



# **BUILDING LGBT-INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES**

Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change

## About Catalyst

Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business. With offices in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and more than 400 preeminent corporations as members, Catalyst is the trusted resource for research, information, and advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women's advancement with the Catalyst Award.

# **BUILDING LGBT-INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES**

## Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change

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# REPORT AT A GLANCE

Organizations that strive to maintain a competitive advantage by attracting and retaining top talent must foster a workplace where all employees can succeed. In this report, Catalyst demonstrates how creating an LGBT-inclusive workplace benefits all employees. By drawing on the workplace experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees working in Canada—a country with legislated human rights protections for LGBT individuals—we find that, despite the supportive legal climate, workplace barriers persist for LGBT employees. This suggests that organizations operating in all countries, regardless of existing human rights legislation, have an important role to play in fostering LGBT inclusion.

While protecting employees from discrimination is essential when creating inclusive environments, organizations must move discourse beyond anti-discrimination policies to everyday issues facing LGBT employees. Organizations should develop practices that leverage diversity, foster inclusion, and increase awareness, accountability, and action. This report aims to help them do that.

To discover how organizations and individuals can create more inclusive and productive workplaces, we conducted an online survey asking LGBT employees about their relationships with colleagues, managers, and senior leaders; about career advancement experiences and strategies; and how their organizations could better support them.

Respondents cited three factors that affected their career advancement and the formation of critical relationships in the workplace:

- A lack of awareness regarding LGBT issues.
- Discriminatory behaviours against LGBT employees.
- Exclusion from important connections with others.

LGBT employees also felt their colleagues, managers, and senior leaders could be more comfortable with them and better informed about challenges they face at work. In particular, through a second survey on workplace experiences, LGBT women reported less positive relationships with their managers compared to LGBT men and non-LGBT women and men.

Organizations that want to fully leverage a diverse talent pool can implement systems to effect change. LGBT employees at organizations with diversity and inclusion programs, policies, and practices, as well as broader talent management programs:

- Were more satisfied and committed.
- Perceived their workplace as more fair.
- Had more positive relationships with their managers and colleagues.

Organizations must make a concerted effort to create LGBT-inclusive workplaces. Developing and implementing effective LGBT-inclusion programs will lead to a broader understanding of LGBT identity, gender, and equity in the workplace.

# UNDERSTANDING LGBT INCLUSION

## LGBT INCLUSION: ADVANCING WORKPLACES AND IMPROVING THE BOTTOM LINE

While research has increasingly focused on gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace, issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT<sup>1</sup>) employees have received little attention.<sup>2</sup> It is challenging to collect precise statistics, but it has been estimated that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals represent up to 21 percent of the population depending on country, age, and whether researchers measure identity, attraction, or behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

The number of employees impacted by LGBT issues is substantial when considering that it also includes friends, families, coworkers, managers, customers, and clients of LGBT individuals. Given the globalization of businesses and economies, organizations striving to lead their industries cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool.

LGBT women and men are highly engaged in workforces globally. Nevertheless, the

difficulties that LGBT employees face in the workplace are often unnoticed or ignored by organizations. As “invisible minorities” who differ from the majority on dimensions that are not always immediately apparent, LGBT employees may choose not to disclose their LGBT identity. Thus, organizations may not be aware of the full diversity of their workforce or understand the benefits, needs, and challenges of LGBT employees.

Organizations must pay attention to whether their employees are satisfied and committed. Research has shown that job satisfaction and commitment are connected to higher productivity and profitability and lower absenteeism and turnover.<sup>4</sup> Discrimination based on sexual orientation was found to be related to lower job satisfaction and organizational engagement.<sup>5</sup> Lesbian and gay employees working in organizations with more protection from discrimination have higher

- 
1. LGBT: This is the acronym most commonly used in Canada and the United States to address the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The acronym can vary in a number of ways, including GLBT and GLB, and can include additional letters, such as Q (queer; also questioning), I (intersex), and A (straight ally). Lesbian: A woman whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to other women. Gay: A woman or a man whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to members of the same gender. Bisexual: A person whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are to both women and men. Transgender: People who identify with the characteristics, roles, behaviours, or desires of a gender different from the one they were assigned at birth. This is an umbrella term that can be used to include transsexuals, cross-dressers, and other gender-variant people; some may use the umbrella term “trans-identified.” Queer: A fluid term with numerous meanings. It is commonly used to describe sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heterosexual norms. The term is often used to refer to the general LGBT community. It can be either a positive or a negative term, depending on the context in which it is used.
  2. Belle Rose Ragins, “Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: The Unique Work and Career Experiences of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Workers,” *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management*, vol. 23 (2004): p. 35-120.
  3. Ritch C. Savin-Williams, “Who’s Gay? Does It Matter?” *Psychological Science*, vol. 15 (2006): p. 40-44.
  4. James K. Harter, Frank L. Schmidt, Theodore L. Hayes, “Business-Unit-Level Relationship Between Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Business Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 2 (2002): p. 268-279.
  5. Belle Rose Ragins and John M. Cornwell, “Pink Triangles: Antecedents and Consequences of Perceived Workplace Discrimination Against Gay and Lesbian Employees,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 86, no. 6 (2001): p. 1244-1261.



levels of job satisfaction and commitment.<sup>6</sup> LGBT employees may continue working at an inclusive and open workplace, sometimes called a “safe haven,” even if more lucrative or beneficial job opportunities exist at organizations perceived to be less inclusive.<sup>7</sup>

In an attempt to address these issues, many organizations have implemented anti-discrimination policies that protect LGBT employees. However, providing LGBT employees with an environment in which they can achieve their full professional potential requires more than anti-discrimination policies. Including LGBT employees fully and fairly in recruiting, development, networking, advancement, and leadership opportunities requires a comprehensive set of programs and policies with strong senior leadership support.

Organizational leaders who understand the bottom-line benefits of diversity should be eager to implement LGBT-inclusion programs. Diverse teams have substantial benefits for organizations and generate more innovative solutions when their different perspectives are used to solve problems.<sup>8</sup> LGBT-inclusive workplaces can increase employee engagement by allowing employees to be authentic and spend less effort on self-editing; reduce costs by decreasing turnover; and increase revenue generation by encouraging LGBT employees to help the organization tap new markets and increase customer loyalty.<sup>9</sup> Past research has shown that 88 percent of lesbian and gay adults and 70 percent of heterosexuals are likely to consider purchases

from organizations that are known to provide equal workplace benefits to all employees, regardless of sexual orientation.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, organizations that fully embrace all their employees, including LGBT employees, will benefit on many levels.

In fact, this report demonstrates that many barriers faced by LGBT employees echo those experienced by women in past Catalyst research,<sup>11</sup> suggesting that organizational efforts to increase inclusion may benefit a broad range of groups. Indeed, an important aspect of advancing women in the workplace is acknowledging and developing a more thorough understanding of LGBT women—who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

As organizations make strides to become more inclusive, they may be perceived as an “employer of choice” for a more diverse candidate pool, further increasing the diversity of their talent and the success of their business. In this way, diversity and inclusion may be mutually reinforcing.

*When people feel respected and needed and liked, they perform better. Fostering an atmosphere of joyful acceptance of LGBT people in the workplace makes them better workers. Being a better worker helps careers develop. Engagement happens when a person feels appreciated and accepted for who they are. Profits are not far behind.*

—Queer woman

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6. Scott B. Button, “Organizational Efforts to Affirm Sexual Diversity: A Cross-Level Examination,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 86, no. 1 (2001): p. 17-28.
  7. Belle Rose Ragins, “Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: The Unique Work and Career Experiences of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employees,” *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, vol. 23 (2004): p. 108.
  8. For an overview of research on the impact of diversity in organizations, see Katherine Y. Williams and Charles A. O’Reilly III, “Demography and Diversity in Organizations: A Review of 40 Years of Research” in Barry M. Staw and L.L. Cummings (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, vol. 20 (1998).
  9. David Megathlin, *LGBT Inclusion—Understanding the Challenges* (Catalyst, 2007).
  10. Harris Interactive, “Large Majorities of Heterosexuals and Gays Likely to Consider a Corporate Brand that Provides Equal Workplace Benefits to All Employees, Including Gay and Lesbian Employees” (February 6, 2007), <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=1171>.
  11. Prior Catalyst research has demonstrated that a lack of network opportunities and stereotyping are advancement barriers experienced by women in the United States and Europe. Catalyst, *Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed* (2005); Catalyst, *Different Cultures, Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders* (2006); Catalyst, *Women in Leadership: A European Business Imperative* (2002); Heather Foust-Cummings, Laura Sabattini, and Nancy Carter, *Women in Technology: Maximizing Talent, Minimizing Barriers* (Catalyst, 2008).

## METHODOLOGY

This report draws from data gathered through two surveys.<sup>12</sup>

### Survey of LGBT Employees

We recruited individuals through various LGBT organizations in Canada to participate in an online survey of their workplace experiences. This recruiting technique allowed us to reach LGBT individuals who may not be out at work and may be more comfortable describing their workplace experiences through channels not connected to their employer. The resulting sample comprised 232 respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual male-to-female, transsexual female-to-male, queer, questioning,<sup>13</sup> intersex,<sup>14</sup> and/or two-spirit.<sup>15</sup> Because many LGBT identity groups were reflected in the sample, we were able to make comparisons among groups.

The main findings were based on qualitative data from the survey's open-ended questions, which captured the workplace experiences, perceptions, and stories of LGBT employees. Many responses to these questions are highlighted in the chapters that follow. The qualitative findings are supplemented with findings from the responses to closed-ended questions, which allowed for quantitative analysis and grouping of respondents by sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Specifically, respondents were separated into the following groupings: lesbian and gay women combined; bisexual, queer, and questioning women combined; gay men; bisexual, queer, and questioning men combined; and transgender and transsexual women and men combined.

### Career Advancement Survey

Our second set of data was collected as part of a study on career advancement in corporate Canada.<sup>16</sup> This sample comprised 17,908 respondents, 466 of whom identified as LGBT. All of the respondents to this survey answered closed-ended questions that provided quantitative data. The data, which were used to compare the career advancement experiences of respondents who identified as LGBT with those of respondents who did not identify as LGBT, supplemented the findings from the first dataset.

## LGBT TERMINOLOGY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW<sup>17</sup>

The term “LGBT” is useful to refer to individuals in the minority with respect to sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression, but it is important to recognize the diversity of the LGBT community.

