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**Bectu’s Big Gay Survey**

A Bectu Briefing: September 2024

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September 2024

During Pride Month 2024, Bectu surveyed 397LGBT+ workers across the creative industries in non-performing roles. This briefing summarises the results.

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Anonymous quotes in this briefing are taken from the survey.

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## Overview

* 43% of LGBT+ workers say that they have personally experienced or witnessed bullying or harassment on grounds of their sexuality or gender identity
* Over the past year, 63% of trans creative workers report having had assumptions made about their sexual orientation or gender identity.
* 73% of trans creative workers say they have had to correct a coworker, client or leadership about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or pronouns.
* 45% of transgender respondents) say they have experienced offensive or unwanted comments made about their sexuality, gender identity, body and/or appearance in the last 12 months.
* 46% of LGBT+ workers have experienced anxiety or depression over the past 12 months
* The majority (68%) of LGBT+ creative workers feel able to bring their full selves to work. Gay (71%) and Lesbian (71%) respondents were more likely to feel they can bring their full self to work than transgender (51%) and queer respondents (49%)
* One in five trans workers say they feel discriminated against at work
* Among non-binary respondents, 72% don’t feel comfortable using their pronouns at work, or only feel comfortable using them with close colleagues.
* Almost half see a culture of discrimination and bias is the greatest barrier to LGBT+ workers and 41% say there is a lack of action from employers to support LGBT+ inclusive workplaces, and 40% say networking and gatekeeping is the greatest barrier they face in the workplace
* 61% report not having policies in place to uplift and support LGBT+ staff/freelancers in their workplace
* 64% report having no training for staff or freelancers around sexuality, gender identity, or trans+ inclusion

## Experiences at work

Our survey showed that in general, LGBT+ workers find the creative industries to be inclusive, though this is not a blanket truth.

A majority of LGBT+ workers say they feel treated with respect in the workplace (78%). And the majority (68%) of LGBT+ creative workers feel able to bring their full selves to work. However, Gay (71%) and Lesbian (71%) respondents were more likely to feel they can bring their full self to work than transgender (51%) and queer respondents (49%).

*“I find on the whole working in media has been one of the more inclusive areas for LGBTQI+ positive experiences in my own working life. The occasional issue but frankly nothing to write home about.”*

*“Generally I have found people who work behind the scenes in TV to be very LGBT inclusive. The only times I have seen or heard homophobic comments have come from on screen talent, who seem to be able to say whatever they want without reprimand because everyone panders to them”*

*“I work in a West End Theatre and it is one of the most inclusive, supportive environments I have ever experienced. Any negative experiences have been the result of comments from customers and these have been swiftly dealt with by management. I've seen customers thrown out for using homophobic language. In this regard, it's truly a wonderful place to work.”*

*“Having been trans for decades I began a gradual process of coming out at work about 16 years ago. As a freelancer each job was a reset situation until I could gauge the likely reaction with my latest set of coworkers and employer. However since my coworkers have been resolutely supportive on each job I finally came out fully at work in 2021. The last three years have been amazing. The side effect of this visibility has been that a number of my coworkers, while not trans themselves, have felt enabled to also become truer versions of themselves regarding their own sexuality.”*

Overall, the majority (79%) of LGBT+ creative workers in non-performing roles are ‘out’ at work, although 17% are not. Lesbian (90%) and Gay (95%) workers are most likely to be out at work, while 80% of transgender, 75% of Queer and 63% of bisexual workers say the same. 10% of transgender worker and 5% of LGBT+ workers overall have been asked to present ‘less queer’ at work over the past 12 months

*“I am specifically not out in the work place as its simply too difficult - the combination of freelancing, touring and being a techie means I meet a lot of older cis men and its 'easier' to just pretend im someone im not (easier in quotes seeing as it takes a toll on me)”*

*“I find it hard to come out and connect with other queer people at work because I’m afraid I’ll be seen as different within the team, or be excluded in conversations. But at the same time, if I choose not to disclose my queerness because I find it easier or less personally challenging to do so, I feel like I’m playing pretend to fit in and be seen as “one of them” when I’m not. Meeting other visibly and openly LGBTQ+ people in the industry is so comforting and reassuring, and makes me feel more seen and accepted.”*

6% of LGBT+ creative workers – including 10% of transgender, and 23% of non-binary creative workers – say they use different pronouns at work. Among non-binary respondents, 38% feel comfortable using their pronouns at work, but the same proportion only feel comfortable using them with close colleagues.

