

Research Brief

IBV Diversity & Inclusion Series: LGBT+

Striving for authenticity

LGBT+ views on enduring discrimination and expanding inclusion

In collaboration with



Striving for authenticity

LGBT+ views on enduring discrimination and expanding inclusion

The identities that make up the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community stretch far beyond the four letters typically used to represent it. This community is diverse—and has adopted a plus sign to be inclusive of its many identity groups. As the community continues to make space for many different understandings of and labels for sexual orientation and gender identity, its language evolves with it.

Individual LGBT+ lives, families, and experiences are all unique. What brings the LGBT+ community together is less a shared identity and more a shared struggle for acceptance and equality, with each segment of the community experiencing the struggle differently.

In some countries, criminalization continues to force LGBT+ communities to live underground and in the closet. In other places, advocacy and education have spurred significant progress. From legalizing same-sex marriage and adoption to writing equality into their constitutions, more than 150 countries now offer some form of legal protection for LGBT+ people.¹

Globally, there has been a massive uptick in the percentage of people who say same-sex relationships should be accepted by society. According to Pew Research, many countries saw a double-digit increase in positive attitudes toward LGBT+ people between 2002 and 2019.² In South Africa and South Korea, acceptance jumped roughly 20 percentage points—and India has seen a 22-point increase since 2014.

This shift in perspective has encouraged more LGBT+ individuals to come out publicly. In February, Gallup reported that the number of Americans who self-identify as LGBT+ hit a new high of 5.6%, up 60% over 2012.³ Most people in this group (56.4%) identify as bisexual, with 11.3% identifying as transgender.⁴

But even in the wake of big wins, such as the US Supreme Court’s landmark decision that the Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from workplace discrimination, a raft of new legislation is putting LGBT+ rights further at risk.⁵ The Human Rights Campaign has declared 2021 to be a record-breaking year for anti-LGBT+ legislation in the US, with limiting transgender rights becoming a common wedge issue. By May 2021, more than 250 bills had been introduced in state legislatures across the US, and 18 bills had either been signed into law or were awaiting gubernatorial signature.⁶

LGB

When you see this acronym, we are referring to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals surveyed by the IBV.

LGBT+

When you see this acronym, we are referring to Jam participants or the wider community that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary people, and more.

Exploring individual narratives

To learn more about the identity and experiences of the LGBT+ community, the IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV) in collaboration with Oxford Economics surveyed more than 6,000 United States-based professionals between August 2020 and January 2021, including 700 individuals who self-identified as gay or lesbian (73%) or bisexual (27%). Although offered as an option in our random, anonymous, double blind survey, none of the respondents explicitly self-identified as non-binary. Therefore, the following data is directionally helpful, but as with any studies missing key populations, the analysis and applicability should be taken in this context and not treated as proxy for any subset of the LGBT+ population in isolation.

While the nuances of gender identity were not included in the initial survey, we did want to tell a comprehensive story about the lived experience of LGBT+ people (see Perspective: Centering the transgender experience on page 3). To capture valuable insights from individuals across this diverse community, the IBV teamed up with Out & Equal and Workplace Pride to host a Global LGBT+ Innovation Jam on April 13 and 14, 2021 (see Insight: Inside the Global LGBT+ Innovation Jam on page 14).

During this Jam event, more than 2,000 business leaders, subject matter experts, and thought leaders—LGBT+ and allies—came together online to discuss the unique needs within the LGBT+ community and identity overarching efforts that can increase inclusion and belonging. Jam participants claimed identities across the spectrum, with 43% identifying as gay or lesbian, 33% as non-LGBT+, 9% as bisexual, and 8% as queer. 5.6% of participants identified as non-binary. Digital Jam discussions covered a broad swathe of topics, ranging from the ways technology can reduce bias to how companies can support the mental health of LGBT+ individuals.

This paper summarizes the findings of the survey and the Jam, both of which offer deep insights from the LGBT+ community about their personal experiences, the obstacles they face at work and in society—and how organizations can redress them. However, in the interest of clarity, we will use different acronyms to refer to the study population (LGB) and the Jam participants and broader community (LGBT+).

Centering the transgender experience

Organizations need to become more actively inclusive to create a safe, supportive work environment where transgender people can thrive.

While support for transgender rights has grown in recent years, so has public backlash.⁷ In 2021, dozens of US states are considering legislation that would discriminate against transgender people, attempting to restrict access to youth sports, gender affirming care, and even public restrooms.⁸ This anti-transgender legislation continues to reflect a society with toxic transphobia which leads to transgender people facing harassment and physical abuse. Sadly, in the US in 2020 at least 44 transgender people were murdered, the majority of whom were Black or Latinx women.⁹

Transphobia and discrimination is experienced in the workplace, as well. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, more than one in four transgender people have lost a job due to bias, and more than three-fourths have experienced some form of workplace discrimination.¹⁰ As a result, transgender people see fewer opportunities for professional advancement.

According to recent research from McKinsey, transgender people are much more likely than cisgender people of the same age to be in entry-level positions, and fewer trans people have sponsors (21%) than their cisgender peers (32%).¹¹ And in a survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2019, 46% of trans respondents indicated that they had at least some difficulty making ends meet (compared to 37% across the entire LGBTI¹² survey population).¹³

“When we do not actively include, we exclude,” one Jammer said. “It is one thing to have LGBTQ+ supporting policies and benefits in place. And another for employees to feel like they belong.”

Fostering a sense of belonging begins with building a culture that doesn’t tolerate discrimination. But it cannot end there. From explicit policies that are consistently enforced to regular training and education sessions to gender affirming benefits, organizations must clearly demonstrate that they’re committed to supporting transgender team members.

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Even lots of LGBT people themselves lack proper knowledge on topics that aren’t directly connected to their own identity.

I took the opportunity while working remotely to begin my transition so when/if we ever return to work, it won’t be as big an issue, I will just be.

To be candid, I admit, I’m afraid of the backlash of coming out in my transition and how that will affect my career as a leader.

There is a lot of good work being done, but a lot of the time it feels like we are fighting an existing system that is just not designed for trans people.

Trying to answer a question about your whole community when you are just one person is very stressful; none of us know anything.

—LGBT+ Jam participants

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Transgender and non-binary people made up 15% of Jam participants.

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I will soon be entering the workforce and would definitely hope that there were fellow transgender employees at the company. In fact, I will actively be looking to work for a company that has high rates of LGBTQ+ employment at all levels, including executive positions.

