

## LGBTQ+ Business Climate Score

out of a possible 100 points

51.80

NOTABLE RISK

# Kansas

Out Leadership's Business Climate Index for the 50 United States is an assessment of states' performance on LGBTQ+ inclusion. It measures the impact government policies and prevalent attitudes have on the LGBTQ+ people residing in each state, quantifying the economic imperatives for inclusion and the costs of discrimination. It equips business leaders and policy makers with a clear sense of the most impactful steps states can take to make themselves more hospitable to forward-thinking, innovative, inclusive businesses.

## Color Coding



For more context around these scores, and to learn more about the criteria we used to assess how state laws, actions and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people create business and talent risks, please visit [outleadership.com/driving-equality/us-state-ceo-briefs/](https://outleadership.com/driving-equality/us-state-ceo-briefs/)

# Kansas



### Legal & Nondiscrimination Protection

The Legal and Nondiscrimination Protections section includes two subsections: The **Personal Legal Scale** assesses the state's laws directly impacting LGBTQ+ individuals. This includes processes for transgender people to change their gender markers on birth certificates and driver's licenses, as well as protections for individuals in housing, the workplace, public spaces, foster care, and more. **Two Nondiscrimination Protections Scales** assess the extent to which LGBTQ+ people are protected under state law. One evaluates nondiscrimination laws related to employment and the other evaluates any nondiscrimination laws related to housing, public accommodations, credit and lending.



### Youth & Family Support

The Youth and Family Support section contains three subsections. The **Family Support Scale** measures how supportive the state is of LGBTQ+ people who are in or wish to start families. Elements of this scale include: the percentage of LGBTQ+ families raising children, and whether state family leave laws cover same-gender couples and allow workers to care for the children they are raising. The **Children and Youth Scale** assesses the resources available to LGBTQ+ children and youth in the state, including whether the state has non-discrimination laws and policies for LGBTQ+ students. The **Targeted Laws** section evaluates states on whether they ban discussion of same-gender marriage in schools, and whether they ban conversion therapy for minors.





## Political & Religious Attitudes

The Political and Religious Attitudes section contains two subsections. Taken together, these scales assess the tone of the state's conversation around LGBTQ+ rights. The **Religious Protections Scale** assesses the extent and impacts of a state's constitutional or statutory religious exemption laws, and whether state law provides for targeted religious exemption from laws governing child welfare services, private wedding services, and the provision of medical care. The **State Leadership Scores** are Out Leadership's unique measures evaluating the state's most senior elected officials – the Governor and the two U.S. Senators – and assessing how they've represented their views of LGBTQ+ people in speeches and in their political platforms, and in terms of how they've acted with regard to laws impacting LGBTQ+ equality.

13.4<sub>/20</sub>



## Health Access & Safety

The Health Access and Safety section contains two subsections. The **Health Scale** assesses LGBTQ+ people's access to insurance and medical care in each state, giving particular emphasis to the most economically precarious and vulnerable members of the community. The **Safety Scale** is based on two significant laws protecting or criminalizing behaviors affecting LGBTQ+ people. It asks whether the state protects LGBTQ+ people in its hate crime laws. It also assesses whether the state criminalizes exposure to or transmission of HIV.

12.0<sub>/20</sub>



## Work Environment & Employment

The Work Environment and Employment section contains two subsections. The **Work Environment Scale** assesses transgender individuals' experiences at work, including incidences of verbal harassment, sexual assault, and other mistreatment. The **Employment Scale** is based on assessments of LGBTQ+ employment in the state. This scale includes the percentage of LGBTQ+ people making less than \$24,000 annually (approximately the current Federal poverty line), and the differences in unemployment rates and food insecurity between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ identified individuals.

