LGB ALLIANCE

amarta research

Compelled Conformity

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences of EDI in UK workplaces

FULL REPORT

JULY 2025

1. SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

- UK organisations face a complex environment when it comes to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Senior leaders must design policies and initiatives that not only comply with the law but also respond to the needs of their varied workforce. This report offers insights into the views and experiences of 235 lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) supporters of LGB Alliance who are employed in medium to large UK-based organisations.

- In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court clarified that under the Equality Act 2010 'sex' and 'sexual orientation' are based on biological sex. Public opinion largely aligns with this view.[1] However, over the past decade, UK workplace EDI policies and initiatives relating to sexual orientation have typically reflected the perspectives of LGBTQ+ groups whose membership spans a broad range of identities and who view sexual orientation as based on 'gender identity.'[2]

- In contrast, the perspectives of those LGB employees who are same-sex attracted, understood in terms of biological sex, and who may have different experiences and hold differing views around EDI, are rarely reflected in policy or practice.[3] Indeed, it is clear that in recent years, the views of this group have often been met with active disapproval. For business leaders, this absence has implications not only for how well organisations are meeting the needs of their LGB employees but also for the extent to which they are meeting their obligations under the Equality Act. [4]

- To address this, the LGB Alliance Business Forum commissioned Amarta Research to explore the views and experiences of this group. Aims were to explore their EDI-related beliefs and values, understand better their workplace experiences, and to gather practical suggestions to help improve workplace EDI.

RESEARCH METHODS

- **Sampling approach.** Research was conducted with gay, lesbian, and bisexual supporters of LGB Alliance. LGB Alliance has a large supporter base with diverse political views, working in various sectors across the UK.

- **Survey design and implementation.** Research included an online survey and interviews conducted in May 2025. A link to a Google Forms-based survey was emailed to newsletter subscribers, event attendees, and donors. After eligibility screening questions, a final sample of 235 respondents completed the survey. Nine individuals were included in follow-up in depth interviews.

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[1] YouGov/Sex Matters survey, Public Attitudes to Gender and the Law, 19 December 2024, p. 5. Question: "Would you support or oppose changing the Equality Act so that sex is defined as meaning 'biological sex'?" Results: 54% support, 22% oppose, 24% don't know. Available at: https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/SexMatters_Gender_241219_ZMwbM2T.pdf

[2] 'Gender identity' represents the view that everyone has an internal sense of gender that may differ from their sex.

[3] This group may broadly be termed 'gender critical' although individuals may not necessarily refer to themselves using this term. 'Gender critical' refers to the belief that sex is binary and immutable, and that sex, rather than gender identity, should form the basis of law and policy where relevant. This term is used in this report because it reflects terminology recognised in recent legal judgments (in particular, the Forstater ruling) that such beliefs are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

[4] Research into the workplace EDI experiences of with gender critical beliefs is growing. For example (1) Sullivan, A. (2025). *Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender Report 2: Barriers to research on sex and gender.* Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), UK. (2) Gosling, M., & Fanshawe, S. (2024). *Flying Flags and Ticking Boxes. Diversity by Design.* (3) Gosling, M. (2025). *Everyday cancellation in publishing.* Sex Matters. Independent review of data, To date, there is no focused research into the experiences of gender critical LGB employees with workplace EDI.

- **Research limitations.** Respondents were self-selected and the survey invitation specifically referenced experiences with EDI, which may have attracted participants who hold strong views or direct experiences related to these views. As such, findings are specific to this group and should not be generalised to the wider LGB population.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

- The sample reflects a fairly balanced sex distribution, 53% men and 46% women, with nearly half gay men (49%), around a third lesbians (35%), and the remainder bisexual. The group is predominantly white (93%) and skewed towards older age brackets, with most respondents aged between 35 and 64. Participants are highly educated, with 87% holding university qualifications and nearly half possessing postgraduate degrees. Income levels are above the UK average, with 40% earning between £40,000 and £74,999 annually. Reflecting the study's workplace focus, most are employed full-time (74%) in mid- to senior-level roles, and exhibit considerable job tenure, with over one-third having worked for their current employer more than ten years. Politically, respondents are distributed fairly evenly across the centre (23%), centre-left (27%), and centre-right (25%). Overall, 41% align as left or centre-left and 31% as right or centre-right, broadly mirroring wider UK political trends.

WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

- Respondents work across a range of sectors and organisation types, with most employed in large organisations, 41% in those with over 5,000 employees and 26% in organisations with 1,000–4,999 staff. Most UK head offices are in England, evenly split between London and other regions, with smaller representation from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

- Organisations range in reach from local and national to UK-wide and global. Nearly half (43%) of participants work for a government agency/public body, with other common categories including publicly listed companies (17%), privately owned businesses (14%), academic/ research institutions, (18%), and charities/non-profits (n=27).[5] Industry representation is diverse, with concentrations in healthcare/social care (19%), government/ civil service (19%), and education/ research (18%), alongside private sector participation across all industries including technology, finance, legal/professional services, retail, construction, transport, and the creative industries. Overall, the public sector dominates the sample (56%), followed by the private sector (31%), and the charity/non-profit sector (n=27).

BELIEFS AND VALUES

- When it comes to sexual orientation, 98% define this in terms of biological sex rather than 'gender identity'. Participants show strong support for all protections provided by the UK's Equality Act 2010, endorsed by 94%. They also overwhelmingly believe key EDI principles— fairness, respect, inclusion, openness, and diversity—are important, yet see significant gaps between these values and how well their organisations reflect them. For example, while 97% of respondents feel fairness is somewhat or very important in EDI policies, only 55% believe their workplace actually applies the same standards and opportunities to all individuals.

- The large majority (91%) feel uncomfortable being grouped under the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella commonly used in workplace EDI policy and initiatives. A similarly large number (90%) believe their senior leadership lacks awareness of the distinctions between LGB-specific and broader transgender, queer, and other (TQ+) issues. These findings highlight a shared

commitment to inclusion and a strong alignment with legal definitions of sex and sexual orientation, but also a concern that current approaches often overlook or misunderstand LGB-specific experiences. The remainder of this report explores their experiences in more detail.

EXCLUSION AND DENIED OPPORTUNITIES

- Few respondents report having been dismissed (under 10) and a small number (n=15) report being subject to disciplinary procedures after expressing their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. These incidents were often triggered by social media activity or workplace discussions. Some described being investigated or formally warned for personal posts unrelated to their job, while others were called into meetings for questioning workplace language or policies. These experiences left many feeling that formal mechanisms offered little protection and, in some cases, carried additional risk.

"Due to speaking about the wider issues affecting LGB people and women on Twitter, I was made to sit through a disciplinary at my workplace."

(Bisexual man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"[I had] a number of meetings with the Director of EDI. The process was the punishment."

(Lesbian, senior manager/ director, charity/non-profit organisation)

- Results from the survey found a small but noteworthy proportion (15%) who report being excluded from meetings or decision-making processes due to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Participants recount being left out of EDI-related forums, action planning groups, and staff networks, often with the explicit rationale that their views are unwelcome.

"As a lesbian, I asked to be part of the EDI Group, I was not invited to join.
No lesbians were included."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit).

"Action planning meetings were held after the Supreme Court ruling, which were only open to trans, nonbinary, and intersex workers."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/ public body)

"I was told that my views...would not be welcomed or shared in the employers LGBTQ 'strand' due to them being views that would make people feel unsafe."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

- A small number of respondents (n=20) report being denied access to promotions, training, or roles due to their beliefs. While some describe being excluded after expressing their views, others suspected but could not be sure that roles were quietly withdrawn or that they were not being considered for advancement because of their views.

"There was a mentoring scheme where members of 'marginalised' communities could partner with a member of the executive-level staff to inform the revision of our EDI policies...Months went by, they put me off, and eventually said there's no place for you in this...I get the impression that I'm the wrong kind of gay man with the wrong kind of opinions."

(Gay man, senior manager, academia/ research)

- Just over one-third of respondents (35%) report experiencing social exclusion or hostility from colleagues or management due to their beliefs. Examples included being ignored, excluded from informal networks, labelled as "transphobic," or criticised in performance reviews, despite holding views that align with UK law and public opinion.

- Many respondents describe a workplace culture in which participation in EDI initiatives, networks, or development opportunities is conditional on affirming particular views, especially around gender identity. Those who held sex-based beliefs or offer neutral perspectives report feeling excluded, silenced, or pressured to conform.

- Respondents frequently reported feeling that senior leaders and HR overlooked or excluded their perspectives. Despite being asked to contribute to policy discussions or consultations, some said their input was ignored or omitted from final outputs, reinforcing a sense of being sidelined and a distrust in organisational leadership.

"I was not consulted on my views as a director of a charity on a corporate statement in response to the Supreme Court, when they knew I knew about it."

(Lesbian, senior manager, charity/non-profit organisation)

"Senior management gave zero backing when I faced hostility."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

COMPELLED CONFORMITY AND SILENCING PRESSURES

- These experiences are not limited to exclusion alone. Many participants describe a broader workplace climate in which they feel unable to speak freely and, in many cases, are pressured to express agreement with views they do not share.

- More than a third (36%) of respondents said they have been informally advised by managers or colleagues to stay silent about their views. Some faced being labelled 'bigoted' or 'TERFs', while a few describe more supportive responses. These informal pressures often discourage open dialogue on contested issues.

"I publicly challenged an all-staff email encouraging pronoun usage and was called to a meeting with the then Head of HR, who told me that the poster had made a complaint about me. Nothing formal happened, but I was advised to moderate my tone."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

"My manager called me a TERF and described my views as 'terfy'. I was advised to keep them to myself if I wanted to get on. This is in the civil service."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency/public body)

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) feel pressure to publicly affirm views they do not hold, including mandatory pronoun sharing and compulsory training presenting contested claims as settled fact. Many feel compelled to conform to organisational narratives to avoid negative consequences.

"I was required to do e-learning…When 'gender' appeared on screen, I kept picking 'no'. Eventually, I had to give in and put it in the 'yes' box, or I would have failed the module. A small thing but I felt humiliated."

(Bisexual, entry-level or junior staff, privately owned business)

"I teach PSHE, and I've been expected to deliver content about gender that I do not agree with."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"We have a big push to make sure you use the email templates for signature signoffs, which include stating your pronouns."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

- A significant majority (86%) avoid expressing their views altogether, fearing consequences such as job loss or disciplinary action.

"I have a fear of being disciplined, fired, or harassed by students."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"People in similar roles have lost their jobs and careers for expressing [these] beliefs."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"Everything is strictly controlled. There is this basic acknowledgement for freedom of belief, but this is tinged with threats that if you express it there will be consequences."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

- Many report self-censorship and self-excluding from workplace conversations, opportunities or roles, out of fear of hostility or reputational damage. Self-censorship, such as stepping down from staff networks, avoiding training, or disengaging from EDI activity, is common and often motivated by emotional strain, perceived intolerance, and fear of social or professional repercussions. Many describe withdrawing from EDI initiatives or professional opportunities as a form of self-protection, highlighting the emotional toll of working in a culture they feel does not tolerate dissent.

"As a senior lawyer with quite a high profile in my area of practice, there is no way I would feel able to express my beliefs openly. I have worked actively to maintain a neutral position sadly."

(Lesbian, senior manager, privately owned business)

"There was a time when coming out to someone was risky; now it's risky to say men are not women. It's like being in the closet all over again."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"The silence on being able to say 'No, I don't believe this', is overwhelming sometimes."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"I feel ashamed to self-censor and it feels like being in the closet again."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

RAISING QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- In this climate, only a small proportion of participants report feeling able to pursue formal complaints or raise concerns through official channels.

- A small number (n=27) report having taken action in response to workplace treatment they believed was unfair or discriminatory based on their views about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Actions taken include raising grievances, submitting concerns to HR, whistleblowing, or formally challenging internal policies. While a few cases resulted in outcomes such as policy changes or formal apologies, most participants reported little or no resolution.

"I've taken out two grievances...made five formal complaints, and two whistle-blowing cases using my employer's procedures. Some were dismissed prior to action, and some found in my favour. All led to little or no action."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"I repeatedly raised issues with senior management and HR. They continued to allow the LGBTQ network to openly discriminate against gay and gender critical people."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

- Alongside workplace culture, respondents also raise concerns about the content and implementation of LGBTQ+ initiatives, including networks, Pride activities, and training.

LGBTQ+ NETWORKS

- Most respondents (71%) said their organisations have formal EDI teams and LGBTQ+ staff networks, with around 23% of respondents actively participating. However, 90% of those who participate feel these networks do not represent them, usually because of the dominance of activist voices, particularly focused on trans issues, that often sideline LGB voices, especially those of lesbians. Described by many as politicised, exclusionary, or even 'toxic,' these networks have prompted some long-standing members to withdraw. Some respondents also perceive these networks as having undue influence over senior management. Overall, many LGB employees feel unseen and unsupported within workplace LGBTQ+ initiatives. These findings suggest that networks intended to foster inclusion may, in practice, contribute to feelings of exclusion among LGB employees.

"Staff networks don't represent me as a gay man at all."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency or public body)

"Activists rule the roost. They are very loud, aggressive and intimidating to any alternative views"

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"The LGBTQ+ staff network describes themselves as 'firmly trans-inclusive'. I've found it easier and safer to stay well away."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

"There are many gender critical staff who have no voice. There are about six different staff groups under the LGBTQ+ banner - all pro trans and not one women only group or sex equality group."

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, academic or research institution)

WORKPLACE PRIDE INVOLVEMENT

- Most respondents (75%) report their organisations take part in Pride activities, yet nearly two thirds (63%) feel this involvement is excessive, with 41% saying it is 'far too high.' Some describe Pride initiatives as virtue signalling or 'rainbow-washing,' feeling alienated or that Pride no longer represents them. Several also criticise hypocrisy, such as celebrating Pride in the UK while ignoring human rights abuses affecting LGB people abroad. A minority find Pride involvement appropriate or low-key. Overall, Pride events are seen by many LGB employees as misaligned with their identities and workplace priorities. For many, Pride has shifted away from representing LGB people, and instead reflects organisational posturing or alignment with contested ideologies.

"Pride is just virtue signalling. I avoid it as it no longer represents me."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"It's a very top-down group influenced by the LGBT+ NGO world as well as rainbow-washed corporations. I find it very alienating."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"[My organisation's involvement in Pride] is quite low-key but still annoying. There's a lot of right-think gets trotted out, but the high ethnic diversity of the corporation does keep a lid on it a bit."

(Lesbian, senior manager, privately owned business)

LGBTQ+ EMPLOYEE TRAINING

- Just under half (48%) have received LGBTQ+ training in the past five years, with 57% of these sessions being mandatory. However, over three quarters (76%) rate the training quality as poor or very poor. The majority feel training lacks neutrality (85%), does not consider alternative views (88%), and does not address LGB-specific issues (79%). Common criticisms include legal inaccuracies, including misstatements about protected characteristics, and a disproportionate focus on trans issues, which leaves many LGB staff feeling alienated or silenced. Some participants have successfully advocated for corrections in their organisations' training materials. Taken together, workplace LGBTQ+ initiatives including training, networks, and Pride events are often seen as reflecting a narrow ideological stance that sidelines LGB perspectives.

