



Building bridges

**LGBTQIA+ collaboration
for equality and inclusion**



August 2023

Road to inclusion

In 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human rights¹ set forth a vision for an equitable and inclusive world that values human dignity and rights for all. This vision of equitable and inclusive space is fronted by marginalised communities, including the LGBTQIA+ community. The acronym encompasses a range of identities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more.

Over time, progress has been made vis-a-vis recognition of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, largely due to the efforts and collaboration within the community with civil right groups around building better understanding, empathy and solidarity.² But even today, 76 countries around the world have discriminatory laws against LGBTQIA+ individuals exposing them to the risk of

arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment while in five countries, the death penalty is imposed on consensual same-sex relationships³.

The month of June is celebrated globally as Pride Month to commemorate the Stonewall riots. Today, it is about amplifying voices, advocating for rights, and celebrating culture and accomplishments of the LGBTQIA+ community. However, recognition and inclusion go beyond the month, enshrined in the “leave no one behind” principle under the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development of the United Nations⁴. The UN has also released a joint statement calling for ending violence and discrimination against ‘LGBT and intersex’ people endorsed by 12 UN agencies.⁵

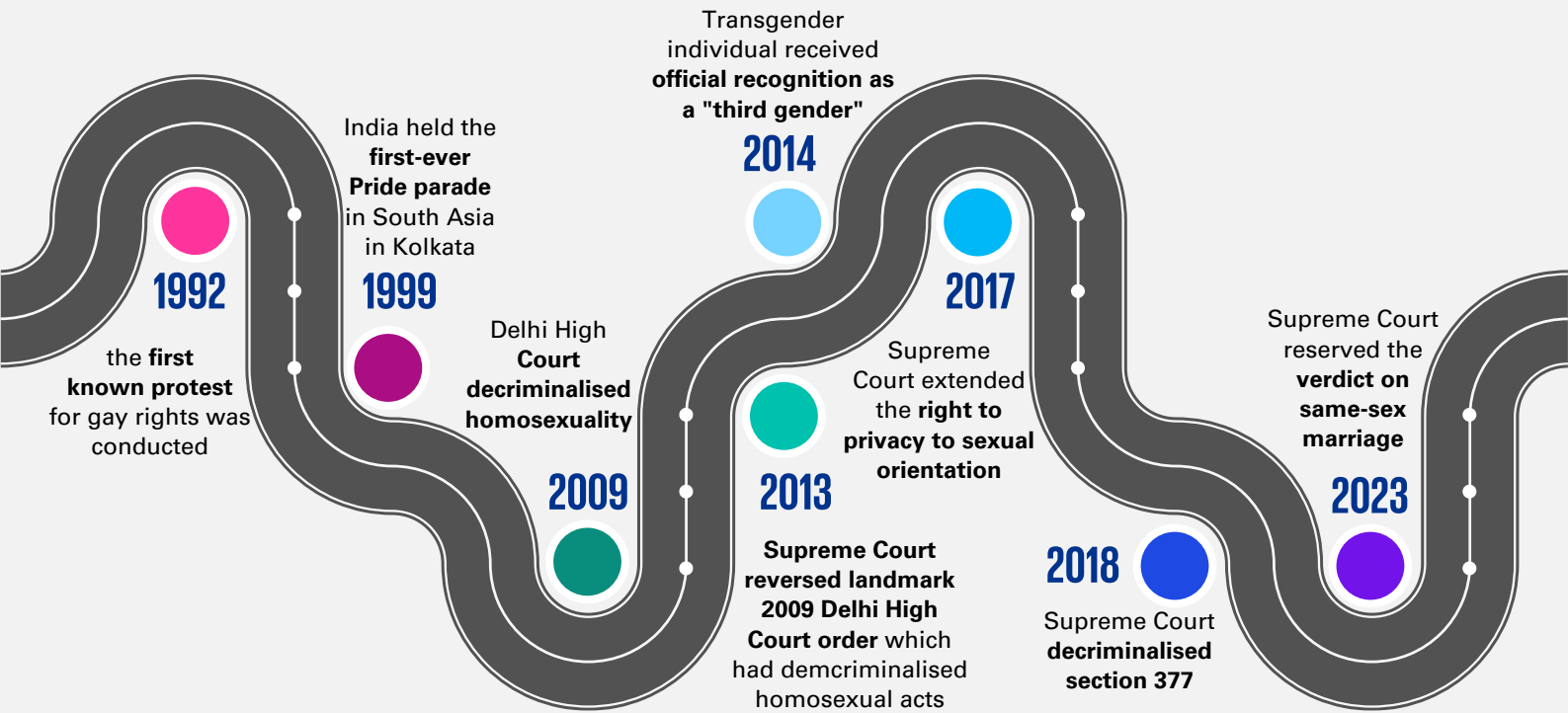


1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations, accessed on 15 June 2023
2. The Changing Landscape of Global LGBTQ+ Rights. Council on Foreign Relations. Angelo, P. J. (2021, January 29)
3. LGBTQIA+ | United Nations; accessed on 15 June 2023

4. UN chief on LGBT rights: “Leave no one behind.” OHCHR. (n.d.); accessed on 15 June 2023
5. Ending Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People, United Nations, September, 2015

Over the past few decades, India has seen a resurgence in the queer rights movement. Some of the major milestones in the history of India’s road to LGBTQIA+ inclusion are as follows:

Figure 1: Major milestones in the history of India’s road to LGBTQ+ inclusion



LGBTQIA+ in the economy

