



INDIA EDUCATION EQUALITY INDEX 2025

India's only benchmarking tool dedicated to measuring
LGBT+ inclusion within educational institutions

EXECUTIVE REPORT 2025

Fostering LGBT+ Inclusion in Educational Institutions
Across India



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Executive Summary

India Education Equality Index (IEEI) is the nation's first and only systematic benchmarking framework for assessing LGBT+ inclusion within higher education. Since its inception, IEEI has enabled participating institutions to critically evaluate their existing policies and practices, identify structural and cultural gaps, and receive recognition for demonstrable progress towards inclusive excellence.

In its 2nd edition, **IEEI 2025** expanded its scope, attracting participation from ten diverse higher education institutions, including private universities and autonomous colleges. The 2025 edition yielded richer, more granular data, alongside the identification of high-impact, replicable practices from campuses across the country. It also expands beyond educational institutions to welcome corporate participation, recognising that systemic inclusion requires alignment between campuses and the world of work.

Through a comprehensive and structured survey methodology, participating institutions provided detailed accounts of their strategies for fostering affirming and supportive environments for LGBT+ students and staff.

A notable finding from the 2025 analysis is the **68% disparity in performance** between the highest- and lowest-scoring institutions. This substantial gap underscores a growing divergence in institutional readiness for LGBT+ inclusion, with some campuses demonstrating advanced integration of inclusive policies, while others remain at nascent stages of engagement.

This report presents a comparative analysis of institutional performance across **7 themes of inclusion**, building upon the analytical framework and baseline established in the inaugural 2024 edition.

Key Insight:

A 68% gap in total performance between the top and lowest scoring institutions highlights a significant divide in LGBT+ inclusion readiness.

From the Founder's Desk



As we stand on the precipice of a new era, the importance of investing in our youth has never been more evident. Nelson Mandela's timeless words, "The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow," continue to resonate with profound truth. It remains our collective responsibility to nurture and empower the next generation, ensuring they have the tools, resources, and opportunities to shape a brighter, more equitable future.

In India, a nation brimming with youthful energy and potential, this responsibility is particularly acute. Our education system is the bedrock of national progress. Yet for true advancement, it must be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that every student, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, feels safe, valued, and empowered to succeed.

At Pride Circle, we believe that education is the catalyst for lasting societal change. Our mission is to enable and empower the LGBT+ community, allies, educational institutions, organizations, and society at large to foster a culture of belonging for all. Our **Pride-Ed** initiative is central to this mission, working tirelessly to build educational ecosystems that celebrate diversity, address the unique needs of LGBT+ youth, and promote understanding and acceptance.

The **India Education Equality Index (IEEI)** stands as a vital instrument in this journey. Launched as India's first and only benchmarking tool for LGBT+ inclusion in higher education, the IEEI offers a robust assessment framework across seven key themes. It enables institutions to critically evaluate their policies and practices, identify opportunities for improvement, and chart a clear path toward comprehensive inclusion strategies.

In its **2nd edition**, the IEEI has grown in both participation and depth. This year, **10 diverse institutions**, ranging from leading private universities to progressive autonomous colleges, engaged in a rigorous survey process, sharing detailed insights into their efforts to foster welcoming, affirming, and equitable campus environments. The 2025 edition has not only expanded the breadth of data but also revealed replicable high-impact practices that can serve as models for the sector.

The need for such a tool remains urgent. UNESCO's research continues to highlight deeply concerning realities: **60% of LGBT+ youth in India have experienced bullying** in schools and colleges, **43% have endured sexual harassment**, and **63% of those affected report a decline in academic performance**. Alarmingly, **one in three drops out entirely**. These statistics underscore the pressing need for targeted interventions and systemic change.

Srini Ramaswamy

Co-Founder

Pride Circle & Rainbow Bazaar



Strategic Context

The launch of IEEI was informed by empirical realities that demand urgent action. Studies, including those by UNESCO, reveal persistent patterns of exclusion: **60% of LGBT+ youth experience bullying, 43% face sexual harassment**, and a significant proportion suffer academic decline or drop out altogether. These systemic inequities undermine not only individual potential but also the collective social and economic capital of the nation. By framing LGBT+ inclusion as an integral component of educational quality and institutional reputation, the IEEI situates this work within the broader discourse of national progress and global competitiveness.

IEEI's **long-term vision** extends beyond measurement. It is designed as an **enabler of change**, a platform that fosters knowledge-sharing, highlights replicable high-impact practices, and guides policy innovation. Over time, the Index seeks to:

Institutionalise Inclusion: Embed LGBT+ affirming policies, curricula, and cultural practices as standard features of Indian higher education.

Influence Policy Ecosystems: Inform and inspire both government policy and regulatory frameworks to integrate inclusion metrics into accreditation and quality assessment processes.

