# Half of LGBTQ+ workers in the UK experience bullying or harassment at work



Recent research conducted by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) highlights the extensive discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in workplaces across the UK. The survey, which included responses from over 1,000 LGBTQ+ people, reveals that one in two members of the community have been subjected to bullying or harassment during their professional lives.

According to the survey, 20% of respondents reported having encountered verbal abuse at work in the past five years. Additionally, more than a quarter (28%) experienced homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic remarks either directed at them or made within their hearing range. Alarmingly, 5% of the participants disclosed that they had faced physical violence, threats, or intimidation due to their sexual orientation.

The data further revealed that nearly 30% of LGBTQ+ individuals choose to keep their sexual orientation hidden while at work, with younger workers, particularly those aged 18 to 24, experiencing higher levels of discrimination compared to their older colleagues.

Layla, a teacher, recounted a disturbing incident where a headteacher dismissed her suitability for a job based on her perceived sexual orientation. She shared her experiences of enduring homophobic comments in the staff room because her colleagues did not know she was gay. "People don’t guess that I’m gay, so I hear the homophobia all the time. I just can’t believe it," she said.

Another individual, Vee, who previously worked in the hospitality sector, reported facing both verbal and racial abuse due to her LGBTQ+ status. These personal stories underscore the pervasive and harmful nature of discriminatory practices within various employment sectors.

Paul Nowak, general secretary of the TUC, expressed concern over the findings, stating, "This new report shines a light on the extent of discrimination LGBTQ+ workers face in our workplaces. LGBTQ+ people should be safe and supported at work, but instead, they’re experiencing shockingly high levels of bullying and harassment – including assault."

Nowak called for a transformation in workplace culture, urging that discriminatory attitudes and behaviours must be eradicated. He advocated for legislative changes to shift the responsibility for preventing harassment onto employers rather than employees.

A spokesperson from Stonewall, the LGBTQ+ rights organisation, echoed Nouak's sentiments, emphasising the need for zero-tolerance policies towards workplace abuse. “Everyone deserves to feel safe at work and should expect their employers to take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. It’s unacceptable that in 2024, people are still being abused in the workplace simply because of who they are and who they love,” the spokesperson commented.

Stonewall also highlighted the positive impacts of inclusivity, noting that fully inclusive workplaces foster happier, more motivated, and productive employees. They acknowledged progress but stressed that there remains substantial work to be done to ensure that every LGBTQ+ person feels safe and accepted in their workplace.

The survey also revealed concerning statistics about the reporting of harassment: only 16% of those bullied or harassed reported the incidents to their employers, and just 25% confided in a colleague. Of those who did report their experiences, a significant portion felt their complaints were ignored or dismissed—20% said their complaints went unanswered, while another 12% said their concerns were not believed.

The findings from the TUC survey highlight a pressing issue within UK workplaces. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals remains widespread, with both personal accounts and statistical data demonstrating the scale of the problem. This research calls attention to the urgent need for cultural and legislative changes to create safer working environments for all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.