"The training misstated the law regarding protected characteristics and misgendering, and provided 'hurt feelings' as examples, as opposed to actual discrimination."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I am forced to sit through 'diversity' training on LGBT+ issues which presents me as part of a wider community that I do not agree I am a part of."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency or public body)

"I was told what the LGBTQ+ community was and what I think, even though I disagreed with nearly all of it. Nobody asked me my opinion, even as a gay man. I was just told what I thought."

(Gay man, Entry-level or junior staff, Government agency or public body)

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Considered as a whole, participants' suggestions can be divided into five key areas for improving EDI policies and practices:

1. PRIORITISE LEGAL ACCURACY AND CLARITY

- Respondents feel organisations should align EDI initiatives closely with the 2010 Equality Act, ensuring policies, communications, and training are legally accurate rather than influenced by external lobby groups with ideological agendas. Clear distinctions must be maintained between protected characteristics (such as sexual orientation, sex, and gender reassignment) to avoid conflation.

"Remember that there are nine protected characteristics, and they all matter equally."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

2. STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT AND INDEPENDENT ADVICE

- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) should be meaningful and thorough, enabling anonymous contributions to capture the full range of employee views. Organisations should seek guidance from multiple, independent sources, especially legal experts, and avoid reliance on partisan groups like Stonewall to ensure balanced and objective advice.

"Do the Equality Impact Assessment—don't tick just the box that says 'EIA not required' because it almost always is required. Let people contribute anonymously to the EIA."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"Consult with multiple external advisory groups as well as internal anonymous focus groups to obtain a balanced input which can inform on potential pitfalls or gaps in existing EDI policies and activities. This can help provide perspectives on how employees and stakeholders might perceive these policies."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

3. PROVIDE NEUTRAL, PROPORTIONATE, AND BUSINESS FOCUSED EDI

- Many respondents emphasise that EDI efforts should remain politically neutral and grounded in law-based equality rather than activism. They call for reducing the volume and intensity of EDI activities, and some favour voluntary over mandatory training. EDI initiatives should meet genuine workplace needs without being intrusive or emotionally charged.

"Base them around common sense and the Equality Act rather than the whims of lobby-based organisations such as Stonewall and Mermaids."

(Gay man, senior manager, privately owned business)

"EDI should be a shield not a sword. It should never be used to assert rights. It should only be used to defend against loss of rights; the balance needs to be reset ...."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

4. CREATE DISTINCT GROUPINGS FOR STAFF NETWORKS

• Respondents would like clearer separation between staff networks and would like to see distinct groups for LGB and women's networks to ensure fair support for all protected characteristics. They warn against overemphasising any single category or ideology.

"Have very clear primary categories of support for your staff following the Equality Act (Sexual orientation sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, etc,), and make it clear what the law states in relation to these. Then you can add secondary categories like mental health, social mobility, etc., afterwards. Do not lump LGB in with gender identity and do not lump in gender identity with women!"

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

5. ENCOURAGE LEADERSHIP COURAGE AND INDEPENDENCE

• Respondents feel that leadership should resist social or ideological pressures, basing decisions on law and ethical responsibility rather than trends or demands from activist or younger staff groups.

"Be brave and don't feel the need to do what you think your woke twenty-something employees wish you to do."

(Gay man, senior manager, privately owned business)

"Ignore social pressures and hearsay and trends. Business and people's livelihoods are a serious and legal topic not to be influenced by opinions and agendas."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

• Taken together, these recommendations highlight a desire among LGB employees for EDI approaches that are clear, balanced, legally grounded, and respectful of diverse views.

CONCLUSION

• This research reveals a difficult environment for LGB employees whose views on sex, gender, and sexual orientation align with biological definitions under UK law. While deeply committed to inclusion and equality, many face exclusion, silencing, and pressures to conform in their workplaces, alongside being sidelined within existing LGBTQ+ initiatives. Findings show business leaders should revisit existing EDI approaches to ensure they are legally sound and inclusive of perspectives of those LGB individuals whose views not only align with public opinion but also with equality laws.

2. INTRODUCTION

Organisations across the UK are facing a changing social, legal, and cultural landscape in their approach to workplace equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Senior leaders across sectors face increasing complexity in designing policies that meet legal obligations while addressing the varied needs of their workforce. This report provides insight into the views and experiences of 235 lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) supporters of LGB Alliance employed in medium to large UK-based organisations.

Recent legal rulings, including the 2025 UK Supreme Court's ruling regarding the Equality Act 2010, clarified that the terms 'sex' and 'sexual orientation' are based on biological sex. Public opinion also appears to increasingly reflect this view, with polling suggesting that a majority of the UK public defines sex biologically.[6] At the same time, debate continues over how sex and gender are defined and applied in public policy and workplace practice, leaving employers to navigate differing views while maintaining lawful and inclusive practices.

Over the past decade, UK workplace EDI initiatives relating to sexual orientation are typically shaped by the perspectives of LGBTQ+ groups whose membership spans a broad range of identities and who view sex and sexual orientation as based on 'gender identity'[7] rather than biological sex. In contrast, the perspectives of those who are same-sex attracted, defined in terms of biological sex, and who may have different experiences and hold differing views around EDI matters such as staff networks, training, and Pride participation,[8] have been largely absent from research,[9] policy, and practice. Indeed, it is clear that in recent years, the views of this group have often been met with active disapproval. This absence has implications for how well organisations are meeting the needs of their LGB employees but also for the extent to which they can meet their obligations under the Equality Act, especially regarding sexual orientation and belief.

Against this background, the LGB Alliance Business Forum commissioned Amarta Research to explore the experiences and perspectives of LGB employees whose voices have been underrepresented in mainstream EDI discussions. The purpose of this research is to better understand these perspectives and, in doing so, to help senior business leaders understand a wider range of perspectives and needs and develop EDI approaches that are legally compliant, inclusive, and responsive to today's workplace realities.

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[6] YouGov/Sex Matters survey, Public Attitudes to Gender and the Law, 19 December 2024, p. 5. Question: "Would you support or oppose changing the Equality Act so that sex is defined as meaning 'biological sex'?" Results: 54% support, 22% oppose, 24% don't know. Available at: https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/SexMatters_Gender_241219_ZMwbM2T.pdf

[7] 'Gender identity' represents the view that everyone has an internal sense of gender that may differ from their sex.

[8] This group may broadly be termed 'gender critical' although individuals may not necessarily refer to themselves using this term. 'Gender critical' refers to the belief that sex is binary and immutable, and that sex, rather than gender identity, should form the basis of law and policy where relevant. This term is used in this report because it reflects terminology recognised in recent legal judgments (in particular, the Forstater ruling) that such beliefs are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

[9] Research into the workplace EDI views and experiences of those who have gender critical beliefs is growing. For example (1) Sullivan, A. (2025). *Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender Report 2: Barriers to research on sex and gender.* Independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), UK. (2) Gosling, M., & Fanshawe, S. (2024). *Flying Flags and Ticking Boxes.* Diversity by Design. (3) Gosling, M. (2025). *Everyday cancellation in publishing.* Sex Matters. Independent review of data, To date, there is no focused research into the experiences of gender critical LGB employees with workplace EDI.

2.1   RESEARCH AIMS

This research has four aims:

1. *To explore the beliefs, attitudes, and values held by LGB individuals regarding a range of EDI-related topics;*
2. *To deepen understanding of the experiences of LGB employees who have encountered challenges or negative impacts related to their views on sex, gender, and sexual orientation within workplace EDI frameworks;*
3. *To examine perceptions and experiences related to LGBTQ+ staff networks, organisational involvement in Pride events, and LGBTQ+ training initiatives; and*
4. *To gather practical insights and suggestions from LGB employees that can inform senior leaders, policymakers, and workplace EDI professionals on how to better respond to a wider range of views relating to EDI in UK workplaces*

2.2   SAMPLING APPROACH

To support these aims, Amarta Research conducted a survey and interviews with gay, lesbian, and bisexual supporters of LGB Alliance. LGB Alliance has a large supporter base representing various political affiliations, with representation from diverse sectors and industries across the UK. While not representative of all LGB individuals, this group provides insight into perspectives that have been left out of contemporary discussion. Research took the form of an online survey with 235 participants and 9 follow-up in-depth interviews.

2.3   SURVEY

Survey administration. The survey was launched on 6th May 2025 and closed on 18th May 2025. A link to a Google Forms-based survey was emailed to 5,991 supporters: newsletter subscribers, attendees of one or more LGB Alliance events, and donors. Unique identification numbers were included in each invitation to prevent the survey link from being forwarded or shared externally. A reminder email was sent one week later to those who had not opened the initial email. The invitation email stated:

'We're inviting you to take part in a confidential survey about your experiences with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies in your workplace. This survey is intended to be completed by lesbian, gay and bisexual supporters of LGB Alliance who work in organisations with formal EDI policies or initiatives. Your insights will help us better understand how these policies impact LGB people and advocate more effectively for your needs. The survey should only take around 10-15 minutes to complete'

The survey landing page explained that the survey would be kept confidential in accordance with GDPR, and that respondents' personal information is protected by law. A contact email was provided for those who wanted more information. The questionnaire comprised around 50 questions, including 16 open-ended questions. (A copy of the questionnaire and topline findings are available in the Appendix to this report, available on request).

Participant eligibility and screening criteria. To ensure the relevance of the findings, respondents were screened based on six key criteria. The first six questions of the survey were designed to screen out ineligible respondents.

1. **Supporters of LGB Alliance:** *only those who said they were 'supporters' were screened into the survey [10]*
2. **LGB status:** *respondents needed to be lesbian, gay or bisexual to be eligible for the survey*
3. **Current employment:** *individuals who were unemployed, retired, or students were excluded, as the study focused specifically on experiences with workplace-based EDI*
4. **UK-based organisations:** *only those working in organisations operating under UK laws and regulations were eligible, in line with the study's aim to inform UK policy and practice*
5. **Exposure to EDI:** *participants were required to have at least some awareness of formal EDI policies or initiatives within their organisation, so they could comment on how such approaches are understood and experienced in real workplace settings*
6. **Organisational size:** *participants working in small organisations (fewer than 50 employees) were excluded, given that such workplaces often lack formalised EDI structures, making comparisons with larger employers less reliable*

Final sample. Seven email addresses were undeliverable. A total of 387 individuals accessed and began the survey, representing 6% of the invited sample. While this response rate is lower than in previous surveys of LGB Alliance supporters, this is likely to reflect the targeted nature of the invitation, which specifically focused on experiences with workplace EDI and was therefore relevant to a more limited subset of recipients.

Of these 387 responses received, 5 were removed due to duplication of unique identifier numbers or email addresses.

147 were screened out based on the following ineligibility criteria:

- Not supporters of LGB Alliance (n=4)[10]
- Non-LGB respondents (n=31)
- Unemployed, retired, or students (n=24)
- Employed in small organisations (n=54)
- Employed in organisations not under UK law (n=19)
- Employed in organisations without formal EDI policies (n=15)

This resulted in a final eligible sample of 235 respondents. In sum, the final sample was made up of LGB supporters of LGB Alliance who were currently employed, working in medium to large organisations operating under UK law, and aware of formal EDI policies or initiatives in their workplace.

Statistical analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS descriptive statistics. Topline findings are presented in an Appendix to this report. Figures are presented as percentages (%), except where the number of responses is fewer than 30, in which case raw counts (n) are reported. An asterisk (*) indicates figures based on fewer than 10 individuals.
Due to the small sample size, subgroup comparisons were not undertaken.

In this report, where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to multiple responses, software rounding, and the exclusion of don't knows/not stated/other.

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10. Note that a small number of those who said they were supporters provided answers to other survey questions indicating they were not supporters, however, these were not removed from the sample because they did not affect overall findings.

Data confidentiality. Open-ended responses to the survey were analysed thematically, and illustrative quotations are included throughout the report. To protect respondent anonymity, any identifying or potentially identifying details were removed or edited, light edits for grammar or clarity were made where necessary, and all edits preserved the original intent and meaning of the response. Open-ended responses based on fewer than 10 individuals are not quoted in the report to avoid potential identification.

2.4   INTERVIEWS

A follow-up email was sent to the same group of LGB Alliance supporters on 13th May 2025 inviting them to take part in interviews about their experiences with EDI in their workplace, whether or not they had taken part in the survey. Nine interviews were conducted.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes and took place remotely via MS Teams. Participants were informed that interviews would be transcribed and that anything included in the results and subsequent published materials would be non-identifiable. All participants consented to their responses being included in the form of summarised case studies. Participants were first asked their sex, sexual orientation, sector, and industry. Participants were asked about their knowledge of EDI initiatives relating to sexual orientation in their workplace including staff networks, Pride involvement, and training. They were then asked to describe any personal involvement they had with such initiatives, and how this may have affected them personally or professionally. Finally, they were asked if they had any recommendations for improvements around EDI policy and initiatives in the workplace for LGB employees, and if there was anything else they'd like to discuss.

Qualitative survey data (i.e., open-ended responses) were analysed using NVivo and grouped into the following themes: Beliefs and values; Workplace consequences; Experiences with staff networks, Pride, and training; Positive experiences; and Suggestions for improvement. Interview transcripts were summarised as case studies focusing on narratives of participants' experiences with EDI policies and initiatives in their workplace.

2.5   RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Respondents were self-selected and drawn exclusively from individuals who support LGB Alliance. The survey invitation specifically referenced experiences with EDI, which may have attracted participants with particularly strong views or direct experiences. As such, findings reflect the views of this specific cohort and are not representative of all LGB Alliance supporters or the wider LGB population in the UK.

The small sample size limits the reliability of estimates from smaller respondent groups and constrains the depth of subgroup analysis. Comparisons are presented only where sample sizes permit meaningful interpretation.

This study focused on participants' experiences of EDI policy in relation to beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Broader experiences of discrimination based on sexual orientation were beyond the scope of the research.

3. WHO WE HEARD FROM

3.1   PARTICIPANT PROFILE

A detailed overview of participant demographics is provided in Table 1. Note that throughout this report numbers are presented as percentages (%), except where the number of responses is fewer than 30, in which case raw counts (n) are reported. An asterisk (*) indicates figures based on fewer than 10 individuals. Where figures do not sum to 100 per cent, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' responses.