Build Capacity for Change: Support institutions through targeted resources, training, and peer learning networks that enable sustained progress.

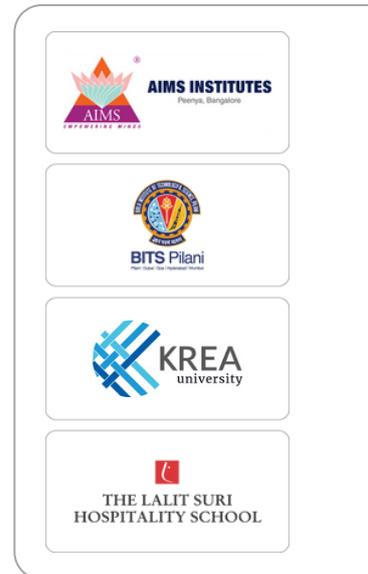
Shift Social Norms: Leverage higher education's role as a driver of societal change to normalise and champion LGBT+ inclusion beyond the campus.

Track Longitudinal Progress: Create a historical record of improvement, enabling stakeholders to evaluate trends, and monitor gaps.

IEEI thus serves not merely as an evaluative instrument but as a **strategic lever for systemic transformation**.

Participating Institutions (Named)

1. AIMS Institutes
2. BITS Pilani, Goa
3. BITS Pilani, Hyderabad
4. BITS Pilani, Pilani
5. Krea University
6. The Lalit Suri Hospitality School



Participating Institutions (Anonymous)

- 4 institutions chose to participate anonymously. Their data is included in the analysis but not attributed by name.

Key Stats

- 10 institutions registered to participate
- Highest performing field: Non-STEM

Best performing themes

Inclusive Policies & Practices

Academic Inclusion

Branding & Advocacy

Key Insight:

- A 68% gap in total performance between the top and lowest scoring institutions highlights a significant divide in LGBT+ inclusion readiness."
- A 76% variation in average inclusion themes between the top and lowest scoring institutions reflects a widening gap in LGBT+ inclusion readiness.

How India Education Equality Index (IEEI) works

India Education Equality Index (IEEI) is India's first and only benchmarking framework dedicated to measuring LGBT+ inclusion in higher education. Now in its second edition, IEEI 2025 marks a significant evolution. It expands beyond educational institutions to welcome corporate participation, recognising that systemic inclusion requires alignment between campuses and the world of work.

Expanding the Horizon: Corporate Inclusion

In recognition of the critical role that the private sector plays in shaping inclusive educational pathways and employability outcomes, IEEI 2025 introduces two new categories for corporate participation:



Campus Catalyst of the Year (Organization)

The Campus Catalyst of the Year award recognises organisations that have demonstrated a **vocal, visible, and sustained commitment** to advancing LGBT+ inclusion within educational institutions. This award honours entities that are **making strategic and tangible investments** to foster inclusive learning environments and facilitate **the seamless transition of LGBT+ youth from education into the workforce**.

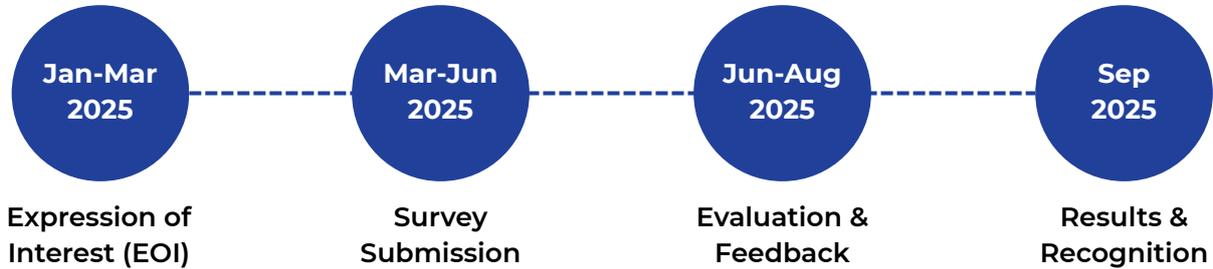


Campus Ally of the Year (Individual)

The Campus Ally of the Year award celebrates **visionary individuals** who have shown an **exceptional dedication to fostering LGBT+ inclusion** on campuses across India. These individuals go beyond the scope of their formal roles to **lead with empathy, advocacy, and impact**—championing initiatives that advance leadership, education, and career access for LGBT+ students.

By inviting corporate participation, IEEI aims to build a bridge between academia and industry, ensuring that inclusion is not siloed within institutions but follows students across the education-to-employment continuum.

Survey Process & Timeline



Comparative Analysis

A 76% variation in average inclusion themes between the top and lowest scoring institutions reflects a widening gap in LGBT+ inclusion readiness.