As an out transgender woman in my workplace and industry, I find my primary responsibility is to show up every day in a real way. Too often I feel the pressure to conform or compromise to fit in. There is power in our uniqueness and I want to leverage that more and more.

I love meeting other nonbinary people who experience gender identity in a similar way to me: divorced from their gender presentation, and very close to a gender while still having a bit of ‘something not man or woman’ to them.

The fact that I am employed and can openly live as transgender at work has made me stronger and more determined.

I have found it helpful for a non-trans ally to bring up an issue at the organization or ask about the implementation of a policy (so it’s not just on trans staff to do so).

—LGBT+ Jam participants

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Being more intentionally inclusive will help transgender employees bring their whole selves to work, which can make them more likely to speak up, share creative ideas, and give their all to their projects. But it is important to respect every trans person and their decision to be out as transgender or to remain ‘stealth.’ Therefore, ensuring privacy is critical to the safety and autonomy of transgender people.

“The goal should not be to have someone come out, as disclosure of personal information is a choice,” said one Jammer.

Rather, the goal should be to create policies that are inclusive of trans people regardless of whether they are out or not. Encouraging all employees to use gender inclusive language (“everyone” instead of “you guys”), making the employee name change process as simple as possible, and offering gender-neutral restrooms are just a few examples of changes leaders can make to provide the corporate support needed to protect transgender people at work.

“There are many incremental steps that can be taken to make a person’s workplace environment more comfortable, no matter their identity,” said one Jammer.

Educational sessions for employees and managers can also create a more inclusive environment. But it’s important not to ask transgender team members to continually do the emotional labor of educating their colleagues about the transgender experience. Outside professionals will often be better suited for this task. Beyond being specially trained in this skill, their third-party status also protects them from the type of harassment an in-house team member could face.

“I’m convinced that storytelling is essential to increase empathy, awareness, and support for trans and nonbinary people,” one Jammer said. “Yet it’s so true that being visible and vocal can put people at risk—and it can also feel really exploitative at times. When putting myself out there in a workplace, I tend to share carefully-curated micro-stories and information so the audience or managers can better understand and connect to the issue while I can maintain some boundaries and emotional safety.”

Individuals, both leaders and team members, also have a large part to play. Demonstrating openness and a willingness to learn can go a long way, even as people continue to learn about the needs of their transgender colleagues. For example, if cisgender people share pronouns every time they introduce themselves—not just when non-binary or transgender people might be around—they can help create a more welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.

“It’s a tricky line to walk, for sure,” said one Jammer. “If you make a mistake, the best thing is to quickly apologize, correct it, and move on with what you were saying. We can tell when folks are trying, and it means the world!”

Ongoing discrimination

The IBV LGB survey offers a unique snapshot of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual experience across the professional spectrum—including senior executives, senior and junior managers, and entrepreneurs. It explores their ongoing experience with discrimination and success—and how their different identities intersect.

Overall, we found that LGB people do not feel they are treated fairly in US society. 92% believe that discrimination exists against people who share their sexual orientation to at least some extent. And 4 in 5 say they have been personally discriminated against due to their sexual orientation.

Nearly half (45%) of LGB people say their employer discriminates against people of the same sexual orientation. Almost the same portion of non-LGB respondents (43%) agree that their employer discriminates against LGB people. Given this reality of sustained discrimination—despite recent progress—it’s unsurprising that 63% of LGB individuals surveyed believe those who share their sexual orientation are less successful than the US population in general. The IBV survey results support this conclusion, at least with regard to LGB representation at the corporate leadership level. We found that only 7% of senior executives in the US identify as LGB.

And Jammer insights support this narrative. The stories they shared were compelling and, at times, heart-breaking. As a group, Jammers weighed the desire to live authentically and pave a path for future generations against the need to ensure the safety and success of individuals in the present. They discussed how to build bridges and open doors, and explored the generational shift taking place as Millennials and Gen Z become a larger portion of the workforce—as well as how leaders need to adapt.

The future of LGBT+ inclusion

The Jam posed a central question: What habits need to change to create workplaces where people of all identities are safe?

By pairing the results of the IBV LGB survey with insights from the LGBT+ Jam, we identified 3 ways organizations can evolve by embracing LGBT+ diversity.

1. Foster visibility, inclusion, and authenticity

2. Embrace intersectionality

3. Expand corporate support and individual allyship

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I think it’s really important for leaders to set the tone and the stage for a truly authentic environment.

—LGBT+ Jam participant

87% of Jammers agree:
My company or organization should take a more assertive public position on LGBT+ inclusion and belonging.

1. Foster visibility, inclusion, and authenticity

Ensuring that qualified LGBT+ individuals are part of leadership teams is an effective way for organizations to understand and elevate the needs of individuals who have historically lived at the margins.

For example, in March, the US Senate confirmed Rachel Levine as assistant secretary of health, the highest position an out transgender person has held in the country's federal government.¹⁴ Advocates hailed the appointment as an important step toward equality and inclusion, as it puts an LGBT+ expert in an important seat at the table.

In her new role, Levine has an opportunity to address unequal access to public health services, which is a major issue facing the LGBT+ community in the US. Our survey found that more than 40% of LGB people feel discriminated against when receiving public services at the state, local, and federal level.

Out leaders like Levine provide powerful examples for others to follow. Having successful LGBT+ people in positions of power and authority provides opportunities for meaningful culture shifts and, by extension, opens more doors for marginalized groups.

