

# VISIBLE GROWTH; INVISIBLE FEARS

GETTING TO EQUAL  
2020: PRIDE

accenture



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Marco Ziegler is a senior managing director in Accenture's global Products practice, focused on leading some of Accenture's most important relationships with Fortune 100 companies across the consumer products, retail and health industries. Marco has more than 20 years of experience in consulting, including in strategy, technology and outsourcing for clients across North America, Europe and Asia. He is also the creator of Accenture's Marketing Operations services and helps clients accelerate their digital transformations.

A leader in helping accelerate a culture of equality for all at Accenture, Marco has held various Inclusion & Diversity leadership roles and is currently Accenture's Global Pride Network Co-Sponsor.




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Christine Rauh is a managing director in Accenture's Cloud & Infrastructure Services practice. Based in Zurich, Switzerland, she is focused on delivering cloud-based solutions to help the company's Products clients—those in the consumer goods, retail, travel services, industrial and life sciences and related industries—drive next-generation business outcomes. Christine has 15 years of experience in consulting, including in IT strategy, transformation and infrastructure services for clients across Europe.

A leader in accelerating a culture of equality for all at Accenture, Christine has held many Inclusion & Diversity leadership roles and currently serves as Accenture's Global Pride Network Co-Sponsor.



**By some basic measures, LGBT+ employees in many parts of the world have progressed in the workplace.**

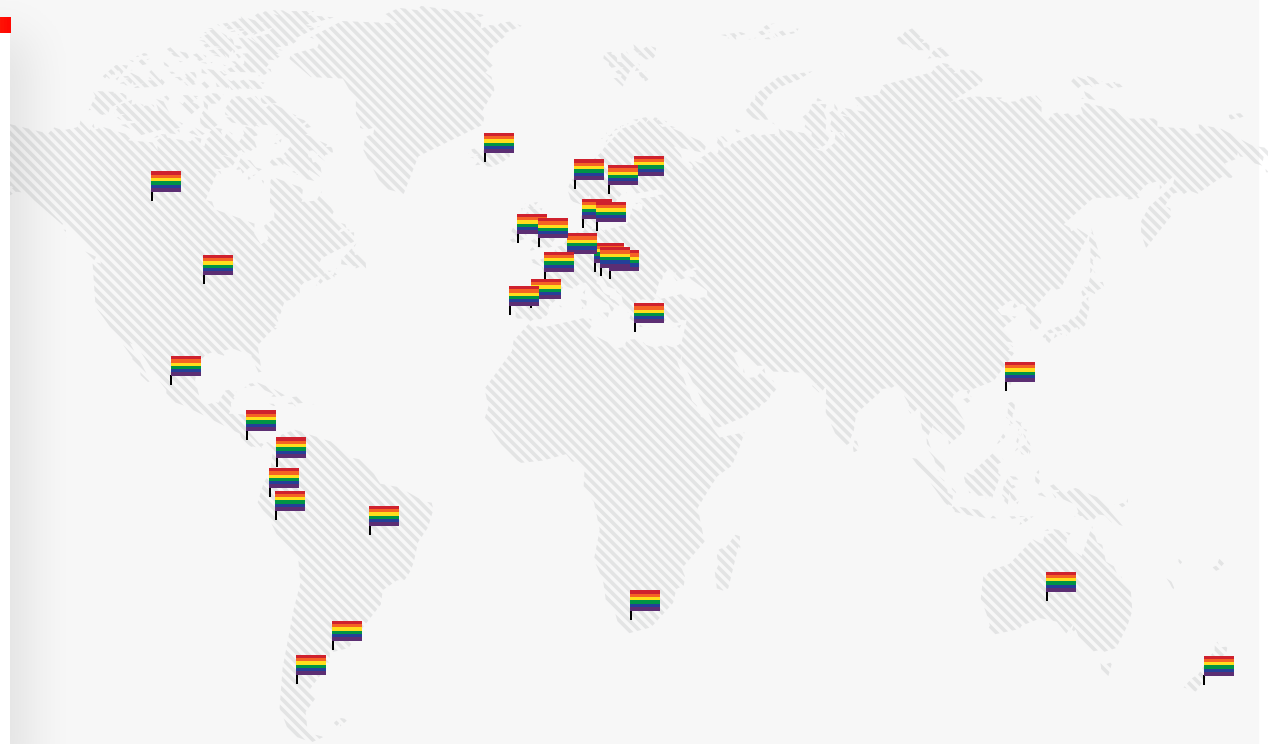
**However, behind the outward signs of progress, LGBT+ employees experience often unseen—but deeply felt—challenges and privately held fears on the job. Our research reveals the impact this has on their ability to thrive and shares proven ways to help them advance while being themselves.**

