ALLIEDPEOPLE | LGBTGREAT

An Allied People Group and LGBT Great Report

Connecting the Dots

The Future of Inclusion and Human Connection at Work

Inclusion matters more, not less. But the next chapter must connect people, communities and organisations in new ways.

Executive Summary

Do Something Great: LIVE

Headline Sponsor

NOMURA

Foreword



Matt Cameron - Chief Executive
Allied People Group and LGBT Great
Host: Do Something Great LIVE

We are living through a period of profound change. Expectations of leaders are changing. Organisations are being asked to think more deeply about how they create cultures where people feel included, valued and able to contribute, particularly at a time when society can often feel increasingly divided.

Trust is being tested, expectations of employers are evolving, and technology is transforming how and where we work. Against this backdrop, inclusion matters more, not less. This is a moment to be ambitious about inclusion, not cautious about it.

The progress of recent years matters. The communities we have built matter. Representation matters. The voices and experiences of people who have historically faced barriers matter. But progress also requires us to keep moving forward.

As we look towards 2030, inclusion must become more deeply connected to how organisations lead, how people connect and how businesses adapt to change. This report proposes a rethink, not a retreat. Much of what organisations need already exists. The opportunity now is to connect the dots, bringing leadership, community, opportunity, human connection and organisational change into a more coherent whole.

It is about creating greater cohesion without diminishing difference. About widening opportunity without losing sight of inequality. And about making inclusion part of the everyday decisions that shape people's working lives.

> **Our three pillars, Ally-led Leadership, Human Connection and Future Readiness, offer a framework for that next chapter. I am optimistic about what comes next. Because the future of inclusion is not less inclusion. It is inclusion becoming a stronger part of how great organisations lead, connect and adapt. And because, ultimately, when your people prosper, everyone thrives.**

01 Inclusion Matters More Not Less

02 Activity is Not the Same as Impact

03 The Future Requires Organisations to Lead, Connect and Adapt

04 From Separate Efforts to Greater Cohesion

05 The Future of Work Must Remain Human

Five Forces Reshaping Inclusion and Belonging

1. **Increasing Experiences of Fragmentation and Polarisation**

   Identity-led analysis and communities remain essential, but disconnected priorities can compete for attention and weaken shared purpose. Cohesion should connect distinct experiences, not erase them.

2. **Declining Levels of Trust and Connection**

   Hybrid and digitally mediated work require deliberate choices about presence, access, sponsorship and learning. There is no universal office prescription; different work and career stages require different forms of connection.

3. **Increasing Job Pressure and Less Time**

   Inclusion competes with operational delivery, transformation and cost pressure. Volunteer network leaders are often asked to carry outcomes that depend on managers, HR, procurement, technology and risk.

4. **The Rise of External Social and Political Issues**

   Silence can be read as abandonment, while rapid statements can appear performative. Organisations need clear principles that separate employee support, corporate advocacy and public commentary.

5. **Worry About the Impact of Technology and the Future of Skills**

   AI creates potential for accessibility and more meaningful work, alongside concerns about bias, privacy, job redesign, unequal access to development and accountability.

Across all five forces, the recurring issue is not a shortage of activity. It is a shortage of connection between expertise, leadership, systems and decisions.

A Rethink, Not A Retreat



81%

of respondents agreed that allyship at work contributes to a greater sense of belonging.

The next phase of workplace inclusion is not a retreat from diversity, equity and inclusion. In a more complex and rapidly changing world of work, inclusion is becoming more important, not less. What must evolve is how the work is led, connected and embedded across organisations.

Many organisations have built policies, employee networks, representation goals, learning programmes and governance. Those foundations remain essential. Yet activity is not the same as impact. Inclusion cannot remain a specialist programme sitting beside the organisation's core systems. It must increasingly shape how work is designed, opportunity is allocated and change is governed.

The report's central theme finding is connect the dots:

1. **Lead through ally-led leadership:** combine empathy and intention with advocacy, fairness, decisions and opportunity.

2. **Connect through human connection:** build trust, belonging, employee voice and cohesion across difference.

3. **Adapt through future readiness:** put human judgement, fair access, skills and agency at the centre of change and AI.

This means greater cohesion, not less difference. Identity-led communities, distinct experiences and targeted action remain vital. The opportunity is to connect their insight more powerfully to leadership, organisational systems and everyday decisions.

