

How to empower the inclusion of people in the workplace at AFRY

AFRY's GUIDE TO LGBTQI+



Why is it important to take a stand for the human rights of the LGBTQI+ community?

Welcome to AFRY's guide to LGBTQI+. Here, we will guide you through the definitions of different abbreviations, what they stand for and why is it necessity to stand up for all AFRY employees regardless of gender identity or sexual expression. This and more important questions will be answered in our LGBTQI+ guide. This guide will be used as a practical handbook for all our employees with the aim of increasing knowledge about the LGBTQI+ community.

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"We know that competence comes in all shapes and looks – that's what creates innovation and makes life at AFRY interesting. Here, everyone fits in. All people are welcome at AFRY. Today, and every day, we celebrate pride and the right to be yourself."

Jonas Gustavsson, CEO at AFRY.



Image: Jonas Gustavsson & Amir Nazari

Our people

We are nothing without our people; they are the most important part of AFRY. We will always encourage our colleagues to be themselves and follow their hearts.

At AFRY, we are committed to ensuring an inclusive environment for all employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It's when people truly dare to be themselves and to trust each other, then we can contribute to our fullest potential.

Our values

We are brave team players taking a stand for LGBTQI+.

AFRY is taking a stand for LGBTQI+, so that everyone can be themselves. AFRY's values are our foundation, the glue of our culture: brave, devoted, team players. They guide us to make inclusive decisions, act wisely and treat each other with care and respect. Our culture at AFRY is all about respect for human rights. At AFRY, we bring together inclusive and diverse teams with deep sector knowledge. Anyone is welcome at AFRY!

Brave

We think big and encourage entrepreneurship to increase value. Challenging each other and making bold decisions, always taking a stand for what we believe in.

Devoted

We have a unique mix of competences and we are all passionate within our fields. Sharing our expertise and insights to make a difference, we are driven by our curiosity to grow and learn more.

Team players

We share ideas and collaborate across borders to seize new opportunities. Challenging, supporting, and bringing out the best in each other, we believe in the power of differences.

Inclusive and diverse teams with deep sector knowledge

The world is complex, and we need to be able to see the bigger picture when we make decisions. If we want to improve how we do things, examining one aspect of society will not be enough. These times call for expertise, an inclusive and diverse team, and, last but not least, brave leadership.

Diversity matters, but inclusion matters even more

Diversity is about having a mix of talents and the similarities and differences that make people unique. Diversity is much more than being just about gender or race – it's also about background and mindset.

Inclusion, on the other hand, is about getting a mix of people from different backgrounds to work together. An inclusive work environment is one in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully towards an organisation's success.

"Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance and belonging is dancing like no one is watching."

Verná Myers



What does LGBTQI+ stand for?

- LGBTQI is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.
- The L, G and B refer to sexual orientation, who a person feels romantically and/or sexually attracted to.
- The T refers to gender identity and expression.
- Q refers to queer in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or relationships and sexual practice, but it also represents a critical view of existing norms.
- I refers to intersex, which is an umbrella term used for a variety of experiences in which a person is born with, or develops, a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male. An intersex person may identify as female, male or neither.
- The plus sign at the end of LGBTQIA+ can include members of other communities, including allies — people who support and rally the LGBTQIA+ cause even though they don't identify within the community itself. Other identities included in the LGBTQIA+ are:

Agender refers to those who do not identify as any gender at all.

Demisexual describes someone who requires an emotional bond before they form a sexual attraction.

Genderfluid describes someone whose gender identity is not static.

Graysexual refers to the 'gray area' between asexuality and sexuality.

Non-binary/Genderqueer a term used for those who do not conform to binary gender identities. Includes asexual persons, pansexual etc.

Pansexual/Omnisexual is a term for individuals who are attracted to all genders and sexes.

Polyamorous is a term for those open to multiple consensual romantic or sexual relationships at one time.

Sapiosexual describes a person who is attracted to intelligence, regardless of a person's gender identity.

Two-spirit is a term used by Native Americans to describe a third gender (sometimes included as 2S in the main acronym as LGBTQIA2S+).

