PRIDE *in* LEADERSHIP

The Pride in Leadership report:

Barriers to LGBTQ+ career progression in the UK

2025

Please be advised that this report contains references to self harm, suicide, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, racism, disability discrimination, and other forms of discrimination and hatred.

Contents

Foreword from Claire Ebrey & Matt Haworth

For LGBTQ+ professionals, career success isn't just about talent and hard work – it's about navigating barriers that many other colleagues never even have to think about. Barriers that keep some from advancing, and others from even entering the careers they aspire to in the first place. Barriers that make it harder to bring their full selves to work. These challenges are well-known within the LGBTQ+ community – discussed, shared, and felt deeply, but rarely evidenced. This report changes that.

There are people who don't believe this report should exist. They argue that in 2025, when LGBTQ+ people can marry and adopt, the fight is over; that legal equality means lived equality. But legal protections remain incomplete, especially for trans and non-binary people, and the data tells us that lived experiences often fall far short of legal ideals. The majority of LGBTQ+ professionals face, or have faced, significant obstacles to achieving their potential. And these barriers are not just historical or passive, they are being actively reinforced.

Some organisational EDI programmes are being scaled back, diversity roles eliminated, and LGBTQ+ inclusion dismissed as 'woke' overreach[1]. In some cases, the backlash is even more extreme – from governments banning workplace diversity initiatives[2] to institutions silencing discussions on LGBTQ+ identities[3]. The decision to erase EDI efforts isn't just theoretical; it has real consequences. It shapes who gets hired, who gets promoted, and who feels safe at work.

In a world where 'culture wars' have made inclusivity a battleground, evidence is needed more than ever. Because behind the policies and headlines, real people, real careers, and real futures are at stake. And all of these real people influence the strength of our organisations, our regions, and our economy. When people are excluded, undervalued,

or unable to reach their potential, we all lose out – on innovation, leadership, and talent.

Since we started Pride in Leadership in 2021, we've been asked time and time again to speak about the barriers LGBTQ+ people face in leadership. And while we – and the senior leaders we spotlight at our events – often spoke from our own lived experience, there was very little data out there to support what we were saying. If you want to talk about gender, there's McKinsey's Women in the Workplace report[4]; on race, there's The Parker Review[5]. There was a small amount of information that focused on the LGBTQ+ workplace experience, but it tended to focus on single issues such as bullying (Stonewall 2018[6], TUC 2024[7]). When it came to barriers to career progression for LGBTQ+ professionals, the research just wasn't there.

That's why we conducted this survey of over 1,000 LGBTQ+ individuals across the UK – to capture their real experiences, in their own words. We wanted to go beyond assumptions and gather meaningful data on the barriers to career progression that LGBTQ+ professionals face, as well as the strengths and opportunities that exist.

So this report fills a gap. It highlights the stark realities that many LGBTQ+ professionals face – from bias in hiring and promotion to the confidence knock that starts early in life and carries through into careers. It shows how intersectionality – being LGBTQ+ and also a woman, disabled, or from an ethnic minority or working class community – can compound these challenges. It shows that trans people are experiencing more barriers to progression that their cis LGB colleagues. And it demonstrates that, while many workplaces celebrate Pride Month, far fewer are putting in place meaningful, structural support for LGBTQ+ career progression.

But this report is not just about highlighting barriers – it's also a celebration of the strength and leadership within the LGBTQ+ community. We must recognise that the LGBTQ+ experience often

cultivates qualities that make for exceptional leaders. Facing discrimination or exclusion has driven many to develop resilience, empathy, strategic thinking, and determination.

Respondents told us how their LGBTQ+ identity has helped them develop leadership skills, forge powerful networks, and create more inclusive workplaces. They told us how they have stepped up – not just in their day jobs, but as mentors, role models, trustees, and advocates for change. In fact, coming out, or simply walking out the door as a queer or gender non-conforming person, can be an act of leadership in itself – a powerful expression of courage, authenticity, and defiance in a world that too often asks us to hide who we are.

Most importantly, this report is a call to action. It's not enough to highlight the challenges; we need solutions. That's why we've included a comprehensive set of recommendations for businesses, policymakers, recruiters, future research, and the LGBTQ+ community itself. If we work together, we can break down these barriers, create truly inclusive workplaces, and ensure that LGBTQ+ professionals are not just present in leadership, but excelling there.

We are incredibly proud of what we've built with Pride in Leadership. The connections, confidence, and opportunities that have come from our network are a testament to the power of our community. And we are even prouder to now be contributing data and insights that we hope will shape real change.

This report is just the beginning. The next step?
Making sure the right people read it – and take action.

Claire Ebrey & Matt Haworth
Co-Founders, Pride in Leadership

www.prideinleadership.co.uk

[1] https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/companies/article/bt-ditches-diversity-targets-from-managers-bonuses-bfzqxhxnb [2] US court allows Trump to enforce ban on DEI programs, for now │ Reuters
[3] New study reveals more UK schools are removing LGBTQ+ books after complaints from parents │ Euronews [4] Women in the Workplace 2024 report │ McKinsey [5] The Parker Review - Encouraging greater diversity of UK boards
[6] LGBT in Britain - Work Report (2018) │ Stonewall [7] LGBT_Sexual_Harassment_Report_2024.pdf

A few words from some LGBTQ+ leaders

For most of my early career, I lived with what I've often called "the worst kept secret in the world." I moved to London in the early 1980s and a few years later I met my future wife but couldn't publicly acknowledge it. She worked in the City and neither of us could be out professionally. In those days, nobody in major professions were able to come out and live openly. The idea of being out in politics was unthinkable. So, I took the classic path – working in backroom jobs, helping others progress and get elected – and then during the Blair government my party leader offered me a place in the House of Lords.

The right moment to come out publicly came during the debate on same sex marriage. As every LGBTQ+ person who does it publicly knows, coming out felt like a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. Since then, I continued to use the enormous privilege of my position in the House of Lords to stand up for those without a voice.

This important report by Pride in Leadership powerfully demonstrates what many of us know through lived experience: you cannot be an authentic leader if you cannot be yourself. The barriers documented here – from lack of role models to workplace hostility – remain all too real for our community.

We are fortunate to be the first generation of LGBTQ+ people who can choose and pursue our professions without hiding essential parts of ourselves. If we are not to be the last, and if we are to ensure future generations remain equally free, we must heed this report's calls to action. We must share our experiences of leadership – both triumphs and mistakes – and demonstrate the tangible difference LGBTQ+ leadership makes to organisations. Most urgently, we must ensure practical support is available as we face down the organised, international campaign which attempts to destroy human rights and roll back equality. This excellent report is one such tool to help us through the journey.

Baroness Liz Barker
Liberal Democrat Life Peer
House of Lords

For most of my career in education, I was unable at work, to be who I am. I always avoided talking about my personal life and that was because I lived with a woman.

We disguised our loving and committed relationship by saying we were 'flat sharing'. This was Manchester in 1977, and it wasn't acceptable to most of the students, parents, staff, and governors to have a queer person in teaching. Things got much worse when the Thatcher government introduced Section 28, by when I had made significant strides in my career becoming the youngest ever female Principal of a College of Further Education at 34 in January 1987. However, it was unthinkable that I might mention the fact that I was gay, despite the generally positive equal opportunities legislation that was passed in the 1980's you still could not be out and proud.

Massive societal changes have been made since, and I find it astonishing and glorious that in 2015, I became the first woman and first gay person to be Chair of The Scouts for which I received a damehood. I am 'as good as you' and it is important that we break down barriers that once existed and give everyone an equal opportunity to thrive.

Dame Ann Limb DBE
former Chair of The Scouts

From 1975 to 1996, I was repeatedly dismissed from jobs and denied the chance to train as a teacher. I was 50 before I gained protection from eviction or being refused services or access to facilities. I've been called a groomer, a paedophile – even "Dr Mengele"- by people who've never met me. But I'm not a criminal. For 30 years, I was treated as a pariah for being a trans man – seen as a pervert, a "sex change," a target for lawful discrimination. My wife, and even our children endured many of the same injustices.

I studied law because I was tired of being sacked. When I was offered an academic post in 1993, it felt like an impossible dream – finally, a path to teaching. With job security, I could come out, speak out, and focus on building a good life for my family.

In the past 30 years, trans people in the UK have moved from having no legal rights to being recognised in law with dignity and equality. By 2005, it felt like society finally saw us as ordinary people. But since 2016, the rise of populism has brought renewed hostility. In the UK, reports of transphobia and related hate crime have surged by nearly 1500%.

This research contributes to protecting a tiny minority from arbitrary and unfounded discrimination, and it should encourage senior management figures to recognise their power in giving trans people as good a future as any.

Professor Stephen Whittle
Emeritus Professor of Equalities Law,
The Manchester Law School

I have been fortunate to spend my whole working life in universities, institutions that have a long history of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Even so, one of my regrets is not having had the confidence to be open about my sexuality earlier on in my career. One reason for this was the absence of role models, something

that I am now keen to redress in my capacity as Vice-Chancellor of a large university. For me, this meant working hard to prove myself and overcome the challenges that came with not seeing people like me in positions of leadership. We all have a role to play in enabling everyone to succeed, to achieve their potential, and to feel accepted, by treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

Professor Malcolm Press CBE DL
Vice-Chancellor,
Manchester Metropolitan University

Whilst I've definitely fallen into the trap of code switching early in my career, I recognise the privilege of now working for an organisation that literally exists to promote the ability of LGBTQ+ people to bring their whole self to work. The bigger challenges I continue to face are largely in relation to my ethnicity – and this is something that is reflected by other respondents in this report.

This is why I'm keen to continue knocking down barriers for other QTIPOC and non queer people of colour. I was proud to be the first gay man of colour to lead a large UK pride organisation and I'm proud to be one of the few visible QTIPOC leaders in Manchester, albeit a situation that is, in itself, questionably shameful.

Whilst we're making progress it's vital for us to leave the door open for others to follow. I welcome this report, and urge leaders to take action to ensure that the future is better than the past.

Mark Fletcher
Chief Executive
Manchester Pride

This report comes at a critical time. Thank you to Pride in Leadership for proactively gathering the voices and experiences of over 1,000 LGBTQ+ individuals.

While we've made real progress over my lifetime, there are troubling signs of regression – not only for the LGBTQ+ community, but across the broader EDI landscape. Yet the evidence is clear: to thrive in the workplace we must feel safe, valued, and able to be our authentic selves.

As a gay woman, I've faced barriers and wrestled with imposter syndrome. It has taken courage, personal resolve – and a great deal of support from my wife and close network of friends – to keep going at times.

As a leader, and former NHS CEO of 22 years, I know that some of my most impactful work happened when I was able to show up as 'me'. It opened the door for staff to engage more deeply in conversations about creating a workplace where everyone could flourish. They said it helped that I was able to share my own story.

This report and its recommendations matter – to individuals, employers, communities, and to society. Taking action will make a tangible difference to people's wellbeing and prospects, and to organisational success. Action now may also help rebuild confidence and stem the regression we are witnessing. I will be actively recommending this report to leaders across my network.

Dame Jackie Daniel
former NHS CEO /
Independent Healthcare Consultant

Growing up a working-class kid in Northwest England, I knew I was gay very early doors. The only gay person I knew of was Martina Navratilova, and I didn't even like tennis. But nevertheless, whenever she was on the telly I'd be glued to it. When Wimbledon was on, Mum, Dad and Nan would look at me sat cross legged two foot from the telly, then at each other, and back to the telly with raised eyebrows. No doubt, wondering where on earth I had picked up any interest in tennis from. Like I said, it wasn't the sport, I was just desperately looking for clues to how I might turn out in the end, for a sense of hope it would all be OK, and I'd be OK. I still don't like tennis. But, if I could go back in time and take the hand of that little person, I'd tell them that they would indeed go on to be OK. Relatable role models really do matter.

I can't tell you whether my career has been impacted by my sexuality, and I am very aware of privileges I have as a white (now middle class) cis woman. I do however think that the intersectionality of growing up working class and being gay without visible role models, cast a long shadow on my confidence to lead authentically. Meaning I didn't really believe I had anything of value to contribute publicly until I was well into my forties. I'm so pleased to see that the report recognises and shines a light for organisations and recruiters, as well as the LGBTQ community in general, that intersectionality in all its forms can further compound career barriers. Excellent reports like this matter, and even more important is that the recommendations are taken seriously and actioned.

Sharon Davies
Not for Profit Leader

A few words from some LGBTQ+ leaders

I welcome this report, and the section on international travel resonates strongly with me. I began an international banking career in 1990, travelling and working in several countries while keeping my identity hidden. That same year, I met my partner – now my husband of 35 years. Between 1992 and 1993, I worked in Tokyo, but after being publicly and cruelly outed by a British colleague, I was forced to leave both the job and Japan. In Japan at that time, no relatively junior banker like me could survive such a public humiliation. We then spent the early years of our relationship in the Middle East, living discreetly and posing as two bachelors sharing costs. My Japan experience pushed me further into the closet professionally, and even when we moved to the UK in 2004, I remained in my secret world.

Hiding my authentic self was exhausting and damaging to my wellbeing. Although my employer has always been supportive and committed to inclusion, I avoided opportunities, like networking events, for fear of awkward questions – why no partner with you, what did you do on the weekend? It wasn't until 25 years into our relationship that I finally came out to colleagues. To my relief, they were entirely supportive.

Since then, I've been more productive, more committed, and seen as an honest, authentic, even courageous leader. With few visible gay role models in my area of banking, I stepped up to become one – mentoring junior bankers and peers alike, including parents whose children have come out.

I am very grateful to Bank of America for being such a supportive employer. I've learned that creating an environment where people can be their authentic selves leads to a more motivated, stable, and productive workforce, which benefits individuals, employers, and the wider economy.

Darren Rickards
Managing Director
Bank of America

Thanks

We couldn't have completed this work without the support of some key people, and we would like to thank:

Davinia Hamilton-Maddox from Phoenix Digital, who built the online survey, tested our questions, and ensured that everything worked properly.

Kat Eddie and Becky McArdle at Rumpus PR for the voluntary work they undertook to help spread the word about the survey and get us to 1,000 responses.

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Who we are

Pride in Leadership is a not for profit CIC that works to elevate, connect and support LGBTQ+ leaders and aspiring leaders across all sectors, and make them more visible.

With over 3,000 members, it hosts regular events both online and in cities across the UK, bringing in high profile LGBTQ+ speakers, and creating spaces for connection, learning, and inspiration. It also offers a free mentoring platform to help individuals grow, share experiences, and support one another on their leadership journeys.

Claire Ebrey is the Director of On The Level, a dynamic micro-consultancy dedicated to transforming leadership and advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Through On The Level, Claire empowers leaders to drive meaningful change at individual, organisational, and regional levels. She works with major organisations to tackle key strategic challenges, such as improving diversity in leadership and building inclusive, high-performing workplaces. Her work includes strategic consultancy, conducting research into the barriers facing minority groups (including LGBTQ+ people, women, and ethnic minorities), as well as designing tailored EDI training programmes that support diverse talent and create environments where opportunity and prosperity are accessible to all.

Beyond her work with On The Level, Claire co-founded and runs Pride in Leadership, is a trustee of Forever Manchester, and an active volunteer with Stockport Race Equality Partnership (SREP). She was awarded Diversity and Inclusion Leader by The Business Desk in 2025, and Northern Gamechanger in 2024.

Matt Haworth is a dynamic force at the intersection of technology and social impact.

As the Co-Founder of Reason Digital, an award-winning social enterprise, Matt is committed to empowering mission-led organisations – such as charities, social purpose brands, and philanthropists – by leveraging digital tools to broaden their reach and bolster their support. He also co-founded Impact, a software company that helps businesses measure and manage their social and environmental value.

In addition to co-founding and running Pride in Leadership, in his spare time, Matt serves as a Trustee of akt, the UK LGBTQ+ youth homelessness charity, and is a member of the General Assembly of The University of Manchester.

Executive summary

LGBTQ+ professionals bring immense talent, resilience, and leadership to workplaces across the UK. However, our survey findings reveal that most LGBTQ+ workers have experienced barriers to career progression, from a lack of representation in leadership, to biases in hiring and promotion.

At the same time, many LGBTQ+ professionals draw strength from their identities, developing key skills such as empathy, adaptability, and leadership that enhance their careers, mentoring others and engaging in voluntary leadership roles.

This report presents both the challenges and successes experienced by LGBTQ+ professionals and provides actionable recommendations for businesses, policymakers, the LGBTQ+ community, recruitment companies and researchers.

1.
Career-enhancing skills

For many LGBTQ+ professionals, their identity and experiences have helped develop key career-enhancing skills, including empathy, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, resilience and emotional intelligence.

2.
Barriers to career development persist

Over 70% of respondents reported a lack of LGBTQ+ role models in leadership, half experienced uncomfortable or hostile work environments, and 42% felt unsupported by HR when facing LGBTQ+ issues. Barriers were greater for trans people.

3.
Confidence & identity impact career choices

Many LGBTQ+ professionals experience imposter syndrome, hesitation in pursuing leadership roles, and fear of discrimination influencing career decisions. Many find an organisation or level of seniority at which they feel safe, rather than fulfilled, and do not strive for more senior roles in their current organisation, or elsewhere.

93%

4.

Recruitment & progression lack transparency

93% of people interviewed believed bias may have played a role in hiring practices. Of those, 77% were unsure, whilst the remaining 16% of respondents believed they had missed out on job opportunities directly due to being LGBTQ+. This suggests a lack of transparency and confidence in recruitment practices, where discrimination may exist but is difficult to evidence.

5.

Mentoring is a critical missing piece

Many LGBTQ+ professionals felt that mentoring with other LGBTQ+ leaders would significantly improve confidence, career clarity, and leadership readiness. However, most corporate mentoring schemes fail to consider LGBTQ+ representation.

82%

6.

Organisational support varies widely - structural change is needed, not just acts of visibility

While 82% of respondents said their organisation marks Pride Month, fewer felt their employer was taking substantive action, such as funding LGBTQ+ leadership training (37%) or supporting career progression through mentoring (31%). This can lead to a feeling that allyship is merely performative.
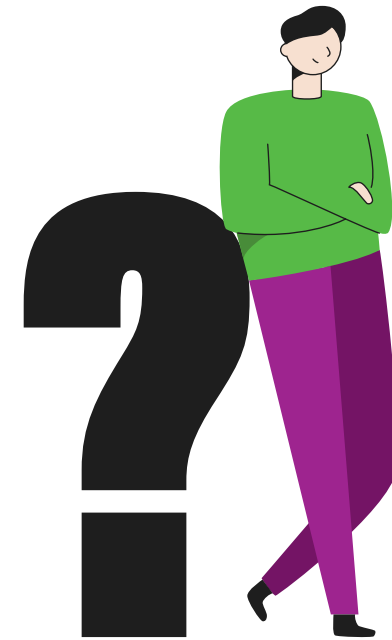
7.
Intersectionality compounds career barriers

LGBTQ+ professionals who are disabled, from ethnic minority communities, working class backgrounds, and women and non-binary identities often face additional barriers in leadership progression, workplace discrimination, and pay equity.

8.
LGBTQ+ professionals contribute significantly outside of their roles

A striking 40% of respondents serve as trustees, non-executive directors, or volunteers, highlighting a high level of civic engagement beyond their core jobs.

9.
Pay gap and reporting transparency remain unaddressed

Unlike gender pay gap reporting, there is no legal requirement for LGBTQ+ pay gap reporting, leaving many unaware of whether pay disparities exist. The lack of intersectional pay data also means that LGBTQ+ professionals who face multiple layers of discrimination remain invisible in workforce analytics.

This report is not just about identifying problems – it is about driving real change. We propose practical steps for five key groups:

For organisations:

Organisations across all sectors shape workplace culture, set industry standards, and influence societal attitudes. By embedding genuine inclusion into leadership, policies, and career development opportunities, organisations can remove barriers for LGBTQ+ professionals and ensure that talent determines success. We make recommendations around:

- Moving beyond performative allyship and embedding LGBTQ+ inclusion in leadership, policies, and training.

- Supporting LGBTQ+ staff by creating and protecting a culture that respects LGBTQ+ people, backed up by policies that enable HR teams to act when breaches occur.

- Supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues when the opportunity for travel arises, not compelling them to travel to places where they may not feel safe.

- Increasing LGBTQ+ representation in leadership through mentoring and sponsorship programmes. Encouraging LGBTQ+ people in leadership to be positive role models.

- Reporting on LGBTQ+ pay gaps and leadership progression to improve transparency.

- Supporting LGBTQ+ staff networks within organisations and giving them the necessary resources and time to make a difference. Working with them to drive change.

For policymakers:

Enabling everyone to achieve their potential is good for the national and regional economy. Policymakers set the framework that determines fairness, equality, and economic opportunity. We make recommendations around:

- Dialling down the 'culture war' discourse, and having a cross-party objective 'to enable everyone to thrive'.

- Extending gender pay gap reporting, firstly to include non-binary and trans categories, and secondly to also show the pay gap between LGB+ and straight colleagues.

- Strengthening employment protections for trans and, especially, non-binary and gender-fluid people (regardless of if they have, or intend to go through, gender reassignment) by strengthening legal protections against transphobia and discrimination, ensuring that HR policies and workplace laws are truly inclusive.

- Preventing a return of damaging Section 28-style restrictions and protecting LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools, careers guidance, and workplaces.

- Improving access to healthcare for LGBTQ+ young people, while implementing a full trans-inclusive ban on conversation therapy.

- Investing in research on LGBTQ+ career progression and workplace experiences.

For the LGBTQ+ community:

The LGBTQ+ community is a powerful force for progress, resilience, and leadership. By supporting one another, advocating for workplace equality, and challenging exclusionary practices, LGBTQ+ professionals can help shape industries, mentor future leaders, and drive inclusion from within. While businesses and policymakers must play their part, the community itself has the power to influence change, create networks of support, and redefine careers for the next generation. We make recommendations around:

- Having the courage to apply for promotion or a new role.

- Joining or creating an LGBTQ+ staff network and using it to drive real change.

- Finding and supporting LGBTQ+ role models; if you can't see one, be one.

- Engaging with LGBTQ+ professional groups, mentorship schemes, and leadership programmes.

- Buying from LGBTQ+ led businesses and organisations.

- Seeking coaching, training, and other professional development opportunities.

- Supporting each other. Advocating and supporting other LGBTQ+ with their careers.

For recruitment companies:

Recruitment companies play a critical role in shaping career opportunities for LGBTQ+ professionals. As gatekeepers to job roles (including more senior roles), they have a responsibility to ensure that bias and discrimination do not limit LGBTQ+ career progression. We make recommendations around:

- Challenging client bias, persuading them of the business case for diversity and inclusion, and pushing back on discriminatory practices.

- Understand and promote the concept of 'culture add' versus 'culture fit' to enhance diversity in hiring

- Working closely with clients to ensure they offer a genuinely inclusive and supportive environment.

- Creating pathways for LGBTQ+ leadership in the long term.

- Reviewing all job-related communication to ensure inclusivity and LGBTQ+ representation.

- Ensuring inclusive candidate shortlists.

- Ensuring that recruiters' own procedures mitigate bias, and tracking the success of LGBTQ+ candidates at different stages of the recruitment process.

- Building connections with LGBTQ+ professional groups, mentoring schemes, and leadership initiatives to proactively identify and support LGBTQ+ talent.

For future research:

Researchers shape how LGBTQ+ workplace experiences are understood, evidenced, and addressed. However, meaningful research on LGBTQ+ career progression remains scarce, with most studies focusing on general workplace discrimination, bullying, or young peoples' experiences. We make recommendations around:

- Prioritising inclusion of manual and retail workers, and those less likely to work with or have a computer but who are potentially more likely to be exposed to tougher working environments.

- Recognising the complexity and sometimes non-linear nature of coming out.

- Strengthening outreach to ethnic minority LGBTQ+ communities.

- Finding new ways to engage closeted or questioning individuals.

- Exploring stagnation in the workplace, often caused by feeling 'safe', not just career progression.

- Examining the role of LGBTQ+ employee networks.

- Exploring the impact of work-related travel on LGBTQ+ professionals.

- Benchmarking LGBTQ+ career progression against general workforce trends to strengthen the case for targeted intervention.

- Tracking how LGBTQ+ career experiences evolve over time.

1. Introduction

LGBTQ+ professionals face a range of challenges and barriers in their careers, from lack of representation in leadership to workplace bias and discrimination. Yet, their voices and experiences are not always fully heard or understood. This report aims to change that.

It is based on the findings of a wide-reaching survey conducted by Pride in Leadership, designed to explore the realities of LGBTQ+ career progression and the steps needed to create more inclusive workplaces.

We heard from 1,017 individuals across the UK about their career experiences – from rural to urban, from entry level to the board room, and across a range of genders, identities and lived experiences. Our methodology can be found in <u>Appendix 1</u>. Our survey cohort skews towards those with experience of more senior roles[8]. This gives an interesting perspective – we are hearing more from those who have faced and, in some cases, overcome barriers to LGBTQ+ progression in the workplace.

But this is not just another report about barriers. While we do not shy away from the inequalities that exist, the rich data we collected also demonstrates the strength, resilience, and value that LGBTQ+ individuals bring to their careers and organisations. Many respondents told us how their LGBTQ+ identity has shaped them positively – enhancing their leadership skills, deepening their emotional intelligence, and motivating them to succeed. Many are using their experiences to advocate for positive change, mentor others, and push for greater inclusion in their industries. These are stories of talent, determination, and leadership, and they deserve to be celebrated.