In today's ever-evolving professional landscape, diversity and inclusivity have become crucial components of fostering a thriving work environment. As per World Economic Forum, companies and businesses around the world are forecasted to spend more than USD15.4 billion in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts by 2026⁶. Diversity in the workplace has both economic and social value, driving creativity, innovation as well as a sense of belonging⁷. In fact, inclusion of LGBTQIA+ community in the workplace has a positive correlation with a country's economic development⁸. On the flipside, it is estimated that homophobia causes a loss of 1.7 per cent to the Indian GDP.⁹



Why is there a need for LGBTQIA+ inclusion at the workplace?

Amongst OECD countries, LGBTQIA+ people are 7 per cent less likely to be employed than non-LGBTQIA+ people. Their earnings are 4 per cent lower and they are 11 per cent less likely to hold managerial positions. It has also been found that more than 1 out of 3 LGBTQIA+ people have personally felt discriminated against due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the workplace¹⁰.

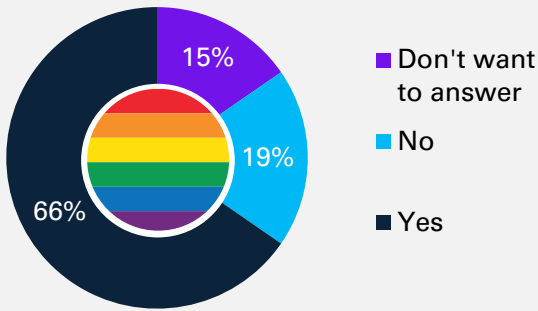
When it comes to India, the situation is marred with deep-rooted stigma and prejudice though recent studies have shown that there is growing support for rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals¹¹. A World Bank study stated that 56 per cent of white-collar LGBTQIA+ workers reported discrimination.¹² It was also found, as per a National Human Rights Commission study in 2018, 96 per cent transgender individuals surveyed reported that they were denied jobs and, in turn, forced to take up work like badhais, sex work and begging.¹³

6. Global Parity Alliance: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lighthouses 2023. (n.d.). World Economic Forum, accessed on 15 June 2023
7. Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: A learning guide, The International Labour Organization, 2022
8. The Relationship between LGBT Inclusion and Economic Development: An Analysis of Emerging Economies, The William Institute, Badgett M., Nezhad S., Waaldijk K., Rodgers Y., November 2014.
9. The Economic Cost of Homophobia and Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India, The World Bank, Badgett M, February 2014
10. Society at a Glance, OECD, 2019
11. Significant Support for Rights of LGBTQIA+ among Urban Indians: Ipsos LGBTQIA+ Pride 2021 Global Survey, Ipsos Research Private Limited, Bhatia, M., June 2021
12. The Economic Cost of Homophobia and Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India, The World Bank, Badgett M, February 2014
13. Study on Human Rights of a Transgender as a Third Gender, National Human Rights Commission, February 2017.

