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# Shine the Light Study

-2024







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# INTRODUCTION

The Shine The Light Report is an annual study examining LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences, sponsored by *Be The Transformational Change Fund*. The study tracks challenges and progress in LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion and informs employers on actions to create fully inclusive environments.

In its first year, the Shine The Light Study found 83% of respondents were out to most coworkers, but only 23% felt comfortable approaching leadership about discrimination. Gaps remained in leadership support and access to gender-affirming health care.

Now in its second year, the study received 914 responses, up from 580 in 2023. Using a non-experimental design, the study offers trended insights to benchmark LGBTQIA+ employment experiences but does not imply causal inferences.

Understanding LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences is key to holding employers accountable and driving change. This report equips LGBTQIA+ professionals, employers, and advocates with insights on trends and areas for improvement. While employees may focus on discrimination and policies, business leaders can better understand how to foster inclusive workplaces.

Sponsored by *Be The Transformational Change*, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on overcoming LGBTQIA+ employment barriers, this study provides insights to drive lasting change in LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.





# 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The **2024 Shine the Light Study** examines the career and employment experiences of 914 LGBTQIA+ individuals, up from 580 respondents in 2023. The findings capture insights from LGBTQIA+ individuals across the non-profit, for-profit, and government sectors.

Now in its second year, the findings highlight both the progress and ongoing challenges in workplace inclusivity. More employees report positive support and comfort discussing discrimination with leadership, yet barriers remain in accessing gender-inclusive health care. By analyzing trends and demographics, the study provides insights for those striving to create fully LGBTQIA+-inclusive workplaces.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

### **Bright Spots**

- Comfort Approaching Leadership: Comfort discussing discrimination with leadership rose from 23% in 2023 to 30% in 2024, signaling growing trust in workplace cultures.
- Positive Support at Work: More than two-thirds of respondents agree or strongly agree they have experienced positive support for LGBTQIA+ employees at work.
- Gender-Affirming Health Care: 73% of respondents identified at least two inclusive health benefits offered by their employer, but many struggle to navigate these policies.

### **Areas for Attention**

- Out at Work: 54% of transgender respondents who are not 'out' at work cited concerns about discrimination or harmful workplace behavior.
- **Discrimination Experiences:** 1 in 5 respondents reported experiencing discriminatory behavior; "Strongly agree" responses held steady from 20% in 2023 to 22% in 2024.
- **Job-Seeking Resources:** 90% of LGBTQIA+ job-seekers see value in resources like salary negotiation training (56%) and LGBTQIA+ career fairs (47%).

### **IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY**

Amid increasing rollbacks of protections and funding cuts for research on LGBTQIA+ issues, it is critical to tell LGBTQIA+ stories through data. Recent changes have impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, as well as policy shifts related to non-discrimination protections, health-care access, and workplace rights for LGBTQIA+ individuals. It is always crucial to provide clear data to measure and inform change. The Shine The Light study, sheds light on the real challenges LGBTQIA+ workers face, shared from their own work-life experiences, and provides important steps employers can take to improve workforce inclusivity.

### **NEXT STEPS**

**For Employers:** Generic diversity statements aren't enough — 58% of respondents say their workplace would benefit from LGBTQIA+-focused anti-discrimination training. Ensure workplace training covers bias, microaggressions, and interventions. Make gender-affirming healthcare easily accessible to employees.

**For Employees:** Advocate for stronger workplace policies, salary negotiation training (56% requested it), and LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) — only 54% have one. If your workplace lacks support, connect with external networks and mentorship programs.

**For Advocates:** Prioritize ERG support and mentoring of LGBTQIA+ professionals. With 48% of respondents witnessing or experiencing discrimination, push for inclusive hiring practices and non-discrimination protections to ensure affirming workplaces.

# RESEARCH CONTEXT

Understanding the current landscape of LGBTQIA+ workplace rights and experiences is essential for building inclusive workplaces. Below are recent studies that shed light on these ongoing challenges and progress, along with opportunities to fill evidence gaps.