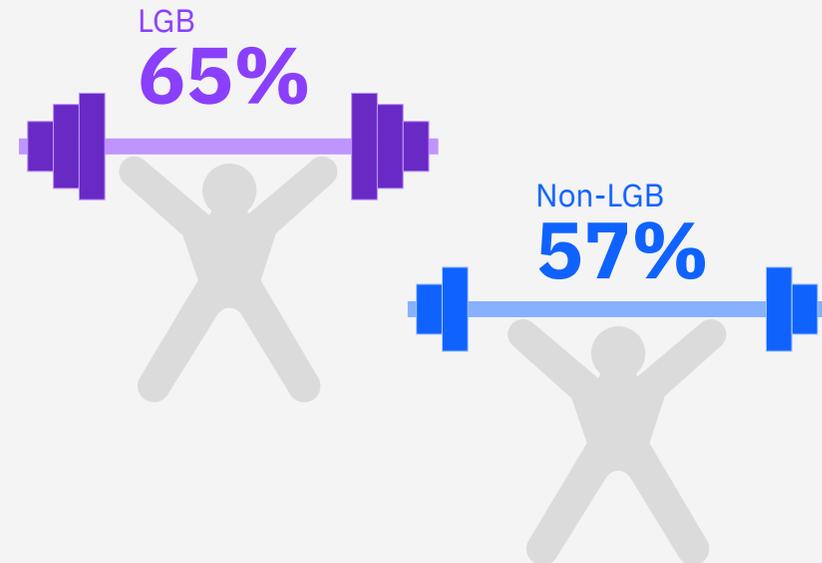
However, not everyone is comfortable accepting—or can afford—the risk and burden of not hiding their LGBT+ identity at work. Authenticity often comes at a cost. For example, according to our survey, nearly 2 in 3 LGB individuals say they have had to work harder to succeed because of aspects of their identity, compared to 57% of non-LGB individuals (see figure “A heavier lift”).

To avoid discrimination and harassment, many are compelled to cover, or downplay aspects of their identities. Covering is a concept attributed to Professor Kenji Yoshino of Harvard that describes a person trying to fit in by minimizing their differences.¹⁵

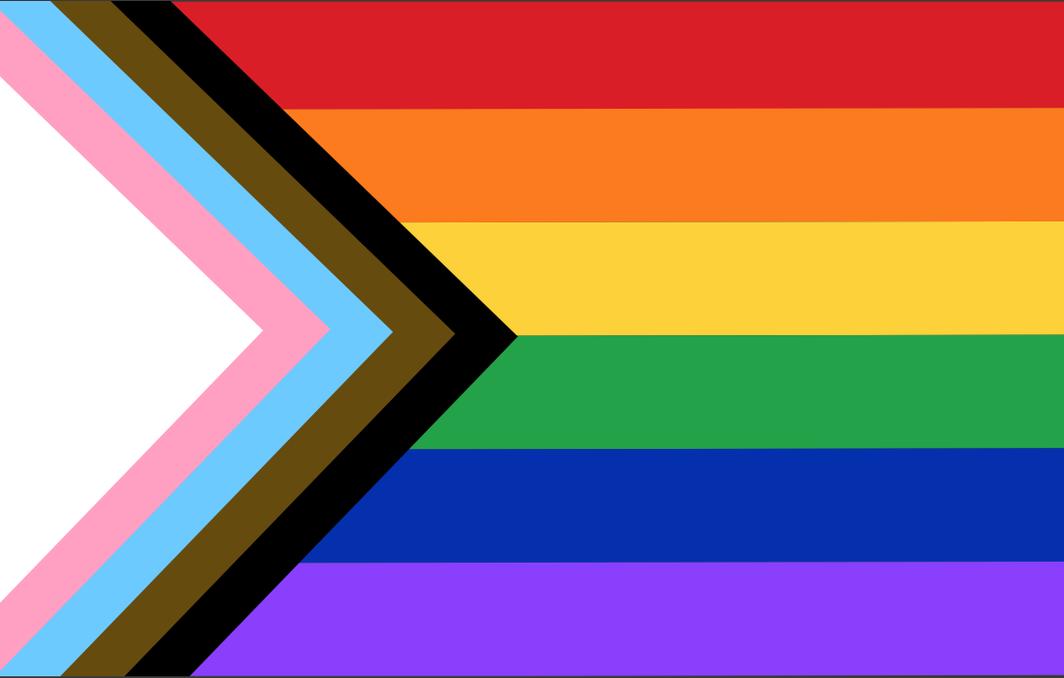
According to 2020 research from the Center for American Progress, two-thirds of LGBTQ (the added Q stands for queer¹⁶) Americans report changing their behavior to avoid discrimination related to their sexual orientation.¹⁷ And in a poll conducted during the Jam, 9% of respondents said they do not feel the gender they express at work matches their true gender identity.

A heavier lift

Roughly 2 in 3 LGB people say they've been disadvantaged due to their identity.



Q: I had to work harder to succeed because of aspects of my identity (somewhat/strongly agree)



The Progress Pride Flag comprises 11 colors. White, pink, and light blue reflect the colors of the transgender flag. Brown and black stripes represent people of color and those living with HIV. The traditional Gay Pride Flag includes red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for art, and indigo for harmony.¹⁸

“I struggle with this at every new workplace I join,” one Jammer said. “The mental health aspect of coming out is difficult, despite having been ‘out and proud’ for over a decade.”

Companies can play a big part in making it easier for employees to bring their authentic selves to work. Getting more LGBT+ people in visible leadership roles is a good start—though that may require filling the leadership pipeline first. Creating intentional mentorship and sponsorship programs can help companies do their part to combat discrimination while also learning more about individual employee needs.

Unfortunately, our data shows that many companies still have a long way to go in terms of mentorship, especially for LGB employees. Only 37% of LGB people say they have benefited significantly from formal mentorship, compared with 44% of their non-LGB peers.

In addition to creating formal structures that support LGB career advancement, companies need to address the informal dynamics that define the LGB experience every day. Much of that work will be cultural.

“I think the most fundamental aspect of championing more LGBTQ leaders in the workplace is creating an environment of safety and trust,” said one Jam participant. “That begins with upper management clearly articulating broadly to their employees what is acceptable behavior and what is not.”

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I really feel included when I see that my voice impacted a decision within the company. It's the difference between being talked at versus being talked with.

Hiding a part of who we are is such an exhausting business. My mental health has definitely improved since I have freed myself from that 24/7 job.

[Pronouns] should never be required. Safety for trans/nonbinary folks should be the highest priority. Pronouns are part of the coming out process; making them mandatory would “out” us and take away our autonomy. It is one of the few things we actually have control over.

—LGBT+ Jam participants

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2. Embrace intersectionality

No single identity defines anyone. Race. Gender. Sexual orientation. Age. Ability. Each of these characteristics can offer privileges and/or disadvantages. To better support people across identity groups, in particular those who have historically been marginalized, leaders must understand intersectionality—how different layers of oppression overlap in people’s lives.

IBV LGB survey results offer a view into the compounded effects different identities can have on a person’s workplace experience—particularly how stacked biases can influence their personal success. In this survey, largely equal representation was achieved across lines of race. 24% of respondents identified as Black, 24% identified as Hispanic, 24% identified as White, and 24% identified as Pan-Asian. 4% of respondents identified as Native American.