More than a third (37%) of all LGBT+ creative workers say they have had to correct a coworker, client or leadership about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or pronouns – this increases to 73% of transgender respondents, 64% among queer and 50% among lesbian respondents (compared to 24% of gay respondents).

A lack of inclusion in the workplace has a damaging impact on workers. Our survey finds that almost half (46%) of LGBT+ workers have experienced anxiety or depression over the past 12 months.

### Harassment and bullying

And shockingly, almost half (43%) of LGBT+ workers say that they have personally experienced or witnessed bullying or harassment on grounds of their sexuality or gender identity. Non-binary respondents (48%) and men (45%) were slightly more likely to have experienced or witnessed bullying or harassment on grounds of their sexuality or gender identity than women (38%).

And sexual harassment remains a pervasive issue for LGBT+ workers in the creative industries. Overall, 31% (and 45% of transgender respondents) say they have experienced offensive or unwanted comments made about their sexuality, gender identity, body and/or appearance in the last 12 months.

Over the past year ,10% of LGBT+ workers say they have experienced unwanted and/or inappropriate touching, hugging or kissing. Queer respondents were 4 times more likely (12% than gay respondents (3%) to have experienced this.

Over the past year, more than half (52%) of LGBT+ creative workers report having had assumptions made about their sexual orientation or gender identity. This increases to 63% of Transgender respondents. 7% of all LGBT+ workers have experienced verbal abuse because of their sexuality or gender identity in the past 12 months, increasing to 10% of non-binary respondents. Lesbians were five times more likely to report verbal abuse (15%) than gay respondents (3%)

### Discrimination and inequities

More than one in ten (11%) LGBT+ creative workers say they feel discriminated against at work – this increases to one in five transgender respondents (20%). Almost one in ten (8%) overall, and 14% of transgender creative workers report experiencing discrimination when looking for work over the past year.

And there are clearly still barriers to LGBT+ workers. More agree (40%) than disagree (24%) that people who are not LBT+ are more likely to be promoted in their workplace. But more disagree (40%) than agree (12%) that there is an LGBT+ pay gap in their workplace

*“It’s not as bad as it was when I was more junior. But I still feel like I’m always going to be playing catch-up to the straight, middle-class men who call the shots.”*

*“More diversity is essential particularly in heads of department positions creating a much more inclusive environment. So many people I know aren’t out as they feel it will affect them getting employment opportunities & I feel the same way. Every department should have a diverse team which should be encouraged & overseen by the production.”*

A majority of LGBT+ creative workers (84%) feel more comfortable working with other LGBT+ colleagues

## Barriers for LGBT+ workers

A majority of LGBT+ creative workers say that a lack of diversity and representation in leadership is the biggest barrier they face in the workplace. Almost half see a culture of discrimination and bias is the greatest barrier to LGBT+ workers and 41% say there is a lack of action from employers to support LGBT+ inclusive workplaces, and 40% say networking and gatekeeping is the greatest barrier they face in the workplace.

38% see financial insecurity as the greatest barrier for LGBT+ workers, 14% say pay disparities and 10% say access to education and training serves the greatest barrier to LGBT+ workers.

While there is a consensus on some issues, such as a lack of representation in leadership, there are clearly different experiences amongst LGBT+ workers which influence where they perceive barriers; 27% of lesbian respondents say pay disparities are the greatest barrier, compared to 8% of gay and 14% of queer respondents. And 60% of queer respondents report a culture of discrimination and bias to be among the biggest barriers faced by LGBT+ workers, compared to 35% of gay and 46% of lesbian respondents.