TABLE 1.
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Characteristic	Response Category	Percentage (%) / Number (n)
Sex	Female	46%
	Male	53%
	Prefer not to say	*
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian	35%
	Gay man	48%
	Bisexual	17%
Age	Under 18	0
	18-24	*
	25-34	n=16
	35-44	23%
	45-54	34%
	55-64	29%
	65-74	n=11
	75 years and over	*
	Prefer not to say	*
Ethnicity	White	93%
	Black/ Black British	0
	Asian/ Asian British	*
	Mixed	*
	Don't know	0
	Prefer not to say	*
	Other (please specify)	*
Education	Primary school	*
	Secondary school up to 16 years	*
	Higher or secondary or further education	n=24
	College or university	38%
	Postgraduate degree	49%
	Prefer not to say	*
Personal income	Less than £20,000	*
	£20,000 – £39,999	29%
	£40,000 – £74,999	40%
	£75,000 – £99,999	n=19
	£100,000 or more	n=29
	Prefer not to say	*

TABLE 1.
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (CONT).

Employment status	Employed full-time	74%
	Employed part-time	17%
	Self-employed	*
	Contractor or freelancer	*
	Other (please specify)	n=10
Politics	Left-wing	14%
	Centre-left	27%
	Centre	23%
	Centre-right	25%
	Right-wing	n=14
	Don't know	*
	Prefer not to say	*
Seniority	Entry-level or junior staff	n=12
	Mid-level professional	62%
	Senior manager or director	22%
	Executive or board level	n=13
	Self-employed / consultant	*
	Other (please specify)	*
	Prefer not to say	*
	Don't know	*
Job tenure	Less than 1 year	n=14
	1–2 years	n=29
	3–5 years	22%
	6–10 years	23%
	More than 10 years	36%
	Prefer not to say	*
	Don't know	*

Note: Base: All (235). (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.

Sex. The sample was generally balanced in terms of sex, with just over half (53%) men, slightly less than half (46%) women, and a very small number selecting the 'prefer not to say' option (see Figure 1).

Sexual orientation. Figure 1 shows that just under half the sample are gay men (48%), with lesbians making up around a third (35%), and a smaller proportion identifying as bisexual (around one in six, 17%, male: n=12, female: n=27).

FIGURE 1.
SEX AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS.
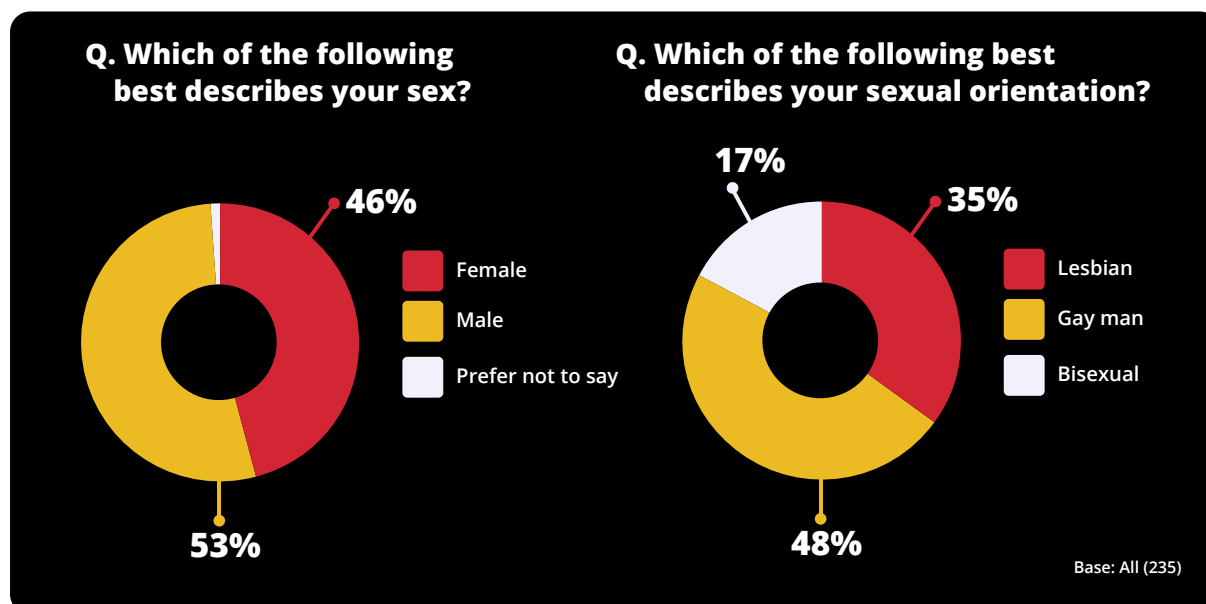
Note: In the survey question, lesbian was defined as 'exclusively same-sex attracted female', gay man was defined as 'exclusively same-sex attracted male' and bisexual as 'attracted to both males and females'

Ethnicity. The sample was predominantly white (93%), with a small number of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds, including Asian, Asian British, mixed, and other ethnic groups (see Table 1). A few respondents preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

Age. Table 1 shows that respondents are mainly aged between 35 and 64. Around a quarter (23%) are aged 35–44, one-third (34%) are aged 45–54, and 29% are aged 55–64. Fewer participants are under the age of 25 (n=17). Reasons for the older age profile include: (a) prior research shows an older age profile for LGB Alliance supporters,[11] and (b) younger individuals were less likely to meet the survey's screening criteria. Those in full-time education, working part-time, or employed in small organisations, criteria that disproportionately apply to younger people, were not included in the research.

Education. The sample is highly educated. Almost 9 in 10 (87%) have completed university-level qualifications and a half (49%) hold a postgraduate degree.

Income. Respondents earn personal incomes higher than average for the UK. [12] About a third (29%) earn between £20,000 and £39,999, 40% earn between £40,000 and £74,999, and 20% report incomes of £75,000 or more.

Employment status. Around three quarters are employed full-time (74%), reflecting the study's focus on workplace experiences.

Seniority. The majority hold mid-level positions (62%), with over a quarter (28%) occupying senior, executive, or board-level roles.

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11. An unpublished 2022 survey of 1,267 LGB Alliance supporters found that 12% were under 35, with 2% aged 18–24.
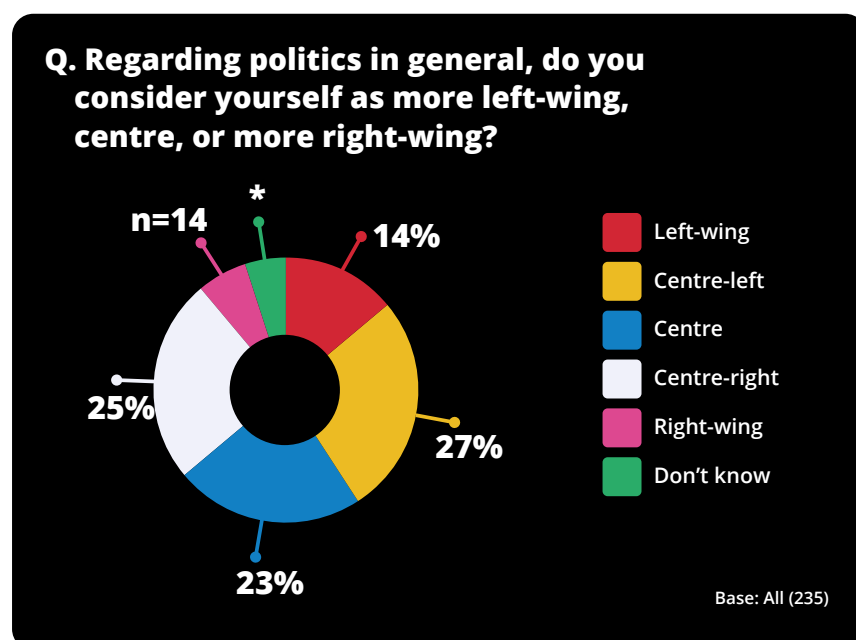12. The average UK gross salary in 2025 is approximately £37,430 (https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/business/average-uk-salary-by-age/)

Job tenure. Job tenure is relatively long, with over one-third (36%) having worked for more than 10 years and nearly half (45%) reporting between 3 and 10 years of service with the current employer.

Political affiliation. Figure 2 illustrates respondent political affiliation, revealing a fairly even distribution among those aligning with centre (23%), centre-left (27%), and centre-right (25%). Among those leaning further from the centre, a larger proportion are left-wing (14%) compared to right-wing (14 respondents). Overall, 41% align with left or centre-left positions, while 31% are right or centre-right. Twelve either did not know or chose not to disclose their political affiliation.

These results broadly reflect wider UK and UK LGB voting patterns. For comparison, a representative Ipsos poll[13] conducted in 2020 (the latest available using this metric) found that among British adults who identified their political stance, 24% positioned themselves on the left, 34% in the centre, and 25% on the right.

FIGURE 2.
POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS.

Q. Regarding politics in general, do you consider yourself as more left-wing, centre, or more right-wing?

n=14   *   14%

25%

27%

23%

- Left-wing
- Centre-left
- Centre
- Centre-right
- Right-wing
- Don't know

Base: All (235)

Note: (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.

3.2   WORKPLACE OVERVIEW

Table 2 presents a detailed description of the sample characteristics of respondent workplaces including organisation size, location, reach, organisation structure, sector, and industry.

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13. https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/polling-how-voters-identify-politically-presents-challenges-and-opportunities-labour

TABLE 2.
WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Workplace Characteristic	Response Category	Percentage (%) / Number (n)
Size	50-249 employees	17%
	250-999 employees	16%
	1,000-4,999 employees	26%
	5,000+ employees	41%
UK Head office location	England: London	45%
	England: elsewhere	45%
	Wales	*
	Scotland	n=15
	Northern Ireland	*
	Don't know	*
Reach	Local	30%
	National	19%
	UK-wide	25%
	Multinational/ global	26%
	Other	*
	Don't know	0
Ownership structure	Publicly listed company	17%
	Privately owned business	14%
	Government agency or public body (e.g., NHS, civil service, local government, BBC)	43%
	Charity / non-profit organisation	n=27
	Academic or research institution	14%
	Other	*
	Don't know	*
Sector	Public	56%
	Private	31%
	Charities and non-profits	n=27
Industry	Finance, banking, or insurance	n=13
	Technology, IT, or telecoms	n=15
	Healthcare or social care	19%
	Education or research	18%
	Government or civil service	19%
	Legal or professional services	n=15
	Retail, hospitality, or tourism	n=10
	Arts, media, or creative industries	n=13
	Engineering, manufacturing, or construction	*
	Energy, utilities, or mining	*
	Transport, logistics, or supply chain	*
	Charity, NGO, or non-profit	n=17
	Other	*
Formal EDI department/ team	Yes	71%
	No	19%
	Don't know	10%

Note: *Base: All (235). (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10*
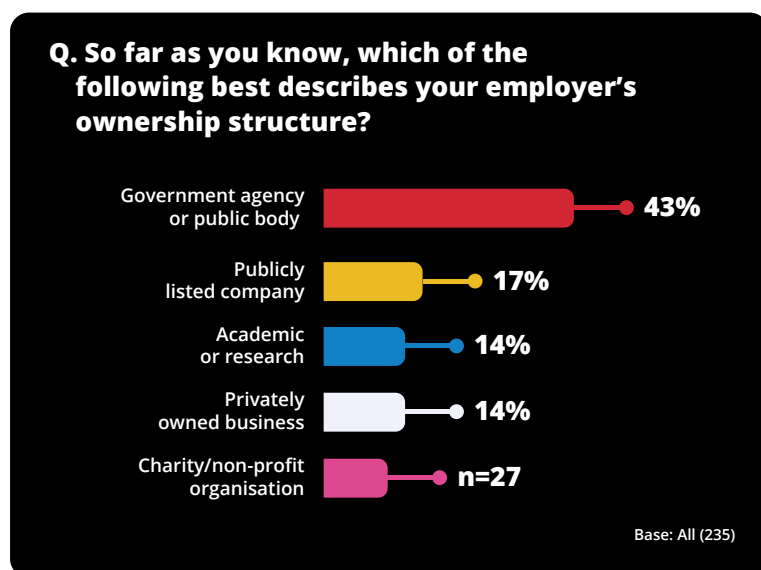
Size. Respondents work in a variety of organisations, with around two in five (41%) employed in organisations of 5,000 or more employees, and a quarter (26%) in organisations with 1,000 to 4,999 employees. Smaller organisations (fewer than 1,000 employees but more than 49) account for one-third (33%) of the sample.

UK head office location. Organisations operating under laws and regulations outside the UK were screened out of the study. The majority of UK head offices are in England, with 45% based in London and a further 45% elsewhere in England; representation from Scotland is small (n=15), while Wales and Northern Ireland are minimal (n<10).

Reach. Organisations have a broad reach, distributed across local (defined as a single location or region; 30%), national (operating within a single country in the UK i.e., England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, 19%), UK-wide (operating across all or most of the UK, 25%), and multinational/global (operating in the UK and other countries, 26%) locations.

Ownership structure. Figure 3 shows that just under half (43%) work in government agencies or public bodies (such as the civil service, local government, NHS, BBC), followed by publicly listed companies (17%), privately owned businesses (14%), and academic or research institutions (14%). Charities and non-profits are also represented, though numbers are smaller (n=27).
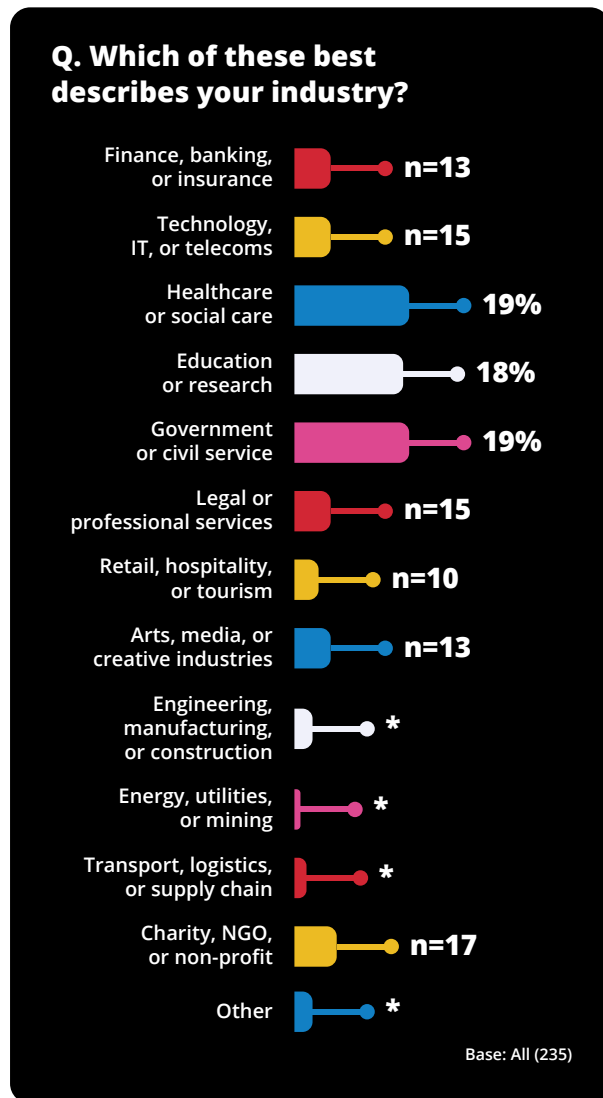
FIGURE 3.
ORGANISATIONAL OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE.