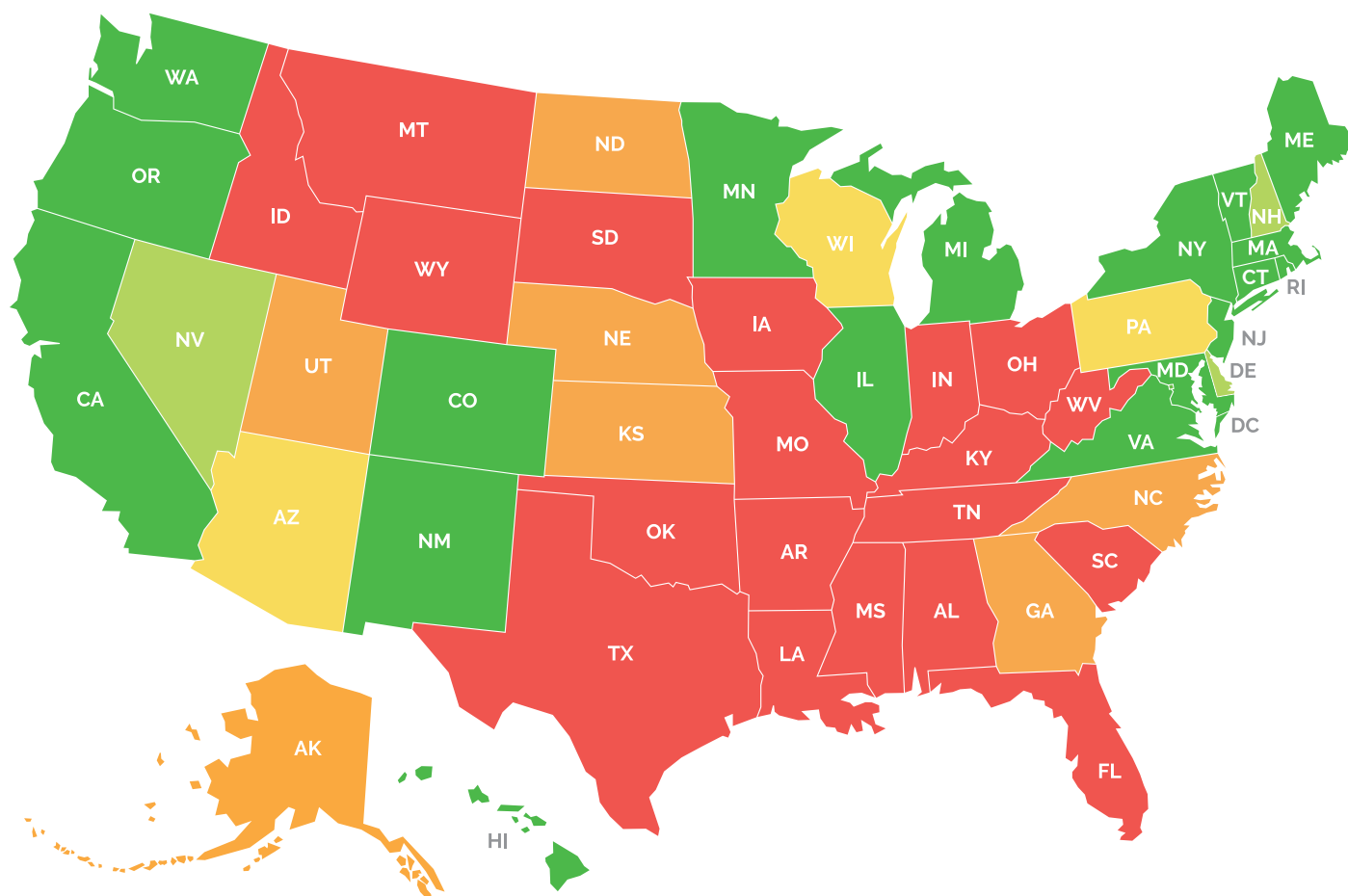
9.0<sub>/20</sub>

## A Note on Methodology

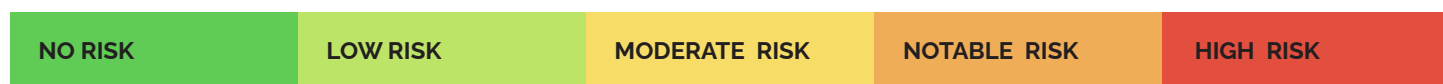
Download this report to learn how and why Out Leadership created the LGBTQ+ Business Climate Index for the 50 U.S. States, with important details about our methodology, including our data standards and practices. NOTE: \*HIV criminalization laws are discriminatory and ineffective. These laws fail to account for advances made in treating and controlling HIV, may deter people from getting tested and seeking treatment, and can exacerbate the stigma targeting people living with HIV and LGBTQ+ people.

# United States Heat Map

The legal and cultural situation for LGBTQ+ people varies widely across the country. This map, based on each state's total Business Climate Score, illustrates the states where LGBTQ+ people are empowered to participate more fully and openly in the economy, and the states that are lagging behind.



0 100







# Kansas

## Talking Points

5.9% of Kansas residents identify as LGBTQ+. Conservatively, that's LGBTQ+ personal income of \$5.9 billion – it's a market my business can't afford to ignore.

Nondiscrimination policies allow LGBTQ+ people to participate more fully in the economy.

