances of support for queer adolescents from parents and close relatives – including involvement in their protection, seeking legal assistance for them, and emotional support. However, such instances did not alter the overall structure of vulnerability in which LGBT+ families continued to exist under systemic pressure and with limited resources for safety.

Access to Information, Censorship, and Queer Culture

In 2025, one of the key shifts in the logic of queer culture regulation was **a transformation of state control itself**. In previous years, censorship operated primarily in a reactive way – intervening after some content had already been published. It has now acquired **a proactive dimension**: control is enforced before materials deemed as ‘extremist’ even reach their audience before materials reach the public. This, in turn, led to a transformation of not only the structure of restrictions, but the very logic of decision-making – from responding to prohibitions to anticipating them. One of the most telling examples of this shift was our state targeting the book publishing industry, which K. describes in detail below.

“Anti-LGBT+ legislation has shifted from being a tool of targeted pressure to a mechanism of structural governance over the cultural space. Whereas previously the state mainly responded to content that had already been published, in 2025, their actions resulted in preemptive suppression and self-censorship on the part of publishers, or even them abandoning the publishing industry altogether. Content deleted “just in case,” print runs destroyed, access blocked without judicial oversight. The targeting of the book industry offers a clear example: in 2025, as is known, there was one criminal case. At the same time, out of the 46 cases that entered our monitoring under the category ‘prosecution of legal entities under Article 6.21 (“LGBT propaganda”)’, 18 concerned the book industry specifically. There were raids on bookstores for the first time – twice – and one inspection. Following a fine, a print run was destroyed. There were four major campaigns to pull books from sale at the request of state agencies – not four individual books, but four such campaigns, with up to ten titles removed each time. Ten instances of self-censorship were recorded. Moreover, this self-censorship involved various institutionalized mechanisms introduced at the discretion of the distributors themselves – for instance, mandatory screening for signs of ‘LGBT propaganda’ using AI tools, or creation of a notification form on an online book distribution platform, allowing users to flag titles that may contain signs of ‘LGBT propaganda.’”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

The most significant consequence of this shift was **the institutionalization of self-censorship** as a primary mechanism for regulating the cultural field. State regulation no longer functions as purely an external act of intervention and has become an internal parameter of decision-making within industries. Publishers, platforms, and distributors started operating under conditions of permanent uncertainty, in which any queer-related content is a potential liability.

Perhaps the most notable effect was **self-censorship transitioning from the realm of fear into the realm of rational calculation**. Publishers and cultural institutions started preemptively excluding potentially risky content not only for ideological reasons, but for economic ones as well.

“Our monitoring has captured reports that LGBT-related content has become one of the most frequently flagged contested issues – this was stated by the director of one publishing house. As a result, deciding not to publish such content is no longer an ideological choice; it is simply an economically rational one.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Thus, self-censorship has ceased to be an individual choice and has become an institutionalized standard across cultural industries.

Censorship and self-censorship were affecting academia as well. Experts observed a gradual narrowing of opportunities for the academic study of LGBT+ topics in Russia:

“It is impossible to study this from the outside – not because of any prohibition, but due to a lack of access; and it is impossible to study it from the inside, this time because of the prohibitions in place. The result is effectively a ban on an entire area, on a disciplinary space that is becoming all but unworkable. There are exceptions – transgender studies, for instance. I follow Yana Kirey-Sitnikova; she is trying to hold that space together, skillfully defending herself for now by framing it as a medical rather than sociological issue.”

– Dmitry Dubrovsky, researcher

Dmitry Dubrovsky highlighted **a dual constraint**: on the one hand, external researchers faced an impossibility of obtaining empirical access; on the other, within the country, there were direct or indirect prohibitions on the development of relevant academic studies. The consequences saw not only a decrease in individual research projects, but a structural displacement of LGBT+ topics and gender studies from the academic sphere. Surviving exceptions, such as transgender studies, were only possible through their redefinition within more institutionally legitimate disciplinary frameworks – medicine, above all. Thus, forcibly depoliticizing the subject became the condition for its partial preservation in academia.

Self-censorship was a constant strategy in the everyday lives of LGBT+ people as well. One of the most telling cases was the mass “disappearance” of people from social media:

“I can say that perhaps 40%, maybe even 50%, of our beneficiaries simply deleted their social media accounts – even when there was nothing remotely compromising there. News-driven anxiety was at work here: people saw who was reading what, heard about accounts being hacked, and all of it frightened them. They just took down their profiles, and after that it became virtually impossible to verify them.”

– Regina Dzugkoeva, activist, the Russian Far East

This quote vividly illustrates the rise of anxiety within the community. Such large-scale deletion of accounts must have been a response to a general atmosphere of uncertainty and fear of digital surveillance by the state. For supportive organizations, this created additional complications: the erasure of digital traces significantly hampered the verification of beneficiaries, undermining the transparency of communication and making it harder to ensure safety for both organizational staff and other community members.