Q. So far as you know, which of the following best describes your employer's ownership structure?

Government agency or public body	**43%**
Publicly listed company	**17%**
Academic or research	**14%**
Privately owned business	**14%**
Charity/non-profit organisation	**n=27**

Base: All (235)

Note: (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10

Sector.[14] Overall, the public sector is the highest represented with over half respondents in public sector workplaces (56%), followed by the private sector where almost a third work (31%).

Industry. Industry sectors are diverse (see Figure 4), with representation in healthcare/social care (19%), government/civil service (19%), and education/research (18%). Also represented is technology/IT/telecoms (n=15), finance/banking/insurance (n=13), legal/professional services (n=15), and arts/media/creative industries (n=13). Other sectors, such as retail, hospitality, and tourism (n=10), are also included, reflecting a wide range of professional backgrounds.

14. Sector' is a new category constructed from the organisation legal structure question. 'Public' includes government agencies, public bodies, and academic or research institutions, reflecting their shared statutory responsibilities. 'Private' includes both publicly listed and privately held companies. Respondents from charities and NGOs were excluded from sector-based comparisons due to small sample size and category heterogeneity.

FIGURE 4.

Q. Which of these best describes your industry?

Industry	Value
Finance, banking, or insurance	n=13
Technology, IT, or telecoms	n=15
Healthcare or social care	19%
Education or research	18%
Government or civil service	19%
Legal or professional services	n=15
Retail, hospitality, or tourism	n=10
Arts, media, or creative industries	n=13
Engineering, manufacturing, or construction	*
Energy, utilities, or mining	*
Transport, logistics, or supply chain	*
Charity, NGO, or non-profit	n=17
Other	*

Base: All (235)

Note: *(n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.*

4. BELIEFS AND VALUES

This section examines respondents' beliefs and values regarding equality in the workplace. It begins by presenting their personal views on the UK's existing legal protections under the Equality Act 2010, along with their alignment with key EDI principles. It also looks at respondents' personal definitions of sexual orientation and their comfort levels with the broader LGBTQ+ categorisation. We compare how strongly respondents endorse core EDI values with whether they feel their organisations reflect these principles in practice.

## 4.1 VIEWS ON LEGAL PROTECTIONS

To explore attitudes toward equality and existing UK legal protections in the workplace, respondents were asked about the importance of upholding the protected characteristics set out in the UK's Equality Act 2010. Respondents were provided with the following background on the 2010 Equality Act:

The UK's 2010 Equality Act protects people from discrimination in the workplace based on certain characteristics. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

They were then asked: ***To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important for workplaces to uphold protections for all these characteristics?***

Support for protections is overwhelmingly high (see Figure 5), with nearly all of participants (93%) endorsing the importance of maintaining these protections. The majority are 'strongly' (77%) or 'somewhat' (17%) in agreement that it is important for workplaces to uphold protections for all characteristics.

FIGURE 5.
PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT WITH UPHOLDING PROTECTIONS OF EQUALITY ACT 2010.

Extent of agreement that it is important for workplaces to uphold protections for all Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics

*

*

93%

Base: All (235)

Agree

Disagree

Neither
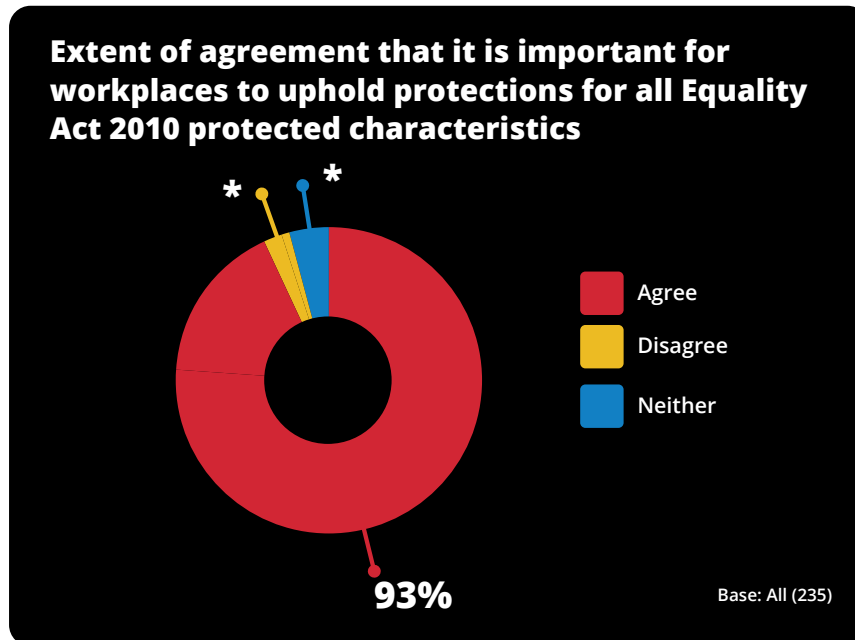
Note: *(n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10*

4.2   CORE EDI PRINCIPLES

To understand how respondents view core EDI principles, they were asked to rate the importance of key values including fairness, respect, inclusion, and openness:

1) *In your opinion, how important are the following values when it comes to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies and initiatives in the workplace?*

2) *And in thinking about EDI in your workplace specifically, to what extent do you believe your organisation's EDI policies and initiatives reflect the following values?*

Fairness (i.e., applying the same standards and opportunities to all individuals)

Respect (i.e., treating each person with dignity, and valuing their contributions equally)

Inclusion (i.e., actively creating an environment where everyone feels they belong)

Openness (i.e., encouraging transparency, listening to different perspectives, and being open to change)

Diversity (i.e., recognising and valuing the benefits of a wide range of experiences, backgrounds, thoughts, and ideas)

Figure 6 illustrates consistently strong support for these values, with nearly all respondents recognising their importance. Endorsement ranged from 97% who agree that fairness is very or somewhat important, to 84% who endorsed the value of inclusion. Respondents were also asked to evaluate the extent to which they believe their organisations' EDI policies and initiatives reflect these values.

FIGURE 6.

GAP BETWEEN PERSONAL EDI VALUES AND EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS FEEL THEIR ORGANISATION REFLECTS THESE VALUES.

Personal importance vs workplace reflection of EDI values (% agree and gap score)

Diversity	86% / 52%	Gap 34%
Openness	91% / 52%	Gap 39%
Inclusion	84% / 46%	Gap 38%
Respect	96% / 55%	Gap 41%
Fairness	97% / 55%	Gap 42%

■ Very/Somewhat important
■ Strongly/Somewhat reflected in my workplace

Base: All excluding 'don't know' (233)

These perceptions reveal a contrast in that respondents generally feel their workplaces fall short of reflecting the values they personally endorse. Figure 6 highlights the gaps between the importance attributed to each value and the extent to which respondents believe these are demonstrated in their organisations. The largest gaps were for fairness and respect, 42% and 41% respectively, indicating a significant discrepancy between how important respondents believe these values are and how well they perceive their organisations to embody them.

For example, while 97% of respondents feel fairness is somewhat or very important in EDI policies, only 55% believe their workplace actually fosters an environment where the same standards and opportunities are applied to all. Similarly, although respect is rated as highly important (96%), fewer respondents (55%) feel their organisation consistently treats individuals with dignity and values their contributions equally. These gaps reveal that despite strong personal support for these values, many employees perceive a shortfall in how effectively their workplaces translate these principles into everyday practice.

4.3   DEFINING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One area of divergence between broader LGBTQ+ groups and this cohort concerns how sexual orientation is defined. We asked participants how they themselves understand the concept of sexual orientation, an important starting point for interpreting their perspectives on other aspects of EDI.

Respondents were provided with a paragraph that said: *Today, some people define sexual orientation in a way that is different from the past. Some people base the definition of sexual orientation on gender identity, or how a person identifies their gender, rather than their actual sex.*

They were then asked: *On what basis do you define sexual orientation?*

The vast majority (98%) indicate that they define sexual orientation on the basis of biological sex confirming the disparity between them and those LGBTQ+ groups who define sexual orientation based on gender identity. This view reflects one of the foundational beliefs that shape these participants' experiences and perspectives discussed throughout this report.
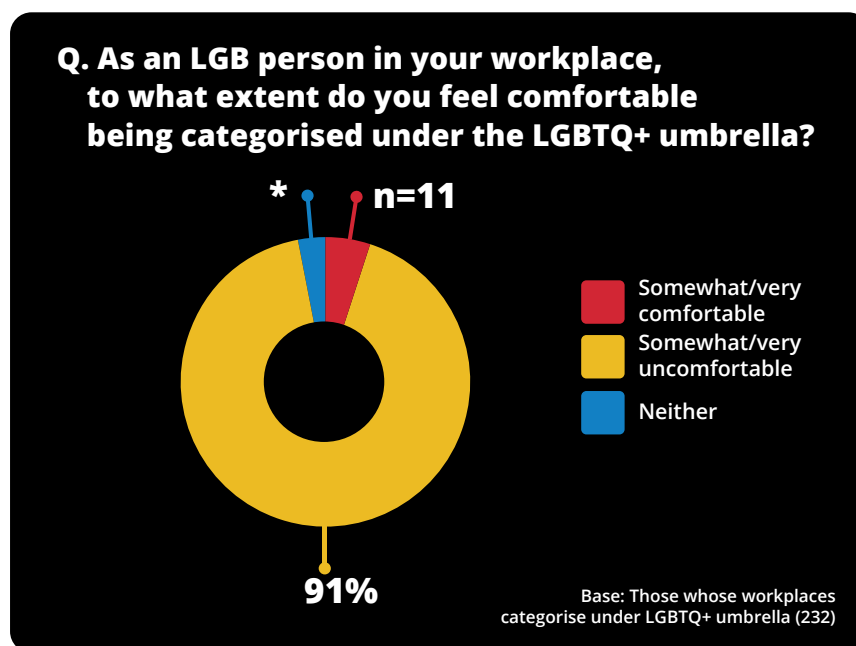
The survey then explored whether respondents feel comfortable being grouped under the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella, a classification that most organisations currently adopt in the UK in EDI-related initiatives.

4.4   COMFORT WITH THE LGBTQ+ LABEL

Most respondents (91%) report feeling uncomfortable being grouped under the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella (see Figure 7). This aligns with earlier research with LGB supporters of the LGB Alliance, which found high discomfort levels when participants were asked a similar, more general question not specific to the workplace.

FIGURE 7.
EXTENT OF COMFORT BEING INCLUDED UNDER LGBTQ+ UMBRELLA

Q. As an LGB person in your workplace, to what extent do you feel comfortable being categorised under the LGBTQ+ umbrella?

* n=11

Somewhat/very comfortable
Somewhat/very uncomfortable
Neither

91%

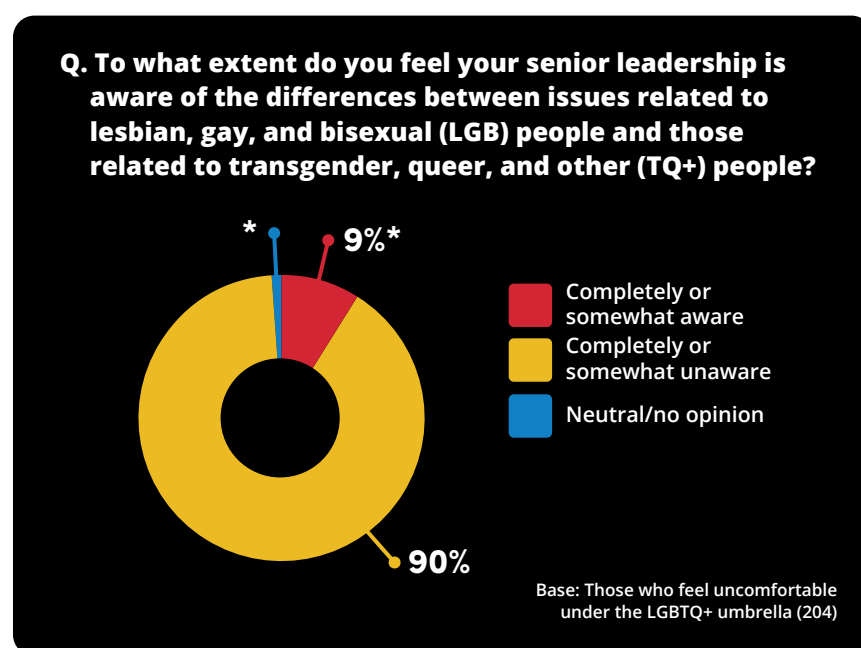Base: Those whose workplaces categorise under LGBTQ+ umbrella (232)

Note: (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.

To further understand this discomfort, those who felt uncomfortable under the LGBTQ+ umbrella were asked whether they believed their senior leaders recognised the specific differences between LGB and transgender, queer, and other (TQ+) issues.

4.5   LEADERSHIP AWARENESS OF LGB VS TQ+ ISSUES

Findings show that respondents feel strongly that their leadership does not understand the differences between issues affecting LGB and TQ+ individuals (see Figure 8). Results show that 9 in 10 respondents (90%) feel their senior leadership is either somewhat (25%) or completely (65%) unaware of these differences.

FIGURE 8.
VIEWS ON LEADERSHIP AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LGB AND TQ+ ISSUES'

Q. To what extent do you feel your senior leadership is aware of the differences between issues related to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people and those related to transgender, queer, and other (TQ+) people?

*
9%*

90%

Completely or somewhat aware
Completely or somewhat unaware
Neutral/no opinion

Base: Those who feel uncomfortable under the LGBTQ+ umbrella (204)

Note: *(n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10. Don't know (n=10) excluded from analysis.*

Taken together, these findings show that respondents hold strong commitments to principles such as fairness, transparency, and inclusion, and overwhelmingly support legal protections for all groups covered under the Equality Act 2010. However, their responses also reveal discomfort with broad identity groupings and scepticism about how well current EDI approaches enact these principles in practice.

The rest of the report examines the workplace EDI experiences of these LGB respondents in greater depth. First, we look closely at negative workplace experiences stemming from their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Participants were asked a series of closed- and open-ended questions, introduced with this preamble:

This section asks about your personal experience in your current or previous workplaces over the past five years.

Some people report experiencing negative experiences in their workplace related to the beliefs they hold about sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

While we recognise that some LGB people may have faced negative experiences because of their sexual orientation, this section focuses specifically on any negative experiences you may have had because of your beliefs or views about sex, gender, or sexual orientation — not because of your sexual orientation itself.

