

KANTAR | DIVA



The DIVA Survey

Catalysing change

LGBTQIA+ and allies' insights 2024
India | South Africa | United Kingdom | United States of America

April 2024

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The DIVA report shines a spotlight on the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ community – an important demographic often underrepresented in the workplace, in society and the media.

Why the DIVA report matters

Sexual and gender identity is more fluid and mainstream than ever before but remains a complex topic across the world. So, while LGBTQIA+ representation is on the rise globally and on the frontier of inclusion, this is often poorly understood by marketing teams. Rightly so, as brands and businesses receive backlash for tacking on diversity without first doing the groundwork. Getting this right relies on rooting in a strong sense of purpose, authentic representation and being brave.

How we collected the data and built the insights

As a market research company, Kantar has the reach needed to sharpen focus on the current reality. The members of our global Pride Employee Resource Group (ERG) have the passion to bring this important work to life, especially when tied in with Kantar's expertise needed to build out the 'so what' action piece for brands – most notably our new [Brand Inclusion Index](#), a top resource in this space as a diagnostic tool for more inclusive marketing.

Research period

Fieldwork conducted Jan-Feb 2024

What was asked

The previous three years of running the anonymous online survey have investigated the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people. Supporting the community is crucial to progress and catalysing change, so this year our report includes the voices and experiences of allies. We have also focused on actionable insights into what workplaces and brands can do to better represent and support.

Top tips on designing inclusive surveys

In developing inclusive surveys, a mindset shift is required. There are a few key areas that require special attention. Firstly, how demographic data is collected needs to be more nuanced, moving beyond age and gender as key identifiers. Secondly, ensuring the questions and statements reflect a broader lived experience and set of attitudes invites responses from a bigger pool of diverse people. Surveys should be representative in the same way media and advertising need to be.

The dynamic nature of inclusivity means that there will always be room for improvement and a greater diversity of lived experiences to help catalyse change.

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“LGBTQIA or not, we are all human beings after all.
Everyone deserves to be themselves and respected.”
South Africa

Introduction from Kantar

This involves proactively shining a spotlight on often underrepresented groups. This is why we are proud to be partnering with DIVA Media again this year in support of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people, the full LGBTQIA+ community, as well as allies.

This year's focus is on catalysing change and represents the voices and lived experiences of over 2,000 LGBTQIA+ people and allies in four diverse countries.

In the spirit of inclusion and constantly striving for improvement, we have grown our survey in two significant ways this year – firstly, by introducing the voice and experiences of allies; and secondly, by expanding our geographical coverage into India and South Africa, in addition to the UK and US. This presents a more rounded view of experiences across the globe and where brands can stand to catalyse change.

At Kantar, better understanding people everywhere sits at the heart of everything we do. As the world's leading data, insights, and consulting company working with leading brands and businesses, we are accountable for ensuring our work truly reflects the diverse world we serve in meaningful ways.

Because as the strategic partner to leading advertisers and marketers globally, Kantar works closely with brands to accelerate their role in inclusion.

There is clear opportunity for brands to lead this current era of inclusion, with a strong commercial imperative to act – and act with authenticity. The potential for positive impact in the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals is immeasurable, but we've seen time and again that mere representation alone is not enough. A nuanced, considerate approach is key to ensure that the LGBTQIA+ lived experiences are included in marketing, truly highlighting the diversity of the community.

We've therefore provided actionable examples and hope this report serves as an inspiration and a spark for how to show up better for each other – as individuals, as allies, and as brands.



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Introduction from DIVA

In the 30 years since DIVA was founded with the goal of celebrating lesbian community and culture, we have flourished and evolved. Today we are part of a fast-growing, diverse and dynamic community of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people. We are unified, not uniform, and in Lesbian Visibility Week 2024 we are taking time to truly celebrate and enjoy each other, as well as inviting our allies to do the same.

Ours is a beautiful story of change and growth. But sadly, not everything has changed. Three decades after the first issue of DIVA was published, LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people are still under-represented in every walk of life. We're still pushed to the margins, with our creativity and power left untapped. We are still knocking on doors, asking to for a chance to be seen and heard.

That is why it so important to work with partners like Kantar to shine a light on the lives of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people. Visibility matters, and this new data makes visible some of the ways in which we are still falling short of being a world where LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people can all live and thrive along with our allies. This data shows us the huge strides that have been made in workplace inclusion, with just over 70% of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people now feeling comfortable being themselves at work.

But it also shows us how painful working life can still be: in 2024, work is a place where 11% of LGBTQIA+ women and non-binary people have experienced verbal insults, and 17% of us have been subjected to physical or sexual harassment and violence.

Across all our data, we see that it is trans people who experience the most painful forms of exclusion and who find it hardest to live their lives in safety and security. Thank you to every single person who took the time to participate in this survey.

The experiences you have shared will help us set our editorial agenda and understand where our voice is most needed in campaigning for positive change.

DIVA is not going to stop celebrating our community, and will not stop fighting for our community.

This report includes views and opinions from the LGBTQIA+ community. We will refer to our respondents as LGBTQIA+ throughout. Full sample detailed on page 8.



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Times of unprecedented change and challenge

This past year's landscape of LGBTQIA+ rights presents a tapestry of both progress and setbacks. Victories like same-sex marriage legalisation in Greece and adoption rights in Taiwan stand in stark contrast to troubling events like the criminalisation of homosexuality in Uganda. The banning of conversion therapy across various countries signifies a growing acknowledgment of LGBTQIA+ rights, while the recognition of non-binary genders in Pakistan and Brazil represents crucial steps toward gender inclusivity.

For LGBTQIA+ individuals, these developments evoke a mix of hope and concern. While legal victories provide validation and security, setbacks like criminalisation and censorship threaten safety and freedom. Bans on conversion therapy offer relief, but restrictions on gender identity highlight ongoing challenges.

LGBTQIA+ rights have been weaponised on the battleground of politics, transforming them into tactical ideologies that clash as power dynamics play out. This underscores the significance as both a catalyst for progress and a tool for political manipulation. As these rights continue to be debated and contested, the journey towards liberation remains multifaceted and dynamic, reflecting the complex interplay between human rights, political agendas and an evolving cultural landscape.

65%

of people globally believe that the world they live in feels like an increasingly hostile and uncertain place.

Kantar Global Monitor 2023

"20-25 years ago in Norwich I was verbally abused on an almost daily basis. Although things have improved a great deal since then it feels like we are now losing ground. I feel less safe, especially since the Brexit vote, which seemed to give bigots and misogynists license to speak out loudly and obnoxiously."

