

InterLaw  
Diversity Forum

# LGBT+ FACTSHEET

Key findings from the 2021 report,  
**Career Progression the Legal Sector**

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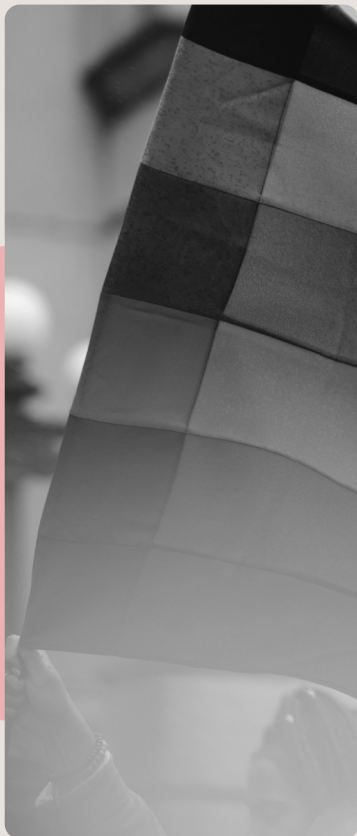


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# LGBT+ UK Legal Landscape

The UK has some of the best LGBT+ equality legislation in the world and has been one of the most progressive countries for LGBT+ rights protection, ranking tenth place in the [ILGA Europe Rainbow Map](#). A wave of legislative changes transformed LGBT+ rights early in the millennium.

These changes represented a major victory for many LGBT+ people who had campaigned tirelessly to change the legal framework to protect and improve LGBT+ people's lives.

But changing people's attitudes and entrenched biases is a different matter. LGBT+ people still face challenges in their daily lives, and the workplace is a common environment where issues may occur.

It is estimated that there are over 6,000 LGBT+ solicitors practising in England and Wales – roughly 4% of the total according to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, based upon their [most recent published data](#) from March 2020.

“There is no debate about whether or not we exist. We exist.”

Trans roundtable attendee

2000

Gay, lesbian, and bi people can openly serve in the armed forces.

2002

LGBT+ people are granted the right to adopt children.

2004

The Gender Recognition Act comes into law. Civil partnerships extend relationship rights.

2010

LGBT+ people are protected from direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation at work by the Equality Act.

2013

Equal marriage made legal.

2014

Trans people can openly serve in the armed forces.



# Discrimination in the Workplace

Many LGBT+ workers still have negative experiences because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Stonewall research** shows:



Almost one in five LGBT+ staff (18 per cent) have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues because they're LGBT+.



One in eight trans people (12 per cent) have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues because of being trans.

"I don't personally feel like I'm part of the LGBT+ community even though the 'T' is there."

**Trans roundtable attendee**



Almost one in five LGBT+ people (18 per cent) who were looking for work said they were discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity while trying to get a job.



One in eight black, Asian, and minority ethnic LGBT+ employees (12 per cent) have lost a job in the last year because of being LGBT+, compared to four per cent of white LGBT+ staff.



Nearly one in five lesbian, gay, and bi people (18 per cent) are not open with anyone at work about their sexual orientation. Almost two in five bi people (38 per cent) aren't out to anyone at work about their sexual orientation. One in four trans people (26 per cent) aren't open with anyone at work about being trans. This number increases to almost two in five non-binary people (37 per cent) who aren't out at work.

"We have some trans individuals and while we're meant to be a top trans employer they aren't out."

**Trans roundtable attendee**



More than a third of LGBT+ staff (35 per cent) have hidden or disguised that they are LGBT+ at work because they were afraid of discrimination.



One in eight lesbian, gay, and bi people (12 per cent) wouldn't feel confident reporting any homophobic or biphobic bullying to their employer. One in five trans people (21 per cent) wouldn't report transphobic bullying in the workplace.



Almost a third of non-binary people (31 per cent) and one in five trans people (18 per cent) don't feel able to wear work attire representing their gender expression.





