

LGBT+ inclusion and equality in the workplace



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Plan for today's course

Knowledge about:

- Why focus on LGBT+ inclusion?
- Basic LGBT+ knowledge – definitions, myths and facts
- LGBT+ people's challenges in the workplace
- LGBT+ and sexual harassment

Tools: How to work towards diversity and LGBT+ inclusion

A final quiz!



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The aim for today's course is both to give you some important knowledge about LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace: why this is an important topic to focus on. You will also get an introduction to some definitions and ways to think about/understand LGBT+. You will also get insight into myths, facts and numbers when it comes to LGBT+ people in the workplace. And then you will get insight into LGBT+ and sexual harassment.

Furthermore, you will also get some very concrete tools to how you can start working actively towards both more diversity in your workplace and more inclusion of LGBT+ people.

In the end, you will get a final quiz to see how much of what you have learned has stuck with you.

Why focus on LGBT+ inclusion

- Studies show that LGBT+ people experience specific challenges in regards to work life and work life satisfaction
- Making sure LGBT+ people thrive and are included requires an active, informed effort
- Work life satisfaction leads to: Productive employees and it attracts the best employees



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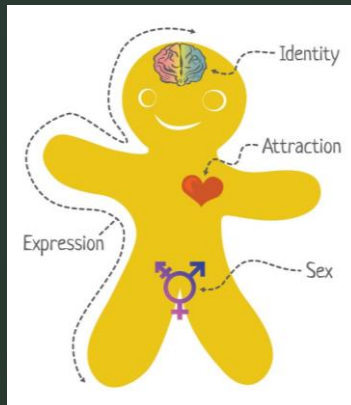


- The reason why focusing on LGBT+ inclusion is that studies have shown that LGBT+ people experience some quite specific challenges in the workplace that need some specific attention and solutions in order to make sure that LGBT+ people thrive and are not excluded in the workplace.
- Therefore, it is important to realise that making sure LGBT+ people thrive and are included in the workplace requires an active and informed effort and that you need some specific knowledge and tools to do this work effectively.
- And – as with everything else we do to improve employee’s work life satisfaction – a satisfied employee is a productive and participating employee who wants to keep his/her/their job. Therefore, it is *also* a good idea to start focusing on LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace.

Definitions

What does **LGBT+** stand for?

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, + (Queer, Intersex, Asexual ...)



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But before we get into how to work towards including LGBT+ people in the workplace, let's go through what LGBT+ stands for and how to think about LGBT+ identities.

LGBT stands for: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The + stands for multiple, different categories and identities that also break with society's gendered and sexual norms. The + stands for:

- **Queer**: A queer person is someone who cannot or will not identify as either man or woman or who identifies as both man and woman. Gender queer people have in common that they oppose the idea that there are only two genders.
- **Non-binary**: Identifying as non-binary means to define oneself as other than inside one of the categories "man" or "woman".
- **Intersex** people are people who who have a congenital variety in their anatomical sex
- and more...

In most, if not all, societies, cisgendered and heterosexual people are the norm – they

are seen as “normal”.

Most people know that being heterosexual means only being attracted to men if you identify as a woman and vice versa.

A cisgendered person is someone whose experienced, inner gender matches the gender that person was assigned at birth, i.e. was written on their birth certificate. This means that the majority of people likely identify as cisgendered. Someone who is not cisgendered may identify as transgender, queer or non-binary. The thing these identities have in common is that they do not identify with the sex or gender, that is written down on their birth certificate.

However, not all cisgendered people know or think about the fact that they are cisgendered – or if another person is cisgendered, because oftentimes people just suppose that if you have a certain kind of body, then you also necessarily have a certain kind of inner understanding of what gender you are even though that is not the reality of things.

Therefore, when it comes to understanding sex, gender, and everything else that is at play when it comes to including LGBT+ people in the workplace, it can be a good idea to think about or understand these things through an illustration that is called the gender bread person. This gender bread person illustrates very well how we should think about people’s sexual and gendered identities.

As the illustration shows you can think about a person’s identity in different ways.