Overall, 50% of LGB respondents believe the group that shares their race, gender, and sexual orientation is less successful than the general US population, compared with just 36% of non-LGB people considering the same factors (see figure “Unequal outcomes”).

This helps quantify the impact of discrimination against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals—but the equation isn’t that simple. The race and gender breakdown of this number shows how other identities move the needle. 74% of Black LGB women, for instance, believe their identity group is less successful. For White non-LGB men, that figure drops to 4% (see Perspective: Layers of intersectionality and discrimination, page 7).

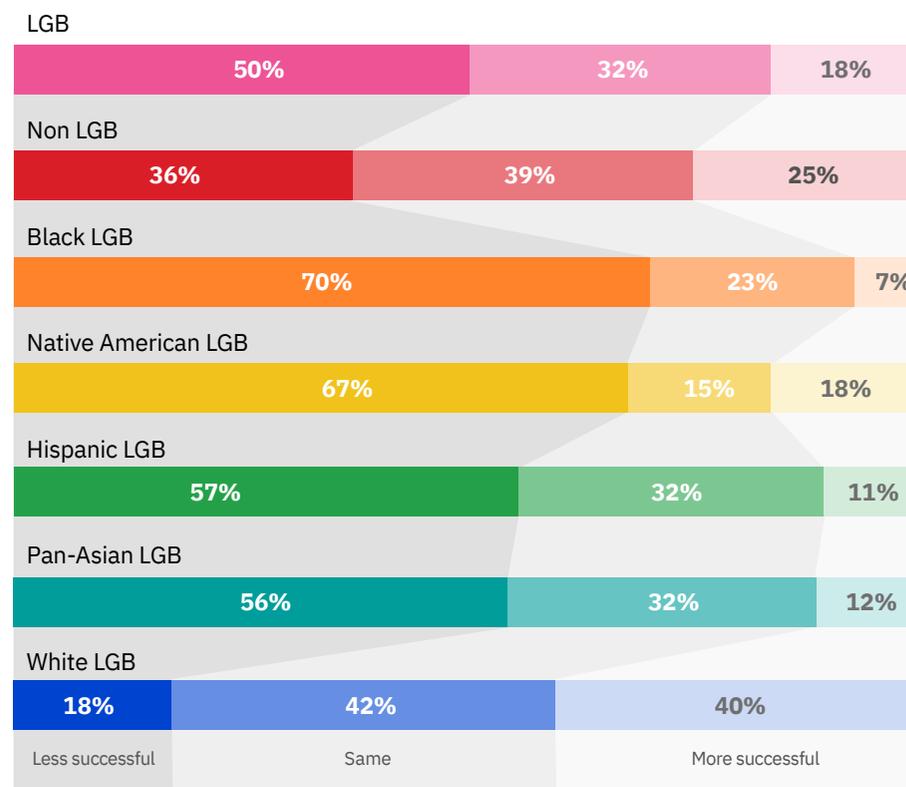
As the concept of intersectionality has gained broader public interest, discourse has become more inclusive of trans women, particularly Black and Brown trans women—who have long been leaders in advancing LGBT+ rights. In response to a national epidemic of violence affecting trans women of color, these women shone a light on the disproportionate discrimination they experience—and are demanding the prioritization of their needs.¹⁹

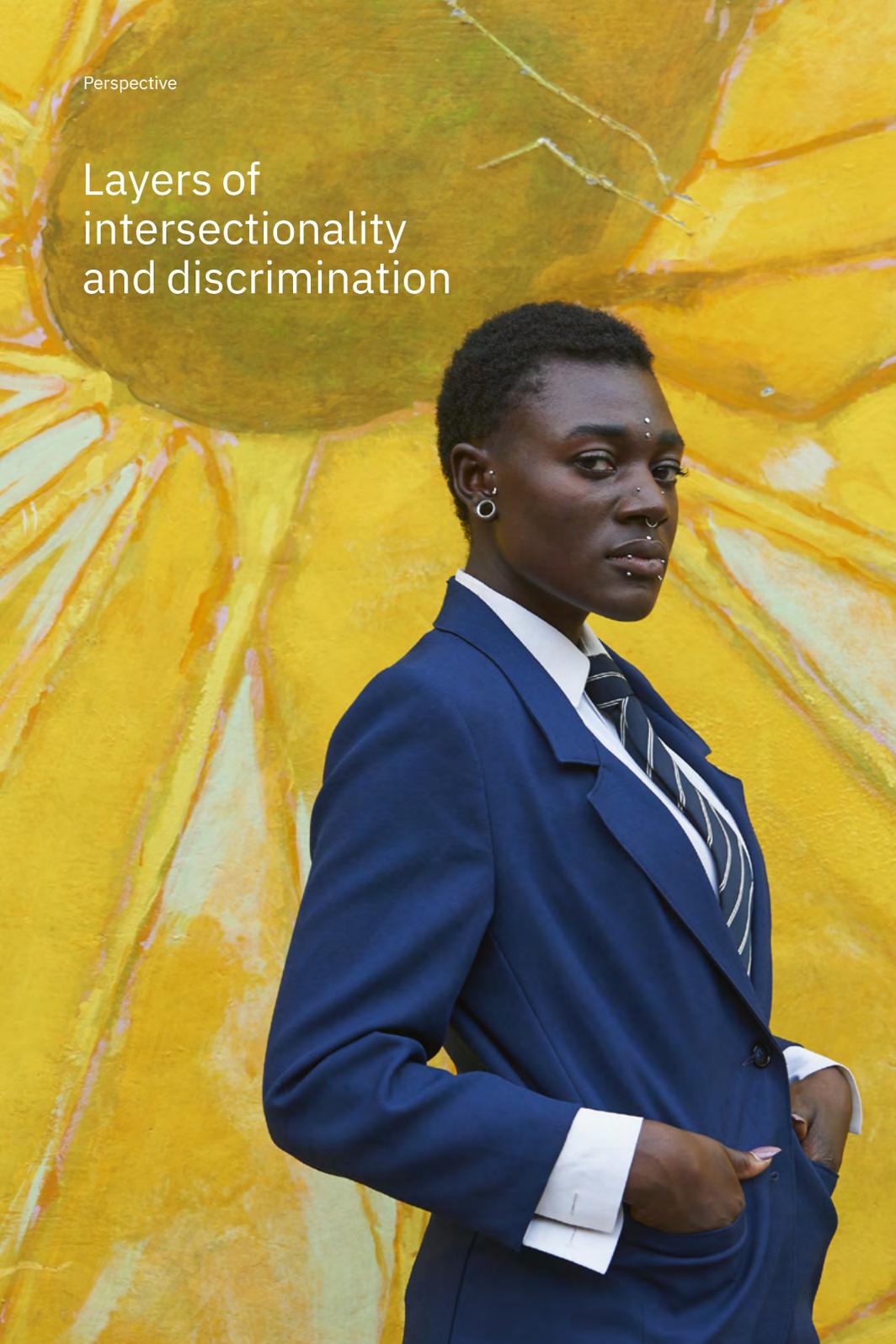
Intersectionality is a powerful framework to understand that a win for one identity group does not necessarily equate to a win for the entire community. However, it also highlights the collective power that comes with meaningfully acknowledging and incorporating the diverse perspectives and experiences of people across all identities within the group. “We should be promoting intersectional solidarity,” one Jam participant said. “Our biggest issues often require an all-of-us approach to identify and implement equitable and sustainable solutions.”

