



# Chasing Rainbows

**LGBTQ+ inclusivity in the South African corporate workplace**

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Shine

As we mark the 25th anniversary of the South African Constitution, PwC surveyed the state of LGBTQ+ inclusivity among corporates in South Africa. Here, we explore our findings, unpack why LGBTQ+ inclusion is important and provide recommendations on how organisations can eliminate discrimination, create an inclusive workplace and effect positive change for all.

## Setting the scene

South Africa's Constitution was the first in the world to prohibit unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. At the same time, gender-based violence and corrective rape<sup>1</sup> are endemic in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Being guaranteed protection by the Constitution is simply not enough to prevent the challenges of discrimination, inequality and exclusion that the LGBTQ+ community face in their personal lives and in the workplace every day. Many companies in South Africa believe they have all bases covered if they have non-discriminatory policies regarding diversity and inclusion in place, when, in fact, they may not fully comprehend the complexity of offering the right support to LGBTQ+ people in their organisations to create a truly inclusive workplace.

It should be a top priority of every company to create a safe and inclusive working environment for all employees — one in which each individual is able to thrive as their authentic self. Though there is no easy one-size-fits-all approach, there are ways in which employers can ensure diversity in the workplace and, most importantly, a positive change in the culture of their organisations.

## Introducing PwC Shine

PwC Shine is an inclusive business network for LGBTQ+ people, allies and supporters, that spans the network of PwC firms around the globe. We are committed to creating an inclusive workplace in which everyone can be themselves, including our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) people. We firmly believe in being an inclusive workplace that embraces the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of all our people, that this inclusivity creates better outcomes for clients and society, and that it provides a better experience for all our staff.

## Surveying the corporate landscape

To better understand the landscape of inclusivity in the workplace, PwC Shine conducted an online survey in February 2021, targeting both local and multinational companies in South Africa. Survey participants, primarily Diversity and Inclusion Leads, HR Managers and C-Suite executives, answered more than 20 quantitative and qualitative questions, which explored the policies, initiatives and perceptions within these organisations.

Our findings have given us some understanding of how LGBTQ+ initiatives currently function in corporate entities across South Africa. Taking our analysis a step further we've used the insights gained from the survey to inform the views and recommendations presented here. We also reflect on the advantages of having an LGBTQ+ initiative or network within an organisation to support valued employees as well as the wider community of staff members.

*Our aim is not only to create more visibility around the triumphs and challenges of implementing LGBTQ+ initiatives, but to shed light, and share our views, on what organisations can do to progress towards the common goal of creating inclusive working environments for all. This includes aspects such as leadership advocacy, company culture, communication and policies.*



1. Corrective rape, also called curative or homophobic rape, is a hate crime in which a person is raped specifically because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

2. "The Brutality of 'Corrective Rape'." The New York Times Web Archive. Last modified 27 July 2013. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/07/26/opinion/26corrective-rape.html>.

## About the survey

PwC conducted an online survey among various corporate organisations during February 2021. Although the sample size was too small to be fully representative, we believe our findings highlight some of the key developments around LGBTQ+ inclusivity in the corporate workplace.

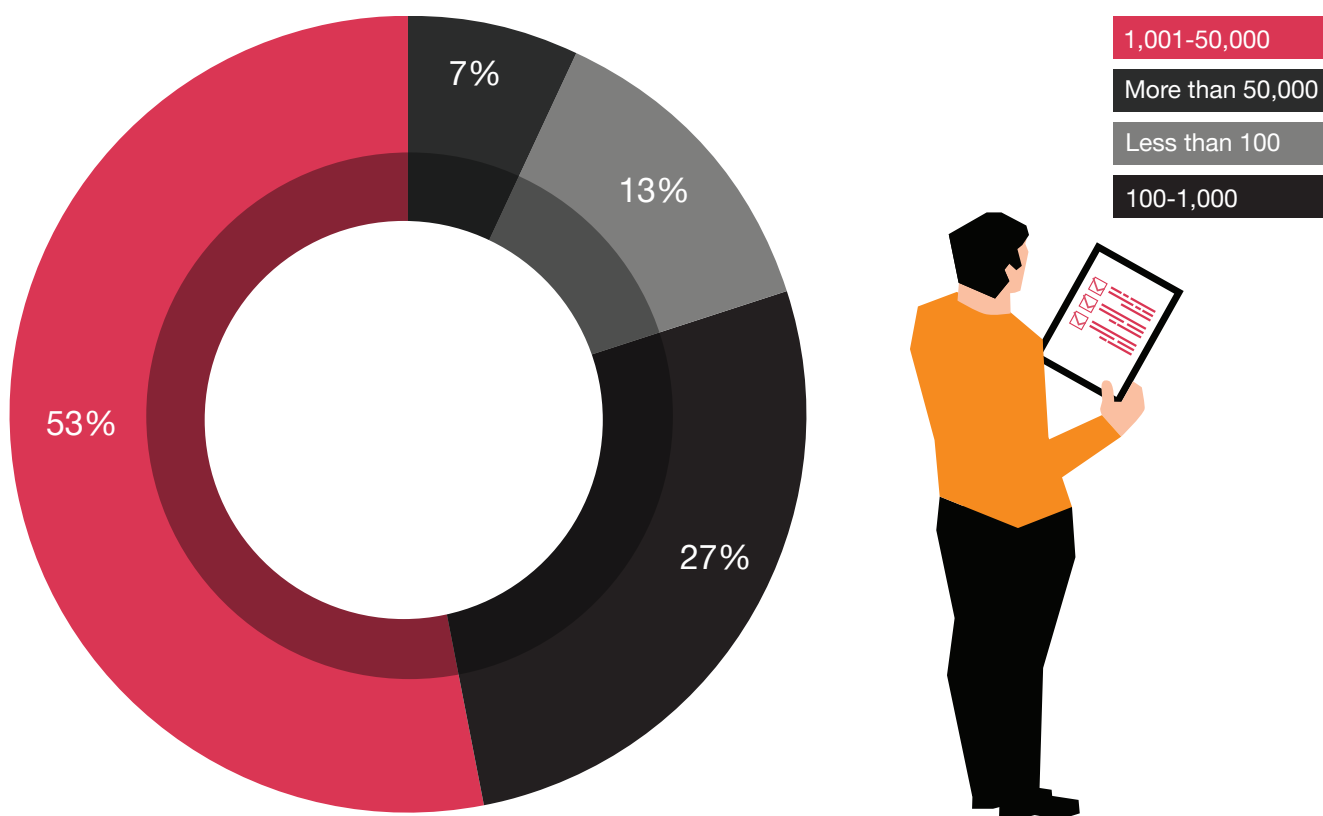
Participants included Diversity & Inclusion leads, HR managers and C-suite executives.