When LGBTQ+ employees don't feel welcome at work, they're less likely to stay, and employee turnover is a drag on the state economy and business competitiveness. It costs companies an average of \$8,914 to replace an employee in Kansas, and it can cost up to \$172,100 to replace senior executives. Kansas and the businesses operating there have strong incentives to create inclusive workplaces in the interest of keeping these costs down.

Millennial and Gen Z consumers prefer to do business with companies with LGBTQ+ friendly advertising and policies – 54% say they're more likely to choose an LGBTQ+ inclusive brand over a competitor – which is why it's important that Kansas create a business environment where being inclusive is supported.

Increased hostile policy toward the LGBTQ+ community will have a negative impact on companies ability to attract and retain top talent.

Community leaders in Kansas should take steps to ease stigmatization of trans people – equality is good for everyone's bottom line.

## Regional Context

# The Midwest

Out Leadership and FCB partnered on original market research into the attitudes of American workers on LGBTQ+ inclusion, which fielded in 2019 and 2020. These briefs as a whole will be updated on an ongoing basis by Out Leadership because we recognize the ever-changing nature of policy on the local, state, and national level.

Only 50.8% of LGBTQ+ workers in the Midwest are out at work. They are only slightly more comfortable being open with their managers than other regions (14% more likely), but they are the least likely to cover their identity at work (17% less likely than nationwide). This could be due to the Midwest having the lowest rates for observing microaggressions (23% less likely) and hearing or engaging in negative conversations on average. However, workers in this region do not typically go out of their way to do business with inclusive companies (21% less likely than the nation as a whole). This is primarily driven by those who live in more rural areas where respondents were 85% less likely to do business with companies that are inclusive.

*Unless otherwise noted, all comparisons for more or less likely are compared to the National results. Regional results are based off of 1,500 respondents (LGBTQ+ and Non-LGBTQ+ responses have been weighted to be age-representative for each audience in each region). National results are based off of 600 respondents representative of each audience (LGBTQ+ vs Non-LGBTQ+).*

States in the Midwest region included: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

# Kansas: Impact of LGBTQ+ Discrimination on Business Talent

**1**

NO RISK

**2**

LOW RISK

**3**

MODERATE RISK

**4**

NOTABLE RISK

**5**

HIGH RISK

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## Brand Risk

**4**

NOTABLE RISK

Companies incur notable risk to their brands by operating in Kansas, where there are no statewide LGBTQ+ inclusive nondiscrimination protections, and political climate for LGBTQ+ equality remains volatile and polarized.

## Client Risk

**4**

NOTABLE RISK

There's notable risk that of LGBTQ+ or strong ally clients might pull their business from companies operating in Kansas, in light of the state's business climate and reputation.

## Talent Risk

**4**

NOTABLE RISK

LGBTQ+ talent is likely to consider Kansas' legal and social environment unwelcoming. The state lacks nondiscrimination protections and is one of three states that doesn't allow trans people to change gender markers on birth certificates, both of which make working in Kansas unattractive to LGBTQ+ professionals.

## Marketing Risk

**3**

MODERATE RISK

Marketing directly to LGBTQ+ people in Kansas could conceivably trigger an outcry from religious conservatives, but companies could reduce this risk by properly targeting messages.

## Future Risk

**3**

MODERATE RISK

The state has a few discriminatory laws on the books, and filing of discriminatory legislation is steady year on year. But with a divided state government, the risk of a future negative event is moderate.





# Current Legal Status of LGBTQ+ People in Kansas

## Legal status of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

Kansas does not have statewide nondiscrimination laws on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. State employees are protected against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity by an executive order signed into law in August 2007 by then-Governor Kathleen Sebelius. This executive order was subsequently rescinded in February 2015 by Sam Brownback, but was reinstated in expanded form in January 2019 by Governor Laura Kelly.

There was a bill introduced in 2019 that would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's nondiscrimination protections, but it died in committee in 2020.

Certain cities and municipalities extend nondiscrimination protections to members of the LGBTQ+ community. The cities of Fairway, Kansas City, Lawrence, Manhattan, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Olathe, Roeland Park and Prairie Village, Westwood Hills and Wyandotte County all have laws in place prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in both government/state and private



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employment, and in some cases housing and public accommodations. Additionally, the cities of Topeka, Emporia, Hutchinson and Olathe all prohibit discrimination against city employees on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Lastly, the County of Shawnee and the city of Wichita both prohibit discrimination against city/county employees on the basis of sexual orientation.