In a context where the state criminalizes access to “extremist” information, people were severing any visible connections with queer and feminist initiatives, minimizing their online presence:

“Things are not getting better – they will likely get worse when it comes to how information can be distributed. People who used to openly follow various LGBTQ+ organizations are now either unfollowing them, or archiving them, or doing something else, because word has spread that people are being persecuted for subscribing to feminist and queer groups – that you can be called in by the police for this.”

– Natalya, Ural Federal District

As a result, **LGBT+ organizations were losing access to part of their audience**; communication and the dissemination of information became harder; and confirming and retaining beneficiaries was increasingly challenging. Organizations were thus compelled to work under conditions of reduced visibility, community fragmentation, and a constant deficit of reliable communication channels – all of which limited their capacity to provide effective support.

Experts observed **a shrinkage of Russian-language queer culture** under the combined pressure of censorship, self-censorship, and platform restrictions:

“It seems to me that the Russian-language segment of queer culture has undeniably narrowed.”

– Natalya, Ural Federal District

Amid intensifying pressure inside the country and a shrinking space for public self-expression, queer culture was increasingly migrating beyond Russia's borders:

“A great deal of queer culture is now flourishing abroad. People who have left are writing music, painting, and writing literature. I cannot say that a large number of truly significant works have emerged, or that they have reached audiences beyond Russian-speaking listeners, readers, and viewers. But at present, the main body of work that can be observed is t creative output by queer people who have emigrated.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

Amid tightening digital restrictions, **media consumption among LGBT+ people was becoming increasingly uneven**, with access to content depending on technical skills, digital security practices, and the ability to bypass blocks. This gave rise to a new “media logistics,” in which different types of platforms were not equivalent in terms of accessibility and risk.

“Telegram was the most easily accessible, since it could still function without a VPN – albeit slowly – and it hosted a wide variety of groups. After that came social media and YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, with their communities, channels, and bloggers, where content could be found fairly easily with the aid of VPN. Podcast platforms sat somewhere in between, because there were podcasts that did not appear on mass platforms like Yandex but were still accessible without a VPN – though they weren’t popular enough to attract significant attention. And the hardest to access were websites with longer articles: on the one hand, they were available with a VPN; on the other, they have often been included on lists of information deemed ‘undesirable for distribution’.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama project

With restrictions and bans at work, access to queer-related content was increasingly bound up with a need to find workarounds. In this context, Telegram – which, at the time of our expert interviews, had not yet been fully blocked in Russia – and VPN services have become the key tools for everyday access to information and for maintaining connection with the queer community. As one expert noted, these channels largely shaped people's sense of what is accessible, despite intensifying regulation:

“You know, broadly speaking, everything is accessible – you just need a VPN for everything. In 2025, Telegram was still working. And Telegram remained just as open as before. I don’t think the situation with access to information deteriorated significantly in 2025 specifically. Roskomnadzor has been quite consistently teaching Russians how to use a VPN. And now we’re watching to see how a full cutoff of Telegram will play out, and how our means of reaching our beneficiaries will change.

But personally I think that accessibility did not change over the course of 2025. Though again, that is a subjective assessment.”

– Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

It is important to note, however, that recent months have seen intensified attempts to throttle and restrict Telegram in Russia, meaning the stability of this infrastructure remains uncertain and may change substantially.

Experts highlighted the resilience of the queer community and newly emerged grassroots initiatives, small online communities, how some offline spaces and events did survive. However, access to safe spaces was no longer self-evident: participation required additional verification processes, raising the threshold for entry. Notably, verification was necessary from both sides – organizers had to verify participants, while participants had to verify whether a given space or event was genuinely open to queer people. Interaction within the community was shifting ever more toward closed, low-profile, and loosely formalized modes of organization, where safety was maintained not institutionally, but through personal connections and ongoing verification.

“Grassroots projects and initiatives are appearing. In the course of my work, I come across them. I hear about them from the people I speak with. But they are usually online spaces – very small, low-profile. Little projects that bring people together in groups, in small media outlets, in small chat rooms. There are probably other initiatives that I simply cannot see from abroad. But yes – grassroots initiative is there, and new projects continue to emerge and take shape.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama project

“As for grassroots initiatives and physical spaces – yes, they exist. They don’t always announce themselves openly, not the way they used to. A significant number of online events have also started to be organized over the past year. There are various book clubs, and perhaps other kinds of online gatherings where people can also come and feel safe, and speak openly about their experiences. But the level of verification involved is usually high – not like it used to be.”

– Natalya, Ural Federal District

“There are social gatherings of various kinds. Some of them are queer-friendly, trans-friendly, and so on. You just have to check each time how friendly, and how safe, it’s actually going to be.”