Respondents from nine industries took part:

- Advertising
- Broadcast media
- Chemicals
- Consumer products
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Professional services
- Property management
- Telecoms



Figure 1. Company size by headcount



Source: PwC analysis

# Take the initiative

*Every company can benefit from an LGBTQ+ initiative, led from the top, prioritised by Diversity and Inclusion, incorporating Human Capital and managed by LGBTQ+ members and allies.*

**Sixty percent of survey respondents confirmed that their company has LGBTQ+ initiatives in place and supports related events, but only 27% run an official or named LGBTQ+ network within the company.**

Large corporations often assume that sponsoring an LGBTQ+ event is enough to demonstrate their commitment to making a difference, but it often does little more than creating brand visibility for a brief moment. True impact is made when companies firstly invest in their own talent by listening to them, understanding their needs, and supporting their growth. Secondly, companies can make a meaningful contribution by participating in sustainable initiatives that assist the wider LGBTQ+ community over an extended period of time. This sentiment was also reflected by participants' feedback. When asked where improvement toward a more inclusive environment was needed, answers included:

- 'Investment into meaningful [LGBTQ+] programmes'
- 'Implementation of initiatives within the firm'
- 'Do something!'

## **'Do something!'**

The principal benefit to having an LGBTQ+ support network in place is to provide ongoing support to LGBTQ+ members of the organisation, to make them feel included and welcome and safe.

Encouragement and advice can be provided in numerous ways, and is in no way limited to the following list of examples:

- Offer guidance to employees facing personal LGBTQ+ issues, such as the coming out of a family member and how best to support them.
- Provide resources on LGBTQ+ topics that may serve to educate staff.
- Furnish contact details of community-based organisations or support structures that may assist LGBTQ+ team members on a more personal or professional level.
- Create opportunities for company-wide awareness or educational drives.
- Call out instances or examples of ways in which the company can be more inclusive, such as by ensuring that an LGBTQ+ member's preferred pronoun is used in communications.
- Be a confidant and assist members in dealing with any discriminatory issues they may encounter.
- Create and develop a trusted group that is approachable and gives LGBTQ+ members the feeling of belonging, acceptance and safety.



There are many advantages to having a fully inclusive and integrated workplace.

- **Investment opportunities with emphasis on social factors**

Investors are increasingly considering environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors in their analysis of risks and growth opportunities, and ultimately to determine the value of companies.

In South Africa, where poverty, high unemployment and crime are major challenges, we see greater emphasis being placed on the social aspects of ESG. Consequently, companies that provide employment in a safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment are likely to be recognised by investors, who are increasingly demanding such practices.

- **Talent attraction**

Having a clear, authentic and relatable vision or mission attracts talent to a company, but in order for great employees to want to stay, there needs to be a sense of alignment between their individual ideals and those of the company. Many LGBTQ+ members are reluctant to enter a work relationship where they are not able to be their true selves for fear of being unwelcome or discriminated against. Some may have had bad experiences in which they've had to fight for equal opportunities, or worse yet, where they have had to submit to the reality of being considered inferior in skills or value, just because they are 'different'. In instances where an LGBTQ+ member is forced to take on a position where they feel they have to censor themselves, they may approach their work with less confidence, and may struggle to share their ideas with the team. The impact of this on business value creation should be obvious.

- **Talent retention**

People, and LGBTQ+ members in particular, will stay in a company when they feel a genuine emotional connection to the mission, and a true sense of belonging, not just during specific event times, like Pride, but at all times. Employers can create such an environment by accepting the complexity of all people and encouraging all individuals to contribute towards the organisation's cause. On the other hand, talent may be lost if an employee is denied growth opportunities within the company due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- **Client attraction and retention**

Authenticity not only attracts and retains great talent, but also valued clients and customers. By building a brand that is not only home to great talent, but that genuinely and fully supports and stands behind all of its diverse people, a company can gain the respect, trust and loyalty of many business partnerships, clients and customers.

