PRACTICE POINTS . 2024 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- The percentage of respondents out at work to all colleagues has dropped for the third year in a row
- Women continue to be the least likely 'out' at work.
- Organisation position, type and tenure of employment all impact on outness
- Confidential methods and assigned contacts need to be made clear and available to increase the potential for anti-LGBTQ+ comments and activities to be reported and addressed
- Look at your data—who can you see reflected in responses, and who are you not seeing? Consider who you have employed, and if you can't see them in the data, why are they missing?
- Are you in management? Listen to the opinions of non-managerial staff. They are on the ground and often have a different view of how your activities are impacting your organisation.

EDITION 2: 'OUT' AT WORK

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2024 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

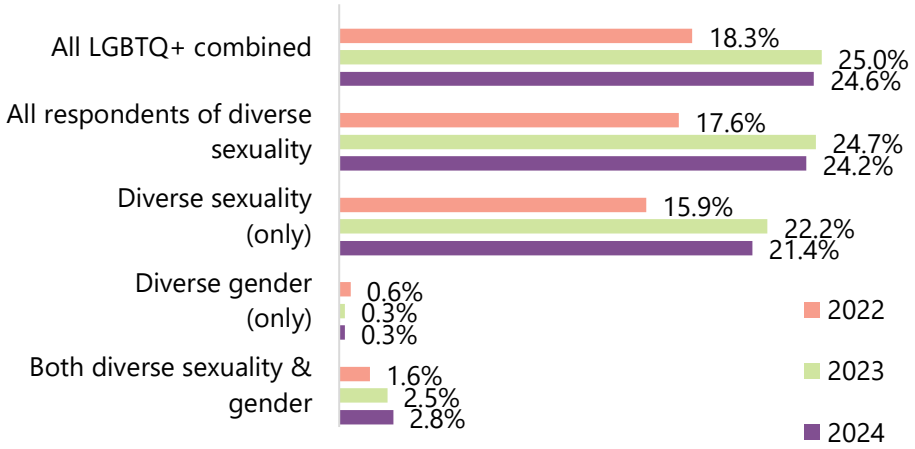
In 2024, 169 organisations and 42,219 individuals took part in the Survey. Of these, 41,497 respondents are Australian-based, and 722 work in overseas locations for Australian employers.

This Practice Point is focused on the experiences of the 24.2% of respondents who are of diverse sexuality. It is important to note that we include respondents who have both a diverse sexuality and a diverse gender and/or trans experience and acknowledge that the experiences of respondents who have this dual diversity may differ from those who have only a diverse sexuality.

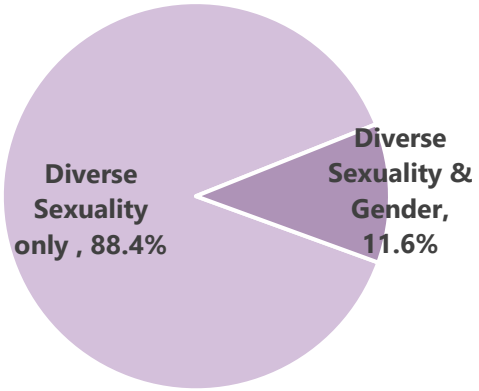
Demographics

Among the 10,058 respondents who are of diverse sexuality, 11.6% also have a diverse gender and/or trans experience.

Respondents of...



Responses from people of dual diversity have increased by a further 12.8% from last year, rising to 2.8% of all respondents, from 2.5% in 2023 and 1.6% in 2022.



Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation describes patterns of sexual, romantic, and emotional attraction. We see an emergence of terminology for people to be able to self-identify an orientation that most resonates with them.