– Evgeny Zhuravlyov, Center T

Overall, our data indicate that in 2025, queer culture in Russia existed under conditions of complex and multifaceted pressure, in which censorship and self-censorship had become built-in mechanisms organizing both cultural production and everyday

practice. State control was shifting toward preventive regulation, which was driving the institutionalization of self-censorship in publishing and media, and generating economically rational strategies for avoiding the publication of queer content. LGBT+ scholarship has become virtually impossible. All of these processes were intensifying the atmosphere of anxiety and pressure among LGBT+ people, leading to the severing of social ties and complicating the work of LGBT+ organizations, which were losing reliable communication channels with their beneficiaries. Access to information and community participation was becoming uneven and increasingly dependent on digital skills and practices for circumventing restrictions. At the same time, despite the decline in the public visibility of queer culture, experts observed the persistence and even emergence of new micro-communities and initiatives.

The Impact of International Political Processes on LGBT+ People

In 2025, the war and the global right-wing turn created a paradoxical situation for LGBT+ people in Russia: on the one hand, the necessity and motivation to leave Russia intensified; on the other hand, the very process of emigration became slower, more complicated and institutionally dependent.

Experts recorded not only a growing pressure inside the country but also a change in the very logic of opportunities for departure. The war became a turning point, simultaneously strengthening people's motivation to emigrate and expanding available routes. Thus, a new assessment of migration options was taking shape, in which earlier closure has given way to a more complex and heterogeneous system of possible exits. It is precisely this ambivalence that the following interview excerpt highlights:

“The war has opened up new opportunities to leave, let’s be honest about that. The pressure on the LGBT+ community created more international sympathy, and thus additional chances to flee from the Russian regime. Prior to this sequence of events, there were no humanitarian visas, and obtaining a residence permit was extremely difficult. “What are the grounds for you to stay?”, the country you intended to flee to would ask. None at all, unless you had been beaten by police twice. There were only individual cases. Now, with a literal war going on, I won’t say that doors opened wider, but there definitely are more doors now. So quite a lot of people have left using this getaway. Far more than did so before the war. And there’s a reason why, of course. There are sanctions on flights, there are complications, but these can ultimately be resolved. They aren’t insurmountable obstacles to leaving the country, not yet.”

– Sergey, lawyer, EQUAL PostOst

At the same time, despite the noted expansion of departure opportunities in the early years of the war, experts emphasized that by 2025 the situation has changed markedly toward greater complexity. What mattered was not so much the existence of

formal grounds for emigration as **access to the infrastructure of departure**: visas, legal support, and reliable routes. Tightening restrictions from European countries, growing refusal rates, and longer processing times reduced spontaneous emigration and generated more cautious and strategic approaches to departure in queer people.

“People keep reaching out with questions about emigration. Yes, the flow has decreased, because there are fewer opportunities – due to high visibility of the stories of rejection. Right now, you can travel to Spain, France, and a number of other countries and request asylum directly upon arrival, but to do that, you need a visa permit from the country that’s your destination. Obtaining one is difficult. I’ve heard stories of people who tried many times and kept getting refused while remaining in Russia. Humanitarian visas are an option. As far as I understand, France is now the only country still offering them. In this regard, however, I know numerous cases where France has denied queer people humanitarian visas, or where getting a decision took years. A humanitarian visa is quite short-lived – it’s valid for a few months, and gives the right to travel and immediately request asylum. This cannot be done remotely. If people are ready to go somewhere, they obviously hope to go with absolute certainty that they won’t be sent back, so that they don’t get stuck in a limbo with a legal status that’s vague at best. They are willing to invest money and effort in preparing their case, they are looking for lawyers inside Russia who will help them compile cases, they seek help planning routes to reach a safe country without a visa, indirectly – to arrive at a border and request asylum. Because stories of people being denied refugee status in various European countries are prominent in the media, people are increasingly losing confidence that Europe will protect them. But the demand is there – just not the kind where you sit down, book a flight on a whim, and deal with the aftermath after landing in a safe location. Firstly, such an approach is practically impossible now; second, because those who were prepared to take off at a moment’s notice and sort things out on arrival have mostly already gone. Those who remain are slowly and quietly trying to arrange a safe departure – which, with each passing year, or perhaps each month, becomes harder, judging by how countries like Germany have effectively stopped issuing humanitarian visas to Russians. In short, it is all becoming an increasingly complicated matter, but a demand exists – it’s just that all of it is getting harder.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama Project