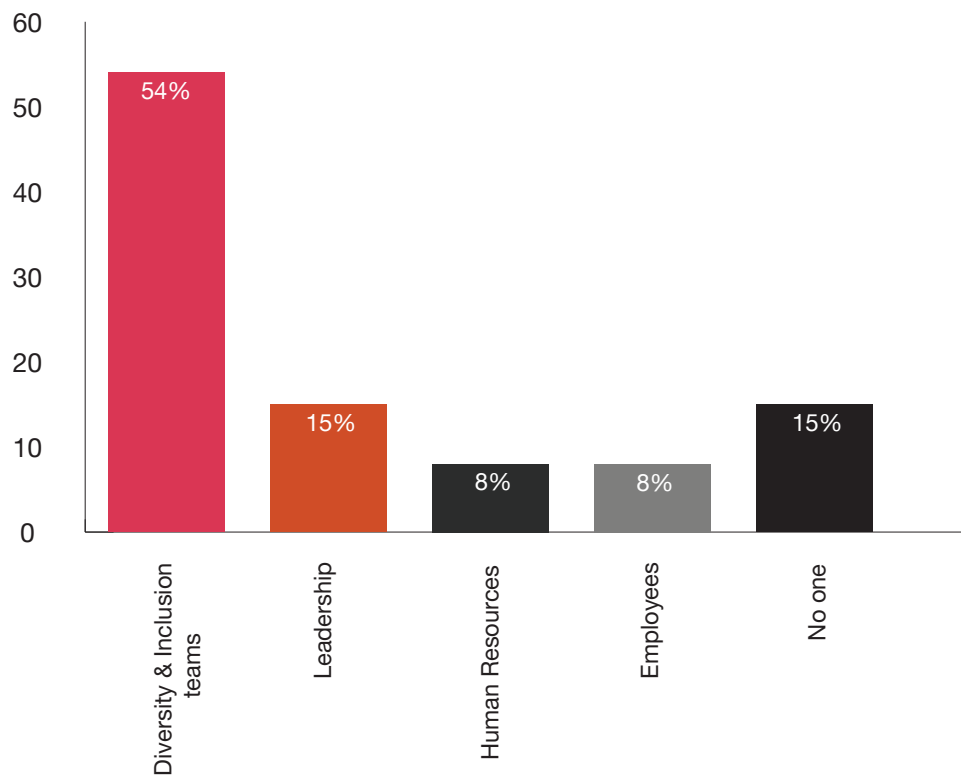


# Who runs the initiatives?

Our research showed that while LGBTQ+ initiatives often start with employees, more than 50% evolve and grow successfully within the companies' Diversity and Inclusion teams. This is likely due to the focused participation of such teams and their experience in dealing with what can be sensitive issues. That said, we strongly believe that for an LGBTQ+ network to thrive and be successful, there should be representation across all levels within the company, including top leadership, but especially from LGBTQ+ members and allies.

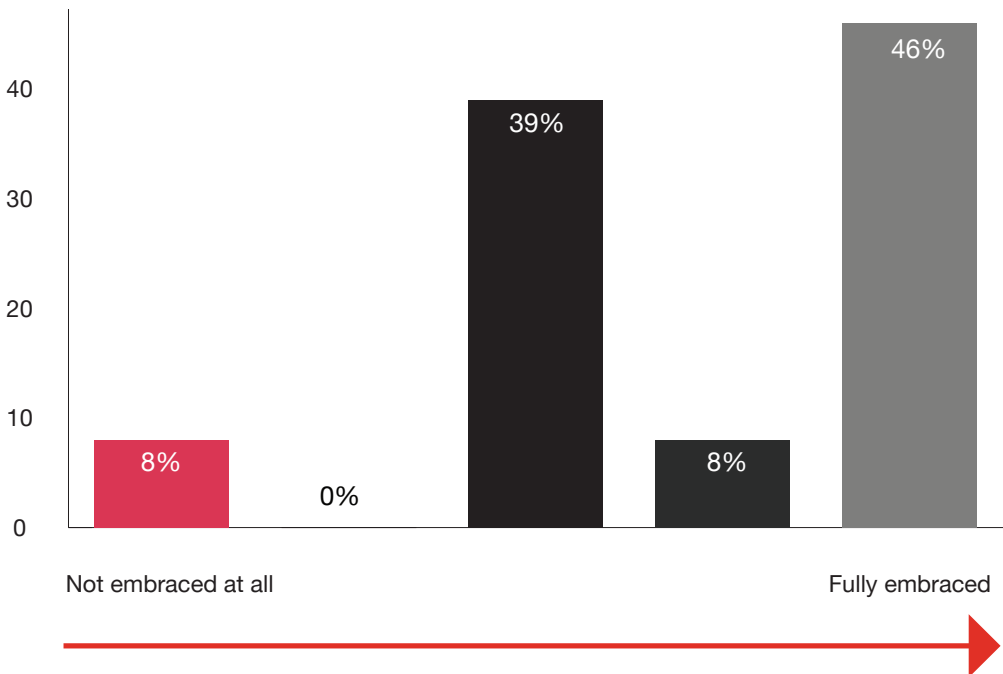
Despite the existence of LGBTQ+ initiatives, and the desire, and need, for new or improved initiatives to be implemented, the extent to which these initiatives are embraced within the company is not always as positive as one would expect. As Figure 2 shows, less than half of respondents (46%) believe that LGBTQ+ initiatives are fully embraced within their organisations. Another 39% are ambivalent about the success of the initiatives. One reason for this, we believe, is lack of leadership advocacy.