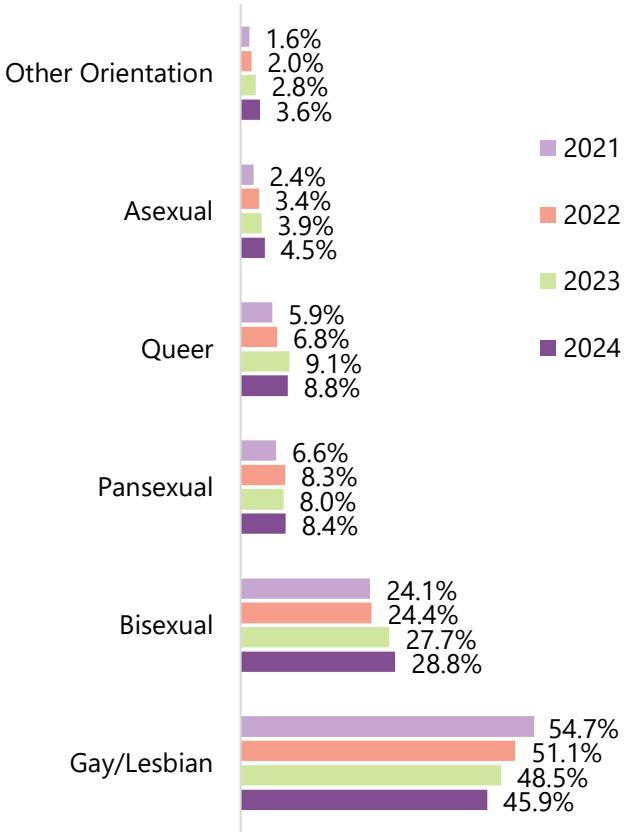
'Emerging' identities, such as bisexual, pansexual and asexual, have increased again this year with;

- 27.2% more respondents identify as other than gay or lesbian than in 2021,
- And 5.0% more respondents identifying in another way since 2023

There are significant differences in the growth between identities;

- 26.5% more respondents identify with a different term,[1]
- 15.9% more respondents identify as asexual,
- 5.6% more respondents identify as pansexual, &
- 4.0% more respondents identify as bisexual.

The only emerging identity which has decreased since last year is queer.



Being 'out' at work

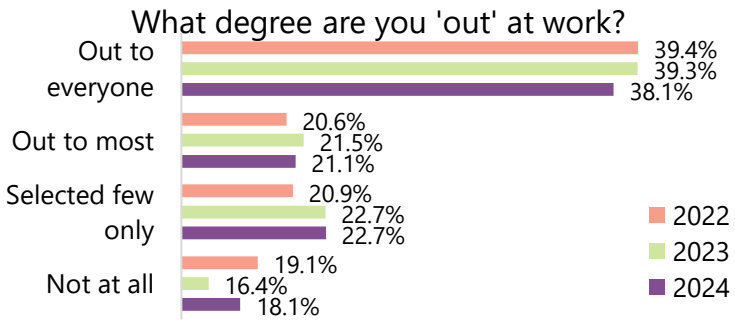
While it should not be considered the 'gold standard', an important indicator of the culture of inclusion is how many people are 'out' in their workplace. We acknowledge that 'outness' may have different levels of relevance or importance to people and that 'coming out' is generally not a single act. But for many, being 'out' is necessary to be able to talk about their life outside of work.

To collect data on 'outness', respondents who identified in any way other than 'straight' were asked, "In regard to your sexual orientation, please indicate to what degree you are 'out' at work?". We received 8,829 responses (397 or 4.5% chose not to disclose). For this Practice Point, those who chose not to disclose are removed from the data set. This brings the total number of respondents to 8,432.

The number of people who are 'out to everyone' at work has continued to decline, with 3.3% fewer this year. The rate for those who are 'out to most' has been more stable, though after slight increases in the past two years, 2.1% fewer agreed this year.

Concerningly, after a reduction last year, 10.7% more respondents have agreed that they are 'not out at all' in the workplace compared to 2023, sending us back to agreement rates seen in 2021.