- Sex: The first one is the body. People are born with a certain kind of body. Some people have what is identified as a female body or a male body. And some people are born with a body that is identified as neither – that is intersex people. So, the body is one category.
- Identity: The second thing to consider is what is in someone’s head – meanings self-understanding, experience, thoughts, and so on. The head symbolizes gender identity, and, as said before, a person can identify – or experience themselves – as cisgender, transgender and non-binary.
- Expression: The third thing is someone’s gender expression, symbolizes with the dashed line. This has to do with how someone dresses, their hair, how someone moves, talks and in different types of ways expresses themselves in a certain, unique gendered way.
- Attraction: The fourth thing is the heart, which on this gender bread person symbolizes desire or sexual orientation.

The reason why this gender bread person illustrates a very good way to think about people's sexed and gendered identities is that this illustration makes a clear division between things that are normally, or often, understood as one thing. Therefore, the important thing that his gender bread illustration shows us is that these four aspects of a person's sexed/gendered identity – attraction, sex, identity and expression – are completely different things and, furthermore, that you cannot assume anything about how these aspects are combined in another person. A person's whole gendered/sexed identity can consist of an endless combination of these four categories.

This means that the kind of gendered experience (symbolized by the head) someone has does not say anything about what to "expect" from the three other categories. And who someone desires/is attracted to says nothing about what kind of gender identity (head) someone has, what kind of gender expression or what kind of sexed body the person has. And so on.

For some people, this way of understanding or thinking about people's sexed and gendered identities may be quite new and perhaps difficult to wrap their head around. But in this case, the gender bread person will hopefully make it a bit easier to remember that you cannot assume anything about another person's sex, gender identity or anything else. And this exact point – not assuming anything – is really important if we want to create a workplace – and a society – where LGBT+ people are just as included as cisgendered, heterosexual people.

The facts

- 40 % not open/only open to a small degree*
→ 70 + % worries about reactions/don't feel safe being open*
- 65 % not comfortable reaching out to their union/do not think they can get help in their union*
- Openness: Co-workers, managers, clients*

*(Als Research, "LGBT+ people and work life", 2019)



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Studies show that LGBT+ have some specific challenges when it comes to the workplace.

These facts and numbers are from a Danish study from 2019 about LGBT+ people and their work life.

One of the things this study focused on was the question of openness; how much LGBT+ were open about their LGBT+ identity, and why.

- The study showed that 40 % of the LGBT+ people responded that they were not open about their LGBT+ identity at work, *or* that they were only open to a small degree. Of these people, 70 % said that the reason why they weren't open was because they didn't feel safe or comfortable being open because of the work environment or the co-workers thoughts about LGBT+ people in general. The aim is not necessarily that every single LGBT+ person *has* to be open, but that they are able to be open if they want to.
- Another very important and unfortunate number this study showed was that 65 % responded that they either did not think they could get help if they reached out to their union about an issue related to their LGBT+ status, *or* they doubted whether

they would get help if they reached out.

This is of course a very big problem that needs to be fixed: It is very important that LGBT+ people can feel comfortable that they will get help from their union if they for example experience discrimination.

If everybody got more knowledge about LGBT+ in general, and started working actively to include LGBT+ people in the workplace, then maybe this wouldn't be a problem – then there maybe would not be such a big level of distrust. And it is the majority's responsibility – not the LGBT+ people's responsibility – to find a solution to this problem. Prejudice, ignorance and lack of knowledge is what leads to exclusion of LGBT+ people and therefore it is the majority's responsibility to find a solution.

- The study also found that LGBT+ people were the most open with close colleagues, then manager and they were the least open to clients/customers and so on.

Myths and the (in)visible norms

- Myth: “Why the need to ‘be open’? I don’t go around talking about who I sleep with at work – that’s a private matter”
- Myth: “We don’t need specific LGBT+ knowledge – we treat everyone with the same respect!”