Note that in this research we chose to focus on experiences related to beliefs rather than those based on sexual orientation in order to address issues surrounding current public debates on differing views about sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

Participants were asked whether they had experienced a range of scenarios (see Table 3), including pressure to affirm views they do not hold, being advised to stay silent about their beliefs, fear of expressing their views, exclusion from meetings or decision-making, withheld opportunities, social exclusion or hostility, and dismissal or being asked to leave. They were also asked whether they had ever taken any formal action in response to what they believed to be unlawful discrimination related to their beliefs. Each closed question was followed by an open-ended prompt inviting respondents to describe what happened in more detail.

TABLE 3.
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE DUE TO VIEWS ON SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Survey Question	Yes	No
In the past 5 years		
1. Have you ever taken any formal action in response to what you believe was unlawful discrimination at work related to your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation? (Examples of formal action include raising a grievance, reporting to HR or a manager, contacting a trade union, or submitting a claim to an employment tribunal.)	N=27	88%
2. Have you been dismissed or asked to leave as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	*	97%
3. Have you been subject to disciplinary procedures as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	n=15	93%
4. Are you aware of having been excluded from meetings, discussions, or decision-making processes as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	15%	85%
5. Are you aware of work opportunities (e.g., promotions, projects, or training) being withheld or negatively impacted as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	n=20	90%
6. Have you experienced social exclusion or hostility from colleagues or management as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	35%	62%
7. Have you been pressured to affirm views on sex, gender, and sexual orientation that you do not agree with?	65%	33%
8. Have you received informal warnings or been advised to remain silent on your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?	36%	62%
9. Have you ever felt unable to express your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation openly due to fear of negative consequences?	86%	13%

Note: *(n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.*

Table 3 provides a summary of findings from these questions. Participants reported a range of negative workplace experiences related to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Few respondents report being dismissed or asked to leave (less than 10), however most (86%) feel unable to express their beliefs openly about sex, gender, and sexual orientation due to being afraid of negative consequences. Around two thirds (65%) have felt pressured to affirm views they do not agree with. The next three sections present these findings in more detail.

5. EXCLUSION AND DENIED OPPORTUNITIES

Results of our analysis shows these LGB employees experience exclusion, withholding of opportunities, and hostility in their workplaces because of their beliefs, in particular when it comes to social exclusion and hostility from management and colleagues. This section explores these in more detail. Survey participants were asked:

1. *Are you aware of having been excluded from meetings, discussions, or decision-making processes as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*
2. *Are you aware of work opportunities (e.g., promotions, projects, or training) being withheld or negatively impacted as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*
3. *Have you experienced social exclusion or hostility from colleagues or management as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*

Table 3 shows that in the past five years, 15% say they have felt excluded from meetings, discussions, or decision-making processes as a result of their beliefs. A small number (n=20) report opportunities being withheld or negatively impacted. Around one third (35%) report experiencing social exclusion or hostility from colleagues.

Participants were invited to write more about their experiences. This section summarises thematically the responses to these open-ended questions.

Note that to protect respondent anonymity, identifying or potentially identifying details were removed or edited, light edits for grammar or clarity were made where necessary, and all edits preserved the original intent and meaning of the response. Open-ended responses based on fewer than 10 individuals are not quoted in the report to avoid potential identification.

5.1   EXCLUSION FROM MEETINGS AND DECISION-MAKING

Fifteen percent describe being explicitly or implicitly excluded from key organisational meetings, decision-making groups, and staff networks, especially those related to EDI initiatives.

"As a lesbian, I asked to be part of the EDI group. I was not invited to join.
No lesbians were included."

> *(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)*

"I was excluded and removed from workplace wellbeing and diversity forums."

> *(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)*

"Action planning meetings were held after the Supreme Court ruling, which were only open to trans, nonbinary, and intersex workers."

> *(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)*

"I was told that my views on LGB Alliance would not be welcomed or shared in the employers LGBTQ 'strand' due to them being views that would make people feel unsafe. I was excluded from membership."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

5.2   DENIED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A small number of respondents (n=20) report being denied access to promotions, training, or key roles after their beliefs became known or were suspected. A gay man who is in a senior role in the education sector described his experiences applying for a mentoring scheme:

There was a mentoring scheme where members of 'marginalised' communities could partner with a member of the executive-level staff to inform the revision of our EDI policies. I applied and stated that I am gay man who doesn't feel represented by the LGBTQ position that is currently in place. I described how this has had some effects on me in terms of how I feel I'm being listened to or if my interests are being represented. I thought that it might be useful for me to give that perspective. Months went by, they put me off, and eventually said there's no place for you in this. We don't have room, too high demand. I'll never know what the real reasons were. I suspect they lay elsewhere. I get the impression that I'm the wrong kind of gay man with the wrong kind of opinions.

(Gay man, senior manager, academia/research)

Others described similar experiences:

"I believe I was prevented from gaining a promotion as I have become known as a gender critical lesbian in the organisation."

(Lesbian, senior manager/director, charity/non-profit organisation)

"I was invited to contribute to EDI training for my trust. When I mentioned my gender critical views, I was dropped."

(Lesbian, senior manager/director, government agency or public body)

"A role I used to hold was subjected to a 'reorganisation'... and the role disappeared."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"There is no way of knowing what opportunities I might have lost."

(Lesbian, government agency/public body)

5.3   VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

In addition to being denied access to roles or development opportunities, some respondents described self-withdrawing from these opportunities by not putting themselves forward in the first place, or self-excluding in response to the stress of being involved.

"I self-excluded myself from activities as I know I can't be myself without facing hostility."

(Lesbian, senior manager/director, government agency/public body)

"I have self-excluded from training and development opportunities because my views... would not be welcomed."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"I was co-chair of the LGB(TQ+) equity group and had to stand down from the stress I experienced."

(Lesbian, senior manager, charity/non-profit organisation)

One gay man wrote of the personal cost self-exclusion has including isolation, disconnection from other gay and lesbian colleagues, and fear.

"I joined the staff LGBTQ Network but was pressured to share my pronouns and wear a Progress flag lanyard. The network is only ever interested in gender issues. They are very intolerant of other views, as is our senior leadership generally. I stepped away from the network. As a result, I don't know any other gay men or lesbians at work. I don't talk about sex, gender, or sexual orientation with colleagues at all. I am genuinely afraid to express my opinion. I just do my work and go home."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

5.4   SOCIAL OSTRACISM AND HOSTILITY

It is not surprising that respondents self-excluded, as around a third (35%) report experiencing hostility or ostracism by management or colleagues for their views—views that align with the Equality Act and are reflected in broader public opinion. Some describe being ignored, excluded from informal social events, or labelled with terms such as "transphobic" or "bigoted".

"[I experienced] hostility from our Staff Pride Network, colleagues I work with, and absolutely zero backing from senior management."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic research institution)

"Colleagues have said to other colleagues that I'm transphobic."

(Gay man, executive or board level, government agency/public body)

"I was criticised in my 360-degree feedback for holding views that may not be seen as inclusive."

(Lesbian, senior manager, charity/non-profit organisation)

"People ignore me during coffee breaks."

(Lesbian, voluntary role, government agency/public body)

"As a journalist, trans rights activist members of staff wrote to me complaining about my reporting and publicly admonished me on social media. I was also 'blanked' by previously friendly colleagues."

(Gay man, senior manager, government agency/public body)

"I feel very strongly about women's and LGB rights and was called a transphobic bigot."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

5.5   CONDITIONAL BELONGING

A recurring theme was the perception that inclusion in meetings, networks, or development opportunities depended on affirming a specific point of view. Those who expressed doubts or alternative opinions describe being excluded, pressured to self-censor, or compelled to conform.

"To be included in anything related to EDI one has to be affirming."

(Bisexual man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"The rainbow staff group is only welcoming if you sign up to the pro-trans agenda."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"When having conversations about sex, gender, and orientation, I am excluded if I give a neutral view or do not affirm beliefs."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"It felt like being excluded for having the 'wrong' views as an LGBTQ+ person."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, Academic or research institution)

Experiences of conditional belonging were often compounded by a perceived lack of support or meaningful engagement from senior leadership.

5.6   VIEWS IGNORED BY MANAGEMENT

Across different contexts many respondents report feeling overlooked by senior leaders and HR. They feel their contributions are solicited but then sidelined, overlooked, or excluded from final outputs, reinforcing a sense of disengagement and distrust. They also feel they are not supported when they face hostility for their views.

"I was not consulted on my views as a director of a charity on a corporate statement in response to the Supreme Court, when they knew I knew about it."

(Lesbian, senior manager, charity/non-profit organisation)

"The comments and questions I raised on policies were not taken into account and [it] was just pushed through committees with stealth."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"My experiences were listened to sympathetically during a survey, but nothing I (or a lesbian colleague) said actually found its way into the final report."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"Senior management gave zero backing when I faced hostility."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

The account provided below by a mid-level professional lesbian in a government agency illustrates how even constructive efforts to contribute to EDI policy can trigger implicit pressure and emotional suppression.

I was an active member of an LGBT network. I took part in an organisation-wide information-sharing workshop where they were asking for experiences related to sexual orientation to inform EDI policy. It got heated because we wrote that LGB Alliance could be an alternative source to Stonewall. It was taken down immediately, and they were labelled a hate organisation. I took it to HR and said that I don't feel safe as a lesbian within the organisation. They basically dismissed my concerns. They didn't actually say it, but it felt like 'you need to shut up and be quiet about this'. They kept saying how we have to make sure we've got a fair and balanced viewpoint going out. Where's the fairness in not being able to talk about being a lesbian or a gay man or a bisexual? I've taken a back seat in the last few years because I might lose my job with what I'd be saying. I'm sticking around to see what the conversation is about and then trying to challenge when it needs a challenge.

(lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

In sum, a consistent pattern emerges across the data: respondents frequently report experiencing subtle but significant exclusion. Many recount being sidelined from meetings and decision-making forums, losing or withdrawing from career-enhancing opportunities, facing active social ostracism and hostility, and feeling required to conform to prevailing views or risk being left out. For some, senior managers and HR solicited their input only to ignore or sideline it later. Together, these experiences reflect a workplace environment where merely holding or expressing certain legally protected perspectives can carry reputational and professional cost, even without formal sanctions. It suggests that indirect exclusion, reputational damage, and reputational risk can operate as mechanisms of control just as effectively as formal punishment.

6. COMPELLED CONFORMITY AND SILENCING PRESSURES

In addition to more overt forms of exclusion and self-exclusion, many respondents describe working in environments where they feel unable to speak about their beliefs on sex, gender, and sexual orientation. This section explores these in more detail. Survey participants were asked:

1. *Have you received informal warnings or been advised to remain silent on your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*
2. *Have you ever felt unable to express your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation openly due to fear of negative consequences?*
3. *Have you been pressured to affirm views on sex, gender, and sexual orientation that you do not agree with?*

Table 3 shows that in the past five years, over 4 in 5 (86%) report feeling unable to express their beliefs due to fear of negative consequences. Around two thirds (65%) feel pressured to affirm views they do not agree with, and over a third (36%) report receiving informal warnings or advice to remain silent because of their beliefs.

6.1 INFORMAL WARNINGS AND ADVICE TO REMAIN SILENT

Table 3 shows that around one third (36%) report they have received informal warnings or advice to remain silent in the past 5 years as a result of their views. While a few describe more formal warnings, most were given informal guidance or were cautioned informally by colleagues or managers.

One respondent described being told to stop raising concerns about a serious safeguarding issue:

"I raised specific concerns about a male who was intentionally setting off metal detectors and forcing women to physically search him while he was dressed in cycle shorts. I was told to stop raising these concerns. Female staff were basically forced to touch his genitals daily, as the female search pattern includes a sweep across the vulva from hip to hip, as this is an area of high concealment. Male searches follow a different pattern, but female staff are not taught this for obvious reasons."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional)

"I received an informal warning after sharing information on trans issues in the NHS."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"There was an investigation about me by the past headmistress. This investigation's outcome was that there was 'nothing to find.' However, they still 'advised' that I don't discuss such things."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"My HR manager advised me not to speak publicly about my views."

(Gay man, mid-level professional)

"Colleagues advised me that it wasn't wise to express views around gender, sex, etc, which didn't conform to the organisation's views."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"I publicly challenged an all-staff email encouraging pronoun usage and was called to a meeting with the then Head of HR, who told me that the poster had made a complaint about me. Nothing formal happened, but I was advised to moderate my tone."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

Some were told by managers to keep their views to themselves after labelling them as 'bigoted' or 'TERFs' for holding or expressing their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation:

"In one instance when being lectured on how to be an ally to the trans community, I was told by senior management not to speak about how LGB and TQ+ are different. I was told that it is bigoted and would cause trauma and pain for other individuals."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"My manager called me a TERF and described my views as 'terfy'. I was advised to keep them to myself if I wanted to get on. This is in the civil service."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency/public body)

There were also examples of more supportive responses:

"The current Head of HR has told me informally that she's received complaints about my LinkedIn posts and has responded to them that I'm free to express my opinions."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

Alongside advice to remain silent, many respondents also report more active pressure to express agreement with contested claims, particularly around gender identity.

6.2   PRESSURE TO AFFIRM VIEWS

In the past five years, 65% report being pressured to affirm views they do not agree with (see Table 3), particularly around gender identity. One common response related to pronoun declarations as a frequent expectation or requirement in email signatures, meetings, internal profiles, or other communications.

"The ritual of pronoun sharing in meetings is culturally 'mandatory'. I have openly refused to do so and have been met with challenge."

(Lesbian, senior manager/director, charity/non-profit organisation)

"We have a big push to make sure you use the email templates for signature signoffs, which include stating your pronouns."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

Several described mandatory training that presented contested claims as settled facts. Some felt compelled to provide answers against their beliefs to pass modules or retain employment:

"Our mandatory EDI e-learning requires us to confirm that we will use pronouns. There is also social pressure to use them in meetings and emails."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"I was required to do e-learning...When 'gender' appeared on screen, I kept picking 'no'. Eventually, I had to give in and put it in the yes box, or I would have failed the module. A small thing but I felt humiliated."

(Bisexual, entry-level or junior staff, privately owned business)

"In a recruitment manager training session, a People Advisor corrected me when I stated sex was a protected characteristic, saying that it was 'gender'."

(Gay man, senior manager/director, academic or research institution)

"I explained to my HR Head that this [training stating it is unlawful not to accept a trans woman in a women's toilet] is not the case, and she recognised the training needed to change."

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, charity/non-profit)

"During training, we were told by the head of HR that 'everyone has a gender identity'. Along with another staff member, they staged a meeting to pressure me into changing my beliefs, which was immensely frightening."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

Other examples included teaching or public sector obligations that conflicted with personal beliefs:

"I teach PSHE, and I've been expected to deliver content about gender that I do not agree with."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

One gay man, a senior manager in a government agency/ public body, recounts how, after 12 years chairing the LGBT staff group, efforts to create an LGB-focused subgroup were met with disproportionate scrutiny. He describes a recent forced meeting where dissenting views were implicitly silenced, likening it to treating mature professionals like "naughty schoolkids."