### SUPPORTING RESEARCH

# 1) Out Leadership's 2023 Report on LGBTQ+ Business Leadership

Out Leadership found 0.7% of 5,400 Fortune 500 board seats are held by LGBT+ directors. This disparity shows a need for greater leadership diversity and accountability. Learn more.

# 2) Williams Institute's 2023 Study on Workplace Discrimination

A survey of 1,902 LGBTQIA+ workers revealed 17% experienced workplace discrimination in 2023. Transgender and nonbinary employees were twice as likely to report mistreatment, exposing persistent inequities despite legal protections. Learn more.

# 3) Human Rights Campaign's 2025 Corporate Equality Index

The latest Index found 765 of 1,449 companies earned perfect scores—up 28% from last year. However, some companies are scaling back DEI efforts, highlighting the need for sustained commitment to workplace inclusion. Learn more.

### **RESEARCH GAPS**

This study addresses gaps in existing LGBTQIA+ workplace research by examining three critical areas.

# LGBTQIA+ Job-Seeking Resources

Many studies miss LGBTQIA+ job seekers' needs. This report tracks demand for resources like salary negotiation training (56% of respondents) and explores interview experiences and outcomes.

# Workplace Environment & Support

The study findings capture how LGBTQIA+ employees perceive shifting workplace support. The drop in Employee Resource Groups (down from 23% since 2023) signals a need for stronger policy protections.

# Gender-Affirming Health Care

While 73% of respondents identified at least two gender-inclusive health benefits offered by their employer, focus group findings revealed many employees struggle to navigate these policies.

By pairing survey and qualitative data, this study identifies gaps and offers actionable insights to support LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.

# **METHODOLOGY**

### **DATA COLLECTION**



The survey questionnaire was distributed between November 1 and December 13, 2024 via an anonymous Qualtrics link. The introduction informed participants that their responses would be shared in aggregate form and that any personally-identifiable information would be removed. Participants were able to skip any question and exit the survey at any time.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC SELECTION**



All participants identify as LGBTQIA+. Participants answered a screening question regarding LGBTQIA+ identity, and those who selected "no" were taken to the end of the survey. Additionally, a series of demographic variables were analyzed to contextualize the research findings: Educational Attainment, Generation, Industry Type, Organization Size, Race/Ethnicity, State/Region, Work Format, and Urbanicity.

### STUDY DESIGN



The survey used a non-experimental design to investigate the experiences and perspectives of an LGBTQIA+ sample population that is reflective of the *Be The Transformational Change* network. Serving as a snapshot, the report offers trended insights, but does not imply causal relationships regarding the LGBTQIA+ community's diverse workplace experiences.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**



Descriptive survey responses were aggregated using Microsoft Excel and Stata Software. Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses was conducted using NVivo. Trended data were analyzed at an aggregate level across both cross-sectional surveys, rather than using a fixed sample. Data points are suppressed for groups with fewer than ten respondents.

# DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

A demographic breakdown of survey respondents in 2023 & 2024.

# **TOTAL 2024 PARTICIPANTS: 914 LGBTQIA+ RESPONDENTS**

CATEGORY	2024 SAMPLE	2023 SAMPLE
Total Count	914 Respondents	580 Respondents
Transgender	42%	20%
Cisgender	58%	80%

### **GENDER IDENTITY**

Man	44%	51%
Woman	34%	39%
Nonbinary / Genderfluid	22%	10%

### **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Asexual	6%	2%
Bisexual / Pansexual	30%	72%
Heterosexual / Straight	10%	5%
Homosexual / Gay / Lesbian	27%	13%
Queer / Another Orientation	28%	8%