Table 1: Institutional Inclusion Gaps Mapped by Severity over the 7 themes: Very High, High, and Low Disparities:

Section	Disparity (%)	Heatmap Intensity
Inclusive Policies & Practices	81.0%	Very High
Institutional Commitment	93.9%	Very High
Academic Inclusion	66.7%	High
Branding & Advocacy	100.0%	Very High
Identity Expression	60.0%	Low
Faculty/Staff Inclusion	63.4%	High
Campus Environment	65.1%	High

Table 2: Thematic Inclusion Performance Comparison (2024–2025) – 7 Repeat Participant Campuses

Section	2024 (%)	2025 (%)	Change (pp)
Inclusive Policies & Practices	39.0	53.4	+14.4
Institutional Commitment	50.8	52.2	+1.4
Academic Inclusion	28.6	34.6	+6.0
Branding & Advocacy	47.6	51.0	+3.4
Identity Expression	19.0	27.4	+8.4
Faculty/Staff Inclusion	18.4	23.4	+5.0
Campus Environment	26.0	30.4	+4.4

Across the 7 campuses that participated in both years, the largest thematic gain was in Inclusive Policies & Practices (+14.4 pp), while all other themes also improved, albeit at varying levels.

Overview of Trends in LGBT+ Inclusion Practices

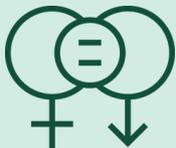
This section presents a thematic analysis of prevailing institutional practices on LGBT+ inclusion, identifying both widely implemented strategies and key areas requiring systemic improvement.

Frequently Adopted Practices



Comprehensive Anti-Harassment Frameworks

Most institutions have adopted explicit anti-discrimination policies that safeguard individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These often include zero-tolerance approaches to bullying and structured grievance redressal mechanisms.



Gender-Neutral Infrastructure & Administrative Inclusion

A growing number of campuses provide gender-neutral washrooms and accommodation facilities, alongside administrative practices that allow non-binary gender markers in institutional documentation and application processes.



Sensitization and Awareness Programs

Institutions regularly conduct LGBT+ sensitization workshops for faculty, staff, and students. These efforts are typically embedded within broader diversity training or aligned with national education mandates.



Integration of LGBT+ Topics in Academic Discourse

There is a noticeable effort to incorporate LGBT+ perspectives into course content, reading materials, and co-curricular engagements, signalling a commitment to academic inclusivity.

Least Effective Areas



Inclusive Recruitment and Faculty Representation

Very few institutions actively pursue recruitment strategies aimed at enhancing LGBT+ representation among faculty and staff, limiting institutional role models and inclusive pedagogy.



Inadequate Health Benefits and Transition Support

Health insurance plans across institutions rarely extend to same-sex partners or include provisions for gender affirmation care, reflecting a significant gap in inclusive HR practices.



Absence of Structured Support Mechanisms for Staff

Mentorship programs and institutional development initiatives seldom address the unique needs of LGBT+ faculty/staff, leading to underrepresentation in leadership and visibility roles.



Lack of LGBT+ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Few campuses have established ERGs for LGBT+ employees, critical spaces for peer support, community-building, and internal advocacy.

Conclusion & The Way Forward

India Education Equality Index (IEEI) 2025 reflects both encouraging momentum and persistent inequities in the pursuit of LGBT+ inclusion within higher education. With measurable gains across several themes, including Inclusive Policies, Academic Inclusion, and Branding, the progress made by participating institutions offers replicable models for systemic change.

However, significant disparities persist. The 68% gap between the highest and lowest scoring institutions and high variation across themes like Faculty/Staff Inclusion and Institutional Commitment reveal that inclusion is still unevenly prioritized and implemented.

As we look ahead, three strategic imperatives emerge:

- **Deepening the Bench:** Institutions must move from performative actions to structurally embedded inclusive systems, particularly in hiring, faculty representation, and benefits design.
- **Strengthening Campus-to-Corporate Continuity:** With the introduction of corporate participation in IEEI 2025, there's a growing need to align educational efforts with industry pipelines to ensure that LGBT+ students transition into affirming workplaces.
- **Institutionalizing Change:** Inclusion must be viewed not as an initiative but as a core metric of institutional excellence, integrated into policy, curriculum, campus culture, and quality assurance frameworks.

IEEI remains committed to enabling this transformation through evidence-based benchmarking, peer learning, and strategic guidance. In the coming year, we envision expanding our network of participating institutions, amplifying high-impact practices, and facilitating dialogue across sectors.

Together, we can co-create a future where every learner, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, has the freedom, safety, and support to thrive.



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Resources and Support

Additional Resources

[Resource Center | Pride Circle](#)

Contact

pooja@thepridecircle.com