Throughout this report, we have deliberately chosen to include a wealth of direct quotes from survey respondents. We believe that real stories and personal insights are vital in shaping an authentic and impactful narrative – one that reflects the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals. Too often, LGBTQ+ voices are overlooked or sanitised in workplace discussions. By amplifying these perspectives, we hope to create a space where people can be heard on their own terms, helping businesses, policymakers, and the LGBTQ+ community itself to better understand both the challenges and the opportunities that exist.

The report is structured to build a comprehensive picture of LGBTQ+ career experiences. We begin by examining the barriers that respondents have faced, including discrimination, lack of role models, and the impact of intersectionality. We then move into an analysis of organisational culture, looking at both symbolic and structural commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion. Finally, we explore the positive impact on career development that LGBTQ+ experiences can bring to leadership and professional spaces.

At the end of the report, we have included a substantial set of recommendations that are written to drive action. They are not just a statement of what is needed, but how practical steps can be taken to remove barriers, support career progression, and harness the full potential of LGBTQ+ professionals. We believe that businesses, policymakers, the LGBTQ+ community, recruiters and researchers all have roles to play in creating meaningful change.
The recommendations provide clear, practical steps that can be taken to remove barriers, support career progression, and harness the full potential of LGBTQ+ professionals.

Our hope is that this report, launched at a time when EDI programmes are being scaled back, diversity roles eliminated, and LGBTQ+ inclusion discounted as 'woke', will spark conversation, challenge assumptions, and most importantly, lead to tangible improvements in how LGBTQ+ professionals are supported in their careers. The insights shared here are not just statistics – they are the life stories of over a thousand people. Experiences that have illuminated an urgent need for change, and also the need for recognition of the value, the talent, and the leadership that LGBTQ+ professionals bring to the table.

"It took a long time to adjust my career trajectory. Unlike most cis-hetero people, queer people (usually) have to rediscover themselves after being a version of themselves to protect them from the hate and anger of the world. This means we're usually discovering ourselves, working on our careers, and playing all kinds of catch-up, which can result in high levels of burnout or high-functionality on the verge of burnout. It's a struggle sometimes, but other times it's the best thing in the world."

[8] Almost half (48%) of our respondents were above mid-level in their organisation, either in senior positions, Executive level or owned their own businesses). Over 88% of respondents were aged between 25 and 64.

What people said:
Key Findings

Section A
2. Barriers to career development

Many factors contribute to a person's career development, from their educational achievements to their self-confidence; from having positive role models to their willingness to relocate or travel for work.

Our findings show that, for many, the lived experiences that resulted from being LGBTQ+, shapes and influences all of these factors.

We asked respondents which specific barriers they had encountered in their careers due to being LGBTQ+.

The results are troubling: 85% have experienced one or more significant barriers in their career due to being LGBTQ+. These challenges are wide-ranging, from a clear absence of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership to damaging experiences of physical or verbal attacks in the workplace.

Most workplace challenges occur in clusters – if someone experiences one major barrier, such as a hostile environment, they are more likely to report others such as a lack of HR support. Strikingly, only 15% of respondents said they had not encountered any of these challenges – a stark reminder that for the vast majority, being LGBTQ+ in the workplace comes with additional hurdles to overcome.

85% *have experienced at least one significant barrier in their career due to being LGBTQ+*

Barrier	Percentage
Lack of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership positions	70%
Uncomfortable or hostile work environment	50%
Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues	42%
Discrimination or bias in promotion or assignment opportunities	27%
Concerns when travelling for work *eg. to countries with poor LGBTQ+ rights*	21%
Verbally or physically attacked at work	15%
None of the above	15%
Other	6%

Among the most commonly reported barriers, 70% of respondents cited a lack of LGBTQ+ role models in leadership, highlighting a persistent visibility gap at the top. Half of respondents reported working in uncomfortable or hostile environments, while 42% said they had received inadequate support from HR or management on LGBTQ+ issues.

The impact on career progression was also clear, with 27% experiencing discrimination or bias in promotions or assignments. Workplace safety and security remain pressing concerns, with 21% expressing anxiety about work-related travel, particularly to countries with poor LGBTQ+ rights, and 15% reporting experiences of verbal or physical attacks at work.

Throughout this section of the report we will explore these barriers in greater depth, examining their impact on career development and what organisations can do to create meaningful change.

70%

of respondents cited a lack of LGBTQ+ role models in leadership

We found that:

a) Trans and non-binary individuals face significantly greater career barriers than their cisgender LGBTQ+ peers.
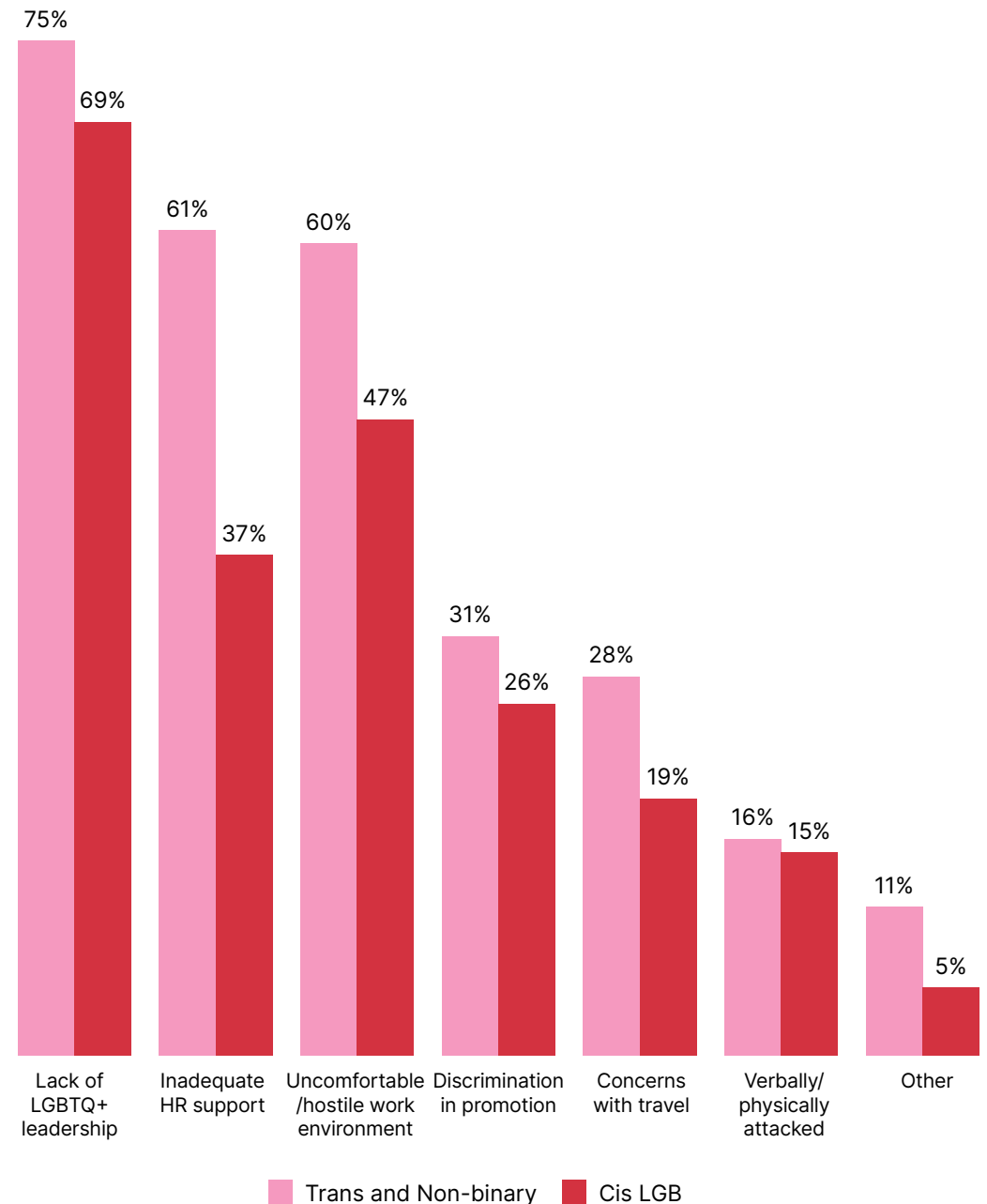
Only 1 in 20 trans respondents (5%) reported experiencing no workplace barriers, compared to 1 in 6 (17%) cis LGB respondents. Across all categories, they reported higher rates of discrimination, exclusion, and lack of support, pointing to systemic challenges that disproportionately impact gender-diverse professionals. If cis LGB have additional hurdles at work, trans people are being given a high jump.

The starkest discrepancy is in 'Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues', with 61% of trans and non-binary respondents citing this as a barrier. This is especially important as trans, non-binary and gender non-confirming people are more likely to report experiencing violence at work. This suggests that many workplaces still lack the policies, training, and cultural awareness – or willingness – needed to effectively support gender-diverse employees. Issues such as misgendering, lack of inclusive facilities, and insufficient protections against discrimination may contribute to these findings.

"I'm in leadership because I'm at a trans led and run org. Otherwise I'd still be working at officer level with few prospects of promotion."

"I've been attacked at work before. That's why no one wants to hire trans people."

95%

of trans respondents reported experiencing workplace barriers

Category	Trans and Non-binary	Cis LGB
Lack of LGBTQ+ leadership	75%	69%
Inadequate HR support	61%	37%
Uncomfortable /hostile work environment	60%	47%
Discrimination in promotion	31%	26%
Concerns with travel	28%	19%
Verbally/ physically attacked	16%	15%
Other	11%	5%

b) The barriers faced by LGBTQ+ professionals evolve as they progress in their careers, with different challenges emerging at different levels of seniority.

'Lack of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership positions' is a prominent issue across all levels of seniority, as shown with the circle below.

Several barriers become a more widely reported as seniority increases: 'Uncomfortable or hostile work environment', 'Discrimination or bias in promotion or assignment opportunities', 'Verbally or physically attacked at work'. This suggests that the higher LGBTQ+ individuals climb in their careers, the more visible they become – and with that visibility often comes greater exposure to bias, scrutiny, or even hostility.

Lack of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership positions: Entry-level 71%, Mid-level 72%, Senior level 71%, Executive level 64%, Owner/Entrepreneur 63%

Uncomfortable or hostile work environment: Entry-level 50%, Mid-level 46%, Senior level 46%, Executive level 57%, Owner/Entrepreneur 61%

Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues: Entry-level 48%, Mid-level 43%, Senior level 41%, Executive level 31%, Owner/Entrepreneur 41%

Discrimination or bias in promotion or assignment opportunities: Entry-level 20%, Mid-level 25%, Senior level 27%, Executive level 29%, Owner/Entrepreneur 39%

Concerns when travelling for work (eg to countries with poor LGBTQ+ rights): Entry-level 17%, Mid-level 19%, Senior level 23%, Executive level 19%, Owner/Entrepreneur 30%

Verbally or physically attacked at work: Entry-level 13%, Mid-level 13%, Senior level 13%, Executive level 19%, Owner/Entrepreneur 25%

None of the above: Entry-level 13%, Mid-level 14%, Senior level 17%, Executive level 17%, Owner/Entrepreneur 13%

Other: Entry-level 6%, Mid-level 6%, Senior level 7%, Executive level 4%, Owner/Entrepreneur 10%

Legend: ■ Entry-level ■ Mid-level ■ Senior level ■ Executive level ■ Owner/Entrepreneur

On average, more people in senior roles are around and over 40+ years of age[9]. When we looked at the data in relation to age specifically, we found that reports of having experienced an uncomfortable or hostile work environment, discrimination in promotions or assignments, and even verbal or physical attacks increase with age.

This may be because older people have experienced more years in work, across different roles and companies, and because outward expressions of homophobia were even more common in the past, leading to older individuals being more likely to have experienced them.
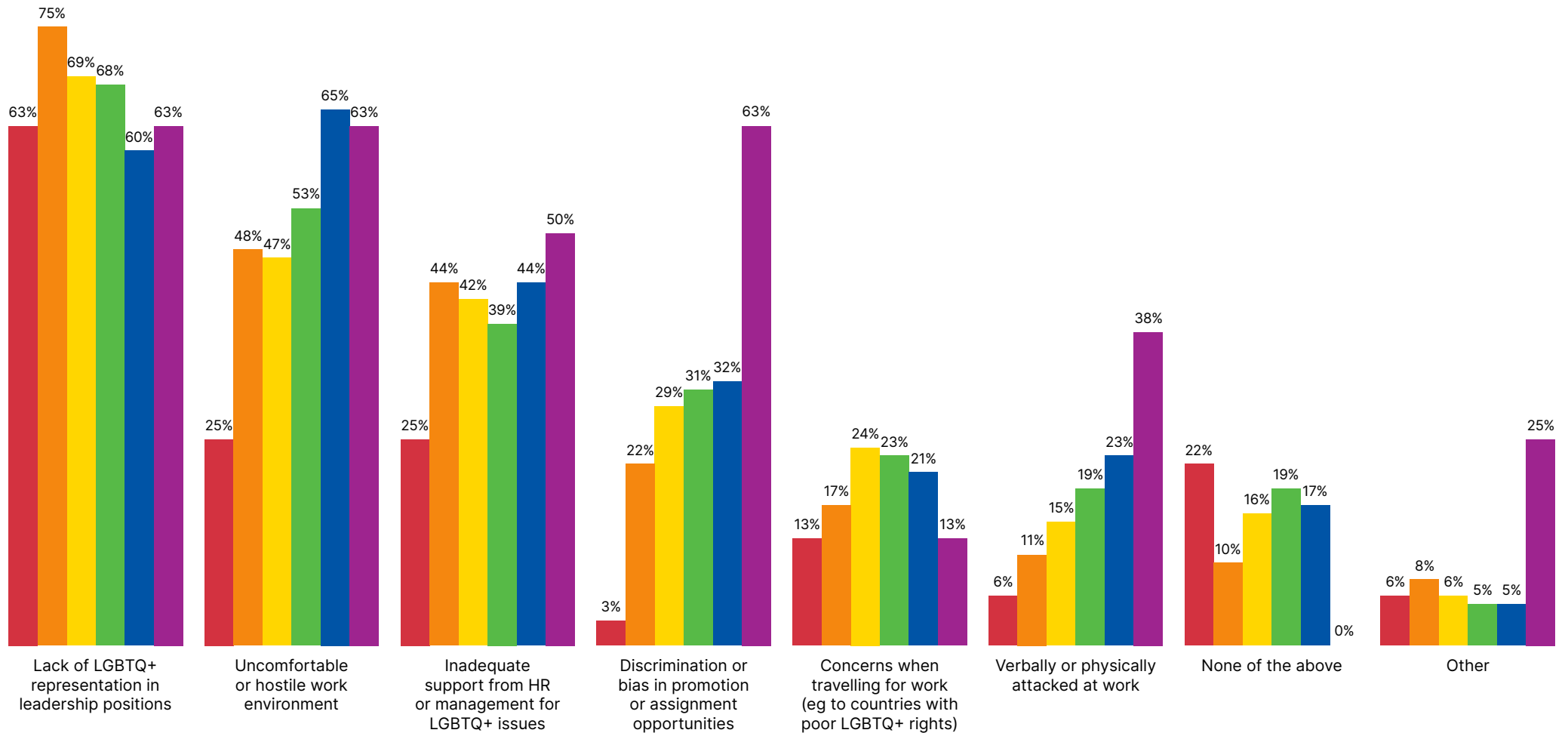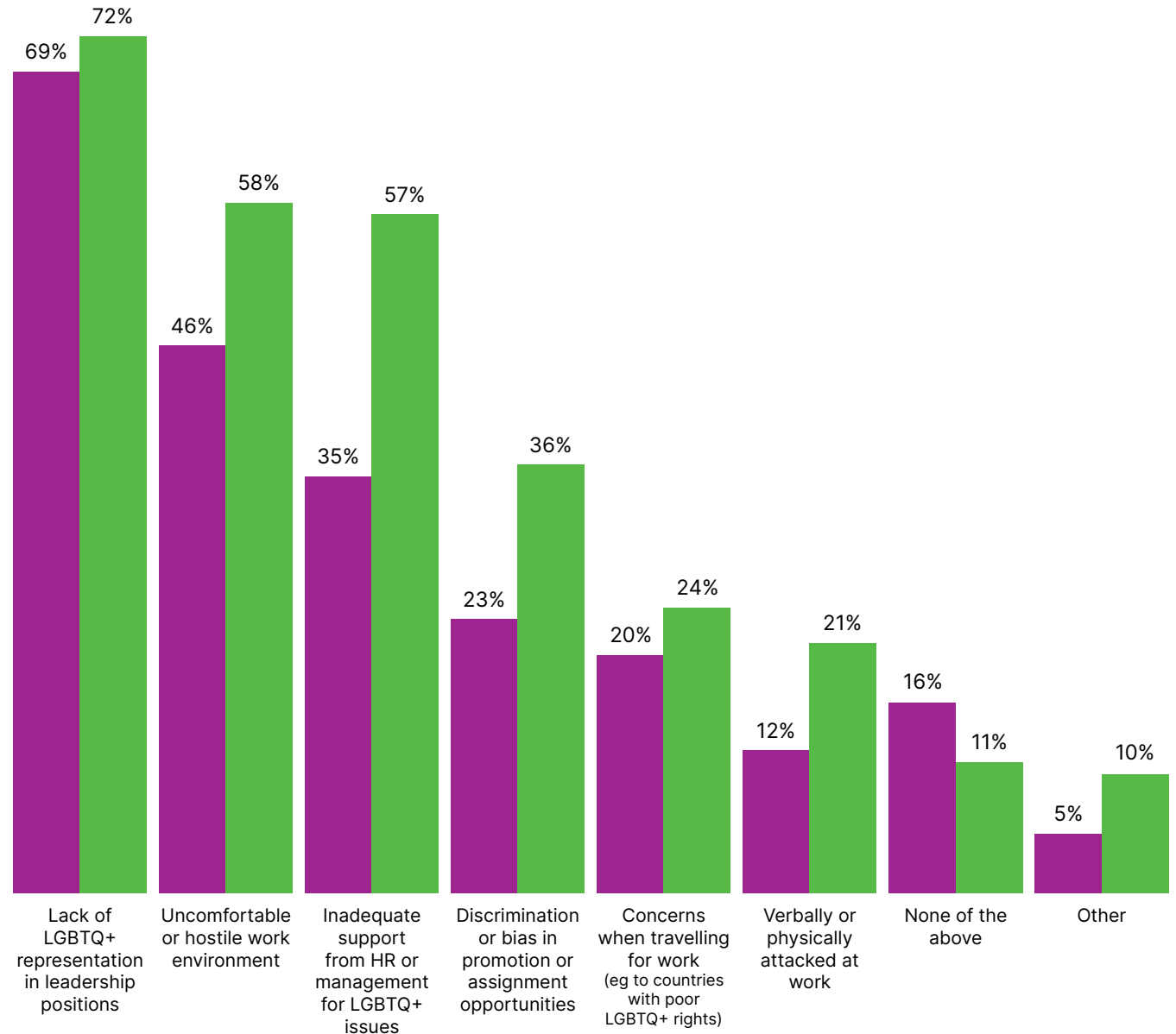

9 Leadership Statistics 2024: Demographics and Development | TeamStage

■ 18-24   ■ 25-34   ■ 35-44   ■ 45-54   ■ 55-64   ■ 65 or above

c) Disabled LGBTQ+ people experience significantly more barriers than their non-disabled peers, with rates higher across all barrier categories. There is a clear gap in support for these individuals.

This data, drawn from the 30% of disabled respondents to our survey, highlights the compounding impact of disability on LGBTQ+ workplace experiences, with disabled LGBTQ+ professionals reporting higher rates of barriers across all categories compared to their non-disabled peers. The most striking gap is in 'Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues'.

Disabled LGBTQ+ employees may face multiple layers of exclusion, navigating not only biases related to their gender identity or sexual orientation but also accessibility barriers, ableism, and a lack of workplace adjustments. If HR and management structures are not equipped to address these intersecting issues, individuals may feel even more isolated, unsupported, and vulnerable to discrimination having a clear impact on their ability to meet their potential at work.


By respondents who consider themselves to have a disability: ■ No ■ Yes

Barrier category	No	Yes
Lack of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership positions	69%	72%
Uncomfortable or hostile work environment	46%	58%
Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues	35%	57%
Discrimination or bias in promotion or assignment opportunities	23%	36%
Concerns when travelling for work (eg to countries with poor LGBTQ+ rights)	20%	24%
Verbally or physically attacked at work	12%	21%
None of the above	16%	11%
Other	5%	10%

Coming out, and the ability to bring your whole, authentic self to work, directly intersects with numerous career barriers. The dynamics of disclosure are significantly influenced by whether an individual "passes" as straight and/or cisgender

Those who pass often have the privilege of choosing when, where, and to whom they come out – both generally and in specific workplace interactions. In contrast, those whose gender expression or other visible characteristics make them more readily identifiable as LGBTQ+ may not have this choice and might experience constant visibility with its accompanying challenges. This distinction profoundly shapes workplace experiences, including exposure to discrimination, access to mentorship, and advancement opportunities.

We asked about the age that people came out to their friends, family, colleagues and clients, and whether they perceived this to have had an impact on their career trajectory. More than half (59%) of respondents had come out to friends by the age of 20, with 78% doing so by 24. When it came to family, 63% had come out by 24.