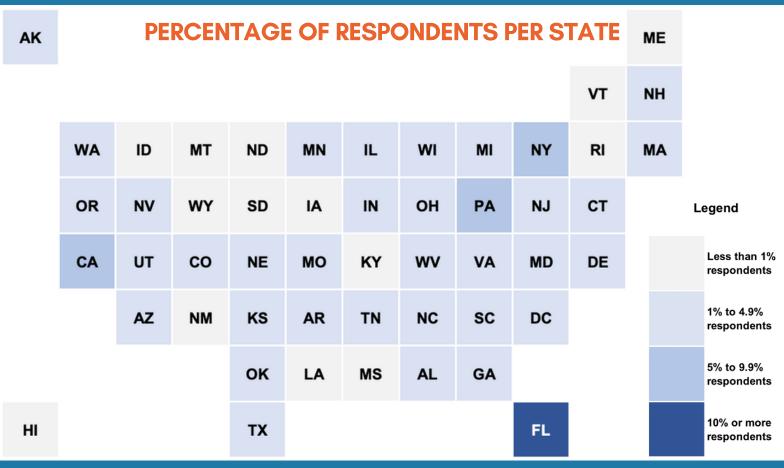
Note: An additional 64 respondents marked "no" to the LGBTQIA+ identity question and were directed to proceed to the end of the survey.

# Demographic Insights continued

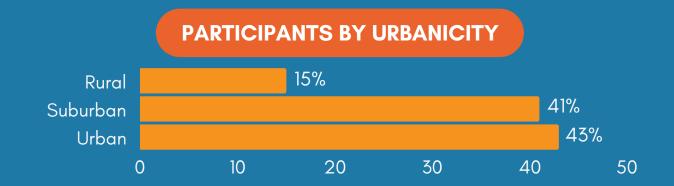
914 TOTAL RESPONSES **42%**Self-Identified as Transgender

Self-Identified
Sexual Orientations

Self-Identified Gender Identities



Note: An additional 41 respondents responded "Outside of the United States" to this question.



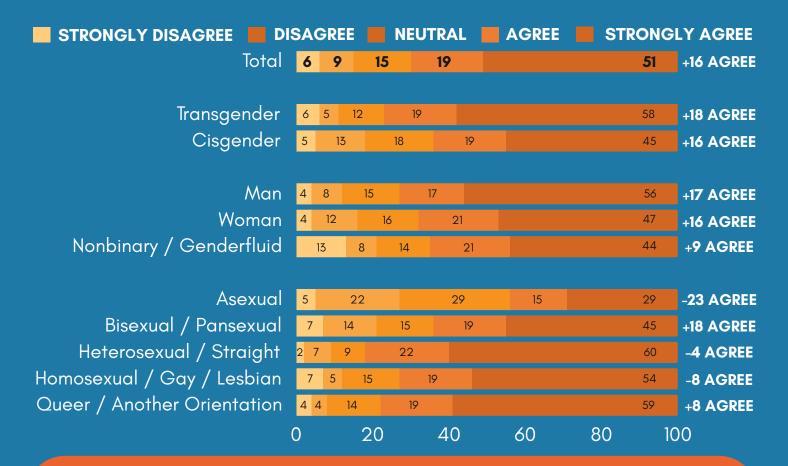
# **GENDER IDENTITY & DRESS COMFORT**

70%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable dressing and expressing their gender identity at work

### **SURVEY QUESTION:**

I FEEL COMFORTABLE DRESSING AND EXPRESSING MY GENDER IDENTITY AT WORK.



- By industry, non-profit workers are most comfortable expressing gender identity at work (79% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers are least comfortable (65%).
- **By generation**, Millennial workers are most comfortable (73% agree/strongly agree); as in 2023, Gen Z workers are least comfortable (57%).
- By race/ethnicity, Asian or Asian American workers are most comfortable (82% agree/strongly agree); Hispanic or Latino(e) workers are least comfortable (63%).
- By work format, remote workers are most comfortable (78% agree/strongly agree); hybrid workers are least comfortable (62%).

# **COMFORT APPROACHING LEADERSHIP**

**50%** 

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable approaching leadership about a discriminatory experience

**SURVEY QUESTION:** IN MY WORKPLACE, I FEEL COMFORTABLE APPROACHING LEADERSHIP ABOUT NEGATIVE OR DISCRIMINATORY EXPERIENCES RELATED TO MY LGBTQIA+ IDENTITY.