Figure 2. Who runs LGBTQ+ initiatives



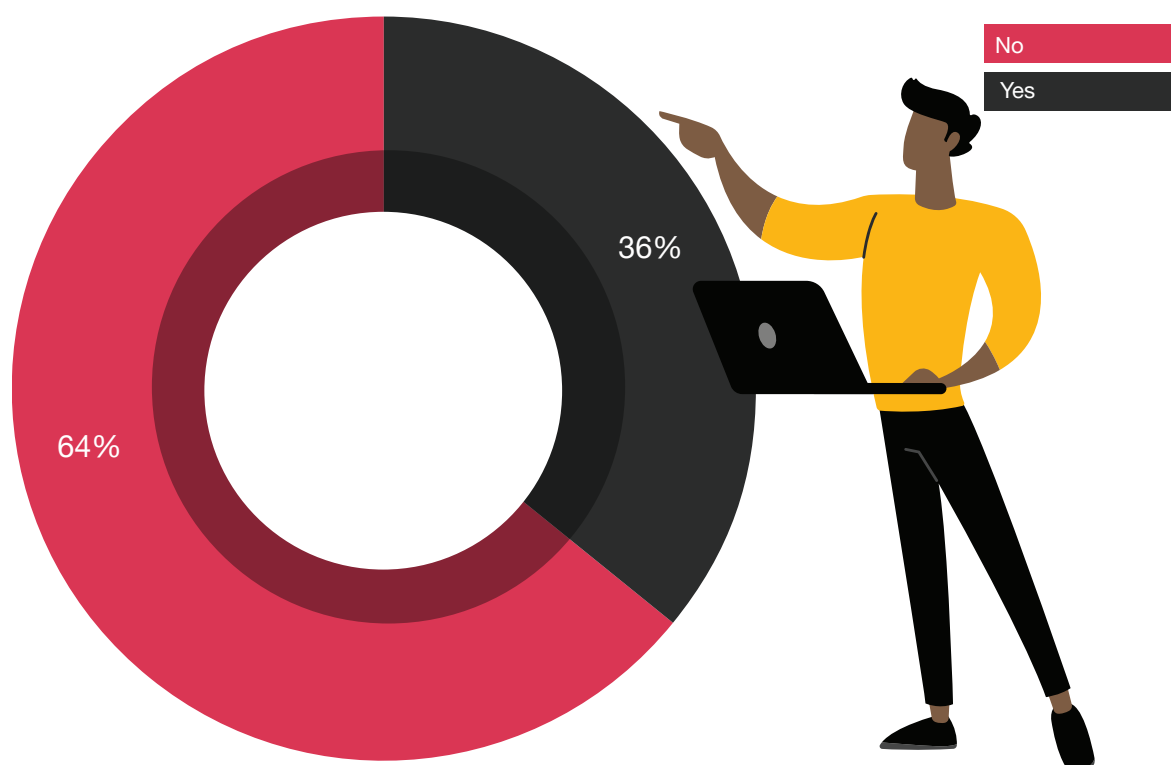
Source: PwC analysis

Figure 3. Extent to which LGBTQ+ initiatives are embraced in the company



*The involvement of leadership visibility and awareness can be crucial to the success of LGBTQ+ initiatives*

Figure 4. Does leadership actively participate in LGBTQ+ initiatives in your workplace?




Source: PwC analysis

In a study by the National Business Institute (NBI) only 24% of LGBTQ+ youth in 15 countries, including South Africa, felt that leadership reflected allyship.<sup>3</sup> When asked whether they felt that leadership actively participated in LGBTQ+ initiatives in their workplace, 64% of our survey participants felt that they did not (Figure 3).

Closer analysis of the responses showed that the involvement of leadership was predominant within companies where long-standing, successful LGBTQ+ networks exist. Leadership participation occurs in these programmes at various levels — from communications and events, to decisions made, to company policy regarding LGBTQ+ rights.

3. "Understanding the Experiences of LGBTQI+ Employees in the Workplace." National Business Initiative. Accessed August 12, 2021.



Further to this, when asked about leadership's active participation, or lack thereof, and the impact this may have on the acceptance and openness of employees, respondents said this:

Other than emails from very senior leaders, I'm not sure that I have seen senior leaders who do not identify as LGBTQ+ actively participating in events.

Lack of support from upper management would result in a culture of 'I don't care' for these employees. Without engagement and support employees will never feel comfortable in their work environments.

By leadership reflecting allyship, this creates a top-down effect on other employees.

I think it doesn't provide the signals to the workforce that it's ok to [be] out in the workplace and that the firm is supportive.

It creates an environment where people are still scared to be open about themselves.

Everyone avoids the topic and we do not talk about it.

We need more of our top HR and EXCO members to be more active and to live the values they claim to support.