# In much of the world, the LGBT+ community has made great strides toward 'equal.'

**For instance, prior to 2001 same-sex marriage was not legal in a single country; today it is legal in 29 countries.<sup>1</sup>**

And on the career front, our survey of more than 28,000 employees in organizations across 26 countries reveals that at the global level, LGBT+ employees are just as likely as others to have reached manager level, to be satisfied with their progression and to aspire to senior leadership positions.

In fact, 37% of LGBT+ employees taking part in our survey had reached manager level, versus 35% among non-LGBT+ respondents. And while 27% of LGBT+ employees aspire to be in a leadership position, just 24% of other employees do.



# But the LGBT+ community knows adversity well.

**77** out of **195**

countries prohibit discrimination in employment because of one's sexual orientation<sup>2</sup>.

**40%**

And according to our latest research, even in the most socially progressive countries only around 40% of LGBT+ employees are fully open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work—indicating that discomfort still abounds.

Now, as the world battles a pandemic, experts warn that the LGBT+ community is likely to disproportionately experience negative economic and health impacts such as job loss.<sup>3</sup>

An OutRight Action International report predicts that this already-vulnerable group will experience greater anxiety, fear of societal stigma and risk of family violence.<sup>4</sup>



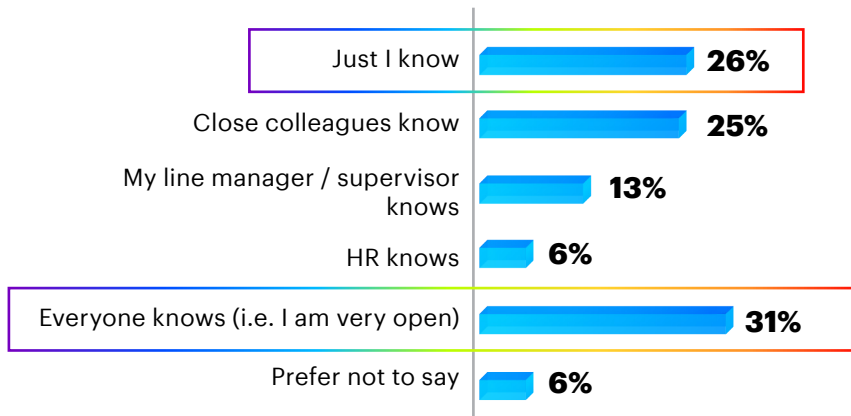
**'How are you,  
really?'**

Though our data suggest a fair representation of LGBT+ employees among management, our survey questions dug deeper and found that behind the outward signs of progress, LGBT+ employees experience often unseen—but deeply felt—challenges and privately held fears on the job.

