

**Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America
50th Session of the UPR Working Group**

The Williams Institute

April 2026

This submission is an update to the submission filed in April 2025

[The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law](#), established in 2001, is the leading academic research center in the United States on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. The Institute is comprised of social scientists, public health experts, legal scholars, and international policy fellows. The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous and independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity (“SOGI”), including on the demographics and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (“LGBT”) people, as well as on HIV laws and policies. The Williams Institute collects and analyzes original data, as well as analyzes governmental and private data, and has long worked with national and international agencies to improve data collection and shape effective policies related to LGBT populations and populations of people living with HIV.

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Introduction

1. This submission provides an update to our 2025 report on the United States (U.S.) government's compliance with its human rights obligations to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary (LGBT) people for the period of April 2025 to April 2026.
2. We bring attention to three areas of heightened concern: discrimination, ill-treatment, and denials of protection for LGBT asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants; government actions to exclude transgender people from public life, travel, and evidence-based health care; and the erasure of sexual and gender minority people from official data.

State-directed discrimination, ill-treatment, and denials of protection for LGBT asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants

3. The U.S. government has issued an overlapping series of executive orders, presidential proclamations, regulatory changes, and agency directives on immigration over the last year. This has created confusion about which nationals are barred from entry, when and whether asylum procedures are available, and whether immigrant visas may be issued or adjudicated.¹
4. In the absence of official data about the sexual orientation or gender identity of those detained and deported, the Williams Institute is conducting ongoing monitoring of media and NGO accounts to track the impact on LGBT immigrants, with the caveat that this process can reveal only a fraction of existing cases.

Rights violations in immigration detention

5. Longstanding problems in immigration detention affecting the safety and health of LGBT detainees have been exacerbated by the January 2025 executive order prohibiting the recognition of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people. Two outcomes of that Executive Order in the last year are:
 - a. **Removal of LGBT-specific standards for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).** Updated ICE detention standards removed LGBT-specific guidance related to housing, safety, and medical care. Transgender detainees are now placed in detention units according to their sex assigned at birth and

¹ See Exec. Order No. 14,161, *Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*, 90 Fed. Reg. 8,451 (Jan. 30, 2025); Proclamation No. 10,949, *Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*, 90 Fed. Reg. 24,497 (June 10, 2025) (effective June 9, 2025), as expanded by Proclamation No. 10,998, *Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States*, 90 Fed. Reg. 59,717 (Dec. 19, 2025) (effective Jan. 1, 2026); U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Servs., Policy Memorandum PM-602-0192, *Hold and Review of All Pending Asylum Applications and All USCIS Benefit Applications Filed by Aliens from High-Risk Countries* (Dec. 2, 2025), <https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/policy-memoranda>; U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Servs., Policy Memorandum PM-602-0194, *Hold and Review of USCIS Benefit Applications Filed by Aliens from Additional High-Risk Countries* (Jan. 1, 2026).

not their gender identity, putting them at risk of sexual and other assaults. Standards requiring assessment of health and safety risks for LGBT detainees have been eliminated.²

- b. **Elimination of gender identity data tracking:** Recent policy changes ended systematic collection and reporting of gender identity data in ICE detention, as had been mandated by Congress in 2021,³ replacing it with sex-based classifications and effectively removing transgender detainees from official records, limiting oversight and the ability to monitor conditions, care, and abuse.⁴
6. **Detention conditions and abuse:** LGBT detainees have reported sexual assault, harassment, and coercion in ICE facilities, including forced labor and retaliation (e.g., solitary confinement or denial of care) when abuse is reported.⁵
7. **Gender affirming care disruptions:** Transgender detainees describe interruption or denial of hormone therapy and other gender-affirming care despite existing prescriptions, leading to withdrawal symptoms, worsening mental health, and increased vulnerability.⁶
8. **HIV treatment disruptions:** Reports describe interruptions in medication, delayed care, and in one case, death due to untreated illness, of detained people living with HIV.⁷

Removals to unsafe countries of origin

9. Media reports document detention and threats of removal for LGBT individuals from countries where same-sex relationships are criminalized despite credible safety concerns, including a gay man from Cameroon facing prolonged detention after deportation was deemed unsafe, and two Iranian LGBT asylum seekers, fleeing family violence and state persecution who have faced denial of protection and risk of

² U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2019) *National Detention Standards For Non-Dedicated Facilities*. <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2019/nds2019.pdf>; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2025) *National Detention Standards*. <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2025/nds2025.pdf>

³ United States Congress. Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182. (2020). <https://www.congress.gov/116/statute/statute-134/statute-134-pg1182.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2026, March 23). *Detention Management*. <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management>.