*Sexual orientation.* The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual<sup>18</sup> all refer to sexual orientation, the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender (women or men). Critically, these terms do not necessarily refer to sexual practices or behaviours. It is important to distinguish LGBT workplace issues from individuals' sexual practices.

*Gender identity and gender expression.* Gender identity is one's inner sense of being a woman or a man, regardless of biological birth sex; gender expression refers to how an individual manifests a sense of femininity or masculinity through appearance, behaviour, grooming, and/or dress. The terms transgender and transsexual refer to gender identity and/or expression. At some points in their life, people who are transgender may express and/or identify with the characteristics, roles, behaviours, or desires of the gender different from the one they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals change or seek to change their physical characteristics through surgery or hormone therapy to that of the opposite sex—for example, individuals born as males seek to change their sex to female.

### Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/ Expression Apply to Everyone

All individuals, regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBT, have a sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. These dimensions can be thought of as a continuum with those in the majority on one end and those in the minority on the other end. Catalyst developed Figure 1, which depicts this continuum on a grid, to highlight the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity and gender expression. How a person identifies and how that person presents to others are distinct

12. For more information on the methodology, see Appendix 2.

13. Questioning: Someone who is questioning his or her gender, sexual identity, or sexual orientation.

14. Intersex: Individuals with sex chromosomes or biological/physical characteristics that are neither exclusively male nor female.

15. Two-Spirit: The term used by contemporary Native Americans and Aboriginal people in Canada to describe a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body.

16. The survey data included white/Caucasian and visible minority respondents from a variety of industries and organizations across Canada. Catalyst, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

17. See Appendix 1 for the full glossary of terms.

18. Straight/Heterosexual: A person whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to members of the opposite sex.

concepts. However, for the sake of simplicity, we have grouped gender identity and gender expression together.

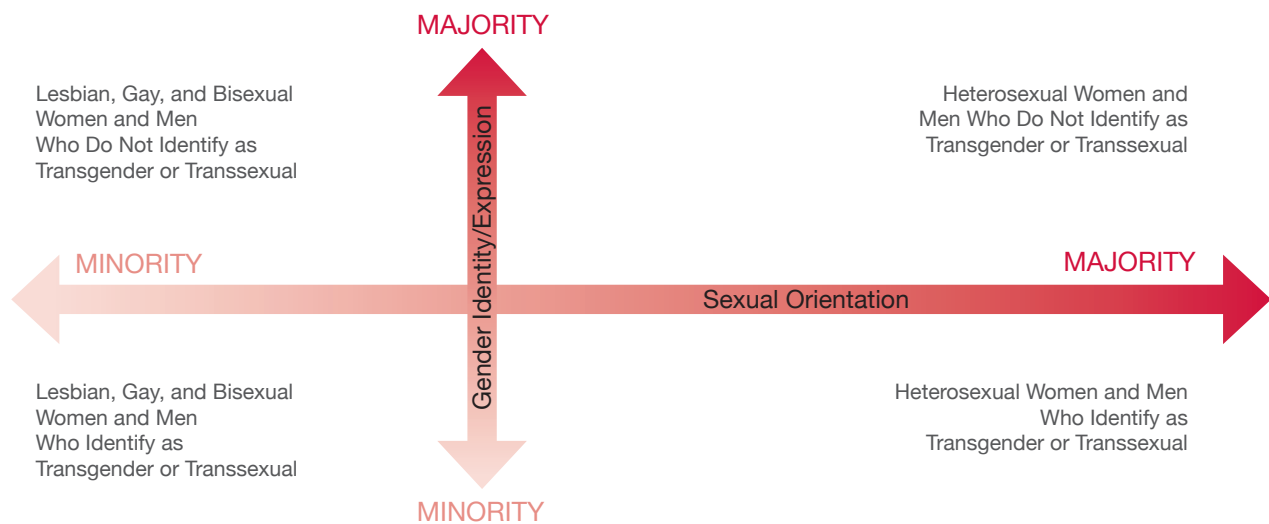
Looking clockwise from the top right corner of Figure 1, the following groups are reflected:

- Those in the majority for both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, for example a heterosexual woman who always identifies as and presents as female.
- Those in the majority for sexual orientation and minority for gender identity/expression,

for example a heterosexual woman who sometimes presents as a man.

- Those in the minority for both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, for example an individual who was born male but identifies as a female and has undergone surgery to change his sex to female, and who identifies as a lesbian.
- Those in the minority for sexual orientation and the majority for gender identity/expression, for example a bisexual man who always identifies as and presents as male.

**FIGURE 1**  
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression



## LGBT INCLUSION IN CANADA

*Canada should be proud of its place in the world as a safe place for LGBT people. Canadian organizations need to encourage and help foster growth within their ranks for LGBT people and be proud.*

—Gay man

In Canada, a broad framework of laws and policies that support diversity and inclusion has been implemented. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects equal rights for all people in Canada<sup>19</sup> and legislation governing employment must comply with the Charter. The Supreme Court of Canada has made it clear that the Charter ultimately

protects employees and clients in Canada from discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>20</sup> That means, for example, that sexual orientation is not grounds for dismissal from a job in any Canadian province, as it is in many other countries and the majority of U.S. states.<sup>21</sup>

While all Canadians, regardless of employment status, receive medically necessary services,<sup>22</sup> many employer health insurance plans also provide additional healthcare services. When employers offer health benefits to employees that include coverage for a spouse or partner, they must by law include same-sex partners. Similarly, same-

19. Government of Canada, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, “Charter Equality Rights: Interpretation of Section 15 in Supreme Court of Canada Decisions,” <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp402-e.htm>.

20. Ibid.

21. Human Rights Campaign, “Statewide Employment Laws & Policies,” [http://www.hrc.org/documents/Employment\\_Laws\\_and\\_Policies.pdf](http://www.hrc.org/documents/Employment_Laws_and_Policies.pdf).

22. Health Canada, “Canada’s Health Care System,” [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/medi-assur/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/medi-assur/index_e.html).

sex couples have the same benefits as opposite-sex common-law couples for income tax, Canada Pension Plan, and Employment Insurance purposes.<sup>23</sup> In 2003, Ontario became the first Canadian province to allow same-sex marriage. In 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world, following The Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain, to legalize marriage for same-sex couples nationwide.<sup>24</sup>

Because Canada provides more human rights and legal protections to its LGBT population than many other countries do, we sampled people currently working in Canada to understand the

workplace experiences of LGBT employees when these protections are in place. We found that, despite the legal climate, workplace barriers to career advancement for LGBT employees in Canadian organizations persist. Our data led us to conclude that organizations and individuals have an important role to play—beyond merely following mandated human rights legislation—in making this population feel included. Unfortunately, this is not surprising to Catalyst given that our research has consistently demonstrated that women face career advancement barriers despite legislation against gender discrimination in many countries around the world.

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23. Canadian Human Rights Commission, “Human Rights Commissions and Public Policy: The Role of the Canadian Human Rights Commission in Advancing Sexual Orientation Equality Rights in Canada,” [http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/research\\_program\\_recherche/soer\\_deos/toc\\_tdm-en.asp](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/research_program_recherche/soer_deos/toc_tdm-en.asp).

24. Egale Canada, “Equal Marriage,” <http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&menu=30&item=983>.

# EXPOSING BARRIERS

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Some LGBT employees reported facing barriers that create a less inclusive workplace and negatively impact their career advancement.
- A lack of awareness about LGBT employees was linked to stereotypes, discriminatory behaviours, and exclusion from opportunities to form important relationships.

*LGB<sup>25</sup> employees face social discrimination, which can be subtle in form but potent in effect. Social discrimination involves differential access to social networks, relationships and activities that can improve an employee's job performance and promote their careers...[A] lack of access to social resources has been found to damage the careers of women and employees of color...The exclusion from valuable work relationships is a pervasive barrier faced by LGB employees.*

—Belle Rose Ragins, “Sexual Orientation in the Workplace”<sup>26</sup>

Because organizations benefit from workplaces in which all employees feel included and receive opportunities to maximize their potential, increasing awareness about the roadblocks to talent development and advancement is essential to business success. Many survey respondents described their workplace culture in positive terms using words such as “supportive,” “collegial,” and “creative.” However, some perceived barriers to their career advancement based on their LGBT identities. In this chapter, we spotlight those workplace barriers.

## LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

The problem at the root of all barriers described by respondents was a lack of information and awareness regarding LGBT individuals. Without education about the experiences and challenges of LGBT employees, other employees may rely on stereotypes, which can lead to a hostile workplace.

*I think that misconceptions of what it means to be LGBT still exist and can cause people to be concerned that we are going to show up to work one day dressed in drag or leather.*

—Gay man

*As a lesbian woman, I have sometimes had to fend off occasional stereotypes of lesbian women as all butch and muscular and ungainly—I'm none of these.*

—Lesbian woman

25. This research included only the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees.

26. Belle Rose Ragins, “Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: The Unique Work and Career Experiences of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employees,” *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, vol. 23 (2004): p. 43.

People also hold stereotypes about what successful leaders should look like. Catalyst research describes the “think leader, think male” phenomenon, in which successful leaders are presumed to have a narrowly defined set of stereotypically masculine traits, leading men to be seen as default leaders.<sup>27</sup> A mismatch between LGBT stereotypes and those of successful leaders may also cause LGBT employees to be overlooked for important opportunities.

*You must fit a narrow stereotype of what a business person should look like. Diversity is not tolerated.*

—Queer woman

Transgender and transsexual employees cited a particularly significant lack of awareness regarding challenges they face. They often encounter

difficulty securing employment initially and trouble advancing in client-facing roles.

*The barriers for trans folk are much different... There are a lot more phobias, misperceptions, concerns about how we might affect the medical benefits plan (e.g., will we demand surgery coverage?), concerns about how others will perceive us, fears that we will never pass and therefore present a negative image for the company.*

—Bisexual, transsexual male-to-female, two-spirit woman

*Our HR types...thought “cross-dresser” translated into something equal to “flamboyant drag queen in pink hot pants and thigh-high boots.”*

—Heterosexual, transgender man who sometimes presents as a woman

## DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOURS

Some respondents reported experiencing blatant and direct forms of homophobia<sup>28</sup>—the disapproval, fear, hatred, or hostility toward people who identify as, or are assumed to be, LGBT—that created a hostile workplace. Needless to say, hostile and stressful workplaces increase the potential for turnover and make it difficult for LGBT employees to be authentic at work.

