

How does your company measure up on the LGBTI+ workplace equality index?

The South African LGBT+ Management Forum has released its inaugural South African Workplace Equality Index (SAWEI), providing local companies with the means to measure how well they are performing when it comes to LGBTI+ inclusion in the workplace, and to identify potential gaps and areas of improvement.



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This year, a total of 17 companies representing six different sectors and employing over 30,000 people completed SAWEI submissions. Of these, two companies were awarded the top gold tiering which is a great achievement, seven companies were silver tiered and four were bronze tiered. The leading tiered companies include Bain & Company, Shell, EY, Thomson Reuters, P&G, PWC and Deloitte.



LGBT+ Management Forum to compile SA Workplace Equality Index

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Some key observations from the index include:

- Nearly all participating companies have policies in place prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation along with other elements such as race, language and gender; however very few have provision for “gender identity” – a more trans inclusive definition.
- All participants have a member of staff working on diversity and inclusion, of these under half of these staff members sit in South Africa and have LGBTI+ as part of their mandate.
- All participants reported a variety of routes open to employees to report harassment; the most common reporting route is the HR line manager and an employee network.
- The majority of participants have an LGBTI+ employee network or affinity group.
- The greatest divergence in SAWEI scores occurred with regards to inclusion of LGBTI+ within Employment Equity (EE) forums, with roughly half of respondents stating that the mandate of EE representatives includes LGBTI+ and sexual orientation, despite discrimination against sexual orientation being addressed in the Employment Equity Act.

The evidence highlighted some great work that companies are doing on diversity and inclusion in South Africa. It has

shown the importance of addressing specific issues facing LGBTI+ people in the workplace and how this can be done through existing programmes that currently address just gender and racial transformation. In fact, integrated diversity or transformation programmes are more likely to be successful than fragmented ones.



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SAWEI coordinator and director at The Forum, Luke Andrews said: “This was the first year that we brought the concept of a corporate LGBTI+ benchmark to South Africa and we want to thank those forward-thinking companies that put their hands up to participate. Without their vision and eager participation, it would not have been possible. Over a year and a half of preparation has gone into launching the SAWEI, led by a dedicated team managing the project in their free time, and we hope the hard work has paid off. When LGBTI+ people are able to bring their true selves to work, this makes them happier, more productive and less likely to leave a company. This alone means that LGBTI+ inclusion makes good business sense.”

The SAWEI plans to expand its reach to include more companies next year and will continue to set the standards for LGBTI+ inclusion in the workplace. The SAWEI is based on highly successful predecessors in the UK, US, Australia and Canada, and there are high expectations that the SAWEI will be just as impactful on employees and workplaces across South Africa.

Download the full [SAWEI PDF report here](#).

For more information about this year’s index, visit lgbtforum.org/index.

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