STRONGLY DISAGREE DISAGREE NEUTRAL AGREE STRONGLY AGREE							
Total	13	16	21	20		30	-1 AGREE
Transgender	16	15	16	19		34	-2 AGREE
Cisgender	12	18	23	20		27	-4 AGREE
Man	14	16	19	18		33	-2 AGREE
Woman	12	17	24	20		27	-5 AGREE
Nonbinary / Genderfluid	15	18	17	23		27	+9 AGREE
Asexual	11	21	:	28	29	- 11	-13 AGREE
Bisexual / Pansexual	13	21	2	21 18		27	+3 AGREE
Heterosexual / Straight	11	15	19	23		32	-4 AGREE
Homosexual / Gay / Lesbian	13	12	20	21		34	-10 AGREE
Queer / Another Orientation	13	16	14	21		36	-2 AGREE
(	)	20	40	60	80	1	00

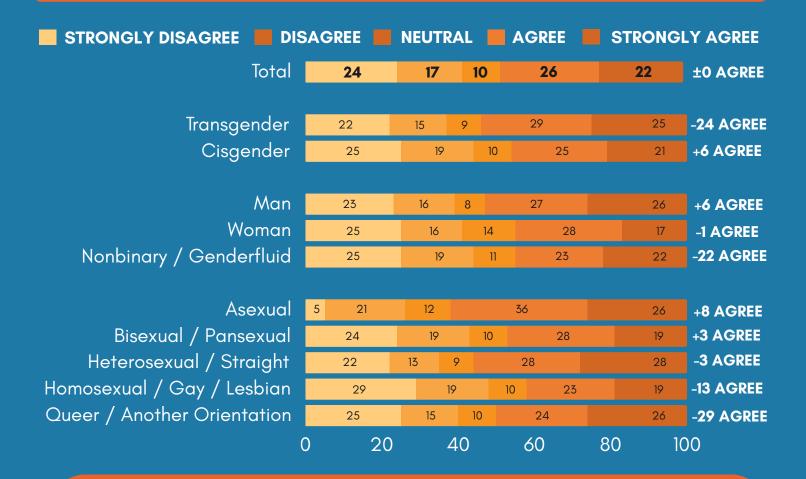
- **By industry**, non-profit workers are most comfortable approaching leadership (61% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers are least comfortable (47%).
- **By generation**, Gen X workers are most comfortable (58% agree/strongly agree); as in 2023, Gen Z workers are least comfortable (44%).
- By race/ethnicity, as in 2023, Hispanic/Latino(e) workers are most comfortable (62%); American Indian/Alaska Native workers are least comfortable (28%).
- By work format, remote workers are most comfortable (56% agree/strongly agree); in-person workers are least comfortable (47%).

# **NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES AT WORK**

48%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they have experienced or witnessed discrimination at work

**SURVEY QUESTION**: IN MY WORKPLACE, I HAVE FACED OR WITNESSED NEGATIVE COMMENTS, SLURS, OR JOKES ABOUT LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE.



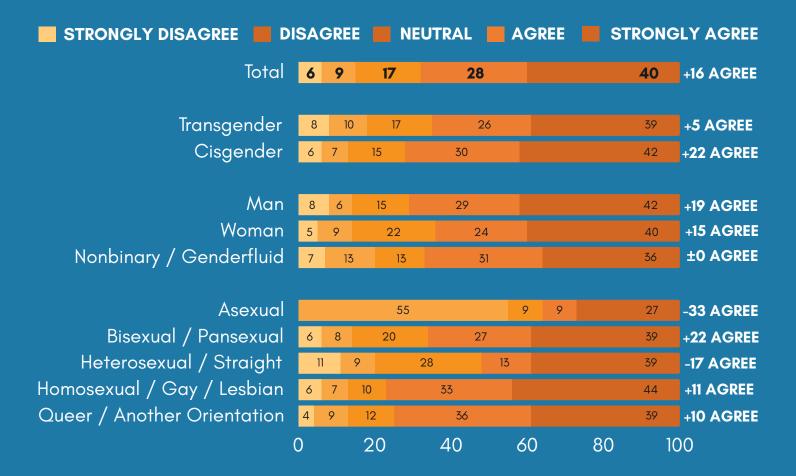
- **By industry**, government workers report the most discriminatory experiences (59% agree/strongly agree); non-profit workers report the fewest (35%).
- **By generation**, Gen Z workers report the most discriminatory experiences (58% agree/strongly agree); Millennial workers report the fewest (47%).
- By race/ethnicity, Black or African American workers report most discriminatory experiences (58%); Hispanic or Latino(e) workers report fewest (35%).
- **By work format**, in-person workers report the most discriminatory experiences (59% agree/strongly agree); remote workers report the fewest (30%).