What age did you come out as LGBTQ+ to...
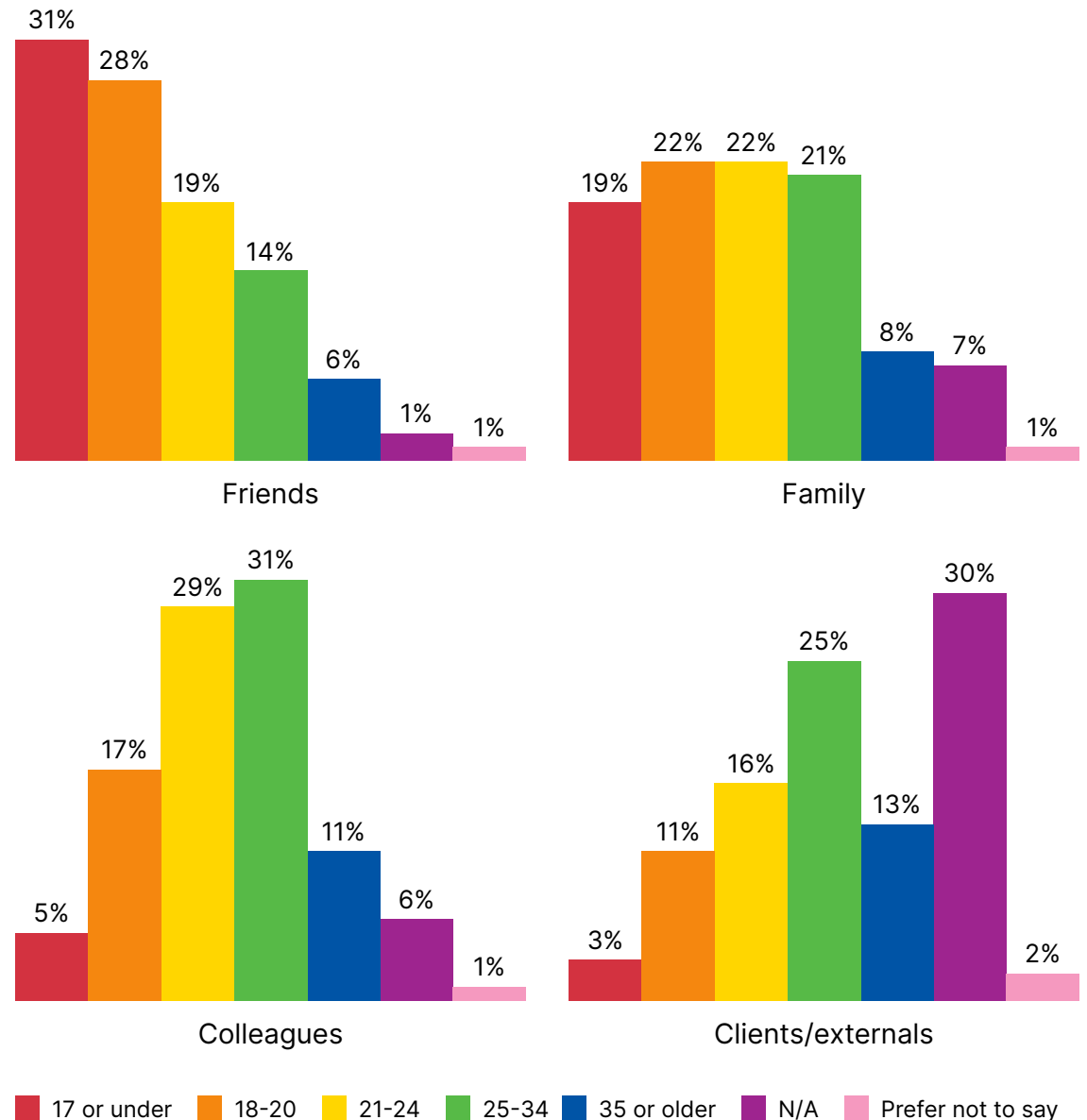
Friends

Family

Colleagues

Clients/externals

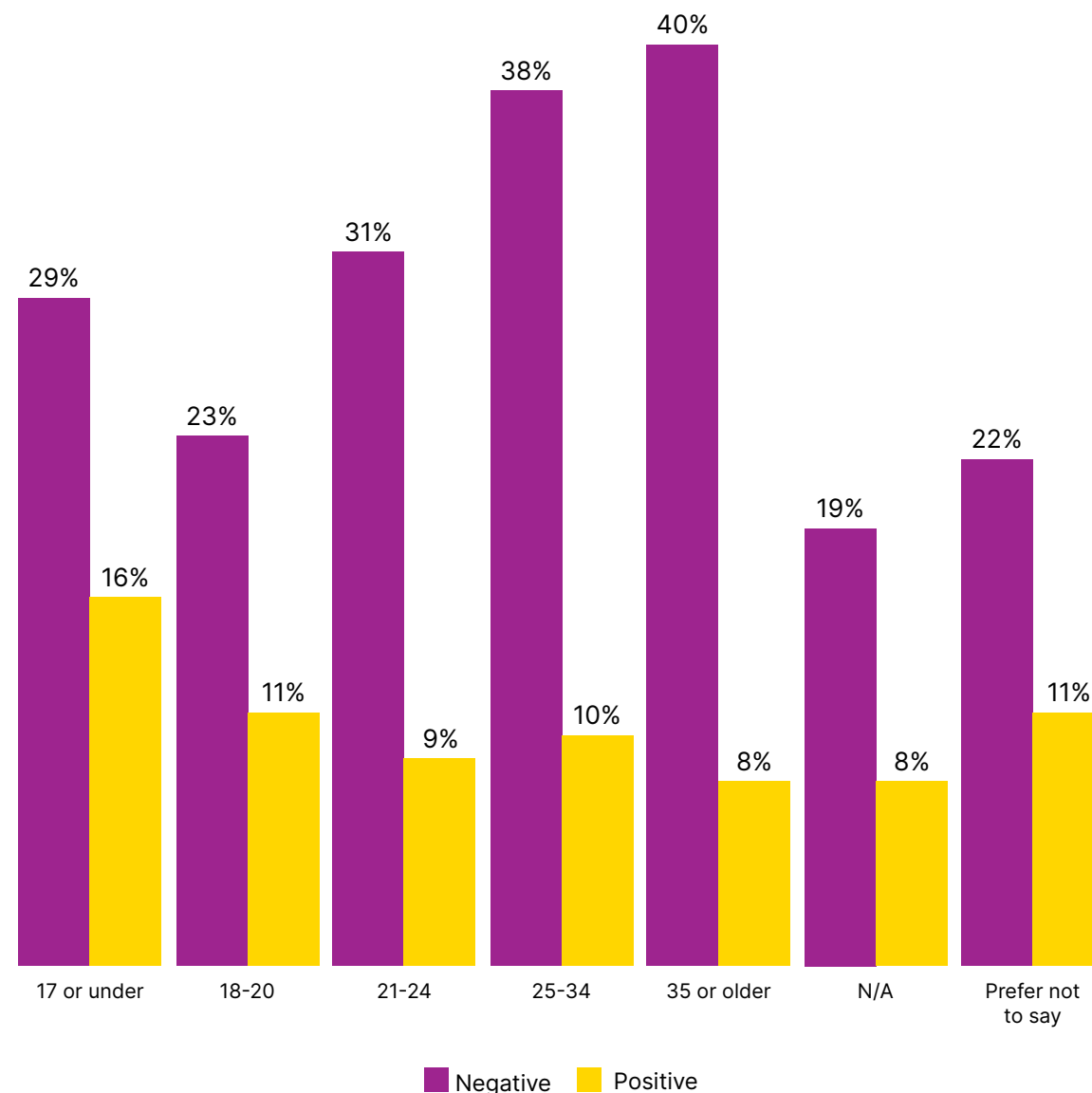17 or under　18-20　21-24　25-34　35 or older　N/A　Prefer not to say

We asked about the age that people came out to their friends, family, colleagues and clients, and whether they perceived this to have had an impact on their career trajectory. More than half (59%) of respondents had come out to friends by the age of 20, with 78% doing so by 24. When it came to family, 63% had come out by 24.

The 'coming out years' are important as they are often marked by stress, self-discovery, and societal pressure. As we discuss in more detail later in this report, they can have a profound effect on educational achievement, ambition, and early career progression. The constant effort and anxiety required to mask or conceal their LGBTQ+ identity/ identities can be exhausting for LGBTQ+ individuals and impacts their ability to socialise at work, establish personal and professional relationships, build social currency and establish and pursue prospective career opportunities.

"I think we shouldn't underestimate the impact of hiding/ masking can have on an individual's ability to thrive – whether that be your sexual orientation, gender dysphoria, etc. And when you come out and are able to be your true self at work you almost feel grief for the time lost and the opportunities lost through no fault of your own."

Workplace environments add another layer of complexity. Just over half (52%) of respondents were out to colleagues by 24, and by their mid-thirties, this figure rose to 82%. This may reflect growing trust in employers and colleagues, or it may suggest that, for some, being visibly LGBTQ+ means coming out isn't always a choice. For others, their ability to hide and mask creates a constant vigilance: do they sense enough signs of safety to be out at work, in the pub with a client, to a new colleague, or on a work trip.

At what age did you come out as LGBTQ+ at work to colleagues?
Do you believe the timing of coming out has impacted your career trajectory?

	Negative	Positive
17 or under	29%	16%
18-20	23%	11%
21-24	31%	9%
25-34	38%	10%
35 or older	40%	8%
N/A	19%	8%
Prefer not to say	22%	11%

■ Negative   ■ Positive

Those who came out to colleagues in the older age brackets reported higher levels of believing the timing of coming out had a negative impact on their career trajectory.

While some respondents report that delaying coming out helped them to establish their career without discrimination, our findings appear to be in line with other research[10], which indicates that LGBTQ+ professionals who delay coming out in the workplace can experience negative impacts on their career trajectories. This delay can lead to prolonged periods of self-censorship, resulting in decreased confidence and authenticity at work. Conversely, embracing authenticity has been linked to positive outcomes, such as enhancing productivity, engagement, and job satisfaction[11].

40%

of respondents who came out after the age of 35 felt the timing impacted their career trajectory

"I tried to avoid it until I had a career trajectory established - that's how, I believe, I was able to progress without any bias"

"By coming out professionally at a later stage, it allowed me to progress at a lower stage of my career without any potential discrimination. "

"Not being at peace with my sexual orientation affected me on my career early years, just not having the mental capacity to invest in my career at the time."

"If I had been out at a younger age, I may be a more confident person now."

"The length of time it took me to work through this could have been spent on my career."

"I feel that my concerns about being LGBTQ+ held me back in the early days of my career."

"The most important thing for me has been to feel in my body how much more confident, empowered and happy I am since I came out as LGBTQ+ at work. The difference in me as a person before and after that is something I really cherish. I can feel that, since I came out and embraced all of me, I am a much more confident person at work, and this is reflected in the way I feel that I've flourished."

"Coming out allowed me to be more 'myself' at work and saved me the energy that I previously spent on staying closeted; instead, that energy could be spent on my career development."

[10] inclusiveleadership.com and researchgate.net [11] knowledge.insead.edu

Perhaps most strikingly, 30% of respondents never come out to customers or clients.

This highlights a persistent anxiety around potential bias or discrimination, which may not only impact them, but also impact the departments or businesses they work for, leading to negative career consequences or a slowing of progression.

"I have lost followers/potential customers on my business account when I post my LGBTQ+ designs. It's something I'm working on accepting."

Many respondents reported experiencing implicit or explicit pressure to modify their gender expression and presentation to conform to traditional, archetypal and workplace expectations – specifically to be more masculine for men, and more feminine for women, with no space for gender nonconformity. Such workplace policing of gender expression creates significant barriers to authentic self-presentation and career advancement, forcing individuals to make difficult choices between professional opportunities and personal authenticity.

"I was refused a promotion because I was too nice/had too much of a feminine voice and they believed I couldn't be authoritative because of it."

"I have been told that I needed to "dress more like a woman" if I wanted to succeed/be taken seriously."

"I chose to work in a field where clothing and norms are less gendered (i.e. I could never wear a pencil skirt and heels!)."

It's important to recognise that coming out is not a linear process but a complex, ongoing journey. Some individuals may retreat into the closet in specific contexts or life stages – for example, many older LGBTQ+ seniors re-conceal their identities again when living in retirement homes, although they may have been out at work and

in all other areas of life before. Those with intersecting identities often navigate multiple coming-out experiences, such as someone who comes out first as a lesbian and later as transgender. While our survey presents this journey in a somewhat simplified manner, we acknowledge that this approach may not fully capture the nuanced, multidimensional reality of respondents' lived experiences.

"You aren't considering people here who have had to come out twice - first as Lesbian and then later in life as Trans. The first time I came out it didn't appear to matter except to a few people who were a little uneducated, but the second time I came out in my 30s I lost a lot of work because of it."

"On the above - I've come out twice. Firstly as lesbian/queer, in my early career. And secondly as non-binary, in my 30s. The latter was significantly harder."

30%
**of respondents never come out to customers or clients**

Over 1 in 3 (34%) of respondents said that being LGBTQ+ had negatively affected their educational achievement, with a further 17% saying that it might have had an effect.

This can have long-term consequences on career progression, limiting access to higher education, professional qualifications, and career opportunities.

Without strong academic results or the confidence to pursue further education, some LGBTQ+ individuals find themselves restricted to lower-skilled jobs or industries with fewer barriers to entry, rather than those aligned with their ambitions or abilities.

Starting in lower-paid or less secure roles can lead to delayed or stagnant progression, while early experiences of exclusion or discrimination in education can cause self-doubt and imposter syndrome, making individuals less likely to apply for promotions or leadership positions. Additionally, disengagement from education can mean missing out on valuable professional networks and mentorship, making it harder to break into competitive fields.

Do you feel that being LGBTQ+ affected your educational achievement?

Response	Percentage
Yes, positively	7%
Maybe	17%
Yes, negatively	34%
No affect	42%
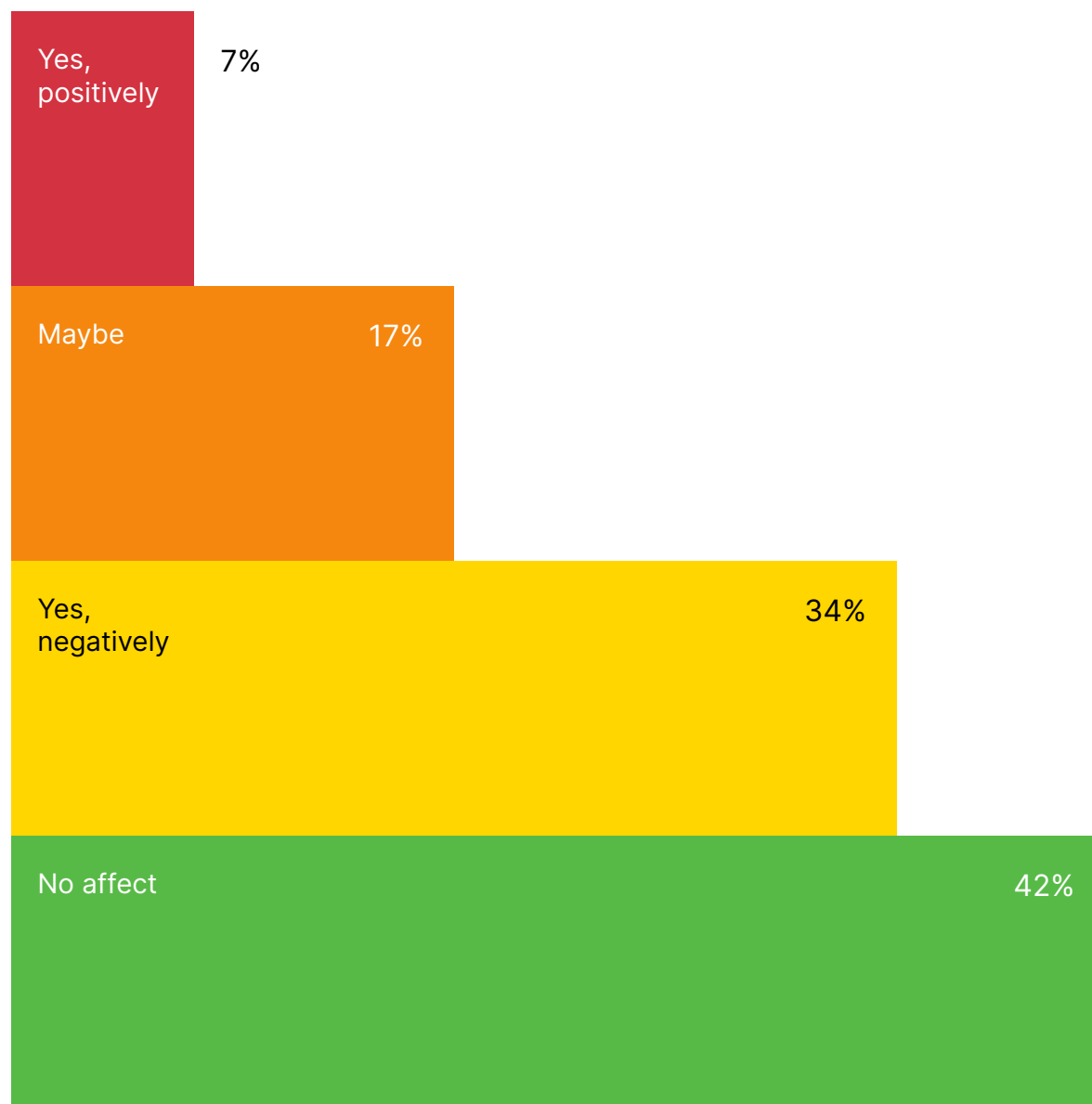
The experience of 'coming out', both to oneself and to others, can have an enormous impact on an individual during education. It can strain family relationships and friendships, raise levels of stress and contribute to poor mental health, all at a time when it is very important to be able to work hard and attain the best possible grades.

"My LGBTQ+ identity negatively impacted my educational achievements in several ways. I faced discrimination and bias from peers and educators, creating a hostile learning environment. This led to isolation and exclusion, limiting access to support and mentorship. The mental and emotional strain from constant stress and anxiety affected my concentration and academic performance. Additionally, bias hindered opportunities for scholarships and internships. Balancing cultural and familial expectations with my identity added further pressure. These challenges collectively hindered my educational progress and delayed my academic and career goals."

"Constantly hiding my real self, terrified of being found out, poor mental health, failed all my A levels."

"Gender dysphoria and fear of homophobia caused strain."

"It was hard, very hard, especially being brought up in a Catholic environment. As a consequence of this, I made attempts on my own life."

"I believe that dealing with pressure of coming out to family and friends at 17 (during the late 90s) negatively impacted my educational outcome. The extra pressure left me with less energy to focus on my studies."

"Being gay at school in the '90s was not fun... Just coping and worrying about it took my attention away from my studies, and that impacted the grades I got."

"The impact of having to reconcile my identity, and come to terms with that, whilst also studying and growing up was more difficult. There's only so much wavelength a person can have, particularly when younger."

"I think being LGBTQ+ affected my mental health and ability to "be myself", which in turn affected educational achievement."

Trans people's stories came out strongly, with some having the additional stresses of 'managing their bodies' as well as managing their relationships.

"I had no support and was desperately unhappy in who I was. I also started transitioning medically while at university while my parents were hostile towards me. It's never been that being LGBTQ+ affected my achievements, but the situations I was in because I was LGBTQ+ absolutely did. No family support, having to research my own healthcare while studying, being refused care by my GP while living at home."

This increased stress and poorer mental health can also have a lasting impact into the future.

"I started coming out at 15/16, but that meant I had a whole lot more to deal with while I was studying for my A-levels. I came third in my year at secondary school but did less well at Sixth Form because of all the emotional baggage and uncertainty. In hindsight, I realise it left me with a lot of insecurities to overcome and no doubt contributed to my desire not to go to university."

Bullying came through as a strong theme that has an impact on respondent's self-worth, engagement, and ability to concentrate. This has a knock-on effect on how far someone goes in education, and how well they do.

In addition, some respondents reported that their early experiences of discrimination shaped their confidence and career progression later in life. Those who experienced severe bullying in school were more likely to mention workplace barriers such as lower confidence, increased anxiety, or reluctance to come out at work. While not all school bullying leads to career barriers, responses suggest a psychological link for some individuals. This is discussed more in section 2.4.

"Having raised the issue of bullying for being gay - I was told I had brought it on myself for drawing attention and that I should focus more on blending in like the other boys and not trying to make everything about me. As a result, I drew into myself – directly impacting on schooling, social development etc as the bullying didn't stop, but me talking about it did."

"I left school before taking most of my GCSEs because of abuse."

"Anxiety and bullying affected my overall mental health which had an impact on my grades in school and university."

"At school, I was violently bullied on a daily basis for 7 years – that is 7 years of being violently attacked on EVERY day that I attended school. While I was not out as transgender, I could not hide my femininity enough to avoid being accused of being gay. Violence included regular punches and kicks to the body and head. My nose is fractured in 5 places from being stamped into the ground."

"I was bullied very severely during my A-Levels years and while I got sufficiently good grades to go to university, they were too low to go to the top tier universities I was capable of attending. My mental health meant I took 2 years out before attending university also."

"I was bullied heavily, I did well at my exams, but wonder could I have done better if I wasn't dealing with the bullying."

34%

of respondents said that being LGBTQ+ had negatively affected their educational achievement

Section 28[12] was raised numerous times as having caused huge difficulty for respondents that it affected. Every person who attended school in the UK before 2003 (or 2000 in Scotland), grew up under Section 28; this means that every LGBTQ+ person who is 38 years of age or older in 2025, went through their entire education under a law that silenced conversations about LGBTQ+ identities. Based on the average age of entry into leadership roles, this is the age group that is now currently in, or looking to move into, leadership roles.

"Being in high school during section 28 meant there was no LGBT representation other than fear and negativity – this has impacted me my whole life making me hesitant and wary of being out at school/college/ uni/then at work. Even though it is different today, the fear and shame of being negatively judged, not accepted and ostracised is deep rooted and hard to overcome even though my logical brain recognises and celebrates the progress that has been made since then. Those feelings that formed in my early life are hard to change."

"I experienced homophobic bullying in a Catholic school. The teachers knew what was happening, but they chose to ignore it. They hid behind Clause 28. I used to try and miss school during flare up periods of homophobic bullying. It affected my learning in school, but I returned to education at the age of 21 and eventually got into University."

"Section 28, need we say more? Also, open homophobia in my school from teachers and staff meant I never came out or thought there was something wrong with me so just tried to "re-educate myself". Took a long time to realise that its ok and beautiful to be gay."

"It was the 1980s. There was zero support, open hostility and life was about surviving. Not academic achievement."

"Section 28 came into effect just as I was starting to be aware of my potential sexuality. The culture of fear and shame negatively affected me. My teachers were unable to support in any way, so I was alone."

This is far more than a historic concern, political leaders, especially in the US[13], are currently debating or enacting bans on the mention of LGBTQ+ identities in schools, books, research and government websites – a trend spreading to UK politics[14]. Recent research from Just Like Us reveals that the experience of school for many LGBTQ+ people today is far from easy or equal to their straight or cisgendered peers[15].

Some respondents felt that they were encouraged to 'be less gay' during their education, and this influenced the subjects they chose, with many not following their passions.

"I might have chosen different subject areas if I hadn't been so conscious about being labelled as 'gay'. I played it safe when I might have preferred to explore my creative side."

"Bullying in school and college influenced the types of courses I picked based on how comfortable I felt in those spaces. Also, whether I felt comfortable / felt I would be supported by the teacher – so these became deciding factors to put me on my career trajectory."

"I didn't feel able to pursue and excel at my true passions, so I performed mediocre at subjects that were more acceptable."

The data suggests that disabled respondents were disproportionately impacted, with 42% saying that their education was negatively affected due to being LGBTQ+, compared to 31% of non-disabled respondents.

[12] Section 28 is the UK law enacted in 1988 under Margaret Thatcher's government that prohibited local authorities and schools from "promoting homosexuality" or portraying same-sex relationships as acceptable. It led to widespread censorship and fear in education and public services, severely impacting LGBTQ+ communities. The law was repealed in Scotland in 2000 and across the rest of the UK in 2003 [13] https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024
[14] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/17/kemi-badenoch-western-civilisation-will-be-lost-tory-party-fails [15] https://justlikeus.org/news/2021/11/25/research-report-growing-up-lgbt-bullying/

Conversely, some respondents suggested that other privileges, in particular being white and middle class, helped to protect them from disadvantage during education

"I'm from a white middle class background and was privately educated – my sexuality did not impact my education."

Almost 7% of respondents felt that being LGBTQ+ had a positive impact on their careers, driving them to succeed in education with greater determination. For some, it provided a clear motivation to leave their hometown in pursuit of a better life, while others found that being closeted during their youth minimised distractions, as romantic relationships were not an option.

"Having figured out I am gay has made me want to achieve big."

"In the absence of queer role models in my industry, I felt driven to one day be that role model for someone else which inspired me to perform well academically and professionally."

"I felt like I had something to prove to people, so worked harder as a result."

"I feel I was somehow more academic and competitive than my peers in an all-boys school."

"I was just really focused on being better than everyone else, I knew where I grew up wasn't too welcoming to queer people, so the goal was to do well at school, go to university and start my life then. So, in a sense I would say it helped a lot because I was driven to get out of the situation to make it better for myself."

"Closeted during education so I focused a lot on my work and learning."

"I feel that because I grew up in an area that was quite unaccepting of LGBTQ+ people, I was much more motivated to do very well in school in order to get out of where I was from."

"I wasn't chasing boys during key exam times."

Some also felt that it necessitated them developing skills that their straight/cis friends did not have to develop, or didn't have to develop until a much later age.

"Our community is forced to be introspective from a younger age through the coming out process, this develops emotional intelligence and perspective that translates well into academic achievement."

felt that being LGBTQ+ had a positive impact on their careers

Confidence was mentioned again and again by our respondents. It plays a crucial role in career development, influencing everything from how you present yourself in interviews to how you navigate workplace challenges and seize new opportunities. It enables you to advocate for yourself, take on leadership roles, and step outside your comfort zone – whether that's speaking up in meetings, negotiating for a promotion, or networking with industry peers.

Confidence also impacts how others perceive you; when you believe in your abilities, colleagues and employers are more likely to trust you with greater responsibilities. While skills and experience are vital, confidence is often the key that unlocks career progression, helping you to push past self-doubt and embrace new challenges with resilience and determination. Without confidence we may never even put our hand up to be considered for a promotion, training course, or new role.

Many young LGBTQ+ people have their confidence knocked early on in life, especially if they grow up in an environment where their identity is not acknowledged, supported, or is even actively supressed. This lack of validation can lead to self-doubt, fear of judgment, and a reluctance to put yourself forward in both educational and professional settings. As a result, many LGBTQ+ individuals hesitate to pursue leadership roles, struggle with imposter syndrome, or feel the need to downplay aspects of their identity to fit in at work. This can limit career progression, impact mental wellbeing, and create additional barriers to success.

"I still have very low self-esteem and imposter syndrome, largely stemming from silencing myself and often feeling out of place. It's hard to overcome that when it's cemented internally, young, despite supportive and inclusive colleagues. There's only so much the organisations can do to create the doorway, but I need to believe in myself enough to step through (though I agree creating the doorway is a decent start, for those of us who are ready!)"

"Trying to figure out who I was and my identity/sexual orientation whilst navigating through queer shame/internalised homophobia has been hard. It made me feel like I would never be the 'right' person for a job, especially in leadership roles."

"I think my sexuality and how I felt about in my teens and early twenties, probably negatively impacted my confidence which in turn has affected my career trajectory."

"My biggest barrier is confidence and anxiety – I believe this is intrinsically linked to being LGBTQ+ and the experiences I had growing up. I feel this is the biggest thing that prevents me from achieving goals."

"Less confidence in self. Feeling you are living a lie because of not being able to be open about who you want to have relationships with, for fear of judgement or losing friends."

"It affects your mental health severely, so you don't put yourself in a position where you have to expose your true self."

"I think I held back in terms of my approach to things for fear of being found out."

"Not being authentic in all situations means that you're always feeling like you're lying or being less than truthful which in turn harms your self-esteem and therefore has a negative impact on your health, your wellbeing and your self-worth."

"After coming out at 24 I had to try and find myself and who I was, so was exploring what career I wanted to do, where I would fit. Growing up gay there was no careers that I saw myself doing so I didn't know what I wanted, what education was needed to get to where I wanted, now I know where I want to go it is hard to get there as do not have the qualifications needed."

"I think it affected my confidence, sense of self which has therefore impacted my career choices, confidence and ability."

"Before I transitioned it was impossible to focus on my career at all really. I didn't care about myself or my career."

Being LGBTQ+ doesn't just influence the trajectory of your career; it can inform which career path you choose in the first place.

"It has completely shaped my career trajectory and personal development."

Over half of respondents said that being LGBTQ+ affected their choice of career. This could mean avoiding certain industries, roles, locations or opportunities for promotion where they fear discrimination or a lack of support.

