



LGBT+ Business Climate Score

Out Leadership's snapshot of the current state of affairs for LGBT+ people, through the lens of international business.

The business Climate Score rating is out of ten possible points, and is based on ten independently verifiable indicators of the legal, cultural and business context for LGBT+ people.



How to Use This Brief

As a business leader, you have the opportunity to create change for LGBT+ people around the world – both within your organizations and in the countries where you do business. This brief provides valuable information to inform your conversations with:

Internal Staff: Ensure that staff at your company who do business in-country are aware of the laws and other regulations that impact LGBT+ people there, and that they've adopted the appropriate internal policies for their location.

Government Leaders: In your meetings with government leaders, particularly those focused on business expansion or diplomacy, we encourage you to bring up the information shared in this brief in an appropriate way, and help them understand how LGBT+ inclusive policies are part of your company's best practices, and acknowledged as global standards. You are the best person to judge whether you have the ability to have such a conversation with a local leader in an appropriate way. Your Government Affairs officer, Diversity & Inclusion head, or equivalent may be appropriate to include in these conversations.

In-country Business Partners: In conversations with business partners, when appropriate, ask them what they're doing to address LGBT+ inclusion, and help explain why inclusion positively impacts your ability to conduct business there.

Talking Points

"The 2013 'gay propaganda' law that criminalizes exposing minors to representations of same-sex relationships—and that the European Court of Human Rights ruled in June 2017 violates freedom of expression – codifies an anti-LGBT+ environment that makes it hard to build a case for doing business in Russia or moving top LGBT+ talent there.

"In May 2015, President Vladimir Putin signed a bill that gives Russian authorities the power to ban "undesirable" foreign organizations – including companies – that they deem a "threat to the defensive capabilities or security of the state, to the public order, or to the health of the population." This makes investing in business there economically risky.

"Based on conservative estimates that 4-6% of the population identify as LGBT+, there are 5.7–8.6 million LGBT+ people in Russia. Passing federal anti-discrimination laws will ensure millions of Russians can participate more openly and productively in the economy."



Current Legal Status of LGBT+ People

Legal Status of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community

Consensual same-sex relations were decriminalized in 1993, but the prevailing cultural view remains overwhelmingly homophobic.

Same-sex marriage is illegal.

Polling conducted in 2018 by the Levada Center, an independent Russian research organization, found that just 8% of Russians do not object to same-sex marriage.

Organizations and individuals can be fined for displays of same-sex affection under the 2013 'gay propaganda' law. For example, in April 2018, the Russian government blocked access to Gay.ru, a popular gay website, as 'propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations.' Similarly, in October 2017 a court found Evdokia Romanova guilty under the law for posting LGBT news articles from the Guardian and BuzzFeed on her Facebook page in 2015.

By law, gay people can serve openly in the military, but there have been reports in years past of new soldiers being inspected – and discriminated against – for tattoos that could indicate an LGBT+ sexual orientation. There is an unspoken 'don't ask, don't tell' policy.

Legal Status of the Transgender and Gender-Diverse Communities

The country's first gender recognition procedure came into force in February 2018. It allows for a person's gender markers to be changed on official documentation without mandating hormones or surgery, and without discriminating against people who are married or have young children.

Transgender people in Russia who lack documents corresponding to their gender presentation regularly face discrimination when trying to access healthcare, education, housing and work.



Current Legal Status of LGBT+ People

Government Statements and Actions

In early 2017, law enforcement and security officials in the Russian republic of Chechnya oversaw a wave of violence against LGBT+ people. Dozens of men suspected of being gay were rounded up and beaten, and several were killed. Tatyana Moskalkova, Russia's commissioner for human rights, confirmed that she had forwarded a complaint about torture allegations in Chechnya to investigators. Nothing ever came from that investigation.

In early 2016, Russian LGBT Network submitted its annual report on violence against LGBT+ people to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It documented 284 cases of discrimination and violence against LGBT+ people. The commissioner, Ella Pamfilova, declined to include the information in her own annual report. Her successor, Tatyana Moskalkova, announced in April 2016 that conditions for LGBT+ people would improve.

President Vladimir Putin said on 60 Minutes in 2015 that nobody in Russia should be persecuted for their sexual orientation. But he also supported the nation's 2013 'gay propaganda' law, saying that children should be allowed to "realize who they are for themselves."

That propaganda law was used in September 2016 to ban five online groups that supported LGBT+ youths.