# POSITIVE SUPPORT AT WORK

68%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they have experienced positive support for LGBTQIA+ employees at work

**SURVEY QUESTION**: OVERALL, I HAVE EXPERIENCED POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR LGBTQIA+ EMPLOYEES IN MY WORKPLACE.



- By industry, non-profit workers report the most overall positive support (78% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers report the least (66%).
- **By generation**, Gen X workers report the most overall positive support (73% agree/strongly agree); Gen Z workers report the least (65%).
- By race/ethnicity, Asian or Asian American workers report the most overall positive support (76%); Multiracial workers report the least (64%).
- By work format, remote workers report the most overall positive support (75% agree/strongly agree); in-person workers report the least (65%).

# **RESTROOM ACCESS**

**75%** 

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they can use the restroom aligned with their gender identity at work

**SURVEY QUESTION**: IN MY WORKPLACE, I CAN USE THE RESTROOM THAT ALIGNS WITH MY GENDER IDENTITY. (NEW QUESTION FOR 2024)

STRONGLY DISAGREE DI	SAGR	EE 📕	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONG	LY AGREE
Total	4 7	7 14	15		60	
Transgender	6 4	14	14		62	
Cisgender	3 9	14	16		58	
Man	4 8	11	14		63	
Woman	2 8	11	14		65	
Nonbinary / Genderfluid	8	4	28	17	43	
Asexual		28	19	30	23	
Bisexual / Pansexual	6	9 13	17		55	
Heterosexual / Straight	2 6	13	15		64	
Homosexual / Gay / Lesbian	3 3	12 1	_		71	
Queer / Another Orientation	5 2	<sup>19</sup> 20	40	60	80	100

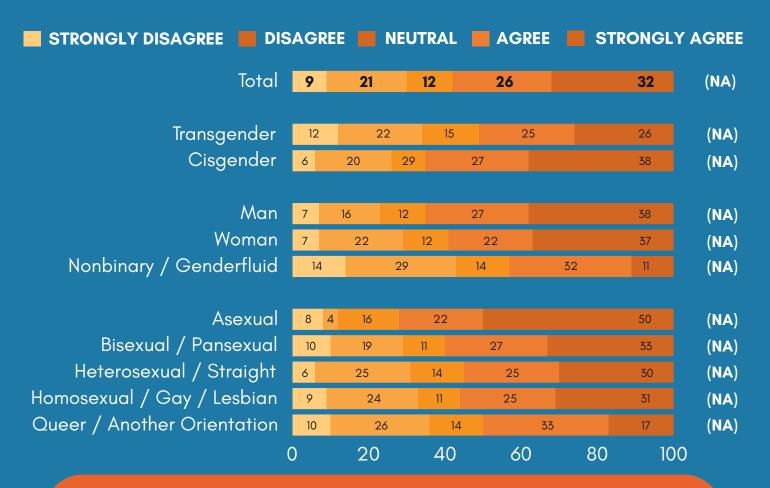
- **By industry**, non-profit workers report the most access to gender-aligned restrooms (86% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers report least access (69%).
- **By generation**, Millennial workers report most access (76% agree/strongly agree); Gen Z workers report least access (67%).
- By race/ethnicity, Asian or Asian American workers report most access (86%); American Indian or Alaska Native workers report least access (43%).
- By work format, remote workers report most access (79% agree/strongly agree); hybrid workers report least access (70%).

# INTERVIEW AUTHENTICITY

58%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree or strongly agree they felt comfortable being their authentic self in recent job interviews

**SURVEY QUESTION**: ON AVERAGE, DURING JOB INTERVIEWS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, I HAVE FELT COMFORTABLE BEING MY AUTHENTIC SELF.