Experts drew attention to **the intensification of everyday militarization within the country**. This refers not only to formal conscription mechanisms but also to the expansion of unofficial mobilization practices, accompanied by increased state propa-

ganda and social pressure. These processes affected large segments of the population, but with LGBT+ people, the authorities keep an especially vigilant eye out, since they already have existing vulnerabilities, multiplying ways to control them through their families, educational institutions, and the state. The following interview excerpt discusses the “invisible military recruitment” and its impact on queer people:

“Drafting continues, albeit covertly; this invisible mobilization happens in various ways, targeting certain demographics. This includes university students; there is a general spread of militarism, an attempt to glorify the armed forces and military service – all of this continues and affects many different communities, including queer people. Last year, we saw an increase in state propaganda as well. It affected queer people, especially those who live with a “male” gender marker in their documents. They face constant pressure regardless of how they identify – from relatives and university administrations. The calls to serve, “defend the Motherland” are persistent – as we can see from requests for help, they have grown even stronger. In 2025, the tendency has continued, and had a major impact on the lives of queer people.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama Project

In a number of cases, the pressure on individuals took the form of direct administrative or physical coercion, including **attempts to force the signing of military contracts under threat of criminal prosecution or other legal consequences**. Such practices were not always directly connected to sexual orientation and/or gender identity, but LGBT+ people were at a particularly high risk due to their overall vulnerability.

“Cases have been documented of demands to sign military service contracts under threat of criminal charges under extremism statutes, or with the use of physical violence. In four cases, such pressure led to the actual signing of a contract. There are cases where LGBT+ people come forward with complaints that they are being pressured to sign a military contract – but not because of their SOGIE; their SOGIE is mostly unknown to the officers, yet the pressure exists. There have been cases where fake dates were used to put pressure on a person to sign a military contract, cases where fake dates were arranged by police officers directly as well. They found a vulnerability, and demanded things, using it as leverage: ‘Give us money, name other LGBTQ+ people, tell us where they gather, sign a contract with the Russian army.’”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Thus, international political processes had a complex and contradictory impact on the lives of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2025. The war, on one hand, has genuinely expanded the range of migration scenarios and legitimized requests for asylum, but combined with the global tightening of migration policy, it has also led to a complica-

tion of access to these opportunities, turning emigration into a lengthy, resource-demanding, and unclear process. At the same time, internal militarization and the intensification of propaganda were creating additional forms of pressure, particularly for gender-nonconforming people and those who formally fall under conscription categories. As a result, LGBT+ people found themselves between a rock and a hard place, growing threats inside the country combined with shrinking access to external protection, forming a state of lingering instability.

State of the Human Rights Sector

In 2025, the human rights sector in Russia **continues to experience a prolonged structural crisis** associated with the destruction of its former organizational, financial, and communication foundations.

A significant number of human rights defenders have either emigrated or lost the ability to work properly inside the country, while many professional connections have been lost.

“The way I see it, I’m not the only one who is going through severe emotional burnout, slowly and painfully recovering from depression, many professional connections lost to political factors. And loss of contacts in Russia leads to us wondering what we are even doing anymore.”

– Sergey, EQUAL PostOst

The growing divide between emigrated human rights defenders and LGBTQ+ people and activists who remain in Russia has intensified year after year.

“I would say that I see a certain emotional and informational divide emerging between those who exist within the agenda of so-called independent opposition media writing about how terrifying life in Russia is, and people who actually live in Russia, who either do not read those same media outlets or engage with them more selectively, while remaining in direct contact with people around them.”

– Natalia, Ural Federal District

At the same time, when discussing the need for **unity and collaboration**, experts agree that such **a need exists**. Those who remain in Russia note that this form of

solidarity is emerging among those still inside the country: ***“I see that there is a need for unity. Politically, it manifests itself in collective actions. There is also a need for offline meetings, not only online ones, simply to look at one another and see this scorched field, see who is still out there. Yes, I would say there is a need for unity, and people are uniting and helping one another.”***

– Natalia, Ural Federal District

Meanwhile, human rights defenders who have left Russia also describe experiences of cooperation among those forced to work abroad, while emphasizing that the divide with those who remain in Russia continues to grow:

“I see cooperation among organizations working outside of Russia. Even the research you are conducting now is a joint project between Coming Out and Sphere. That is an example of good collaboration. In June 2025, a queer festival took place in France, and many people from different organizations attended. People are uniting and gathering on the same platforms. My colleagues and I in the media also try to support one another, repost content, and create materials together. At the same time, the gap between those who left and those who stayed continues to grow. We are drifting further apart, we understand and hear each other less and less. We rarely see one another. Even at the festival I mentioned, there were people from Russia who continue to live there. But what can one really understand about life in Russia by speaking with them for only a few days once a year? The gap is growing wider, and while collaborations do exist, we would like more of them. Yet that is impossible, not because our goals are fundamentally different... Our main goal is the same, but our most pressing immediate concerns are tragically different.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of Glitter and Carbines show

