

Reports Confirm Need for Employers to Foster Inclusive Work Environment for Black, LGBTQIA+ Youth

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Both The Trevor Project and the Human Rights Campaign have released reports detailing the challenges faced by Black LGBTQ+ youth in the United States and the importance of acceptance and support to ensure these young people are safe and can thrive. These reports provide valuable insight about the vital role employers can play in ensuring a safe, welcoming, and nondiscriminatory workplace for their youngest employees.

Reports

LGBTQ+ youth crisis organization The Trevor Project's ["Discrimination among Black LGBTQ+ Young People and Suicide Risk"](#) analyzed previous survey data and established a connection between experiences of discrimination and detrimental effects on mental health. The survey, conducted between Sept. 1 and Dec. 12, 2022, collected data from over [28,000 LGBTQ+ young people](#) ages 13 to 24 across the United States. Of the 28,000 respondents, the report's analysis focused on youth who identified as "Black/African American," which totaled 1,504 survey respondents. Many of these respondents aged 18 to 24 have likely worked at least at a seasonal or part-time job or are likely full-time employees.

The report revealed that 83% of young Black individuals identifying as transgender, nonbinary, or questioning reported experiencing some form of discrimination in the past year relating to their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. In evaluating experiences of discrimination, the survey asked the respondents: "Over the past year, have you experienced discrimination for any of the listed reasons? Please select all that are applicable." The report examined how discrimination faced by young Black individuals identifying as transgender, nonbinary, or questioning affected the prevalence of suicide attempts within the past year. Of these individuals who reported experiencing no form of discrimination, 9% reported a suicide attempt in the last year; this number increased to 15% (one form of discrimination), 21% (two forms of discrimination), and 30% (three forms of discrimination). The report does not specify whether the respondents experienced discrimination at their workplace, school, or other location, but these statistics are sobering for any organization that includes or may include young Black LGBTQ+ employees among its workforces. In addition, since more of these individuals will be entering the workforce each year, the report stated, employers should ensure that these workers are welcomed and supported to protect against the mental health crises that can result from a hostile or unfriendly work environment.

The Human Rights Campaign's [28-page 2024 Black LGBTQ+ Youth Report](#) examined the "compounding challenges" confronted by Black LGBTQ+ Youth. This analysis from the country's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization was based on survey responses from approximately 1,200 Black LGBTQ+ youth, aged 13-17, spanning all 50 states and

Washington, D.C. The results are alarming. More than 78.2% of Black transgender and gender-expansive youth have experienced racism in *only* the LGBTQ+ community, those who should be supporting and encouraging these individuals the most. More broadly, akin to the findings of The Trevor Project, the report revealed that over 58% of Black LGBTQ+ youth screened positive for depression. Even with such high rates of depression, 46.5% feel they have unmet mental healthcare needs, such as therapy. In terms of future employment, 73% of Black LGBTQ+ youth expressed a desire to openly embrace their LGBTQ+ identity at their future workplace. However, 62% anticipate facing discrimination at their prospective place of employment due to their LGBTQ+ identity.

Takeaways

Young workers may account for only a small percentage of employees in some companies, but this segment of the workforce is growing every year. Both [The Trevor Project](#) and the Human Rights Campaign offered guidance for supporting Black LGBTQ+ youth. For employers, the most relevant advice would involve (1) promoting inclusivity and advocacy and (2) educating the workforce.

First, as an employer, it is crucial to use your platform to express a clear stance against both homophobia and racism, thereby fostering value and belonging in your diverse workforce. Whether the advocacy is internal or external, such a stance may foster a sense of security among a diverse workforce. This can be achieved through various channels such as social media, press releases, website promotions, internal communication emails, or establishment of relevant inclusive policies. Furthermore, employers should work to establish a welcoming environment for Black LGBTQ+ employees. For example, sharing gender pronouns following a name introduction serves as a simple yet effective method to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community during interactions with colleagues.

Second, it is imperative for employers to ensure their workforce receives comprehensive education on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This applies to the entire workforce, especially management. Providing insight into unconscious and implicit biases, microaggressions, and workplace harassment, coupled with exposure to diverse perspectives from reputable training resources, can cultivate empathy within a diverse workforce. For example, particularly with respect to LGBTQ+ employees, both managers and nonmanagers can be trained not only in learning and understanding the diverse gender pronouns that individuals identify with, but also in mastering the correct usage when addressing their coworkers. The benefit of devoting time and resources to such training may ultimately prevent conflict among employees (thereby improving employee morale), promote business ethics, and stimulate creative problem-solving and productivity.

There are many other ways employers can work to foster a safe and welcoming environment for diverse workforces, including Black LGBTQ+ employees. This is something that should be conscious and ongoing.

These reports show that creating a workplace that is inclusive and welcoming to young Black LGBTQ+ employees affects the mental health and safety of these young workers. To combat potential harm, employers can use the straightforward strategies described above. Employers can also explore other strategies for fostering inclusivity and embracing diversity. The goal is to create an environment where young individuals feel less apprehensive about being open and authentic about their LGBTQ+ identity, especially as they increasingly join the workforce.

Please contact a Jackson Lewis attorney with any questions.

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