⁵ Singh, M. (2025, October 16). *Queer and trans immigrants allege forced labor and sexual assault in Ice facility: 'I was treated worse than an animal'*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/16/ice-immigration-queer-trans-louisiana>

⁶ Kalish, L. (2026, February 7). *ICE is Treating Trans Immigrants With A New Level Of Cruelty*. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-ice-trans-immigrants-medical-neglect_n_69851c88e4b06f7f7bb7cdbc

⁷ Hogan, G., & Adams, R. (2026, February 18). *ICE Has Doubled Its Presence in Notorious Brooklyn Jail*. The City NYC. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2026/02/18/ice-mdc-dan-goldman/>; Kladzyk, R. (2025, April 10). *Migrant Dies in ICE Custody from Untreated HIV*. POGO Investigates. <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/migrant-dies-in-ice-custody-from-untreated-hiv>

deportation.⁸

Chain refoulement

10. Recent cases show that asylum seekers, including LGBT individuals with pending claims or court-ordered protections, are being removed to third countries with punitive laws targeting LGBT people. Removing asylum seekers to countries where they face likely persecution violates both international human rights law and U.S. law.

11. Reports include:

- a. A Moroccan lesbian asylum seeker, with a protection from removal order, deported to Cameroon where same-sex relationships are criminalized, then sent back to Morocco.⁹
- b. A Ghanaian woman fleeing sexual orientation persecution also deported to Cameroon.¹⁰
- c. A Gambian gay asylum seeker, with a protection from removal order, deported to Ghana where same-sex relationships are criminalized, and returned to Gambia.¹¹
- d. A Venezuelan gay asylum seeker removed to El Salvador and then forcibly returned to Venezuela.¹²
- e. A Guatemalan gay asylum seeker, who reported sexual violence in Mexico while trying to reach the U.S., with a protection from removal order, deported to Mexico and then sent back to Guatemala. He was returned to the U.S. under a judge's order after four months in hiding.¹³

Denial of access to asylum procedures and refugee resettlement

⁸ Planas, A., & Green, R. (2026, March 3). *Gaming pro from Cameroon detained by ice for deportation*. The Banner. <https://www.thebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/ludovic-mbock-deportation-4hhpyy4p5jh3bjo5m6gidgemcq/>; MacDonald-Evoy, J. (2026, January 23). *Asylum-seekers set for deportation to Iran fear execution in their home country*. News From the States. <https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/gay-asylum-seekers-set-deportation-iran-fear-execution-their-home-country>

⁹ Pronczuk, M. (2026, February 23). *The U.S. deported a gay asylum-seeker to a third country where homosexuality is illegal*. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2026-02-23/u-s-deported-gay-asylum-seeker-to-country-where-homosexuality-is-illegal>

¹⁰ Baskar, P., & Aleaziz, H. (2026, February 16). *U.S. Departs Nine Migrants in Secret, Ignoring Legal Protections*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/14/world/africa/us-secret-deportation-cameroon.html>

¹¹ Maclean, R. (2025, September 18). *West Africans Deported by the U.S. Sue Ghana for Rights Violations*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/18/world/africa/us-deportees-sue-ghana.html>

¹² Blanco, U. (2025, May 28). *He left Venezuela for the US, dreaming of a career in cosmetics. He was deported to a Salvadoran prison*. CNN World. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/28/americas/romero-venezuela-deported-us-salvador-intl-latam>

¹³ Feuer, A., & Schwartz, M. (2025, June 4). *U.S. Brings Back Guatemalan Wrongly Deported to Mexico*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/04/us/politics/guatemalan-deported-mexico-trump.html>

