

LGBT+ workers experience higher levels of conflict at work, shows new report

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Published in LGBT History Month, the report calls for employers to eradicate discrimination and harrassment for LGBT+ workers. Credit: University of Bath

The CIPD is today launching a new research report, co-authored by the University of Bath's Dr. Luke Fletcher, to highlight how LGBT+ workers tend to have a more negative experience of work.

'Inclusion at work: Perspectives on LGBT+ working lives' draws on data

from the CIPD's UK Working Lives Survey and a separate survey of trans workers to explore their perspectives on working life, hence the intentional use of LGB+ rather than LGBT, in the research findings:

- Over 40% of LGB+ workers experienced a conflict at work over a twelve-month period, compared with 29% of heterosexual workers. Conflicts typically involve being undermined/humiliated or discriminatory behavior aimed at a protected characteristic.
- More than half (55%) of trans workers surveyed said they had experienced conflict over a twelve-month period and at least 50% of these conflicts were unresolved. 12% of trans workers said they have experienced unwanted sexual attention at work and 2% have experienced sexual assault.
- Trans workers were least likely to feel psychologically safe (able to be accepted, valued, and able to voice concerns) at work. Almost 1 in 5 (18%) said they felt psychologically unsafe at work compared with 16% of LGB+ workers and 10% of heterosexual workers.
- LGB+ and heterosexual workers reported similar job satisfaction levels with around 66% of both groups saying they felt somewhat to very satisfied at work. However, a slightly higher proportion of LGB+ workers felt somewhat to very dissatisfied with their job, compared with heterosexual workers (19% vs 15%). Just over 50% of trans workers reported feeling somewhat to very satisfied with their job and a third (33%) said they felt somewhat to very dissatisfied.

Melanie Green, research adviser for the CIPD, said: "Our research suggests that many LGB+ and trans workers don't feel safe to express themselves and be accepted at work. This can have a negative impact on their working relationships, wellbeing and overall job satisfaction.

"It's particularly concerning to see how many LGBT+ workers have experienced conflict and that more often than not, these conflicts are not resolved. This must stop. Everyone has the right to feel safe, to be themselves and to flourish at work. Employers must do more to support these groups and create inclusive cultures that have zero tolerance of bullying and harassment of any kind.

"When creating inclusive practices employers must recognize the unique challenges faced by LGBT+ workers. For instance, recognizing that a lesbian will face very different challenges to a trans person at work. Employers must treat people as individuals rather than assuming that any general measures to address LGBT+ as a homogenous group will sufficiently meet a spectrum of diverse needs. If we are to truly celebrate and support individuality we must start with the individual."

The CIPD's report suggests that much more needs to be done at an organizational level to protect, support and include LGBT+ workers, and trans workers in particular. It recommends that employers:

- Ensure that LGBT+ staff have voice mechanisms and feel safe using them to highlight problems and provide solutions on the issue of inclusion.
- Lead by example with strong buy-in from [senior executives](#) and senior sponsorship of employee resource groups.
- Encourage companywide learning and conversations on inclusion.
- Train line managers to understand particular concerns and challenges faced by LGBT+ workers, with a focus on raising awareness of support needed by different groups.
- Create safe spaces and employee resource groups where minority groups can come together, with allies, to support each other. The CIPD's research found that only 40% of trans respondents said their organization had an LGBT+ staff network and just 50% of

trans workers said they actively attend and participate in meetings and socials connected with the network. This highlights the importance of providing support that is specific to trans workers beyond broader inclusion and LGBT+ efforts.

Dr. Luke Fletcher, Associate Professor at the University of Bath's School of Management, and co-author of the report said: "The report highlights the different challenges and needs that groups in the LGBT+ spectrum have. During the pandemic we've seen a lot of blanket changes come into place to protect employee wellbeing but businesses must also think about how best to adapt broader policies and practices to specific minority groups such as those within the LGBT+ spectrum.

"Being proactive on inclusion sends a clear message to current and future employees on the values that your organization has regarding how it supports its people."

More information: Inclusion at work: Perspectives on LGBT+ working lives: www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/diversity-and-inclusion/perspectives-on-perspectives-lgbt

Provided by University of Bath

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