UK

Progress in flux

"I'm scared, but that makes me fight harder."
USA

"I would like to see more being done to alleviate the scourge of vitriol against my kind on the internet."
South Africa

"I feel we are going backwards in Texas and the hate is only growing. I worry about my transgender son and his future here."
USA

"Only kindness and support can truly help us become better."
India

"Unfortunately, people don't seem to see that there is more to unite us, than divide us. Certain political factions thrive on this division."
USA

What's next:

May 2024

Homosexual activity to be legalised. *Namibia* ↑

March 2024

Same-sex marriage bill passes. *Thailand* ↑

February 2024

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues punished by imprisonment. *Ghana* ↓

Homosexual activity illegal, punished by imprisonment. *Ghana* ↓

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues state-enforced. *El Salvador* ↓

LGBTQIA+ discrimination illegal. *Greece* ↑

Same-sex marriage and adoption legal. *Greece* ↑

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues state-enforced. *Kazakhstan* ↓

January 2024

Conversion therapy banned. *Portugal* ↑

Right to change legal gender illegal. *Florida USA* ↓

December 2023

Blood donations by men having sex with men (MSMs) legal. *Finland* ↑

Conversion therapy banned. *Norway* ↑

Right to change legal gender legal, no restrictions. *Pakistan* ↑

Legal recognition of non-binary gender recognised. *Pakistan* ↑

November 2023

Same-sex marriage now 'other type of partnership'. *Nepal* ↑

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues punished by fine or imprisonment for demonstrating LGBTQIA+ symbols. *Russia* ↓

October 2023

Homosexual activity legal. *Mauritius* ↑

Same-sex marriage now 'unregistered cohabitation'. *India* ↑

Conversion therapy banned. *Belgium* ↑

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues state-enforced. *USA* ↓

September 2023

Same-sex marriage now 'civil unions'. *Hong Kong* ↑

Censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues punished by fine. *Kyrgyzstan* ↓

July 2023

Conversion therapy banned. *Mexico* ↑

June 2023

Homosexual activity legal. *Cook Islands* ↑

Conversion therapy banned. *Iceland* ↑

Right to change legal gender legal (medical intervention not required).

New Zealand ↑

Same-sex marriage not legal. *Mali* ↓

Conversion therapy banned. *Mexico* ↑

May 2023

Parliament passes amendment allowing same-sex couples to jointly adopt children. *Taiwan* ↑

Legal recognition of non-binary gender. *Mexico* ↑

Legal recognition of non-binary gender not legally recognised. *Pakistan*

Conversion therapy banned. *Cyprus* ↓

Blood donations by men who have sex with men (MSM) legal. *Across USA* ↑

Homosexual activity illegal (death penalty as punishment) and censorship of LGBTQIA+ issues punished by imprisonment. *Uganda* ↓

Evolving identities

As personal identities evolve, so too must the world around them. Therefore, in the spirit of inclusion, 2024 saw our survey grow in two significant ways.

Firstly, having experienced first-hand ‘why do you do this’ reactions to our own allyship, we decided to feature allies’ experiences in this report. Because when those supporting the community are questioned, it’s a symptom of the community itself feeling less understood.

We also wanted to present reality beyond the Western views typically explored, so expanded geographically into India and South Africa. Here, experiences of the community are often worlds apart from what we’ve featured before the UK and USA.

This year's survey therefore represents the voices and lived experiences of 2101 LGBTQIA+ people and allies*.

*‘Are you an ally’ was part of an overall single code question on LGBTQIA+ identity with 447 of our 2101 respondents (21%) selecting this option.

“We are all equal and should be treated as such. This world belongs to us all.”
South Africa



How our LGBTQIA+ respondents identified in terms of sexual orientation:

| | |
|------|---|
| 2.5% | Asexual |
| 10% | Bisexual - Higher prevalence amongst younger respondents (16-35) - 16% |
| 74% | Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual |
| 7% | Pansexual/queer - Higher prevalence amongst millennial respondents (25-35) - 7% |

How our LGBTQIA+ respondents identified in terms of gender identity:

| | |
|------|---|
| 82% | Woman |
| 7% | Man |
| 6% | Non-binary/non-conforming - higher prevalence amongst millennials (25 – 34) - 13% |
| 0.5% | Transgender man |
| 3% | Transgender woman |
| 1% | Gender fluid |

Identity freedom

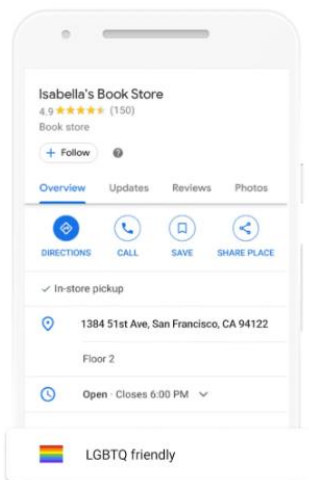
Tracking LGBTQIA+ openness in sharing sexual orientation and gender identity reveals the community feels most comfortable with close friends and least comfortable with their children's school community and their religious/spiritual community. Age, race, regional cultural norms, social and economic standing also contributes to the individual experiences.

"Everything seems to be geared to the younger generation. I didn't come out until my late 40s and have found it very difficult to find any welcoming lesbian communities."

USA

Enabling offline safe spaces in an online world

Google allows owners to mark their businesses as "LGBTQ-friendly" and as a "transgender safe space" on their Google listing. Signals of safety like this allow people to feel welcome without the need to second-guess whether they will be treated equally before stepping into the store or interacting online.



More open

My close friends

89% - Open about sexual orientation
80% - Open about gender identity

My friends and acquaintances

83% - Open about sexual orientation
70% - Open about gender identity

My family

70% - Open about sexual orientation
67% - Open about gender identity

My work colleagues

65% - Open about sexual orientation
56% - Open about gender identity

My neighbourhood and local community

60% - Open about sexual orientation
48% - Open about gender identity

My religious/spiritual community

25% - Open about sexual orientation
21% - Open about gender identity

My children's school community

17% - Open about sexual orientation
12% - Open about gender identity

Less open

For LGBTQIA+ people, choosing to reveal or not reveal their sexual and gender orientation is an act of self-preservation. The community is acutely aware of signals of safety or danger, these could be visual or verbal cues. This is why we have focused on the principles of allyship this year.