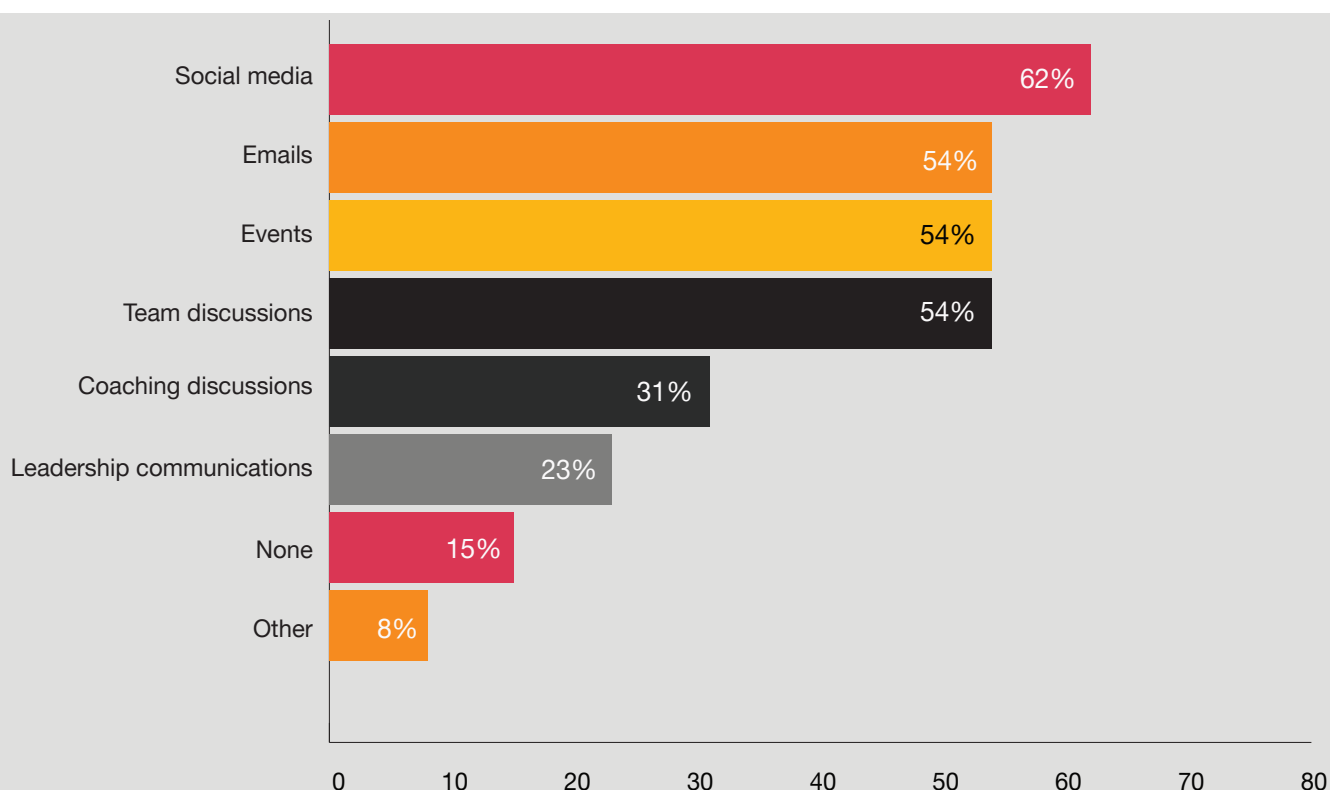
## Visibility and consistent communication

Executives who fully embrace the value and significance of inclusivity and equality not only lead by example, but lead more effectively and promote empathy and productivity within their organisation.<sup>4</sup>

The awareness and education needed to create an inclusive culture starts and grows via consistent communication. When asked if there was visibility within the company surrounding LGBTQ+ initiatives, 62% responded 'Yes'. Platforms used for communication and to create visibility are quite extensive, as shown in Figure 4. Despite the use of numerous forms of communication, there is still room for improvement, including increasing awareness, education and effective communication.

**“The awareness is only on social media, so awareness is lacking among employees who do not interact on social media.”**

Figure 5. Platforms used for communication and to create visibility



Source: PwC analysis

## Culture add

Although the conventional forms of communication are great tools for conveying a message, we believe that it is only by adopting a firmwide inclusive culture, and living by this, that companies can effectively overcome resistance to LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

The world view in which we define and tolerate those who are in the minority or of lower social standing as 'other' is no longer acceptable. To tolerate something means to allow the existence of something that we may not necessarily like or agree with. It also means to ignore or turn a blind eye to something. Such behaviour or attitude of tolerance (and ignorance) towards the LGBTQ+ community does not bring us any closer to embracing

individuality and diversity. Indeed, merely having a culture of tolerance certainly sends the wrong message for any organisation that intends to demonstrate inclusivity and equality. We advocate for fully embracing diversity and inclusivity for minorities.

Taking this idea one step further, we also suggest that leaders drop the 'culture fit' approach, where employees are encouraged to culturally fit in with the rest of the company. Instead, we believe there is greater value in embracing a 'culture add' approach, in which every individual, in their uniqueness, adds to the culture of the company.

4. "The Key to Inclusive Leadership." Harvard Business Review. Last modified March 6, 2020.