*There was active or tacit discrimination, homophobia, and harassment, in which LGBT employees were forced to be closeted<sup>29</sup> or silent in the face of abuse. This is very stressful, and has negative effects on health and productivity.*

—Lesbian woman

*LGBT employees need to feel safe in their work environment. If they feel that divulging their sexual orientation could have an impact on advancement, or worse yet, lead to dismissal, then they will not come out.*

—Gay man

Respondents reported that in some cases their colleagues contributed to a hostile workplace inadvertently. For example, inappropriate humour and attempts at jokes that are offensive even if

intended to be funny make many LGBT employees uncomfortable. Certain phrases can also be offensive, causing LGBT employees to feel excluded and question their future with the organization.

*Bosses and senior management have made fun of gay people in social settings, not knowing there were gay people in the room.*

—Gay man

*[A negative thing about working here is] hearing “that’s so gay” and “what a fag” from some of the younger workers.*

—Bisexual, transgender male-to-female woman

Respondents expressed that regardless of an individual’s LGBT identity, derogatory language of any sort is not acceptable in the workplace as it has the potential to offend and exclude LGBT employees even when negative outcomes are not intended.

*Sometimes the teasing goes too far. Sometimes people seem to think that because they’re “okay with it” they can joke around and use derogatory words/phrases in a “joking” way.*

—Gay woman

27. Catalyst, *The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don’t* (2007): see also Sabine Sczesny, “A Closer Look Beneath the Surface: Various Facets of the Think-Manager-Think-Male Stereotype,” *Sex Roles*, vol. 49, no. 7/8 (October 2003): p. 353-363.

28. Homophobia: The disapproval, fear, hatred, or hostility toward people who identify as, or are assumed to be, LGBT.

29. Closeted/In the closet: LGBT individuals who do not openly disclose their sexual orientation to others.

## EXCLUSION FROM IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS

Respondents also experienced barriers associated with a lack of connections with important people both inside and outside their organizations. For example, respondents reported a lack of senior LGBT role models. Without senior leaders who identify as LGBT, LGBT employees may question whether they can reach those levels when no one else “like them” has already.

*I think the major barriers lie within a certain “sameness” of the people who advance. Diversity statistics don't seem to reflect a senior leadership team that parallels society in general.*

—Gay man

*There has not been an openly LGBT person in a senior manager or VP role in my division of the organization since I have been employed here [early 1990s]. It does make one wonder.*

—Gay man

Other LGBT employees felt that opportunities to make important external connections were curtailed by organizations that presumed that clients and customers will be uncomfortable interacting with LGBT employees. When LGBT employees are overlooked for roles such as those that require significant client interaction, they experience truncated or slower career development.

*I think the main barrier is for the organization to see you serving a specific role in relation to clients. As I am an LGBT individual, I think that they worry sometimes about whether I can serve that role (both professional and social) and build the relationship.*

—Gay man

*I worry that the business may be less inclusive of transgendered employees on the front lines because they may fear making the customer uncomfortable.*

—Lesbian woman

In addition, respondents reported feeling excluded from networking activities, which are critical to career advancement because they provide exposure to a variety of people and opportunities to communicate one’s skills and ambitions. Previous Catalyst research has demonstrated that a lack of access to informal networks is one of the primary barriers to the advancement of women and minorities.<sup>30</sup> LGBT women and men reported exclusion from the “old boys’ club” and were acutely aware of the career limitations of exclusion from important networks.

*Advancement in the organization is about political networking... Trans people are left out of these networking attempts/opportunities because we are seen as complicated—maybe an embarrassment.*

—Queer, transsexual female-to-male man

*Not being part of the golfing crowd excluded me from several opportunities in my career. This crowd (typically white, male, heterosexual, or closeted) accounts for how you get on to a short list for senior management positions. Where is the engagement process for individuals like myself?*

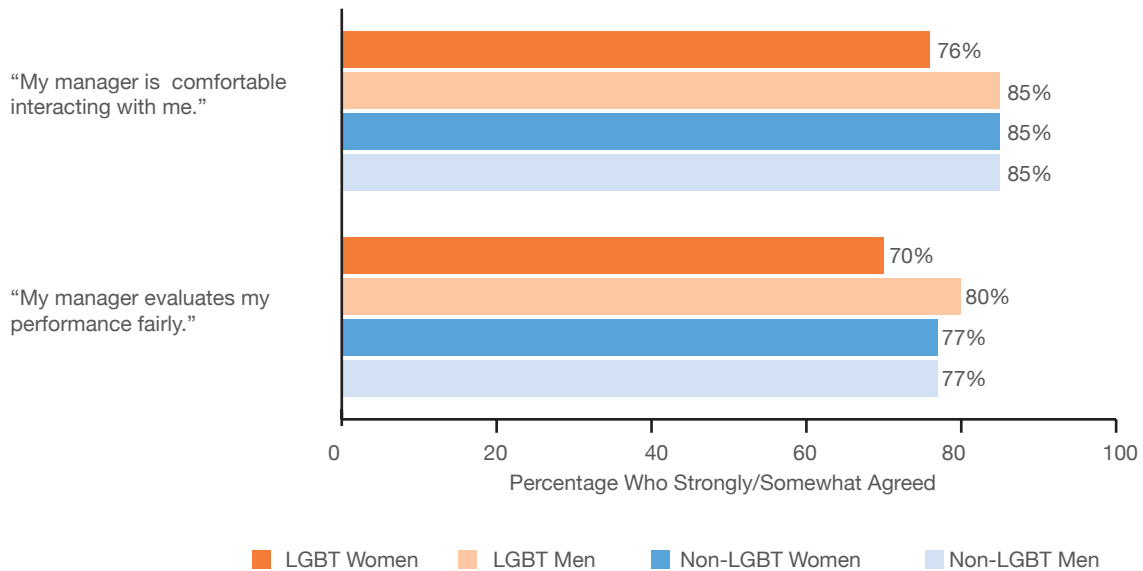
—Gay man

While LGBT women and men both reported being excluded from the old boys’ club, LGBT women were the least likely to report positive relationships with their managers. As depicted in Figure 2, LGBT women were less likely than LGBT men and non-LGBT women and men to agree that their managers are comfortable interacting with them or evaluate their performance fairly.

30. Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (2004); Christine Silva, Monica Dyer, and Lilly Whitham, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Critical Relationships* (Catalyst, 2007); Catalyst, *Connections That Count: The Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States* (2006).

**FIGURE 2**

**LGBT Women Report Less Positive Relationships With Their Managers<sup>31</sup>**



Does this reflect a double disadvantage for LGBT women, who are different from the workplace majority in terms of both gender and LGBT identity? Catalyst research has demonstrated a double disadvantage for women of colour in the workplace, who not only face the barriers experienced by people of colour as well as the barriers experienced by women, but also experience some barriers to a greater extent than both men of colour and white women.<sup>32</sup>

Little research on the career experiences of LGBT employees has explored the perspective of intersecting identities. However, one study found that workplace discrimination, including whether supervisors scrutinize the work of LGBT employees

more than that of heterosexual employees, was greater for lesbians than for gay men when employees have male supervisors and work in primarily male teams.<sup>33</sup> While we cannot determine whether the gender of managers and coworkers affected the respondents to our survey, Figure 2 shows that LGBT women do face some workplace barriers to a greater extent than LGBT men.

In the following chapter, we highlight how non-inclusive environments—those where barriers are left unchallenged—make it difficult for some employees to disclose their LGBT identity, precluding them from contributing fully to their organization.

31. Z-tests of proportion differences revealed that LGBT women were significantly less likely to report that their manager is comfortable interacting with them and evaluates their performance fairly compared to all other groups at  $p < .1$ . There is no statistically significant difference between any other groups.

32. Katherine Giscombe, *Women of Color in Accounting* (Catalyst, 2008).

33. Belle Rose Ragins, John M. Cornwell, and Janice S. Miller, "Heterosexism in the Workplace: Do Race and Gender Matter?" *Group & Organization Management*, vol. 28, no. 1 (March 2003): p. 45-74.



# COMING OUT AT WORK: TO DISCLOSE OR NOT

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Diverse perspectives about disclosing LGBT identity at work indicate that coming out is an individual decision motivated by both personal and organizational factors and that it is a never-ending process.
  - Employees who are not out at work cite two main reasons: a preference to keep personal and professional identities separate and a fear of potential repercussions.
  - Employees who are out at work cite various personal and organizational reasons, including desires to be authentic, form stronger relationships, become role models, and combat homophobia.
- Appearance makes the identity of some LGBT employees readily apparent to others. When there is no “choice” about whether to disclose, an inclusive workplace is especially important, particularly for transgender employees.

*Because lesbians and gay men must identify themselves to be counted, their visibility is an unreliable measure of their presence. A quick scan of a particular company or industry may tell us something about the willingness of gay employees to identify themselves, but reveals comparatively little about their actual numbers.*

—James D. Woods, *The Corporate Closet*<sup>34</sup>

## COMING OUT:<sup>35</sup> A COMPLEX PERSONAL DECISION

Diversity within LGBT communities and workplaces is partly influenced by whether an individual openly identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The LGBT identity of some people, especially transgender or transsexual individuals, is readily apparent to others. However, for many, sexual orientation is an invisible characteristic that requires disclosure for others to be aware.

In the workplace, LGBT employees have the ability to manage whether and how they communicate their LGBT identity. These decisions can be very complicated. Employees can come out to everyone, a select number of colleagues, or no one at all. They can be motivated to disclose or not for personal reasons and/or because of organizational factors such as the workplace barriers discussed in Chapter 2. LGBT employees differ with respect to what affects their disclosure decisions.

34. James D. Woods, *The Corporate Closet: The Professional Lives of Gay Men in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 7.

35. Coming out of the closet: The process of self-acceptance and disclosure of sexual orientation to others. People can disclose to none, some, or all of the people they know. An “out” employee discloses his or her LGBT identity to a few, some, or all of his or her coworkers.

## REASONS FOR NOT DISCLOSING LGBT IDENTITY

Respondents who have not disclosed their LGBT identity at work cited two primary reasons: a preference to keep personal and professional identities separate and a fear of potential repercussions.

