

Poll Finds Just 22% of Workplaces Have Policies to Protect LGBTQ Employees



Canadian jurisdictions bar discrimination in the workplace on various grounds, including gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and disability. And more jurisdictions are adding gender identity'each person's internal and individual experience of gender'and gender expression'how people publicly express their gender'to the list of protected categories in an effort to protect transgendered individuals from discrimination.

For example, in May 2016, Nova Scotia released Guidelines to Support Trans and Gender Variant Employees for government workers to provide clarity on how trans and gender variant employees are to be supported and included in the workplace.

But when we recently asked if your workplace has policies to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) employees, only 22% said yes. Most respondents (61%) said no, while 17% said they didn't know.

Our poll results are consistent with the results of a new study commissioned by Telus, which found that one third of respondents don't agree that their workplace is safe and inclusive for LGBTQ employees and that 45% don't agree their workplace is safe and inclusive for transgender employees.

MARU/VR&C conducted the survey of 814 Canadians (half of which identified as LGBTQ) in July 2016. Other survey findings include:

- 30% of LGBTQ respondents said they've experienced or witnessed homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment at work, with nearly half of the incidents going unreported to employers
- 57% of LGBTQ Canadians weren't fully 'out' at work'22% of those were worried about a hostile or unfriendly work environment, 15% said they were worried it may limit their career opportunities and 10% were concerned with their personal safety.

LGBTQ respondents agreed that the following actions and activities would have a positive effect on diversity and inclusiveness in Canadian workplaces:

- Anti-harassment/discrimination policy (81%)
- Diversity and inclusiveness training (66%)

- Supporting/taking part in Pride celebrations (51%)
- LGBTQ employee support/resource groups (50%)
- Senior leaders supporting LGBTQ causes and events (50%).

So it's important to ensure that your workplace's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and practices reflect *all the groups* protected in the human rights, labour standards and/or OHS laws, including members of the LGBTQ community.

Use [this checklist](#) when developing policies and procedures to protect transgender individuals from discrimination and deal with their specific needs as to transitioning, identity documents, washrooms and change facilities, privacy and confidentiality, etc.