Active allyship

Allyship is a journey of continuous learning and unlearning. It entails forging and nurturing supportive relationships with individuals or communities who are underrepresented, marginalised, or discriminated against, with the overarching goal of advancing societal inclusion.

Allyship is prioritising progress over perfection, advocating for systemic change and active engagement rather than passive observation, and embracing the belief that our shared humanity outweighs our differences.

Most importantly, allyship is active. It's about creating platforms like this report that help uplift others, amplifying voices and contributing to a society where everyone can experience a sense of belonging and worth.

How can we recognise the humanity that connects us all?

Practising radical empathy and compassion is the key to fostering understanding and support across people with diverse backgrounds.

How can my actions be more inclusive?

Remembering inclusion is about progress over perfection and is an ongoing journey. We can untangle the knots of privilege, stereotypes and othering, through mindful introspection, creating new habits that are ever more inclusive.

Whose perceptions are we missing?

Simply seeking and respecting a diverse range of perspectives and ideas will lead to more comprehensive and equitable outcomes.

How can I use my influence to uplift others?

Speak up for others and create opportunities for them to realise their potential. Invite them into spaces where they would normally not be visible – from meetings to social gatherings.

This year's study saw the inclusion of allies and their experiences. In many respects this report would not have been possible without the support of allies, co-creating platforms for underrepresented and marginalised communities to have an amplified voice.



Our allies

Allies are defined in this report as:

“someone who supports people who are in a minority group or who are discriminated against, even though they do not belong to that group themselves.”

Unfortunately, when we try define a population we sometimes further alienate by othering. We want to build understanding of allyship overall with this work so have included recommendations in the report on how to be a better ally.

It's a sign of the times as inherent bias and the social stigma of today's cancel culture means lack of true understanding prevents even the most empathetic from standing with communities in need of support.

But allies often face similar levels of discrimination as the communities they support. For example, of our respondents who identified as allies*, just 67% of allies feel safe in bars/clubs, vs 72% of LGBTQIA+.

Most notably, 23% of allies don't feel safe on social media vs 20% of our LGBTQIA+ respondents. For allies, it can be tricky to know who supports or rejects their views and where it's safe to show this support. Social media often becomes the virtual battleground of liberal and conservative views.

On the flip side, 79% of allies feel safe in their workplace, vs 71% of LGBTQIA+. 66% of allies have reported discrimination (experienced/witnessed) in the workplace to HR versus only 45% of LGBTQIA+. Marginalised communities often do not feel safe reporting or believe that reporting discrimination will not have a positive outcome. 72% allies feel they have the same opportunities to advance in their careers as others, versus only 66% of LGBTQIA+.

We unpack how to improve these experiences and catalyse change further in the report.

“I'm a lesbian who supports my trans siblings. I'm horrified by the mainstream transphobia I see and people claiming to represent lesbians saying horrifically transphobic things. Not in my name.”

UK

“I have been disowned by my father, uncle, brother, and nieces and nephews for being lesbian.”

USA

“In my society people hesitate to talk about LGBTQ topics...They are human and have the same rights as everyone else.”

India



*'Are you an ally' was part of an overall single code question on LGBTQIA+ identity, with 447 of our 2101 global respondents (21%) selecting this option.

Safe spaces

For marginalised communities, safety is fundamental for human dignity, fostering mental well-being, community unity and societal progress toward inclusivity where all can flourish.

Safety cultivates a sense of belonging and enables authentic self-expression, shielding individuals from discrimination and violence. Home continues to be the safest space for the LGBTQIA+ community. High-density public transport and the presence of alcohol contributes to bars, pubs and nightclubs as locations where the community feels the least safe.

This year we explored spaces beyond the physical, including online and service-based experiences. It is reassuring that relatively high levels of safety were felt by the LGBTQIA+ community in the following experiences:

73%

On social media

77%

When seeking legal or financial support

91%

When seeking healthcare/medical support

However, transgender people still face lower levels of safety across the same experiences:

54%

On social media

68%

When seeking legal or financial support

89%

When seeking healthcare/medical support

As an LGBTQIA+ person, how safe do you feel in the following spaces:



NOTEWORTHY NUANCES

67%

Of transgender respondents felt safe in bars, pubs and nightclubs

57%

Of South African LGBTQIA+ respondents felt safe in bars, pubs and nightclubs

66%

Of transgender respondents felt safe in their workplace

“During Trump’s reign of terror, we removed our rainbow flag from our house, and our rainbow license plate from our car.”
USA

“I go to a great medical clinic but reported a doctor for his rude attitude towards me, which I believe was due to me being a lesbian. I would love to see all medical schools have a requirement or class about LGBTQ+ issues, and unique requirements.”
USA

“We are quite nervous to travel to some parts of the US with the abortion laws and anti-gay legislation we are hearing about. We have started traveling abroad overseas as an alternative.”
USA



“There is also a stigma that the LGBTQ community is directly responsible for the HIV pandemic.”
South Africa

“Public rest rooms or fitting rooms should start accommodating queer communities to mitigate discriminations and discomfort due to differences.”
South Africa

“Gender inequality still plays a large part in my ability to feel safe or respected in society. So to be able to move forward with changing people’s minds about transgender issues, we really need real gender equality across the board. We may be taking baby steps to get there but it often feels the reverse.”
USA



South Africa sees higher levels of unsafety on public transport and bars, clubs and night clubs. This could be driven by an overall sense of unsafety due to high rates of crime in the country.

South Africa suffers from one of the highest crime rates in the world, symptomatic of a historical and persistent socio-economic inequality rather than explicitly against the LGBTQIA+ community.

As an LGBTQIA+ person, how safe do you feel in the following spaces:



NOTEWORTHY NUANCES

51%
of transgender respondents felt safe at sports clubs

61%
Of LGBTQIA+ respondents said not applicable, suggesting they do not visit places of worship

66%
Of South African LGBTQIA+ felt safe on public transport

*Sample adjusted to represent only those who frequent these spaces.

Unpacking the impact of inclusive workplaces

Workplace inclusivity fosters dignity and belonging and ensures fair opportunities, driving innovation and ultimately growth. This year's study revealed that progress must still be made to ensure the LGBTQIA+ community has equal access to opportunities, balancing gender dynamics and a continued effort to attract diversity within the community.

57% of respondents agree that their company attracts a workforce that represents the diversity of their community.

66% of respondents said that they have not faced obstacles in their company due to their gender identity.

50% of respondents agree that the LGBTQIA+ networks and development opportunities at work are very male-dominated.