Unequal outcomes

More than half of LGBT+ people of color feel people who share their identities are less successful.

Compared to the general US population, the group that has all three characteristics (race, gender, sexual orientation) as me is less or more successful?



A Black woman with short hair, wearing a blue suit jacket over a white shirt and a striped tie, stands in profile against a large, textured yellow background that resembles a sun or a large abstract painting. She has a nose ring and a small earring. The text 'Layers of intersectionality and discrimination' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Layers of intersectionality and discrimination

There are 3 Black CEOs²⁰ and 4 LGBT+ CEOs²¹ in the Fortune 500. None are Black and LGBT+.

This is a striking example of how intersecting identities often result in people facing compounded bias at work and in their careers. And the IBV LGB survey has helped quantify this experience.

Our research revealed that the experiences of discrimination based on sexual orientation are stratified along lines of race. While almost half of White LGB respondents say they have experienced some discrimination based on their sexual orientation, only 4% say they were discriminated against to a very great extent. For LGB people of color, this figure is closer to 20%—rising to almost 1 in 4 for Native American LGB respondents, demonstrating the “real life” impact of facing a plurality of biases (see figure “Intersectionality in action”).

Overall, Black LGB people experience the most intense discrimination based on their sexual orientation. Only 11% of Black LGB respondents say their sexuality has resulted in little personal discrimination, in contrast to 24% of Pan-Asian LGB respondents, the highest percentage of groups answering the question.

Still, across all surveyed racial identity groups, LGB people see their sexual orientation as the primary driver of the discrimination they’ve experienced personally in the workplace. The numbers among the Hispanic²² LGB community are high, with 36% saying that sexual orientation has been the primary driver of discrimination, compared to 22% who selected race. The Black LGB community cited racial discrimination more frequently than other respondent groups at 27%, but more than 1 in 3 (34%) Black LGB respondents put sexual orientation at the top of the list of drivers (see figure “What drives discrimination?”).

For White and Native American LGB people, gender ranked second, with nearly 3 in 10 saying it is the primary driver of the workplace discrimination they have experienced. This speaks to the very complex nature of discrimination—and the intentional, intersectional work that is required to address it.

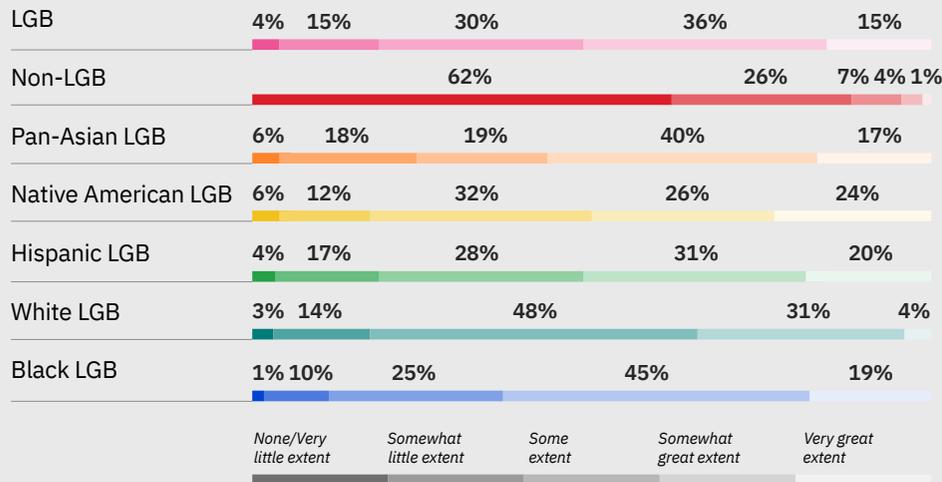
“At work, our very livelihood is at stake. And it is hard to find the courage or bravery to be ‘out’ when even the most successful Black women in the media and public eye are not explicitly out of the closet,” one Jam participant said. “Allies even within the community can help by being advocates/sponsors/mentors, improving the inclusivity of our workspaces and combating the ignorance of others.”

Layers of intersectionality and discrimination (continued)

Intersectionality in action

LGB people of color experience greater discrimination due to their sexual orientation.

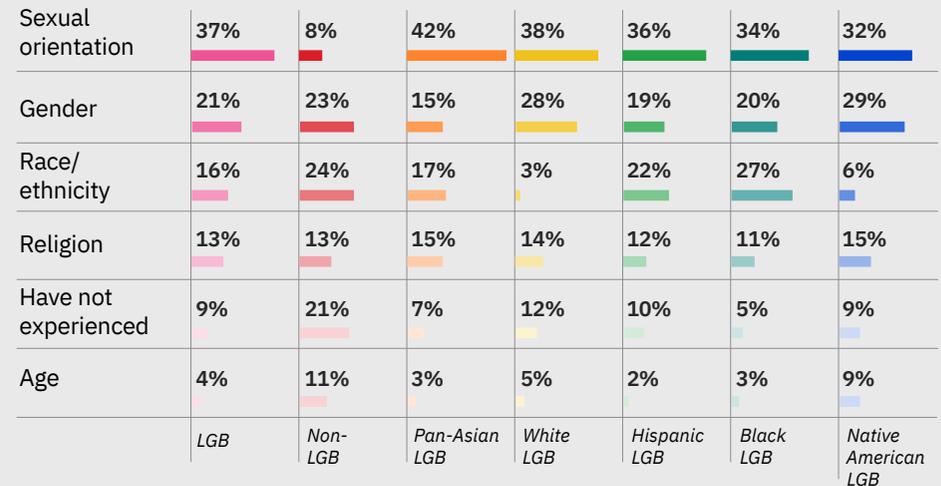
To what extent have you personally experienced discrimination because of your sexual orientation?