I chaired the LGBT+ staff group for a number of years before I stepped back because of gender politics. When we set up an LGB splinter group, my organisation checked with legal if it was allowed. They never checked when the disability or BAME splinter subgroups were set up. We also received a number of complaints from trans and non-binary staff questioning the need to meet separately. After the Supreme Court ruling, there were comms about trans people meeting separately. They didn't check it with legal. There's hypocrisy in so many ways.

Due to the tensions between some LGB, trans, and non-binary staff, were all brought into a room together. It was like we were naughty schoolkids, as if we've all got to get along. I think it made the situation worse because there was no definitive 'this is not acceptable behaviour', nothing saying LGB staff are entitled to meet to discuss their individual needs and concerns, without intimidation from others. When I first joined the organisation many years ago, we used to meet in secret as a staff group. Now we've come full circle.

(Gay man, senior manager, government agency/public body)

6.3   FEAR OF SPEAKING OUT

Closely related to the pressures described above, most participants (86%, see Table 3) report feeling unable to express their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation due to fear of negative consequences.

Perceived professional risk: Many participants described an environment where expressing their beliefs openly could lead to professional consequences, including disciplinary action, damage to career prospects, or job loss.

"It would be career suicide."

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I would be formally disciplined if I opposed transgender ideology."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

"I posted on Facebook that 'I stand with Kathleen Stock' and got attacked by the mob…If one of those people knew where I worked, they could report it and discipline would follow."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"If I was to voice my opinion that trans should be separated from sexual orientation I know I would be possibly sacked."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"I have a fear of being disciplined, fired, or harassed by students."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"People in similar roles have lost their jobs and careers for expressing [these] beliefs."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

Concerns about ideological bias in EDI policies. Many respondents attribute this climate to the alignment of EDI policies with particular ideological positions, particularly those influenced by Stonewall and similar organisations. Lesbians, in particular, often express feelings of erasure coming from these groups and their views. These policies are seen as advancing gender identity narratives over legally protected sex-based rights.

"My company pays money to Stonewall to pursue their Diversity Champion programme, which includes a gender identity policy which breaks several laws and promises disciplinary action against employees who challenge self-ID in single-sex spaces."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

"The GRACEs model conflates sexual orientation and identity. It does not mention sex at all."

(Lesbian, government agency/public body)

"Most people were saying they hated the word 'lesbian' and didn't identify with it."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, member-owned company)

"The organisation is seriously captured."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

Culture of compelled conformity and silencing. Participants frequently describe a culture of compelled conformity, leaving little room for dissent or alternative views.

"It is impossible to question or even gently challenge some of the organisational EDI statements and policies."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"Everything is strictly controlled. There is this basic acknowledgement for freedom of belief, but this is tinged with threats that if you express it here will be consequences."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"I've not felt I'd be able to challenge this without somebody potentially taking issue."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

Self-censorship and withdrawal. In line with descriptions in Section 5.3 on managing exclusion or threats of exclusion, many respondents describe self-censorship as a common form of self-protection against these pressures. This includes carefully monitoring language, avoiding certain discussions, or excluding themselves from workplace groups or networks.

"It's easier to not say what I think to get on with my day."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

"As a senior lawyer with quite a high profile in my area of practice, there is no way I would feel able to express my beliefs openly. I have worked actively to maintain a neutral position sadly."

(Lesbian, senior manager, privately owned business)

"There was a time when coming out to someone was risky; now it's risky to say men are not women. It's like being in the closet all over again."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

Emotional and social impact. Many respondents report that this suppression has had a significant emotional impact. Respondents describe feelings of invisibility, shame, and isolation.

"The silence on being able to say no, I don't believe this, is overwhelming sometimes."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"I feel ashamed to self-censor and it feels like being in the closet again."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

"I have to keep quiet and have been pushed back into the closet and am expected to accept the male lesbian to keep my job. It makes me very unwell...It's very much like growing up catholic and instinctively knowing that to remain safe I had to pretend I was not a lesbian."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

Together, these accounts show a workplace environment where many people feel they cannot be open about their views on sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Whether it is because of informal warnings, direct pressure to conform, or fear of professional and social consequences, the result is the same. Many end up censoring themselves, feeling emotionally drained, and isolated, unable to fully participate at work.

7. RAISING CONCERNS AND CONSEQUENCES

In this section, we explore whether participants have attempted to raise formal concerns as a result of what they believed to be unlawful discrimination at work related to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation, and whether they themselves have ever faced formal scrutiny as a result. Respondents were asked whether they had ever initiated complaints due to their beliefs, and whether they had been subject to disciplinary proceedings or dismissal for expressing those beliefs.

1. *Have you ever taken any formal action in response to what you believe was unlawful discrimination at work related to your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation? (Examples of formal action include raising a grievance, reporting to HR or a manager, contacting a trade union, or submitting a claim to an employment tribunal.)*
2. *Have you been dismissed or asked to leave as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*
3. *Have you been subject to disciplinary procedures as a result of your beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation?*

7.1 USING FORMAL CHANNELS TO RAISE CONCERNS

In this climate, it is unsurprising that only a small proportion of participants report pursuing formal complaints or raising concerns through official channels about their treatment.

Most respondents (88%) have not taken any formal action in response to what they believe was unlawful discrimination in the last 5 years related to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation (see Table 3). A small number (n=27) have taken action. They were invited to describe what action they took and what the outcome was. This section summarises thematically the responses to this open-ended question.

While some accounts involved disciplinary processes, exclusion from networks, or reputational consequences, most did not result in legal claims of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Instead, respondents described a range of internal actions such as raising grievances, submitting concerns to HR, whistleblowing, or challenging internal policies and training content. In a few cases, these steps led to tangible outcomes such as policy changes or formal apologies. However, many reported limited resolution or a lack of meaningful response.

The examples below illustrate the kinds of concerns that respondents attempted to address through formal workplace channels.

"The head of LGBT staff network reported me for transphobia. There was a HR investigation, etc. I raised a grievance, and there was a long investigation. I was found to have done nothing wrong. I received an apology."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

However, most respondents reported limited resolution or a lack of meaningful response:

"I wrote emails to [senior business leaders] regarding the Staff Pride Network not being inclusive of gender-critical lesbians, as well as a transwoman speaking at an event on campus openly mocking gender criticals and creating a hostile environment. I received quite a bland response back with no action taken."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"I've taken out two grievances...made five formal complaints, and two whistle-blowing cases using my employer's procedures. Some were dismissed prior to action, and some found in my favour. All led to little or no action"

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"I repeatedly raised issues with senior management and HR. They continued to allow the LGBTQ network to openly discriminate against gay and gender critical people."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

7.2   FACING DISCIPLINARY ACTION OR DISMISSAL

In contrast to those who initiated formal complaints, some respondents described being placed under formal scrutiny themselves. While only a small number report taking action themselves through grievance procedures or legal channels, others recount facing direct consequences in the form of disciplinary processes or dismissal. This section explores those experiences, focusing on how respondents' views or expressions of belief became the subject of internal investigation or sanction.

Respondents were asked whether, in the last five years, they had been (a) dismissed or asked to leave, or (b) subjected to disciplinary procedures due to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

Dismissed or asked to leave. Table 3 shows that very few participants (less than 10) have been dismissed or asked to leave.[15] In total, 97% said this had not happened to them.

Disciplinary procedures. The majority (93%) have not experienced disciplinary procedures, while a small number (n=15) have. In many cases, social media activity triggered formal interventions:

"I was investigated for being 'transphobic' as I had a discussion at a staff table where I said, 'if you have a vagina, you are a girl or woman.' I informed HR of the ruling that 'belief' in the reality of sex was a protected belief. I managed to get the trans policy rewritten and removed from the outward-facing website."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, academic/research institution)

"[My manager] was made to investigate something that I'd written on Twitter. Despite having nothing to do with the company at all, HR were pushing for 'action', and I ended up with an 'informal' warning by email. Ironically my manager let me write my own informal warning because he thought it was bollocks too."

(Bisexual man, senior manager/director, government agency/public body)

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15. Open-ended responses with fewer than 10 participants are not analysed or reported here to protect confidentiality and minimize the risk of participant identification.

"HR were alerted to me sharing a post criticising DEI policy in another charity."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

"Due to speaking about the wider issues affecting LGB people and women on Twitter, I was made to sit through a disciplinary at my workplace"

(Bisexual man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

In one case, the respondent characterised the experience as punitive in and of itself.

"[I had] a number of meetings with the Director of EDI. The process was the punishment."

(Lesbian, senior manager/ director, charity/non-profit organisation)

Some report being asked to explain their actions or views in formal meetings.

"I have been asked to attend a meeting with HR to justify why I would not welcome 'gay' transmen (heterosexual women) in an LGB staff network group."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency/public body)

Another respondent who had protested workplace language said they were told colleagues had been dismissed for stating sex-based views.

"My line manager sent me materials including the word 'qu**r'. When I protested the use of the word, the head of HR stated that he 'had to let four people go' because they had said that there were two sexes."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

The experiences of a lesbian senior manager in the charity sector illustrates how raising concerns can rapidly shift into professional marginalisation and denied opportunity for progression.

> *I lead learning for 30,000 staff and volunteers and I used to chair the LGBT+ network. Both have put me in conflict with our EDI team often, for example around the history of Pride. They wanted to put out revisionist history, Marsha P. Johnson, that kind of thing. When I said that isn't what happened, I got called into the director of EDI and told I was discriminatory towards trans people. I then didn't get a promotion that I was 100% absolutely guaranteed to get. Obviously, I can't prove that was why. But I became quite unwell and stressed around that time. That's when I reached out to [-] and they gave me some good advice and had barristers on standby if we needed to go down that route, but I think enough court cases happened around then that they backed off. But it's ongoing. It's been five years now. I always look for an opportunity to stand up. A lot of my colleagues are worried I'll stand up too much. But somebody has to, right?*
>
> *(Lesbian, senior manager, charity sector)*

This case underscores a recurring pattern in our data: even where formal complaints do not result in sanctions, the act of speaking up often triggers exclusion from key development opportunities, stalled career progression, or subtle sidelining. It demonstrates how attempts to address perceived injustice can lead to longer term reputational and professional consequences issuing a clear signal to others about the risks of dissent.

Having examined experiences across three key areas of negative workplace treatment, this report now turns to explore views on LGBTQ+ staff networks, organisational Pride engagement, and LGBTQ+ training initiatives.
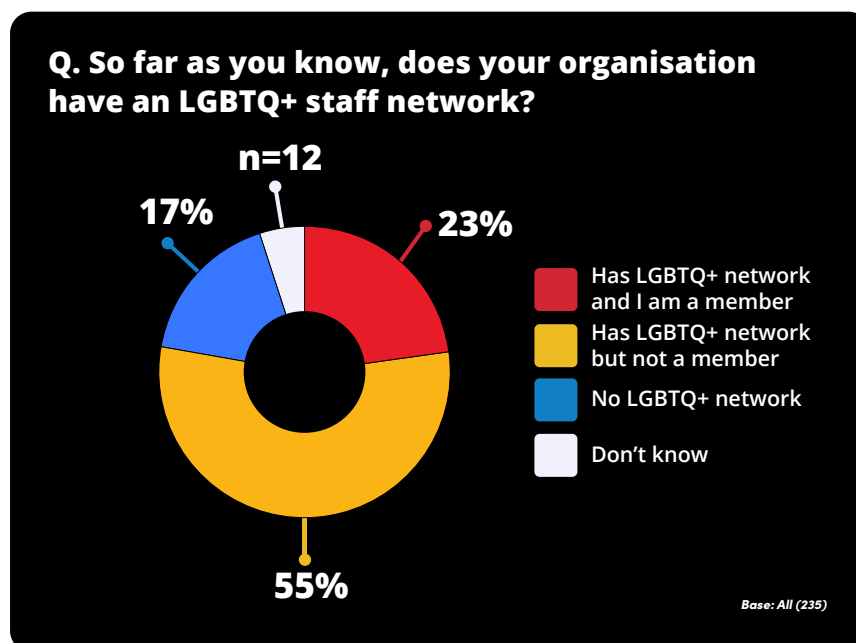
8. ENGAGEMENT WITH LGBTQ+ INITIATIVES

LGBTQ+ staff networks, workplace Pride involvement, and LGBTQ+ training represent core features of contemporary workplace EDI initiatives in the UK, often positioned as signals of institutional commitment to equality and belonging. However, as previous sections have shown, many LGB employees feel marginalised within these efforts. Together, these sections focus on how LGB individuals themselves assess these initiatives.

8.1   EXPERIENCES WITH LGBTQ+ NETWORKS

First, we asked respondents whether they have an LGBTQ+ staff network. As seen in Figure 9, around a quarter (23%) of respondents are members of their staff network. Over half (55%) have a network but are not members themselves.

FIGURE 9.
ORGANISATIONS WITH LGBTQ+ STAFF NETWORKS AND RESPONDENT MEMBERSHIP.