A human rights activist who remains in Russia emphasizes that cooperation is further complicated by the inability to hold joint events, invite colleagues, or travel abroad due to visa restrictions and the high cost of travel under current conditions:

“Because of issues such as the European visa regime, the difficulties Russians face in obtaining visas, and restrictions inside Russia, we cannot invite partners to visit us now because the risks are too high. Even though cooperation still exists, it needs to be sustained through collaborative projects, events, and similar activities. And I, for instance, have practically stopped traveling abroad. I only travel for the internal needs of our organization. Although I regularly apply for trips, I am not invited often. Some of my colleagues have traveled, but again, not frequent-

ly. This exchange continues for us, at least to some extent, but it has been significantly reduced because transporting people out of Russia is now extremely expensive. Not everyone has a visa, not everyone has access to one, and obtaining a visa has become very difficult.”

– Natalia D., Southern Federal District, civil activist

Following the collapse of offline infrastructure, a substantial portion of human rights work has shifted online. However, this transition has been accompanied by **the loss of direct contact with beneficiaries.**

“When you leave the country, you lose a certain connection to what is happening. You lose that feeling of constant danger or, rather, constant unsafety and shrinking space. Intellectually, you may still understand it, but you no longer feel it. Therefore, maintaining contact with people on the ground is extremely important because they provide a kind of reality check and an understanding of what is happening and how frightening it truly is. But again, access to information inside Russia is becoming increasingly restricted. And for those who have left Russia, access to information about what is happening inside the country is also decreasing. So, the information coming out of Russia is becoming more and more limited.”

– Dilya Gafurova, head of the Sphere Foundation

Communication has become one of the sector’s main challenges, and this problem goes both ways: it has become increasingly difficult both to share your agenda to those living in Russia, and to receive feedback and **reliable information** on developments in the country.

“It is becoming increasingly difficult to find respondents for interviews, surveys, and other forms of interaction. It is also becoming harder to receive feedback from Russia. On the one hand, this is due to internet-related problems. On the other hand, it stems from growing fear among people. More and more cases are emerging in which fines or prosecutions may result from likes on social media or private correspondence. These are isolated cases and are not always connected to LGBTQ issues. And they do not always happen in the way they initially appear. For example, likes or private messages are discovered during phone inspections, as happened in the North Caucasus. But these stories appear in headlines in simplified form and generate widespread fear. Therefore, the main challenge is communication.”

– Roman Polyakov, Queerorama project

There is also an alternative perspective regarding the divide between those who left and those who stayed: while the divide undoubtedly exists, its scale and conse-

quences should not be overstated. Rather, what is occurring is a partial reconfiguration of interaction, where the resilience of support systems is maintained through digital communication channels, redistributed trust, and ongoing information exchange, albeit with certain distortions.

“There is an awareness gap between organizations that left Russia and continue to provide support to LGBT+ people in Russia and the community itself, but it is not that large. People seek support from those who have the resources to provide it, including those for whom personal safety is not as acute an issue. Moreover, aside from rare offline events, communication still takes place online one way or another. Often, people even prefer to contact those outside the control of Russian authorities for information-security reasons. Through requests for assistance, which can number in the dozens each day, and through the process of providing that assistance, organizations that have relocated abroad receive a broad and direct understanding of the situation in Russia. There is a certain one-sidedness in the sense that what becomes visible are primarily situations where difficulties arise or may arise, and whether those difficulties are resolved successfully or unsuccessfully. What often remains outside the field of view is the part of life where, for example, offline activities can still take place without real or anticipated problems.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

A key structural turning point for the human rights sector has been the **disappearance of familiar funding sources, particularly those connected to the United States**.

“Trump’s policies had a very strong impact. The main issue is funding for human rights defenders: American grants disappeared or were significantly reduced, and this severely affected the work of Russian LGBT+ organizations. It is no secret that many organizations received grants through USAID, and people were left without that funding. This led to staff reductions and the closure of some organizations or certain programs. We can see that in 2025 evacuation assistance has almost disappeared.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of Glitter and Carbines show

In addition, helping to evacuate LGBT+ individuals from Russia in emergency situations has become increasingly difficult due to the broader crisis in migration policy:

“And it is becoming increasingly difficult to evacuate people anywhere because the countries that once issued humanitarian visas are not is-

suing them anymore. We know that Germany has suspended the issuance of humanitarian visas. We know that France issues them far less frequently now. The Spanish program closed: after being tested and deemed unsuccessful, the Spanish authorities announced that there would be no more humanitarian visas. The only remaining option is to leave using other types of visas — through study, work, or other forms of emigration. But this is extremely difficult and resource intensive.”