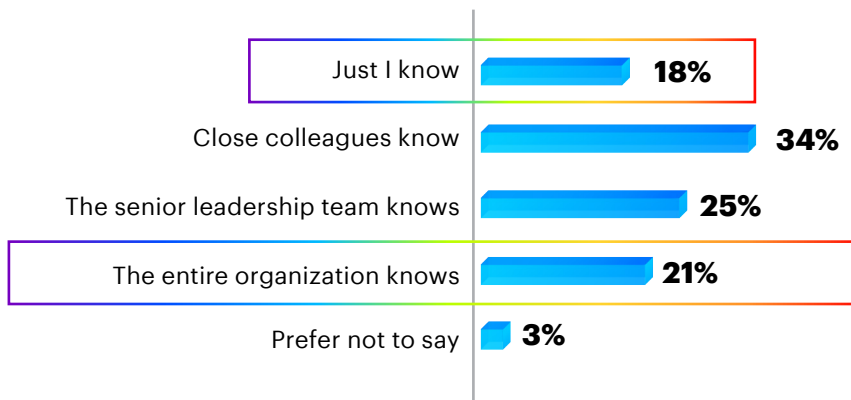
**We discovered that only 31% of LGBT+ employees are fully open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work. Even more worryingly, this figure falls to just 21% among those in senior leadership positions (“leaders”).**

Note: Respondents in the employee survey were able to select multiple options (unless they selected ‘Just I know’, ‘Everyone knows’ or ‘Prefer not to say’). Respondents in the leader survey were not able to select multiple options.

**Employees’ openness about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work:**



**Leaders’ openness about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work:**



# 57%

**We also found that more than half of employees believe that their gender identity/expression or their sexual orientation has slowed their progress at work.**

**What's behind these disheartening behaviors and beliefs? Workplace cultures that aren't truly inclusive, and leaders who don't have their ear to the ground, are largely responsible.**

As covered in another recent report from Accenture, 'The Hidden Value of Culture Makers,'<sup>5</sup> our latest survey reveals a large gap between what leaders think is going on and what employees say is happening in their workplaces. Two-thirds (68%) of leaders feel they create empowering environments—in which employees can be themselves, raise concerns and innovate without fear of failure—but just one-third (36%) of employees agree.

These kinds of perception gaps might help explain why many LGBT+ employees feel relatively unsupported at work and why others remain afraid to be open with their colleagues. Only 14% of LGBT+ employees feel fully supported by their employer when it comes to

issues like improving diversity of gender expression/sexual identity and being very welcoming to those who identify as LGBT+ at work. And 19% of those who are not open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work fear that they would be discriminated against if they opened up.

Even among LGBT+ leaders, only half (57%) agree that their company is very welcoming toward other members of the LGBT+ community.

**How can LGBT+ leaders—and all leaders who care about getting to equal—close the perception gap and open the doors to this vital group of employees?**



**Rise above:**  
**Act like the**  
**Culture Makers**



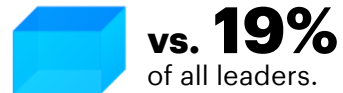
# 6%

## We identified a small group of leaders—we call them Culture Makers—who stand out.

This younger, more gender-balanced group of people, comprising 6% of leaders, runs organizations growing more than twice as fast on average than those of their peers and is ahead of the curve when it comes to promoting key factors that drive LGBT+ inclusion.



of Culture Makers have personally campaigned for (or spoken publicly about) LGBT+ rights,



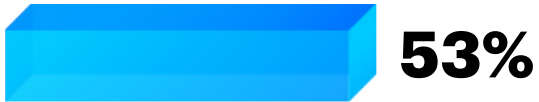
of all leaders.



of Culture Makers believe that employees having the freedom to express their individuality is important in helping them thrive in the workplace,



of all leaders.



of Culture Makers work for a firm that has set a goal/target around employees feeling able to 'be themselves' at work,



of Culture Makers believe that employees in their firm feel 'completely safe' to openly identify as LGBT+,



**We also found that when leaders are out and proud and coworkers are loud in their support, LGBT+ employees are set up for success.**

**71%**

More than two-thirds (71%) of them say 'seeing people like me' in senior leadership positions is important to helping them thrive.

And the same number (71%) say that the support of non-LGBT+ colleagues— allies—is important to their ability to enjoy being at work.