# Protection provided by policies

*All company policies should command 100% inclusivity and equality and 0% discrimination.*

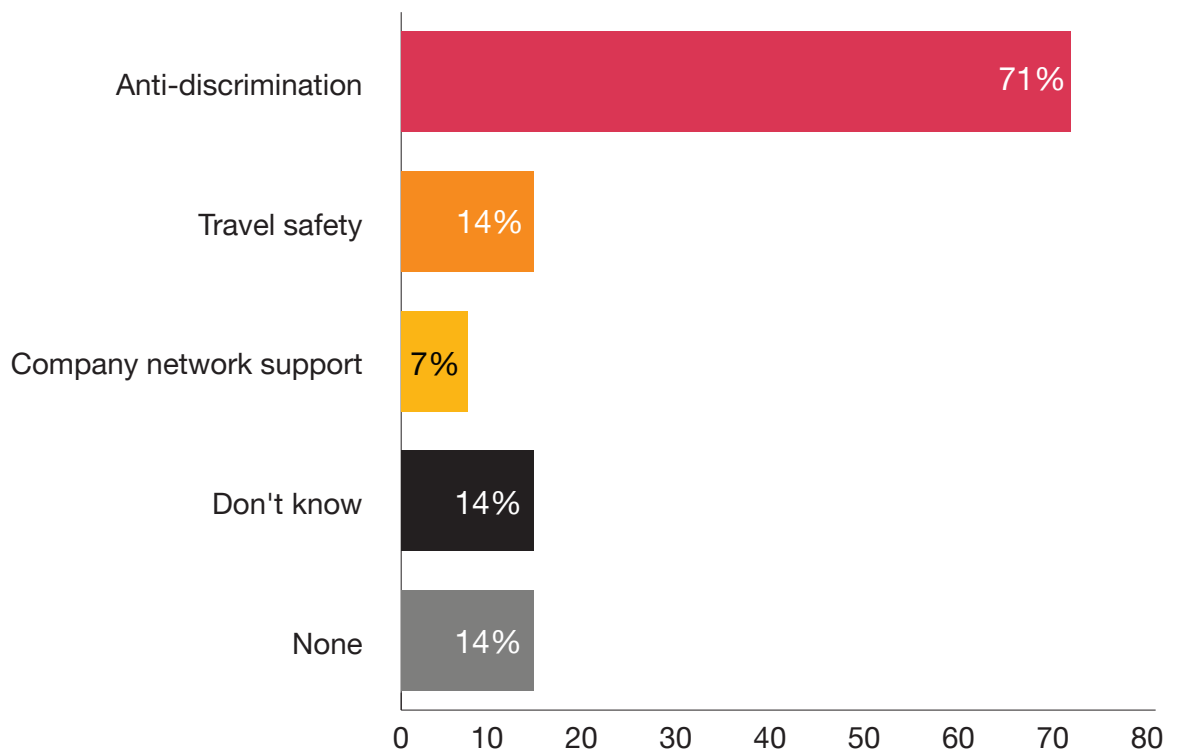
While the Constitution has certainly contributed positively to the protection of LGBTQ+ rights on a national, legislative level, there are members of the community that still face challenges of discrimination, inequality, exclusion, and much worse on a daily basis in society and the workplace.

All company policies should thus incorporate 100% inclusivity and equality and 0% discrimination. They should also be explicit in defining the rights of LGBTQ+ members' needs, thereby eliminating any uncertainty. For instance, the South African Labour Law stipulates that "all parents — including fathers, adopting parents, and surrogates — are now entitled to 10 days' unpaid parental leave when their children are born."<sup>5</sup> This legislation does not, however, make specific provision

for paternity (better described as 'secondary caregiver') leave or maternity ('primary caregiver') leave for gay men. But would it not be discriminatory to refuse a gay man who is assuming the role of primary caregiver to a newborn the same four months' paid leave on the grounds that he is not the child's biological mother?

There is no reason why a company shouldn't allow a gay man who is becoming a parent, either by surrogacy or adoption, to have the same rights to maternity leave as a natural mother. Similarly, in order for an organisation to pledge gender equality, a single heterosexual man who is going to become a parent to a child by surrogacy or adoption, should also be granted the same maternity rights.

Figure 6. Policies addressing LGBTQ+ issues



Source: PwC analysis

5. "New Parental Leave Laws & Benefits in South Africa." Gunston Strandvik Attorneys. Last modified February 12, 2020.

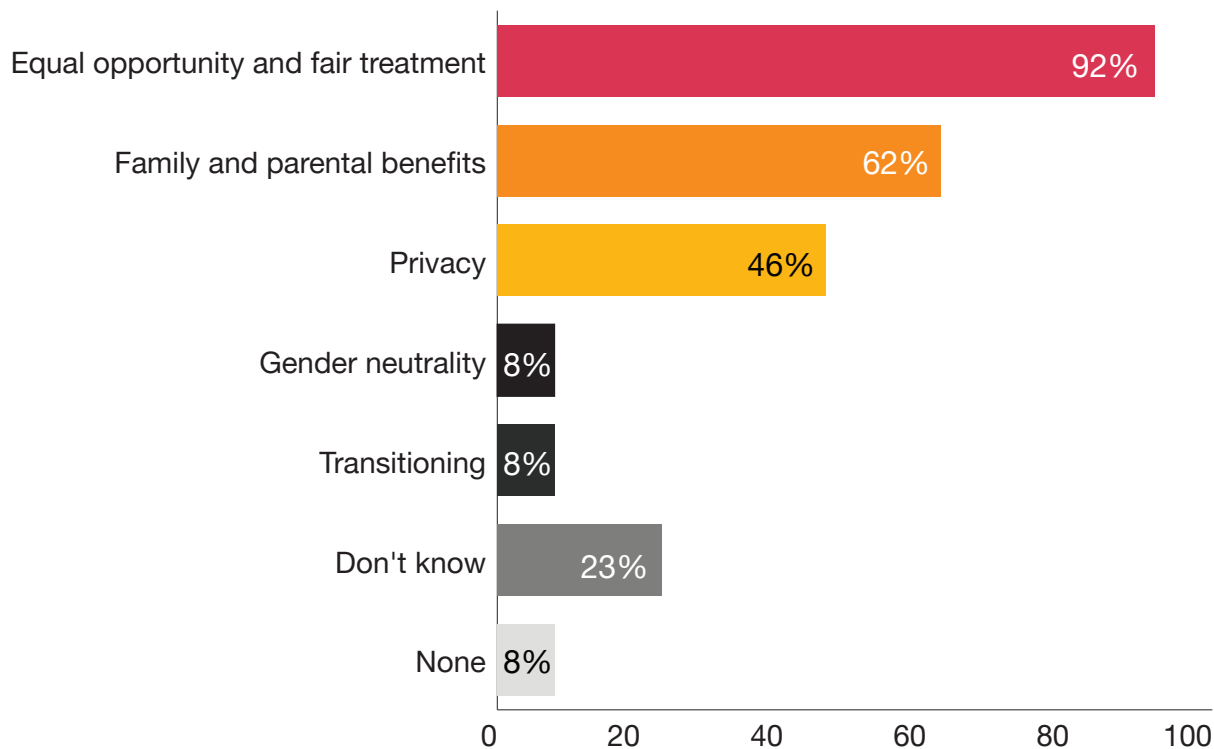
Although Figure 5 confirms the assumption that most policies address issues of anti-discrimination, the question remains as to how explicit these are with regard to the LGBTQ+ community. The point is that when an LGBTQ+ person needs to rely on a policy for protection, they should not have the burden of proof that they are entitled to the protection that the policy provides.