What drives discrimination?

LGB people across racial identity groups say sexual orientation has been the top cause of workplace discrimination.

Which aspect of your personal identity do you feel has been the primary driver of any discrimination you have experienced in the workplace?



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Being an ally is simply practicing hearing and seeing someone accurately.

One has to be flexible and able to quickly adapt and adopt new language to their vocabulary. What was considered ‘correct’ yesterday could be totally wrong today.

It all comes down to values. Values are what you do, not what you say you will do. Look at a company’s actions.

—LGBT+ Jam participants

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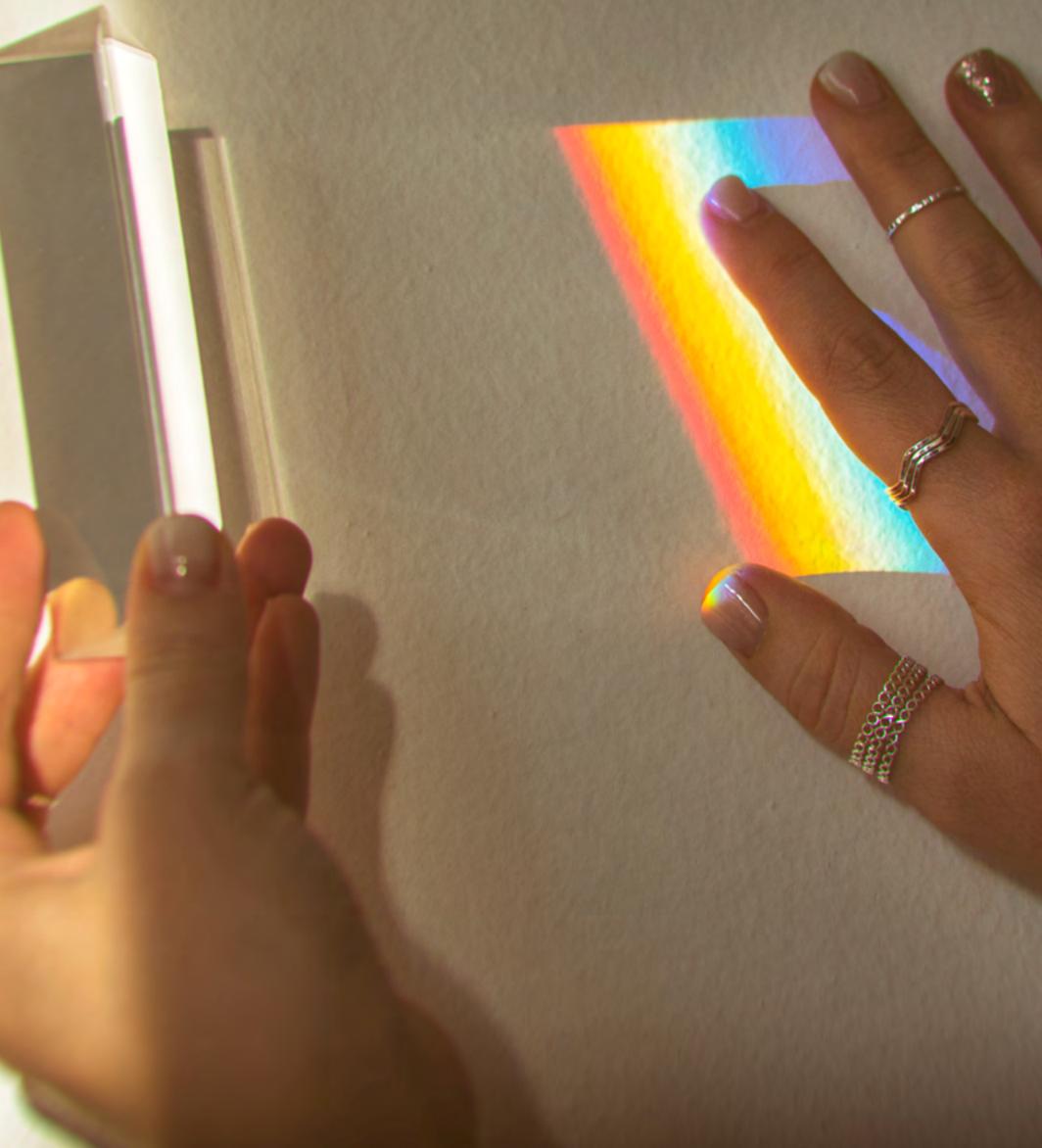
This approach will be even more important as breaking the gender binary becomes a workplace priority (see Perspective: Breaking the gender binary, page 10). Today, about 1 in 5 adults in the US know someone who goes by a gender-neutral pronoun, according to Pew Research.²³ And in a poll conducted during the Jam, 82% of participants said they feel more comfortable at work when other employees display their pronouns in email signatures and/or on messaging platforms.

That means companies need to embrace and adapt to the needs of non-binary people. From encouraging people to provide their pronouns to offering gender-neutral bathrooms, the younger generation will likely expect their employers to accommodate a wider range of identities.

While learning new ways to treat people always comes with the possibility of getting it wrong, taking the risk (with humility and an ability to apologize) is the only way forward. And doing so helps leaders provide more of the personalized management and career development LGBT+ people need—and that employees increasingly demand.

As one Jam participant put it: “Ultimately we are all unique and by definition fall into an intersectionality of one.”

