

# Sexual orientation & global mobility

Sexual minorities include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, and asexual (LGBTIQ+) individuals. Supporting LGBTIQ+ within global mobility is an indicator of effective equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice.

## TALENT IMPLICATIONS

Global mobility provides career enhancement for individuals and a strong source of talent, creativity and innovation for employers. Research highlights that many LGBTIQ+ people pursue more limiting but safer career options. This reduces their career advancement and the global talent available to employers. It is therefore important to ensure that this minority group is included within the global talent pool.

Although research into the experiences of sexual minority assignees is limited as employers do not always track sexual orientation and assignees may not disclose this, employer support for this minority group is important to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in global mobility.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

First employers should consider strategic intra-organisational issues. This requires an assessment of the cultural and institutional frameworks of subsidiary operations compared with those of the sending operation.

There may be strong organisational support for sexual minorities in Western

headquarters, with policies and practices in place to ensure inclusion and equity. However, these may not be mirrored in the receiving country. In essence, headquarters policy may not be embraced in host subsidiaries. This may be due to legal and cultural barriers.

As far as is practicable (within the confines of the law) organisations should disseminate their diversity and inclusion principles and back these up with solid action, including diversity training. A proactive diversity and inclusion policy is needed, supported visibly by top management.

## LEGAL & CULTURAL BARRIERS

It is important to recognise that global mobility of sexual minorities can involve difficult, perhaps dangerous, legal and cultural issues. LGBTIQ+ assignees can face stigmatization and widespread discrimination.

Homosexuality is illegal in around one-third of countries. Conviction for homosexuality can have severe penalties such as imprisonment or even being punishable by death. There may also be implicit, invisible cultural barriers which LGBTIQ+ assignees have to overcome.

Even if same-sex relationships are not illegal, there may be no workplace discrimination protection for sexual minorities. Same-sex couples may be unable to undertake accompanied mobility if their partners are not recognised by the visa regime and are not allowed residency.

## SUPPORT ACTIONS

The receiving country's legal and cultural frameworks will influence how an individual is treated. These are linked to LGBTIQ+ individuals' assessment of their likely reception and willingness to undertake global mobility. Locations receptive to



sexual minorities can be identified.

Organisations have a duty of care in respect of safety and well-being. It is critical to have knowledge and understanding of real and perceived threats and actions that can mitigate these.

LGBTIQ+ assignees and accompanying family members benefit from support through networking and supportive allies. These can provide information on rights and benefits as well as relevant resources and information.

Access to employee assistance and support programmes for mental well-being can be particularly valuable. Where families are separated, additional reunification visits can be helpful in reducing stress. These can also help to increase assignee productivity.

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