This is important because it suggests that some LGBTQ+ individuals feel the need to navigate their careers based on inclusivity, safety, and acceptance rather than on ambition, passion, skill, or calling.

"I chose to join a firm where I knew I could be myself, build my own team and career, without any fear of prejudice or bias. I was very lucky to be afforded that opportunity and believe that it is still very challenging for those not able to control their own careers in such a way."

"Yes, be aloof, don't be outrageous, everything in moderation at work. Be a corporate animal, don't show off. If you care to be loud and proud pick a career where you can do that, media, arts, fashion, hospitality. Otherwise you are a target still IMO."

"I believe that if I had realised and accepted my sexuality at an earlier age, it would have shaped my career path towards a more accepting, supportive industry (rather than construction)."

56%

of respondents said being LGBTQ+ has influenced their choice of career
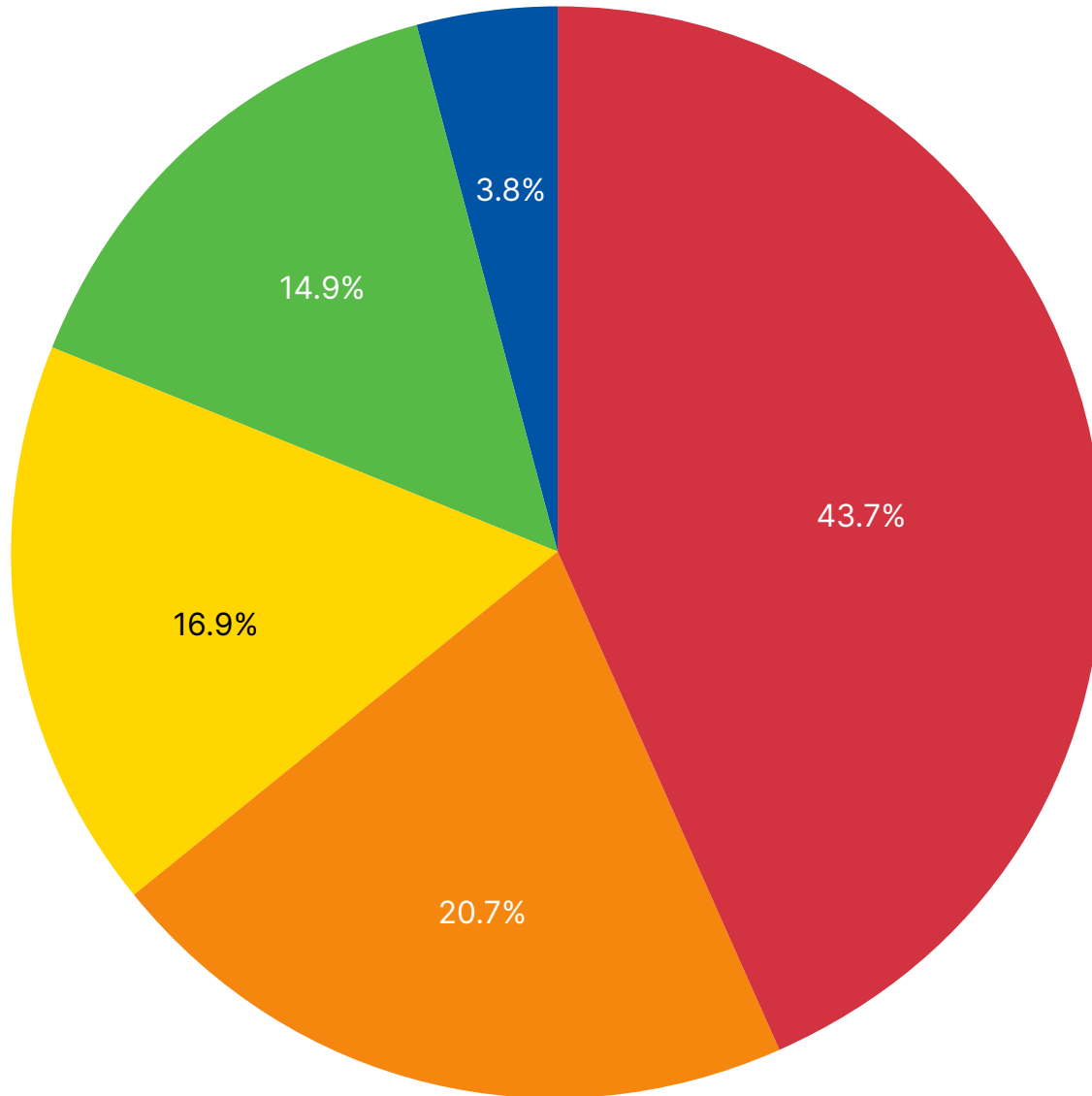
Has being LGBTQ+ influences your choice of career?

- Not at all (43.7%)
- Slightly (20.7%)
- Moderately (16.9%)
- Significantly (14.9%)
- Entirely (3.8%)

Others may stay in jobs where they feel accepted but unchallenged, hesitant to move into leadership roles or high-visibility positions due to concerns about bias.

Even within organisations that appear tolerant, individuals might settle for environments that are 'good enough' rather than workplaces that are truly safe and equitable spaces that support their career progression. This is a velvet rut – a state of professional stagnation where safety takes precedence over career. Without feeling safe to take the risk on a new role or promotion, many LGBTQ+ people can find themselves stuck on a rung of the career ladder for a long time. Additionally, some may avoid advocating for change at work, fearing that challenging the status quo could put them at risk.

"The overwhelming driver has been to stay safe, and that has definitely affected career choices and satisfaction. I've spent most of my working life being bored."

"There are promotions and opportunities I did not even attempt to attain when I was a younger man."

"It isn't something that worries me in my current organisation. I would be wary that going elsewhere may mean unknowingly ending up somewhere less inclusive."

"I work in an inclusive environment at the moment, but I worried that I would move to a place that would be less inclusive. Therefore I have kind of stagnated in my role because I can't risk moving somewhere that's not inclusive."

"I value a supportive and inclusive workplace culture very highly. It's good for quality of life but I think it also makes me reluctant to apply for more challenging jobs at other organisations."

The vast majority (77%) of respondents were not sure whether being LGBTQ+ had affected them getting a job. This is important because it suggests a lack of transparency and confidence in recruitment processes, where bias may exist but is difficult to detect.

"I received feedback following an interview that I didn't fit their work environment."

"The awful thing is that you'll never know. I'm pretty sure I didn't get roles because people thought, rather than knew, I was gay, but I'll never know."

"It seems to me that 'discrimination' is often now a lot less obvious. It can be really subtle... I'm always being told my work is exemplary but somehow a leadership opportunity never seems to come my way."

As many as 16% were confident that they had directly missed out on opportunities because they were LGBTQ+, highlighting the ongoing presence of bias and discrimination in hiring and career progression.

"In a job interview, I was told they didn't want poofs working for them."

"I was in a final interview, the director of the company found out I was gay with HIV and she did a total 180 and the hiring manager was sat there dumbfounded."

"Job interview early in career where the whole vibe of the interview

which seemed like it was going well plummeted the moment being gay was brought up."

"I was once subject to a recruitment process where the panel discussed if I could be appointed (I found out afterwards) as I was gay and they weren't sure the CEO would like it."

"I was refused a job in a different company due to being a lesbian. I knew someone in HR who informed me that the individual who interviewed me went into the office after my interview and said 'no, she's a lesbian'."

Are you aware of any times being LGBTQ+ may have affected you getting a job?

Positively (7%)

Negatively (16%)

Not sure (77%)
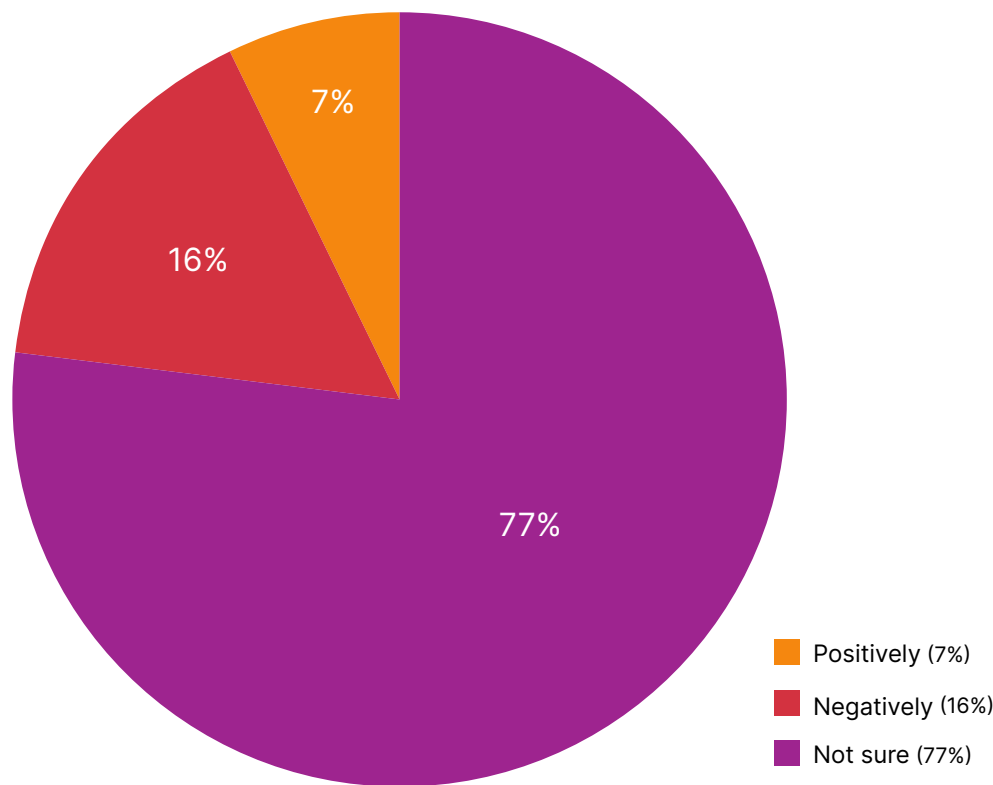
"No one wants to hire trans people. The hate in the media has caused an increase in transphobia and employers are afraid they'll have to deal with it in the workplace so they just don't employ trans people to protect their businesses."

"After an interview I overheard transphobic comments about me while leaving "yeh they were great, pity they are a <insert slur>, not gonna give them the job."

"I was told I wasn't manly/strong enough to be in that post despite running the department for 5 years and delivering over and above."

"I applied for a job that I was experienced and more than qualified to do. It involved informing past employment that I had transitioned because of references. I contacted the employer to ask before outing myself to past employers. They tried to put me off applying. I still applied and was rejected for apparently not demonstrating enough experience based on my CV. My CV was a perfect match for the job."

"When I was male presenting, I could interview for a few jobs and land a role. As a trans woman, I had to apply for hundreds of jobs and interview over 40 times before being offered a role."

"I was recently unemployed for 3 months; it was like tumbleweeds in terms of interest. Then I removed my pronouns from my CV and got two calls within 24 hours, one of which led to my current role."

Some felt that it was LGBTQ+ people's innate 'difference' which caused this problem

"We often appear different or 'other' and that instantly puts you at a disadvantage. People are inclined to hire people like them, and we are often not like them. I see cis gay men sometimes make it into leadership but examples of lesbian/trans leadership are like trying to find water in the desert!"

It is important in this section to highlight the role of recruitment companies in this process. It is evident that fair processes are either not in place or are being ignored, and it is also clear that recruitment companies are not always challenging obvious poor recruiting behaviours.

"Once had feedback from a final interview for a director-level position that there was little in it between me and the other candidate however the panel didn't like that I 'crossed my legs'."

"I stated on job application forms with demographic data that I am gay…One company rejected me out of hand, and I asked the recruitment consultant to find out why. After a lot of digging, he was told by someone in that company in no uncertain terms that as they employ almost entirely males they do not employ gay people as it makes the existing employees feel uneasy…which was a big shock for me."

Nonetheless, seven percent suggested that being LGBTQ+ had a positive effect on them getting a job.

"I was discharged from the armed forces at 20 for being gay. So I had to come out to everyone and at every interview after that I've had to come out, explaining why I left the navy. I've received nothing but support from every interviewer."

"When applying for my current firm, I was aware it had a good reputation in this space, so I was sure to let them know I'm gay!"

"I determined that I would always make it clear on my application that I am gay. I would rather be screened out at that point than have to not live my authentic self. That hasn't been my experience though, I have progressed, and it has been much healthier to be open."

A massive 76% of respondents had no professional role models early in their career. This is important because without visible LGBTQ+ role models, many individuals struggle to see a path to leadership, leading to hesitancy in career progression and reinforcing barriers to success.

"Leadership always seems to be straight, cis and white."

Presence of LGBTQ+ role models in early career

Yes 20%

No 76%

Unsure/can't recall 4%
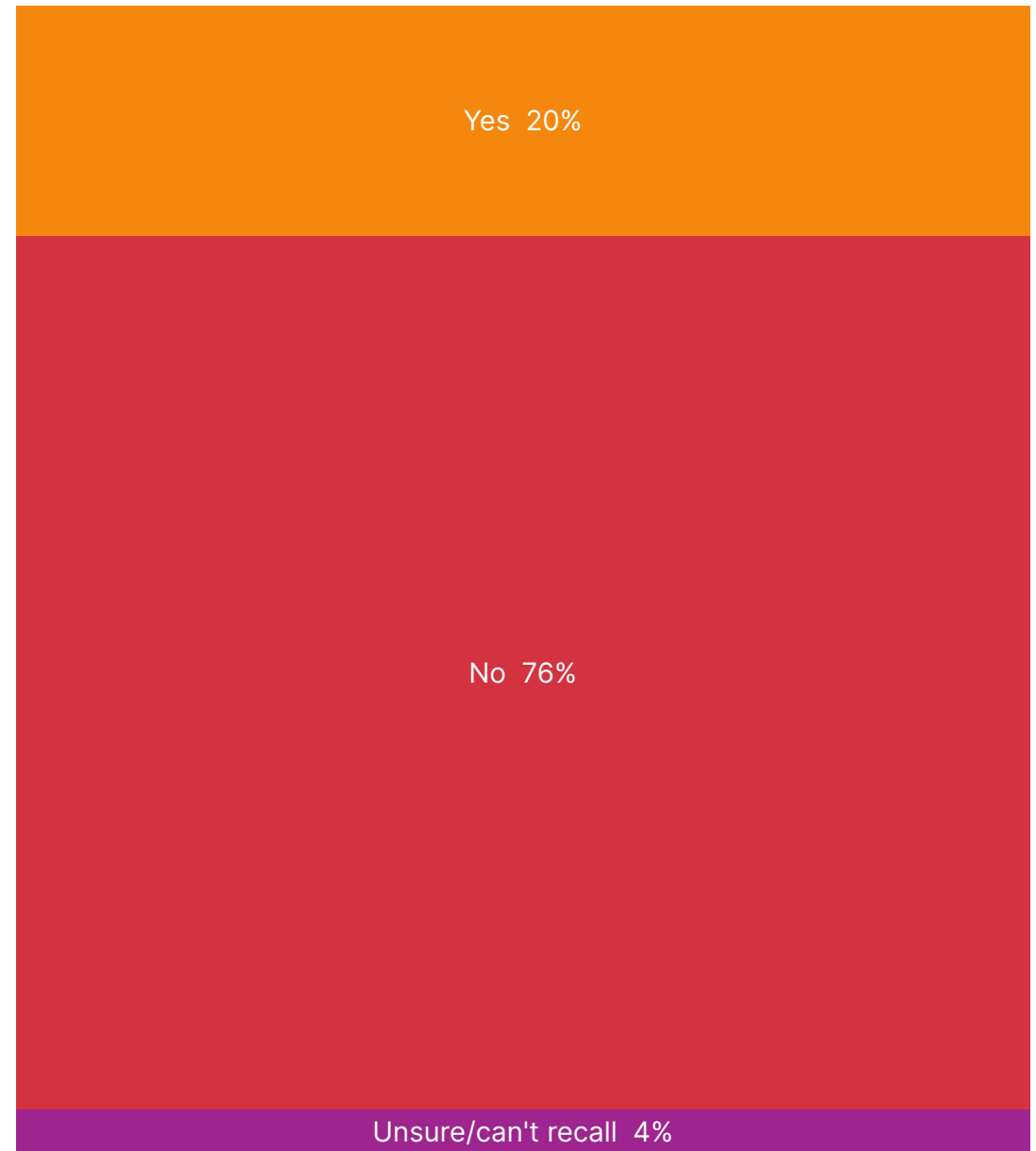
"My first career was teaching. Although I did my PGCE and taught after Section 28 was repealed, the impact of the silencing was there for years later, although I worked with wonderful people the idea of having a LGBTQ+ role model was not realistic. Being openly LGBTQ+ as a teacher wasn't normalised until at least a decade after Section 28 and then very quickly started to become not ok again. In my last school I was told I shouldn't bring it up and treat it the same as my political views - I must be neutral and not mention my 'views'."

"As a late 70s child, HIV had a massive impact on the number of gay men, and the generation ahead mostly hid their sexuality for fear of reprisal."

"My graduate job was a religious organisation where there were no lgbt staff (that were out). It definitely had an impact on my self-expression and confidence."

"I'd just like to see more visible LGBTQ+ leaders at more senior levels either in my organisation or out of it. Banking is a very heterodominated industry so seeing more open LGBTQ+ people in the industry would be really positive."

"I've never really seen anyone talking about how lonely it can feel being trans in the workplace. Logically I know that I'm not the first trans man in my position, but it really feels it sometimes."

"Not seeing a positive LGBT role model in an Exec or Senior role made me think twice about applying for a leadership role."

"Outside of LGBTQ+ media, I've seen no LGBTQ+ representation in leadership. It can be difficult to visualise a future for yourself at a company that constantly assumes you're heterosexual."

76%

of respondents had no professional role models early in their career

The 'see me, be me' effect is critical – when LGBTQ+ professionals see people like them in senior roles, they may be more likely to push for promotions and aspire to leadership positions.

"I have had a gay mentor an also a gay manager which helped me shape my own approach to being out in the workplace and to building my personal brand."

"As a member of the LGBT steering committee, I met senior leaders who were able to be out and their authentic self and succeed. It gave me confidence that it was possible to have the career I wanted and be myself."

"After not being out at all in my first roles, I moved to a new company with visible queer role models and that helped give me the confidence to come out."

"My first line manager within my sector was openly lesbian and in a civil partnership. Which provided me with the confidence that I could be my true self and take on a leadership role within my sector."

"I have seen a very limited handful of people that are from the community, and it is inspiring to want to do more and give more to my career to be like them and succeed."

"I have valued in recent years having positive role models in my workplace and wider sector, to see LGBTQ+ people leading with authenticity and empathy has been really powerful for my sense of self."

"There were several senior queer members of staff at my last workplace, it helped me to be more at ease and be myself, which ultimately made me

more comfortable, confident and successful at work."

"When I worked in a shop as an assistant the manager was a gay man. It was meeting him and seeing him in a position of responsibility that made me realise that queer people can advance beyond entry level roles and are able to achieve leadership roles."

Organisations that create an environment where people in leadership roles feel comfortable to be out to more junior colleagues were perceived positively by respondents.

"It was helpful to see examples of LGBTQ+ leadership to know that the organisation was supportive."

"On day 1 when I joined the organisation, somebody introduced themselves to me and spoke about their same-sex partner when introducing themselves. This immediately made me feel so much more comfortable to be able to be myself in that setting to see their confidence and the acceptance of others."

"I worked in teams where leaders and colleagues were closeted. It created an atmosphere that implied being out was not acceptable (or at the very least that your sexuality or other aspects of your private life were not relevant at work)."

For some, the lack of role models they experienced has driven them to become the role models for others. While this can add pressure to a person's job, it can also bring huge joy and support to those around them, having a halo effect beyond their work life into their personal life, too.

"It doesn't matter how many times it happens, but the sense of belonging and gratitude I feel when a colleague at work either explicitly identifies themselves as LGBTQ+ in conversation, or creates space through conscious ambiguity (like saying 'my partner' rather than a gendered term) gives me the warm and fuzzies, which has definitely motivated me to role model the same behaviours for others!"

"I worked for a firm that promoted inclusivity but did not have any visible role models/leaders, so I decided to be that visible person. Which a lot of people I worked with thought was "brave" given we worked in a white male dominated finance environment."

"I've been told by members of my team that they feel seen and represented by me being open about my sexuality as a member of ELT. That they believe they can aspire to leadership roles because of me. And it's honestly the most inspiring feedback I've ever had in my career."

"I had a senior civil servant role model from the age of 18 onwards who had a powerful influence in my life. In his 70s I provided some care

support before he passed away. He was my gay dad. Wise, compassionate and understanding and helped me navigate many of life's LGBT challenges. He was never out in his own career, as the MOD did not tolerate gay men in his early career."

It is important to note that just because there is a senior, out, gay male leader (for example) that this might not translate to a sense of visibility for other demographics, such as lesbians or trans people.

"As a trans man, I didn't really have any other out trans men working in my fields to look up to and many encounters with systemic failures were ones I needed to encounter and fight for change myself with no one to speak or share what they did in similar positions. I had a manager who was openly gay, but ultimately he wasn't equipped with mentoring skills. Oftentimes white cis gay men had a comparatively easier times obtaining access to more senior roles, but weren't very invested in helping others follow them up the ladder. I rarely saw out queer women in senior roles and I became my own trans role model in my field."

Having an LGBTQ+ role model can be incredibly powerful, but mentoring takes this one step further, providing structured, personalised guidance that helps individuals navigate career challenges, build confidence, and access new opportunities.

Mentoring is more than just advice; it is about connection, advocacy, and unlocking potential. A good mentor can help an LGBTQ+ professional understand workplace dynamics, develop leadership skills, and feel more comfortable being their authentic self at work.

"A member of our EDI team offered informal mentorship (I am still early in my career and receiving this) and has helped me feel more comfortable to be myself at a professional level."

"I would like mentoring from LGBTQ+ leaders and training in confidence in leadership positions."

"I signed myself up for an lgbt mentoring programme and my mentor has been important in helping me figure out my career trajectory and helping me with contacts within the civil service."

"My first professional mentor was a gay man, and although we never discussed our sexuality, he provided unspoken reassurance that being gay needn't hold me back in my chosen work."

Respondents felt that mentoring with an LGBTQ+ professional was more impactful than generic programmes, offering reassurance, networking opportunities, and a greater sense of belonging. However, many traditional workplace mentoring schemes are not designed to match LGBTQ+ employees.

"I think mentoring is really important for career progression and I don't think LGBTQ+ is often considered as something you may need a specific connection on. Workplace mentoring often considers gender or ethnicity, but I've never been asked if I would like to be paired with another gay man or queer person."

"Queer mentoring that specifically focused on how to maximise queer networks and consider jobs in queer friendly organisations."

"I think mentoring would be great. One LGBTQ professional to another."

"I think LGBTQ mentors would be useful for newer professionals who may be having to navigate the workplace for the first time. This would have been helpful for me."

A few respondents also noted that they were more likely to mentor others as a way of paying forward the support they had received.

"I seek to mentor much more than I think I would have if I were heterosexual."

Almost 80% of respondents said that being LGBTQ+ influenced where they choose to live, with 40% saying that it entirely or significantly influenced their decision.

This shows that, while others may relocate freely in pursuit of opportunity, most LGBTQ+ professionals navigate an additional layer of decision-making, ensuring they live in a safer place first before exploring the career opportunities in that area.

This may mean LGBTQ+ people are less likely to be in the career they would ideally want, or are underemployed in roles available in their locale that don't enable them to deploy their full skillset. Safe LGBTQ+ places are often bigger cities and university towns which can have more opportunity but also more competition. All this has a knock-on effect, leading to disparities in leadership representation and pay.

