

# LGBT advocacy within companies works

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Activism in the workplace surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues is often effective at changing a company's social policies – even before government mandates bring about change, according to a new study by a UConn sociologist.

The study, "Benchmarking Diversity: Social Movement Outcomes in the Workplace," led by Professor Mary Bernstein, is part of a wider investigation into the impact of social movements in organizations and institutions in regard to changes in corporate policy.

Working with two collaborators, Bernstein reviewed data from hundreds of corporations, law firms, and nonprofit organizations in a variety of areas including domestic partner benefits, [health insurance coverage](#),

employee recruitment, and philanthropic support. She presented her initial findings this week at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

"What we find is that the most important determinant ... is whether a business has an LGBT resource group that operates officially within an organization," Bernstein said. "We also find that benchmarking is important, that companies look at what other companies are doing.

"Diversity has become a best practice," she adds. "Once major companies become more friendly to LGBT people, others follow suit. They have decided they have an investment in best practice."

Businesses often enact policy changes regarding LGBT employees before the government, Bernstein said. "It's very much about recruiting and retaining diverse employees, improving workplace efficiency, and expanding markets."

The researchers will continue to study the data for other findings. They are interested in how employee resource groups affect a variety of workplace issues. And they are examining state nondiscrimination policies and how they affect companies conducting business with organizations located in other states that may have different [social policies](#).

"Oftentimes, LGBT employee resource groups will meet with each other through national organizations like Out and Equal and they can apply pressure," Bernstein said. "They can say that if your customers who are other companies have these policies, then you ought to have these policies as well. We find quantitative support for those activities."

Provided by University of Connecticut

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