

LGBT IN THE WORKPLACE

Most LGBT Working Canadians Experience Tolerance But Some Discrimination Persists

Despite noticeable advances, two-in-five gays and lesbians say they have experienced workplace discrimination.

[OTTAWA – Nov. 15, 2011] - Most members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered community (LGBT) believe that the Canadian workplace has become a more tolerant place, although some instances of discrimination are still being reported, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion survey has found.

The online survey of 983 gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadian adults who are employed—conducted in partnership with the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce—sought to review specific workplace issues that may arise because of a person’s sexual identity or orientation.

Intolerance

The survey found that intolerant attitudes towards LGBT people in the workplace are still being reported, although by a small minority.

Approximately one-in-ten respondents described their employer (7%) or their co-workers (11%) as intolerant towards LGBT people. However, almost three-in-four respondents (72%) feel the attitudes in their workplace towards LGBT people have improved over the past five years. In fact, only two per cent of respondents who are “out” at work say that their colleagues had a negative attitude towards that aspect of their lives.

KEY FINDINGS

- **93% describe their employer’s overall attitude towards LGBT people in the workplace as tolerant**
- **72% feel that attitudes in the workplace towards LGBT people have improved over the past five years**
- **34% of gays and 40% of lesbians have experienced discrimination during their professional lives**
- **28% of respondents who have not come “out” at their workplace say they fear negative consequences**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From August 25 to August 30, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 983 Angus Reid Forum panellists who are employed and identify themselves as being a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered community (LGBT). Results from the survey not weighed. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Discrimination

One third of gays (34%) and two-in-five lesbians (40%) have experienced some form of discrimination throughout the course of their professional lives. Social exclusion (43%) and ridicule (42%) are the most likely forms of discrimination. The likeliest reaction to these incidents is saying nothing (69% for social exclusion, 43% for ridicule).

Coming “Out”

The respondents who have come “out” tend to be more open about their sexuality with their peers (59%) than with immediate supervisors (50%), management (48%), the human resources department (44%) and subordinates (43%). In addition, a large proportion of gays (44%) and lesbians (54%) who have not come “out” claim that their co-workers already assume they are gay or lesbian.

Respondents who have not come “out” say that their private life is private (61%) and feel no need to do so (50%), but almost three-in-ten (28%) are worried about negative consequences. While almost half of these respondents (47%) think there would probably be no consequences if they decided to come “out”, three-in-ten fear social exclusion (29%) and one-in-five are concerned about being ridiculed (23%), harassed (21%) or negatively affect their chances for advancement (21%).

Discrepancies

The study outlines an attitudinal divide between two groups. Overall, the responses from gays and lesbians varied largely in some instances from the responses of bisexual men and women. While large majorities of gays and lesbians who are “out” at work say this is an important issue for them (61% and 73% respectively), the proportion dwindles among bisexual men and bisexual women (25% and 32% respectively). Bisexual respondents are also less likely to have experienced discrimination at their current workplace (18% for both men and women) than lesbians (31%) and gays (32%).

Analysis

The survey shows that the average Canadian workplace has become kinder for LGBT people, with most employers and co-workers being regarded as tolerant towards the LGBT community, respondents acknowledging that attitudes have greatly improved over the past five years, and only 20 per cent of respondents saying they sometimes feel like their peers treat them differently because of their sexual orientation.

Bisexual men and women are more likely than gays and lesbians to regard their private life as private, and even those who have come “out” do not see this as an important aspect. In fact, while more than three-in-five gays and lesbians feel comfortable talking about their personal life with their colleagues, the proportion is slightly lower for bisexual women (55%) and decidedly lower for bisexual men (38%).

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However, it is important to note that at least two-in-five gays and lesbians have experienced workplace discrimination at some point in their lives. Also, while some respondents have come “out” with specific people around the office, it seems that acceptance is not universal. Almost three-in-ten respondents have not come “out” because they fear negative consequences

Less than half of respondents who have not come out believe that, if they chose to do so, there would be no negative consequences. A sizeable proportion of LGBT people who are not “out” in the workplace are concerned about social exclusion, ridicule, harassment and being passed over for a promotion—all factors that could negatively affect both an employee’s sense of belonging and productivity.