# Key Findings from our Latest Career Progression Report

## Introduction

This fact sheet is based upon the **Career Progression in the Legal Sector** research conducted by the InterLaw Diversity Forum. We designed an extensive online survey for all lawyers in the UK in 2018, using the same questionnaire again in 2020. We had approximately 1,400 respondents in 2018 and approximately 1,100 respondents in 2020. We gathered a range of data on key points of career progression, as well as collecting data on disability, race and ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social mobility, and religion. 18.8% of our respondents identified as LGBT+ in 2018, and 19.9% in 2020. To get more lived experiences, we conducted a series of four roundtables in 2019, one each for lesbian, gay, bi, and trans and non-binary lawyers. For a complete methodology please see the full report.

## The Intersectional Difference

### 1 Gender and Sexual Orientation

When analysing compensation for LGBT+ lawyers, gender differences in pay were even more pronounced when controlling for sexual orientation. All women earned less than men on average in our research findings, regardless of their sexual orientation.

“I agree that for me being a woman is more of a challenge than being bi.”

Bi roundtable attendee

Gay men earned half that of their straight male counterparts. At the very top of earners were straight men, earning on average £600,000 to £700,000 per annum. This was followed by the top 10% of gay men who earned substantially less than straight men at £300,000 to £400,000 on average.

£600 – £700K

Straight Men

£300 – £400K

Gay Men

£200 –  
£300K

Lesbians

£100 –  
£200K

Straight Women

Interestingly, while all women earned significantly less than straight and gay men, lesbians earned more than straight women. The top 10% of lesbians earned even less than straight and gay men, at £200,000 to £300,000, while straight women were found in the bottom tier, earning £100,000 to £200,000.

“There is not much representation of women generally, but especially for LGBT+ women.”

Lesbian roundtable attendee

### 2 Disability and Sexual Orientation

There were differences in the intersection of disability and sexual orientation with variations in the findings between the 2018 and 2020 data. For example, whereas the proportion of straight individuals with disabilities who requested accommodations was lower than gay and lesbian individuals with disabilities in 2018, this pattern was reversed in the 2020 data.





However, gay and lesbian lawyers with disabilities were consistently more likely to report being satisfied with workplace accommodations in relation to disability than straight individuals with disabilities.

Bi lawyers with disabilities reported an even higher percentage of those asking for accommodations and reporting satisfaction than lesbians and gay men in 2018.

“One of my clerks said to me a few years ago, ‘Oh you’re just greedy.’”

**Bi roundtable attendee**

But only about half (52% for 2018 and 2020) of all lawyers with disabilities reported satisfaction with the accommodations that they received.

## Challenges for LGBT+ Lawyers

### 1 Social Mobility: Education

Gay men and lesbians were less likely to have attended fee paying schools and less likely to have attended Oxford or Cambridge in comparison to straight men and women. As with our previous findings, top earners were dominated by those who attended Oxford or Cambridge. Lower education outcomes on average for LGBT+ people limit future career opportunities by making it more difficult to secure a training contract at a top firm or otherwise limiting their career progression.

### 2 Workplace Bullying, Bias, and Discrimination

Gay and lesbian lawyers were more likely to suggest that their workplace was free from bullying and free from unconscious bias than straight individuals, but less likely to suggest that the workplace was free from discrimination. This suggests that instances of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic behaviour in the workplace were from direct discrimination.

Bi lawyers reported the least positive responses to personal experiences with unconscious bias, bullying, and discrimination.

Understanding the specific challenges and biases that bi employees face is one key challenge for organisations that came out of our roundtables to ensure they are not routinely discriminated against by both LGBT+ and straight colleagues and in order to improve their workplace experience.

“At an LGBT+ female lawyers’ event she said she was bi and they replied ‘Why are you even here?’”

**Bi roundtable attendee**

### 3 Job Security

Our research showed some consistently negative experiences from bi lawyers in the legal profession across the United Kingdom. Bi lawyers reported the lowest job security ratings versus much higher job security ratings for gay men and lesbians.