68% of respondents said that they have not faced obstacles in their company due to their sexual orientation.

59% of respondents agree that events organised at work are inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people.

68% of respondents agree that they have access to the same opportunities to advance in their company as all other colleagues do.

63% of respondents said they feel their direct manager supports them being open about their sexual orientation and or gender identity.

67% of respondents agree that their company has an explicit anti-discrimination policy that protects LGBTQIA+ people.

Kantar Global Monitor 2023 revealed that 75% of people globally believe that businesses have a responsibility to make society fairer.

"Micro aggressions. I work in retail and I am misgendered many times a day, often by regulars who have been told. I also get avoided by many customers who won't approach me and they do it so obviously. These small things in volume have a big effect."
UK

"I have BUILT my own safety. I don't go to bars/nightclubs. I surround myself with accepting people. I heavily research LGBTQ+ friendly travel destinations. I feel safe mostly because I work really hard to ensure my safety."
USA

In the workplace as an LGBTQIA+ person:

| | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| I feel comfortable & supported to talk about my sexual orientation | I feel comfortable & supported to talk about my gender identity | I feel emotionally supported | I feel socially accepted | I feel comfortable being myself |
| 60% Agree | 61% Agree | 61% Agree | 75% Agree | 74% Agree |

“It’s hard to discern between feeling ignored or mistreated because of being a black woman or because I am gay. I believe that I experience more discrimination as a black woman in my workplace and community.”
USA



Taking a closer look at the types of negative experiences in the workplace lived by LGBTQIA+ community, verbal harassment, insults and hurtful comments are ranked as the most common. This kind of discrimination is often the most difficult to prove or to confront as it ranges from unintentionally hurtful comments to offensive slurs. The second most common negative experience is when someone discloses a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent, followed by misgendering. These experiences are linked to social etiquette norms that have not evolved to deal with increasingly diverse and inclusive communities.

India sees the highest levels of questions about orientation, identity and misgendering. In South Africa, it’s verbal harassment and disclosure of information. In the UK, verbal harassment and inappropriate comments or conduct are likely. Respondents from the USA report verbal harassment, disclosure of information and misgendering.

Transgender people face more negative experiences at work compared overall.

Of concern is that only 50% of respondents who have witnessed or experienced a negative experience in the workplace felt comfortable reporting it to their manager or HR.

As an LGBTQIA+ person, which of these negative behaviours have you experienced at work:

| Verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments | Online harassments and insults | Physical harassment or violence | Sexual harassment or violence | Threat of physical or sexual harassment or violence | Exclusion from events or activities | Disclosing your LGBTQIA+ status without consent | Any other inappropriate comments or conduct | Obstacles to career progression due to sexual orientation | Questions about orientation/identity | Misgendering |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 12% | 5% | 2% | 5% | 3% | 6% | 11% | 11% | 6% | 7% | 10% |
| Transgender people face higher levels of discrimination at work | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21% | 10% | 4% | 6% | 6% | 11% | 18% | 19% | 9% | 11% | 28% |

Boosting belonging at work

We spend most of our waking hours with colleagues, whether virtual or in-office, so this should be the first area we strive for inclusion. As the world around us changes, businesses need to take an internal view of what they're doing right and what they need to change to enhance that all-important sense of belonging. Inclusive hiring and workplace practices are key to fostering habits of inclusivity...

Inclusive workplace practices to foster habits of inclusivity

Inclusion and diversity goals help drive a more engaged workforce as it's then clear you're investing in your people for ultimate business success. This encourages people from underrepresented groups in society to join your company, become top performers and stay for longer tenure, so it's a win-win all round.

Get this right by being clear on your I&D ambition of reflecting the diversity of societies you operate in and ensuring everyone has equal opportunity to join, succeed and feel included. Work to create a culture of belonging that supports employee wellbeing, evolve your goals and share regular updates to futureproof your business and inspire your people.

54%

of people globally believe that it is important to be exposed to people from different backgrounds.

Kantar Global Monitor 2023

Inspired by Kantar's latest [I&D annual report](#)



5 tips for hiring inclusively

Diverse perspectives and backgrounds bring fresh ideas, boost creativity, and help us connect better with clients. Plus, it's the right thing to do, making everyone feel welcome and valued throughout their employee journey. Get it right with these 5 steps:

1. Biases awareness training: Raise the hiring team's awareness of unconscious bias and diversity with mandatory training.
2. Inclusive language: Did you know descriptions like "driven" and "confident" are mainly used to describe men while "emotional" and "enthusiastic" tend to be used to describe women? Craft job descriptions with gender-neutral, inclusive wording. Tools like Textio help with this.
3. Skills assessments: Assess candidates based on their skills, rather than relying on educational background or experience. This will help provide a fair opportunity to individuals from diverse backgrounds.
4. Diverse hiring panels: Select a diverse interview panel to reduce bias and provide varied perspectives.
5. Structured interviews: Standardise interview questions and scorecards to assess candidates consistently.

"Continuous efforts in education, awareness, and legal support play a vital role in fostering a more inclusive and accepting society. Embracing diversity and respecting individual identities is essential for creating a world where everyone feels valued and understood."
South Africa

"Women are still discriminated against in the workplace, still not being able to progress in our careers... Oh, to have the career success of a mediocre white man!"
UK

"As a disabled lesbian, I find issues surrounding my sexuality aren't as out front as my lack of public service for my handicaps."
USA

9 ways to foster LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace

1. Start or join a workplace Pride/LGBTQIA+ ERG

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) strengthen workplace relationships, foster a sense of belonging, promote personal and professional growth, and ultimately nurture the entire community within the company by bringing allies and the curious along on the journey.

4. Be brave, be a role model

Know that inclusive leaders come from anywhere in the organisation. Leading can mean showing your support, evolving the inclusivity conversation, implementing sensitivity training and creating platforms for marginalised communities, no matter your seniority.

7. Advocate for equity

Understand what rights and entitlements LGBTQIA+ colleagues have and do not have. This is a crucial step in being able to advocate for equity.

2. Share how you #InspireInclusion

Acknowledge that inclusivity is a journey. Find the path that feels most comfortable for your business to authentically show you support for the LGBTQIA+ community. Pride days are a good place to start but keep up the action all-year-round to avoid a splash from the rainbow-washing brush.

5. Become a mentor or reverse mentor

Become a mentor to share your knowledge and expertise with an emerging LGBTQIA+ leader or explore reverse mentoring to learn first-hand about LGBTQIA+ experiences as an ally.