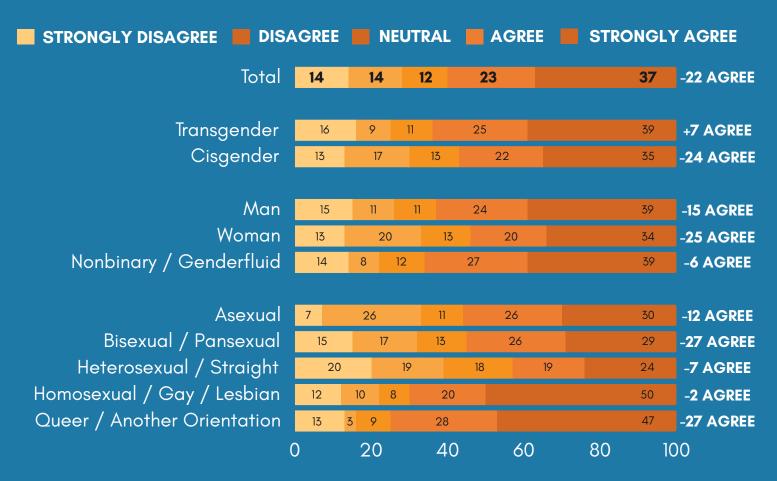
- By industry, government workers felt most authentically themselves in interviews (60% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers felt least authentic (59%).
- By generation, Millennial workers felt most authentic in job interviews (60% agree/strongly agree); Gen X workers felt least authentic (55%).
- **By race/ethnicity**, American Indian or Alaska Native workers felt most authentic (74% agree/strongly agree); Multiracial workers felt least authentic (46%).
- **By work format**, hybrid workers felt most authentic in job interviews (73% agree/strongly agree); remote workers felt least authentic (46%).

# BEING 'OUT' AT WORK

60%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) say they are "out" at work to all or most coworkers

### SURVEY QUESTION: I AM OPENLY LGBTQIA+ AT WORK.





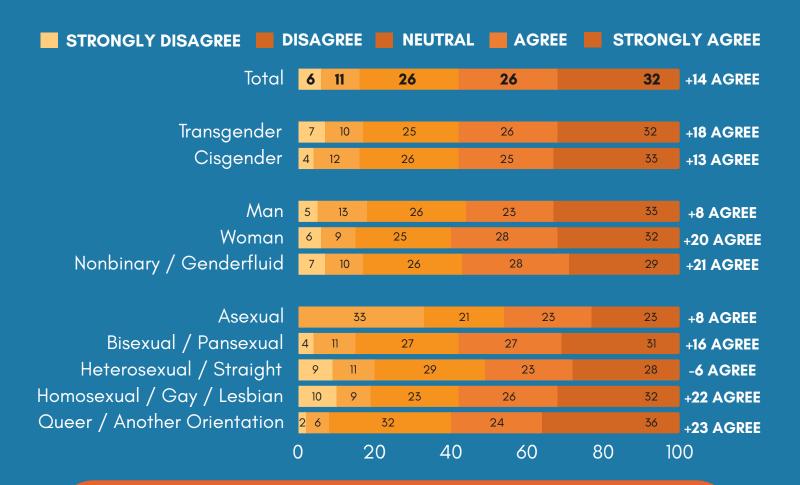
54% OF TRANSGENDER RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT OUT AT WORK WORRY ABOUT DISCRIMINATION OR HARMFUL WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

# **LGBTQIA+ WORKPLACE TRAINING**

**58%** 

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) agree their workplace would benefit from LGBTQIA+-focused anti-discrimination and harassment training

**SURVEY QUESTION**: IN MY WORKPLACE, THERE IS APPROPRIATE TRAINING AROUND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT RELEVANT TO LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES.



- **By industry**, government workers report the highest rates of LGBTQIA+ training (68% agree/strongly agree); for-profit workers report the lowest (67%).
- **By generation**, Gen Z workers report the highest rates of LGBTQIA+ training (62% agree/strongly agree); Gen X workers report the lowest (52%).
- By race/ethnicity, Black/African American workers report highest rates of training (65% agree/strongly agree); Hispanic/Latino workers report lowest (40%).
- **By work format**, in-person workers report the highest rates of LGBTQIA+ training (59% agree/strongly agree); remote workers report the lowest (53%).

