



Pride in geoscience

For Pride month, we celebrate our LGBTQ+ colleagues, recognise the challenges they face in traversing academia and the role the majority must play in fighting injustice.

The geosciences are amongst the [least diverse](#) of all STEM disciplines: ethnic, racial and gender representation is poor. For Pride month, *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* shines a light through the metaphorical dark rainclouds to reveal a rainbow of LGBTQ+ diversity.

Just as gender identity and sexual orientation are often hidden or invisible, so too are the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. However, staying hidden is not unfamiliar to those who identify as LGBTQ+. Shame, isolation and fear are powerful and dominant. Many therefore lie or conceal aspects of their identity — whether in part or in full, temporally or permanently — to fit in or to evade persecution. Academic environments are not immune to these fears and anxieties, triggering so-called minority stress: fear of rejection, of violence, of discrimination, of social exclusion and of losing one's job. The decision to come out can precipitate not only a journey of self-acceptance but hopefully of acceptance from friends and family, students and advisors, colleagues and collaborators. It's a never-ending and exhausting process that can erode and undermine mental health. But so too can the alternative, hiding one's identity, which drives knock-on effects such as reduced productivity and engagement in research, in learning, in teaching.

More specific to the geosciences are challenges associated with fieldwork. For example, a [survey of LGBTQ+ geoscientists](#) indicated that 55% of respondents felt unsafe in relation to their identity, and 33% had refused to take part in fieldwork opportunities due to safety concerns. These issues are most prevalent if the fieldwork is taking place in areas where cultural acceptance is low or legal protections lacking — which are often regions popular for geology fieldwork. However, seemingly 'safe' territories might also present distinct challenges in terms of toxic masculinity, homophobic slurs or other micro-aggressions. Simply banning field courses to regions where LGBTQ+ people have no rights is inadequate. Fieldwork must be safe and inclusive for all, regardless of the location. Indeed, as the survey further demonstrated, fieldwork-related issues were particularly abundant for students, clearly highlighting inequity in learning opportunities for LGBTQ+ geoscientists. Undue fear and stress are also not conducive to learning, to networking or to engaging.

Of course, solving these problems is not simply a case of waving a magic wand. Legal progress has been

made in some places, but heteronormative attitudes are deep-rooted. Although it will take time for prevailing socio-cultural outlooks to shift, we cannot afford the pace of change to be geological. Change is possible and it can be facilitated by the enhanced visibility of inherently invisible identities. For example, visibility offers role models — whether active or passive — signalling that spaces are safe, that an individual is not alone and that their identity is legitimate. Importantly, visibility needs to come not only from those who identify as LGBTQ+ but also from straight or cisgender allies; those who have the privilege to explore and address queer-phobic attitudes and implicit biases without fear for their physical safety and mental health. After all, failure to take action when seeing discrimination makes one complicit.

The queer geoscience community is strong, vibrant and increasingly visible, but more support is needed. For Pride month, we have published a series of World View articles offering personal reflections on being an LGBTQ+ geoscientist. We recognise that storytelling from a few individuals fails to encapsulate the full diversity of experiences within the queer community — everyone's experiences are unique. Yet, we hope that giving visibility to some of these issues promotes discussion and in turn, encourages action: changing fieldwork guidance, joining ally groups, including pronouns, and engaging with LGBTQ+ visibility events for example.

But addressing visibility for LGBTQ+ scientists is only the beginning. Diversity issues are at the core of contemporary challenges in Earth science and so those who intersect multiple marginalized identities — be they based on gender, sex, race, ethnicity, health conditions or disability — face amplified risks. Intersectional approaches to diversity, equity and inclusion are a must; addressing challenges for one marginalized group, in turn, removes barriers for another. The fight is necessary. The fight is long overdue. The fight must be led by the majority for the minority.

At *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*, we are dedicated to providing a platform for discussion and, importantly, allyship. We support and celebrate diversity in all forms and strive to enhance visibility of all marginalized communities. [Diversity is key to success](#). So, fellow geoscientists, recognise your positions of privilege and rise to the challenge — be an ally and fight for your LGBTQ+ and other marginalized colleagues. They've fought long and hard. Now we must all fight.

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