

41% of LGBTQI+ workers face discrimination, says survey results

2 years ago



June 2024 marks 55 years since the Stonewall riots, a pivotal moment that ignited the global celebration of LGBTQ+ Pride. While workplaces have made strides towards inclusivity in those five decades, a new Randstad Workmonitor Pulse Survey reveals significant work remains.

The survey, polling over 2,000 LGBTQI+ workers in seven countries, finds that just under half (49%) feel comfortable discussing their sexual orientation or gender identity at work. While this indicates progress, a concerning 28% avoid it altogether.

Over half (51%) of respondents believe their employers have taken steps towards creating an equitable workplace for LGBTQI+ employees. However, a significant gap exists between perception and reality.

Sander van 't Noordende, CEO of Randstad, said: "Understanding workers' needs and taking authentic steps to create inclusive workplaces is not just the right thing to do. It's also a fundamental business imperative for retaining top talent, in the face of growing complexity from a world in constant flux. Companies must build equitable workplaces where all workers can feel they belong."

The survey paints a mixed picture. While 41% report experiencing less discrimination than five years ago, a worrying 41% have faced prejudice throughout their career.

Isolation is another concern, with one-third feeling more isolated now than five years ago. This issue is particularly acute for younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials) who are driving the demand for change.

Impact on Careers and Talent Retention

The survey highlights the impact workplace culture has on LGBTQI+ employees' careers. Feeling uncomfortable has led one-third to leave a job, while over a third believe hiding their true selves hinders motivation and productivity.

Discrimination concerns also affect career progression, impacting 40% of respondents. Notably, Gen Z is most worried, with nearly half expressing concerns.

These findings underline the need for greater support and inclusivity, not just for LGBTQI+ individuals, but for organisations themselves in a competitive talent market.

The survey reveals a generational shift in expectations. Younger LGBTQI+ workers are less tolerant of inauthenticity. Millennials, in particular, are more critical of tokenistic Pride initiatives.

The study also highlights the need for nuanced approaches tailored to different cultural contexts. For example, while workers in the UK and Australia feel more comfortable being themselves at work, Japan sees the lowest comfort level.

The Netherlands emerges as a potential leader in allyship, with over half reporting having role models and active allies in the workplace.

Actionable Steps for Employers

The research offers clear steps for employers to foster inclusivity:

1. **Empower Employee-Driven Groups and Provide Visible Support:**
Involve employees in shaping policies and ensure initiatives reflect their experiences. Publicly demonstrate commitment through Pride participation, charitable sponsorships, or displaying the Pride flag. Promote LGBTQI+ visibility through company materials and leadership representation.
2. **Instill a Culture of Respect and Empathy:** Educate leadership and employees on LGBTQI+ issues and terminology. Promote inclusive language and update policies to encompass sexual orientation and gender identity. Develop protocols for addressing harassment and microaggressions, ensuring a safe reporting environment.
3. **Promote Authentic Allyship Year-Round:** Move beyond performative actions during Pride Month. Offer inclusive health insurance benefits, including domestic partner coverage and transgender healthcare. Provide gender-neutral bathrooms and locker rooms.

While progress has been made, the fight for LGBTQ+ workplace equality continues. By implementing these steps and fostering authentic allyship, employers can create a more inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and empowered to thrive.