Norms

- Unwritten social rules that contribute to deciding what we expect from each other and how we behave around each other
 - Invisible to those who fit the norm, visible to those who break it
 - Decides who’s included and who’s excluded
- Minority stress



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Myths about LGBT+ people and about being LGBT+ in the workplace stand in the way for complete inclusion of LGBT+ people. And these myths are important to talk openly about and to replace with facts.

- The first myth has to do with openness. When talking about the fact that it is a problem when LGBT+ people do not feel comfortable being open, some people may think: “Why the need to be open? I don’t go around talking about who I sleep with at work – that’s a private matter”. The issue is defining what openness means.

Openness does not mean going around at work talking about your sex life for example. Openness is about being able to talk to your co-workers about your partner: That your co-worker Michael can tell that he went to the movies last Saturday with his spouse, John. And not being open can mean not going to work as the person you are – for example, dressing a certain normative way, even if the someone does not feel comfortable or good in these kinds of clothes. It can be very hard to go to work every day and not share some quite fundamental parts of one’s way of life. This focus on openness is not meant to dictate that all LGBT+ people *must* be open – only that, *if* LGBT+ people want to be open, the work environment or work place shouldn’t stand in the way of that.

This myth likely exists because heterosexual people for example do not notice when they are open about their sexual orientation – which they are every single time they mention their partner, their plans for the summer, have a family picture on their desk, and so on. And this should be possible for everyone to do without being excluded or feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.

- The second myth is often well intentioned: It often comes into play when people hear that it is important to have some specific knowledge and tools in order to include LGBT+ people and make sure LGBT+ people thrive at work. In this situation some people think: “We don’t need specific LGBT+ knowledge – we treat everyone with the same respect.” And that is of course a good thing to do.

However, if you don’t think that you need a specific focus on LGBT+ people and LGBT+ inclusion, you – for once – will likely not be made aware of the specific challenges that LGBT+ people experience. When you think “everyone is the same” and leave it at that, then you may not see how different people experience different challenges due to for example sexual orientation or gender identity. And, as a second thing, you will likely not be able to solve the challenges that different people have, because different challenges need different solutions. Therefore, being aware of and tuned into the ways in which people differ and how these differences lead to different challenges, *that* is the way to treating people with the same level of respect.

Norms

When working with LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace, norms are very relevant to look at and start working with and talking about.

To define what norms are: Norms are unwritten social rules that contribute to deciding what we expect from each other and how we behave around each other. Another important thing about norms is that they are often invisible to those who fit the norm, and visible to those who break it.

The reason why norms are important to focus on when working with LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace is that norms decide who is included and who’s excluded in the workplace.

For example if the norm (in the workplace or society in general) is to be heterosexual, then most heterosexual people will not walk around being hyper aware that this is a norm. It just seems completely natural that, of course, this is the way it is. They often don’t think about it or question it.

This heterosexual norm may be expressed when an employee asks a new female co-

worker, "do you have a husband?". In this situation, the female co-worker who does not have a husband but a wife, is then forced to consider "Do I come out now and tell them that I have a wife and that I'm gay?". The person will have to spend energy thinking about and assessing the situation, assessing her new co-workers and quickly figure out whether or not it is safe and comfortable for her to come out at her work. This is the ways norms work, and how they are invisible to those who break them and how norms lead to exclusion.

Minority stress

The fact that society in general is build around a cisgendered and heterosexual norm can lead to LGBT+ people experiencing minority stress.

Minority stress is stress that is caused by being a minority – the stress response is caused by all the small and the more serious situations where an LGBT+ person – because they break with the norm – has to asses and figure out "what do I do here? How do I act? Do I come out? Is it safe? What will they think" and so on. It takes a lot of extra energy to think about all of these things every single day. And ultimately it can lead to a stress response and to what is called minority stress.

And when a workplace is working with LGBT+ inclusion, a good way of thinking about the aim of the work, is to think that the aim is to eliminate LGBT+ people's minority stress.

Sexual harassment and LGBT+ people

- 68% who responded reported being sexually harassed at work
- 2/3 didn't report it to their employer. 1/4 of those who didn't report it was due to fear of being 'outed' at work.