Breaking the gender binary



Increasingly, younger generations are rejecting the idea that there are only two genders. Rather, they are embracing a much more fluid and inclusive approach to gender identity. Recent US research from the ad agency Bigeye found that half of Gen Z—and 56% of Millennials—believe that labels related to the gender binary are outdated.²⁴

But while younger Americans are becoming more vocal about the gender binary, this idea isn't new. Some cultures have recognized that gender is a spectrum since the beginning of time.²⁵ And just as gender isn't binary, neither is sexuality. People who identify as asexual, bisexual, demisexual, pansexual, and so on, acknowledge that their attraction to another person (or lack thereof), is defined by something that goes beyond their gender identity.²⁶

Accommodating the needs of non-binary people in an inclusive way requires taking a comprehensive look at how gender defines an organization's operations. From how bathrooms are designed to how formal documents are worded, the gender binary is often omnipresent, and unnecessarily so.

"The strong social codes inherited from history are so deeply conditioned that even now I think twice before being or wearing my authentic self on my sleeve," said one non-binary Jam participant.

Shifting the way an organization operates isn't only beneficial for employees. It also has major implications for customers. Assumptions about gender and sexual orientation play a large part in product development and marketing campaigns. Holistically rethinking its view of gender may help a company better serve and reach LGBT+ customers—and advance acceptance and support of LGBT+ people in the public sphere.

3. Expand corporate support and individual allyship

Before companies can begin to reduce the discrimination LGBT+ people face, they must first understand the systemic inequalities that need to be addressed.

One top concern for LGBT+ employees is equal access to paid family and medical leave. Something as crucial as caring for a sick partner—or as joyous as welcoming a new child—can cause serious problems if employers don't have the right policies in place to support non-traditional family structures. Some LGBT+ individuals may be afraid to even request time off in such scenarios if equal protections aren't expressly offered, as it might disclose their identity.

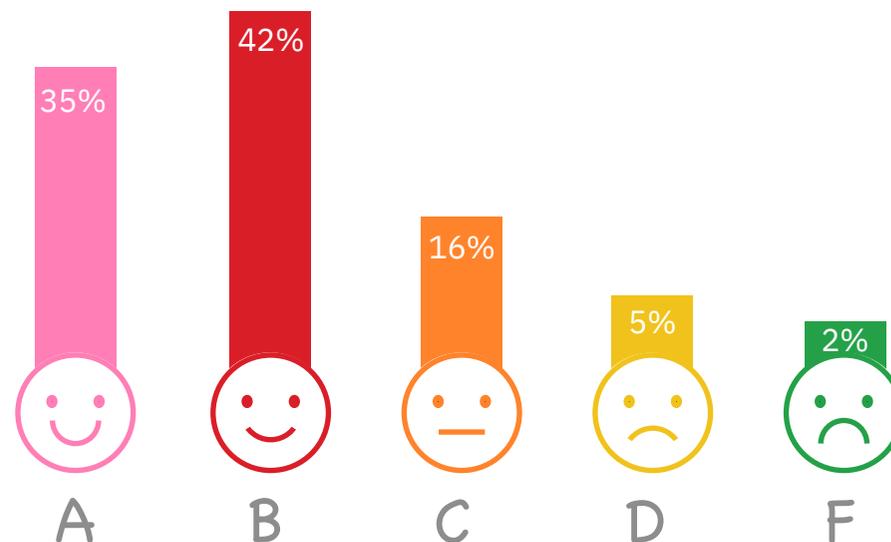
This reality is exacerbated by the fact that, in general, workers in the US have low access to paid leave. Our survey found that only 34% of LGB respondents have benefited from a paid leave or sabbatical—and for non-LGB people, that number is just 39%.

However, our survey also found that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed an outsized burden on LGB caregivers. 43% of LGB respondents say they have struggled balancing working from home with taking care of other family members, compared with 34% of non-LGB people. This is likely due, at least in part, to the experiences that require LGB people to cover elements of their personal life in the workplace. To become more equitable, companies need to look closely at how they offer parental leave, as well as other benefits structures.

“Workplaces need to ensure that their parenting policies and practices are inclusive and that they include an explicit statement of support for all family arrangements, including IVF, surrogacy, adoption, and foster parenting,” one Jam participant said.

Making the grade

We asked Jammers: What grade would you give your employer for efforts to promote LGBT+ diversity and inclusion at your company?



Offering LGBT+ families the same benefits non-LGBT+ families receive is also important for supporting mental health. On average, LGBT+ employees are at greater risk for mental health issues, likely due to the unique stresses they face.²⁷ According to our survey, more than two-thirds of LGB people say they don't feel equipped to overcome professional challenges, which speaks to a need for stronger support and enablement networks.

Listening and learning from LGBT+ individuals can help leaders understand where their organization is lacking, but it's important not to put the burden of fixing the system on those already carrying the heaviest load. Allies, especially those at the executive level, need to be prepared to step up and champion important changes.

"Some of us can carry a message far and magnify it, and lessen the burden on others who've been carrying it for so long," one Jam participant said.

The same holds true for people at all levels. Simple actions—such as rejecting or speaking up when confronted by homophobic/transphobic/biphobic and bias-based humor, and including pronouns during introductions—can create a safer environment for people across the LGBT+ spectrum.

"Making everyone feel comfortable at work must be a priority for all companies," said one Jam participant. "And it must be clear from day one that we are not alone."

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COVID is showing home-life much more realistically than the confines of the structured office. As much as this makes some more comfortable, it makes others feel threatened and endangered.

Being an active champion means being a real ally. It means speaking up whenever things are shared, heard, seen, etc., that don't sound right or inclusive.

I don't really separate my autistic and nonbinary identity. They work together and I love that. I feel like I am living evidence of why gender is a social construct.

—LGBT+ Jam participants

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Action guide

LGBT+ views on enduring discrimination and expanding inclusion

1. Fill the LGBT+ leadership pipeline. Corporate sponsorship and mentorship programs can help elevate the voices of out members of the community and help address the LGBT+ leadership gap.

- Connect with young LGBT+ talent at colleges and universities or through early career programs.
- Nurture global Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), as they are vital platforms for talent development, internal education, and leadership growth.
- With the foundation of clear non-discrimination policies, develop an optional self-identification program for the LGBT+ workforce to better understand their needs, track professional development, and benchmark success.

2. Set clear expectations for employees. Communicate the need for respect and the business value of belonging in the workplace.