8. Challenge yourself and do the hard work

Everyone has implicit biases – these are unintentional but nonetheless affect our judgements, decisions and behaviours. Take an implicit bias test to uncover what yours are to become aware of and work at overcome them.

3. Practice empathy for others

Be open to deeply understanding the lived reality of your colleagues. Remember there will always be more that unites than divides but it's in celebrating our difference that our workplaces become stronger and more representative of our communities.

6. Advocate for inclusive habits in the workplace

Inclusivity is felt in everyday moments and actions. This could mean politely calling out exclusive behaviours or ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and respected.

9. Encourage inclusive interviews

Unconscious biases can unknowingly influence hiring decisions. Employers should educate recruiters and hiring managers about these biases and provide training and access to platforms that can help overcome them.

Brands leading an era of inclusion

The world is at an inflection point. People are looking to brands and businesses to lead positive and impactful systemic change. The social and commercial imperative for brands to embrace and champion inclusion is clear.

Society is evolving and so the role of marketing (and therefore brands) needs to follow suit. We have moved from the era of the product, centred around functional utility, into the era of the public, where brand growth is found through having a positive impact that contributes to a better society and planet.

Brands with a strong purpose grow faster

The numbers speak for themselves. Brands with a strong purpose grew +31% in 2022 versus the Top 100 Most Valuable Brands in Kantar BrandZ, the largest global brand equity platform.

“When we are aware of discriminatory brands, we do not purchase them. But we do not always know which brands discriminate.”
USA

“Pride advertising isn't just about acknowledging and embracing the LGBT community. It's an opportunity for brands to speak their own truth and take a stand.”
India

“Sometimes it's not that we want to be represented by brands and TV stars, but we just want to be respected. That's the biggest thing, we want live without fear.”
South Africa



The LGBTQIA+ community has significant spending power.

The market value of the LGBTQIA+ community is currently estimated by the Kantar team at USD 1.46 trillion in the US alone – the global size of prize is significantly larger, recently [estimated](#) at USD 3.9 trillion. So, how can brands tap into this opportunity in an authentic way?

Genuine impact

Marketing is how brands communicate their values and purpose to the world, with advertising a key tool to influence consumers – and an important vehicle to support the inclusion agenda.

Many brands have therefore integrated inclusive narratives, showcasing marginalised groups in their advertising. However, simply showing under-represented groups has no impact on the ads’ ability to build brand equity in the long-term or increase short-term sales.

The magic comes in showing underrepresented groups in a [positive](#) way, as this in turn has incremental impact on both brand equity and short-term sales.

Kantar’s work with the UN’s Stereotype Alliance [proves](#) the business impact of ads that portray people positively in Kantar’s new Gender Unstereotype Metric (GUM), and initial data shows this to also be true of progressive portrayal as evidenced in Kantar’s new Progressive Unstereotype Metric (PUM).

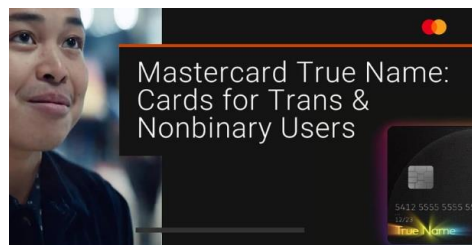
So the right portrayal is important, but so is the fit with different inclusion issues for your brand. Before jumping on the “rainbow brandwagon”, note that not all brands can play in all areas of inclusion. Right to play is important and will make the difference between brand purpose as a driver of growth and the brand being cancelled.

Brands have been criticised for only engaging with the LGBTQIA+ community during Pride month, and then only with token actions like featuring rainbows across their social media channels.

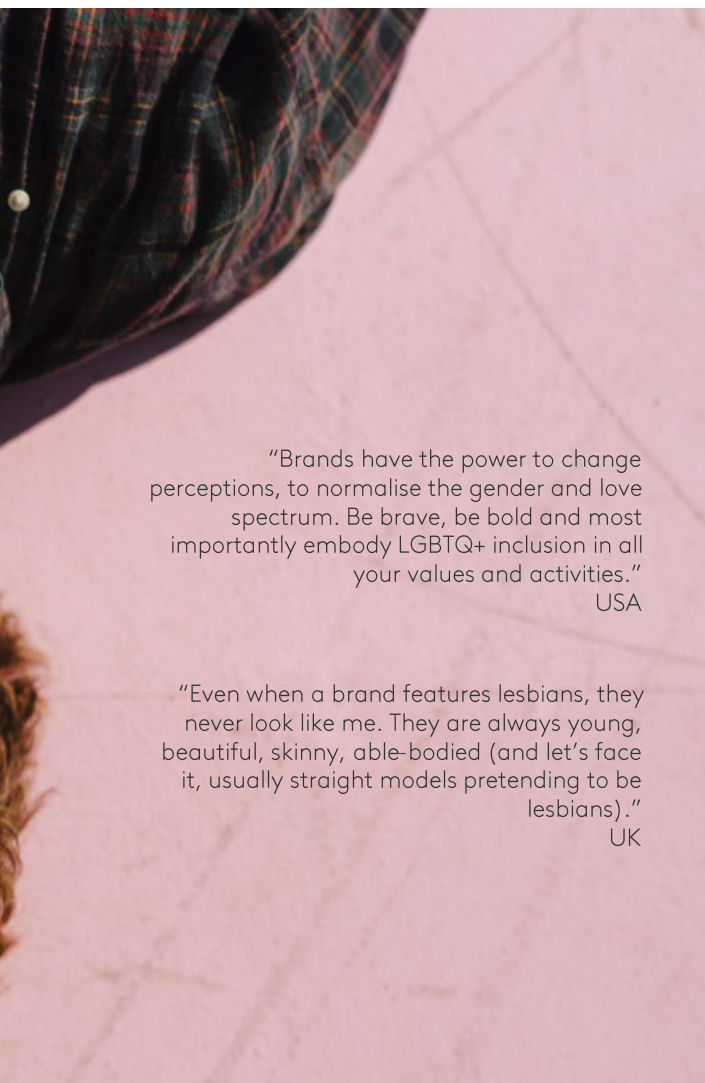
Starbucks, on the other hand, leveraged a key part of their brand and their brand experience – giving your name with your order – to champion inclusion of the trans community. A powerful example of authenticity.



Mastercard also tapped into the importance of names to represent individuals’ identity to the world with their “True Name” initiative.



Representation matters, as does inclusion.