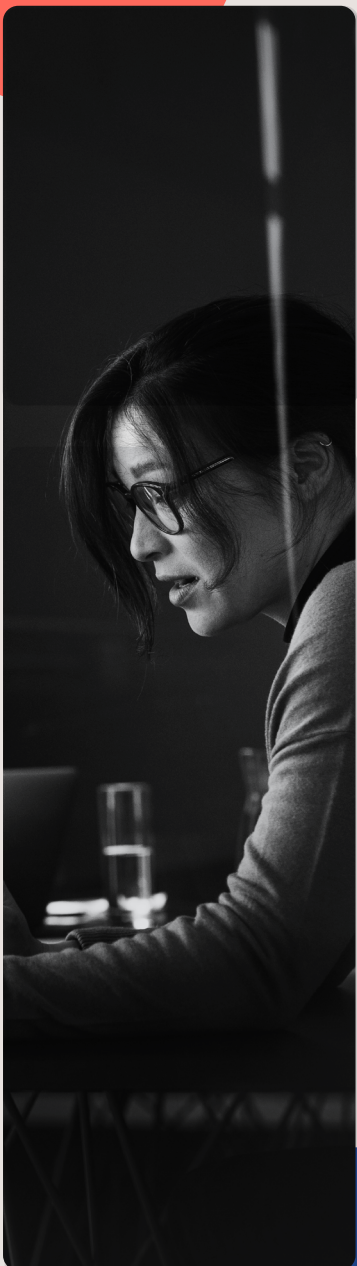
“I think it’s difficult in a big law firm at least because there is zero visibility about how decisions are being made with regards to career progression. When people are not progressing it’s not necessarily clear as to why.”

**Bi roundtable attendee**

“The bigger the firm, the less accepting they actually are. Firms may say that they are accepting, but internally there’s a big difference.”

**Gay roundtable attendee**





#### 4 Job Satisfaction

For both straight and gay men, the most important determinant of job satisfaction was fair promotion practices. Fair promotion practices were more closely correlated with job satisfaction for gay men and bi individuals. This was not the case for lesbians, who reported the lowest levels of job satisfaction in our research.

“Lesbian, bi, and trans women don’t tend to put their hand up as much as perhaps our gay male counterparts.”

**Lesbian roundtable attendee**

For lesbians, job satisfaction correlated more closely with personal discrimination experiences, organisational environments, and fair assessment of achievements. Thus, job satisfaction among lesbians appeared to be more closely linked to their perceptions of organisational fairness and their experiences with discrimination, harassment, and bias.

“Work allocation is definitely an area where you do start seeing differences. People who are diverse often get lower quality work.”

**Lesbian roundtable attendee**

#### 5 Work Flexibility

The sexual orientation and disability patterns were inverse of the typical “majority-greater than-minority” pattern. In these cases, those with marginalized statuses (gay, lesbian, bi, and people with a disability) typically displayed more positive opinions of the organisation’s approach to flexible and agile working.

Gay and lesbian lawyers reported more positive satisfaction with the organisation’s approach to flexible working, agile working, and part-time working. The ratings were generally highest for bi individuals.

#### 6 Organisational Equity and Diversity Efforts

Whereas all responses were positive, there were small differences within the LGBT+ groups for organisational equity and diversity efforts. Gay and lesbian individuals’ opinions and satisfaction were virtually indistinguishable from those of straight individuals, but bi individuals provided less positive opinions and satisfaction with their respective organisation’s efforts toward equality and diversity.

“It’s important that, in the absence of an LGBT+ partner, you have allies.”

**Gay roundtable attendee**

This means bi individuals were less likely to endorse that the organisation lives up to its public commitment in this space and expressed lower satisfaction with the organisation’s equality and diversity practices relative to gay, lesbian and straight individuals.

“There is an issue around the interaction between gender and bisexuality that I think is actually worse for men than it is for women.”

**Bi roundtable attendee**

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# Top Tips for LGBT+ Inclusion for Organisations and Allies

Everyone in an organisation has a role to play in making their workplaces more LGBT+ friendly, but it's clear that allies play a crucial role, particularly if they hold positions of leadership.

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## 1 Listen, learn, and amplify LGBT+ voices

Make time to speak to your LGBT+ colleagues, friends, and family and find out about their experiences as an LGBT+ person at work. They will have ideas about how your workplace can be made more LGBT+ friendly. Everyone worries about saying the wrong thing, but if you're taking a positive step you'll find that LGBT+ colleagues are happy to answer your questions. Provide a platform for LGBT+ colleagues and clients to share their journeys and make LGBT+ role models more visible.

