



# LGBT+ inclusion: Can you apply a globally consistent policy across an inconsistent world?

Currently, at the time of publishing, homosexuality is criminalized in 73 countries. Multinational corporations with inclusive values can't ignore this as they work to advance inclusion for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) community across the globe. Organizations are grappling with questions, such as how can we make progress when we could be in direct conflict of local laws? And how can we lobby for equality without placing any of our LGBT+ employees or local business at risk of prosecution or abuse?

These are questions that EY has grappled with on our own diversity and inclusiveness journey.

New research by the New York University School of Law's Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging explores three models for multinational companies striving to advance LGBT+ inclusion in their workplaces.

## Our journey

At EY, we've been on a diversity and inclusiveness (D&I) journey for many years. Diversity paired with inclusion drives business success and better outcomes. LGBT+ inclusion in particular allows companies to attract and retain the best talent and drive high-performance teaming through diversity of thought. It's the right thing to do and it's good for business.

When we really started to dig into LGBT+ inclusion, it didn't take long to expose the layers of complexity to move the needle toward full inclusion of our vibrant LGBT+ community.

The convergence of social, legal and company environments layered on top of personal beliefs, opinions and fears can create the perfect formula for a deadlock for progress. Momentum and visibility of the LGBT+ community continue to grow, and we can now leverage progress to consistently and collectively push for inclusion around the globe.

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We know that as a multinational organization, we need to be cognizant of the local legislation and social environments in which we operate. We can't simply set a global policy and walk away. We need to be consistently evaluating and tailoring our LGBT+ inclusion efforts and activating them based on the realities on the ground.

**Trent Henry**  
EY Global Vice Chair – Talent



The better the question.  
The better the answer.  
The better the world works.





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At EY, we believe it is our responsibility to create an environment where each professional can feel like they belong and can bring their true, unique selves to work, making us a stronger organization and better able to service clients. We have member firms in countries in which homosexuality is illegal, and we have a responsibility to provide employees with a safe workplace where they can thrive.

**Karyn Twaronite**  
EY Global and Americas Diversity & Inclusiveness Officer

We've collaborated with the New York University School of Law's Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging on a discussion paper, *Opening up the World: How multinational organizations can ascend the maturity curve on LGBT+ rights*, to help spark a conversation among multinational organizations about advancing through three models of LGBT+ engagement.

View the full report at:  
[ey.com/lgbt-inclusion](http://ey.com/lgbt-inclusion).

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This research affirms that multinationals play an important role in promoting equality and a culture of respect in the workplace, and this extends to the communities where they operate. Through dialogue and a thoughtful approach, we can start to open hearts and minds, deepen understanding, remove uncertainty and create pathways toward LGBT+ equality and inclusion in our global workplaces and beyond.

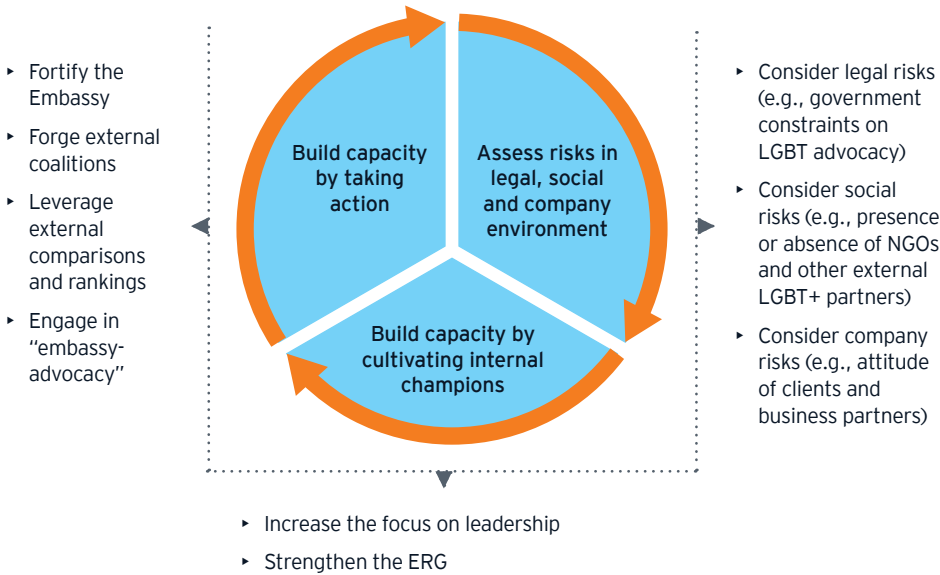
**Beth Brooke-Marciniak (retired)**  
EY Global Vice Chair – Public Policy

Three models were first introduced in 2016 in the Center for Talent Innovation report *Out in the World Securing LGBT+ Rights in the Global Marketplace*.

**When in Rome** – This is the earliest model where organizations follow the norms of the jurisdiction by creating exceptions to their pro-LGBT+ policies. Companies are usually eager to move beyond this stage, but should carefully assess any potential risks that could be detrimental to their employees or their business, before taking action. Some ways that companies can start to build capacity in this model are to cultivate grassroots, local and global leadership champions, focus on allies and begin raising awareness of the value of LGBT+ inclusion.



**Embassy** – In this model, companies apply pro-LGBT+ policies and practices to their own employees without seeking to change the laws or culture outside the company. Policies can include nondiscrimination policies that prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, provide equivalent medical and other benefits for same-sex spouses and domestic partners, offer training and education on LGBT+ topics and establish an LGBT+ employee resource group (ERG). To move to the next model, companies can increase focus on leadership champions, invest more time and resources in the ERG and forge external coalitions with other companies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to be better advocates.