LGBT+ women (compared to men) were **twice** as likely to report:

- unwanted touching (35%),
- sexual assault (21%)
- rape (12 %)

Why?

- Sexualisation of LGBT+ identities
- Stereotypes lead to 'invitation' of inappropriate question etc.

Source: Trades Unions Congress report "Sexual harassment of LGBT people in the workplace", 2019



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Sexual harassment is not only a big problem to cisgendered, heterosexual young females without a powerful position in the workforce or in a company. LGBT+ people are also very much at risk for being subjected to sexual harassment.

- The British Trades Union Congress report from 2019 show that 68 % of the LGBT+ people who responded to their survey reported being sexually harassed at work.
- And two third of those people who reported they were subjected to sexual harassment at work, didn't report the harassment to their employer. And one in four of those who didn't report it, said that they didn't do it because of fear of being outed at work. This shows how sexual harassment and prejudice against LGBT+ identities combined, unfortunately lead to people not feeling comfortable seeking the help and justice they need.

LGBT+ women vs men

The same study also showed that LGBT+ women (all LGBT+ people who identified as female) are twice as likely to report unwanted touching, sexual assault, and rape compared to LGBT+ men.

Why

Many of the incidents of sexual harassment highlighted by the report appeared to be linked to the sexualisation of LGBT+ identities and to the misconception that these identities solely focus on sexual activity – LGBT+ people are in some way seen as extra sexualized. And people influenced by these stereotypes about LGBT+ people being more sexual, they see being LGBT+ as an invitation to make sexualised comments or ask inappropriate questions about a person’s sex life.

Therefore, it is important to remember that just because people may seem more “exotic” to you because they are not cisgendered or heterosexual, that does not mean that you are allowed to ask questions that you normally wouldn’t ask non-LGBT+ people. Being curious about people you may feel like you don’t understand or people who you think live a different life than you do, that does not make it okay to ask them about their bodies, their sex lives or the like.

This way of thinking that LGBT+ people are especially “exotic” people, is one of the stereotypes which is very important to break because it can lead to all kinds of inappropriate, harmful, and not-okay behaviour, language, and questions towards LGBT+ people.

What to do?

- Humour – inclusive or exclusive? Talk about it in a meeting
- Show support, awareness, and commitment to LGBT+ inclusion – internally and externally
- Policies (parental leave, family, bullying, sexual harassment)



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Now we will go through different things you can do in your workplace in order to heighten the inclusion of LGBT+ people.

- Humor is an important part of having a good work environment. However, humor can also be used to exclude someone from the community – also unintentionally. If jokes about LGBT+ people are made in the workplace, it will often carry a negative significance for the well-being and job satisfaction for your LGBT+ co-workers. Therefore, a way to work towards LGBT+ inclusion is to have a meeting in the workplace about humor. Talk about: “What do we think good humor is/isn’t?” and talk about why it is not okay to make “jokes” about LGBT+ people and how these “jokes” are excluding. It is also a good idea to talk about how you may intervene in the workplace if someone makes a “joke” that may be crossing the line.
- Another, quite easy, way to make a positive difference when it comes to LGBT+ inclusion, is to be clear about your support – externally and internally in the company – about the fact that you see diversity as a good thing and that you are committed to LGBT+ inclusion. You can have posters in the workplace, mention it in news letters, write it on your website, raise the rainbow flag to show support for

your city's Pride day and so on.

- A third way in which you can work towards LGBT+ inclusion is to add LGBT+ into your different policies at work. One way to do this is to go through all of your policies and look for where norms of heterosexuality or cisgenderedness is expressed, for example in the language or the wording. For example, about parental leave: Do you always write "mother" and "father"? Then an easy, and very important, way to work towards more inclusion, is to just write "parents". Or, do you have a section in a policy that says that women should wear skirts and men pants? Then that could be changed so that the policy just states that employees have to wear either a certain skirt or some certain pants. Also if you have a policy about sexual harassment, you should also mention LGBT+ people, because, as we have seen, LGBT+ people are unfortunately very often subjected to sexual harassment. It is also important to state in a policy that bullying or harassment related to people's gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression is not tolerated.