Ultimately, this inflected starting point leads to long-term career progression consequences. It also has consequences for the places and communities LGBTQ+ people leave behind, compounding the problems for people that don't have the means to escape.
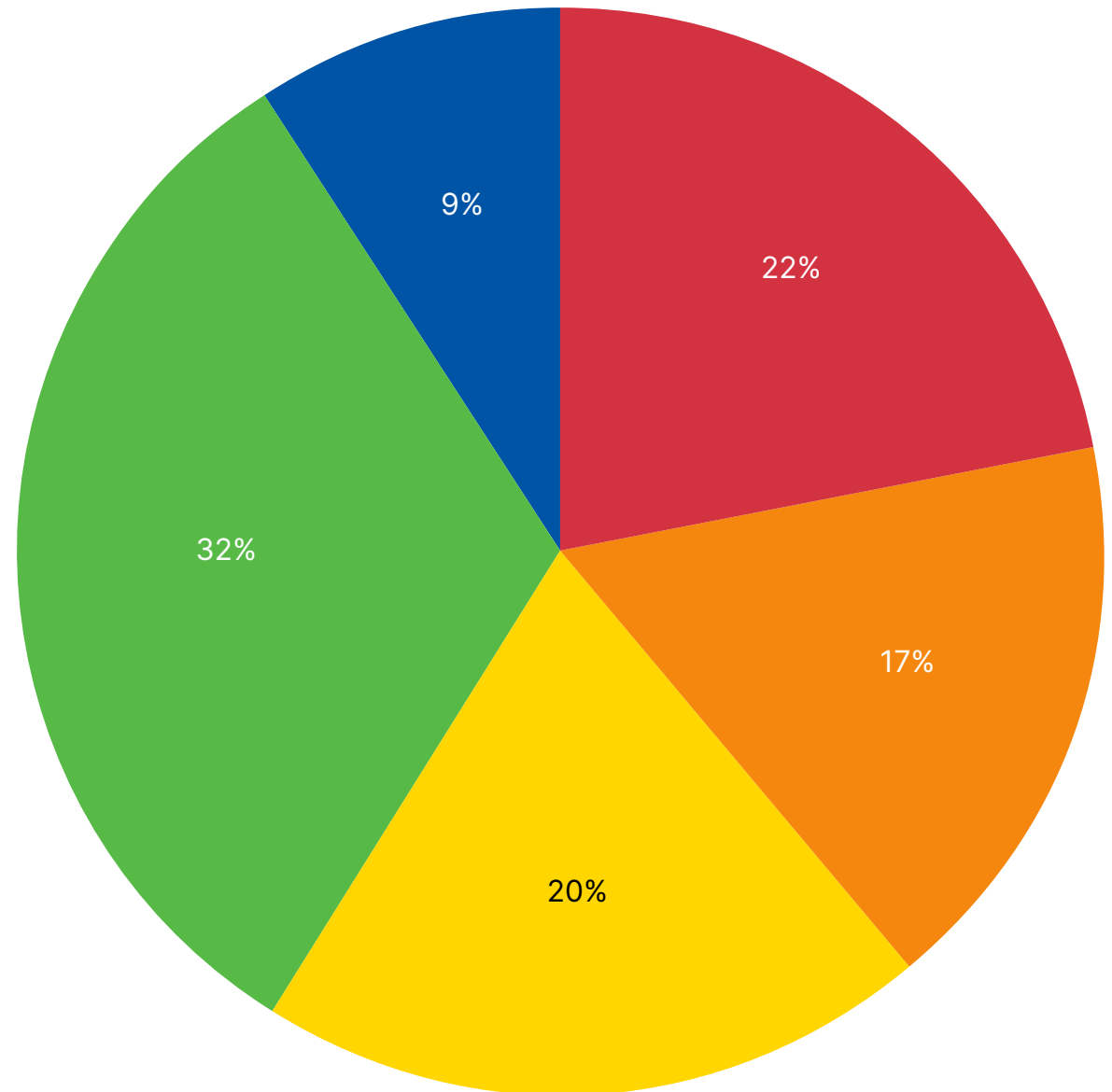
To what extent has being LGBTQ+ influenced your choice of where to live?

■ Not at all (22%)   ■ Slightly (17%)   ■ Moderately (20%)   ■ Significantly (32%)   ■ Entirely (9%)

This finding is also important for businesses and politicians because it highlights how ensuring LGBTQ+ people can live safely, and thrive, in their local area impacts businesses' ability to attract and retain top LGBTQ+ (and likely other, diverse) talent.

An inclusive environment not only attracts a wider pool of skilled professionals but also enhances employee retention and engagement.

"There are towns/cities/countries I wouldn't even consider living in due to perceptions of how those places tolerate LGBTQ+ people."

"Because of location being so important, we have less options."

"I chose to live somewhere that is known for being lgbtqia+ friendly and encouraging of this. As I work in health care it limits my available jobs as I cannot work remotely whilst having a wonderful, inclusive environment to live in."

"We have a 6 year old child and we could no longer afford to live in London. Our heterosexual friends were happy to move to the suburbs of London, but we didn't feel this is possible for queer families to live a safe and authentic life, therefore we moved to Manchester – giving up the jobs we love, so we could continue to live in a city, which was LGBTQ+ friendly and welcoming, and where our daughter wouldn't be the only kid with queer parents in the school."

"Manchester is the most LGBT friendly city whilst also having a thriving business and professional community."

"I feel like London and Manchester (and some parts of the South of England) are the only viable places for professional career-driven LGBTQ+ people to thrive in their jobs and personal lives."

"I went to uni in Manchester because of watching Queer as Folk. I knew I wanted to get out of the small village I grew up in and I have lived in Manchester ever since. I believe being queer drew me to more urban cosmopolitan areas with a more diverse culture and set of people, where not only would I be accepted but also would give me opportunities to meet other queer people."

78%

said that being LGBTQ+ influenced where they choose to live

Almost a quarter of respondents said they have turned down or chosen not to apply for a new role because it would have required relocating to a place they considered less LGBTQ+ friendly. This can present a significant barrier to career progression, as LGBTQ+ individuals may feel forced to prioritise personal safety and wellbeing over a career opportunity in a new town or country. Limited relocation options can restrict access to better job opportunities, higher salaries, or industries with greater career growth potential.

"I would never consider a move to a location that is known as anti-LGBTQ+, no matter how high the pay or amazing the benefits were."

"Living in a city is more comfortable though if I lived in a rural area it would have a positive impact on my career."

"My career has had the option to move to more rural locations but due to a lack of LGBT population this has not been attractive. The idea of being "the only gay in the village" feels very lonely and it has impacted my choices with my career."

"There are many lucrative jobs in locations that are not known for their tolerance and I've avoided applying, and denied offers, at these locations."

"Dubai is booming in my field, many of my peers are now there working with big salary and roles but obviously I declined all."

"I refuse to live in any country where my rights as a gay person are not protected, or where that country is actively promoting harm to LGBTQ+ communities."

"I have been personally invited to two jobs based in United Arab Emirates, which isn't an option for LGBTQ+ people to live safely and truthfully. It wasn't something I felt I could even consider for a second."

"Opportunity to do a well-paid contract in the UAE; did not pursue for obvious reasons!"

"I've been approached for roles in the Middle East. Despite higher pay and no doubt great material living conditions, I would never put myself in that sort of environment as a gay man for mental health, legal and social reasons."
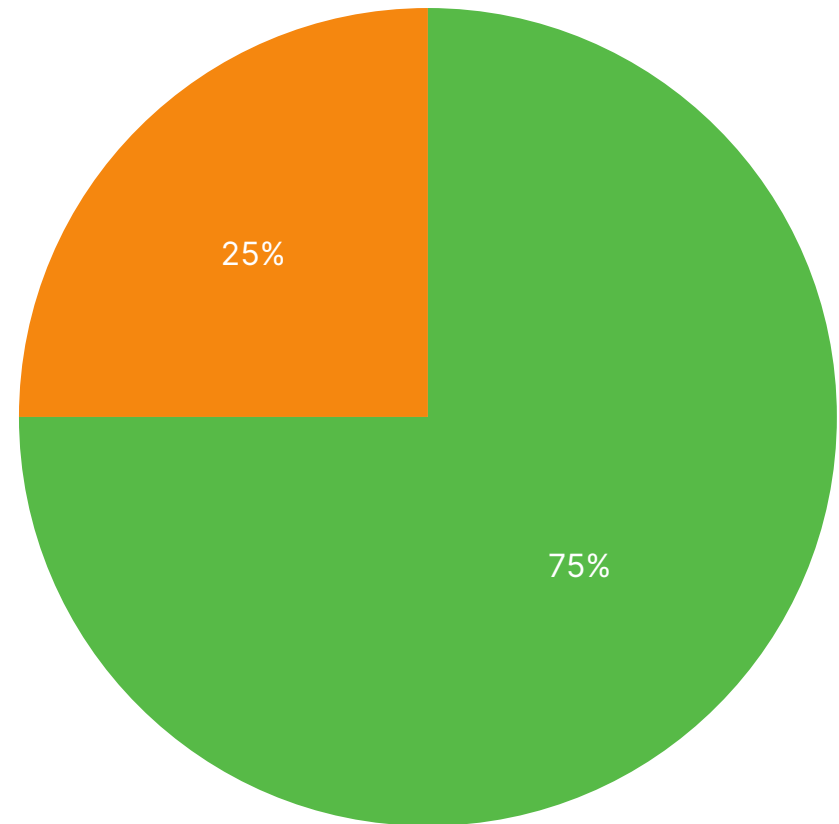
25%

75%

Have you ever not applied for, or turned down a role because it would have required a move to a location that you considered might be less LGBTQ+ friendly?

🟩 Yes (75%)   🟧 No (25%)
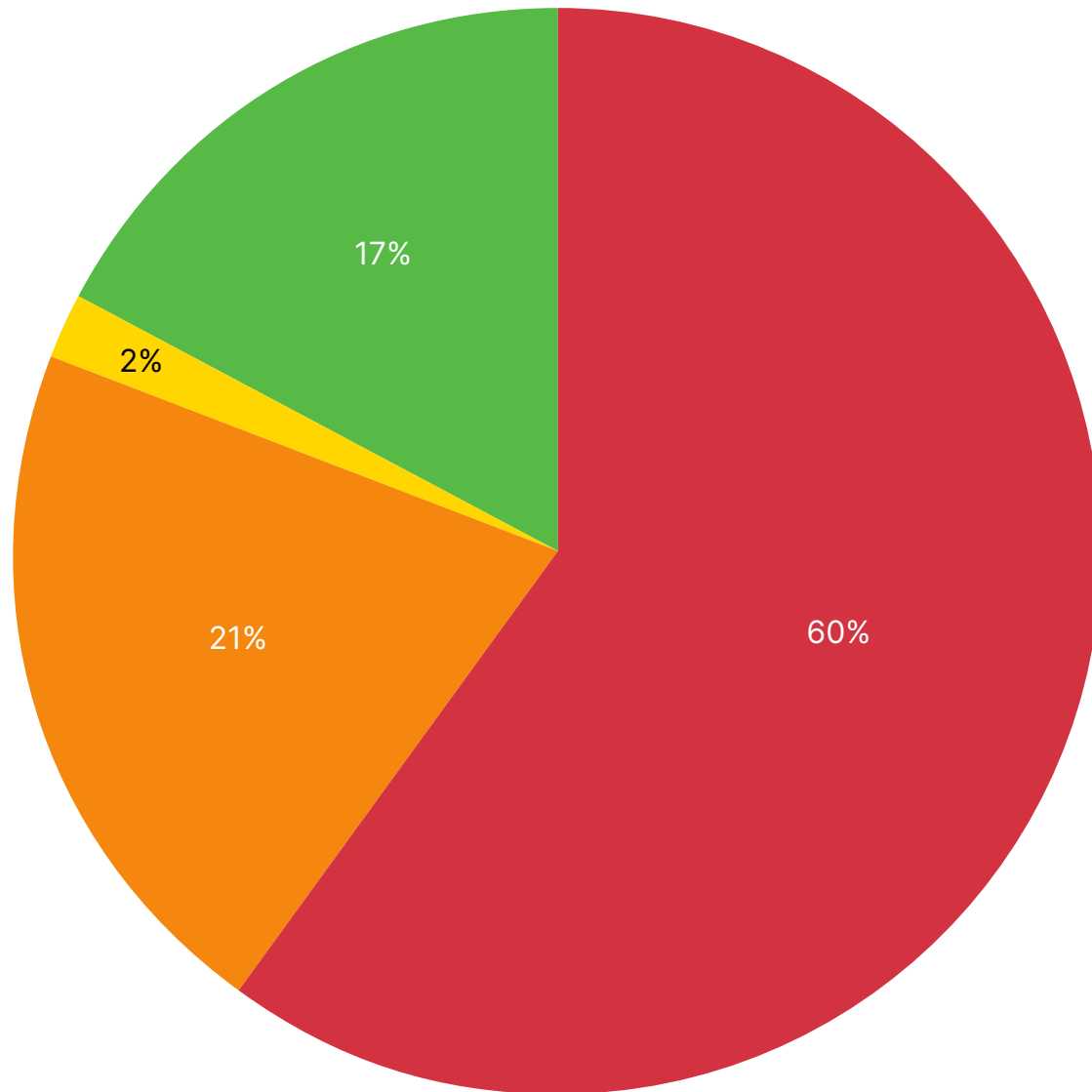
Have you faced difficulties related to being LGBTQ+ while travelling for work purposes?

■ No, never (60%)   ■ Yes, occasionally (21%)   ■ Yes, frequently (2%)   ■ N/A (17%)

Almost a quarter of respondents said they have experienced difficulties while travelling for work. We asked which of the following barriers they had personally experienced:

- **Legal and safety concerns in certain locations (49%)**

- **Hostility or discrimination from colleagues or clients (23%)**

- **Lack of appropriate accommodation (8%)**

LGBTQ+ individuals may feel unable to fully participate in potentially career-enhancing opportunities like international assignments, conference talks, trade missions, networking events, or client meetings. This may ultimately affect their ability to advance their careers at the same pace as their peers.

"I have refused to travel to clients in such countries and no doubt been judged as difficult for doing so."

"I was not allowed to travel to Dubai by my work in case it caused problems, even though I was leading the project."

"Incorrect gendered title on my travel documents."

"Fear of travelling alone on public transport as an open trans person."

"I have turned down opportunities to travel to anti-LGBTQ+ countries out of fear (eg for conferences)."

"Sharing a room with a colleague while away and I would have preferred a room on my own. I was worried colleagues might not want to share a room or get undressed because I was a lesbian."

The experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals are not uniform, and for many, their career development is shaped by multiple overlapping aspects of their identity.

Respondents highlighted how factors such as race, gender, disability, social class and sexual orientation interact in complex ways, making it difficult to pinpoint which barriers have had the greatest impact on their progression.

Some felt that being female or Black had posed greater challenges than their LGBTQ+ identity, while others noted disparities within the LGBTQ+ community itself, such as the visibility of gay men in leadership compared to lesbians.

For some, navigating multiple forms of discrimination created additional hurdles, while for others, overcoming one challenge helped them develop the resilience to face another.

These insights underscore the importance of recognising intersectionality in workplace inclusion efforts, ensuring that support is tailored to reflect the diverse experiences within the LGBTQ+ community and with an understanding that some people face barriers or discrimination on multiple fronts.

"I think being black and born female, has had more effect than being queer."

"Hard to distinguish queer versus Black prejudice."

"The above barriers were as much for being female as being LGBT."

"LGBTQ+ seems too broad. I see plenty of gay men in leadership positions. I don't see plenty of lesbians in leadership positions."

"I think racism has played a bigger role."

"Being black and gay helped me be more courageous as I had already dealt with racism early in life so homophobia wasn't as hard to navigate."

"I think being black and born female, has had more effect than being queer."

"By building more confidence in myself, accepting who I am, it has helped me focus on my targets at work without feeling weird or embarrassed."

Section B
3. Organisational Culture

Organisational culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, behaviours, and practices that define how people work and interact within a company. It is shaped by a combination of leadership, values, behaviours, policies, procedures, and systems, influencing decision-making, communication, management approach, and the overall workplace environment.

Throughout our findings, organisational culture emerged as a key theme. It plays a crucial role in shaping employees' experiences, directly impacting their well-being, engagement, and overall workplace satisfaction – every single day.

In this section, we consider various factors that influence how LGBTQ+ colleagues might experience organisational culture.
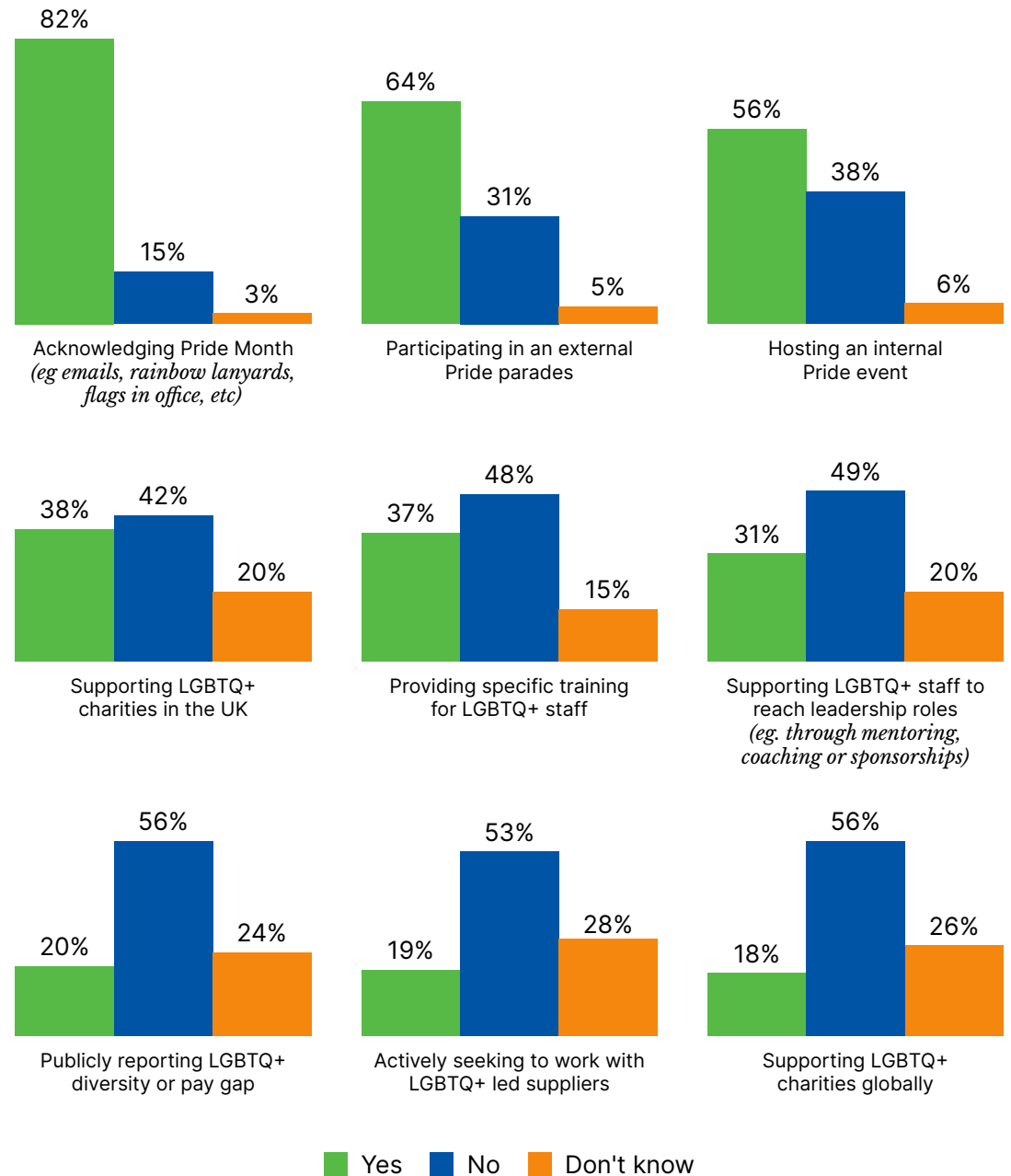
We asked how respondents' organisations support LGBTQ+ people. The answers revealed a clear divide between symbolic gestures of LGBTQ+ support and more meaningful, structural commitments in workplaces.

While many employees report that their workplaces acknowledge Pride Month (82%) and participate in external Pride events (64%), fewer believe their organisations take more substantive steps to support LGBTQ+ inclusion in leadership, training, and financial investment.

A high proportion (82%) of respondents say their organisations engage in visible actions such as rainbow lanyards, office flags, and internal Pride events, however, fewer employees perceive their organisations as investing in long-term, meaningful initiatives, such as funding LGBTQ+ training (37%) or supporting people to reach leadership roles through mentoring or coaching (31%).

"I don't think an organisation that, for example, participates in a Pride parade, necessarily supports LGBTQ+ people by doing so."

Acknowledging Pride Month *(eg emails, rainbow lanyards, flags in office, etc)* — Yes 82%, No 15%, Don't know 3%

Participating in an external Pride parades — Yes 64%, No 31%, Don't know 5%

Hosting an internal Pride event — Yes 56%, No 38%, Don't know 6%

Supporting LGBTQ+ charities in the UK — Yes 38%, No 42%, Don't know 20%

Providing specific training for LGBTQ+ staff — Yes 37%, No 48%, Don't know 15%

Supporting LGBTQ+ staff to reach leadership roles *(eg. through mentoring, coaching or sponsorships)* — Yes 31%, No 49%, Don't know 20%

Publicly reporting LGBTQ+ diversity or pay gap — Yes 20%, No 56%, Don't know 24%

Actively seeking to work with LGBTQ+ led suppliers — Yes 19%, No 53%, Don't know 28%

Supporting LGBTQ+ charities globally — Yes 18%, No 56%, Don't know 26%

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Only 20% of respondents believe their organisations publicly report LGBTQ+ diversity and pay gap information, while 56% say their employer does not, and 24% are unsure.

Some 38% of respondents believe their organisation supports LGBTQ+ charities in the UK, but only 18% think they do so globally. Only 19% are confident that their organisation actively seeks to work with LGBTQ+ led suppliers, highlighting a potential gap in wider supplier and supply chain diversity programmes.

Many respondents selected "I don't know," particularly regarding their employer's engagement with LGBTQ+ charities (20–26%) and supplier diversity (28%). This suggests either a lack of transparency from employers or that these efforts, if they exist, are not well communicated internally.

These responses indicate that while many LGBTQ+ employees see their workplaces engaging in Pride celebrations, fewer feel their employers take concrete actions to address systemic barriers, such as leadership development, financial support, and pay transparency. Whether these perceptions fully reflect organisational policies or not, they highlight a need for clearer communication and, potentially, stronger commitments to long-term LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Fewer still feel their organisations participate in good corporate citizenship around the LGBTQ+ community by supporting LGBTQ+ charities and community groups at home and abroad, where many LGBTQ+ people face severe human rights oppression or violence. In the case of 12 countries the death penalty is, or can, be imposed on those engaging in private, consensual same-sex activity. These include countries that our respondents have been asked to travel or move to for work.

It's worth noting that as the survey was often distributed by LGBTQ+ staff networks, where active support for LGBTQ+ people is likely higher than average, it's likely these numbers overstate the amount of support being provided.

ONLY 20%

of respondents believe their organisations publicly report LGBTQ+ diversity and pay gap information

When it comes to the day-to-day experience of working for an organisation, the culture of an organisation is comprised of a lot more than its external commitments. One element is its policies and procedures.

There is perception that, in some companies, no policies, procedures or HR personnel have been put in place to ensure a positive working environment for LGBTQ+ colleagues.

"Most workplaces I have worked at have had little to no accounting for LGBTQ+ people in policies and practice. This includes parental leave, caring responsibilities and others."

"Many organisations still don't have adequate HR personnel who can empathise with people who are not cisgendered and straight."

"A complete lack of understanding in the workplace of same sex couples and equality. There's a level of tolerated homophobia, biphobia, transphobia that we're just programmed to accept. It shouldn't be the case."

"I feel that our HR does not take LBGTQ+ issues seriously, I have raised multiple issues over many years and felt each time that I'm being brushed off."

"I was once asked to visit United Arab Emirates and had to decline. I was told to not be obviously gay. I refused and was put on a report for it."

"Early career in teaching was blighted by appalling views openly discussed."

In some cases, the policies have been misinterpreted or misused by the organisation or its people and actually hold LGBTQ+ people back.

"Held back from management role which involved facing customers due to the risk of discrimination against me (wording from HR)."

"I was told that security training for LGBTQIA+ staff was not feasible when travelling to Uganda and Nigeria because 'it may offend someone' by the CEO."

Some LGBTQ+ people have experienced direct issues in the recruitment and promotion process, as described in more depth in 2.6 above.

"Awareness & Training needs to be company / sector wide to overcome bias, negativity and homophobia. Companies need to welcome a diverse range of people into them. Most companies just hire 'people like them' so they remain largely straight and white and male, especially in leadership positions."

Few organisations undertake LGBTQ+ pay gap reporting, as this is not mandatory in the UK:

"I would love to see diversity and pay gap information being compulsory in the UK alongside gender pay disparity. I think this would not only be significant for increasing equality for pay, but also access to leadership as it would highlight the disparities in levels attained and encourage positive action but I also feel it could encourage LGBTQ+ to be recognised in a safe/protected way so we can all stand up and be counted — officially."

And, in some organisations, there is a perceived clash between the business' objectives and making their LGBTQ+ colleagues feel safe:

"I work in a large chemical company and we operate in the Middle East and in Malaysia. Through our Pride Network we have raised our concerns about travel safety to these regions. While senior management try to listen to our concern, not much action is taken and the company still expands to LGBTQ+ unfriendly countries (not just for business development but also for business support sites such as IT, HR, ...). It always looks like profitability comes before LGBTQ+ rights even though the company praises itself for defending Human Rights."

If *"culture eats strategy for breakfast"* [16], then it also eats policies and procedures, too. There are many other factors that contribute to how people feel at work – from day-to-day comments to LGBTQ+ staff networks, to allyship, pay gap reporting, and beyond.

While many companies have the necessary policies and procedures in place – and may actively support initiatives like Pride Month – they often overlook or tolerate queerphobic behaviours in daily interactions.

"Having spent a significant part of my working life in retail and hospitality I have lost count of how many times I've been called faggot by customers. With the exception of one boss this has never been dealt with. Each time you're expected to continue serving them and one time when I did tell my boss their response was "The customer is always right"."

"I work at a university that has rainbow flags waving at main campus, still nothing happens to people being hostile to queer people. A shame."

"They didn't think being asexual was LGBTQAI+ enough and told me rather to focus on being an ally."