# **JOB SEARCH RESOURCES**

90%

of LGBTQIA+ respondents (n=914) say they would benefit from two or more of the provided inclusive job-seeking resources.

**SURVEY QUESTION**: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES OR TYPES OF TRAINING WOULD BE MOST VALUABLE TO YOU DURING A JOB SEARCH?

Resource	% 2024	% 2023
Salary Negotiation Training	56%	42%
LGBTQIA+ Career Fairs	47%	39%
Interview Practice Sessions	44%	38%
Mentorship for LGBTQIA+ Job Seekers	44%	36%
LGBTQIA+-Friendly Career Counseling	43%	38%
LGBTQIA+ Job Search Support Group	39%	39%
Resume Writing Workshops	34%	34%
Transitioning / Coming Out Resources	25%	29%

### **SUMMARY**

Among all LGBTQ+ respondents, Salary Negotiation Training continues to be the top resource in a job search (56%), followed by LGBTQIA+ Career Fairs (47%). Interview Practice Sessions and Mentorship are also common resources sought by LGBTQIA+ individuals when pursuing employment (44%).

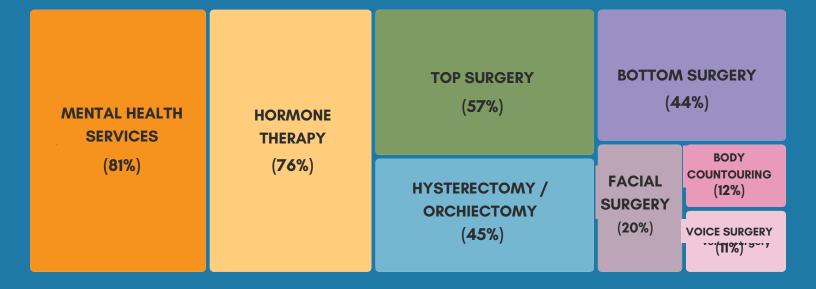
Among transgender respondents, Salary Negotiation Training is the top resource (42%) followed by LGBTQIA+ Career Fairs (39%), and Job Search Support Group (39%) as needed resources.

# **GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE**

**73%** 

of respondents seeking gender-affirming care (n=161) identified two or more of the following health benefits offered by their workplace

SURVEY QUESTION: MY EMPLOYER OFFERS THE FOLLOWING GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS:



# IN A FOCUS GROUP SERIES, RESPONDENTS MENTIONED THE NEED FOR HEALTH INSURANCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT ARE LGBTQIA+-INCLUSIVE.



It's become even more challenging for queer people to get the health insurance they are supposed to be getting. My employer doesn't publish a specific guide for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and it shows. The only way to get health care support from my current employer is to out myself.

Bisexual Transgender Woman; Manager at a Fortune 500 Company in Illinois

It would help for workplaces to provide a specific healthcare guide for LGBTQIA+ individuals. I had to go through six different booklets to understand if my health care would even be covered.

Gay Transgender Man; Special Education Teacher in Utah

99

# REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP MATTERS

In December 2024, a random selection of Shine the Light survey respondents were invited to join one of four 30-minute focus groups. These discussions provided a space for LGBTQIA+ individuals to confidentially share workplace experiences.

## KEY INSIGHT FROM FOCUS GROUP CONVERSATION

66 If you don't see people like yourself in leadership roles, it's very hard to know if it is safe to be yourself.

Transgender Worker in Technology; Chicago, IL

JUST 0.7% OF OVER 5,400 BOARD SEATS IN THE FORTUNE 500 ARE OCCUPIED BY LGBTQ+ DIRECTORS

OUT LEADERSHIP, 2023

# **EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS**

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), or Affinity Groups, are voluntary, employee-led collectives that provide support, connection, and advocacy. As workplaces navigate issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), including executive orders that challenge these initiatives, some organizations are reassessing their DEI commitments, which may impact ERGs. Despite these shifts, ERGs remain essential spaces for marginalized employees, continuing to adapt and persist.



