

Please cite as: EUAA, '8.5.2. Social attitudes ' in *COI Report - Bangladesh: Country Focus*, August 2025.

8.5.2. Social attitudes

As reported in the 2024 EUAA COI Report: Bangladesh – Country Focus, sources described a stigma surrounding sexuality in Bangladesh,1117 and that homosexuality is met with societal disapproval1118 ‘deeply ingrained and reinforced by the legal system, societal norms, and religious beliefs.’1119 Hijras reportedly also faced social stigma and discrimination.1120 According to the Equaldex’s Equality Index measuring the status of LGBT rights, laws, and freedoms as well as public attitudes towards LGBT people, Bangladesh rated 23 (with 100 being the most equal),1121 ranking Bangladesh 138 out of 197 countries in 2025.1122

Hijra is considered the oldest transgender group in the world1123 and there are about 10 000 hijras in Bangladesh according to an official estimate.1124 Rights groups claim the figure could be as high as 1.5 million in a population of 170 million people, as reported by Reuters.1125 Government initiatives have included opening separate Islamic schools for hijras1126 as well as a one mosque dedicated to the community,1127 but hijras have continue to face social stigma, 1128 discrimination,1129 and socio-economic marginalisation.1130 Historically, the hijra community has been impoverished,1131 although they have been holding an important traditional role in entertaining at marriage and birth ceremonies.1132 According to national authorities, ‘modernisation has diminished the traditional earning opportunities’ for hijras, and with limited education and skills many engage in high-risk sex work for survival.1133

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