– Maria Latsinskaya, journalist, host of Glitter and Carbines show

The crisis faced by the human rights sector in 2025 is not limited solely to shrinking resources. Whereas there once existed a relatively stable and institutionalized funding system, including not only grants themselves but also the infrastructure for their safe distribution, organizations now find themselves in a situation where they must simultaneously search for new funding sources while rebuilding the mechanisms necessary to receive and use those funds. This has resulted in rising transaction costs, heightened risks, and the constant need to explain organizational logistics to new donors who do not always understand the constraints under which the Russian human rights sector operates.

An additional dimension of this crisis concerns its symbolic consequences. **The weakening of international support** has become not only a practical problem but also an important element in the broader political and ideological context. It is reinterpreted by the state as evidence of the alleged failure of human rights organizations and is used to reinforce stigmatizing narratives. This, in turn, affects not only external perceptions of the sector but also its internal condition: it intensifies uncertainty, undermines motivation, and contributes to a broader crisis of meaning within organizations themselves.

One expert describes these changes as follows:

“When the USAID situation happened in the United States, it was not simply that there was less money. It happened simultaneously with the rightward political turn in the United States and growing fatigue in Europe due to the burden of the war. As a result, this became a structural turning point. First, there was less money, that part is obvious. Second, the withdrawal of USAID meant the loss of a financial security infrastructure. These financial flows had been institutionally, politically, and legally protected. There was an established infrastructure for obtaining funds without exposing beneficiaries and specialists to risk. Once this financial infrastructure disappeared, organizations had to simultaneously search for new funding sources and new safe mechanisms. You may find many new donors, but you still have to explain to them why you work the way you do and why you lack the transparency they are accustomed to. And that is a much more systemic problem.

In addition, the departure of USAID carried symbolic weight. Russian authorities gained an opportunity for new propaganda narratives. The message became that the U.S. government had reconsidered its priorities and stopped funding all these NPOs. LGBTQ rights are presented in propaganda as a failed Western experiment. Furthermore, external support weakened, allowing official propaganda to intensify portrayals of NPOs as dependent and incapable. This supposedly demonstrates their inefficiency and the meaninglessness of their work. And this perception is internalized within NPOs themselves. It creates a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. It is a crisis of meaning because your funding has been taken away and you are told that you are unnecessary. Psychologically, this creates a very heavy atmosphere, affecting motivation, self-perception, and long-term sustainability.”

– K., lawyer, “Coming Out” LGBT Group

Overall, the state of the human rights sector in 2025 can be characterized as a multilayered structural crisis in which the organizational, financial, communicative, and symbolic foundations of its work are simultaneously deteriorating. A significant portion of human rights defenders have either been forced into emigration or deprived of the ability to operate fully inside Russia. It is also accompanied by emotional exhaustion and diminishing opportunities for coordination and cooperation.

There is a growing difference between everyday experience and working conditions between those inside Russia and those operating abroad. However, these differences have not led to a complete break in interaction. Rather, distinct modes of perceiving the situation are emerging, coexisting within a shared broader mission and continually reconciled through ongoing communication and coordination. Despite objective constraints, participants in the sector continue to maintain working relationships and cooperate even under conditions of limited resources and differing contexts.

A separate structural turning point concerns the transformation of international support and the broader funding crisis, which extends beyond the simple reduction of resources to include the collapse of the former “security infrastructure” of funding and increasingly complex relations with new donors.

Thus, in 2025, the human rights sector finds itself in a condition where a crisis of resources has evolved into a broader crisis of stability and meaning.

Forecasts for 2026

All experts interviewed this year **shared pessimistic expectations for 2026**. None anticipated improvements in the situation for LGBT+ people in Russia or broader stabilization of the political climate in the country and globally.

“Nothing good will happen. I don’t see any positive scenarios; neither for Russia in general nor for the LGBT+ community in Russia.”

— Sergey, EQUAL PostOst

“I think things will only get worse. There is no optimism here.”

— Tatyana Kalinina, expert on women’s and queer rights protection

“I think there will be more repressions, more censorship, and fewer news reports. I don’t see any potential for improvement yet.”

— Itil Tyomnaya, Crime 6.21 Project

A clear consensus is formed among experts that the future does not contain any room for improvement, their forecasts predicting varying degrees of deterioration.

Some experts, however, don’t predict the crisis intensifying further, and expect it to enter a period of stagnation.

“I don’t think things will get worse, but I don’t think things will improve either. It feels as though we are in a kind of stasis, suspended in this condition.”

— Dmitry Dubrovsky, researcher

Other interviewees talk about a potential expansion of repressive practices through the use of flexible legal categories and discriminatory legislation targeting new social groups:

“The previous year, 2025, already showed us that these repressions constantly invent new targets for themselves — and then strike those targets.”