Inclusion Matters More, But the Word Risks Meaning Less

Inclusion now carries multiple expectations, political associations and organisational interpretations. It is used to describe representation, belonging, wellbeing, culture, leadership and employee experience. When everything becomes inclusion, the idea can lose clarity and power.

The answer is not to abandon inclusion.
It is to reset what we expect it to achieve.

Inclusion must remain capable of identifying unequal experiences and responding to the needs of specific communities. At the same time, it must become more deeply connected to leadership, opportunity, organisational systems and the future of work.

The evidence points to an implementation gap

The 2026 Inclusion Index Benchmarking Tool (iiBT) benchmark recorded strong average scores for Culture, Belonging and Benefits, but materially lower scores for Procurement and Suppliers. The cohort was mature and should not be treated as representative of the wider market, yet the pattern illustrates how visible internal commitment can outpace integration across the enterprise.

95%

Average score for Culture, Belonging and Benefits in the participating iiBT cohort.

51%

Average score for Procurement and Suppliers in the same cohort.

The strategic shift is from inclusion as a portfolio of activities to inclusion as an organisational capability. Progress should be judged by whether people can contribute, influence and develop, and whether fairness is visible in the systems that allocate work, voice and opportunity.

Connection Must Not Make Difference Invisible

Connecting the dots does not mean making the dots the same. People want connection, but they also need confidence that difference will not reduce safety, credibility or opportunity.

65%

associated workplace belonging with acceptance and inclusion.

64%

associated belonging with authenticity.

60%

associated belonging with connection.

The progression should be cumulative, not substitutive



Diversity describes who is present and visible in the evidence. Equity asks whether systems and opportunity operate fairly. Inclusion concerns participation and influence. Belonging concerns whether inclusion is experienced as acceptance, authenticity and connection. Connection and cohesion extend the analysis to relationships and shared purpose.

Ownership must evolve too



Distributed ownership is not the removal of expertise. Inclusion specialists remain necessary to interpret evidence, challenge risk and support community-specific work. The change is that each function must own the decisions within its authority, rather than referring every inclusion question to a central team.

From Separate Efforts to Enterprise-Wide Connection

The research identifies ten shifts. The short report highlights the ten most consequential for leadership teams.

	Established pattern		Emerging model
01	Identity-led diversity and inclusion strategies and activity	→	Connected strategies that strengthen identity, connection and shared purpose, supported by specialist expertise
02	Networks carrying responsibility for change and organisational development	→	Networks connecting and informing, with change owned across the enterprise
03	Programme-led	→	Leadership-led, with clear functional ownership
04	Reactive response	→	Proactive design, evidence and scenario planning
05	Policy as evidence of completion	→	Culture and systems as evidence of impact
06	Representation as the endpoint	→	Representation connected to voice, influence and opportunity
07	Initiatives and campaigns	→	Repeatable organisational capability with clear accountability
08	Identifying and addressing inequity	→	Broadening access to opportunity
09	High volume of activity and engagement	→	Focused engagement with greater collective impact
10	Identity-specific expertise primarily developed internally	→	External partnerships bringing specialist, identity-led perspectives and helping communities to feel seen

The transition is not a clean break. Organisations should retain specialist expertise, safe community spaces and targeted action while joining them more deliberately to strategy, talent, technology, procurement, risk and accountability.

The Future of Inclusion

Three priorities emerged consistently as critical to the next phase of inclusion and human connection at work.

LEAD

Ally-led Leadership

Advocacy | Empathy | Opportunity | Allyship | Fairness

Connect empathy and intention with power, decisions, advocacy and opportunity.



CONNECT

Human Connection

Trust | Belonging | Employee Voice | Cohesion

Connect people, communities and different experiences without requiring sameness.



ADAPT

Future Readiness

Change | Technology & AI | Resilience | Talent

Connect technological and organisational change with human judgement, fairness, skills and agency.



The pillars are mutually reinforcing

Leadership creates the conditions. Connection determines whether people can contribute and influence. Future readiness protects fairness, voice and human agency through change. Weakness in one pillar limits the others.

Do Something Great: LIVE

The Practical Test

How must inclusion evolve so that diversity evidence and community-specific needs remain visible while becoming a more integrated organisational capability?