“Brands have the power to change perceptions, to normalise the gender and love spectrum. Be brave, be bold and most importantly embody LGBTQ+ inclusion in all your values and activities.”
USA

“Even when a brand features lesbians, they never look like me. They are always young, beautiful, skinny, able-bodied (and let’s face it, usually straight models pretending to be lesbians).”
UK

Dynamic representation

Fostering inclusion, equality, and diverse representation isn't just a social obligation — it's a strategic opportunity. Thoughtfully inclusive advertising not only promotes understanding and dignity but also drives business growth and cultural resonance, benefiting both communities and profits.

Unfortunately, we're not there yet. This year's study revealed that only 16% of LGBTQIA+ respondents feel well represented in brand content or advertising. This is particularly important to note, as 71% of the community agree that it is important that the brands they buy from actively promote diversity and inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in their own business or society as a whole. Gen Zs and Millennials lead the charge in their expectation of businesses' role in social responsibility and advancing equality.

84% of respondents said that they often think about diversity and inclusion issues, with 56% mentioning this includes which brands they buy from. Progress needs to be made more visible, as only 51% of respondents think brands are making an effort to be more diverse and inclusive of the community. Again, Gen Z and Millennials display higher awareness of brands making a difference. The inclusion imperative is clear for businesses looking to secure their future.

The journey of inclusive representation must be approached with care, empathy, responsibility and authenticity.

The 2023 case of Bud Light and transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney serves as a lesson for all. The long-standing number one American beer brand was knocked off its position as boycotts cost the brand nearly \$1-billion in losses. The business metrics are well measured and documented, unfortunately the same luxury cannot be afforded to the transgender community at the heart of the controversy. The less-than-a-minute long promotional post served as a lightning rod for conservative, violent and hateful rhetoric.

Reflecting on what went wrong, the Bud Light brand was simply not ready to engage in this space. Brands first need to take a hard introspective look at how their actions may have perpetuated stereotypes, past or present, as well as who they have excluded. They must also examine why this is the case and whether their 'more inclusive' actions now stem from a place of genuine care for advancing the equality of a marginalised community and/or individuals.

"I think there's still a big issue around virtue signalling - brands that want to look inclusive (around Pride month, for example), but don't actually put in the work to make real change happen."
UK

nike 🌟 You are an essential component to the success of your community! We welcome comments that contribute to a positive and constructive discussion: Be kind ❤️ Be inclusive ❤️ Encourage each other ❤️ Hate speech, bullying, or other behaviors that are not in the spirit of a diverse and inclusive community will be deleted.

At the same time as the Bud Light Dylan Mulvaney, controversy, Nike sparked similar consumer fury after starting a partnership with the same influencer, featuring their women's workout apparel. But in stark comparison to the way Bud Light handled the matter, Nike urged boycotters and angry online mobs to "Be kind, be inclusive and encourage each other."

Effective representation of any group in advertising clearly needs to come from an inclusive brand mindset and not as a way to tap into what's trending. Context and authenticity of messaging is everything.



“The lesbian community is very underrepresented. Sadly it feels like even when it comes to the LGBTQIA community, it is still male-dominated and male represented. A lot of brands and companies will try and be inclusive by using gay men, which is great, but rarely do you ever see lesbians. Especially feminine lesbians.”
USA

As an LGBTQIA+ person, how do you feel about brand or business:

| Felt a brand did not want my business | A brand's advert has no one like me represented | A brand's advert has misrepresented people like me or left me feeling bad | Denied service based on my gender/sexual orientation | Ignored or mistreated me when I asked for assistance in store | Treated unfairly by a brand | Other experiences that showed prejudice, discrimination, bias or misunderstanding |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 40% | 55% | 27% | 22% | 37% | 10% | 42% |

Noteworthy nuances by region

| | | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 59% USA | 50% India | 25% India | 14% South Africa | 50% India | 50% India | 330% India |
|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|

Noteworthy nuances by age groups

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 31% 55 – 64 yrs | 51% 16-24 yrs | 36% 16-24 yrs |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|

Transgender people experienced a higher rate of negative experiences overall

Global movement

LGBTQIA+ representation across the globe is at the frontier of inclusion. It takes brave and purposeful brands and businesses to take a meaningful stand and make impactful progress in this space. It is essential that we learn from both victories and losses as this will pave the way for brands and society to catalyse the change we want.

United Kingdom

Netflix is ranked top in Kantar's Brand Inclusion Index by LGBTQIA+ in the UK for their DEI work, driven by their inclusive content highlighting the experiences and lives of the community. In particular, shows like "Heartstopper" and "Sex Education" have made a strong impression and deeply positive impact on LGBTQIA+ youth. The shows' commitment to authentic representation has been life-changing for many that don't see themselves reflected in mainstream media.

It is a powerful statement to see Netflix use their reach and saliency to champion inclusion and diversity for the community, setting an example of how a brand can lead by example and catalyse change.



United States of America

LGBTQIA+ representation in advertising is increasingly contentious amid a growing culture war over the rights of gay and transgender individuals. Despite this pushback, which includes a record-breaking number of anti-LGBTQIA+ bills, data suggests that most Americans support LGBTQIA+ inclusion in advertising and advocate for equal rights.

However, brands like Target and Bud Light have faced criticism and backlash for their support, often giving in to pressure from vocal minorities. Organisations like GLAAD emphasise the importance of brands standing strong in their support for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, particularly in light of ongoing challenges and threats. GLAAD and Kantar's Advertising Visibility Index therefore highlight the need for increased representation in advertising, as LGBTQIA+ individuals currently receive minimal screen time.

Brands that navigate this landscape effectively, such as Honey Maid with their "This Is Wholesome" campaign, can resonate with a broader audience and drive greater acceptance. The key to their success is embracing diversity and standing firm in their values, despite potential criticism.



UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

South Africa

South Africa is the only country in this study that constitutionally protects the rights of the local LGBTQIA+ community. This progressive constitution is a source of pride, but this legislative safety does not always translate into the lived experience. Marketing efforts here are by far the most progressive on the continent, with representation of the community expressed through global brands like Vodacom, Johnnie Walker and Woolworths.

Brand bravery in this field is celebrated a creative level by South Africa's inaugural WPP Unite Awards recognise brands and ad agencies supporting the LGBTQIA+ community. Spearheaded by WPP's network, the initiative unites LGBTQIA+ employees and allies.

Jameson's recent campaign cleverly featured Thami Dish, the founder of Africa's largest queer award, celebrating all who support, inspire and empower the LGBTQIA+ community.

