



# LGBTQIA+ Inclusion – A Global Perspective

Roundtable Discussion

June 2024

# Our Message

Thank you for attending or showing interest in our roundtable discussion.

Our roundtable events on equity, diversity, and inclusion are designed to be informal, allowing participants to openly discuss bold topics, share knowledge, and challenge thinking.

Since In Diverse Company launched, we have had the pleasure of meeting numerous inspiring thought-leaders in the ED&I space. We set up our events programme to share some of these truly inspirational stories and provide evidence of the power of inclusion within the workplace. Also, our roundtables are a fantastic networking opportunity, creating a community for those working along the ED&I journey.

**We are happy to share some of the key insights from our latest roundtable discussion - "LGBTQIA+ Inclusion - A Global Perspective".**

If you have any additional comments or feedback, please let us know.



**“When people are in an environment where they can perform at their best, engagement, productivity and business performance increase. For this to happen, organisations should aim to shift mindsets and hold inclusion at the heart of business decisions.”**

Johanna Beresford CEO, In Diverse Company

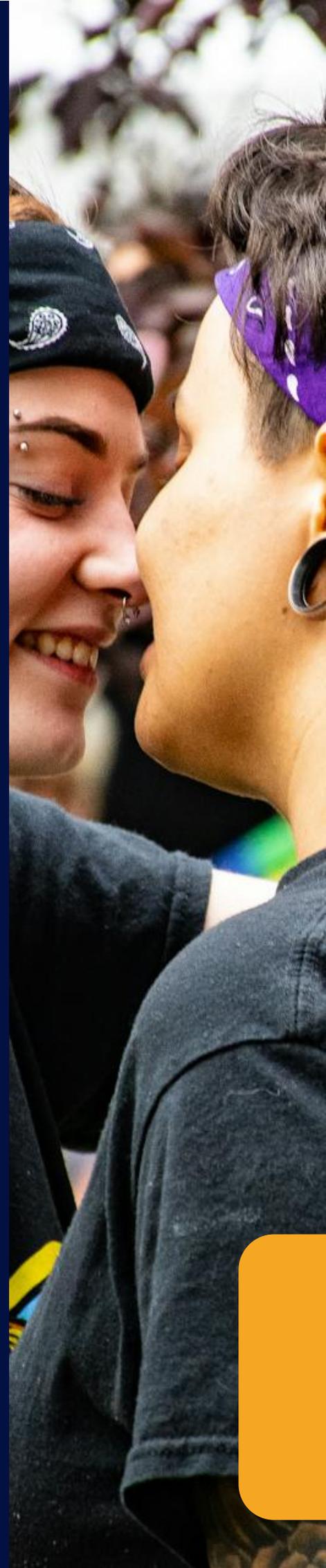
# About

The global landscape for LGBTQIA+ individuals has seen remarkable positive changes, with many countries making significant strides towards equality and acceptance. However, these advancements are not uniform across the globe. According to the 2024 ILGA World report, "Laws on Us", one-third of the world continues to criminalise consensual same-sex sexual acts. Some regions continue to struggle with deep-rooted prejudices and legal obstacles.

On the 25th of June 2024, In Diverse Company hosted a virtual roundtable discussion on LGBTQIA+ Inclusion – A Global Perspective. Industry experts globally joined us to explore the dynamic and evolving landscape of LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion worldwide, how organisations and leaders navigate this in their global operations, and how they pave the way for change in the wake of the current situation.

## **In particular, we discussed:**

- Changes that have allowed people to feel safe and open up about their identities
- The responsibility of global organisations in building and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion
- The importance of LGBTQIA+ individuals to take accountability for sharing knowledge, their experiences and challenges
- Challenges organisations face in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion and what they can do to create a more inclusive environment for all



# The Participants



**Sreedevi Palit (she/her)**

*Director HR India Lead Diversity and Inclusion  
Cognizant*



**Maira Quereshi (she/her)**

*Lead - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Godrej Capital*



**Aravind Warriar (he/him)**

*Lead - People Partner & Culture, Digital & IT  
Volvo Group*



**Stephen Dixon-Mould**

*Chief Client Officer  
In Diverse Company*



**Amith Prakash (he/him)**

*Vice President, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion  
Randstad Enterprise (APAC)*