What to do? Support your transgender colleague

- Use the correct pronoun
- Free choice of work attire
- Ensure available toilet/bath facilities
- Offer support in the person's transition
- Speak up to gossip, "jokes", discrimination. Enter a dialogue to eliminate prejudice and ignorance.
- Days off for legal or medical appointments
- Alter the person's workplan for a period to suit their transition.



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Some transgender people are open about their identity, others are not. For that reason, you may have a transgender co-worker without knowing about it.

If you have a transgender co-worker who chooses to transition, i.e. chooses to begin to live and/or look like the gender the person identifies as, you can make a positive difference by making the process in the workplace as safe as possible. First and foremost, it is important to talk to your transgender co-worker who is going through the transition to understand what kind of support the person needs. This may vary from person to person.

- One way you can all support your transgender co-workers, is by calling them the name and the pronoun, e.g. "he", "she" or "they", that they wish to be called and help your co-workers do the same. It is important to practice, because it can create a feeling of insecurity and sadness to be called your old name or a wrong gender pronoun.

It may take time to get co-workers used to using a new name or saying e.g. "he" instead of "she". You can contribute to the process by nicely reminding your co-workers to use the correct pronoun or name. If you make a mistake, it is better to just apologize and correct it than ending the conversation and making a big deal of

it.

- Another thing you can do, is to make sure all co-workers can choose freely between any different versions of the work attire. E.g. between smock and pants if those are the options.
- It is also important to work to ensure the availability of toilet and bath facilities that your transgender co-workers also feel comfortable using
- And if your transgender co-worker wants to inform the other co-workers of possible changes and a new name with regard to their transition, you can offer your support. It may be that your co-worker wishes to do the informing themselves. It may also be that they want either your help or your supervisor's help to do it.
- Always speak up, if you hear any gossip or "jokes" about transgender people in general or your transgender co-worker. Explain the people making the "jokes" why it is harmful and not okay to do so.
- A transitioning process can be an extensive process both physically, mentally and socially. Because of that, it may be that the co-worker in question, for a period of time, needs to have the work planned in a way that takes this into consideration. You can thereby support the co-worker by looking into options for adjusting the work to make it possible for the co-worker to thrive and maintain their attachment to the workplace.

What to do? Recruitment + interviews

- Declare: “We see diversity and difference as a resource and encourage everyone regardless of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation to apply for the job.”
- Consider the choice of words in the job advertisement
- Be aware of your own unconscious bias in the selection process – make a checklist or blur identities
- Diversify the hiring committee
- Gender-neutral language
- Ask the same questions



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If you have any influence on recruitment and the hiring of new co-workers, you can be involved in making sure that the workplace both has the most qualified employees and that LGBT+ people are not discriminated against. This you can do by becoming more aware of how new employees can be recruited in a way where everyone regardless of gender, sexuality, and gender expression have the same opportunity to be hired.

- A good first step is to declare in the job advertisement that you see diversity and difference as a resource and to encourage everyone regardless of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation to apply for the job. This list should also include: age, disability, religion and ethnicity. Declaring this is a good start but not enough. To make sure you have a diverse group of employees and that you do not unintentionally exclude LGBT+ people from joining your workplace, more action needs to be in place.
- Another important thing you can do to make sure you do not exclude someone from applying for a job is to consider how different wordings in the job advertisement may be interpreted by different applicants. You might for example consider it a positive wording if you write that “we have a casual and blunt tone in

our work place” . But some LGBT+ applicants may understand this to mean that they may expect discriminatory jokes and may choose to not apply for the job for this reason. Therefore, try to put yourself in a LGBT+ persons place and consider how your job advertisement may be read.