Q. So far as you know, does your organisation have an LGBTQ+ staff network?

n=12

17%

23%

- ■ Has LGBTQ+ network and I am a member
- ■ Has LGBTQ+ network but not a member
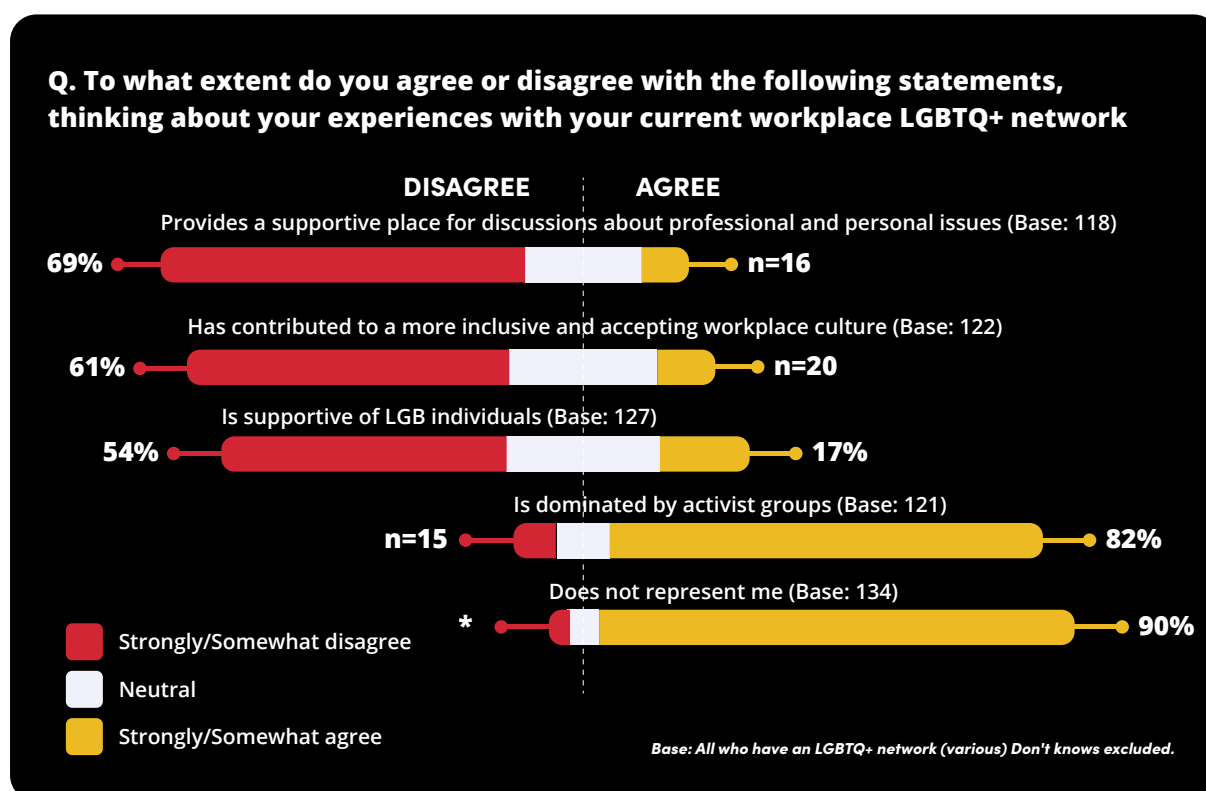- ■ No LGBTQ+ network
- □ Don't know

55%

Base: All (235)

Note: *(n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.*

Those who have a staff network were asked various questions about asking the extent to which they agree or disagree with a number of statements, including the extent to which their network represents them, is supportive of LGB individuals, is dominated by activist groups, contributes to an inclusive working culture, and provides a supportive place for discussion. Figure 10 shows results for this question.

FIGURE 10.
AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT CURRENT LGBTQ+ STAFF NETWORK.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, thinking about your experiences with your current workplace LGBTQ+ network

	DISAGREE	AGREE

Provides a supportive place for discussions about professional and personal issues (Base: 118)
69% — n=16

Has contributed to a more inclusive and accepting workplace culture (Base: 122)
61% — n=20

Is supportive of LGB individuals (Base: 127)
54% — 17%

Is dominated by activist groups (Base: 121)
n=15 — **82%**

Does not represent me (Base: 134)
* — **90%**

■ Strongly/Somewhat disagree
□ Neutral
■ Strongly/Somewhat agree

Base: All who have an LGBTQ+ network (various) Don't knows excluded.

Note: *Don't knows excluded from analysis. (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10.*

While LGBTQ+ networks are widespread, there's a disconnect in that many LGB participants feel unseen and unsupported within those spaces.

Staff network does not represent me. Nine in 10 (90%) agreed with the statement 'My LGBTQ+ network does not represent me,' with almost three quarters (73%) strongly in agreement.

"Staff networks don't represent me as a gay man at all."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff government agency or public body)

"It is clear that those with gender critical views dare not speak up in LGBT groups and we feel scared to do so as our views are not respected or approved of."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I am not in the LGBTQIA+ network. I have two colleagues (gay man and a lesbian) who were reps in that group but have stepped down and left the group as it was a very 'toxic environment'. The lesbian told me that she was constantly shut down whenever she raised issues specifically relating to lesbians."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

Dominated by activist groups: Over four in five (82%) agree with the statement that their staff network is dominated by activist groups with around half (51%) strongly agreeing this is the case.

"Activists rule the roost. They are very loud, aggressive and intimidating to any alternative views"

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"The LGBT+ network is very vocal on trans issues."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, member owned company)

"There is certainly a strong activist facet to the network."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

In many cases, participants feel staff networks are overly politicised or focused on gender identity, leaving LGB employees feeling sidelined, as can be seen in this account by a lesbian senior manager of a publicly listed company. This example reveals how the initial promise of an LGB-focused network can be overshadowed by broader institutional EDI agendas, causing longstanding members to disengage.

I joined the LGBT network at my company for three years. Initially it was very positive. We were member-led and could really achieve things. We discontinued the Stonewall membership because of the cost to benefit ratio and were working well without it. Our head office is based in the U.S. and in the last two years, the influence of the global EDI really took hold. They started to actively audit what our group was doing and pressuring the TQ messaging. Suddenly the Stonewall membership was reinstated, and they were requesting we review our policies for wording. They were putting a lot of pressure on the chairperson of our group. But they were never personally involved and never addressed the group as a whole, which I found strange. It felt like there was now an agenda we had to fulfil, and it became quite tedious. I started to disagree with some of the messaging so eventually I chose to step away. The group is dwindling and I'll be very surprised if it lasts until the end of the year.

(Lesbian, senior manager, publicly listed company)

"The LGBTQ+ staff network describes themselves as 'firmly trans-inclusive'. I've found it easier and safer to stay well away."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

The account below by a lesbian who is a mid-level professional working in the retail/ hospitality sector, underscores the sentiment that lesbian voices specifically, not just LGB perspectives in general, can be sidelined in LGBTQ+ staff networks, particularly when discussions are dominated by trans-centric agendas:

There was a lesbian visibility event last year. It was about general experiences within work as a lesbian and what being a lesbian means to them as working women. The panel event started with the question, 'Do we like the word lesbian?' Most people said they hated the word and they were questioning whether they wanted to use it on the actual invite for lesbian visibility week! It's a shame because female-centric events for lesbians or bisexual women really feel like one of the big things that's missing from the network. There are often trans-specific events – that's seen as its own separate thing. When you're a lesbian, you're just thrown in with the rest of them and expected to get on with it. I would like to see some acknowledgement that LGB people's experiences at work are different to trans people's experiences, and that not to be a negative thing. Coming out as gay isn't the same as coming out as trans.

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, retail/ hospitality sector)

"The LGBT+ network is mostly run by men and trans people, so female/lesbian voices aren't prominent."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, member owned company)

"There are many gender critical staff who have no voice. There are about six different staff groups under the LGBTQ+ banner - all pro trans and not one women only group or sex equality group."

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, academic or research institution)

There was also some who feel that EDI and HR are overemphasising politics in general. Some favourably recalled approaches in the past when there was a lighter touch, with a focus on protecting individuals from discrimination rather than overt politicising. Some had the sense that LGBTQ+ groups were strongly influencing the organisation's senior management.

"I believe that 'networks' for minorities which have become fashionable in corporations create yet more division. Identity politics and 'difference' is valued more than acceptance and equality. If I wanted to join the Pride Network at my workplace, I know I would be unwelcome as I would be expected to affirm gender and queer theory without question."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"Individuals within the LGBTQ network seem to have an unhealthy influence over the senior management."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

In addition to views on staff networks, participants were also asked about their organisation's involvement in Pride events. This represents another highly visible area of LGBTQ+ inclusion policy, often seen as a marker of progressive values. However, responses suggest that many LGB staff perceive current organisational Pride involvement as excessive, alienating, or misaligned with their own identities and priorities.
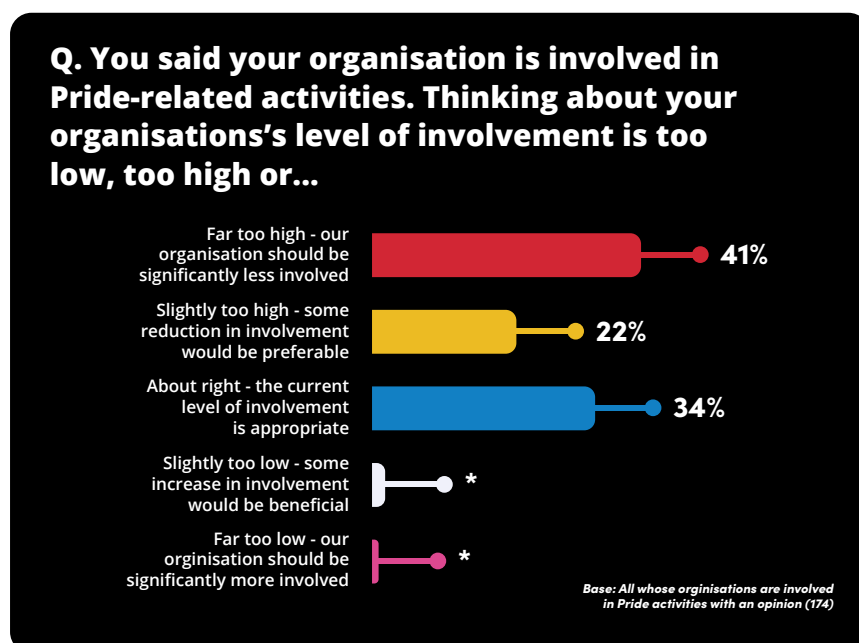
8.2   WORKPLACE PRIDE INVOLVEMENT

Engagement with Pride activities was high, with three quarters (75%) saying their organisations were involved. Fourteen percent did not have any involvement and 26 individuals did not know whether their workplace was involved in any Pride-related activities.

Figure 11 reveals that when asked their opinions about their organisation's level of involvement, almost two thirds (63%) feel it is too high, with 41% believing it is 'far too high – our organisation should be significantly less involved,' and 22% 'slightly too high, some reduction would be preferable'

FIGURE 11.
VIEWS ON ORGANISATION'S LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN PRIDE ACTIVITIES.

Q. You said your organisation is involved in Pride-related activities. Thinking about your organisations's level of involvement is too low, too high or…

- Far too high - our organisation should be significantly less involved — 41%
- Slightly too high - some reduction in involvement would be preferable — 22%
- About right - the current level of involvement is appropriate — 34%
- Slightly too low - some increase in involvement would be beneficial — *
- Far too low - our orginisation should be significantly more involved — *

Base: All whose orginisations are involved in Pride activities with an opinion (174)

Note: *Don't know excluded from analysis. (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10*

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about their thoughts on their organisation's Pride involvement a number of responses revealed concerns about whether these initiatives were primarily symbolic.

"Pride is just virtue signalling. I avoid it as it no longer represents me."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"It's a very top-down group influenced by the LGBT+ NGO world as well as rainbow-washed corporations. I find it very alienating."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"For the most part those who attend Pride events from my organisation are virtuous straight people or those identifying as 'queer.' Pride isn't about gay men and lesbians anymore."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

A number have the sense that Pride is now irrelevant.

"As an institution, the university's approach to Pride has little to no relevance for lesbians or gay men. We are simply social camouflage for its TQ+ posturing."

(Gay man, senior manager, academic or research institution)

"I don't think the civil service or the military should be involved in any Pride activities. We are beyond people being bothered by somebody being gay or lesbian in the workplace, so we should be beyond Pride now."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"As a gay man, Pride is an irrelevance now. The most enthusiastic in getting involved at work are younger straight women."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

Some call out what they believe is the hypocrisy of their organisations.

"My company is owned by foreign investors, and it's interesting that they expect the business to be heavily involved in Pride events within the UK, while they operate in overseas territories which are very homophobic and criminalise gay behaviours. They don't ever rock the boat in those countries where a Pride movement might actually be of some use. I think they are rainbow-washing the business here in the UK."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

There are those who felt that their organisation's Pride involvement is not too low, with some expressing that their organisation's Pride involvement was unintrusive and 'low key':

"I don't think [Pride is] too intrusive. I do work in an area which is very culturally diverse and as such, I think that some degree of awareness is necessary, and outside the LGBT network, [what my organisation does] is fairly subtle in terms of engagement events which are voluntary."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"[My organisation's involvement in Pride] is quite low-key but still annoying. There's a lot of right-think gets trotted out, but the high ethnic diversity of the corporation does keep a lid on it a bit."

(Lesbian, senior manager, privately owned business)

"Occasionally, some staff use internal Pride activity to promote gender ideology, but this is relatively rare and more irritating than threatening."

(Bisexual man, executive or board level, government agency or public body)

Beyond networks and visibility-focused initiatives, workplace training is often used to embed institutional values and communicate expected norms around EDI. The next section examines participants' experiences of LGBTQ+ training over the past five years, focusing on how these sessions are received, what messages they convey, and whether they are seen as relevant or inclusive by LGB staff.

8.3   LGBTQ+ STAFF TRAINING

Just under half of respondents (48%) have received LGBT+ training in the past five years, split almost evenly between external (21%) and internal (20%) training providers, with 14 unsure who delivered their training. 52% have not received any such training. Of those who have, for the majority (57%) it was mandatory, while for the remainder it was voluntary or a mix of voluntary and mandatory.
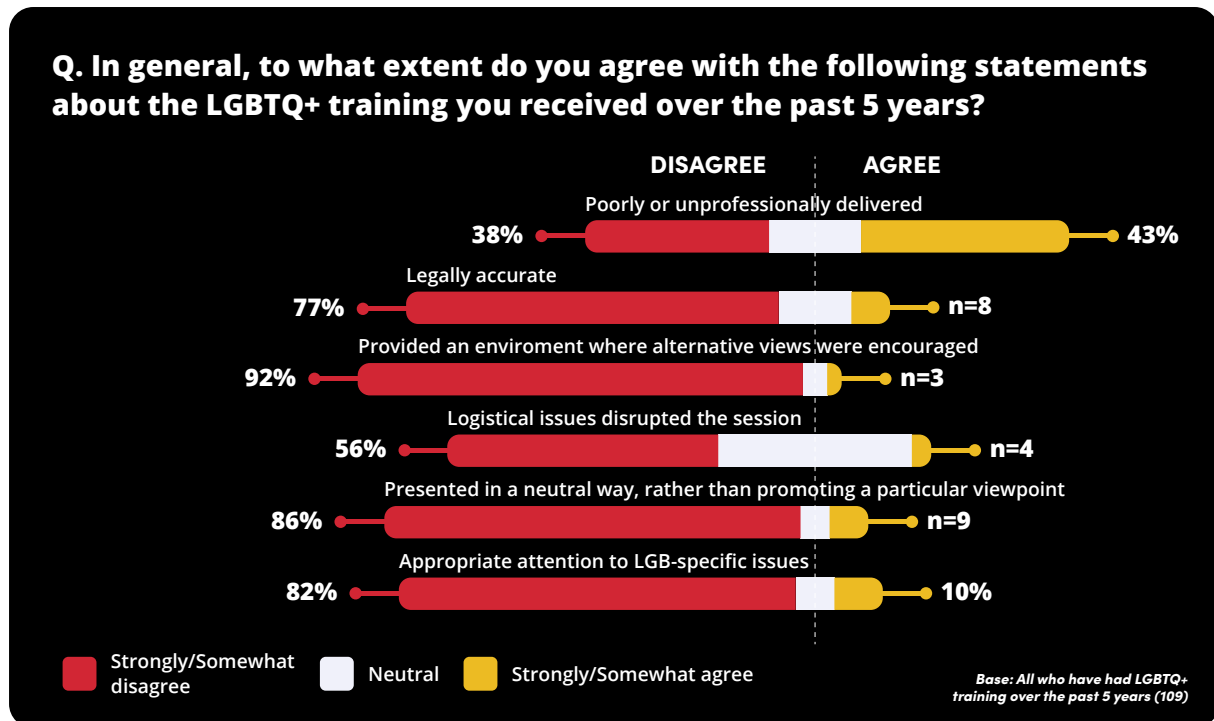
Respondents were asked how they would rate the quality of training provided. Over three quarters (76%) rated it as poor (32%) or very poor (44%).