Socio-cultural Environment of LGBT+ People

Status of LGBT + Organizing and Community

Diversity House, an organization intended to provide a safe space for LGBT people to watch the World Cup, was evicted from its St. Petersburg location prior to the beginning of the 2018 World Cup in Moscow.

Gay pride parades have not been allowed in Moscow since before 2006; in 2012, the city's top court banned gay pride there for 100 years when a top LGBT+ activist, Nikolay Alexeyev, tried to overturn the city council ban.

Activists in Moscow were also prevented from holding a "day of silence" event in April 2016 to commemorate victims of violence against the LGBT+ community. The event was allowed to go on in St. Petersburg, though the city declined to allow a march and rally three months later.

Cultural Views of the LGBT + Community

In January 2018, a same-sex Russian couple who married in Denmark "accidentally" had their marriage recognized in Russia when a Russian clerk put marriage stamps in their passports. The couple, facing death threats and alleged police mistreatment, fled the country later that month.

The Power Rangers movie released in 2017, which was rated PG-13 in the United States, was deemed off-limits for minors in Russia because it depicts an LGBT+ protagonist.

In 2017, the head of the Russian Orthodox church equated marriage equality to Nazism while promoting his book.

Polls released in summer 2016 showed that 37% of Russians believe homosexuality is a disease, 18% believe that LGBT+ people should be prosecuted, and only 3% think LGBT+ people should be allowed to raise children.

According to the Russian LGBT Network's 2017 annual report, which conducts an anonymous survey of LGBTQI people, 47.4% of respondents reported suffering psychological violence, 10.1% reported physical violence, and 2.6% suffered sexual violence.

In summer 2015, two straight, male video bloggers walked around Moscow holding hands with a hidden camera to gauge passersby reactions. They were heckled and sworn at, and one man tried to push them off a sidewalk.

Impact of LGBT Discrimination on Business & Talent

1 • NO RISK

2 • LOW RISK

3 • MODERATE RISK

4 • NOTABLE RISK

5 • HIGH RISK

BRAND RISK **NOTABLE**

In terms of supporting LGBT+ rights, there is notable brand risk to operating in Russia.

CLIENT RISK **HIGH**

Entrenched cultural and political homophobia create significant risk that LGBT+ clients may feel alienated by business conducted in Russia.

TALENT RISK **NOTABLE**

Though consensual same-sex relations are legal in Russia, same-sex marriage is not, making it unwise to send LGBT+ talent abroad, where they'll likely face discrimination and their spouses won't be recognized.

MARKETING RISK **HIGH**

The 2013 law making depictions of non-heterosexual relationships punishable by fine makes it virtually impossible to market to LGBT+ consumers in Russia.

Local Leaders Advocating for LGBT Equality

As appropriate, Out Leadership encourages you and your company to engage in safe and cautious discussion with local leaders around LGBT+ equality and to leverage your firm's influence to support their work. Due to conditions on the ground, activists in Russia are currently keenly focused on ensuring the physical safety of LGBT+ people there. Our partners at Human Rights Watch and Outright Action International are well networked with activists in Russia should your company be able to offer support.

Purpose

Multinational companies face operational and reputational risk when they do business in countries where the legal and/or social atmosphere makes it difficult for LGBT+ people to live openly. Discrimination against LGBT+ people creates serious challenges for talent mobility, retention, and development.

Out Leadership's LGBT+ CEO Business Briefs seek to help C-Suite leaders understand and respond to these risks. Secondly, these Briefs seek to inform and empower corporate executives to engage in conversations with trade officials and other local stakeholders about why discrimination against LGBT+ people negatively impacts their ability to do business.



Additional Resources

2016 International Gay and Lesbian Association State Sponsored Homophobia Report

This report contains a country-by-country analysis of anti-LGBT laws and policies around the world.

2016 Human Rights Watch World Report

This report contains a country-by-country analysis of human rights concerns for 2014, and includes specific information pertinent to LGBT issues.

Special Thanks

Our partners and colleagues at the Global Equality Fund, 11.e Council/or Global Equality, The Palette Fund, The United States Department of State, Stonewall, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, Oogachaga, OutRight Action International, Human Rights Watch, and the Williams Institute were instrumental in the creation of this brief.

We also want to thank Out Leadership's Global Advisory Board Members and our member companies' senior leaders, who have committed to using the brief.

Pro Bono Legal Partner

We thank our partners at Ropes & Gray, who have vetted the legal facts in this brief.

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