Hetero norm, what is it?

For many people, there is a preconceived assumption, a norm, that everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise. This has consequences for LGBTQI+ people who need to 'come out' or are expected to behave in a certain way to fit in with the image of how a LGBTQI+ person should be. Our heteronormative society, which also includes working life, stigmatises LGBTQI+ people and can adversely affect their social health and mental wellbeing.

What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex at birth or can differ from it.

What is gender expression?

Gender expression, or gender presentation, is a person's behaviour, mannerisms, interests and appearance that are associated with gender in a particular cultural context, specifically with the categories of femininity or masculinity. This also includes gender roles. These categories rely on stereotypes about gender.

Who is an ally?

An ally, in the context of LGBTQI+ rights and advocacy, is an individual who supports and stands in solidarity with the community, actively working to promote understanding, acceptance, and equal rights for people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.





Human Rights and zero tolerance for discrimination

Equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion

AFRY is committed to responsible, equal and fair opportunity practices when conducting business. Working for AFRY should be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. We are convinced that a more diversified workplace makes a company more competitive. At AFRY, diversity and inclusion form the basis of our personnel policy.

We support non-discrimination and equal opportunities for our employees and job applicants regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, age, nationality, language, political opinions, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. We require that our business partners also respect these principles.

As AFRY employees, we are expected to treat each other and our stakeholders with respect. AFRY does not tolerate harassment of any kind. Harassment is an action or behaviour that, to an individual or group of people, is intimidating, humiliating, offensive or hostile.

Listen up!

AFRY encourages employees to speak up if they experience discrimination, harassment or other violations against our Code of Conduct and prohibits retaliation against whistleblowers. There are several ways to raise concerns:

- Talk to your manager
- Contact your local HR support
- Make a compliance report in Listen-up

[Click here for more.](#)



Listen Up

How to apply this to my everyday work, do's and don'ts

All human beings deserve to be treated fairly and with respect. All people at AFRY are equally important regardless of gender, gender identity and sexual expression. Who we are and what we stand for should never be an issue in the work environment.

But, we must be aware of the privileges that comes with being the norm and never having one's gender identify questioned. So, how do I go about introducing this to my team? Well, here is a list of do's and don'ts.

Don't make assumptions about someone's gender identity or sexuality

Instead, use gender neutral and inclusive language to open the door to all. Inclusive language: use the term 'partner' or 'significant other' instead of 'boyfriend/girlfriend', or 'husband/wife.'

Don't be afraid to make mistakes

If you are willing to learn and are asking questions with humbleness and with a good intention, you can ask almost any questions. And, it's ok to make mistakes, that's how we learn. If you don't know how to ask a question or how to approach somebody, just say: "I'm curious to learn more and I have a feeling that you and I are different from each other, can you help and explain to me about... ?" Ask, clarify, apologise, if necessary. You might make some good-faith mistakes along the way and that is ok! At AFRY, we want to learn and to make the effort to be a place where LGBTQI+ employees and their friends, families and allies want to work.

Don't ask questions about someone's body

Do: Respect people's identity. If a colleague identifies themselves as woman, then they are a woman, or if a colleague identifies as a man, then they are a man. To ask someone how far they have transitioned or questions about their body can be perceived as sexual harassment. To be open to all transgender people, you must be willing to accept and respect the individual's identity. Not everyone chooses to undergo medical transition or has access to the resources needed to undergo medical transition.



Don't ignore the importance of using the correct pronouns

Do: Use the pronoun that someone asks you to use. And, if you forget or make mistakes, correct yourself, apologise and move on. Accept that you might make mistakes; that is part of being a good ally. When you mess up, don't make a huge deal out of it, don't apologise profusely. Your focus should instead be on figuring out for yourself how not to make the same mistake again.

Don't use excluding language like: "She says she's a man, but she is obviously a woman, or "He is not a real woman."