Some respondents indicated that their professional identity is strictly about their work role and they prefer not to bring elements of their personal life to the workplace. Their decision not to disclose their LGBT identity was made on the basis of their personal preferences and was not influenced by others in their organization.

*I don't believe my bisexuality is relevant information for them.*

—Bisexual woman

*I have chosen to come out only to close friends at work because I feel that personal relationships should remain private in a workplace context, regardless of sexual orientation.*

—Gay man

*My work and private life are kept separate. I feel confident with my choice to keep my orientation private. There is no need to come out. Just like religion, it has no bearing on my work life—so why is there a need to come out?*

—Bisexual man

Other respondents made the decision not to disclose their LGBT identity based on concerns regarding harassment from others or potential career limitations. Some decided not to come out because they witnessed homophobia or hostile behaviour in the workplace. Others may not have witnessed hostile behaviour, but they still had a sense that the organization was not sufficiently inclusive for them to feel comfortable coming out.

*I haven't come out because I fear some homophobia. I have encountered some homophobia among colleagues from other countries, and I suspect that one of the senior managers at my company may be homophobic. I don't feel great about my decision not to come out. I may decide to come out on a very limited basis in the future.*

—Lesbian woman

*I do not feel that the organization would support me...They may say they do but...I perceive a glass ceiling for gay people in this organization.*

—Gay man

For employees who strongly prefer to be out at work but feel that the organizational culture prevents them from doing so, the potential for turnover and lack of engagement is apparent.

*If I was employed in a workplace where I knew [there would not be] backlash, I would definitely come out...My decision to remain closeted is unfortunate because I can never really allow someone at work to get to know me, so it has the effect of distancing me.*

—Bisexual woman

The goal for organizations should be to create inclusive environments in which employees who prefer to come out can feel safe doing so and LGBT employees who do not come out can still benefit from programs and policies in ways that do not “out” them to others.

## REASONS FOR DISCLOSING LGBT IDENTITY

Respondents who had disclosed their LGBT identity at work cited a variety of reasons behind their decisions and ways of coming out. Some disclosed in direct ways, for example, publicly identifying as LGBT, while others used more indirect disclosure, for example, referring to a same-sex partner. Many employees felt a strong need to be authentic at work. They expressed little hesitation about coming out and they accepted the risk of negative responses from others.

*I want to live my life honestly, and because my lesbian orientation is one part of who I really am, why would I hide that? Because I don't define myself by my sexual orientation... coming out was less about "coming out" and more about just "being."*

—Lesbian woman

Some desired to answer personal questions truthfully and speak freely. Some disclosed their LGBT identity as it came up in conversation, often by simply sharing their relationship or family status using same-sex pronouns or correcting assumptions of heterosexuality.

*I feel no need to disclose my situation unless it comes up. I'm not embarrassed or afraid to disclose; I just do not feel it is necessary to be proactive about it. If the situation arises, then I will freely disclose.*

—Gay man

*There are others in my workgroup that are out so it is more acceptable. They basically broke the ice. I feel fine with my decision, though I only disclose my sexuality if asked or if brought up in conversation.*

—Lesbian woman

Some respondents felt able to form stronger connections with others when they were comfortable disclosing their LGBT identity. Existing research has supported this correlation: individuals who have come out at work are generally more satisfied

## DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE LGBT COMMUNITY

**LGBT Women:** LGBT women working in companies and firms reported being out to a smaller proportion of their workgroup than did LGBT men. On average, LGBT women indicated that they were out to approximately 50 percent of their workgroup, while LGBT men indicated that they were out to approximately 72 percent of their workgroup.<sup>36</sup>

**Gay Men:** Gay men were least likely of all LGBT identity groups to be completely "closeted" (i.e., out to none of their workgroup). Only 5 percent of gay men reported not being out to anyone in their workgroup, compared to 12 percent of lesbian and gay women; 18 percent of transgender and transsexual women and men; 19 percent of bisexual, queer, and questioning women; and 38 percent of bisexual, queer, and questioning men.<sup>37</sup>

**Bisexual Women and Men:** Some respondents suggested that bisexuals have an easier time "passing," especially while in opposite-sex relationships.

*I find that I have not had to come out as bisexual, since my same-sex relationships are few and far between, and, as we all know, people in straight relationships can rest on heterosexual privilege for that time if they want to.*

—Queer woman

**Transgender/Transsexual Women and Men:** Most transgender/transsexual respondents suggested that there is no "decision" to come out when their transsexual identity is immediately apparent.

*I've found that being openly bisexual has not seriously affected me at work, beyond the occasional bit of gossip or a gasp that, "We don't talk about that." Coming out as trans is a whole other ballgame and is also a very visible process. You can't just disclose it to those you trust. Instead, everybody knows.*

—Bisexual, transsexual male-to-female, two-spirit woman

36. A t-test of mean differences revealed that LGBT women working in companies and firms were out to a significantly smaller percentage of their workgroup than LGBT men working in companies at firms at  $p < .1$ .

37. A z-test of proportion differences revealed that all other LGBT identity groups were statistically significantly more likely than gay men to be out to no one in their workgroup at  $p < .1$ .

with their relationships with their colleagues.<sup>38</sup> At organizations with inclusive workplaces, individuals who prefer to come out at work will benefit from stronger relationships and advance their careers. In addition, all LGBT employees, whether they are out or not, will feel secure being themselves without the threat of workplace discrimination or exclusion.

*I choose to be open with people at work as I cannot establish a close working relationship or friendship without doing so.*

—Lesbian woman

Transgender and transsexual employees, whose identities may be more visible than those of other LGBT individuals, indicated that they have fewer strategies available. If their appearance makes their transgender identity readily apparent to others, they have no “choice” regarding authenticity. Instead, they may be disclosing their identity upon arrival at an organization. For this reason, some stressed the importance of finding an organization that is supportive and inclusive.

*I came out during my job interview when I spoke about needing time off for surgery. I had already decided I did not want to be working for an organization that would have a problem with my gender identity...There were rough spots and job offers I did not get, [but] now I am in a job where I am respected and appreciated by all the people I work with.*

—Queer, transgender woman

To a lesser extent, a few lesbian and gay respondents similarly felt that their LGBT identity was easily identified by others in the organization.

*My gay identity is pretty obvious, and I don't attempt to hide it, so I assume that people know.*

—Gay man

Some respondents indicated that they had previously put in effort to manage their identity, often avoiding the use of same-sex pronouns to refer to their partners. They found this difficult and recognized that it required energy that could be better spent on work. Their initial identity management strategy of avoidance suggests concern regarding career implications of coming out.

*[It was] too difficult to keep calling [my] partner a “friend” or “roommate” when talking about what I did on vacation or last weekend.*

—Gay man

Other respondents indicated that before giving up their avoidance strategy, they ensured they were seen as good performers or determined to whom it would be “safe” to disclose.

*I don't like to have to do the “pronoun dance”...I waited until I had at least one excellent performance review in writing before coming out too broadly.*

—Lesbian woman

*[I] came out after years of [building] trust...with colleagues and [taking] time to see what their ideas about homosexuals were.*

—Gay man

Some individuals disclosed their LGBT identity to make it known that there were LGBT employees at the organization. In some cases this was proactive, to support the creation of a safe, open, and authentic workplace and to provide role models for others in the organization.

*I am out because we need role models and people who can demonstrate strength in being who they are.*

—Transsexual male-to-female woman

Others disclosed in direct response to discriminatory behaviour. They felt that their disclosure might reduce overt discriminatory comments in the organization and benefit both themselves and others.

*On a couple occasions I did come out to individuals who were making some negative comments about homosexuals. I reacted quite spontaneously with disclosure. I felt a deep need to make an effort to dispel the perceptions I considered misguided.*

—Lesbian woman

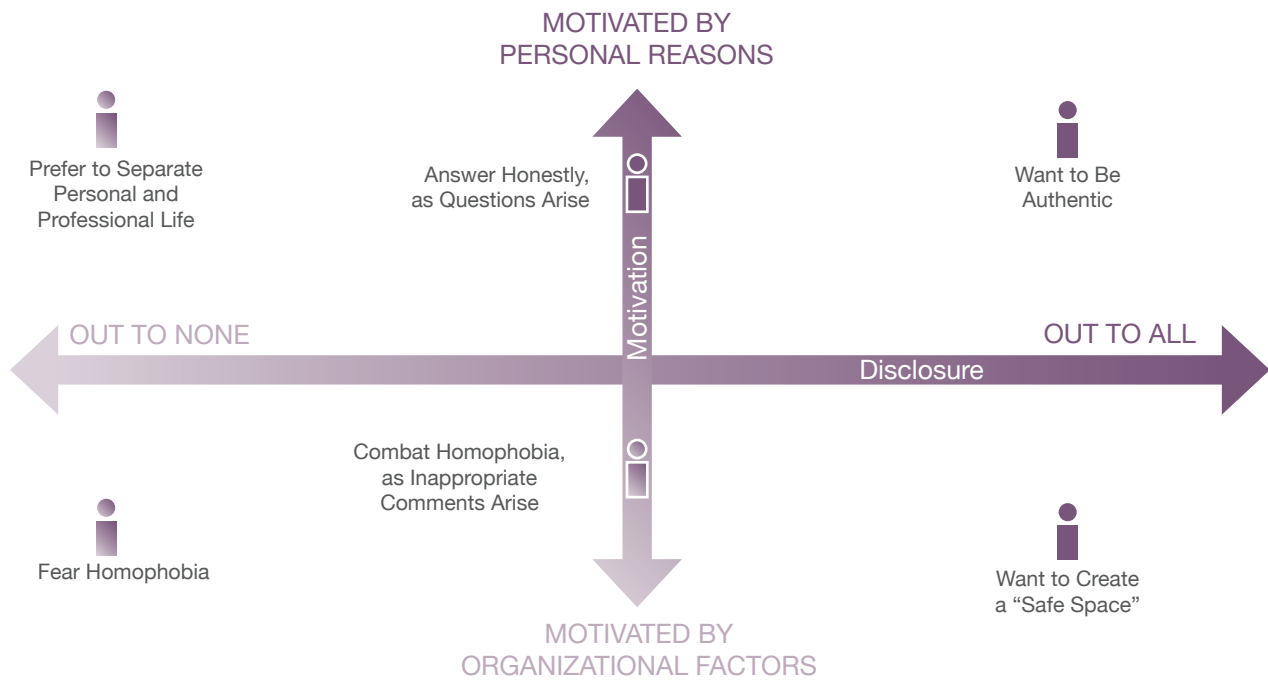
38. Alan L. Ellis and Ellen D. B. Riggle, “The Relation of Job Satisfaction and Degree of Openness About One’s Sexual Orientation for Lesbians and Gay Men,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1995): p. 75-85.