There are ways in which company policies can be extended beyond the minimum, in favour of LGBTQ+ members. Figure 6 depicts policy types pertaining to LGBTQ+ rights

on a broader level, but some policies could be made quite specific to incorporate, without doubt, the LGBTQ+ community. Some examples are:

- medical leave for employees that are transitioning;
- gender-specific, as well as gender-neutral toilets for non-binary members;
- company documentation inclusive of all genders and personal pronouns (and names); and
- formal and safe avenues for workplace dispute resolution around harassment and bullying.

Figure 7. Policies addressing LGBTQ+ issues



Source: PwC analysis

When developing and implementing company policies, consideration should be given to having the right balance of sources of input. At a bare minimum, policies should be aligned to national laws and regulations, and HR, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Risk Management teams should also be consulted.

On a more personal level, the feedback and input obtained directly from the LGBTQ+ community members and allies is vital in not only drawing up relevant policies, but in

demonstrating the commitment to inclusivity and equality, and showing employees that the company truly cares about their wellbeing and values.

The impact of leadership involvement, as previously discussed, plays a crucial role in raising awareness of the policies in place, clearly communicates the stance of the company in relation to infringements of stipulated policies, and emphasizes the consequences that may occur as a result.

# Final thoughts and aspirations

*Each conscious action in support of our LGBTQ+ community, irrespective of how small, is a step towards a more inclusive culture*

As a nation, we can celebrate having a human rights-based Constitution that protects the dignity of all of our people, but we need to acknowledge that, despite progress over the years, we still have a long way to go before becoming a fully inclusive society.

We can contribute by creating initiatives in the workplace that focus on supporting members

of the LGBTQ+ community, and attaining and retaining talent. We need to encourage everyone's collaboration in a 'culture add' environment, especially that of leadership. We can also officially take a stand against discrimination and insist on inclusivity and equal rights, by updating, maintaining and enforcing LGBTQ+-specific company policies.



Irrespective of our role or position, we can help effect change on a personal level in the workplace. This starts by consciously adopting one, some, or all of the actions below, and knowing that by doing this you are changing (and potentially saving) someone's life:

- Embrace coming out, especially if you're in a senior management role. Junior LGBTQ+ members are desperately seeking a role model to pave the way for them.
- Avoid putting LGBTQ+ members in boxes. Consider their whole being, not just their sexual orientation.
- Place LGBTQ+ members in roles relevant to their experience. For example, many transgender people report being denied promotion, not getting positions they applied for when they were the best candidates and ending up underemployed (working in a field they should not be in or in a position for which they are over-qualified) or even unemployed.<sup>6</sup>
- Stand firmly behind your LGBTQ+ colleagues if they are discriminated against by other colleagues or clients.
- Consider the laws of other countries when offering an LGBTQ+ member the chance to grow their career internationally.

6. Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. [https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS\\_Report.pdf](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf)

- Acknowledge the efforts of your LGBTQ+ colleagues. Many may feel that they have to constantly outperform their non-LGBTQ+ peers to gain recognition.
- If no gender-neutral restrooms exist at your company, be accepting of a non-binary person using either the male or female restrooms.
- Don't force your own, or any, religious beliefs onto an LGBTQ+ member.
- Don't refer to a transgender or non-binary person by the first name they used before they transitioned. (This is called 'deadnaming'.)
- Instead of inquiring about someone's wife/girlfriend (if they're male) or husband/boyfriend (if they're female), use gender-neutral words like 'spouse' or 'partner'.
- Avoid microaggressions such as making disparaging remarks or derogatory jokes about LGBTQ+ people, at all times.
- Speak out against microaggressions if you do encounter them.
- Keep yourself and your team educated on LGBTQ+ matters.
- Engage with LGBTQ+ members and gain a true understanding of their needs and desires.
- Learn about which pronouns are preferred, and use them correctly.
- Normalise LGBTQ+ relationships by using language such as 'Tom and his partner, Dave'.
- Reduce unconscious bias in hiring decisions by screening CVs without names, gender, race or any other identifying factors.
- Remove heteronormative dress codes.
- Display signs of support. This can be anything from lighting up your building in rainbow colours, to laptop stickers, lanyards or t-shirts.
- Use appropriate communication channels to share relevant news in support of LGBTQ+ issues.