## 2 Develop policies and programmes to support LGBT+ talent

Communicate a clear mission to all your employees, including managers and senior staff, through education and diversity training about your inclusion policies and strategies for supporting LGBT+ employees. Mentoring, employee resource groups, seminars, allies programme, and conferences all go a long way in making your workplace a more inclusive place for your LGBT+ employees. Review your policies to ensure that they are LGBT+ inclusive, including those for bullying, harassment, dress code, parental leave, adoption leave, and time off to take care of dependants.

## 3 Foster an LGBT+ inclusive environment

Establish a strong anti-discrimination policy in your recruitment and promotion practices with specific examples of LGBT+ discrimination. Ensure all employees know what is not tolerated in the workplace, and in cases of homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic bullying, that they promptly recognise the problem and take action. Create a gender-neutral environment by making bold changes such as establishing unisex toilets and using gender-neutral language, like "partner" or "spouse" instead of "husband" or "wife". Consider adding pronouns to email signatures to signal support for trans and non-binary.

## 4 Support transgender employees

As transgender visibility within the LGBT+ community has increased over the past few years, it has become clear that transgender people face a unique set of experiences and challenges. Learn what steps to take after an employee comes out as transgender to create a supportive and encouraging environment. Use the InterLaw Diversity Forum's **Gender Neutral Drafting Guide**, produced in collaboration with **Government Legal Services** and the **Office of the Parliamentary Counsel**. Work with **Global Butterflies**, our trans partner, on developing trans and non-binary inclusive policies, training, etc. Also consider supporting the trans and non-binary work of organisations such as **Stonewall**, **Mermaids**, and others in this space.

## 5 Be inclusive and be intersectional

Ensure that you embrace the full spectrum of the L, G, B, T and +, and ensure you include the intersectional communities within them – women, race and ethnicity, disability, etc. Otherwise you risk further marginalising these disadvantaged groups within them.

## 6 Walk the walk: Put words into action

Whether you're the CEO or a line manager, people watch you and take cues from your authentic behaviour. Become an ally or sponsor of your employee resource group, attend events, and consider being a mentor or sponsor.

## 7 Demonstrate inclusive leadership

Being visible as a leader and saying "LGBT+ equality at work is important" can powerfully affect the culture and tone within an organisation, a division, or a team. It also demonstrates the organisation's values to stakeholders, clients, and customers. Holding colleagues to account on what they are doing to advance LGBT+ equality at work is one of the most effective tools that allies have.

## 8 Invest in inclusive recruitment

Work with your internal recruitment team, as well as your external recruiting partners, to ensure you develop inclusive recruitment practices. This can include signing up for the **Scotland-Woolf Rule** to adopt best practice in recruitment for senior roles; and revisiting your recruitment processes from job ads and job descriptions to short lists and interviews.

## 9 Join and support the InterLaw Diversity Forum

Participate in the InterLaw Diversity Forum as individual members (free and open to all, including LGBT+ talent and allies in the legal sector) and consider joining as a corporate member or sponsoring a project.

## 10 Support the LGBT+ community

Show your support of the local LGBT+ community through pro bono work, volunteering, charitable fundraisers, and by providing information to employees about local events and groups.

For more information on supporting LGBT+ inclusion, visit InterLaw Diversity Forum and find out more about our **UK Model Diversity Survey**.

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## Get Involved with the **InterLaw** **Diversity Forum**

The InterLaw Diversity Forum works to foster inclusion for all diverse talent working in the legal sector, and to promote meritocracy in all sectors by working to 'level the playing field' in order to create environments where the best talent can succeed. We take an intersectional approach across all strands of D&I and social mobility and a focus on allyship.

The InterLaw Diversity Forum currently has more than 8,500 members and supporters from over 300 law firms and chambers, and over 500 corporates and financial institutions. The InterLaw Diversity Forum is a volunteer-led, not-for-profit organisation.

For more information on the InterLaw Diversity Forum please see our [2020 Annual Report](#).

**For information on our key projects see below:**



**InterLawADVANCE**