1. Ally-led Leadership

Ally-led Leadership starts from a straightforward proposition: leadership is partly the creation of conditions in which other people can succeed. It moves allyship from symbolic support to the purposeful use of attention, credibility, resources and decision-making power.

From empathy to opportunity

01 | Listen to lived experience and remain open to challenge, particularly when the answer is incomplete or uncomfortable.

02 | Use sponsorship, stretch work, introductions and advocacy to widen access to influential networks and progression.

03 | Test whether apparently neutral criteria produce patterned outcomes.

04 | Make the rationale for decisions visible, balancing individual need, team requirements and organisational standards.

Fair does not always mean equal

Treating everyone identically can reproduce disadvantage when people have different access needs, caring responsibilities, exposure to bias or routes into informal opportunity. Conversely, unexplained flexibility can create perceptions of favouritism. Good leadership combines legitimate adaptation with transparent standards.

A growth mindset for ally-led leadership

Actively listen. Demonstrate empathy. Understand context and lived experience. Call people into constructive accountability. Reassure where appropriate. Appreciate contribution.

> **Empathy helps a leader understand context. Advocacy converts understanding into action. Fairness subjects that action to transparent standards.**

2. Human Connection

Human Connection is the capacity to create workplaces in which people feel connected to one another, to their leaders and to a shared purpose. It is not constant agreement or compulsory sociability. It is the quality of relationships through which information moves, challenge becomes possible and people decide whether it is safe and worthwhile to contribute.

Voice turns connection into influence

Connection without influence can become merely social. Employee voice should be designed into decision-making through accessible listening channels, disaggregated analysis, clear feedback loops and routes for dissent that do not depend on confidence or proximity to power.

Networks: Connect, Inform and Transform

- Connect: create trusted spaces and peer belonging.
- Inform: translate lived experience into insight for leaders and functions.
- Transform: support time-bound organisational change with defined ownership and outcomes.

Not every network should operate in Transform mode all the time. Connection is not a lesser outcome, and networks should not become unpaid delivery teams for work that belongs to management.

Cohesion does not require consensus

Cohesion should be judged by whether people can work through difference without being diminished. It needs shared standards of dignity and fairness, sufficient trust to surface disagreement and a common purpose that does not demand the erasure of identity.

3. Future Readiness

Future Readiness is the ability to navigate disruption without losing the human relationships, judgement and fairness on which adaptation depends. Technology, culture and talent are not separate issues: AI adoption affects confidence, skills, bias, accountability, job design and how people learn from one another.

AI with people, not to people

01 Bring technology, HR, legal, risk, data protection, inclusion expertise and employee representatives into governance.

02 Test high-impact systems for differential outcomes and monitor them after implementation.

03 Be clear about where AI is used, what data informs it, which decisions remain human and how outcomes can be challenged.

04 Monitor access to AI tools, learning and development so technological change does not deepen existing opportunity gaps.

Who benefits from the future of work?

Recruitment, performance, mobility, succession and learning will increasingly determine who benefits from technological change. Organisations should also examine whether automation removes entry-level learning opportunities and protect routes through which early-career colleagues acquire judgement from experienced people.

Resilience is organisational

Resilience should not mean asking individuals to absorb unlimited change. It is created through clarity, learning, relationships and agency. The objective is technological progress that strengthens, rather than diminishes, connection, opportunity and human accountability.

Uplifting People

Ally-lead Leadership: Connecting Through Purpose

Thematic analysis of episodes 1–255 of How HR Leaders Change the World points towards a model in which people leadership connects culture and inclusion to organisational purpose, performance and wider societal impact. The recurring lessons are that purpose can connect people to something bigger, empowerment can distribute leadership and human leadership turns purpose into action.

> **Great leadership means helping others see their influence, contribute to a shared purpose and recognise that their work drives both commercial performance and positive change in society".**



Cecilia Crossley
Founder, Uplifting People
Host: How HR Leaders Change the World

Legal and General

Human Connection: Connecting Across Difference

Legal and General's evolving approach brings leadership sponsorship, employee participation and employee networks into closer alignment with its inclusion and wellbeing strategy. The emerging lesson is that greater cohesion does not require less difference; it requires stronger connections between communities, leadership and organisational purpose.

