

"I find myself censoring details of my personal life or avoiding colleagues altogether for fear of making them uncomfortable or being judged. The staff room is a relaxed, informal space, with teachers freely sharing what's on their minds, including their spouses and in-laws and children or even mental health struggles. Initially, as a cautionary measure, I found myself actively drawing and defending the line between personal and professional." Gender presentation is also a matter of concern for queer women who may have different ways of expressing themselves that don't necessarily adhere to what is considered conventional at the workplace. Meera says, "I prefer to present androgynously (or generally gnc) through hair, makeup and clothing, but there was a strict, gendered dress code at my workplace. I felt I could safely and subtly "express" my queerness through rainbow backpack stickers and jacket patches."



"I feel safe and comfortable in most establishments where I am a paying customer. I expect surprise and confusion from staff but am not daunted by the possible judgement from other customers and clientele present – as such I am freely affectionate and explicit/ uncensored in these settings. I feel very differently in public, uncontrolled environments. Depending on who's around and which city and neighbourhood I'm in, I may fear for my safety and be on guard, and move quicker and wear my hair down and avoid direct eye contact. I speak extra high and soft and sweet to "throw off" the average straight person's perceptions of gnc people as threatening, dangerous or antisocial."

"I feel watched most of the time that I am in public, simply on account of my appearance. Sometimes, I feel judged as pretentious or attention-seeking, but that is easier to ignore than when I perceive disgust and fear. When I do perceive disgust or a more threatening flavour of disapproval, I seek reassurance from those around me. I walk directly behind them or help them navigate their way out of a crowd in the quickest way possible."

-----Meera Kale, a 24-year-old, bisexual woman who works as an educator

"I tend to be more stern than I actually am at work, I also have to remind people not to interrupt me (or anyone) and to wait for their turn to speak." Negative experiences are not the norm, there are queer women who find it relatively easier to assert their identities in their workplace. Trina, a 25-year-old lesbian woman, who works as a client servicing executive is comfortable in expressing herself. She says "I think because I'm in a space where my colleagues are all very young and from similar backgrounds, so they will listen if I have something to say. Clients are more different, sometimes I've had to take a male colleague along (depending on the client) to be taken seriously."

-----Subashree, a 26-year-old bisexual woman educator



'The Intersection Of Space And Identity: How Queer Women Navigate Heterosexual Public Spaces May 2021