— Tatyana Kalinina, expert on women’s and queer rights protection

“I don’t think it will get better, because the very existence of discriminatory laws, even if they are not applied on a mass scale, creates enormous room for abuse. Anti-LGBT policies and legislation affect our lives even when the connection is not immediately visible. In fact, they influence cisgender, heterosexual people and their quality of life as

well, as such discriminatory laws should not exist in a normal society or a normal state in the first place.”

— Natalya D., SFD, civil activist

One of the central topics in expert forecasts for 2026 concerns a possible full ban of Telegram, which currently serves as a critical communication and information infrastructure for LGBT+ communities and support organizations. The interviewees describe Telegram as not just a messenger, but a primary channel for seeking assistance, sharing information, and maintaining community networks, especially after restrictions on other platforms. Experts warned that a ban on the platform could significantly narrow the already limited informational space and further restrict access to supportive services.

“Telegram is now banned, and given that many organizations receive requests for help through Telegram bots, this is a very troubling trend.”

— Katya, Head of the legal aid program, the Sphere Foundation

“I think the nature of repression will remain roughly the same as in 2025. What worries me is that we might hear even less about it. Regarding access to information, in 2026 many of us expect Telegram to be fully blocked. After Instagram was blocked, Telegram became the main channel for queer-related informative action. This would be detrimental for access to help and information.”

— Yaroslav Rasputin, gay activist, journalist, blogger

During the research process in early 2025, we learned that Russian courts would consider Ministry of Justice lawsuits seeking to designate human rights organizations Coming Out and Russian LGBT Network extremist. In March 2025, the courts approved these claims. These events affected the experts' forecasts for the year; they noted that such decisions could significantly increase risks for individuals cooperating with these organizations, and affect the willingness of LGBT+ people in Russia to seek help.

“The government declaring Coming Out and the Russian LGBT Network extremist organizations will surely affect the number of requests for help. Some people inside Russia will be afraid to contact organizations with such a perilous status. Still, it is unlikely for people to suddenly stop reading announcements and materials from Coming Out and Russian LGBT Network altogether. Perhaps, they will not follow these organizations on social media, but will still visit their pages and read the information, while avoiding any digital traces.”

— Tatyana Kalinina, expert on women's and queer rights protection

Experts also predicted that the migration crisis will worsen, further limiting opportunities for emigration, evacuation, and support for those

who have already left Russia: “The migration crisis seems to be gaining momentum. It is becoming increasingly difficult to help people once they have left. Countries we work with are reducing refugee quotas. So the forecasts are not very optimistic.”

— Lusya Shtein, NC SOS Crisis Group

Overall, expert forecasts for 2026 present a consolidated pessimistic picture in which the crisis is expected either to persist in a stagnant form or gradually intensify through expanding repression practices, increasing legal uncertainty, and tighter control over information and human rights environment. Experts emphasized not only the likelihood of worsening conditions, but also the normalization of existing restrictions as a new social reality in which risks become routine and systemic. They further predicted continued shrinking of public and digital spaces, as well as reduced access to information, assistance, and community support.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that 2025 marked a stage of consolidation and normalization of a repressive system targeting LGBT+ people in Russia. The initial shock following the events of 2024 has evolved into what can be described as a “routinized catastrophe,” in which pressure, fear, and restrictions have become part of everyday life, while public visibility and openness steadily decline. Repressive legislation has become firmly established as a universal mechanism of control, applied arbitrarily and expansively across both public and private spheres.

At the same time, the inner structure of the LGBT+ community is being destroyed, forcing community life further underground. Queer spaces are closing or disguising themselves, offline events have practically disappeared, and even private communication through messaging platforms is becoming increasingly risky. The decline in visible forms of repression, such as police raids or administrative prosecutions, does not indicate political liberalization, but rather reflects growing self-censorship and adaptation to threats. Under these conditions, censorship has shifted toward a preventive model, encouraging individuals and institutions to avoid potentially dangerous topics and enforcing stricter control over cultural and informational spaces.

The social environment has also become increasingly hostile and unsafe. Hate-motivated violence remains widespread amid the militarization of Russian society and the normalization of aggression. LGBT+ individuals effectively lack reliable access to protection, as contacting law enforcement carries a risk of further persecution. In this context, denunciations and threats of denunciation have become routine instruments of pressure.

Certain groups within the community are particularly vulnerable. Transgender people encounter systemic barriers in access to healthcare, justice, and employment. LGBT+ families and adolescents live under increased surveillance, self-censorship, and a constant risk of outing.

The economic situation of LGBT+ people can be characterized as a form of “double burden”: general economic hardship is compounded by additional costs associated with security and planning for potential emigration. Simultaneously, both employment and educational sectors are increasingly shaped by institutional fear, while LGBT+ identity itself is often treated as a risk for organizations and institutions. This contributes to a further exclusion of LGBT+ individuals from professional spaces.