12. The U.S. is currently blocking nationals of 39 countries from entry into the U.S., including for purposes of seeking asylum.¹⁴ Of these countries, 27 have laws that criminalize LGBT people, including four with the death penalty for same-sex sexual acts.¹⁵
13. For 2026, the U.S. has deeply reduced the number of refugees allowed into the country for resettlement from 125,000 to 7,500, prioritizing some groups, specifically South African Afrikaners, rather than groups with identified persecution risks, such as LGBT people.¹⁶

Immigration visa restrictions

14. The U.S. government has indefinitely paused all visa issuances to visa immigrant applicants from a list of 75 countries,¹⁷ of which 33 have laws that are hostile to LGBT people, including six in which the death penalty for same-sex sexual acts is possible in part or all of the country.¹⁸

Removals of SOGI data from refugee and immigrant program monitoring

15. Federal programs for vulnerable refugees and immigrants have removed gender identity, sexual orientation, or both from their monitoring and reporting forms. These include widespread removals from collections across the Office of Refugee Resettlement, including Services provided to Unaccompanied Children: Assessments for Risk; Support for Trauma-Affected Refugees; and Services for Survivors of Torture; as well as from the Domestic Victims of Human Trafficking program.¹⁹ These data are used for program management, oversight, and “to understand if and how specific groups are being offered services and to provide support to grantees.”²⁰

¹⁴ Proclamation No. 10949, *Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*, 90 Fed. Reg. 24497 (June 10, 2025) (effective June 9, 2025), as expanded by Proclamation No. 10998, *Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States*, 90 Fed. Reg. 59717 (Dec. 19, 2025) (effective Jan. 1, 2026).

¹⁵ Ilga World Database. (2026, February). Legal Frameworks: Criminalization of Consensual same-sex acts. <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>

¹⁶ National Archives. (2025, September 30). *Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026*. Federal Register. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/10/31/2025-19752/presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2026>

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State. (2026, February 2). *Immigrant Visa Processing Updates for Nationalities at High Risk of U.S. Public Benefits Reliance*. U.S. Department of State. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/immigrant-visa-processing-updates-for-nationalities-at-high-risk-of-public-benefits-usage.html>

¹⁸ Ilga World Database. (2026, February). Legal Frameworks: Criminalization of Consensual same-sex acts. <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>

¹⁹ Williams Institute. (2026, February). *Removal of sexual orientation and gender identity from federal data collections* [Data interactive]. UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/sogi-data-collection-removal/>; Bouton, L., & Redfield, E. (2026) *Removal of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity from Federal Data Collections: January 2025 to January 2026*. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/sogi-data-collection-removal/>.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2023, January). *Generic program-specific performance progress report (PPR): OMB information collection request 0970-0490, supporting statement part A: Justification*. https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=202506-0970-008

More information about federal SOGI data removals can be found later in this report.

State-directed restrictions on legal gender recognition and denial of health care for transgender people

Health and social exclusion of transgender youth

16. Restrictive laws targeting transgender youth intensified in 2025. By the end of the year transgender students were restricted from school sport participation (29 states); using school washrooms aligned with their gender identity (21 states); using gender-affirming pronouns in schools (10 states); and were banned or substantially restricted from accessing gender-affirming health care (27 states). More than half of all transgender youth aged 13-17 in the U.S. (382,800 of an estimated 724,000) lived in one of these states.²¹
17. In December 2025, the Trump administration proposed Medicaid and Medicare rule changes to restrict coverage of gender-affirming care and prohibit hospitals from receiving federal funding if they provided such care to minors, even using non-federal funds.²² These proposals carry substantial leverage to force compliance by hospitals and doctors committed to evidence-based, individualized care for young transgender patients; in 2024, Medicare and Medicaid together accounted for over one-third of national health spending and more than 70% of hospital inpatient days.²³
18. Federal surveillance intensified in parallel: the Federal Trade Commission launched an inquiry into gender-affirming care framed around potential "unfair or deceptive" practices, while the Department of Justice issued subpoenas to doctors and clinics providing such care.²⁴
19. A 2025 Williams Institute survey of gender-affirming care providers in states without bans found that nearly three-quarters (72%) said their youth clients were increasingly worried about their ability to continue care and 42% said their youth

²¹ Joshua Arrayales & Elana Redfield. (2026). The Impact of 2025 Legislation on Transgender Youth. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/anti-trans-legislation-youth/>

²² Arrayales, J., et al. (2026). Comment Letter on Proposed Rule, *Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Hospital Condition of Participation: Prohibiting Sex-Rejecting Procedures for Children*, RIN 0938-AV87. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Comment-CMS-Feb-2026.pdf>.