There are no legal restrictions against same-sex adoption in the state of Kansas. However, the 2018 Adoption Protection Act allows child placement agencies to decline to serve prospective adoptive parents where doing so would violate the agency's sincerely held religious beliefs.

Both parents can be represented on a child's birth certificate in Kansas if certain requirements are met. Whether utilizing gestational or traditional surrogacy, only the biological parent will initially be listed on the child's birth certificate. If the same sex couple is married, both parents may subsequently petition for a step-parent adoption in Kansas (or another state). If successful, both same-sex parents will subsequently be listed on the child's birth certificate.

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## Legal Status of the Transgender Community

In April 2023, the Kansas State Legislature passed Senate Bill 180 after overriding a veto from Governor Laura Kelly. This bill, titled by its authors as the "Kansas Women's Bill of Rights," only recognizes sex assigned at birth and in doing so, bars transgender individuals from utilizing facilities that align with their gender identity, such as restrooms, locker rooms, prisons, and domestic violence centers. A separate bill, SB 288, applies the same principles to county jails after also overriding a veto.

SB 180 prohibits changes to gender markers on birth certificates and driver's licenses. If transgender Kansans who had previously changed their gender marker on their birth certificate or driver's license needed to update or replace either document, the new document issued would reflect the original marker.

As of 2023, Kansas now bars transgender women and girls from playing on women's and girl's sports teams— replacing an athlete-by-athlete policy. The restrictions are tied to the Kansas State High School Activities Association policy, which requires an annual physical for all students wishing to participate in school sports from 7th grade onward. If the birth certificate "closest to a student's birth" is not available, the policy states, then the student is to be examined by a doctor.

The 2009 enhanced sentencing guidelines that include offenses motivated by sexual orientation do not apply to crimes motivated by the victim's gender identity.

Kansas does not have any explicit State Medicaid policy regarding transgender health coverage and care. Similarly, Kansas does not have any laws in place specifically allowing insurance companies to exclude transgender care.

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## Government Statements and Actions

In April of 2024, Governor Laura Kelley vetoed SB 233 which sought to ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth. This is the second time she's vetoed a bill of this intention, and is her sixth veto of bills targeting transgender Kansans. Following her vetoes last year, Governor Kelly said, "By stripping away rights from Kansans and opening the state up to expensive and unnecessary lawsuits, these bills would hurt our ability to continue breaking economic records and landing new business deals... I'm focused on the economy. Anyone care to join me?"

The ACLU is currently tracking 5 anti-LGBTQ bills in Kansas. SB63 was vetoed by Governor Kelley, but veto was overridden in February 2025. The bill restricts the use of state funds for gender affirming surgery and prevents gender affirming surgery for minors.

The first two openly LGBTQ+ members of the Kansas state legislature were elected in 2018. State Rep. Stephanie Byers became the first openly trans member upon her election in 2020.

In 2020, the most recent attempt to introduce legislation banning conversion therapy in the Kansas Senate was made, but the legislation died in committee.

The city of Lawrence banned conversion therapy for minors in April 2021, making it the second municipality in the state to do so. The first was Roeland Park.

In Laura Kelly's first official act as governor, she signed an executive order reinstating and expanding on discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ state workers.

Kelly has announced her intention to push for the state to require that adoption agencies with state contracts not discriminate against LGBTQ+ applicants in response to a bill passed in 2018, saying that the Kansas Department for Children and Families cannot block any foster or adoption agency from participating in its programs solely because it refuses to adopt or place children with LGBTQ+ individuals.



# Socio-cultural Environment of LGBTQ+ People in Kansas

## Cultural Views of the LGBTQ+ Community

In 2021, the Kansas Chamber of Commerce cut ties with the national chamber over its endorsement of U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids, who is openly LGBTQ+.

In March 2019, the archdiocese of Kansas City denied enrollment to the kindergarten-aged child of a gay couple, and at least 7,000 people signed a petition supporting the decision to ban the child, far more than the amount who signed a petition opposing it.





# Partners

Our partnerships make our work possible. The first State LGBTQ+ Business Climate Index released in 2019 was funded by a grant from the Gill Foundation. The Index is based on data graciously shared by the Movement Advancement Project and the Williams Institute. Ropes & Gray is our pro bono legal partner for the CEO Business Briefs globally, and their research informs this Index. FCB partnered with us to conduct original market research into American attitudes toward LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion, informing the Regional Context section of the State CEO Briefs. America Competes supported the development of the scoring for the Risk Assessments, particularly for the Future Risk score.