Do: Respect an individual's identity and use the terms that someone uses for themselves. Mirror a person's language. If you are trying to create a safe and welcoming environment for transgender individuals, then you need to remove language like 'real woman' and 'real man' from your vocabulary. Respecting someone's identity quite simply means using the language that a person uses for themselves without judgment and mirroring their language back to them. If an individual identifies themselves as a woman, then they are a woman, period. If an individual identifies as a man, then they are a man, period.

Do: Speak up when someone makes homo/bi/transphobic or heterosexist jokes. Here, you also must be aware of your own biases. Treat people as individuals and don't expect a single person to represent an entire community.

Voices in AFRY

This section is devoted to real stories from our colleagues here at AFRY



The experience of your LGBTQI+ colleagues



Freya Lausen

Tell us about yourself and what you do at AFRY?

I live in Denmark. I started in AFRY 2017. I have been out as a trans woman here at AFRY since 2021. I work as a software developer, so I work with databases, websites, windows applications, and various tasks that involves computers and coding.

What does inclusion mean to you?

Inclusion to me means to respect each other and provide an environment where everyone can feel at home. It means working towards eliminating the biases and limitations that exists across the organisation. That can be in hiring, communications, policies etc.

What are your experiences at AFRY?

I realised late in life that I was trans, so it was a substantial change for me and and those around me but people at AFRY have been welcoming and have made it easy for me to find my new place in life. Working as a consultant means that I work with different companies on various projects, so I was worried when I came out about how it would affect the projects I was on. However, my managers were good at reaching out to the clients I was working with, and making them aware of the change, so I have not had any issues.



Unni Idland

Tell us about yourself and what you do at AFRY?

I am a 58 years-young woman living in Oslo, Norway. I joined Advansia, part of AFRY, in 2016 and I work as a section manager for the project and Uncertainty Management Section. Before that, I have had various roles within oil and gas, offshore wind connections (OWC), energy performance contracting (EPC) and at the Norwegian Public Roads Administration.

I have volunteered and been part of the LGBTQI+ community in Norway for many years. I came out as a lesbian at work in 2004. Several stones fell off my shoulders just by being open about my sexual orientation. It should not be necessary but it certainly has made my work life and socialising at work easier.

What does inclusion mean to you?

Inclusion means that people can be open about who they are regardless of circumstances or background, without having to fear that this could jeopardise their career or lead to exclusion in any form. All minority groups should be treated with the same respect as others.

What are your experiences at AFRY?

As an LGBTQI+, queer and lesbian person, I feel lucky that I am working at AFRY. I am comfortable at work knowing that most people know about my sexual orientation. I think the reason is because the LGBTQI+ movement has gained more visibility during the last couple of years and advocated for LGBTQI+ rights while educating others that LGBTQI individuals are harmless?

AFRY has also pushed LGBTQI+ rights up the agenda by, for example, including sexual orientation in the Code of Conduct and by arranging webinars.

However, there is still work that needs to be done. I know that many people around the world, including inside AFRY, are struggling at work since they live in parts of the world where LGBTQI+ is still taboo. There is a need for education and increasing people's knowledge in these countries.

The experience of your LGBTQI+ colleagues

"I wish I could be part of the team of people promoting inclusion and contributing to this guide. I am not sure if I feel comfortable being exposed, but I can surely help in other ways, as an example for the new generation and inspiring others to embrace inclusion in our company."

"Is being homosexual or transgender relevant to the workplace? Is it not a private matter? Well, is being heterosexual and cis-gender a private matter? The heterosexual norm is so strong in society, but it should be ok to comment during the fika break that you spent time camping with your same-sex partner at the weekend, without any comments."

"I must say that I do carry a lot of trauma, but I am grateful for the achievements that I've made in my life. As a matter of fact, I am always cautious about being open about my sexuality due to previous events in my personal life."

"If AFRY wants to improve, we need to have local awards or recognition to empower employees that are brave enough to come out as themselves. Highlight the topic during the inclusion and diversity week. Create a global LGBTQI+ network with allies and LGBTQI+ people. AFRY should sponsor a pride festival during 2022. AFRY employees and two senior executives should walk in the parade for the pride festival, walk the talk."