*During the gay marriage debate, a lot of my colleagues were making derogatory remarks about gays and lesbians. I decided to come out of the closet so I wouldn't have to hear the comments anymore.*

—Gay man

Catalyst developed Figure 3 to depict the complexity of this discussion and reinforce that coming out is not an all-or-nothing decision. In the figure, the horizontal continuum represents the degree of disclosure to coworkers: from out to no one to out to everyone. The vertical continuum delineates motivating factors—personal reasons and workplace dynamics—that LGBT employees consider when deciding whether or not to come out at work.<sup>39</sup>

**FIGURE 3**  
Degrees of Disclosure and Motivation



## COMING OUT IS A NEVER-ENDING PROCESS

Because there are always new employees, new work teams, and new clients to form relationships with, respondents described coming out at work as a never-ending process. In addition, they noted that the assumption of heterosexuality is pervasive.

*No matter how out you are, coming out is always going to be a constant in our lives, whether it's to new employees or new friends.*

*The general public assumes you are straight until you tell them different!*

—Lesbian woman

*I move from one project to the other in my role, and I am with new project team members all the time. Therefore, I need to come out on a regular basis. Perhaps there should be a handy guide to coming out in the workplace.*

—Gay man

At this point, organizations and individuals should have a more thorough understanding of the barriers facing LGBT employees and how they affect decisions about disclosure. The next chapter offers guidance to those who want to dismantle the barriers and create more inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees.

39. Individuals may plot their reasons differently on this grid, and some may be motivated by both personal and organizational factors. This figure serves as one example of the complexity of decisions to come out.

# BUILDING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICES

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- LGBT employees working in organizations with diversity and inclusion programs and practices have more positive workplace relationships and experiences.
- There are many steps organizations can take to increase awareness and support LGBT diversity and inclusion goals.
- Organizations can leverage broader talent management practices to support the career advancement of LGBT employees.

*We need to move beyond compliance and “it is the right thing to do,” and instead move toward [the idea that] it makes great business sense to be fully inclusive.*

—Gay man

*Don't make assumptions. Avoid stereotypes. Be respectful. Become educated. Be honest about what you don't understand and be open to change. Be an ally. Provide support, but know that you too can be given support.*

—Lesbian woman

*It is easier to talk the talk than to walk the walk. Policy without understanding and commitment by the majority is pretty hollow.*

—Bisexual, transgender, transsexual male-to-female woman

Creating inclusive workplaces takes concerted efforts by organizations. In this chapter, we highlight important elements of programs and practices that foster diversity and inclusion. In addition, we demonstrate that LGBT employees working in organizations with diversity and inclusion policies and practices have greater career satisfaction and commitment, increased perceptions of fairness, and better relationships with managers and colleagues than LGBT employees working at organizations without those policies and practices. The broad range of employee perceptions affected by diversity and inclusion practices, as well as talent management programs in general, reinforces the business case for implementing these practices.

Organizations and individuals both benefit from LGBT inclusion. In inclusive workplaces, LGBT employees can expend less effort managing disclosure and mitigating its impact; instead, they can focus on their work. As discussed in Chapter 1, employees who do not experience discrimination are more satisfied and committed, and both of these characteristics are linked to higher productivity and profitability. LGBT employees can further support organizational efforts to be employers and providers of choice and to reach new markets when their diversity is effectively leveraged.

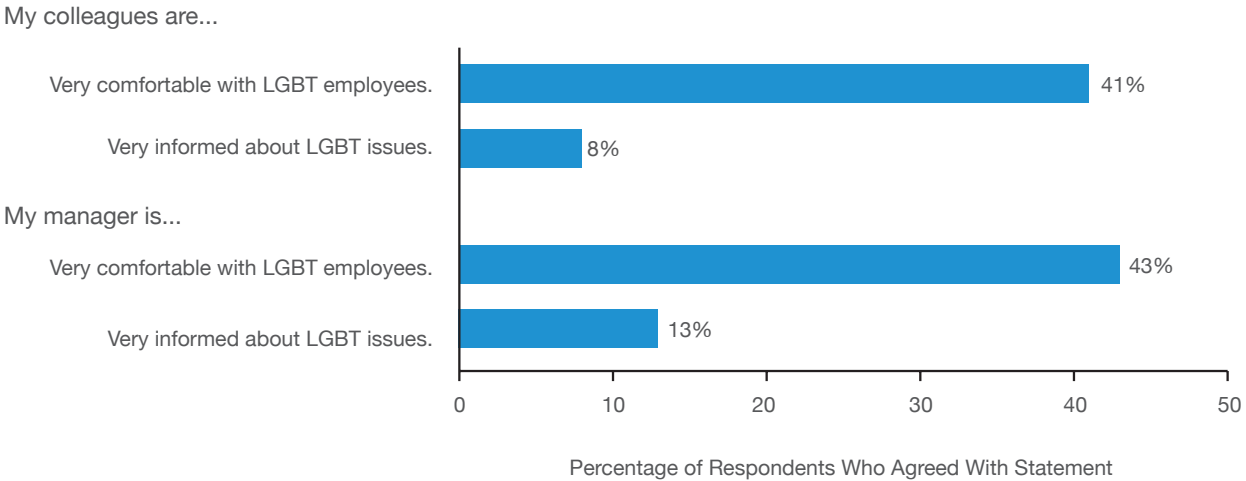
As we have shown, LGBT employees face barriers that may limit career advancement and lead some to avoid disclosure at work. This remains true despite that fact that the survey respondents work in Canada, a country with legislation that protects equal rights for LGBT individuals. We uncovered that legislated protections and rights are important but do not ensure inclusion in organizations.

# ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES SHOULD INCREASE AWARENESS

As depicted in Figure 4, 41 percent of LGBT survey respondents indicated that their colleagues are very comfortable with LGBT employees, but only 8 percent indicated their colleagues are very informed about LGBT issues. Similarly, 43 percent indicated that their managers are very comfortable with LGBT employees, but only 13 percent indicated that their

managers are very informed about LGBT issues.<sup>40</sup> This comfort level perceived by LGBT employees suggests that colleagues and managers may be receptive to training and education to increase their awareness, thereby eradicating the root cause of many of the barriers faced by LGBT employees.

**FIGURE 4**  
Perceptions Regarding Colleagues and Managers



**ABOUT THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICES DESCRIBED IN THIS REPORT**

The Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Practices featured in this chapter are designed to illuminate Catalyst’s recommendations. Catalyst defines these practices as “programs, initiatives, or activities that support diversity and inclusion efforts in the workplace and are considered promising models for others to follow.” In many cases, the D&I Practices detailed here describe one particularly relevant element of a broader practice.

## 1. IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO LGBT EMPLOYEES

Organizations should collect internal and external data regarding LGBT issues in all regions in which they conduct business, including legal challenges for LGBT employees working on international assignments. This data will help build the foundation for an organizational LGBT-inclusion strategy. Effectively sharing this information across

the organization, as described below in the D&I Practice from Royal Dutch Shell plc, may also support LGBT employees’ career planning.

Organizations should proactively build knowledge about how to support LGBT employees. For example, they should be aware of whether

40. Z-tests of proportion differences comparing 41 percent and 8 percent for colleagues and 43 percent and 13 percent for managers were significant at p<.1.

transgender- and transsexual-specific health needs are provided for through employer-sponsored health benefits,<sup>41</sup> and what message this sends to employees about inclusion.

Senior leaders should also identify the potential barriers to career advancement for all employees. However, a majority of respondents from each LGBT-identity group said that senior leaders do not understand their experiences.

*[Leaders should] include LGBT in our annual employee survey. They include everyone except LGBT. Then do something about it with the results.*

—Gay man

*[Senior leaders] prove [their commitment] by educating themselves, getting to know us, supporting our needs and our activities in person and with funding.*

—Lesbian woman

*Career advancement may be hindered based on location. Not all small towns are as open-minded as urban centres, and that may make an LGBT employee not apply for a promotion to that area.*

—Gay man

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICE

### Royal Dutch Shell plc

#### *Mobility Across the Borders: Addressing Global Relocation Barriers for LGBT Employees*

In 2007, to raise awareness of mobility issues for LGBT employees, the Shell LGBT Netherlands Network organized the *Mobility Across the Borders Conference*, working closely with Shell Netherlands and the Global Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Practice, the conference sponsor. The conference aimed to build awareness and knowledge around the topic of global relocation for LGBT employees and discuss concerns and issues. To inform the dialogue, the Shell LGBT Netherlands Network surveyed its members prior to the conference to determine if there were specific questions or issues regarding international mobility and whether people were choosing not to apply for jobs based in locations that have been traditionally hostile or unfriendly to LGBT individuals. The data from this informal survey reinforced that sexual orientation does have an impact on one's ability to be internationally mobile.

The LGBT Netherlands Network is working to create an international knowledge exchange system so that LGBT employees can share their experiences working in other cultures. This would provide information to LGBT employees considering positions in other geographies and make transitions easier. Examples of questions that would be included are:

- If you've worked outside of your base country, what is it like for LGBT individuals to work there?
- Are you willing to have conversations with others about your experiences?
- From your experience, what are LGBT-friendly countries?
- From your experience, are there particular countries which you have found to be particularly difficult or hostile to LGBT individuals?
- In which cultures do LGBT individuals have to hide their sexual orientation? In which cultures can LGBT people be more open?
- Are there informal support networks for Shell employees in LGBT-unfriendly countries?

In addition, a lunch-and-learn session about LGBT issues has been developed by the Global D&I Practice to further raise awareness, and LGBT modules have been added to supervisory and managerial training curriculum targeted at inclusion.

41. Many Canadian provinces offer sex-reassignment surgery as a government-sponsored healthcare benefit. See Health Canada, "Canada Health Act 2005-2006," [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/alt\\_formats/hpb-dgps/pdf/pubs/chaar-ralcs-0506/chaar-ralcs-0506-prov-sect\\_e.pdf](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/alt_formats/hpb-dgps/pdf/pubs/chaar-ralcs-0506/chaar-ralcs-0506-prov-sect_e.pdf); Ontario Ministry of Health, "Bulletin-Subject: Relisting of Sex Reassignment Surgery under OHIP," <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4480.pdf>. For information about sex-reassignment surgery in the United States, see Mary Ann Horton, "Cost of Transgender Health Benefits," *Out and Equal Workplace Summit* (September 2008), <http://www.tgender.net/taw/thb/THBCost-OE2008.pdf>.