## Support for LGBT+ workers

Less than half of all creative LGBT+ workers (41%) say they are confident that as a sector or industry we are taking effective action to be actively inclusive for all. 51% of LGBT+ men agree compared to 28% of transgender respondents (although this includes men) 24% of lesbians, 22% of queer respondents, 34% of LGBT+ women and 35% of non-binary LGBT+ workers.

A lack of inclusion is pushing LGBT+ workers out of work; 4% overall, including 8% of Queer and 12% of transgender creative workers say they have left a job because it was not LGBT+ inclusive.

There is clearly a lot mor employers could be doing to support inclusion in the workplace. Fewer than half (39%) of LGBT+ workers report having policies in place to uplift and support LGBT+ staff/freelancers in their workplace. And only 65% of LGBT+ creative workers have access to gender neutral bathrooms in their workplace.

Just over a third (36%) report having training for staff or freelancers around sexuality, gender identity, or trans+ inclusion.

*“As there are many LGBT people in theatre I feel fully welcomed and included by the large majority of staff. some older, heterosexual and or cis staff have misgendered me/others repeatedly or made transphobic comments. There are many trans staff but none above entry level positions.”*

Across sectors there is a mix of support for LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace. For example, those working in broadcasting are more likely to report having inclusion policies (43%) but less likely to have access to gender neutral bathrooms (43%). Those working in live events are more likely to have access to gender neutral bathrooms (69%) but less likely to have inclusion policies in place (31%)

And just 6% say their employer was not supportive if they had changed their name and/or pronouns at work during a job. Among transgender respondents, 8% said they didn’t find their employer supportive in this situation, and among non-binary respondents 12% said the same.

Some reported very positive initiatives, but for others, attempts at LGBT+ inclusion were seen to be quite performative, or even damaging:

*“My current employer are very vocal about how inclusive they are. They hand out rainbow lanyards as standard for new start employees. Despite this, I do not feel supported or comfortable to talk to anyone about my identity at work. Concerns that have been raised have been brushed under the carpet by HR etc.”*

*“They have a very good & thorough 'transitioning at work' policy document. There is a LGBT network but it feels predominantly for permanent staff within the organisation and quite distant from the freelancer community.”*

*“Effective LGBT+ inclusion initiatives, such as Employee Resource Groups, inclusive policies and benefits, diversity training, visible leadership support, and inclusive recruitment practices, foster a genuinely inclusive workplace by providing support, education, and advocacy. Conversely, poorly implemented initiatives, characterised by tokenism, token hires, inconsistent policy application, lack of follow-up, ignoring intersectionality, and resistance to change, undermine trust and inclusivity, making LGBT+ employees feel undervalued and alienated”*

*“There could be more attempts made to make gender neutral, inclusive language the norm at the theatre (‘everyone’ instead of ‘ladies and gentlemen’).”*

*“The use of pronouns in signatures, seeing ally signatures and lanyards etc all help make me feel more accepted even though I am not out at work*

*There is a lot of training for in-house resident staff, but no training for incoming shows and their crews”*

*“During pride month the building we work in has pride flags flying which although a small detail definitely made me feel safer to come out.”*

*“We just completed a round of inclusivity training delivered by a queer person of colour - it was very well structured and knowing that the whole organisation has done it makes me feel better about applied DEI going forward.”*

*“‘Gold standards’ for inclusive and professional behaviour laid out by execs, spoken of in pre shoot meetings and generally adhered to by cast and crew.”*

*“Our head of HR created an LGBTQ+ working group in 2021. Since then we've it's been staff-led and has been a great way to organise events (eg networking) & influence policy (eg creating a trans inclusion policy). Like a lot of people working in theatre/ performing arts, I find that it is a really LGBT inclusive workplace.”*

While our survey highlights that many find the creative industries an inclusive place, it also highlights a number of serious issues and barriers faced by LGBT+ workers.

## How can I get involved?

LGBT+ Bectu member? You’re encouraged to stand for election to the Committee or pitch-in to the committee’s work via the Network. Allies are equally welcome to join the Network and get involved with the committee’s campaigns. To get more involved, contact your branch rep, branch official, or the [Bectu LGBT+ Committee](mailto:lgbt@bectu.org.uk).