Another standout example is retail giant Woolworths South Africa, having pledged ongoing support for Pride month and LGBTQIA+ individuals after facing backlash for their 2023 Pride collection. Receiving commendation from LGBTQIA+ rights organisations, the company has also established a Woolworths Pride (W.Pride) team, showing its values are firmly in favour of kindness and inclusivity.

This all sets a positive context so despite challenges, activists feel supported as they continue to raise awareness and advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights in South Africa.



India

Illustrating the clash between traditional values and progressive ideals, marketing efforts in India face resistance from conservative views at times. Calls to boycott make as many headlines as praise for brands' support of LGBTQIA+ rights.

There are many positives to learn from: Starbucks India's 2023 ad turns its signature cup name-writing tradition into a tale of inclusivity. A transgender woman reconciles with her family over coffee, with her father accepting her new name Arpita. The ad, starring Siya Malasi, garnered 12 million views, sparking mixed local reaction.

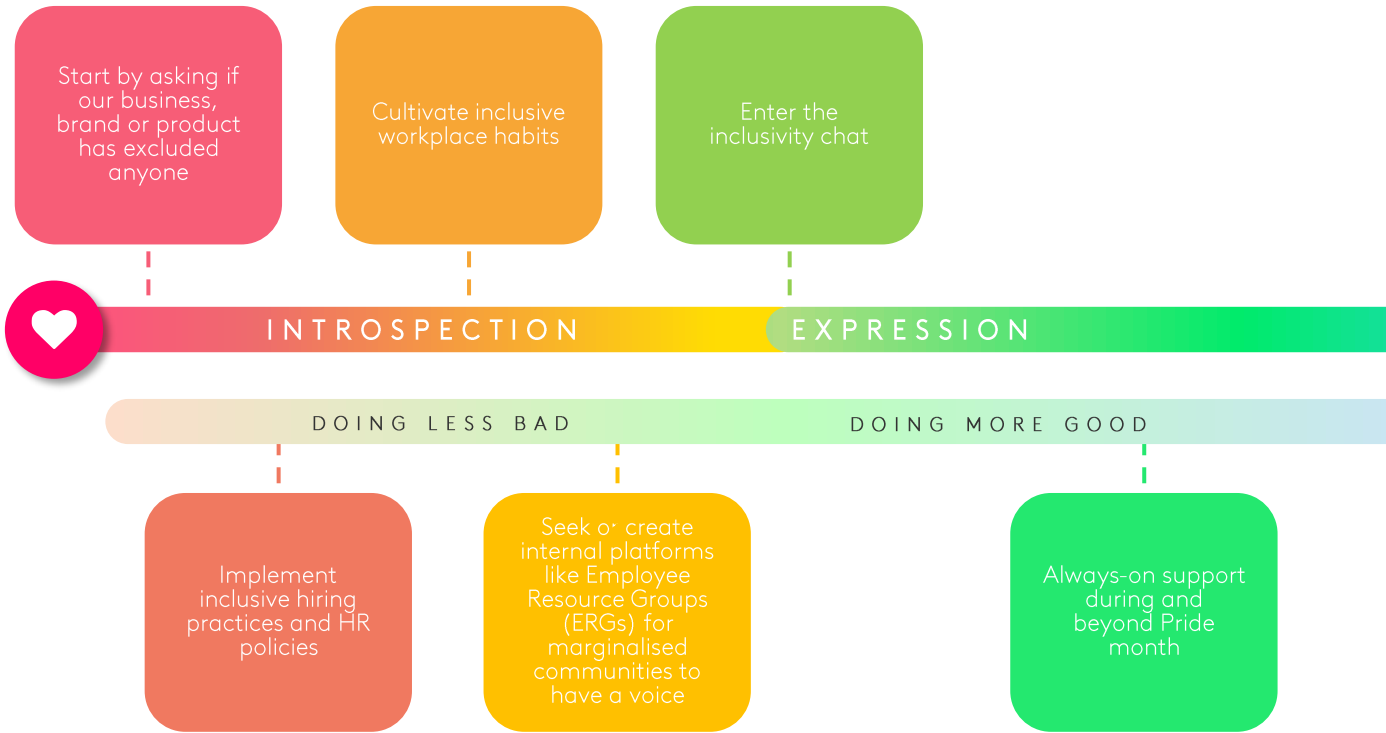
It's reminiscent of the reaction to Procter & Gamble India's Vicks "Touch of Care" 2017 campaign, which featured transgender Gauri Sawant adopting and raising an orphan girl, emphasising love's boundless nature.

The positive thread continues in Lalit Hotels' "Pure Love" campaign, demonstrating their commitment to inclusivity by providing a safe haven for same-sex couples and promoting love without boundaries. The group goes far beyond a campaign, training their employees on LGBTQIA+ sensitisation. Their Medi-claim policy also includes same-sex couples, single parents and children born through surrogacy. They offer insurance that covers gender affirmation surgery and host "Pure Love" entertainment evenings for the LGBTQIA+ community.

The campaigns that win are those that align with brand value and core purpose.



The transformative brand journey



Following a public homophobic remark by their chairman in 2013, Barilla Italy's turnaround has been impressive. Today, Barilla has earned a perfect score, 100% in the Human Rights Campaign Annual Corporate Equality Index (USA), which is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. They launched packaging portraying a lesbian relationship and made inclusivity the heartbeat of the business.

Skittles evolved its monochrome Pride packs by adorning them with vibrant artwork created by LGBTQIA+ artists.