The human rights sector is also experiencing a profound structural crisis. Previous forms of coordination, funding, and solidarity have weakened or transformed significantly, while differences in experiences and operational conditions inside and outside Russia continue to grow. Resource shortages are evolving into a broader crisis of sustainability and meanings. Nevertheless, grassroots forms of mutual aid and self-organization persist and remain an important, though limited, resource for survival and resilience.

Expert forecasts for 2026 reflect a broad consensus of pessimism: a further intensification of repression or the entrenchment of current conditions at their existing level is anticipated. Overall, the position of LGBT+ people in Russia can therefore be described as a stable system of multilayered vulnerability in which legal, social, economic, and institutional restrictions mutually reinforce one another.

Position of LGBT+ People in Russia: Assessment by Human Rights Defenders. – Sphere Foundation; LGBTQ+ Group Coming Out, 2026. – 64 p.

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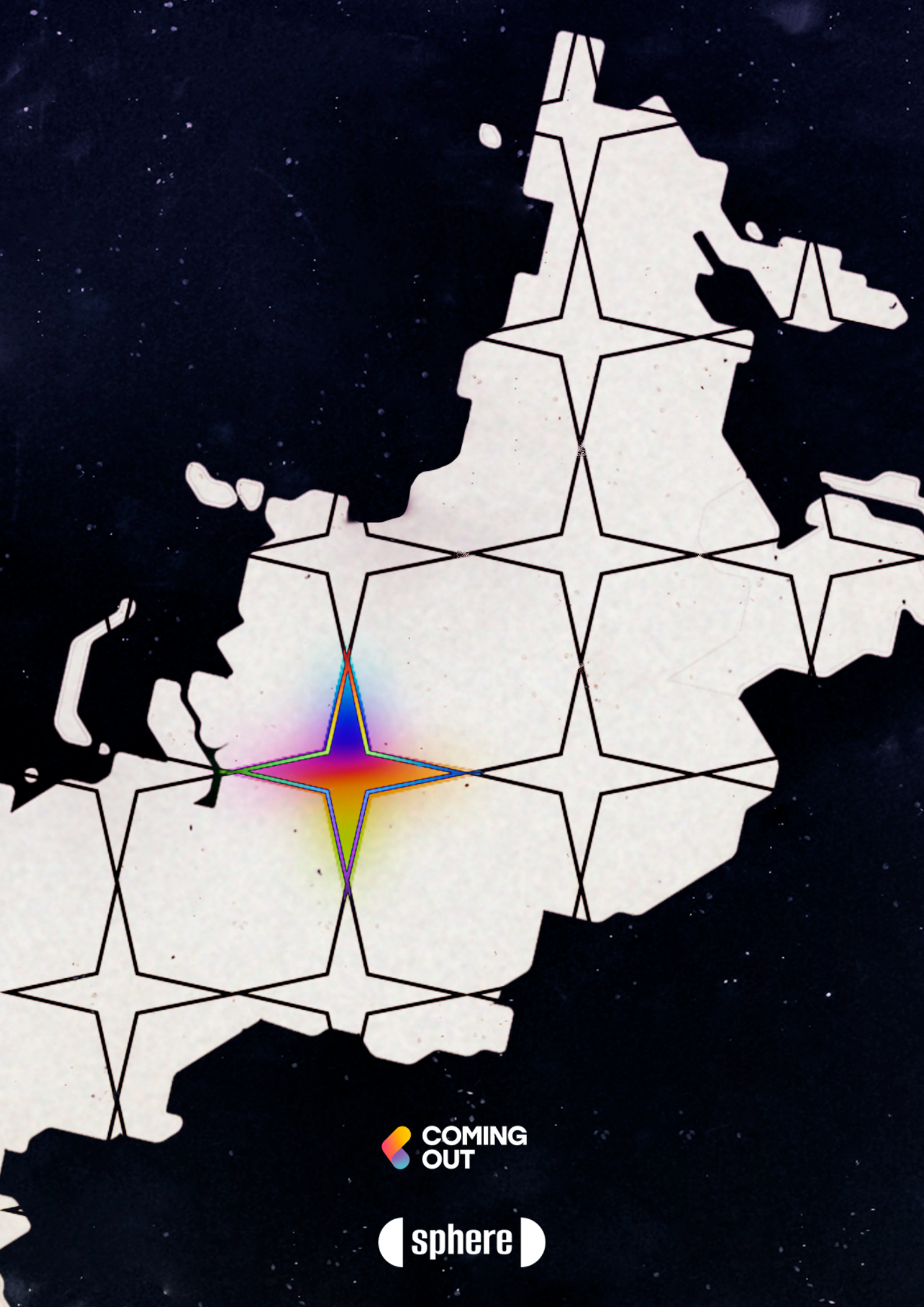
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