## 2. DISPEL MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES THROUGH DIVERSITY TRAINING

Diversity training can play an important role in increasing awareness, dispelling myths and stereotypes, and encouraging dialogue about diversity and inclusion, which is beneficial to all employees. Different sources of information can be incorporated into diversity training—programs grounded in research may also introduce stories from individuals in ways that bring the information to life.

*Education is the key to change. Unfortunately, much of what has passed as solid information is invention based on personal story without any other merit. Education based on solid research is the key to removing stereotypes and myths, including those that are rampant in LGBTQ communities.*

—Gay man

*Sitting down and talking to real people about their particular issues is much more effective than listening to someone talk in an abstract sense about an issue. I think that sensitizing people to the issues will foster a change in their thinking, which will improve life for LGBT employees in all aspects.*

—Gay man

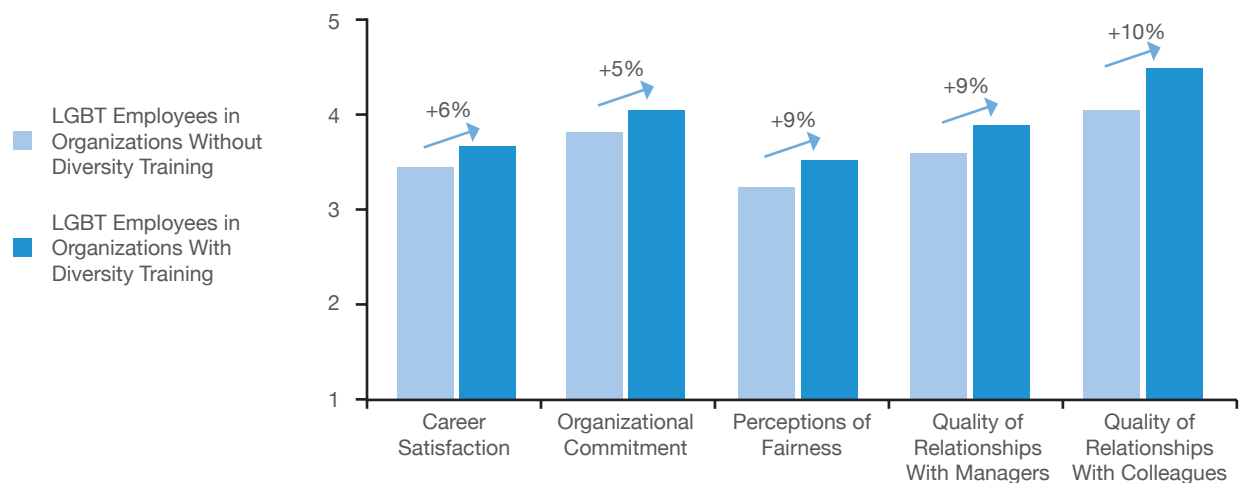
### Diversity Training Benefits LGBT Employees

Diversity training is designed to increase awareness of issues faced by people from various groups, usually based on characteristics or demographics such as gender, race, and LGBT identity.

Figure 5 shows that LGBT employees who said their organization offers diversity training have more positive workplace experiences than LGBT employees who said their organization does not offer diversity training. Depending on the workplace perceptions considered, average scores of those whose organizations had training were 5 to 10 percent higher than those whose organizations did not offer training.

**FIGURE 5**

Workplace Perceptions of LGBT Employees at Organizations With and Without Diversity Training<sup>42</sup>



42. Percentages in Figure 5 reflect the difference between the average scores of LGBT employees who indicated their organizations offer diversity training and the average scores of LGBT employees who indicated their organizations do not offer such training. These differences are statistically significant at  $p < .1$ . Average scores could range from 1 to 5.

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICE

### IBM Canada

*Enhancing Inclusion Through Critical Relationships and Cultural Awareness*

#### Diversity Training for Managers

IBM has diversity training in all of its offices worldwide; however, only in Canada is the two-day program *Diversity and Inclusive Leadership* required for all managers and project leaders. IBM Canada's *Diversity and Inclusive Leadership* training program focuses on all aspects of diversity, including LGBT. IBM Canada recognized that in order to ensure that managers are fluent in the business case for diversity and aware of how their own assumptions may impact their reports, training was an important first step. To date, more than 3,000 IBM Canada managers from across the country, including senior executives, have been trained. In addition, managers are given tools to help them have meaningful conversations with their reports following training.

Diversity training helps participants learn how to leverage differences, and it explores the difference between simply recognizing diversity and leading with a full understanding of how inclusion can benefit the business. *Diversity and Inclusive Leadership* has a number of goals and outcomes:

- **Recognize frames of reference.** The first day of the program aims to reveal each employee's frame of reference. Participants learn about their pre-conceived biases toward others and move closer to understanding the "why" behind judgments and discrimination.
- **Move beyond frames of reference and lead with inclusion.** The second day is geared toward understanding how frames of reference play out in the workplace and how to remove the biases and notions of "insiders and outsiders." Managers learn how to put aside the frames of reference that may predispose them to pre-judging others. The training uses case studies, videos, role play, and dialogue to help managers see their colleagues in an inclusive way. It is mandatory that training sessions include at least one case study focusing on LGBT issues.
- **Support action with *Fit for You*.** IBM Canada complements the mandatory manager training with *Fit for You*, a booklet available from the intranet that helps managers enact what they have learned. *Fit for You* gives managers strategies for having dialogues about what their employees need, as well as for setting goals for the relationship. For example, if employees make the manager aware of any requirements they have—from being vegetarian to needing a flexible work schedule—or if employees lay out their career goals and aspirations, managers will have strategies to help them avoid making biased assumptions about employee capabilities or goals. Use of these strategies will clarify expectations so that a productive conversation will ensue. After such a conversation, *Fit for You* can be filled out and used as an informal contract between manager and employee. Other diversity content and information posted to the intranet, blogs, and podcasts helps managers and employees keep updated on diversity information and continue their learning beyond *Diversity and Inclusive Leadership*.

### 3. COMMUNICATE THE ORGANIZATION'S LGBT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

Organizations should communicate at all levels the policies and programs that affect LGBT employees. They can use varied communication methods such as newsletters, employee handbooks, Intranet pages, and information sessions. Extending communications beyond employees who identify as LGBT ensures that information will reach LGBT employees who may not be out at work and allows

them to gain access to resources without having to come out.

*There is an LGBT group, but I'm not 100 percent comfortable being out at work...The management team needs to do some work regarding the work environment.*

—Lesbian woman

LGBT respondents encouraged their organizations to advertise that they are LGBT-friendly, not only internally but also externally. This reinforces the organization's stance on inclusion for current employees, potential employees, customers, and clients.

*[I] would like to see, at some point, career ads mentioning LGBT friendliness. No one wants to walk into an uncomfortable situation.*

—Questioning, transsexual male-to-female woman

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICE

### Chubb Corporation

#### *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Inclusion at Chubb*

Chubb's LGBT-inclusion initiative, along with its other diversity initiatives, including its 2006 Catalyst Award-winning initiative, *Reach Up, Reach Out, and Reach Down*, was created to build a truly inclusive workplace environment where every employee feels welcome and comfortable. Chubb believes that an inclusive corporate culture provides the company with a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Chubb also believes that employees can lead the way in making change, although the company certainly provides support and guidance. Thus, employee groups at Chubb have always contributed to setting the direction for diversity and inclusion. This internal focus has allowed Chubb to build key internal structures for support of LGBT inclusion. The organization has now moved to develop external LGBT efforts, including LGBT marketing initiatives. Chubb has succeeded in creating an LGBT-inclusive culture by implementing many activities, including:

**Marketing to Potential Clients and Employees:** In order to drive internal and external consistency for LGBT inclusion at Chubb, the company reviews its policy language when creating new products. The Chubb website's diversity section and certain targeted brochures are crafted to be LGBT-inclusive; business units have also targeted LGBT insurance markets. Both LGBT and non-LGBT prospective employees have reported that the importance Chubb gives to LGBT inclusion has sparked particular interest in working for the organization.

## PROGRAMS AND POLICIES CAN FACILITATE LGBT-INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

Beyond increasing awareness across the organization, employers can take concrete action

by offering programs and developing policies that support LGBT inclusion.

### 1. CREATE AND/OR ENFORCE POLICIES

A necessary first step is to establish anti-discrimination policies, practices, and programs. Once these efforts are in place, senior leaders must ensure that they are enforced, and they may need to establish appropriate checks and balances so that employees are informed about the programs and adhere to policies.

*As to policies, living by and enforcing them would be a good start!*

—Lesbian woman

*I am not sure that [the practices] need to be improved. [The organization] just needs to ensure they are adhered to in every situation.*

—Gay man

## 2. HELP LGBT EMPLOYEES BUILD EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS AND FIND MENTORS

Past Catalyst research has consistently found that exclusion from networks is a major workplace barrier for women and visible minorities.<sup>43</sup> LGBT employees want to learn from and support each other, and employee resource groups (ERGs) offer them access to potential mentors, role models, and career-advancing information. ERGs may be structured to develop members' business skills, support members socially, support business goals, and provide community outreach.