- A very important way to make sure you hire in a diverse way and also attract all of the qualified LGBT+ candidates, is to be very aware of the fact that all people unconsciously are biased when it comes to deciding which applicants should be called to an interview and who should get the job. Having unconscious biases means that people have a natural tendency to chose people who look like themselves or remind them of themselves. This means that the white, straight, male HR employer that has the job of recruiting new employees is more likely to pick one of the applicants that is most like himself – either male, white or straight for example – than some of the other applicants. And this does not have anything to do with being a bad person – people just have biases and that is (unfortunately) how we work. The important thing is not to shame someone by telling them they are biased, but to just be aware of them. And being aware of them means *not* just relying on your “gut feeling” about someone. Because the gut feeling will often be biased towards someone who resemble yourself.

A very effective way to be aware of your biases when you select which candidates should be invited to a job interview, is to take a paper and write down what qualities, skills, and so on you are looking for in your new employee. Then, take every applicant and go though the list and se how many of the things on the list, they have. Then you can compare the different applicants by comparing each of the applicant’s checklists.

However, in this situation you may still see the person’s age, picture and so on and this is what makes it very difficult to be unbiased. If you want to be very serious about not making your own unconscious biases lead the way, then you can have someone cover the picture of the applicant and all the other information that tells about the persons identity. And then you can chose which applicant should be invited to an interview.

- Being aware of who is in a hiring committee is also something you can do to work towards a more divers group of employee’s and towards not excluding LGBT+ people because of unconscious biases. Make sure that you have people of different sex, gender, age, ethnicity and so on in your hiring committee will also be an effective tool.
- When the applicants have been chosen and they are invited to a job interview, then it is important to remember to use gender-neutral language. If you for

example are going small talk a bit and ask “Do you have a wife?” or the like, then remember to say “spouse” instead of wife. However, it might be even better to not ask these kinds of private questions in this first interview. Because if one of the people you are interviewing identifies as LGBT+, then – by asking about the person’s spouse – the person may be put in a situation where he/she/they do not know how to answer and whether or not they should come out. Eliminating any situation where a person has to consider whether they should come out or not, is important. In this way, you can help reducing this person’s minority stress.

- And, in connection to the last point, be aware of what kind of questions you ask the applicants. Try to be mindful about asking the same kinds of questions. Of course, everyone has different work experience you want to ask about and every question cannot be the same, but be aware that you do not for example ask the women about something that can point to their plan about having children and so on. Be mindful of where your unconscious biases may be expressed in the interview situation.

Quiz

1. What is important to remember about people's gender identity, sexual attraction, sex, and gendered expression?
2. How many LGBT+ people reported not being comfortable reaching out to their union? 35 %, 55 % or 65 %?
3. Why is it important that LGBT+ are comfortable being open?
4. Why is it important to look at the norms of a workplace?
5. What is minority stress?
6. How many LGBT+ people reported experiencing sexual harassment? 38 %, 48 % or 68 %?
7. What is important to be aware of and work actively against when you recruit new employees?



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Now it is time for a quiz which is meant to test how much of this course has stuck with you. It is not a multiple choice, which means you are free to answer in your own words.

These are the seven questions:

1. What is important to remember about people's gender identity, sexual attraction, sex, and gendered expression?
2. How many LGBT+ people reported not being comfortable reaching out to their union? 35 %, 55 % or 65 %?
3. Why is it important that LGBT+ are comfortable being open?
4. Why is it important to look at the norms of a workplace?
5. What is minority stress?
6. How many LGBT+ people reported experiencing sexual harassment? 38 %, 48 % or 68 %?
7. What is important to be aware of and work actively against when you recruit new employees?

And now you'll get 10 minutes or so to each write down your answer. When the 10

minutes are up, I will ask you to read aloud what you have written down and then we'll see who has the most correct.

The answers:

1. That you can never assume that these things are combined in any specific way.
2. 65 %
3. Because being open is about being able to share normal details about one's private life – who someone lives with, who someone went to the movies with in the weekend – in the workplace.
4. Because norms decide who are included and who are excluded
5. Minority stress is the stress that is caused by all the small and big stressors that LGBT+ people have to endure every single day because they break with society's cisgendered and heterosexual norms.
6. 68 %
7. Unconscious biases