"I think it's very easy to get labelled as 'sensitive' if you are empathetic or people-centric in your approach to leading. I have been told (during the course of work) that gay people should be beaten or gassed to death). It shakes your confidence."

[16] Often attributed to Peter Drucker.

"Being bi means you must be sleeping with everyone including your boss, so any success can't possibly be attributed to genuine aptitude and conscientiousness."

"I worked within the financial sector and it was very much "old boys club". The use of the F word and "fairy" was not uncommon. There was a new tension in the air after I came out. I left shortly after."

"As a bisexual woman I feel that I was seen as promiscuous and unstable by colleagues and was not treated as seriously as straight colleagues."

Queerphobic attitudes and comments such as these can be demeaning and leave a person feeling deeply uncomfortable, humiliated, and like they do not 'fit' in the organisation. What's worse, concerns around this are often invalidated and dismissed by labelling these comments as just 'banter', with the only issue being the LGBTQ+ individual's inability to "take a joke".

"Definitely encountered harmful work cultures (marked as "banter") ...would've benefited from someone saying "they can't say that" and someone highlighting policies and grievance procedures."

"In one of my previous jobs a few years ago I recall LGBTQ+ "jokes", offensive language or innuendo casually thrown around staff rooms / during meetings."

"The odd homophobic comments at times from senior people, when reported I've always been told, they didn't mean it in that way. So these things have never been addressed, leaving me feeling on the outside often, just sticking with the other Gay people."

"In an earlier role, my boss asked several times if I could use Grindr to seduce some our clients. Was a joke at first until it wasn't."

Some respondents highlighted that they would like to see more active support from straight/cis colleagues.

"I wish allies would come forward more to support in the workplace, meaning it is not just LGBT+ people striving for their own inclusion."

For trans people, it feels like organisations are much further behind, often making very basic mistakes that cause the individuals to feel fundamentally undervalued or unsafe. Sometimes these mistakes not only go unacknowledged, but are doubled down on, compounding the issue.

"I was questioned in respect of my gender identity with colleagues constantly telling me it "didn't make sense" to them and the whole "plural pronouns aren't proper grammar". All people in senior roles were white, cisgender, and heterosexual; and were vocal about this. I was described as being the "politically correct one" and was the butt of many jokes around this."

There is also some concern that the 'culture war' will lead to a withdrawal of support for LGBTQ+ workers, stoking additional anxiety amongst LGBTQ+ workers.

"I think finding a workplace which (currently) supports my diversity and encourages me to live my authentic self at work has been hugely beneficial for developing my skills, becoming more confident at work and finding meaning in my work. I do see it starting to shift backwards however, as part of the wider impact of how LGBTQ+ issues have been used in the "culture war". I can see this making senior leaders nervous and retreat away from a proactive culturally humble, radical approach to equity and back into a comfort zone of "don't be too political". I am worried about how this will affect me, my colleagues, the workplace culture and the knock-on effect to our service users."

A strong network at work increases visibility, opens doors to new opportunities, enables knowledge-sharing and provides access to mentorship. Building relationships across teams also boosts resilience, provides a support structure during challenging times and can contribute to overall job satisfaction.

More people reported that being LGBTQ+ had a positive impact on their work-based networks (37%) than a negative one (6%). This suggests that for many, being openly LGBTQ+ can strengthen professional relationships, create opportunities for connection, and open doors within inclusive workplaces. Over 30% said that their experience was a mixed bag of positive and negative.

"The gay mafia is a thing. We all overwork, so if you want something you are never more than a few phone calls or connections away from someone who can help. The queers always seem willing to help each other in my experience."

"Our LGBTQ+ professional network in our industry I feel moves to friendship a little quicker than some other networks. We all have something very significant in common from the get-go. It's a superpower."

"Being LGBTQ+ has led me to be part of networks, groups etc, which has expanded my network."

"Through my organisation's LGBTQ+ network, I have been exposed to colleagues that I never would have met otherwise. In one instance, meeting a LGBTQ+ colleague has led to us writing a grant application, putting on a workshop and bringing other LGTBQ+ people together from within and external to the organisation to write a grant."

"It gives me access to a wider range of stakeholders across the firm as the LGBTQ+ network is not defined by service line, so for example I speak with tax colleagues that I would otherwise never meet. Membership of the ED&I network gives me contact time with the senior people within the firm."
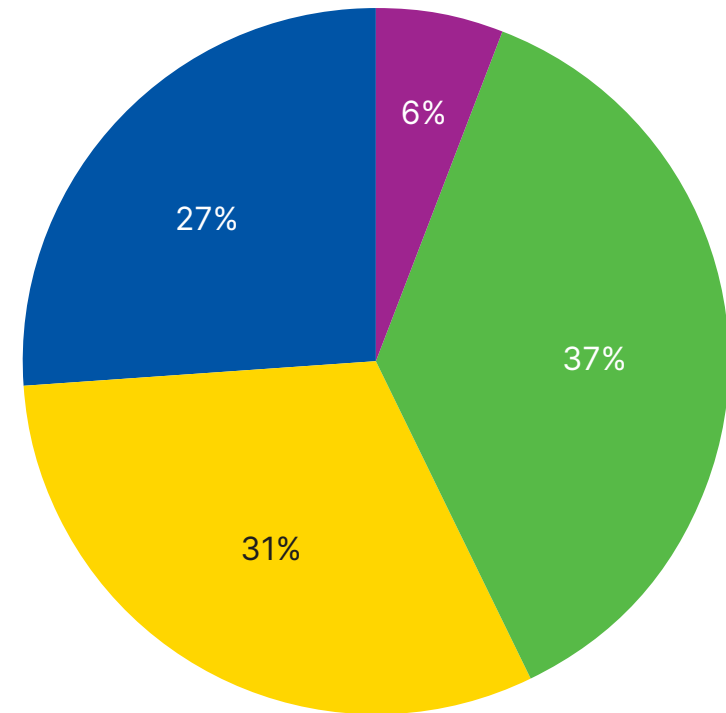
Would you say that being LGBTQ+ has affected your work-based network?

- Yes, negatively (6%)
- Yes, positively (37%)
- Both positively & negatively (31%)
- No (27%)

In some organisations, an LGBTQ+ network has been established but is not really given the support it requires to make a positive difference.

"Having an LGBTQ+ network isn't enough if the organisation doesn't do anything with it. In my organisation the network appears to be largely a token thing."

Pulling together as a community, can lead to real benefits, but the lack of integrated networking that results can create barriers. Several respondents highlighted that they struggle with 'straight' networking. They describe experiences or invitations to events that can be off-putting to some LGBTQ+ people, often due to past experiences, and from which they can be excluded.

"Despite a career in creative industries and now tech, I still feel like it's a boys' club at times and that it'll always be a little bit out of reach network wise as I don't/won't have kids, don't play/watch sports, go to pubs etc."

"Sometimes I will avoid events or networking opportunities due to feeling unsure about being openly non-binary. Often it can become exhausting either correcting people on my pronouns or not saying anything and being misgendered. Therefore, I sometimes avoid these situations."

"I do find that sometimes there's drinks with the lads I don't feel welcome at and also "nights out for the girls" which I don't get invited to either."

"Overall coming out at work has massively positively affected my networks. But I have had things said to me like 'I don't mind but don't come near me' or 'you don't make things easy for yourself' or 'I don't want to know who you have sex with'..."

"In some offices I've felt shut out from the main conversations colleagues use to bond (e.g. about football, or trips to the pub)."

"When all the lads went to Chelsea or golf days with the boss, I simply wasn't invited."

"I've often been excluded from networks where roles have been available. So lack of equal access to networks, which indirectly affects access to roles at senior levels."

"I like spending time with my LGBT colleagues. I hate being around the heterosexual banter. I do not feel I can say certain things when people talk about relationships or sex. If I have joined in the conversation people go quiet. I am invisible. No one ask about my relationship."

"I feel lonely."

And, as a result of the blow that one's confidence can suffer during the 'coming out' process, some find networking a challenge in general.

"Spending the first few years in the closet made me not want to draw any unnecessary attention to myself and "keep my head down" the lack of my participation in networking events etc had a negative effect on my building those strong professional relationships."

"I feel alienated quite a bit from the boys' club of professional development. I feel we are relegated to the sidelines and never really brought into the fold unless we are willing to sacrifice or tone down our queerness."

Over 80% of respondents had received no training aimed at helping them overcome the barriers that LGBTQ+ people face to career development.

Of the 18% that had received some kind of training, the experience could be poor, too generic, or uninspiring.

"It just felt like generic corporate "believe in yourself" bullshit with a pink tint - I didn't enjoy it."

"I think it was around new policy or legislation that had recently been created and the training covered an explanation of that new policy or legislation... but I cannot quite remember, sorry!"

"There was an eLearning session in a previous job about pronouns that everyone had to complete, but it was very basic and it's alienating having to complete eLearning about being non binary as a non binary person."

These quotes highlight the importance of making a distinction between generic, blanket inclusion training for the whole organisation and the specific, tailored training designed for LGBTQ+ people. The former can improve the comfort and safety of the work environment for LGBTQ+ (and other minority) workers, and work to remove some systemic barriers in areas like recruitment decisions. Training specifically aimed at LGBTQ+ people and delivered by LGBTQ+ people can go deeper, and be important in naming, acknowledging and working through the past experiences described above, in building confidence, and in enabling LGBTQ+ colleagues to achieve their potential.
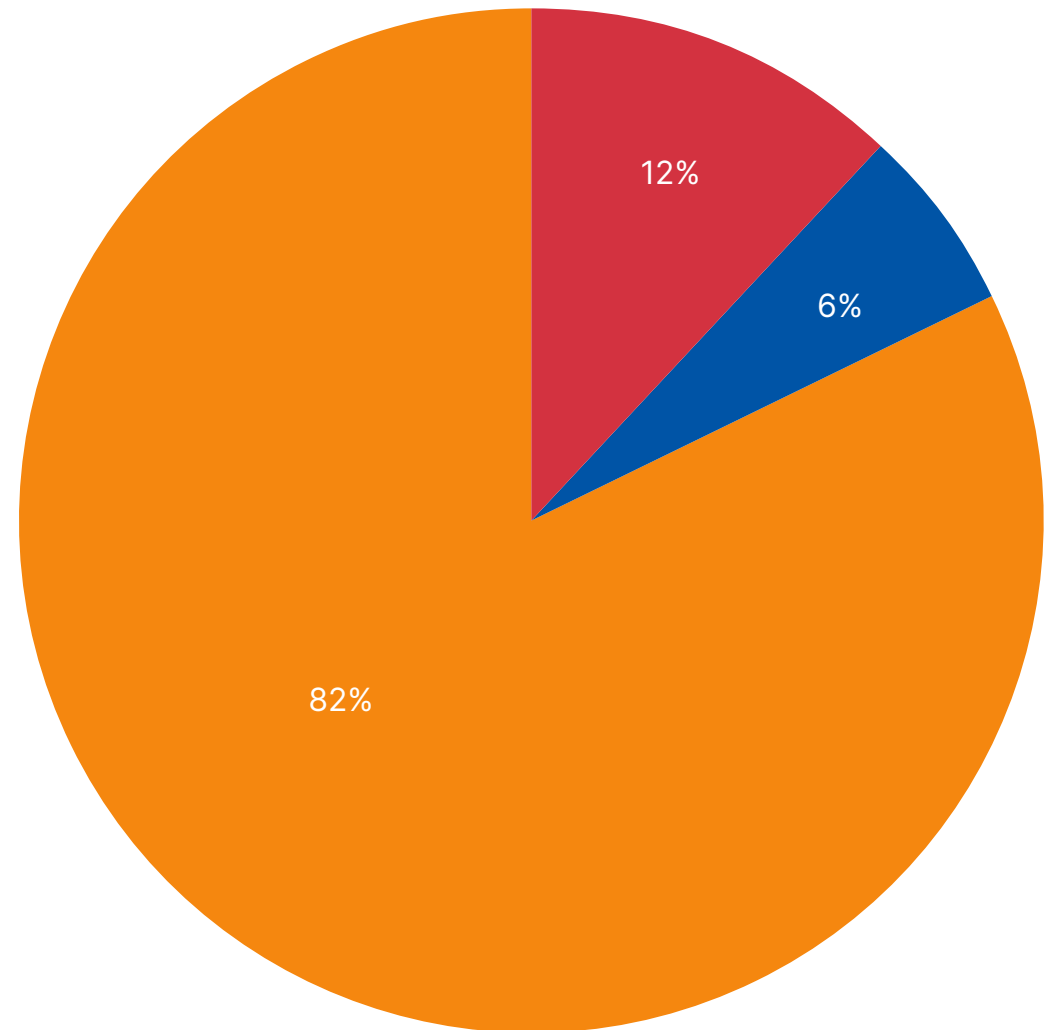
Have you ever received training that was specifically aimed at overcoming barriers to career development for LGBTQ+ people?

■ Yes - through my employer (12%) ■ Yes - through LGBTQ+ organisations that I organised for myself outside of work (6%) ■ No (82%)

This lack of tailored support leaves many individuals navigating workplace challenges such as bias, exclusion, and limited progression opportunities, without the confidence, tools or guidance needed to succeed. Providing it gives a clear sign to LGBTQ+ employees that they work in an environment that understands and provides for their specific support needs.

When asked what training would be most beneficial, respondents highlighted a range of topics, with Overcoming Barriers to Career Development emerging as the most requested. Other key areas included Confidence-building, Leadership, and Influence and Voice. Many also expressed interest in training on authenticity in the workplace, mentoring, handling conflict, and knowing their rights. Others were keen to receive any kind of training to help them overcome barriers to career development.

"Anything! I've never even heard or thought of this so it would be good to experience any of it and see what it's about."

"Any and all training!!"

"Anything honestly, just to be in a cohort of similar people would be nice."

"I'd just like help building confidence around my identity. I want to be an example to others and help support their identity by being confident in my own."

"Confidence. Positively embracing those lost years."

Some respondents highlighted the need for straight colleagues to receive EDI or allyship training to help them see, understand and tackle the barriers LGBTQ+ face, and build their knowledge about what language and behaviour is and isn't appropriate in an equitable workplace for LGBTQ+ colleagues.

"Training aimed at straight colleagues to see the barriers that LGBTQ+ staff face."

"Training to all leaders at all levels about identifying, understanding and tackling barriers for LGBTQ+ persons career progression, improving experiences in the workplace, and how to effectively and meaningfully create the core conditions to achieve psychological safety for LGBTQ+ people in the workforce."

"Training to all staff on LGBTQIA+ issues in the workplace, and educating what is not appropriate in the workplace that would cause members of the community to feel unwelcome/unsafe/bad."

"I don't want training - I want training to be given to others. The issues I have faced have largely been due to ignorance and a lack of knowledge/understanding from colleagues/peers, management, and HR."

82%

of respondents had received no training aimed at helping them overcome the barriers LGBTQ+ people face to career development

Section C
4. Positive impact on career progression of being LGBTQ+

It's paradoxical that the limited research available on LGBTQ+ experiences has tended to focus almost exclusively on the negative, creating a depressing informational climate that can unintentionally reinforce the systemic barriers of poor mental health and confidence that some LGBTQ+ people face.

Many of us are thriving despite (and sometimes literally in spite of), barriers outlined in this report. Encouragingly, many respondents highlighted the positive impact that being LGBTQ+ has ultimately had on their careers and lives. From the skills they developed in resisting and overcoming homophobia and transphobia, to the additional roles our community takes on and the growth opportunities they create, through to the natural leadership some felt compelled to embrace in advocating for others – these experiences have shaped resilience, confidence, and success. This section brings those elements together, demonstrating that while many still face challenges at work, there is also an abundance of queer joy to be celebrated.

"I wonder what life would have been like if I had been different, but I never ever wish that I was. That aspect of me has added so much joy and humour and love to my life that I would never change it."

For many LGBTQ+ professionals, their identity and experiences have helped shape key career-enhancing skills, from empathy and adaptability to networking and creative problem-solving.

When asked how being LGBTQ+ has positively affected their career, only 6% said that it had had no positive impact. Many associated it with positives such as:

Enhanced empathy and interpersonal skills (69%)

Enhanced ability to think creatively and challenge norms (52%)

Improved judgement of character and ability to build better networks (48%)

Stronger networks within LGBTQ+ professional communities (46%)

Others highlighted very specific skills they have developed, from critical thinking to resilience and emotional intelligence.

"It's made me much more aware of EDI initiatives and the importance of an inclusive culture. It's helped me to empathise with individuals of other minority groups, and overall I think has helped me to be more inclusive and kinder as an employee."

"Ability to read a room."

"I think it has made me braver."

"I think I also have developed a better sense of reading between the lines, understanding tone, and quickly understanding someone's character."

"I've taken on leadership roles in developing and leading staff networks, which gave me exposure and leadership experience at a relatively young age."

"Made me resilient and determined to become a role model for the next generation."

"Critical thinking – I've developed a better sense for BS!"

"It has given me a degree of emotional intelligence and a better insight into people and their behaviour."

"Being LGBT means I more naturally form bonds with other LGBT professionals enhancing my networking skills. More broadly though I am an introvert but the career challenges I faced being LGBT forced me to work on being more extroverted which made me better at networking relative to how I would have been if I was straight."

"Being LGBTQ+ enables a greater understanding of all minority groups and leads to better inclusion and diversity awareness."

"I think being LGBTQIA+ has overall positively impacted my career. I have been ambitious and striving for genuine change and inclusion within the creative industry, third sector and the mental health space."

Taking on Non-Executive Director (NED), trustee, or voluntary roles enhances career development by building strategic leadership, governance, and decision-making skills beyond day-to-day work.

These roles expand professional networks, increase visibility, and provide experience in financial oversight, risk management, and stakeholder engagement, which are highly valued in senior leadership positions.

As many as 40% of survey respondents serve, or have served in the last three years, on boards or in hands-on roles as Trustees, NEDs, or volunteers, with over 25% holding three or more roles alongside their day job. In most cases this is on a voluntary, unpaid basis.

This demonstrates a significant level of engagement within the LGBTQ+ community, suggesting that LGBTQ+ individuals are not only actively contributing to governance roles but are also stepping up disproportionately to drive change, create inclusivity, and ensure representation within organisations.

This high level of participation may stem from a response to the historic lack of LGBTQ+ voices in leadership, with individuals taking on additional responsibilities to influence decision-making, advocate for equality, and ensure that LGBTQ+ people now have a better experience than perhaps they did – this sense of obligation leads them to taking on a 'gay job' alongside their 'day job'.

Beyond the impact on wider representation, these roles also offer valuable professional experience, enhancing skills such as strategic leadership, governance, stakeholder management and advocacy, raising profile, and potentially strengthening career development opportunities for LGBTQ+ professionals.

Given that some LGBTQ+ people feel the need to obtain extra experience and status to be taken as seriously as a heterosexual, cisgender peer, it also makes sense that some would gravitate towards supplementary professional roles that confer extra cache, such as serving on boards.

1	**42.2%**
2	**33.7%**
3	**15.3%**
4	**7.2%**
5 or more	3.3%

If yes, how many NED, trustee or voluntary roles do you currently hold/ did you hold in the last 3 years in total?

We asked respondents as an LGBTQ+ leader, how comfortable they felt using their role to advocate for and support LGBTQ+ individuals and initiatives inside and outside their organisation.

A huge 68% said that they felt very or somewhat comfortable to do so, compared to only 18% who said they felt somewhat or very uncomfortable.

Those who felt comfortable use their position to advocate for and support LGBTQ+ individuals and initiatives within their organisation through:

- **Organising or supporting internal LGBTQ+ events and networks – 68%**

- **Developing and implementing inclusive policies – 64%**

- **Mentoring LGBTQ+ employees to support their professional growth – 50%**

- **Creating or supporting career development programmes for LGBTQ+ colleagues – 35%**

Delving further, these experiences are very diverse. For many, simply being 'out and proud', makes them the example that other queer people need to see, and it also gives the cis/heterosexual majority an example of a successful LGBTQ+ person, which helps to break down stereotypes.

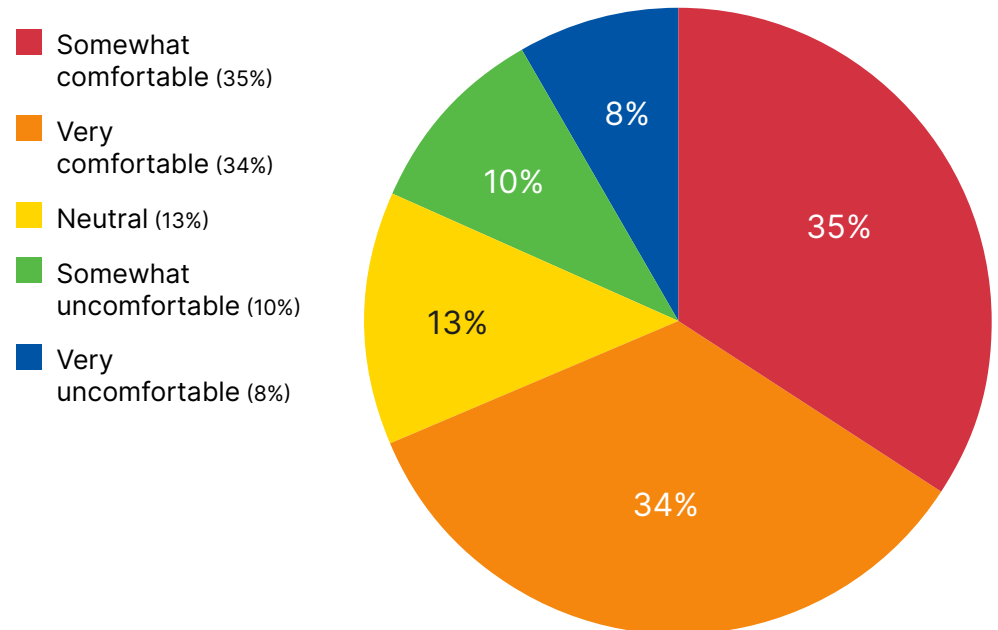*"I do my best to be visible talking about my partner."*

"Being visibly queer in management to make others feel safer coming out."

"Being openly and publicly proud sends a loud message to the UK business community."

"I often get approached by senior leaders and managers in the organisation for guidance and advice to help inform their thinking. Having had exposure to me has given them the opportunity to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community and reach out to learn."

"I love being queer, and it is a joy that keeps my work innovative and impactful. I look to find ways to share that joy even though the world does not feel great right now."

As an LGBTQ+ leader, how comfortable do you feel using your role to advocate for and support LGBTQ+ individuals and initiatives inside and outside your organisation?

Somewhat comfortable (35%)

Very comfortable (34%)

Neutral (13%)

Somewhat uncomfortable (10%)

Very uncomfortable (8%)

8%

35%

10%

13%

34%

LGBTQ+ individuals' advocacy often extends beyond their organisation, and often beyond the natural remit of their paid role. Externally, they use their position for:

• **Engaging in advocacy or partnerships that promote LGBTQ+ rights outside of their organisation – 65%**

• **Speaking at conferences or public events on LGBTQ+ issues – 47%**

• **Influencing industry-wide practices or policies to be more inclusive – 43%**

• **Sponsoring LGBTQ+ organisations or events – 40%**

Again, this advocacy can range from simply existing and being open about being LGBTQ+ to influencing a change of attitude, to much more hands-on work, such as volunteering, attending LGBTQ+ events, and setting up groups to support others.

"Being out and talking about my children and partner."

"I feel that I have a moral obligation to ensure positive awareness of LGBTQ+ contribution in society and be a part of that contribution."

"Volunteering for LGBTQ+ charities."

"Developed a queer Jewish group."

"Attending Prides."

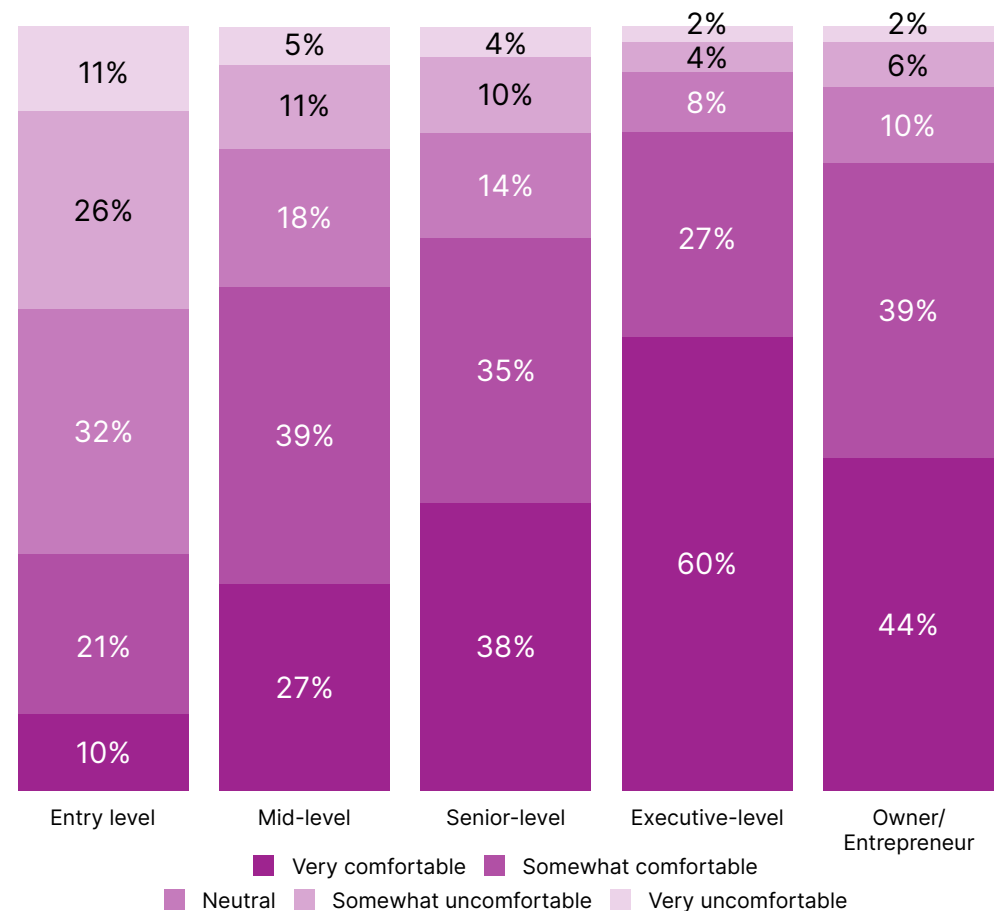*"I will do anything I can to support initiatives which elevate more role models in leadership."*

"Makes me work in a role where I can champion other people's rights."