"My personal experience at AFRY has been exceptional and emotional really. I remember the day that I got married and received a bouquet of flowers from my manager. Being gay, middle-aged, with a Latino background and not a Finnish speaker, I have always felt different."

"Inclusion for me means asking 'what I can do for others at any time to make them feel included. This requires vigilance, a will to try to see and get to know people.'"



Sofia Klingberg interview



Tell us about yourself and what you do at AFRY?
I work as Inclusion & Diversity Manager at AFRY. This is a fantastic job, and the best part is that I work globally so I get to work with everybody at AFRY.

What does inclusion mean to you?
For me, inclusion is really connected to a greater feeling of being included and that everybody can be themselves, that all voices are equally valid and that all people feel that they truly belong. Inclusion is active; it is all related to our behavior towards other people.

What are your experiences at AFRY?
My experiences are that there are pockets where things are good and pockets that need improvement at AFRY. I see really inclusive people all over our organisation, but I also feel that we need to educate and be better in other parts.

This guide is an excellent way to start raising awareness of the LGBTQI+ community and how incredibly important it is to stand up for human rights.

What other actions do we take at AFRY?
AFRY's LGBTQI+ journey started during 2021 and the starting point was the brave act of one of our transgender women who participated in a live interview. Her bravery reached other transgender individuals within the organisation and that led to LGBTQI+ network. She was also nominated for Brave achievement of the year in the AFRY Awards.

We also practice brave leadership where leverage diversity and inclusion are the key pillars of the leadership criteria.

By empowering our leaders and encouraging inclusive leadership, we can foster an inclusive culture where equity and a strong sense of belonging are the foundations.



Lastly, we discuss all discrimination grounds during our annual Inclusion and diversity week, every year around the International Women's Day. During this week, we celebrate our differences by organising inspiring events to help us learn more.

Glossary

Short definitions that describe gender identities and some other nouns that are used frequently in this context:

GLOSSARY

Ally — A person who is not LGBTQI+ but shows support for LGBTQI+ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways.

Biphobia — Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual — A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Cisgender — A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Closeted — Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Coming out — The process by which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Gay — A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

Gender dysphoria — Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Gender identity — One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from your sex assigned at birth.

Gender transition — The process by which some people strive to align their internal knowledge of gender more closely with their outward appearance. Some people transition socially, whereby they might begin dressing differently, using different names and pronouns and/or be socially recognised as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.

Homophobia — The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Intersex — An umbrella term used to describe people who are born with bodily variations typically belonging to both female and male sexes, or people whose sex cannot be determined based on the traits of their body. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth and, in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

Lesbian — A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTQI+ — An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex" with the plus sign (+) indicating inclusivity of other identities and orientations not explicitly mentioned.

Non-binary — An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

Outing — Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

Queer — A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQI."

Questioning — A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sex assigned at birth — The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. This is also referred to as "assigned sex at birth."

Sexual orientation — An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

Transgender — An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transphobia — The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Social and historical timeline

This social and historical timeline is not intended to be exhaustive. It's simply meant to provide context about the evolution of society in the last four centuries.

27–1 BCE — Chinese Emperor Ai of Han lived openly with his lover Dong Xian.

1789 — The French revolution decriminalised homosexuality.

1912 — The Chinese Republic abolishes ji jian anti-homosexuality laws.

1920s — The world's first gay neighbourhood appears in Berlin's Schöneberg quarter.

1930s — Lili Elbe, first transgender woman who received gender-affirming surgery. She was the first known recipient of a uterus transplant but died due to the subsequent complications.

1933–1945 — Homosexuals (wearing a pink triangle) and lesbians (wearing a black triangle) were deemed anti-social, arrested, or deported by the Nazis.

1945 — Homosexuality is decriminalised in **Sweden**.

1950 — The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights is founded.

1969 — In the **United States**, rioting occurred following a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City. The Stonewall riots gave rise to the first Lesbian and Gay Pride marches.

1970 — The first Gay Pride march took place in the **United States**, commemorating the anniversary of the Stonewall riots.

1972 — **Sweden** becomes the first country in the world to allow transgender persons to surgically change their sex.