²³ American Medical Association. (2026, March 16). Fact Sheet: Medicare and Medicaid Constitute Majority of Hospital Payments. <https://www.aha.org/fact-sheets/2022-05-25-fact-sheet-majority-hospital-payments-dependent-medicare-or-medicaid>; Levinson, Z., et al. (2025, February 19); Key Facts About Hospitals.

KFF.org. <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/key-facts-about-hospitals/?entry=overview-introduction>

²⁴ Office of Public Affairs. (2025, July 9). *Department of Justice Subpoenas Doctors and Clinics Involved in Performing Transgender Medical Procedures on Children*. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-subpoenas-doctors-and-clinics-involved-performing-transgender-medical>; Federal Trade Commission. (2025, July 28). *FTC Requests Public Comment Regarding "Gender-Affirming Care" for Minors*. <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/07/ftc-requests-public-comment-regarding-gender-affirming-care-minors>

clients had concerns about the privacy and security of their medical information.²⁵

Access to gender-affirming health care for adults

20. Access to gender-affirming care for transgender adults in the U.S. has also been increasingly constrained. Coverage was eliminated in federal employee health benefits for 2026.²⁶ Currently, 14 states exclude coverage from state employee health plans, and 11 states bar Medicaid coverage for transgender-related care across all ages.²⁷

Access to single-sex facilities

21. As of April 2026, 21 states had enacted laws restricting transgender people from using washrooms and other single-sex facilities consistent with their gender identity in public buildings, schools, colleges, and in some cases all state facilities,²⁸ creating increasing health and safety risks for transgender people as described in our 2025 report.

Denial and revocation of gender-concordant identity documents

22. Following the US Supreme Court's decision on November 6, 2025, to stay a preliminary injunction in *Orr v. Trump*, the US State Department is issuing passports only with sex markers corresponding to sex assigned at birth, denying transgender people access to travel documents consistent with their gender identity.²⁹
23. At the state level, eight states have a formal or *de facto* ban on transgender people obtaining driver's licenses reflecting their gender identity.³⁰ One state, Kansas, enacted legislation in early 2026 that retroactively invalidates driver's licenses and birth certificates not reflecting sex assigned at birth, resulting in transgender residents receiving official notification that their legally obtained identification is no longer valid.³¹

²⁵ Goldberg, A.E., Redfield, E. (2025). The Experiences of Gender-Affirming Care Providers in States Without Laws Restricting Access to Care. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/experiences-gac-providers/>

²⁶ Moss, K. (2025, August 20). Coverage for gender-affirming care will be eliminated from FEHB plans in 2026. Government Executive: Pay & Benefits. <https://www.govexec.com/pay-benefits/2025/08/coverage-gender-affirming-care-will-be-eliminated-fehb-plans-2026/407553/>

²⁷ Movement Advancement Project. (2026, April 7). Equality Maps: Healthcare Laws and Policies. https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/healthcare_laws_and_policies/state_employees; Movement Advancement Project. (2026, April 7). Equality Maps: Healthcare Laws and Policies: Medicaid.

<https://www.mapresearch.org/equality-maps/healthcare/mcicaid>

²⁸ Movement Advancement Project. (2026, April 7). *Equality Maps: Bans on Transgender People's Use of Public Bathrooms & Facilities According to Their Gender Identity.* https://www.mapresearch.org/equality-maps/nondiscrimination/bathroom_bans

²⁹ US Department of State. (2025, November 18). *Sex Marker in Passports.*

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/passport-help/sex-marker.html>

³⁰ Movement Advancement Project. (2026, April 3). *Equality Maps: Identity Document Laws and Policies.* https://www.mapresearch.org/equality-maps/identity_document_laws.