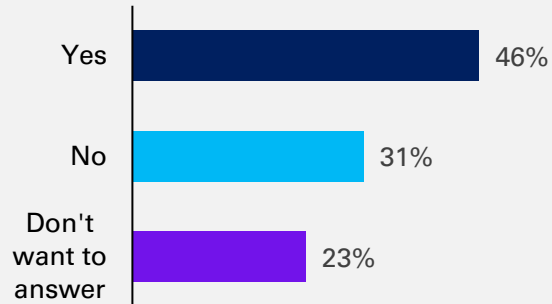
How are Indian corporates doing?

KPMG in India undertook a survey¹⁴ to understand corporate India’s practices, policies and initiatives on inclusion in general and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in particular.

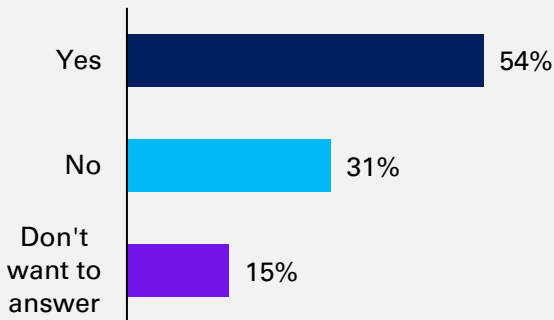
Does your organisation’s inclusion, diversity and equity policy talk about inclusion of LGBTQIA+ community?



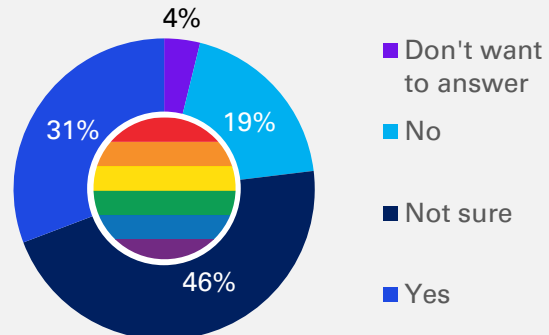
Do you have any specific initiative for LGBTQIA+ community as part of your diversity, inclusion and equity policy in this financial year?



Does your inclusion/diversity related training also have specific modules related to LGBTQIA+ community?



Do you have any representation of LGBTQIA+ community members in your leadership/ management/ employee level in your organisation?



35 per cent of the surveyed had already defined their target and timeline to achieve diversity and inclusion within their organisation but fewer organisations have defined targets for inclusion of LGBTQIA+. Based on the current findings, there is more to be done to ensure an inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ community at the workplace.

Some preliminary steps to understand and work toward achieving LGBTQIA+ inclusion can be taken from World Economic Forum’s DEI Lighthouse programme which has already identified five success factors that have yielded the most positive impact for inclusion

of underrepresented groups at the workplace like building a nuanced understanding of root causes, defining success, invested leadership, contextualised solutions and rigorous tracking and course correction when needed.¹⁵

In conclusion, embracing true DEI at workplace requires us to expand our understanding to acknowledge the experiences and voices of the LGBTQIA+ professionals. The way forward to achieve this is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders for creating awareness, policies and engaging conversations to achieve a truly inclusive, fair and equitable workplace for all.

14. Note – The survey was undertaken with the senior leadership of Indian corporates.

15. Diversity, equity and inclusion lighthouses 2023; World Economic Forum, Ellingrud, K. and Baller, S. (2023); accessed on 15 June 2023.



Inclusion is not just a word; it's a commitment to embrace and accept every individual in their uniqueness. In order to ensure the same, we need a collective approach to design solutions. With this thought leadership, we envision a world where voices are heard, and everyone is given a fair chance. In the face of challenges, particularly concerning workplace inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community, let's build these bridges, spanning differences, fostering a culture of acceptance and celebrating diversity, to create more inclusive workspaces for all.

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30 years
and beyond

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