1975 — The American Psychological Association removes homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses.

1982 — Homosexuality was decriminalised in **France**.

1989 — **Denmark** becomes the first country in the world to recognise same sex couples, via registered partnerships.

1990 — On May 17, the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses. This date was chosen to celebrate the International Day against Homophobia.

1994 — **The Philippines** becomes the first Asian country to host a Pride March.

1996 — **South Africa** became the first jurisdiction in the world to provide constitutional protection to LGBTQI+ people.

1998 — Three countries of Central Asia (**Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan**) legalise same-sex sexual activity.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1999 — **Brazil** introduces the first conversion therapy ban in the world.

1999 — The French National Assembly passed the PACS law (civil partnership). It was the first time that the French government provided legal recognition to same-sex couples.

2001 — **The Netherlands** became the first country to legalise gay marriage.

2003 — **Belgium** introduces gay marriage (but not adoption rights).

2008 — For the very first time, a statement supporting LGBTI rights was presented to the UN General Assembly. It was initiated by the French government, in the name of the French president of the European Union.

2008 — Same-sex couples are allowed to jointly adopt in **Israel**.

2009 — In **Sweden**, being transgender is no longer defined as a psychological disease.

2009 — Same sex marriage legalised in **Sweden**.

2010 — By this time, 10 countries in the world recognised gay marriage.

2011 — **Nepal** became the first country to include a third gender option on its federal census.

2011 — The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution condemning human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

2013 — Same sex marriage legalized in **Brazil**; recriminalisation of homosexuality in **India**.

2014 — Japanese first lady Akie Abe showed her support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities by joining the third annual Tokyo Rainbow Pride event.

2015 — The US Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples (*Obergefell v. Hodges*).

2015 — Same-sex sexual activity became legal in **Mozambique**.

2018 — **Tunisia** granted legal gender recognition to a transgender man who received gender-affirming care in Germany.

2019 — **Taiwan** becomes the first Asian country to legalise same-sex marriage.

2019 January 22 — The Supreme Court allows Trump's transgender military ban to go into effect. The policy blocks individuals who have been diagnosed with a condition known as gender dysphoria from serving with limited exceptions and specifies that they can serve only according to the sex they were assigned at birth.

2020 — Same-sex marriage laws: came into effect in **Northern Ireland**, **Costa Rica**.

2021 — Same-sex marriage approved by referendum in **Switzerland** (to come into effect in July 2022).

2021 January 25 — President Joe Biden signs an executive order repealing the 2019 Trump-era ban on most transgender Americans joining the military. "This is reinstating a position that the previous commanders and, as well as the secretaries, have supported. And what I'm doing is enabling all qualified Americans to serve their country in uniform," Biden said, speaking from the Oval Office just before signing the executive order.

2022 — At least 35 LGBTQ athletes compete at Beijing Olympics, a Winter Games record.

2022 — An anti-LGBT-motivated mass shooting occurred at Club Q, a gay bar in Colorado, **USA**. 5 killed after shooter opens fire.

2022 — In **the US**, passports are issued with a non-binary "X" gender option for the first time.

2022 — **Slovenia** legalises same-sex marriage.

2023 — **Russia** declares LGBTQI+ movement an extremist organization and bans its activities across the country.

2023 — **Uganda** passes the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which prescribes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuals".

2024 — **Estonia** and **Greece** legalise same-sex marriage.

2024 — Gabriel Attal is appointed Prime Minister of **France**, becoming the country's first openly gay head of government.



Useful internal information

[Read more about our People Policy at AFRY.](#)

[What to do if you feel harassed or discriminated against or see someone in your close environment not being fairly treated.](#)

[Join AFRY's LGBTQI+ Network](#)

AFRY provides engineering, design, digital and advisory services to accelerate the transition towards a sustainable society.

We are 19,000 devoted experts in industry, energy and infrastructure sectors, creating impact for generations to come. AFRY has Nordic roots with a global reach, net sales of 24 BSEK and is listed on Nasdaq Stockholm.

Making Future