> Inclusion is about recognising the individuality of people while also understanding what connects us. Taking a more intersectional approach helps us move beyond looking at specific communities in silos and towards creating a culture where different perspectives and experiences can come together. The opportunity is to make inclusion part of how we lead, how we listen and how we work every day.



Zahra Sheikh

Group Head of Inclusion and Wellbeing - Legal and General

Impax Asset Management

Future Readiness: Connecting Inclusion to Resilience

Impax Asset Management is exploring how human capital and workplace culture can add insight into organisational quality and resilience. Its Corporate Culture Indicator investigates workplace factors quantitatively while acknowledging data limitations and avoiding a claim that inclusive culture alone causes superior performance.

> Human capital and inclusive culture can tell us something important about the resilience of a business. Looking at how companies manage their people, from leadership diversity and workplace equity to talent development and employee engagement, helps build a richer picture of organisational quality. These factors are not always easy to measure, but bringing them into investment analysis can deepen our understanding of how companies are positioned to adapt and create value over the long term.



IMPAX Asset Management

Lisa Beauvilain

Executive Director - Global Head of Sustainability & Stewardship
Impax Asset Management

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What Comes Next?

The dots are already there.
The opportunity now is to connect them.



A Practical Checklist for Boards and Leaders

The framework becomes useful when it changes expectations, decisions and accountability. A focused starting agenda is set out below.

01

Set direction

Define the outcomes inclusion must support, the communities and inequalities that require targeted attention, and the organisational systems that must change.

02

Clarify ownership

Executives allocate resources and set standards. Managers distribute work, feedback and opportunity. Functions own decisions in their remit. Specialists provide evidence and challenge.

03

Connect evidence to decisions

Use representation data, employee voice, network insight and process outcomes together. Avoid treating participation or activity volume as proof of impact.

04

Build leadership expectations

Reflect listening, fairness, advocacy, sponsorship and trust repair in leadership standards, development and accountability.

05

Govern change humanly

Make employee voice, access to skills, explainability and routes to human review part of transformation and AI governance.

06

Measure what matters

Track whether people can contribute, influence and develop, and whether access to opportunity improves across groups and career stages.

The aim is not another standalone initiative. It is a repeatable organisational capability that remains attentive to difference while strengthening shared purpose and performance.

Five Questions to Ask:

01 How must inclusion evolve so that diversity evidence and community-specific needs remain visible while becoming a more integrated organisational capability?

02 What does good leadership require, and how are trust, empathy, fairness, advocacy and opportunity reflected in expectations and accountability?

03 How should employee networks evolve to Connect, Inform and Transform with clear mandates, sustainable capacity and effective sponsorship?

04 Where is inclusion embedded in everyday decisions and systems, and where does it still depend on isolated activity?

05 As AI and work evolve, how will we keep human connection, employee voice, fair access to skills and meaningful human accountability central to transformation?

About the evidence

The full report draws on data and insights collected from 3000+ people across Allied People Group and LGBT Great research and interactions, alongside anonymous qualitative fieldwork conducted specifically for the report. It also includes a thematic analysis of episodes 1–255 of How HR Leaders Change the World, iiBT findings and an external corporate literature review. Different evidence sources use different samples, geographies and measures; converging themes are treated as triangulation, not proof that any single finding applies universally.

Read The Evidence Behind The Argument

- LGBT Great, Allyship: The Power of Allyship and Belonging (2025).
- LGBT Great, Inclusion Index Benchmarking Tool (iiBT): Results Report 2025/2026.
- LGBT Great, Raising the Bar for Employee Networks (2026).
- Deloitte, 2024 Global Human Capital Trends.
- Deloitte, Global 2024 LGBT+ Inclusion @ Work Survey.
- EY, Work Reimagined Survey 2024.
- McKinsey & Company, Diversity Matters Even More (2023).
- McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org, Women in the Workplace 2024.
- Mercer, Global Talent Trends 2024.
- Onvero, The State of Inclusion in the UK (2026).
- PwC, Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2024.
- PwC, 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer.
- Accenture, Work, Workforce, Workers (2024).
- Edelman, 2024 Trust Barometer.
- Cecilia Crossley, thematic analysis of How HR Leaders Change the World, episodes 1–255 (2026).

For complete references, footnotes, methodological detail and the full case studies, see the full edition of Connecting the Dots.

> **The dots are already there.**
> **The opportunity now is to connect them.**

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