Interestingly, the analysis suggests a clear link between seniority and confidence in advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion. The higher up someone is, the more comfortable they are speaking out.

A positive 87% of Executive-level respondents said they feel either very (60%) or somewhat (27%) comfortable advocating. In contrast, just 31% of Entry-level staff reported feeling comfortable, with only 10% saying they felt very comfortable.

Discomfort drops consistently with seniority. 37% of Entry-level staff report feeling somewhat or very uncomfortable, compared to 16% at Mid-level, 14% at Senior-level, and just 6% at Executive level.

Only 1 in 10 Entry-level respondents said they are very comfortable advocating, the lowest across all groups.

	Entry level	Mid-level	Senior-level	Executive-level	Owner/ Entrepreneur
Very uncomfortable	11%	5%	4%	2%	2%
Somewhat uncomfortable		11%	10%	4%	6%
Neutral	26%	18%	14%	8%	10%
	32%	39%	35%	27%	39%
Somewhat comfortable	21%	27%	38%	60%	44%
Very comfortable	10%				

■ Very comfortable   ■ Somewhat comfortable   ■ Neutral   ■ Somewhat uncomfortable   ■ Very uncomfortable

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from our survey, as reported above. They highlight the key barriers faced by LGBTQ+ professionals and the actions needed to drive meaningful change.

Creating truly inclusive workplaces requires action at multiple levels – our recommendations are for organisations, policymakers, the LGBTQ+ community, recruiters and future research.

This section provides targeted recommendations, based on our findings, offering practical steps to embed inclusion, remove systemic barriers, and ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals can progress based on their skills and potential.

Organisations across all sectors shape workplace culture, set industry standards, and influence societal attitudes. By embedding genuine inclusion into leadership, policies, and career development opportunities, they can remove barriers for LGBTQ+ professionals and ensure that success is determined by ability, dedication, and expertise.

Culture

Organisations need to move beyond performative allyship – rainbow logos and Pride events are not enough:

1. Ensure that all the correct policies are in place to support LGBTQ+ staff, including (but not limited to):

    a) Anti-discrimination Policy – Clearly state that discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is not tolerated. This should be integrated into the company's code of conduct and reinforced at all levels.

    b) Gender Identity and Transition Policy - Provide clear guidance on how the organisation supports transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse employees, including name and pronoun changes, workplace accommodations, and privacy protections.

    c) Family and Parental Leave Policies – Ensure equal access to parental leave, adoption leave, and fertility support for LGBTQ+ employees, reflecting the diverse ways families are formed.

    d) Health and wellbeing policies – Ensure medical benefits, mental health support, and employee assistance programmes (EAPs) are LGBTQ+-inclusive, including coverage for gender-affirming healthcare, and coverage for LGBTQ+ partners if they cover heterosexual partners.

2. Importantly, ensure HR and Management understand and apply these policies, and create an environment where colleagues can raise concerns in confidence, even if they are not 'out'.

3. Create a professional working environment where there is zero tolerance of bullying and harassment, and where 'banter' does not cross the line into bullying or harassment, and enhances rather than diminishes the workplace experience.

4. Always support and never compel LGBTQ+ employees travelling for work. Recognise the risks LGBTQ+ employees may face when travelling internationally, and implement clear policies to protect their safety and wellbeing. Importantly, understand that LGBTQ+ colleagues may not wish to travel or move to certain locations – this should be their choice – and do not allow this to negatively impact their career progression.

5. Support LGBTQ+ employee networks with budget, resources, and leadership backing to ensure LGBTQ+ networks are not just social groups but vehicles for change within the organisation.

6. Work to establish and support integrated networking opportunities and inclusive social and professional events.

7. Where LGBTQ+ individuals are in leadership, encourage them to be active role models, so that more junior colleagues can see that success is possible, representation matters, and they have a pathway to leadership themselves.

8. Ensure visible role models across the LGBTQ+ spectrum by introducing external speakers, mentors, or trainers when internal representation is lacking – such as through events, workshops, or leadership programmes.

9. Where possible, create an environment that allows employees to express themselves through their dress and presentation in a way that feels authentic to them, rather than enforcing traditional or heteronormative dress codes (such as requiring women to wear skirts or heels). Support colleagues in using their own voice and embracing their individual self-expression, rather than feeling pressured to conform to expectations that downplay their identity or authenticity.

10. Train all employees in LGBTQ+ inclusion. Equip managers to confidently challenge homophobic and transphobic behaviour in the workplace, and to apply policies (eg parental leave) correctly.

11. Embed supplier diversity, and proactively seek to work with LGBTQ+-led businesses and suppliers to support economic inclusion beyond the organisation.

12. Embed LGBTQ+ inclusion into wider business strategy – consider how LGBTQ+ representation could be demonstrated through marketing, customer service, and community engagement, not just internally.

13. Gather intersectional LGBTQ+ data and report on LGBTQ+ inclusion and progression. Include LGBTQ+ pay gap and diversity reporting in corporate transparency measures, alongside gender and ethnicity. Without measurement, progress cannot be tracked.

Recruitment and career progression

14. Provide comprehensive bias training for hiring managers to ensure fair and inclusive recruitment. Embed a company-wide commitment to diversity, and strive to ensure that diversity is seen a business benefit throughout the organisation.

15. Ensure that LGBTQ+ colleagues are encouraged to build their skills, upgrade their CVs/Linkedin profiles, and to apply for more senior roles. They may not have the confidence to put themselves forward without your encouragement.

16. Choose recruitment companies that have a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Allow them to challenge your organisation to improve its processes and culture to ensure that the best person gets the job. Empower your own HR teams to do the same wherever possible.

Tailored support for LGBTQ+ colleagues

17. Acknowledge the impact of ongoing culture wars and socio-political hostility, particularly towards trans people, on LGBTQ+ employees. Even just recognising this wider context can offer meaningful support and validation.

18. Actively seek out and commission training for LGBTQ+ colleagues that has been designed to help them overcome the barriers to career development described in this report.

19. Many LGBTQ+ individuals are developing high-level skills outside of their primary roles through voluntary board positions. Create mechanisms to ensure that this experience is understood and viewed positively in the organisation, and the expertise developed can support their career advancement. For example by including voluntary board positions in internal talent review discussions, and encouraging employees to list voluntary roles in internal CVs or appraisal documents.

20. Actively encourage LGBTQ+ employees into leadership roles through mentoring, sponsorship, and career development programmes.

21. Address intersectional barriers. Recognise that LGBTQ+ employees are not a homogenous group. Tailor support for trans and non-binary colleagues, LGBTQ+ people of colour, and those with disabilities, who face distinct challenges. For example: review recruitment processes to ensure that the best person (not the usual person) gets the job, ensure that recruitment processes are not screening out diverse candidates, ensure that training, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities consider intersectionality, and ensure that LGBTQ+ networks support intersectional colleagues and do not become homogenous themselves.

Enabling everyone to achieve their potential is good for the national and regional economy. Policymakers set the framework that determines fairness, equality, and economic opportunity.

By ensuring stronger legal protections, greater transparency, and targeted support for LGBTQ+ professionals, policymakers can help dismantle systemic barriers and create an environment where LGBTQ+ people can succeed based on their skills and potential, not their identity.

22. Reject divisive 'culture war' rhetoric and establish a cross-party commitment to ensuring everyone can thrive at work. Policymakers should actively challenge the rollback of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, recognising that inclusive workplaces not only enable individuals to live more fulfilled lives, but also unlock their full contribution to the UK economy.

23. Currently, mandatory pay gap reporting only applies to gender, excluding non-binary and trans people – this should change. Ethnicity and disability reporting are encouraged but not required – this should also change. Additionally, LGBTQ+ pay gap reporting and intersectional analysis should be introduced to ensure a more accurate and inclusive understanding of workplace inequalities.

24. Protect trans and non-binary rights in the workplace by ensuring that employment laws explicitly safeguard against transphobia and discrimination. This includes amending and reinforcing the Equality Act 2010 to provide clearer protections for gender identity and expression (especially for non binary people), mandating comprehensive anti-discrimination policies in all workplaces, and ensuring robust enforcement mechanisms. Governments should require employers to implement inclusive HR policies, such as clear pathways for reporting discrimination, and access to appropriate facilities. Regular consultation with trans and non-binary individuals, advocacy groups, and legal experts should inform policy development to ensure workplace protections remain effective, enforceable, and responsive to emerging challenges.

25. Prevent a return of Section 28-style restrictions and ensure that LGBTQ+ inclusion remains protected in schools and workplaces. Do not unduly limit discussions about LGBTQ+ identities – prevent the banning of books and protect librarians and other information professionals. This report shows the long-term damage to confidence that can be caused by preventing conversations and information about LGBTQ+ identity.

26. Improve access to healthcare for LGBTQ+ young people, while implementing a full trans-inclusive ban on conversation therapy.

27. Invest in research on LGBTQ+ career progression. Fund ongoing studies into LGBTQ+ workplace experiences, ensuring that policy decisions are based on evidence.

The LGBTQ+ community is a powerful force for progress, resilience, and leadership. By supporting one another, advocating for workplace equality, and challenging exclusionary practices, LGBTQ+ professionals can help shape industries, mentor future leaders, and drive inclusion from within.

While businesses and policymakers must play their part, the community itself has the power to influence change, create networks of support, and redefine careers for the next generation.

If you feel safe to do so:

28. Apply for that promotion or new role! LGBTQ+ people can only reach leadership roles when they step out of the 'velvet rut' and put themselves forward.

29. Join or create an LGBTQ+ staff network. Use it to encourage your organisation to be the best it can be for LGBTQ+ people, and move beyond symbolic gestures such as supporting Pride events. What action are they taking, for example, to ensure diversity at leadership level, or to prevent harmful 'banter'? Hold leadership accountable for real progress.

30. Find and support LGBTQ+ role models; if you can't see one, be one. Representation matters, and LGBTQ+ professionals in leadership can inspire the next generation to aim higher.

31. Engage with LGBTQ+ professional groups, mentorship schemes, and leadership programmes to enhance your networks, build connections and advance your career.

32. Advocate for yourself and others. Speak up about LGBTQ+ inclusion in your workplace, whether that means calling out bias, suggesting policy improvements, or mentoring others. Be mindful of the additional challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people of colour, trans and non-binary individuals, and those with disabilities – and help advocate for their inclusion.

33. Be informed about workplace discrimination laws, HR policies, and legal protections to ensure that you can challenge unfair treatment effectively.

34. Support LGBTQ+-led businesses and organisations. When possible, buy from, invest in, or partner with businesses led by LGBTQ+ people to strengthen economic inclusion.

35. Seek out coaching, training, and mentoring opportunities to strengthen your skills and assert your value in the workplace.

36. Support each other – the LGBTQ+ community is strongest when we lift each other up, across borders and backgrounds. Advocate, mentor, and create opportunities to help everyone thrive in their careers and reach their full potential.

Recruitment companies play a critical role in shaping career opportunities for LGBTQ+ professionals. As gatekeepers to job roles (including more senior roles), they have a responsibility to ensure that bias and discrimination do not limit LGBTQ+ career progression.

Encouraging better performance from clients

37. Challenge client bias and do not allow or enable discriminatory hiring preferences from employers. Be prepared to have difficult conversations with clients who express concerns about LGBTQ+ candidates based on identity rather than ability. Call out exclusionary practices, including the misuse of "culture fit" as a reason for rejecting diverse candidates. Push back on bias, advocate for hiring based on skills not comfort zones. Sponsor, champion and fight for diverse candidates to your clients, as much as you would for a straight cis white person.

38. Understand and promote the concept of 'culture add' versus 'culture fit' to enhance diversity in hiring. While culture fit seeks homogeneous candidates who align with existing team dynamics, culture add focuses on those who bring fresh perspectives, diverse experiences (both professional and lived), and new ways of thinking. Encourage clients to assess their team's current skills, behaviours, and approaches, identifying gaps that a new hire could fill. This helps shape inclusive role profiles, improves decision-making, and challenges unconscious bias – leading to stronger, more diverse teams.

39. Use your influence to advise businesses on inclusive hiring practices, the benefits of workplace diversity, and the risks of exclusionary approaches.

40. When placing LGBTQ+ candidates, work closely with clients to ensure they offer a genuinely inclusive and supportive environment. Start by assessing their EDI policies – do they explicitly include LGBTQ+ people? Review recent training efforts: when was the last session for leaders and staff, and did it meaningfully address LGBTQ+ inclusion? Look at internal diversity data to gauge representation and identify areas for improvement. With this insight, you'll be better equipped to advise candidates on whether the organisation will provide a fair and equal working environment for them. Where gaps exist, encourage clients to take meaningful action – so that LGBTQ+ professionals not only feel welcome, but have every opportunity to thrive.

41. Collect and analyse ongoing diversity data to improve LGBTQ+ recruitment outcomes. Track the progress of LGBTQ+ candidates at each stage of the hiring process to identify any patterns of exclusion, such as drop-offs at the interview or offer stage, and investigate the root causes. Ensure data collection is meaningful and leads to real change by conducting annual internal reviews to assess performance and refine strategies – both within your organisation and on behalf of clients.

42. Create pathways for LGBTQ+ leadership in the long term. Work with businesses to develop LGBTQ+ leadership pipelines and ensure LGBTQ+ professionals are supported into senior roles rather than overlooked.

Job/role specific

43. Review all job-related communication to ensure inclusivity and LGBTQ+ representation. Check role profiles, job descriptions, person specifications, advertisements, and application instructions for inclusive language. Avoid gendered terms, references to 'culture fit' without mentioning diversity, or non-inclusive imagery that may deter applicants. Ensure external communication actively signals LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Use free online inclusive language checkers to support this process and make it a standard part of your recruitment practice.

44. Commit to diverse candidate shortlists and to presenting LGBTQ+ candidates for senior roles, particularly in industries where representation is low. Proactively seek out diverse talent rather than relying on traditional networks.

Within the recruitment company

45. Build a strong, up-to-date learning and development pathway for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), including LGBTQ+ inclusion. Ensure your organisation has a structured approach to EDI training that supports continuous learning and best practices, with a specific focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion. As a recruiter, stay informed on best practices, hold yourself and your team accountable, and review training at least annually to maintain high standards in inclusive hiring.

46. Address bias in your own internal processes as a recruiter. Ensure that LGBTQ+ experiences, such as leadership in a network or charity, are highlighted as strengths rather than downplayed. Ensure interview panels are diverse, and review whether your own recruiters hold unconscious biases that may disadvantage LGBTQ+ candidates.

47. Partner with LGBTQ+ networks and organisations. Build connections with LGBTQ+ professional groups, mentoring schemes, and leadership initiatives to proactively identify and support LGBTQ+ talent.

Researchers play a vital role in shaping how LGBTQ+ workplace experiences are understood, evidenced, and addressed. However, meaningful research on LGBTQ+ career progression remains scarce, with most studies focusing on general workplace discrimination, bullying, or youth experiences.

This report was created to fill a major gap in the data. We learned a lot by conducting our survey and writing this report, and hope that it will inspire future studies to dig even deeper.

Diversify research samples

48. Prioritise inclusion of manual and retail workers. LGBTQ+ individuals in manual labour and retail roles are less likely to be at a computer or have access to traditional research channels, yet they are likely to be disproportionately exposed to workplace abuse and discrimination. Researchers should develop alternative recruitment methods, such as in-person outreach at community centres, local LGBTQ+ events, and union networks, to ensure these experiences are documented.

49. Strengthen outreach to QTIPOC (ethnic minority LGBTQ+) communities for research around LGBTQ+ experiences in the workplace. Traditional LGBTQ+ research networks often fail to reach ethnic minority LGBTQ+ individuals, many of whom are less likely to be out or engaged in mainstream LGBTQ+ spaces. Structural inequalities and scepticism about whether research will lead to real change also deter participation. Researchers should build relationships with trusted community leaders, faith-based groups, and culturally specific organisations to ensure these voices are included.

50. Find new ways to engage closeted or questioning individuals. Those who are not yet out – or struggling to accept their own identity – hold critical insights into workplace barriers but are often the hardest to reach.

51. Expand research through innovative and community-led methods to reach underrepresented LGBTQ+ groups. Traditional survey and interview methods often fail to engage those who are not 'out,' those in high-risk workplaces, or those who distrust research efforts. Researchers should explore fully anonymous data collection methods, such as encrypted surveys, confidential forums, or indirect questioning techniques, to allow closeted or questioning individuals to share their experiences safely. In addition, grassroots and community-driven approaches – such as peer-to-peer outreach, collaboration with LGBTQ+ organisations, and engagement through social media – can help reach participants who may not engage with mainstream research networks. Targeting non-traditional spaces (e.g., nightlife venues, faith-based groups, rural communities) ensures that research captures the full diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences, particularly those often overlooked in workplace studies.

Understand LGBTQ+ career experiences

52. Recognise the complexity of coming out. Coming out is not a one-time event or a linear process – especially for those with intersecting identities (for example, people that are both gay and trans go through a complex process of recognition different elements of their identity that may at times feel conflicting and confusing). Research should avoid rigid models of disclosure and instead explore the fluid, context-dependent nature of coming out, particularly in professional settings where safety and career progression may be at stake.

53. Account for the "velvet rut" effect on career stagnation. Many LGBTQ+ professionals may remain in workplaces that are comfortable or safe rather than pushing for career advancement due to fears of discrimination. Research should explore how this stagnation impacts leadership representation and career mobility.

54. Examine the role of LGBTQ+ employee networks. Workplace LGBTQ+ groups are common, but their effectiveness varies. Research could investigate how these networks influence career progression, whether they receive meaningful employer support, and how they can be leveraged for systemic change rather than being purely social spaces.

55. Explore the impact of work-related travel on LGBTQ+ professionals. Many LGBTQ+ employees refuse roles that require travel to unsafe regions. Researchers should examine how this impacts career progression, employer responsibilities, and industry policies for ensuring safety and inclusion.

Explore LGBTQ+ leadership

56. Investigate the experience of LGBTQ+ people in leadership roles. Most research focuses on barriers to reaching leadership, but little is known about the experiences of those who do make it. Are LGBTQ+ leaders expected to take on extra "diversity" responsibilities? Do they face increased scrutiny compared to their heterosexual, cisgender peers?

57. Compare with non-LGBTQ+ Employees. This report focuses solely on LGBTQ+ experiences, meaning we cannot compare our findings to non-LGBTQ+ employees facing similar career challenges. Future research could benchmark LGBTQ+ career progression against general workforce trends to strengthen the case for targeted intervention.

Other

58. Look into shifts across time. This report presents a snapshot in time, but does not track how LGBTQ+ career experiences evolve over time. A longitudinal study would provide a more dynamic understanding of whether barriers are improving, worsening, or shifting over time.

59. Work with our data. We're happy to share an anonymised version of the dataset behind this report with universities and other relevant research organisations, with a view to driving greater understanding and positive change for LGBTQ+ people.

6. Conclusion

This report has laid bare the realities that LGBTQ+ professionals continue to face in the workplace. The data is clear: barriers to career progression are widespread, deeply embedded, and often compounded for those with intersectional identities.

From bias in hiring and promotion to the impact of early-life confidence knocks, these challenges shape career trajectories in ways that cannot be ignored. And yet, despite these obstacles, LGBTQ+ professionals bring immense talent, resilience, and leadership to their fields – qualities forged through life experiences that demand adaptability, courage, and creativity.
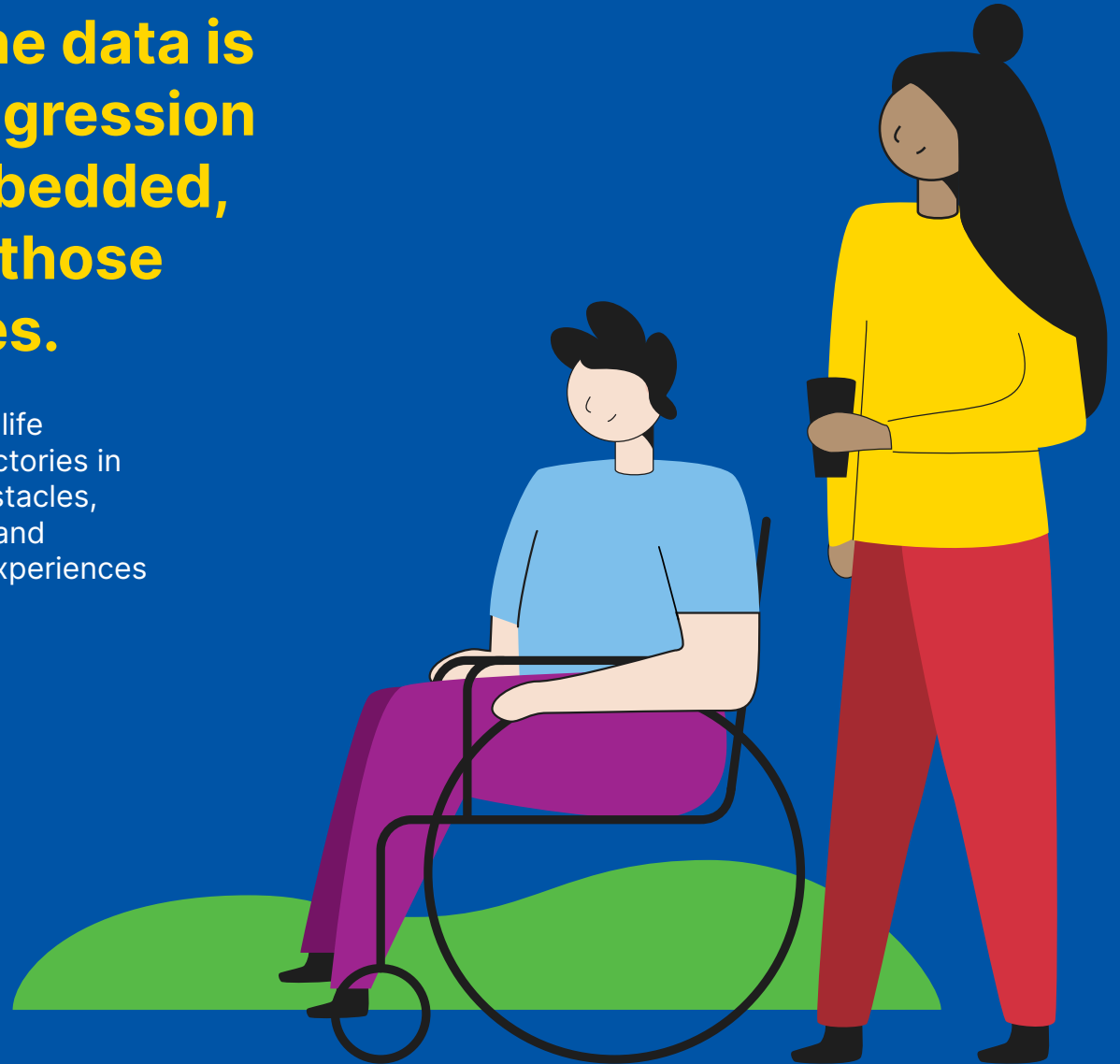
Some argue that in 2025, with progress on rights like marriage and adoption, the fight for LGBTQ+ equality is over. But legal protections remain incomplete, especially for trans and non-binary people, and the data tells us that lived experiences often fall far short of legal ideals. Many LGBTQ+ professionals still face significant barriers to reaching their full potential – barriers that are not only historical, but actively reinforced today.

At a time when EDI programmes are being scaled back, diversity roles eliminated, and LGBTQ+ inclusion dismissed as 'woke overreach,' the need for action has never been greater. The backlash against inclusion is not theoretical – it has real consequences. It shapes who gets hired, who gets promoted, and who feels safe at work. And when inclusion is deprioritised, it's not only individuals who suffer – organisations and economies do too. The business case for reversing the rollback of EDI efforts is clear. This is not just an LGBTQ+ issue – it's a collective challenge. Everyone has a stake in creating workplaces where all people can thrive, contribute, and prosper.