54%

of respondents report employer offers an LGBTQIA+ Resource Group

-23 points from 2023

68%

of respondents agree they feel supported as an LGBTQIA+ employee

+15 points from 2023

92%

of employers on the Corporate Equality Index offer an LGBTQ+ Resource Group\*

-6 points from CEI 2024

<sup>\*</sup>Human Rights Campaign. (2025). Corporate Equality Index 2024–2025. Human Rights Campaign. Percent of Respondents Whose Employer Offers An LGBTQ+ Resource Group

# Summary of Trends

# **LGBTQIA+ Workplace Supports**



LGBTQIA+ respondents noted increased workplace support; "Strongly agree" responses rose from 22% in 2023 to 40% in 2024 (+18 points).

# **Coming Out at Work**



54% of transgender respondents who are not 'out' at work cited concerns about discrimination or harmful workplace behavior.

# **Employee Resource Groups**



54% of respondents report their employer offers an LGBTQIA+ resource group, down from 77% in 2023 (-23 points).

# Comfort Approaching Leadership



Comfort discussing discrimination with leadership increased from 23% in 2023 to 30% in 2024 (+7 points).

# **Discrimination Experiences**



1 in 5 respondents reported negative LGBTQIA+ interactions; "Strongly agree" responses held steady from 20% in 2023 to 22% in 2024.

# **Job-Searching Resources**



Top-requested resources—Salary Negotiation Training (56%) and LGBTQIA+ Career Fairs (47%)—were consistent with 2023 findings.

# **NEXT STEPS**

As workplaces reassess their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives amid increasing attacks on policies protecting LGBTQIA+ employees, many must navigate safety, support, and career growth in an increasingly uncertain environment. This year's findings highlight the need for stronger workplace protections, intentional leadership, and active allyship. Here's how each group can create real change.

# **FOR EMPLOYERS**



Generic diversity statements aren't enough — LGBTQIA+ employees need real support. Ensure training goes beyond basics, covering bias, microaggressions, and intervention strategies. Only 50% of respondents feel comfortable approaching leadership about discrimination, reflecting a lack of trust in many workplaces and a need to track inclusion progress. If your company offers gender-affirming healthcare, ensure employees know how to access it — this was a key concern of focus group participants.

## FOR EMPLOYEES



Whether you are part of the LGBTQIA+ community or an ally, speaking up makes a difference. Advocate for stronger workplace policies, push for salary negotiation training (56% requested it), and participate in or help build an LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Group (ERG). ERGs are vital, yet only 54% of respondents report having one. If your workplace lacks support, connect with external networks, career fairs, or mentorship programs for LGBTQIA+ professionals. No one should navigate the workplace alone.

## **FOR ADVOCATES**



As some workplaces scale back DEI initiatives, continue to support initiatives — including ERGs. Support LGBTQIA+ leadership by mentoring rising professionals and pushing for inclusive hiring practices. With 48% of respondents experiencing or witnessing some discriminatory behavior, much work remains. Expand LGBTQIA+-focused job fairs and create stronger pathways to affirming workplaces. Advocate for local and state non-discrimination protections to secure workplace rights.

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report would not have been possible without the dedication of many individuals and organizations committed to workplace equity for LGBTQIA+ people. Special thanks to the **Shine the Light Research Advisory Group** — Todd B., Tricia P., Ashley B., Ace D., Lia T., and Noelle J. — for their invaluable guidance. We are especially grateful to **Tricia P.** for her contributions to conducting the research as well as the report's design and editing.

We are also deeply grateful to *Be The Transformational Change*, as the primary sponsor supporting this research.

Finally, we extend appreciation to the 914 survey respondents and focus group participants who shared their time and experiences. Your voices are essential in turning this research into action.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to LGBTQIA+ Research.

# Contact

**Evan Linett | Researcher** evan.linettegmail.com

Be The Transformational Change | Sponsor 4 Peddlers Row #212, Newark, DE 19702 info@bethetransformationalchange.org