# Nurture inclusivity to unleash innovation

**Fully tapping into all sources of talent in your organization is not just the ethical way to lead, it's the imperative way to grow and succeed in a post-pandemic, post-digital-disruption world.**

The incentives are undeniably attractive:

Our previously published<sup>6</sup> research uncovered large perception gaps between what leaders think is going on and what employees say is happening on the ground.

**If these gaps were narrowed by 50%, we estimate that global profits would be higher by 33%, equivalent to \$3.7 trillion in 2019.**

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Plus, we know that a culture of equality is a powerful multiplier of innovation: Our 2019 research found that an innovation mindset is six times higher in the most-equal cultures than in the least-equal ones.<sup>7</sup>

**Build a more  
equal workplace  
culture**



## Our report 'The Hidden Value of Culture Makers,'<sup>8</sup> published in March, used an econometric data model to identify 40 factors that influence advancement and characterize a culture of equality.

That same data model now reveals the top-five cultural issues that employers should address to create a workplace where LGBT+ employees in particular can not only rise, but also feel supported, heard and understood:

01.

Senior leaders must talk openly about their own personal issues and challenges to **convey bold leadership.**

03.

The workplace should be **an empowering environment** in which employees who are different from the majority are able to settle in quickly and thrive from the outset.

05.

Employees should **feel safe raising concerns with (and about) leaders,** especially when it comes to harassment and discrimination.

02.

**Comprehensive action should be taken** to ensure that flexible working arrangements are not only available, but properly supported and encouraged.

04.

That kind of empowering environment is also one in which employees are helped to understand that **it's OK to fail at work** sometimes without fear or recrimination.

# Take the Pride Challenge

**Accenture is proud of the ways that we've included and uplifted our own LGBT+ community. But we're still learning and improving. Here are the questions we're asking ourselves—ones that other leaders can ask themselves, too—this Pride Month and all year round:**

/ Are your policies setting the right framework and tone to include everyone and treat every employee equally?

/ Do you have employee networks in the countries where you operate? Do you listen to their concerns? Do you support them in their actions?

/ What steps are you taking to support the mental health and well-being of all employees?

/ Does each employee have a designated person (other than their boss/direct manager) they can go to with any concerns about how they're being treated at work?

/ Do you have an ally program? How do you define being an ally? Do you set goals and measure progress on the impact of your work?

/ Is your organization bringing its support of the LGBT+ community to high-profile forums and conferences as well as local events?

/ Are you creating internal and external opportunities for the LGBT+ leaders in your organization to share their stories?

/ Are you 'cross-pollinating' among employee networks to strengthen your overall inclusion efforts for intersectionality?

/ Are you supporting and cultivating 'Culture Makers' in your organization who are eager to make a difference?

# About the Research

**The findings and insights contained within this report are derived from online surveys that were fielded in 28 markets during October and November 2019 as part of Accenture's broader Getting to Equal 2020 research program.**

One survey was completed by more than 1,700 senior 'leaders' (C-suite and management committee in organizations with 50 or more employees), and the other was completed by more than 30,000 employees.

Unless otherwise indicated, all figures refer to global data. Note, however, that findings that relate specifically to 'LGBT+' or 'Non-LGBT+' employees are based on data from 26 (rather than 28) markets (28,000 employees).

# Acknowledgments

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/resources/marriage-equality-around-the-world>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.catalyst.org/research/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-workplace-issues/>
- <sup>3</sup> [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/COVID19-IssueBrief-032020-FINAL.pdf?\\_ga=2.14549303.1644369101.1588875258-56912156.1587588564](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/COVID19-IssueBrief-032020-FINAL.pdf?_ga=2.14549303.1644369101.1588875258-56912156.1587588564)
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- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/inclusion-diversity/culture-equality-research>
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- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/inclusion-diversity/culture-equality-research>

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For more information on Pride at Accenture see [www.accenture.com/pride](http://www.accenture.com/pride) and contact [lgbt@accenture.com](mailto:lgbt@accenture.com)

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