³¹ Thoreson, R. (2026, March 3). *US State Revokes Gender-Affirming Identification.* Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/03/03/us-state-revokes-gender-affirming-identification>

24. Taken together, these federal and state measures violate the right to recognition before the law and equal protection without discrimination under Articles 16 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.³² As noted in our 2025 report, forcing transgender people to carry identity documents inconsistent with their gender identity and presentation restricts their freedom of movement and exposes them to heightened risk of discrimination, harassment, and violence in their daily lives.³³

State-directed removal of sexual orientation and gender identity data from federal surveys

25. Federal agencies continue to systematically remove sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) measures from federal data collections, including national surveys, population health surveillance systems, public program monitoring, evaluation research, and administrative forms.³⁴ Williams Institute research documents that at least 360 federal data collections had removed one or more SOGI measures by the end of January 2026. This is a conservative estimate, with further removals expected as documentation continues to be reviewed.
26. Gender identity measures accounted for the vast majority of removals, affecting 338 data collections. At least 60 data collections also removed sexual orientation measures. Twenty-three collections removed sexual orientation and/or gender identity data elements from questions tracking bias-motivated incidents, including the National Crime Victimization Survey.
27. These actions reverse the practice of SOGI data collection that was adopted under previous administrations and grounded in a long history of methodological research and evidence-building.³⁵ Removing SOGI measures from federal datasets undermines the ability to monitor and address inequities in domains where Williams Institute research has consistently shown LGBT people to face disproportionate risk.³⁶
28. Removal of SOGI data from bias-motivated incident questions further compounds this harm by precluding the ability to report discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. These measures are inconsistent with the

³² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 16, 26, December 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171.

³³ Herman, J. L., & O'Neill, K. (2021). Gender Marker Changes on State ID Documents: State-Level Policy Impacts. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/gender-marker-policies>

³⁴ Bouton, L., & Redfield, E. (2026) Removal of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity from Federal Data Collections: January 2025 to January 2026. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/sogi-data-collection-removal/>.

³⁵ Meyer, I. H., & Bouton, L. J. (2025). Impact of executive orders on access to federal data. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/access-federal-lgbt-data>

³⁶ See, for example: Meyer, I., & Flores, A. (2025). Anti-LGBT Victimization in the United States. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/anti-lgbt-victimization-us/>; Wilson, D.M., et al. (2023) LGBT Poverty in the United States. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-poverty-us/>; Wilson, B.M., et al. (2021) Health and Socioeconomic Well-Being of LBQ Women in the US. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lbq-women-in-us/>; Romero, A., et al. (2020) LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-housing-instability/>

obligation under international human rights law to collect disaggregated data as a means of monitoring compliance with the right to non-discrimination.³⁷

Recommendations

29. Recommendations for the U.S. remain similar to those presented in our original 2025 report:

Non-Discrimination

1. Adopt legislation that ensures legal recognition of gender identity at the federal level and prohibits discrimination based on sex, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, and gender identity with respect to public accommodations, employment, housing, and in federally funded programs and services.
2. Adopt and fund a National Action Plan to combat discrimination and violence against sexual and gender minorities with regular and transparent reporting.

Violence

3. Implement nationwide efforts to address the underreporting of, and impunity for, hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity and report on progress.
4. Fund the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and ensure that it includes transgender, intersex, lesbian, and bisexual women, women of color, and immigrant women.

Immigration

5. Institute urgent measures to ensure the safety of LGBT people and people with HIV and other health conditions held in immigration detention centers and allow independent human rights monitoring of detention conditions.
6. Halt all third-country deportations and establish oversight and accountability procedures that ensure asylum seekers are protected from refoulement.
7. Create safe and confidential systems for reporting mistreatment and prompt redress.
8. Ensure asylum officers and other personnel within CBP and USCIS who conduct credible/reasonable fear determinations, as well as immigration judges, are adequately trained in competent interview methods for LGBT people.

Monitoring and Accountability

9. Restart and expand systematic collection of research data on sexual orientation and gender identity in government research that collects demographic

³⁷ Human Rights Council. (2019, April 23). *Data Collection and Management as a Means to Create Heightened Awareness of Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT Persons*, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/45. United Nations General Assembly.

information, with a focus on reducing disparities and complying with stringent protections against misuse and unauthorized disclosure of such data.

Foreign Assistance

10. Address the harms to vulnerable communities—including people living with HIV, sexual and gender minorities, and other key populations—caused by withdrawals of U.S. foreign assistance, by cooperating with independent human rights mechanisms to assess impacts and coordinating support for critical health programs.