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[Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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LGBT Employer Attitude

How would you describe your **employer's** overall attitude towards LGBT people in the workplace?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Very tolerant	64%	69%	59%	57%	62%
Somewhat tolerant	29%	25%	36%	34%	29%
Somewhat intolerant	6%	5%	3%	7%	7%
Very intolerant	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Total – Tolerant	93%	93%	96%	91%	91%
Total – Intolerant	7%	7%	4%	9%	9%

LGBT Co-Worker Attitude

How would you describe your **co-workers'** overall attitude towards LGBT people in the workplace?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Very tolerant	50%	55%	55%	34%	52%
Somewhat tolerant	39%	37%	40%	47%	35%
Somewhat intolerant	9%	7%	4%	14%	11%
Very intolerant	2%	1%	1%	5%	2%
Total – Tolerant	89%	92%	95%	81%	87%
Total – Intolerant	11%	8%	5%	19%	13%

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LGBT Trend in Attitudes

Over the past five years do you feel that attitudes in the workplace towards LGBT people have improved worsened or stayed the same?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Greatly improved	20%	21%	22%	23%	14%
Somewhat improved	52%	51%	53%	51%	56%
Remained the same	24%	25%	20%	22%	26%
Somewhat worsened	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Greatly worsened	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Not sure	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Total – Improved	72%	71%	75%	74%	70%
Total – Worsened	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

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LGBT Being “Out” at Work

At work, are you open about your sexual orientation with the following people/departments?
– “Yes” responses listed

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Peer employees	59%	71%	80%	23%	47%
Immediate supervisor	50%	64%	72%	15%	29%
Management	48%	62%	66%	17%	25%
Human resource department	44%	58%	63%	18%	18%
Subordinates	43%	55%	59%	16%	23%

LGBT Assumptions

To respondents who are not “out” to a department or group at work:
Do you think that most of your co-workers know or assume you are LGBT?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Yes	27%	44%	54%	11%	11%
No	55%	36%	23%	80%	71%
Don’t know	18%	20%	23%	9%	18%

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LGBT Reasons for not being “out”

To respondents who are not “out” to a department or group at work:

You indicated that you are not open about your sexual orientation with certain people at work at work. Why not?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
My private life is private	61%	58%	44%	72%	60%
I do not feel the need to	50%	52%	48%	42%	57%
I am concerned about negative consequences	28%	34%	31%	21%	25%
People know without me having to say anything	5%	8%	10%	2%	2%
Other reason	6%	5%	4%	2%	9%

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LGBT Consequences of coming “out”

To respondents who are not “out” to a department or group at work:
What do you think the consequences of being open about your sexual orientation at work might be?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Probably nothing	47%	43%	42%	46%	54%
I may be excluded socially	29%	31%	23%	28%	29%
I may be ridiculed	23%	22%	19%	29%	19%
I may be harassed	21%	24%	17%	24%	16%
It may hurt my chances for advancement	21%	24%	23%	15%	22%
I may be gay bashed	7%	5%	6%	12%	7%
I may be fired or laid off	7%	10%	4%	2%	6%
Other	7%	5%	13%	6%	10%
All of the above	3%	2%	8%	3%	2%
None of the above	7%	7%	2%	8%	7%

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LGBT Consequences of being “out”

To respondents who are “out” to a department or group at work:

You mentioned that some or all of your work colleagues know about your sexual orientation. Overall, how would you describe your colleagues’ attitudes towards this aspect of your life?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Very positive	53%	54%	61%	33%	48%
Somewhat positive	23%	24%	22%	33%	18%
Indifferent	23%	21%	17%	31%	33%
Somewhat negative	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Very negative	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Total – Positive	76%	78%	83%	67%	66%
Total – Negative	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%

LGBT Importance of being “out”

To respondents who are “out” to a department or group at work:

How important to you is being out at work?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Very important	27%	32%	42%	12%	15%
Somewhat important	24%	29%	31%	13%	17%
Somewhat unimportant	17%	19%	13%	9%	22%
Not important at all	32%	20%	14%	67%	45%
Total – Important	51%	61%	73%	25%	32%
Total – Unimportant	49%	39%	27%	75%	68%

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LGBT Discrimination at current workplace

Which of the following, if any, have you experienced at your **current** workplace because of your sexual orientation?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
I was discriminated against	6%	7%	11%	2%	1%
I felt discriminated against	11%	13%	14%	7%	7%
I suspected discrimination against me	14%	17%	18%	9%	8%
None of these	73%	68%	69%	82%	82%
Not sure	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%
Rather not say	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%

LGBT Discrimination at previous workplace

Which of the following, if any, have you experienced at your **previous** workplace because of your sexual orientation?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
I was discriminated against	10%	12%	14%	4%	7%
I felt discriminated against	14%	17%	17%	7%	11%
I suspected discrimination against me	18%	19%	29%	11%	13%
None of these	63%	59%	52%	77%	68%
Not sure	5%	6%	6%	3%	5%
Rather not say	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%

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LGBT Incidences of discrimination

To respondents who have experienced discrimination:

You indicated being or feeling discriminated against at work because of your sexual orientation, which of the following have you experienced in your past or current workplace?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Excluded socially	43%	42%	51%	30%	42%
Ridiculed	42%	40%	38%	49%	48%
Passed over for advancement	28%	28%	34%	22%	27%
Harassed	26%	26%	28%	27%	29%
Fired or laid off	9%	9%	10%	11%	4%
Gay Bashed	7%	6%	9%	8%	10%
Other	17%	19%	28%	3%	13%
None of the above	4%	3%	4%	11%	6%
Not sure	2%	3%	1%	0%	2%
Rather not say	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%

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LGBT Social Exclusion

To respondents who have experienced social exclusion:
How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –
Excluded socially

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Said nothing	69%	73%	57%	73%	75%
Tried to make light of the incident	39%	39%	40%	18%	50%
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	16%	12%	11%	27%	25%
Quit my job	13%	10%	17%	36%	10%
Reported the incident to your supervisor	10%	11%	9%	9%	10%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	5%	6%	6%	9%	0%
Other	12%	10%	14%	9%	15%
Rather not say	1%	1%	3%	0%	0%

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LGBT Harassment

To respondents who have experienced harassment:
How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –
Harassed

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Reported the incident to your supervisor	44%	47%	42%	60%	29%
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	41%	41%	37%	20%	57%
Tried to make light of the incident	31%	27%	42%	40%	29%
Said nothing	31%	33%	21%	60%	14%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	16%	18%	11%	0%	29%
Quit my job	13%	10%	11%	20%	21%
Other	9%	12%	11%	9%	7%

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LGBT Gay Bashing

To respondents who have experienced gay bashing:
How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –
Gay bashed

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	48%	45%	50%	33%	60%
Reported the incident to your supervisor	44%	55%	50%	0%	40%
Said nothing	32%	27%	17%	67%	40%
Tried to make light of the incident	28%	45%	0%	33%	20%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	24%	18%	33%	33%	20%
Quit my job	24%	27%	17%	33%	20%
Other	8%	9%	17%	0%	0%

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LGBT Ridiculed

To respondents who have experienced ridicule:

How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –

Ridiculed

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Said nothing	43%	42%	50%	56%	35%
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	36%	38%	27%	17%	48%
Tried to make light of the incident	32%	25%	46%	39%	39%
Reported the incident to your supervisor	25%	28%	27%	22%	22%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	8%	8%	4%	6%	17%
Quit my job	6%	5%	8%	6%	9%
Other	7%	8%	8%	6%	9%
Rather not say	2%	3%	0%	0%	4%

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LGBT Passed Over

To respondents who have experienced being passed over for advancement:
How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –
Passed over for advancement

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Said nothing	60%	67%	52%	63%	54%
Quit my job	26%	20%	22%	63%	23%
Tried to make light of the incident	22%	22%	13%	13%	46%
Reported the incident to your supervisor	13%	18%	9%	0%	8%
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	10%	11%	4%	0%	23%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	6%	7%	9%	0%	0%
Other	9%	15%	4%	0%	0%
Rather not say	2%	0%	0%	13%	8%

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LGBT Fired / Laid Off

To respondents who have been fired or laid off:

How have you reacted to the following occurrence(s) of discrimination in the workplace? –
Fired or laid off

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Said nothing	55%	53%	57%	50%	50%
Directly confronted the employee(s) responsible	19%	18%	14%	25%	50%
Took action outside of your workplace (e.g. human rights tribunal, ombudsman, etc)	19%	24%	14%	0%	0%
Quit my job	19%	18%	14%	50%	0%
Reported the incident to your supervisor	6%	12%	0%	0%	0%
Other	3%	0%	0%	25%	0%
Rather not say	3%	6%	0%	0%	0%

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LGBT State of Affairs

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – “Agree” responses listed

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
My workplace’s non-discrimination policy is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity	79%	82%	80%	77%	74%
My workplace embraces the diversity of sexual orientation of its workforce	72%	77%	72%	65%	67%
I feel comfortable discussing my sexual orientation with friends and family outside of the workplace	69%	79%	83%	38%	61%
I feel comfortable with people at my workplace knowing my sexual orientation	67%	76%	83%	35%	59%
I try to avoid discussions of sexual orientation at work	61%	58%	51%	76%	61%
My workplace has policies and rules about sexual orientation and gender identity	56%	62%	60%	55%	44%
The fact that I am gay is a big part of who I am as a person	56%	67%	72%	33%	38%
Regardless of your sexual orientation, it is best to keep such matters private in the workplace	54%	47%	39%	81%	62%
I sometimes feel like I am treated differently by my peers at work due to my sexual orientation	20%	24%	28%	10%	11%

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LGBT Colleagues

Do you feel comfortable talking about your personal life with your colleagues?

	Sexual Orientation				
	Total	Gays	Lesbians	Bisexual Men	Bisexual Women
Yes	58%	63%	67%	38%	55%
No	34%	30%	26%	53%	36%
Not sure	8%	7%	7%	9%	9%

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