**Advocate** – This is the state where corporations strive to change the climate in the country, such as by lobbying the government or supporting local activists. Even when this model is reached, an organization needs to continue to monitor, adjust and improve. Companies can do this through educating their champions of the types of advocacy that work in certain cultures, securing higher budgets for LGBT+ activities, streamlining approval processes for external advocacy and ensuring that their initiatives speak to all subgroups within the LGBT+ umbrella.



While the "When in Rome" and "Embassy" models above can be necessary points along the journey to LGBT+ inclusion, companies should not remain in those models longer than necessary. An objective analysis of global LGBT+ inclusion opportunities through an assessment of legal, social and company risks can help organizations feel more prepared to move to the next model.



The idea that frameworks have even been established around LGBT+ inclusion illuminates the complexity — and opportunity — for making progress. Regardless of local nuances, one thing is universal, a need for active and visible allies who courageously support LGBT+ employees. Allies can help advance inclusion in a meaningful way and show members of the LGBT+ community they are not alone.

**Moriaki Kida**  
 EY Regional Chief Operating Officer – Japan and Asia-Pacific Area Special Transition Leader and Global Unity Sponsor

## How do we assess legal, social and company risks?

Companies can progress through the models using an LGBT+ growth cycle, in which global leaders and local leaders assess risks in the legal, social and company environment, then build capacity by cultivating internal champions and finally, take action. A risk assessment is the first step, and should be a comprehensive process tailored to your organization.

Regardless of what model you're in, a few key questions to ask include:

### Legal

1. What are the current laws against LGBT+, including advocacy?
2. Does LGBT+ activity jeopardize our employees' safety?
3. Are LGBT+ employees protected against discrimination by law?

### Social

1. Is the social climate safe for LGBT+ professionals?
2. Are there visible allies and partnerships for the LGBT+ community outside of your organization?
3. Are subgroups within the LGBT+ community recognized and accepted?

### Company

1. Are there visible and active LGBT+ leaders and allies?
2. Do employees feel safe, supported and included being out at your organization?
3. Do you have visible business and employee resource groups in which employees can engage?

## Driving toward change

During our conversations with clients, we often get asked the important question of how? How do you create and inspire diversity and inclusion? How do you bust through bias? How do you build trust and understanding? The reality is there isn't one single answer. Our report *Making it real – globally: a practical guide for advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender diversity and inclusion across global companies* provides nine ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice:

1. Conduct an opportunity and risk assessment to identify priorities for action
2. Set policy globally, calibrate implementation locally
3. Keep making the business case for diversity, promoting 360 education and storytelling
4. Engage LGBT+ advocates and allies at all levels of the organization
5. Build out strategies supporting successful career growth
6. Create opportunities for reverse mentoring and education of management
7. Utilize social media and other technology, locally and globally
8. Develop LGBT+ networks and unify globally
9. Measure, solicit input and celebrate success

## Engaging with us

There continues to be much progress to be made in countries throughout the globe. Join in to collectively advance the agenda. Collaborating with other organizations broadens the impact and reduces potential risk.

- ▶ Join the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality, a collaboration between the World Economic Forum and leading multinational companies by emailing [Unity.network@ey.com](mailto:Unity.network@ey.com).
- ▶ Contact EY teams to talk about how your organization can adopt LGBT+ inclusion leading practices.
- ▶ Participate in the conversation on social media using the hashtag #ProudToBelong.



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## LGBT+ by the numbers

In 2019, homosexuality is criminalized in **73 countries**.

Countries that provide equal rights for LGBT people can benefit from a higher GDP per capita of up to **\$2000**.<sup>1</sup>

LGBT discrimination in Kenya is costing the country **1.7% of GDP** a year through poor health outcomes, reduced tourism and lower productivity.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States alone, the combined purchasing power of the LGBT+ community is estimated to be more than **US\$917b**.<sup>3</sup>

In the United States, **a quarter** of LGBT employees have reported workplace discrimination, and **a third** aren't even out at work, choosing to hide their true selves for fear of repercussions.<sup>4</sup>

Workers who remain in the closet at work are **73%** more likely to leave their jobs and feel they have fewer opportunities to progress at work.<sup>5</sup> **90%** of trans people experience harassment, mistreatment or discrimination at work or actively hide who they are to avoid it. **26%** of trans or gender nonconforming employees have lost a job because of their identity.<sup>6</sup>

In 1996, only **3%** of the Fortune 500 had anti-discrimination policies that included sexual orientation<sup>7</sup> – in 2019, this figure is **93%**.<sup>8</sup>

1 M.V. Lee Badgett, Kees Waaldijk and Yana van der Meulen Rodgers, "The relationship between LGBT inclusion and economic development: Macro-level evidence," March 2019, The Williams Institute.

2 "The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in Kenya," Open for Business, April 2019.

3 "America's LGBT 2015 Buying Power Estimated at \$917 Billion," Witeck Communications, July 20, 2016.

4 Brad Sears and Christy Mallory, "Documented Evidence of Employment Discrimination & Its Effects on LGBT People," July 2011, The Williams Institute.

5 Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Karen Sumberg, "For LGBT Workers, Being 'Out' Brings Advantages," July 2011, Center for Work-Life Policy.

6 Jaime M. Grant (PhD), Lisa A. Mottet (JD) and Justin Tanis (DMin), "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey," 2011, National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

7 Selisse Berry, *Out & Equal At Work: From Closet to Corner Office*, February 2013, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates.

8 Corporate Equality Index 2019, Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

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