*I think all companies should promote a network of LGBT employees so that we could know and learn from one other's experiences.*

—Gay man

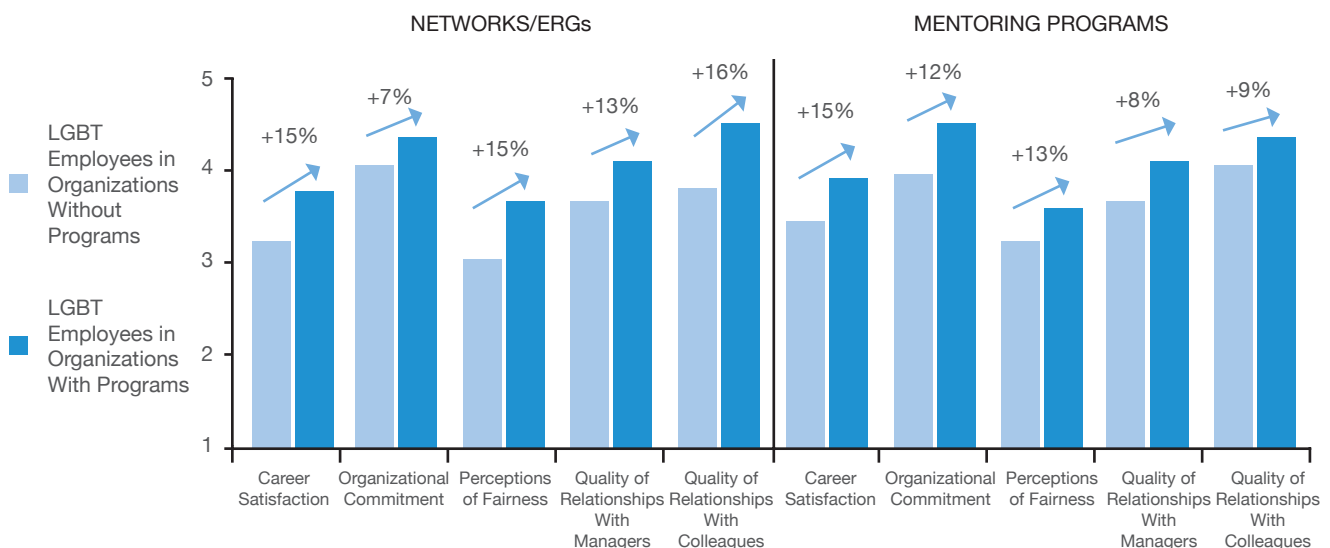
*I think that it would be helpful to [find as] mentors more advanced employees [and match them] with those who are still in early stages of their career.*

—Gay man

Ensuring that LGBT employees have opportunities to meet potential mentors through networking activities supports the development of an organization's talent base. LGBT employees can also be encouraged to mentor others so that employees have access to a diverse selection of potential mentors. LGBT employees—as mentors and mentees—can help non-LGBT employees learn about LGBT issues.

Figure 6 shows that LGBT employees who said their organization offers any networks/ERGs and mentoring programs had workplace experience scores 7 to 16 percent higher than LGBT employees who said their organization does not offer diversity programs. Indeed, these programs impacted a broad range of workplace experiences. Both employees and organizations can benefit from networks and mentoring programs: employees with more positive workplace experiences can drive higher productivity and profitability for organizations.

**FIGURE 6**  
Networks and Mentoring Programs Benefit LGBT Employees<sup>44</sup>



43. See, for example, Heather Foust-Cummings, Laura Sabattini, and Nancy Carter, *Women in Technology: Maximizing Talent, Minimizing Barriers* (Catalyst, 2008), and Christine Silva, Monica Dyer, and Lilly Whitham, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Critical Relationships* (Catalyst, 2007).

44. Percentages in Figure 6 reflect how much higher average scores were for LGBT employees who indicated their organizations offer ERGs and mentoring programs compared to LGBT employees who indicated their organizations do not. These differences are statistically significant at  $p < .1$ . Average scores could range from 1 to 5.

## ERGs at Catalyst Member Organizations

In a global survey of Catalyst member organizations and members of Japan Women's Innovative Network (J-Win), 83 percent of respondents

indicated that they had at least one ERG. Sixty-one percent of those respondents offered an ERG for LGBT employees.<sup>45</sup>

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICE

### Scotiabank

#### *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Inclusion at Scotiabank: Scotia Pride*

In 2008, a group of Scotiabank LGBT employees and allies created an employee resource group (ERG) called Scotia Pride with the support of Scotiabank's senior leadership and an executive champion. Scotia Pride expands on other diversity and inclusion initiatives, including the bank's 2007 Catalyst Award-winning initiative, *Advancement of Women*. Its mission is to help the bank foster an inclusive environment where all employees and customers feel safe, valued, and respected. The ERG was introduced to all Scotiabank employees through a letter from Rick Waugh, Scotiabank's President and CEO.

In accordance with its mission, every Scotia Pride networking event is open to all Scotiabank employees, not simply those who identify as LGBT. As of Spring 2009, in-person events have largely been held in Toronto, where Scotiabank is headquartered. To protect the privacy of attendees, events are held outside of the bank's premises at various locations throughout the city.

Immediately following each event, Scotia Pride sends an online survey to its members seeking feedback to help shape future events. Scotia Pride is actively working to extend its reach by establishing subcommittees in other cities across Canada. While regional subcommittees are being formed, Scotia Pride is launching lunch-and-learn conference events that can be broadcast, allowing employees in other regions to participate.

Scotia Pride encourages employees from branches across the country to become involved in Scotiabank's broader community outreach, which enhances brand recognition as an employer and bank of choice where diversity is celebrated. Scotia Pride informs employees of events sponsored by the bank, such as ProPride, the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life, and the Friends For Life Bike Rally, a six-day bike ride from Toronto to Montreal designed to raise money for the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation. In 2008, employees from branches between Toronto and Montreal came out to support bike riders during the event.

## 3. ALLOW LGBT EMPLOYEES TO GIVE BACK TO LGBT COMMUNITIES

Through community outreach and charitable donations, organizations can publicly demonstrate their value to potential customers, clients, and employees while supporting important activities in the community. Respondents indicated that they appreciate being allowed to support charities and community groups, but they would like more

opportunities to help their organizations forge connections with LGBT community groups or networks.

*I'd love to be able to get our LGBTQ employees together and be more visible in the LGBTQ community.*

—Queer woman

45. Heather Foust-Cummings and Emily Pomeroy, *2008 Catalyst Member Benchmarking Report* (Catalyst, 2008): p. 6.

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICE

### KPMG LLP Canada

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans-Identified (LGBT) Inclusion: pride@kpmg*

Since 2005, KPMG has been visible and vocal in the LGBT community by running ads in most major LGBT publications in Canada and attending annual, community-based pride parade events. By setting up information booths at these events, KPMG publicly displays its commitment to LGBT inclusion. In addition, KPMG strategically attends annual pride parade events in smaller Canadian cities to reach LGBT employees in areas with more limited LGBT support and to show its commitment to LGBT inclusion in those markets.

To reinforce its public commitment to LGBT inclusion, KPMG also partners with community organizations. For example, KPMG raised money for The Gay and Lesbian Business Association of British Columbia, a charitable foundation that provides scholarships to LGBT youth. In addition, the firm sponsored the first North American OutRights Conference, a human rights conference on LGBT issues that was spun off from the first world OutGames, an LGBT sporting, cultural, and conference event first held in Montreal in 2006.

## 4. MAKE INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION AN ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL

Organizations should represent the diversity of employees and ensure that inclusive language is used in all corporate communications. A simple and appropriate example is making it clear that partners of employees, regardless of sex, are invited to corporate events.

*Although [the organization's] mission says they are inclusive, they are referring to people's race and religion, not their sexual orientation. The word "lesbian" does not appear in any of the material, not even the equity policy.*

—Lesbian woman

LGBT employees encourage their organizations to reinforce the policies on inclusion regularly. Some organizations do a good job of raising awareness in June, which is Pride Month in many places around the world, and during other externally designated LGBT pride celebrations. But employees would like to see consistent communication throughout the year, demonstrating the organization's ongoing commitment.

*The only time LGBT employees have ever been mentioned was buried deep inside some passive communications for a "diversity month." Rather meaningless.*

—Gay man

LGBT employees were also doubtful that their organizations would maintain their commitment to inclusion when inclusion and business needs conflict. Senior leaders should proactively determine how the organization will respond to challenging situations. For example, what will happen if a high-performing employee uses offensive language or a client is uncomfortable with an LGBT employee on the project team? Organizations must communicate widely their stance on discrimination and ensure planned responses are carried out.

*I think our existing policies, as written, are excellent. It's in the grey area where "policy" meets "needs of the business" that things can get sticky.*

—Heterosexual, transgender man who sometimes presents as a woman

## 5. DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR INCLUDING LGBT IDENTITY IN DIVERSITY METRICS

Many organizations have processes in place to track the advancement of diverse employee groups, such as those based on gender or other demographic categories. Many also require diverse slates of candidates, in acknowledgement that traditional recruiting and promotion methods may inadvertently overlook candidates from certain groups. Tracking LGBT employees as a “diverse” demographic group requires knowledge of legally appropriate, strategic, and culturally sensitive ways to identify employee sexual orientation and

gender identity/expression (if disclosed) in human resources information systems. It is important to remember, however, that even in an inclusive workplace, some employees may prefer not to disclose, and their privacy must be respected.

*Within [my organization], I think there is great need to address equity hiring practices in their totality.*

—Lesbian woman

## 6. LEVERAGE GENERAL TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ALL EMPLOYEES

Strong talent management programs greatly support the career advancement of LGBT employees. This is good news for organizations: by offering broad talent management practices without a specific focus on diversity and inclusion, they can develop all employees—including those who identify as LGBT—and improve workplace experiences.

Indeed, LGBT employees who said their organization offers broad talent management practices had more positive workplace experiences than LGBT employees who said their organization does not offer them. Average scores on ratings of workplace experiences—career satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceptions of fairness, and relationships with managers and colleagues—were:<sup>46</sup>

- Seventeen percent to 24 percent higher for LGBT employees who indicated their organization uses performance evaluation management systems.

- Thirteen percent to 26 percent higher for LGBT employees who indicated their organization has succession planning in place.
- Thirteen percent to 24 percent higher for LGBT employees who indicated their organization offers leadership development programs.
- Fourteen percent to 26 percent higher for LGBT employees who indicated their organization uses talent identification systems.
- Eleven percent to 17 percent higher for LGBT employees who indicated their organization has peer coaching programs.

While these talent management practices may not be designed for a particular demographic group, they should include checks and balances to ensure that no group is unintentionally excluded from their benefits and the resulting more positive workplace experiences.

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46. Percentages reflect how much higher average scores are for LGBT employees who indicated their organizations offered talent management practices compared to LGBT employees who indicated their organizations do not. These differences are statistically significant at  $p < .1$ .

## HOW INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES CAN HELP

When organizations have effective programs and policies in place, all LGBT and non-LGBT employees can support organizational efforts for diversity and inclusion.