There will always be people within the organisation who, based on religious beliefs, cultural upbringing, or even a fear of the unknown, will feel uncomfortable to promote, let alone embrace, an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture. We believe that well-structured LGBTQ+ networks can, and should, exist despite potential adverse reactions from select individuals or groups. Through consistent and constant education and communication, prejudice and fear of the unknown can be overcome.

Each conscious action in support of our LGBTQ+ community, irrespective of how small, is a step towards creating a completely inclusive culture.



# Glossary of LGBTQ+ terms

## Ally

A (typically) straight and/or cis person who supports members of the LGBT+ community.

## Asexual/Ace

Ace is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a total lack of attraction.

## Bisexual/Bi

An umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual attraction to more than one gender.

## Cisgender/Cis

A person whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Coming out (of the closet)

The process of voluntary disclosure that occurs when a person first tells someone/others about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The process often starts with a person coming out to themselves.

## Deadnaming

The act of calling a transgender or non-binary person by their birth name after they have transitioned and changed their name.

## Gender

The characteristics of girls and boys, women and men that are socially constructed. Usually assumed from the sex assigned at birth, gender is expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity.

## Gender dysphoria

Psychological distress felt by a person who experiences a profound mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. It often begins in childhood.

## Gender expression

How a person outwardly presents themselves in terms of appearance, behaviour, interests and mannerisms within the context of societal expectations of gender.

## Gender identity

A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Gender reassignment

The process undertaken by a transgender person in order to alter their physical sexual characteristics to match their gender identity.

This may include surgical procedures and/or hormone treatment and is also associated with their changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living as their self-identified gender.

## Heteronormativity

The belief that heterosexuality is the only normal, natural and legitimate form of sexuality. It presupposes there are only two distinct, opposite genders and that sexual and marital relations should only occur between people of the opposite sex. It assumes that all of us experience a natural alignment between our biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles.

## Heterosexual/Straight

A person who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards people of the opposite sex or gender.

## Homophobia/Biphobia

The fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying may take the form of discrimination, abuse or violence targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Types of homophobia include institutionalised homophobia such as religious and state-sponsored homophobia.

## Intersex

A person who is born with a reproductive/sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the binary definitions of female or male. At least one in 100 babies is born with a body that differs from typical male or female, while other atypical characteristics may go unnoticed until later or remain unknown to a person all of their life.

## Lesbian

A woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

## Lesbophobia

The fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian.

## LGBT/ LGBT+

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. LGBT+ is a more inclusive term, encompassing LGBT together with other forms of sexual diversity such as intersex, queer/questioning, asexual, aromantic, agender and pansexual.

# Glossary of LGBTQ+ terms

## Microaggression

Everyday comments or actions, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes toward people from stigmatised or marginalised groups — leaving victims feeling uncomfortable or insulted.

## MX / ZE / ZIR

Alternative pronouns that are gender neutral, which replace he/she and his/hers. Some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun 'they/their' as a gender neutral singular pronoun.

## Non-binary

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit within the man-woman binary. Non-binary identities vary from those who identify with some aspects of binary identities to those who reject them entirely.

## Orientation

Sexual orientation is the emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction that a person feels toward another person. The terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual and straight.

## Outing

Disclosing the sexual orientation or gender identity of an LGBTQ+ person without their consent.

## Pansexual/Pan

A person who feels romantic and/or sexual attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

## Pronoun

A gendered pronoun substitutes for a person's name and specifically references their gender — for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender-neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their, mx/mux and ze/zir.

## Queer

An umbrella term for sexual and romantic orientations and/or gender identities that are not heterosexual and/or are not cisgender.

## Questioning

The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Often included in the acronym LGBTQ+.

## Sex

Biological characteristics that determine an individual's reproductive function as a male or female. A person's sex is assigned at birth according to what their reproductive anatomy looks like. A person may identify with a gender that is different from their assigned sex.

## Transgender/Trans

Term to describe people who feel that the sex they were assigned at birth doesn't match their gender identity. Studies suggest that 0.1%–1.1% of reproductive age adults are transgender.

## Transgender man

A person who is assigned female at birth, but identifies as a man.

## Transgender woman

A person who is assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman.

## Transitioning

The process a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgery, but not all trans people want or are able to have this.

## Transphobia

The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including denying their gender identity or refusing to accept it. Transphobia may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, trans.

A transsexual person is a transgender person who desires to permanently transition to the sex or gender with which they identify. They usually seek medical assistance, including sex reassignment surgery and hormone therapy to help them align their body with their identified sex or gender. Many people find the term transsexual outdated and offensive.



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# Contacts



**Liesbeth Botha**

*PwC Africa Shine Network Sponsoring Partner*

liesbeth.botha@pwc.com

+27 (0) 11 797 4448



**Etienne Dreyer**

*PwC Partner*

etienne.dreyer@pwc.com

+27 (0) 11 797 4072



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