While some organisations have made strides toward inclusion, many efforts remain performative rather than substantive. Celebrating Pride Month is not enough on its own. True change requires structural investment: mentoring programmes, leadership pathways, transparent pay gap reporting, and real, measurable commitments to LGBTQ+ career progression. Without these, the so-called 'diversity gains' of recent years could erode under the pressures of economic cutbacks and rising anti-inclusion sentiment.

At the same time, this report has revealed something powerful: LGBTQ+ professionals are not just surviving these challenges; many are leading. They are honing empathy, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, resilience and emotional intelligence, which are very positive in the workplace. They are stepping up as role models, mentoring others, shaping more inclusive workplaces, and driving change far beyond their immediate job roles as volunteers and trustees. The

community's resilience is undeniable, but resilience to systemic barriers should not be a prerequisite for success.

This moment demands action. Organisations, policymakers, recruiters, researchers, and LGBTQ+ individuals themselves all have a role to play. We cannot afford to let talent be stifled by outdated biases or systemic inertia. Not only is that morally wrong, but it's bad for business and the UK economy. The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap – not just to mitigate barriers, but to build truly inclusive, equitable workplaces where LGBTQ+ professionals can thrive.

This is our call to action: to move beyond words and take meaningful, measurable steps toward change. Because when LGBTQ+ professionals succeed, we all benefit – from stronger leadership, richer innovation, and workplaces where everyone is empowered to reach their full potential.

Now, it's time to act.

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Appendices

This report is based on the findings of a survey conducted by Pride in Leadership to explore the barriers faced by LGBTQ+ professionals in career development, with a particular focus on leadership opportunities.

The survey, which is shown in full below, aimed to capture the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, identifying both challenges and opportunities within professional environments.

The survey was created using Google Forms and consisted of a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. These questions covered topics such as career progression, workplace experiences, representation in leadership, the impact of intersectionality, and organisational support for LGBTQ+ employees. The questions were designed to ensure respondents could share both quantitative data and personal insights, allowing for a richer understanding of the issues at hand.

One of the primary challenges was ensuring the survey reached a wide and diverse audience. To achieve this, it was promoted through multiple channels, including LinkedIn, other social media platforms, and Pride in Leadership's network of LGBTQ+ professionals and allies. It was picked up and shared by key organisations to their networks. Through these channels it was passed on virally to people we were not connected with. Additionally, Rumpus PR supported the outreach efforts, helping to maximise visibility and engagement.

The survey was open to LGBTQ+ professionals across different sectors and career levels between June and November 2024. To encourage candid responses, all participation was anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was collected, except where respondents voluntarily provided contact details for a prize draw or opted in for future communications. We received 1,017 responses in total. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone responded more than once.

Limitations:

Survey reach and representation bias

While the survey gathered over 1,000 responses, participation was skewed towards LGBTQ+ professionals who are already in leadership roles. Voices from less visible groups – such as manual workers, lower-income professionals, those in industries with fewer LGBTQ+ networks, or those who are not out at work, or not confident users of the internet – may be underrepresented. Future research should aim to capture these perspectives more comprehensively.

	Count	*Percent*
Mid-level	407	40%
Senior-level	262	26%
Entry-level	121	12%
Owner/Entrepreneur	111	11%
Executive-level	109	11%
Total	**1010**	**100%**

Geographic representation

The majority of respondents were from urban areas, where LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts are often more established. Those in rural areas or regions with fewer visible LGBTQ+ communities may experience different barriers that may not be fully reflected in this report.

Intersectionality and data gaps

While we made efforts to analyse intersectional experiences, some groups – including LGBTQ+ disabled professionals, LGBTQ+ people of colour, and trans/non-binary professionals – may not have been represented in large enough numbers to draw statistically significant conclusions. More targeted research is needed to fully understand the compounded barriers faced by these groups.

Self-selection bias

Since participation in the survey was voluntary, responses may skew towards those who have strong opinions or experiences (either positive or negative). Individuals who have faced mild discrimination or no significant barriers may be underrepresented, which could influence the overall tone of the findings.

Lack of longitudinal data

This report presents a snapshot in time, but does not track how LGBTQ+ career experiences evolve over time. A longitudinal study would provide a more dynamic understanding of whether barriers are improving, worsening, or shifting over time.

Employer perspective not included

The report captures LGBTQ+ employee perceptions but does not include data from employers, HR professionals, or recruiters. While these perspectives are important to understanding the full landscape of LGBTQ+ career progression, they were outside the scope of this study.

Limited industry-specific insights

While the survey included professionals from a range of industries, it does not provide deep dives into sector-specific challenges. The experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals in finance, healthcare, education, construction, tech, and retail, for example, may differ significantly, warranting further research.

No comparative data for non-LGBTQ+ employees

This report focuses solely on LGBTQ+ experiences, meaning we cannot compare our findings to non-LGBTQ+ employees facing similar career challenges. Future research could benchmark LGBTQ+ career progression against general workforce trends to strengthen the case for targeted intervention.

Section 1: Professional Level

1. Which of the below options best describes your current level within your organisation?

- Entry-level
- Mid-level
- Senior-level
- Executive-level
- Owner/Entrepreneur

1.1 Please explain (optional)

2. What is the size of your organisation?

- 1-10 people
- 11-50 people
- 51-200 people
- 201-500 people
- 501-1000 people
- 1001-5000 people
- 5000+ people
- 10,000+ people

Section 2: Board Participation

3. Outside of your 'day job', are you serving, or have you in the last 3 years served on any boards either as a Trustee, Non-Executive Director or volunteer? Or do you lead any voluntary groups?

- Yes, as a Trustee
- Yes, as a NED
- Yes, as both a Trustee and NED
- Yes, I run/lead a Voluntary group
- None of the above
- Other

3.1 If yes, how many such positions do you currently hold/did you hold in the last 3 years in total? (Please include both paid and voluntary roles that are not your official 'day job'

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Section 3: Coming Out

4. At what age did you come out as LGBTQ+?

Prefer not to say   17/under   18-20   21-24   25-34   35/older   NA
To friends
To family
At work (to colleagues)
At work (to clients/customers/externals)

5. Do you believe the timing of coming out has impacted your career trajectory?

- No impact
- Minor negative impact
- Major negative impact
- Minor positive impact
- Major positive impact
- Not sure

5.1 If so, please give examples of how you think it has affected your career

Section 4: Role Models

6. Did you have any LGBTQ+ role models in your professional field while you were early in your career?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Can't recall

6.1 If yes, how important were these role models in shaping your professional aspirations and confidence?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important
- Not applicable

6.2 Please give examples (optional)

Section 5: Career Barriers

7. Which of the following barriers have you encountered in your career due to being LGBTQ+? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of LGBTQ+ representation in leadership positions
- Discrimination or bias in promotion or assignment opportunities
- Inadequate support from HR or management for LGBTQ+ issues
- Uncomfortable or hostile work environment
- None of the above
- Verbally or physically attacked at work
- Concerns when travelling for work (eg to countries with poor LGBTQ+ rights)
- Other

7.1 Please tell us more (optional)

8. Do you feel that being LGBTQ+ affected your educational achievement (school, college, university, apprenticeships, etc)?

- Yes, positively
- Yes, negatively
- No affect
- Maybe

8.1 Please explain (optional)

Section 6: Positive Impacts

9. In what ways, if any, do you think being LGBTQ+ has positively affected your career? (Select all that apply)

- Enhanced empathy and interpersonal skills
- Stronger network within LGBTQ+ professional communities
- Enhanced perspectives on diversity and inclusion
- No positive impact
- It made me a better judge of character, and helped me choose better friends and networks
- Enhanced ability to think creatively and break norms
- Other

Section 7: Employment Choices

10. Has being LGBTQ+ influenced your choice of career?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Significantly
- Entirely

11. Are you aware of any times being LGBTQ+ may have affected you getting a job?

- Positively
- Negatively
- Not sure

11.1 Please tell us more (optional)

12. To what extent has being LGBTQ+ influenced your choice of where to live?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Significantly
- Entirely

12.1 Please tell us more (optional)

13. Have you ever not applied for, or turned down a role because it would have required a move to a location that you considered might be less LGBTQ+ friendly?

- Yes
- No

13.1 Please tell us more (optional)

14. My organisation supports LGBTQ+ people by:

Yes / No / I dont know

- Acknowledging Pride Month
  (eg emails, rainbow layards, flags in office, etc)
- Hosting a Pride event internally
- Participating in an external Pride parade or event
- Funding or providing specific training for LGBTQ+ staff
- Reporting LGBTQ+ diversity and pay gap information publicly
- Supporting LGBTQ+ people to get to leadership roles
  (eg through mentoring, coaching or sponsoring)

- Supporting LGBTQ+ charities (either financially or in-kind) in the UK
- Supporting LGBTQ+ charities (either financially or in-kind) globally outside the UK
- Actively seeking to work with LGBTQ+-led suppliers
- Other (optional)

Section 8: Travel for work

15. Have you faced difficulties related to being LGBTQ+ while travelling for work purposes?

- No, never
- Yes, occasionally
- Yes, frequently
- Not applicable/I do not travel for work

15.1 If yes, please specify the type of difficulties encountered

- Hostility or discrimination from colleagues or clients
- Legal or safety concerns in certain locations
- Lack of appropriate accommodations
- Other

Section 9: Your network

16. Would you say that being LGBTQ+ has affected your work-based network?

- Yes, negatively
- Yes, positively
- Both positively and negatively
- No

16.1 Please tell us more/give examples (optional)

Section 10: Training

17. Have you ever received training that was specifically aimed at overcoming barriers to career development for LGBTQ+ people?

- Yes - through my employer
- Yes - through LGBTQ+ organisations that I organised for myself outside of work
- No

17.1 if yes, can you remember what this training covered?

17.2 What training would you like to receive?

Section 11: Leveraging leadership to influence change
We view leadership as encompassing both the responsibilities within your role and the influence you exert beyond it.

18. As an LGBTQ+ leader, how comfortable do you feel using your role to advocate for and support LGBTQ+ individuals and initiatives inside and outside your organisation?

- Very uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat comfortable
- Very comfortable

19. If you feel comfortable, how do you use your position to advocate for and support LGBTQ+ individuals and initiatives within your organisation? (Select all that apply)

- Developing and implementing inclusive policies
- Creating or supporting career development programmes for LGBTQ+ colleagues
- Mentoring LGBTQ+ employees to foster their professional growth
- Organising or supporting internal LGBTQ+ events and networks
- Other

20. How do you use your leadership role to support LGBTQ+ initiatives externally? (Select all that apply)

- Sponsoring LGBTQ+ organisations or events
- Engaging in advocacy or partnerships that promote LGBTQ+ rights outside of your organisation
- Speaking at conferences or public events on LGBTQ+ issues
- Influencing industry-wide practices or policies to be more inclusive
- Other

21. Do you have any other thoughts about how being LGBTQ+ has impacted on your career trajectory that you would like to share?

Section 12: About you

22. What is your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Other

23. Does your gender identity match the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No

24. What is your age group?

- 17 or under
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55- 64
- 65 or above

25. What is your sexual orientation? (optional)

- Gay man
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Straight/Heterosexual
- Asexual
- Other

26. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

27. Please select your ethnicity

- Asian/Asian British
- White
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups
- Other

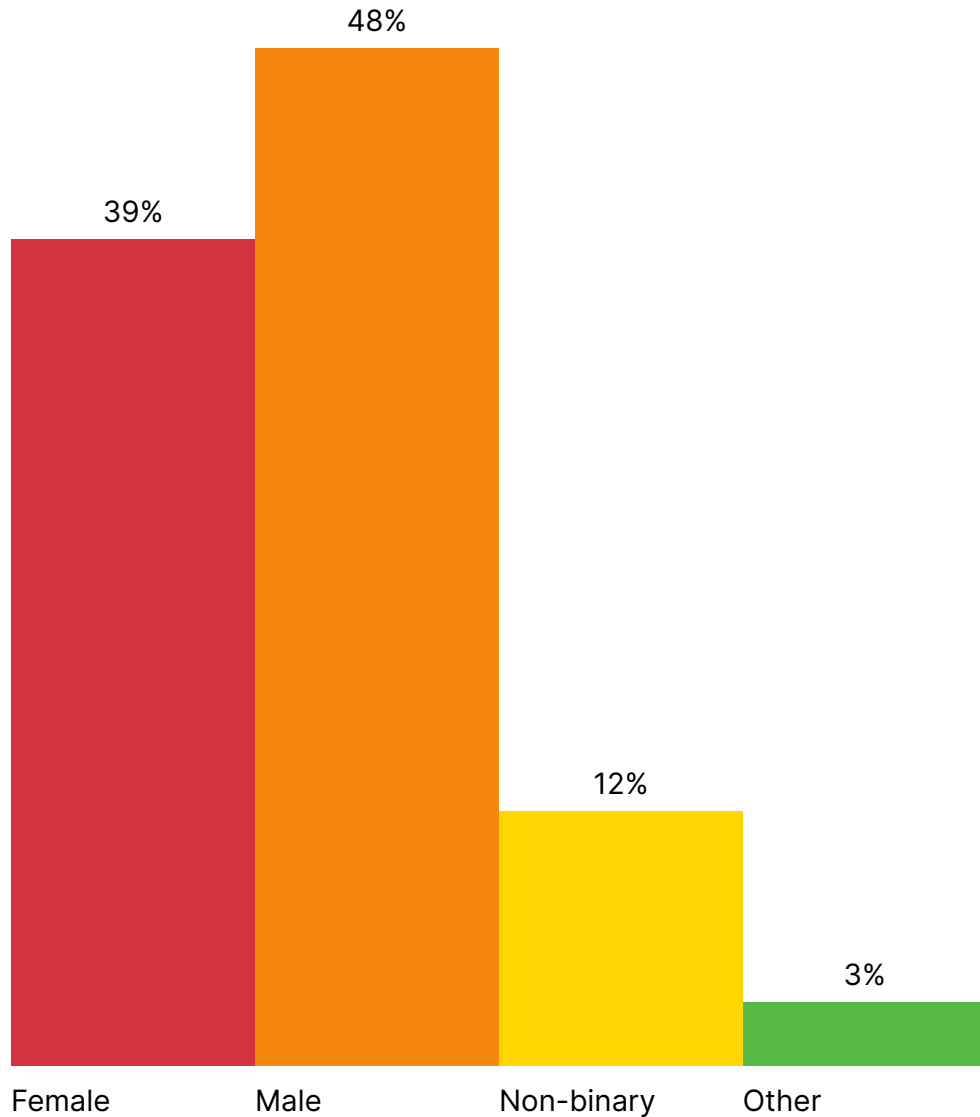**28. Where do you live? Please select your county from the alphabetical list below.**
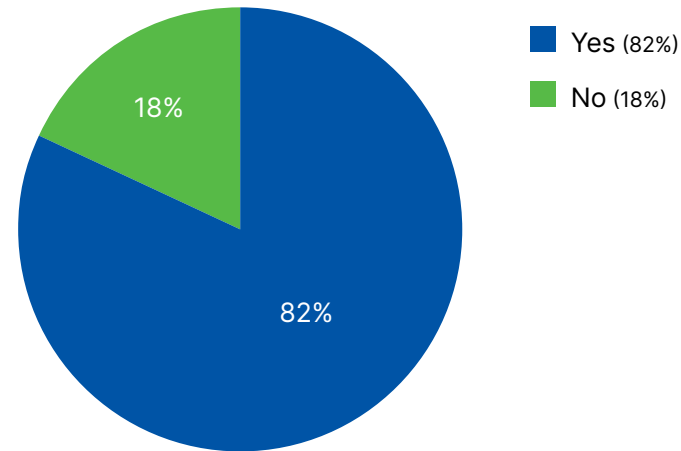
- Full list of UK counties...

Respondents were 39% female, 48% male,12% non-binary and 3% other.
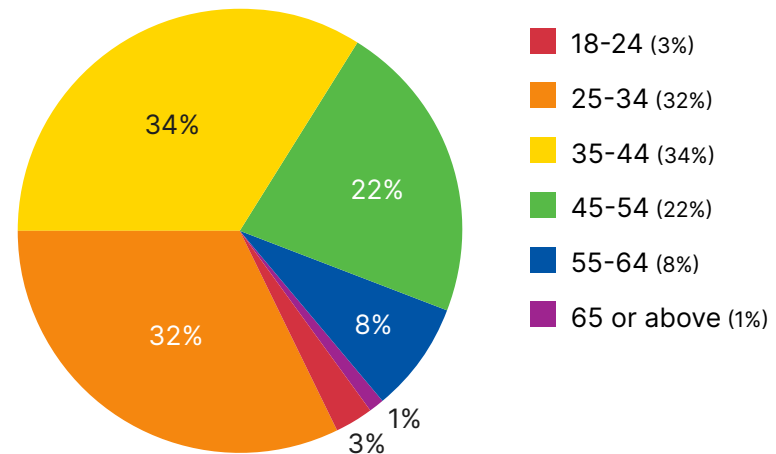
What is your gender identity?

82% of respondents' gender identity matched that assigned at birth, and 18% did not.

Does your gender identity match the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes (82%)
- No (18%)

As may be expected from a survey about career development, over 88% of respondents were in prime working ages, between 25 and 64

What is your age group?

- 18-24 (3%)
- 25-34 (32%)
- 35-44 (34%)
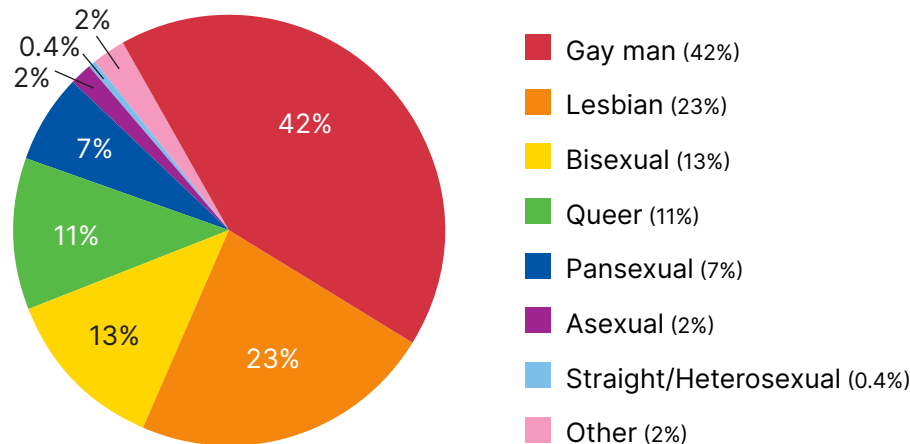- 45-54 (22%)
- 55-64 (8%)
- 65 or above (1%)

Almost half (48%) of our respondents were above mid-level in their organisation, either in senior positions, Executive level or owned their own businesses.

Which option best describes your current level within your organisation?
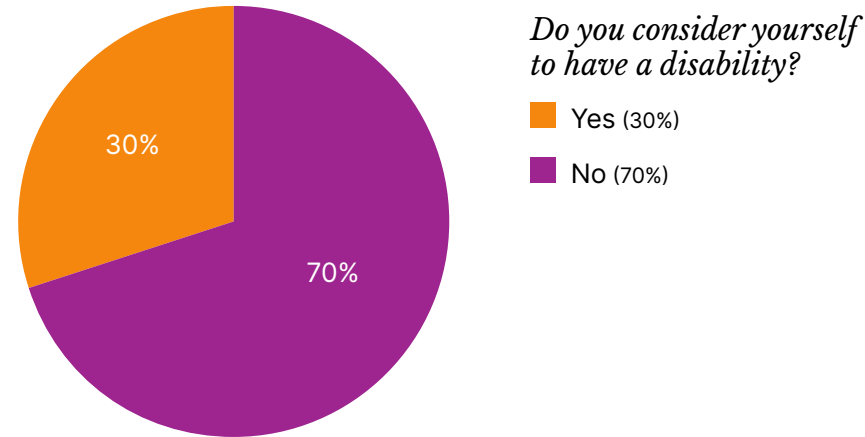

- Entry level (12%)
- Mid-level (40%)
- Senior-level (26%)
- Executive-level (11%)
- Owner/Entrepreneur (12%)
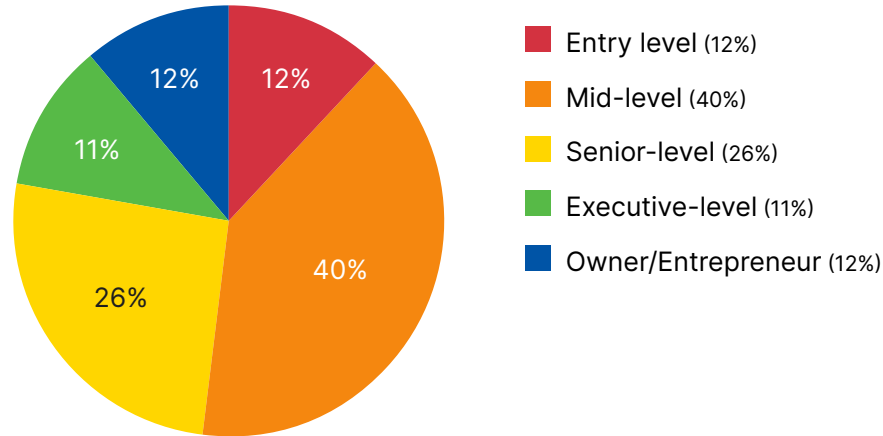
Respondents were 42% gay men, 23 % lesbians, 13% bisexual, 11% queer, 7% Pansexual and 2% Asexual, with 2% saying 'other'.
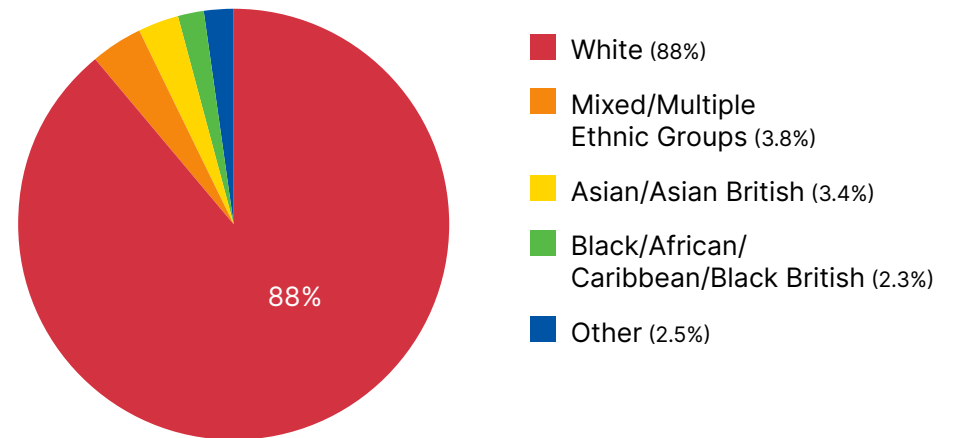
What is your sexual orientation? (optional)

- Gay man (42%)
- Lesbian (23%)
- Bisexual (13%)
- Queer (11%)
- Pansexual (7%)
- Asexual (2%)
- Straight/Heterosexual (0.4%)
- Other (2%)

Over 30% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes (30%)
- No (70%)

The vast majority of respondents, over 88%, were white, with only 3.4% Asian, and 2.3% Black.

While we were aiming to be representative of the UK population in terms of demographics (ie 4.2% Black, 9.6% Asian), there are no statistics covering the numbers of LGBT people in these communities. We recognise that people from ethnic minority communities often face additional cultural, religious, and familial pressures, as well as racism within LGBTQ+ spaces, which can make it more challenging to be openly LGBT.

- White (88%)
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups (3.8%)
- Asian/Asian British (3.4%)
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (2.3%)
- Other (2.5%)

We received responses from across the UK, with a higher representation from Greater Manchester (29%) and Greater London (16%).
This is likely due to Pride in Leadership's established presence in these regions. Other areas that were represented in the survey were:

Aberdeenshire
Angus
Argyll and Bute
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Blaenau
Gwent
Bridgend
Bristol
Buckinghamshire
Caerphilly
Cambridgeshire
Cardiff
Carmarthenshire
Ceredigion
Cheshire
Clackmannanshire
Conwy
County Antrim
County Armagh
County Down
County Fermanagh
County Londonderry
County Tyrone
Cumbria
Denbighshire
Derbyshire

Devon
East Dorset
Dumfries and Galloway
Dundee
Durham
East Ayrshire
East Dunbartonshire
East Lothian
East Renfrewshire
East Riding of Yorkshire
Sussex
Edinburgh
Essex
Falkirk
Fife
Flintshire
Glamorgan
Glasgow
Gloucestershire
Gwynedd
Hampshire
Herefordshire
Hertfordshire
Highland
Inverclyde
Isle of Anglesey
Isle of Wight

Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Merseyside
Merthyr Tydfil
Middlesex
Midlothian
Monmouthshire
Moray
Neath Port Talbot
Newport
Norfolk
North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire
North Yorkshire
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Orkney
Oxfordshire
Pembrokeshire
Perth & Kinross
Powys
Renfrewshire
Rhondda Cynon Taff
Rutland

Scottish Borders
Shetland Isles
Shropshire
Somerset
South Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire
South Yorkshire
Staffordshire
Stirlingshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Swansea
Torfaen
Tyne & Wear
Warwickshire
West Dunbartonshire
West Lothian
West Midlands
West Sussex
West Yorkshire
Western Isles
Wiltshire
Worcestershire
Wrexham

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