- Make education modules on LGBT+ inclusion accessible and refresh them regularly to incorporate evolving perspectives.
- Train mid-level managers on handling bias in the workplace and build accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals into performance reviews.
- Offer guidance on how to use inclusive language, such as gender-neutral pronouns. See practical guidance in *What's Your Pronoun? Strategies for Inclusion in the Workplace*.²⁸
- For additional information on best practices for transgender and non-binary employees, see *How to Celebrate Transgender Employees on TDOV and Year-Round*²⁹ and *Best Practices for Non-binary Inclusion in the Workplace*.³⁰

3. Institute non-discrimination policies and practices. From gender-neutral restrooms and dress codes to LGBT+-friendly family leave policies, corporate offerings can help create a more equal workplace.

- Conduct regular “equity” reviews of employer-provided benefits, including transgender-inclusive healthcare coverage, family benefits, retirement, travel and relocation, and more.
- Engage the ERG to gauge “real life” impact of the benefits.

4. Use brand eminence as a tool for positive change. Leverage the power of the corporate brand to support LGBT+ rights around the world. Be outspoken—your current and future employees will thank you for it.

- Ensure government and regulatory affairs teams focus on legislation impacting minority groups.
- Work with ERGs around the world to stay on top of the latest legislation, whether it be pro- or anti-LGBT+ rights. They provide a unique and powerful bridge between the company and trusted advocates. See *Leveraging Your Voice: A Guide for Employee Resource Groups and Public Policy Engagement*.³¹
- Partner with trade associations and NGOs, issue position statements, and directly lobby to further LGBT+ rights around the world.

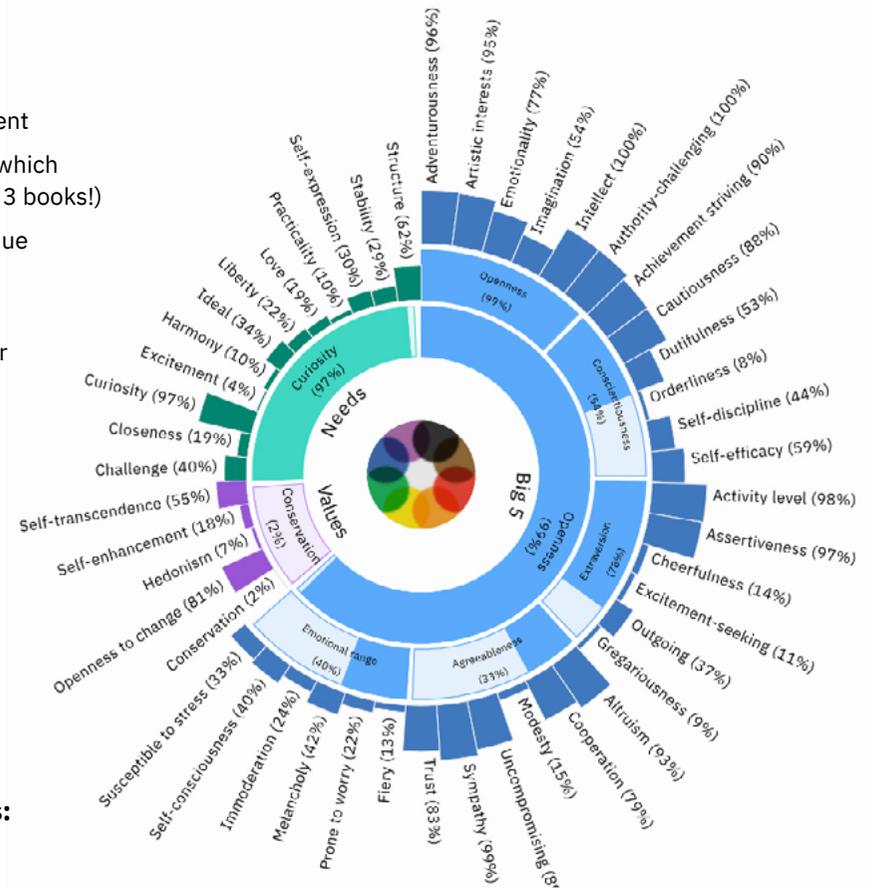
Inside the Global LGBT+ Innovation Jam

Jam summary:

- 34 consecutive hours of virtual jamming
- 28 hosts, 27 facilitators, and 54 topic area guests
- 3,300 registrations, 1,800 unique logins
- The average Jammer returned 7 times and spent 6 hours in the Jam (58% US, 19% Europe, 9% Asia, 8% Latin America)
- 7% identified as non-binary and those Jammers posted nearly 14% of the content
- 528 Jammers posted 2,800 comments, which generated 251,000 words (equivalent to 3 books!)
- 40 poll questions generated 17,500 unique data points

Jam technology uses Watson Personality Insights in an experimental approach to define a Jammer “persona” based on the psychology of language in combination with data analytics algorithms. Watson analyzes the Jam content and returns a personality profile of the Jam collective. Here’s what we learned about the LGBT+ global innovation Jammers. They are:

- Expressive, empathetic, and philosophical
- Open to and intrigued by new ideas
- Prone to challenge authority and traditional thinking to help bring about positive changes
- Trailblazers, making their own path rather than following others
- Most interested in activities that have a purpose greater than just personal enjoyment



Jam conversation topics:

- Corporate and individual championship
- Visibility and development
- Allyship
- Mental health
- LGBT+ intersectionality
- Trans & non-binary belonging
- Impact of technology

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Out & Equal

Out & Equal is the premier global organization working exclusively on LGBTQ workplace equality. Through its worldwide programs, Fortune 500 partnerships and annual Workplace Summit conference, Out & Equal helps LGBTQ people thrive in their careers and supports organizations to create cultures of belonging for all. For more information visit, <https://outandequal.org/>.

Workplace Pride

Workplace Pride is a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTIQ+ people in workplaces worldwide. We strive for a world of inclusive workplaces where LGBTIQ+ people can truly be themselves, are valued and, through their contributions, help lead the way for others. For more information, visit <https://workplacepride.org/>.

About IBM InnovationJam®

In addition to our quantitative survey, the IBV hosted a global two-day virtual jam—the Global LGBT+ Innovation Jam—in cooperation with Out & Equal and Workplace Pride. Seven concurrent sessions covered topics ranging from how technology can help eliminate biases to allyship, intersectionality, and transgender belonging.

With more than a quarter million words generated over the course of 34 hours, we used the IBM InnovationJam® AI Dashboard with Watson Natural Language Understanding (NLU) and IBM Research Project Debater Key Point Analysis to identify conversation themes, sentiment, and insights for suggested improvements. To learn more, visit <https://www.collaborationjam.com>.

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