### Managers and Senior Leaders Set the Tone

Creating inclusive workplaces takes effort, and employees appreciate when that effort is made in public and visible ways. LGBT employees want managers and senior leaders to create a comfortable and inclusive workplace in which employees feel safe coming out.

LGBT employees believe managers and senior leaders have an important role to play in creating inclusive workplaces because they set the tone for what is accepted and encouraged. Managers and senior leaders should use visible symbols to communicate their inclusiveness, enforce zero-tolerance policies, and help connect LGBT employees with organizational programs and policies.

### All Employees Can Help Create an Inclusive Workplace

LGBT respondents suggest that all employees, regardless of level or LGBT identity, should participate in creating LGBT-inclusive workplaces. Employees are encouraged to include their LGBT colleagues in conversations as they would others, be open to education, and make their acceptance of LGBT individuals apparent. Homophobic jokes, even from those who identify as LGBT or consider themselves allies,<sup>47</sup> contribute to a hostile workplace and are never acceptable.

For more information on how employees at all levels can support LGBT inclusion and how organizations can support their efforts, see *Supporting LGBT Inclusion: A How-To Guide for Organizations and Individuals* (Catalyst, 2009).

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Even in a country with legislated protection and rights for LGBT employees, organizations and individuals need to work at creating inclusive workplaces. In particular, three barriers—a lack of awareness, discriminatory behaviour, and exclusion from important relationships—restrict the careers of LGBT employees.

Few differences were based on gender. Both LGBT women and men reported exclusion from the “old boys’ club,” suggesting that the network could more aptly be named the “straight old boys’ club.” Catalyst research on ethnic and racial minorities in Canada<sup>48</sup> suggests that it is most accurately the “straight, white, old boys’ club.”

LGBT women and men are willing to support efforts to meet organizational diversity and business goals. They are best able to do so in workplaces that are inclusive. In fact, LGBT employees working for organizations with diversity and inclusion programs and practices reported better workplace relationships, perceived talent management practices as more fair, and indicated greater organizational commitment and career satisfaction than LGBT employees at organizations without them.

Diversity and inclusion policies, programs, and practices positively impact LGBT employees. Our findings also suggest that organizations should leverage broader talent management practices—those designed to develop and advance all employees—to create more positive workplace experiences for LGBT employees. Past Catalyst research has identified practices that support the advancement of women. Such practices start discussions about gender, stereotypes, and equity, and organizations can use them as models for LGBT-inclusion programs.

Diversity and inclusion are mutually reinforcing. Without an inclusive environment, LGBT employees may not feel comfortable coming out and thus organizations will not be aware of the diversity that already exists in their workplaces. In addition, the more inclusive the environment, the more likely the organization will become an employer of choice for LGBT employees. At the same time, organizations may not become fully inclusive without having diverse LGBT employees who can uniquely advance organizational inclusion goals.

47. Straight ally/LGBT supporter: An individual who identifies as non-LGBT and who supports the LGBT community in a direct way, such as attending LGBT group meetings, acting as an executive sponsor, or volunteering at an LGBT group event.

48. Catalyst, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).



# TERMS TO KNOW

Terms may evolve over time to reflect changes in thinking and/or preferences within the LGBT community. Catalyst offers these definitions but encourages readers to recognize that different language may be used by different people, companies, and countries. Also, it is important to respect the language individuals use to identify themselves, regardless of how they are labeled by others.

**Bisexual:** A person whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are to both women and men. Bisexuals need not be “equally” attracted to, or have had equal sexual experience with, both sexes. Nor do they need to have attractions toward both sexes at the same time.

**Closeted/In the closet:** LGBT individuals who do not openly disclose their sexual orientation to others.

**Coming out of the closet:** The process of self-acceptance and/or disclosure of LGBT identity to others. People can disclose to none, some, or all of the people they know.

**Gay/Homosexual:** A woman or a man whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to members of the same gender.

**Gender expression:** How an individual manifests a sense of femininity or masculinity through appearance, behaviour, grooming, and/or dress.

**Gender identity:** One’s inner sense of being a woman or a man, regardless of biological sex; different from sexual orientation.

**Heterosexism:** The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation. Heterosexism denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, or community.

**Homophobia:** Disapproval of, fear of, hatred of, or hostility toward people who are identified as, or assumed to be, LGBT.

**Intersex:** Individuals with sex chromosomes or biological/physical characteristics that are neither exclusively female nor male.

**Lesbian:** A woman whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to other women.

**LGBT:** The acronym most commonly used in Canada and the United States to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The acronym can vary in a number of ways, including GLBT and GLB, and can include additional letters, such as Q (queer; also questioning), I (intersex), and A (straight ally).

**Non-LGBT:** Anyone who does not identify as LGBT; most commonly refers to straight/heterosexual individuals.

**Out employee:** An employee who discloses his or her LGBT identity to a few, some, or all of his or her coworkers.

**Queer:** A fluid term with numerous meanings. It is commonly used to describe sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heterosexual norms. The term is often used to refer to the LGBT community in general. It can be either a positive or a negative term, depending on the context in which it is used.

**Questioning:** Someone who is questioning their gender, sexual identity, or sexual orientation.

**Sexual orientation:** A term commonly used to refer to a person’s emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender (women or men).

**Straight/Heterosexual:** A person whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to members of the opposite sex.

**Straight ally/LGBT supporter:** An individual who identifies as non-LGBT and who supports the LGBT community in a direct way, such as attending LGBT ERG activities, acting as an executive sponsor, or volunteering at LGBT events.

**Transgender:** People who identify with the characteristics, roles, behaviours, or desires of a gender different from the one they were assigned at birth. This is an umbrella term that can be used to include transsexuals, cross-dressers, and other gender-variant people; some may use the umbrella term “trans-identified.”

**Transsexual:** Transsexuals change (or seek to change) their physical characteristics to a gender different than what they were assigned at birth—for example, individuals born as males seek to change their sex to female. These changes can include sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy.

**Two-spirit:** The term used by contemporary Native Americans and Aboriginal people in Canada to describe a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body.

# RESEARCH METHODS

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This project was designed to understand the career advancement experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees. The survey methodology included data from a general survey on career advancement in Canada with LGBT and non-LGBT respondents as well as a survey focusing specifically on LGBT issues.

Data collected from the *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada* survey as part of a prior study<sup>49</sup> was used to compare LGBT and non-LGBT respondents. LGBT and non-LGBT respondents were identified by a demographic question that asked respondents if they identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. (Respondents could answer “yes” or “no.”)

The LGBT survey was fielded in summer 2008, and it asked respondents to share their career experiences through written answers. To reach a diverse sample, including those who may not be out at work, invitations to participate were sent to the following individuals:

- Respondents to the *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada* survey who identified as LGBT and provided an email address expressing interest in participating in future studies.
- Members of Scotiabank’s Pride Network.
- Participants on LGBT message boards in Canada.
- Leaders of prominent Canadian LGBT social, business, information, and health networks.

In all cases, we used a snowball sampling technique, asking invitees to forward the invitation to other LGBT employees in their personal and professional networks.

After collecting the two data sets, we ran analyses making comparisons between LGBT and non-LGBT employees as well as comparisons within the LGBT population.

## QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

We used a consensus-building approach to theme development. To identify patterns within and across groups, respondents were grouped by gender, LGBT-identity group, and proportion of the workgroup to whom they are out.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The LGBT survey included rating and yes/no questions that allowed for quantitative analysis. To conduct these analyses and make comparisons across groups, we divided the respondents into the following mutually exclusive groups: lesbian and gay women combined; bisexual, queer, and questioning women combined; gay men; bisexual, queer, and questioning men combined; transgender and transsexual women and men combined.<sup>50</sup>

For both data sets, we used z-tests of proportion and t-tests of mean differences as appropriate. We used a significance level of  $p < .1$  throughout to uncover significant differences between groups with smaller numbers of respondents.

49. Catalyst, *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada: A Focus on Visible Minorities ~ Survey Findings* (2007).

50. We grouped all trans-identified respondents together because many spoke about issues related specifically to their transgender or transsexual identity as opposed to their sexual orientation. This grouping allowed these stories to emerge most clearly.

# SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

## LGBT SURVEY SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The LGBT survey had 232 respondents, all of whom identified as LGBT. Respondents had an average of eight years of experience in their organization and 20 in the labour force.

LGBT SURVEY <sup>51</sup>	Women (N=104)	Men (N=124)	Overall (N=232)
% Bisexual	11.5	5.6	8.3
% Gay	5.8	90.3	51.3
% Heterosexual	3.8	1.6	3.0
% Lesbian	65.4	0.0	29.6
% Queer	9.6	2.4	6.1
% Questioning	3.8	0.0	1.7
% Transgender or transsexual	19.2	4.0	12.1
% Intersex	1.9	5.6	3.9
% Two-spirit	3.8	4.8	4.3
% University degree/Professional designation	60.3	69.9	64.8
% Pre-manager or staff	32.0	26.4	29.1
% Professional	41.3	20.7	30.3
% Manager	20.0	44.8	32.7
% Senior leadership	6.7	8.0	7.9
% Company	49.3	83.9	67.9
% Professional services firm	17.3	6.9	11.5
% Government organization	13.3	2.3	7.9
% Educational institution	12.0	2.3	6.7
% Nonprofit	8.0	4.6	6.1

51. Percentages for LGBT identity groups do not add to 100 because respondents could identify as members of multiple groups.

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN CORPORATE CANADA SURVEY SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The *Career Advancement in Corporate Canada* survey sample included a total of 17,908 respondents, 466 of whom identified as LGBT.

LGBT respondents had an average of 12 years of experience in their organization and 20 in the labour force.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT SURVEY	LGBT			Non-LGBT			Entire Sample
	Women (N=119)	Men (N=340)	Overall (N=466)	Women (N=7,728)	Men (N=8,762)	Overall (N=16,629)	Overall (N=17,908)
% University degree	59.3	64.6	62.9	60.4	66.7	63.8	63.4
% Pre-manager	11.7	10.8	11.1	9.5	7.3	8.3	8.4
% Professional	27.9	32.1	31.4	27.6	31.9	29.9	29.8
% Manager	55.0	51.7	52.2	56.7	51.9	54.1	54.2
% Executive	5.4	5.4	5.3	6.2	8.9	7.6	7.6
% Company	87.3	79.9	81.9	81.7	82.9	82.4	82.7
% Firm	12.7	20.1	18.1	18.3	17.1	17.6	17.3

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