**Karthik Damarsetti (they/them)**

*Sr. Consultant, LGBTQIA+ and Disability Inclusion Advocate  
Thoughtworks*



**Johanna Beresford (she/her)**

*Chief Executive Officer  
In Diverse Company*

# Key Insights

## What has enabled LGBTQIA+ inclusion?

Over the years, there have been positive changes that have allowed people to feel safe and open up about their LGBTQIA+ identities.

These include:

- Protection by law – there have been an increasing number of laws and regulations around the world aimed at bolstering legal protections for the LGBTQIA+ community
- Global connectivity via the internet and social media – providing global role models and making people feel that they are not alone
- Financial security – Companies are adopting inclusive practices and building inclusive infrastructure. They also talk about their inclusion work openly, which helps people in the community not only find jobs easily but also work and earn well.

## Inclusivity is evolutionary

An inclusive culture is not built overnight. It takes time, effort and continuous conversation. It demands a commitment to long-term efforts, including ongoing dialogue and continuous improvement within EDI.

Organisations must implement it at the ground level and integrate it into everyday practices, not just during specific months or events. This also means moving from superficial diversity initiatives to authentic, foundational changes that make everyone feel safe and included

# Key Insights

## Commitment beyond numbers

Often, companies face the “revolving door” effect, where when companies focus on hiring diverse talent but fail to provide them with an opportunity to grow or a sense of inclusion or belongingness, the talent moves out of the organisation. Another factor is that when it comes to the LGBTQ+ community, not many people can afford to come out due to factors such as social stigma and lack of legal protection. If organisations focus on numbers, these people are left out. Companies end up not accounting for this invisible group.

Therefore, organisations must focus on genuine inclusion beyond just meeting diversity quotas. They must put efforts into retention by creating supportive ecosystems and advancing inclusion through a strategic focus on supporting the needs of all employees. Creating a safe environment where employees feel comfortable speaking up about issues becomes pivotal, too.



**"To ask people to come out so that you can include them in the organisation is a bit ironic, if not hypocritical. It's like saying, 'You're safe, but you need to tell us because we need that data'."**

Stephen Dixon-Mould, *Chief Client Officer*  
at In Diverse Company

# Key Insights

## Role of leaders, HR and allies

LGBTQIA+ inclusion requires everyone to work together.

The most important pillar is clear support from the leadership. The effort must be top-down, as much as bottom-up. When leaders are bought in and act as sponsors, this sets the right behaviours and culture to enable inclusion. It facilitates and supports the process of inclusion being embedded in the organisation's DNA.

The other important pillar is the HR function. Inclusion efforts must not just stop at talent acquisition but also continue with talent engagement, development, rewards, and retention.

Ultimately, creating a great employee experience for everyone, focusing on multiculturalism and a culture of accepting and embracing differences, will cascade into an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

The third pillar is active allyship. Allyship should not stop with celebrating Pride Month or accepting a badge for doing so; instead, allies should indulge in continuous learning about the nuances underlying this topic, how to be a better ally throughout the year, and how to support the community without seeking recognition.



**“We are all allies in this together, and it’s a journey, not a destination. Every day, we learn something, and we unlearn something. And, we have to keep our minds open to different perspectives.”**

Karthik Damarsetti, Sr. Consultant, LGBTQIA+ and Disability Inclusion Advocate at Thoughtworks

Finally, it is crucial for the LGBTQIA+ community members to share their personal journeys as much as possible, as this will help develop empathy through understanding diverse experiences.

# Thank you!

Want to get in touch with us for future events, contribute to our thought leadership, or have a chat about ED&I? Send us an email at [info@indiversecompany.com](mailto:info@indiversecompany.com).



**“Inclusivity is not revolutionary; it does not happen overnight. It is evolutionary; it requires conscious effort and conversation.”**

Amith Prakash, Vice President, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion  
at Randstad Enterprise (APAC)