Those who had received LGBTQ+ training over the past five years were asked about the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements.

Figure 12 shows there is a high level of disagreement that training provides an environment where alternative views are encouraged (92% disagreement), that training was neutral (86% disagreement), and that it gave appropriate attention to LGB-specific issues (82% disagreement). Around three quarters (77%) believe their workplace training is not legally accurate.

FIGURE 12.
VIEWS ON LGBTQ+ TRAINING RECEIVED IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

Q. In general, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about the LGBTQ+ training you received over the past 5 years?

DISAGREE — AGREE

Poorly or unprofessionally delivered
38% — 43%

Legally accurate
77% — n=8

Provided an enviroment where alternative views were encouraged
92% — n=3

Logistical issues disrupted the session
56% — n=4

Presented in a neutral way, rather than promoting a particular viewpoint
86% — n=9

Appropriate attention to LGB-specific issues
82% — 10%

■ Strongly/Somewhat disagree □ Neutral ■ Strongly/Somewhat agree

Base: All who have had LGBTQ+ training over the past 5 years (109)

Note: Don't knows excluded from analysis. (n) = number. (*) refers to a number less than 10

When asked if there was anything more they wanted to say about their workplace training, many mentioned concerns regarding legal accuracy.

"The training misstated the law regarding protected characteristics and misgendering, and provided 'hurt feelings' as examples, as opposed to actual discrimination."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I am forced to watch videos which state that it's discrimination to say trans women cannot use women's toilets, yet the Supreme Court ruling shows this is not correct."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency or public body)

"The EDI officer openly positioned gay people as a gender identity and not as homosexual."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, privately owned business)

There were also some instances where individuals had success in altering the training after highlighting the lack of legal accuracy within their organisation.

"I once completed online training which stated that it is unlawful not to accept a trans woman in a women's toilet. I explained to the head of HR that this is not the case, and she recognised that the training needed to change."

(Bisexual woman, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I raised an issue with the EDI officer and HR about the wording of their policy. They had rewritten the list of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act, leaving out sex and replacing it with gender. They changed it to correctly mirror the Equality Act."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

A number express discomfort with being included under the broader LGBTQ+ of identities and a limited focus on issues relating to lesbians.

"With my current employer, the training had a limited focus on lesbians, a disproportionate focus on TQ+ issues."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"I am forced to sit through 'diversity' training on LGBT+ issues which presents me as part of a wider community that I do not agree I am a part of."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, government agency or

Some participants describe feeling alienated or silenced by messaging that claims to represent the views of the LGBTQ+ community. Rather than being invited into a conversation, they feel that it was assumed they spoke with or shared a collective voice they didn't recognise, and that they were denied the opportunity to voice disagreement.

"I was told what the LGBTQ+ community was and what I think, even though I disagreed with nearly all of it. Nobody asked me my opinion, even as a gay man. I was just told what I thought. Open debate was not encouraged or welcomed. I felt dictated to and patronised and it made me think it would make heterosexual colleagues angry and bewildered, because that's how I felt and I'm a gay man. I felt I was made to look like I supported things I didn't agree with and was part of a community and upheld values I want nothing to do with without my consent."

(Gay man, entry-level or junior staff, Government agency or public body)

Across LGBTQ+ networks, Pride initiatives, and training sessions, a consistent picture emerges. Many LGB participants feel sidelined or spoken for by workplace initiatives that were designed in the name of inclusion, but which often reflect a narrow ideological perspective. Rather than feeling invited into dialogue, respondents frequently describe environments where disagreement is unwelcome, where institutional messaging presumes there is a consensus, and where dissent carries social or professional risks. The experiences of respondents in this research do not suggest they reject inclusion or EDI in principle but rather reflect a call for practices that are more respectful of pluralism, legal accuracy, and the distinct realities of same sex attracted employees.

In light of these experiences, participants were invited to share their views on how workplace EDI efforts might be improved. The next and final section presents these suggestions.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING EDI

Respondents were invited to propose practical ways their organisations could improve EDI policies and initiatives. Their responses can be grouped into five broad areas: legal accuracy, strengthening oversight and advice, ensuring political neutrality and a business focus, separating staff networks, and leadership courage.

Prioritise legal accuracy and clarity. A strong theme is the call for organisations to align EDI work closely with the 2010 Equality Act and to avoid reliance on external lobbying groups. Respondents would like to see a more structured and transparent legal foundation for workplace policies, communications, and training.

"Being legally accurate is a good start."

(Lesbian, senior manager, privately owned business)

"Remember that there are nine protected characteristics and they all matter equally."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"Follow the law, not what a lobby group tells you to use, because it's you that's liable not the lobby group."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"Have very clear primary categories of support for your staff following the Equality Act (Sexual orientation sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, etc,), and make it clear what the law states in relation to these. Then you can add secondary categories like mental health, social mobility, etc., afterwards" Do not lump LGB in with gender identity and do not lump in gender identity with women!"

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"Any training should state multiple experiences and opinions but be clear what the legal definitions (Equality Act and EHRC) are of the terms 'sex', 'sexual orientation', and 'gender reassignment'. Preferably, it should be delivered by an LGB person who has worked in that field (or similar) and experienced a same-sex relationship as an adult. It should be relevant to the working environment, giving examples of discrimination."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"Base them around common sense and the Equality Act rather than the whims of lobby-based organisations such as Stonewall and Mermaids."

(Gay man, senior manager, privately owned business)

"Clear delineation between sexual orientation and gender reassignment in policy and training."

(Gay man, senior manager, academic or research institution)

"Recognise that gender critical views are ethical and advertise this. Allow an LGB staff network Comply with the Equality act 2010."

(Lesbian, senior manager or director, government agency or public body)

Strengthen oversight and independent advice. Also important is the emphasis on strengthening oversight and seeking independent, objective advice to guide EDI initiatives. Some respondents feel that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are either being neglected or carried out as a tick-box exercise.

"Diversity impact assessments are an excellent way to balance the differing and sometimes conflicting needs of individuals and groups who have similar or very different protected characteristics. It must take into account the differing needs within a specific demographic, too."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, government agency or public body)

"Do the Equality Impact Assessment—don't tick just the box that says "EIA not required" because it almost always is required. Let people contribute anonymously to the EIA."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, academic or research institution)

"Impact assessments should be done, whenever trans-inclusive policies are written, in order to look at the implications for groups with other protected characteristics."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, education or research)

There are calls for organisations to move away from partisan advisors and seek varied, objective sources of input, particularly legal expertise.

"Consult with multiple external advisory groups as well as internal anonymous focus groups to obtain a balanced input which can inform on potential pitfalls or gaps in existing EDI policies and activities. This can help provide perspectives on how employees and stakeholders might perceive these policies."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"Do not use organisations like Stonewall, which are partisan."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"If anyone still thinks that the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index is a beacon to attract great LGB employees to their workforce they are deluded. This is now the biggest red flag a potential LGB applicant can see."

(Lesbian, senior manager, civil service or government body)

"Ensure consultation with a certified and objective legal advisory group to ensure compliance with local legislation and identify the correct application of the EDI policies, should there ever be a dispute to resolve or a policy to enforce."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

Respondents also advocated for EDI strategies that are neutral, proportionate, and aligned with business objectives.

Provide neutral, proportionate and business-focused EDI. Several respondents emphasised the importance of organisations maintaining political neutrality and reducing the intensity or volume of EDI activities. They argue that neutrality creates a more inclusive environment and avoids alienating those who hold different views:

"Do not take political positions. Stay neutral to allow everyone to have a voice—e.g., in sexuality and gender identity conflicts stick to what the law IS rather than the law as activist groups would like it to be."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"A lower key approach that simply recognises everyone's rights under the Equality Act and commits to protecting them would suffice. Enough with various days, weeks or months 'celebrating' this group or that."

(Gay man, senior manager, academic or research institution)

"All policies and initiatives should be emotionally neutral and based in actual law. I have seen DEI staff who are emotionally connected to the subject matter to such an extent that they cannot consider other views."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, owned by venture capital)

"Don't allow political motivation to infiltrate HR. Have the legal department provide advice and HR to provide recommendations but the board decides."

(Gay man, executive or board level, publicly listed company)

Several respondents also argued that EDI training should be voluntary rather than compulsory.

"All EDI training should be voluntary."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

While the majority of respondents did not call for rollback of EDI, some did:

"I would like to see a rollback of EDI generally. But if it must exist it ought to make itself as unintrusive as possible. I don't need to receive weekly emails about this issue or that issue. I don't need to be invited to talks or workshops about "trans awareness" (this has happened several times at my organisation. At least it's always been optional!)."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

The majority of participants called for EDI efforts to be refocused on supporting genuine workplace needs, improving processes, and safeguarding equal opportunities:

"Focus on delivering equality of opportunity for all."

(Gay man, senior manager, academic or research institution)

"Diversity should respect diversity of opinions or it is disingenuous."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"EDI should be a shield not a sword. It should never be used to assert rights. It should only be used to defend against loss of rights; the balance needs to be reset so we can get back to a more realistic view of each other."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

"I think EDI should be about accommodating genuine needs such as disabilities...It should also be about creating a culture where feedback...is encouraged, but always with the same objective in mind: to help the business function better! It's not about soothing employees' egos or making work 'fun'"

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company (subsidiary))

Another significant suggestion was the creation of distinct and balanced staff networks, ensuring all protected characteristics receive equitable attention and support.

Create distinct groupings for staff networks. Some of those LGB surveyed feel that workplace inclusion efforts are disproportionately focused on a narrow set of (LGBTQ+) issues. Rather than finding this emphasis affirming, they express concern that it comes at the expense of broader inclusion and contributes to a sense of imbalance. They call for a more even-handed approach that respects the full diversity of experiences and avoids creating hierarchies or alienating colleagues.

"Don't over-emphasise one category over another—it feels like you are ramming it down people's throats. For example, if there's a LGBT/Pride/gender ideology celebration every month, this puts other employees off and can have a backlash effect."

(Lesbian, senior manager, government agency or public body)

"Make sure you cover all protected characteristics (women, pregnancy and maternity are heavily ignored!). Also likewise spend equally across characteristics if you intend to fund promotional material, etc."

(Lesbian, senior manager/director, government agency or public body)

Many feel that staff networks should be more clearly differentiated, particularly between LGB, trans, and women's groups.

"Don't lump sexual orientation and gender identity together, and have a women's network, not a 'gender' one. At my workplace there is a gender network and an LGBTQ+ network, but nothing for women as a sex or for people who are exclusively same-sex attracted."

(Lesbian, mid-level professional, charity/non-profit organisation)

While most believe diversity initiatives prioritise other identities, in particular trans people, a small number mention women and ethnic minorities, too.

"Recently, my workplace has begun a massive drive for women and people of colour... prioritising their applications for promotions or job roles."

(Gay man, mid-level professional, government agency / public body)

Encourage leadership courage and independence: Finally, some participants highlight the need for leadership to demonstrate courage and independence, resisting external pressures and making decisions grounded in legal and ethical considerations.

"Be brave and don't feel the need to do what you think your woke twenty-something employees wish you to do."

(Gay man, senior manager, privately owned business)

"Ignore social pressures and hearsay and trends. Business and people's livelihoods are a serious and legal topic not to be influenced by opinions and agendas."

(Bisexual woman, mid-level professional, publicly listed company)

10. CONCLUSION

This research provides insights into the experiences and perspectives of a specific group of LGB employees whose voices are underrepresented in mainstream workplace EDI discussions. Despite strong personal commitments to inclusion, fairness, and legal protections under the Equality Act 2010, this group of LGB respondents describe a workplace environment that falls far short of these ideals. They frequently face workplace exclusion hostility tied to their beliefs about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. A large majority are afraid to express their views openly. A significant minority have even been subject to disciplinary procedures because of their beliefs—beliefs that align with current legal definitions but are often misunderstood, disregarded, and actively rejected within organisational EDI frameworks. Some have been dismissed or asked to leave because of their views, have had work opportunities denied, and many have received informal warnings or advice to remain silent by colleagues and managers.

Respondents report pervasive pressures to conform to particular ideological views, with informal warnings, compulsory training, and organisational cultures that discourage open dialogue and dissent. This silencing creates a climate of fear, leading many to self-censor or withdraw from participation in workplace initiatives, thereby limiting their professional development and contribution. Such a climate not only undermines the principles of fairness and respect but also risks alienating a significant segment of the LGB workforce.

Concerns extend to LGBTQ+ staff networks, Pride events, and LGBTQ+ training programmes, which many participants perceive as narrowly focused on gender identity issues and dominated by activist perspectives that marginalise LGB voices, particularly lesbians. These initiatives, while intended to promote inclusion, instead contribute to feelings of exclusion and misrepresentation, calling into question their effectiveness in serving all sexual minority employees.

Participant suggestions for improvement provide a clear framework for those seeking to foster genuinely inclusive workplaces. Prioritising legal accuracy and clarity in EDI policies will ensure that protections are understood and applied consistently. Strengthening oversight with independent and diverse advisory input will help organisations avoid ideological bias and better reflect the varied experiences of employees. Creating distinct, clearly defined staff networks will offer equitable support and avoid alienation across different groups. Finally, courageous and independent leadership is needed to address these issues, uphold legal and ethical standards, and cultivate a fair and respectful environment.

Dr Tamara Burrows brings two decades of experience across academia, public policy research, and the international NGO sector, in support of organisations working on complex and contested issues. She has led hundreds of research projects, using mixed methods to inform policy development, guide strategic planning, sharpen campaign messages, and evaluate humanitarian responses. Before starting Amarta, Tamara worked in senior research roles at leading social research agencies and spent ten years in the Middle East. There she worked on programming and research with local NGOs as well as others like the UN, Save the Children, and Action Against Hunger, focusing on vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Amarta Research delivers principled, independent research for organisations working on complex and contested issues. We provide clear, evidence-led insight to support strategic decisions, shape campaigns, and inform legal or policy reform. We specialise in policy and advocacy research, mixed methods studies, literature reviews, needs assessments, and evaluation. Our work is rigorous, ethical, and grounded in real-world relevance. We work with charities, advocacy groups, and public interest organisations in the UK and internationally. Amarta is small by design—agile, selective, and personally invested in every project. We value intellectual clarity, methodological integrity, and respect for those whose voices are often overlooked.