# “Cancel Your Gays” Disappearance of LGBTQ+ TV Characters Raises Concerns



Concerns are escalating over the disappearance of TV shows featuring queer and trans characters, as networks and streaming services seem to respond to growing anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment. According to GLAAD, the number of LGBTQ+ characters in television shows decreased by 128 from last year’s total of 468. Of these characters, 36% will not return next year due to show cancellations or endings.

Jake News has observed that the Hollywood writer's strike contributed to a 14% overall decline in new shows from 2022 to 2023, according to research by cable network FX. Fans have termed this phenomenon "Cancel Your Gays," a nod to the 2016 "Bury Your Gays" trope where queer characters were killed off.

Dana Piccoli, a LGBTQ+ journalist, noted that losing these characters is demoralizing for fans and impacts their understanding and acceptance of their own identities. She emphasized the positive shift in representation from 2018, which took a downturn post-COVID-19 pandemic amid rising anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and legislation.

Today Jake hears from Toronto-based writer and producer Emily Andras that TV studios are now reluctant to invest in queer and trans stories, returning to more traditional narratives. She cited her experience with "Wynonna Earp," which faced cancellation and fan-led renewal efforts, as evidence of the strong demand for diverse storytelling.

Helen Kennedy, executive director of Egale Canada, believes blatant homophobia and transphobia partly drive the trend. Egale received significant hate mail after advocating the ban of Fox News in Canada for anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Kennedy emphasized the role of TV in countering hate by educating viewers.

Sarah Kaplan from the University of Toronto noted a corporate pullback from diversity and inclusion, citing examples like Target’s reduced Pride selections and Bud Light’s backlash over a trans influencer. A recent poll indicated decreasing support for LGBTQ+ protections among Americans.

These cancellations coincide with a growing understanding that well-rounded, authentic queer and trans characters are crucial for societal acceptance and legitimacy, especially for vulnerable LGBTQ+ youth.