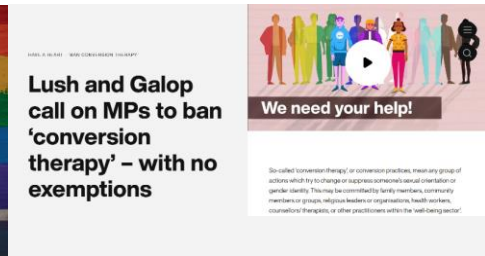
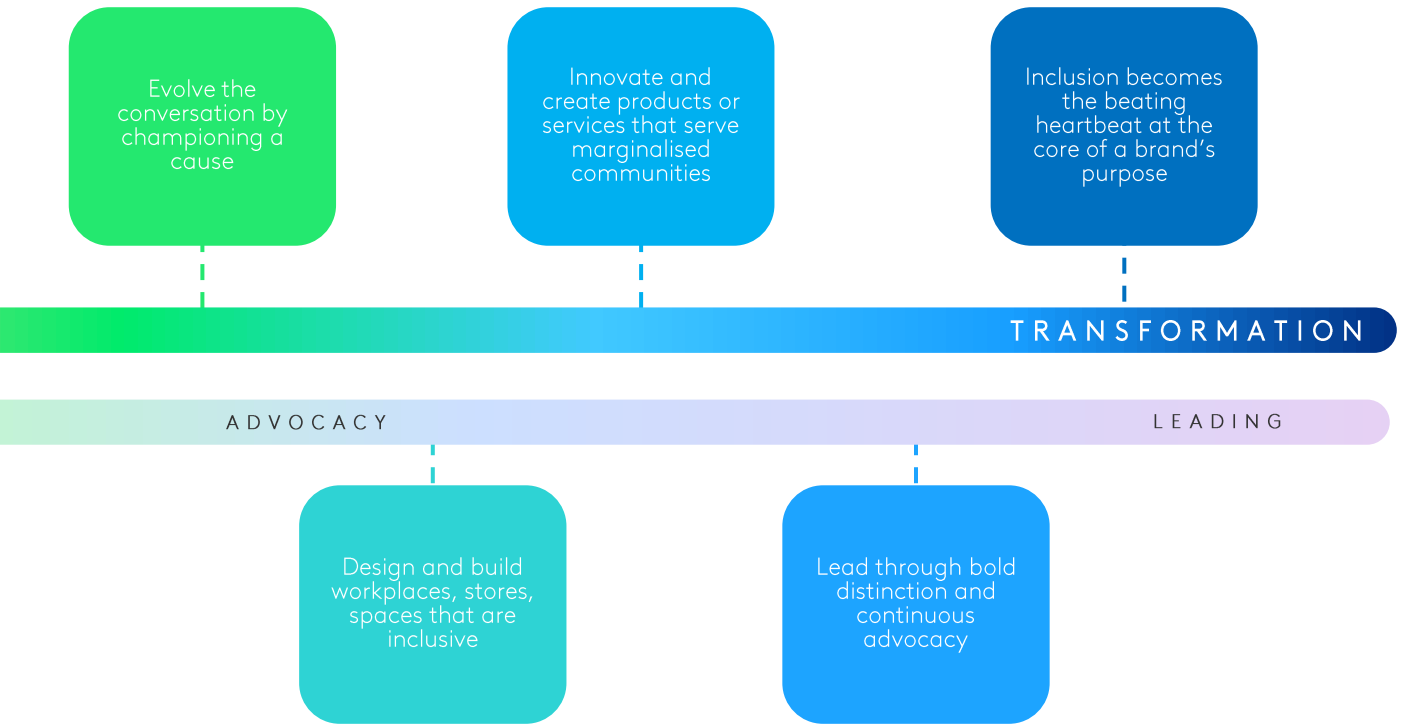
With each pack purchased, Skittles pledged to donate \$1 to GLAAD, the non-profit advocacy organisation dedicated to combatting anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

In 2017, Mattel's Barbie collaborated with blogger Aimee Song to raise awareness of non-profit organisations that provide support to LGBTQIA+ youth. 2019 saw the launch of their first line of gender-neutral dolls. Paying homage to transgender actor Laverne Cox, a doll fashioned after the actress launched in 2022 as the first openly trans Barbie doll. Donations were made to TransFamilySOS, providing support to trans youth and their families.

People expect more from brands than ever before. They choose brands that are relevant, inclusive and exceed on their promise. Keen to get started?

The journey to building truly transformative brands begins within.

“When I’m thinking about brands’ approach to the LGBTQ+ community I’m incredibly wary of pinkwashing. I want to know how a brand treats its LGBTQ+ employees. I want to know if it’s just putting a queer person on a billboard, or if it has policies in its workplace which actively make it an inclusive place to work for all levels of employees.”
UK



Against a backdrop of increasingly hostile and reductive discourses about LGBTQIA2S+ representation, AESOP launched an in-store Queer Library.

This complimentary library features books that have been banned or challenged in various settings across the US and Canada.

Absolut Vodka leads with pride, celebrating 40+ years of allyship and advocacy. This legacy informs their core belief that a colourful, diverse, and equal world is something to strive and work for.

In 2022, Absolut launched Out & Open, a platform to celebrate the cultural significance of LGBTQIA+ bars and restaurants and the many ways these critical spaces serve the community.

Lush launched a campaign calling on the UK government to ban conversion therapy. This involved partnering with Galop on its “have a heart” initiative, which urges MPs to prohibit conversion practices.

By scanning a QR code, Lush customers could send an e-card to their MP on Valentine’s Day 2023, asking them to “have a heart” and bring legislation before parliament.

Looking forward

"I am an 88-year-old lady and am amazed at the obvious change in attitudes in my lifetime. In 2013, our rabbi offered to marry us, and did so in a large ceremony in our conservative synagogue. Who could have imagined that? We also celebrated our 50th anniversary there, holding a large party."
USA



Amidst a climate of increasing polarisation, the future of LGBTQIA+ rights and freedoms is in contention. The hard work of creating systemic change for all marginalised people must continue. Inclusivity is a dynamic journey and there are a few principles that can guide us into the future.

Progress over perfection

Dealing with multi-layered complex issues like identity means not all the answers will be clear. Inclusion often means confronting personal biases, unlearning and re-learning. Removing the pressure of perfection and striving for positive progress evolves the conversation, as does awareness of big movements to increase inclusion, like asking rather than assuming someone's pronouns. Be graceful and open-minded to experiences that differ from your own.

Fostering empathy

Stay curious and respectful by asking the questions that remove the divides that separate:

- How can we recognise the humanity that connects us all?
- How can my actions be more inclusive?
- Whose perceptions are we missing?
- How can I use my influence to uplift others?

Catalysing change

It will take a ground swell of multi-pronged support to ensure the rights and freedoms of future LGBTQIA+ people are upheld. Active allyship, creating safe spaces, boosting inclusivity at work and the actions of impactful transformative brands are all key in ensuring our rainbow future.

"I believe the LGBTQ community needs to be out, loud and proud more now than ever. I mean this for organisations and groups; not necessarily for individuals. We are sliding backwards in an outpouring of negativity. We should use our voices, our votes, and our money to push back against this backlash by being more vocal and, yes, by openly boycotting. We need to defend by going on the offense."
USA

KANTAR | DIVA

The DIVA survey

Catalysing change

LGBTQIA+ and allies' insights 2024

India | South Africa | United Kingdom | United States of America

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