For this Practice Point, those 'out to everyone' and those 'out to most' will be

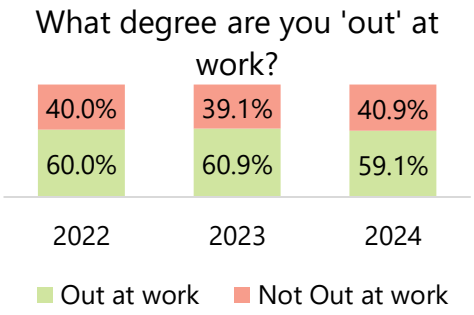


[1] We acknowledge that the survey implements the ABS standards and does not support an exhaustive list. Additionally, due to the possibility of small subsets of data identifying individual respondents, it has been considered inappropriate to ask in any more detail than is currently provided

considered 'out' in the workplace, while those out to 'selected few only' or 'not at all' will be regarded as 'not out'. Overall, after a slight increase last year, we have again seen a decline in respondents who are 'out' (2.8% *fewer* respondents (n233) are 'out' this year).

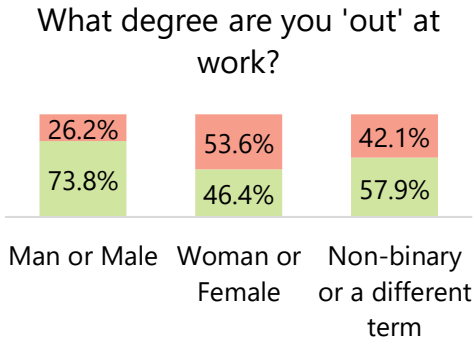
Who is more likely to be 'out' in the workplace?

When looking at the demographics, there are significant differences in respondents who are "out" in their workplace.



Gender identity

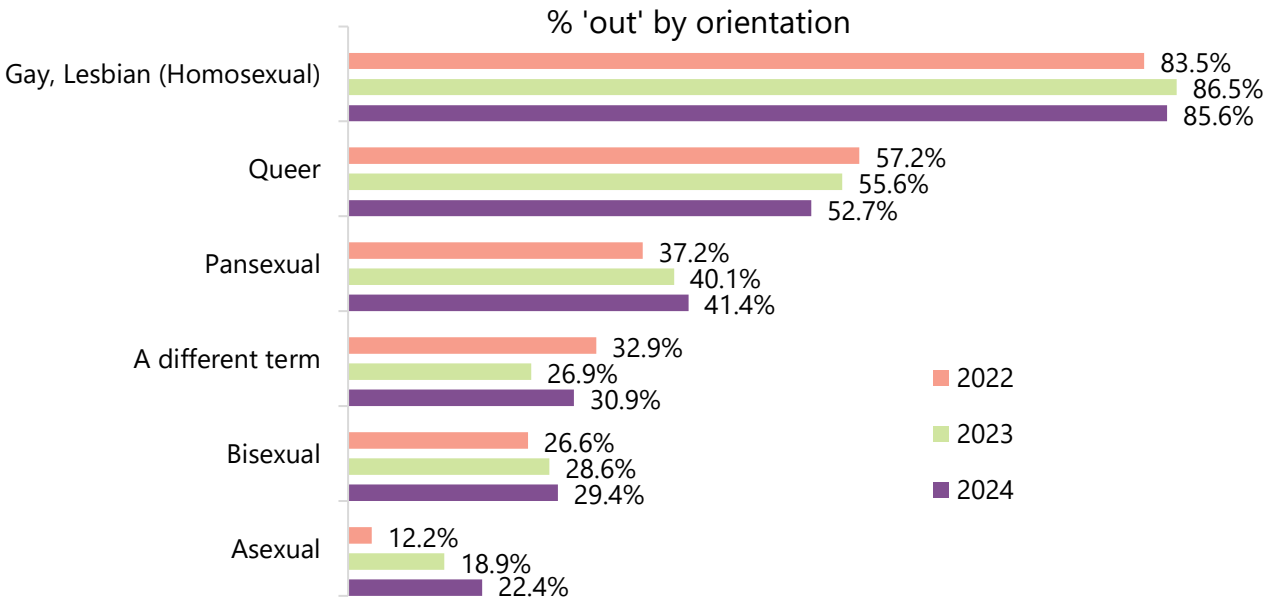
Gender identity plays a significant role in 'outness'. Those who identify as man/male are the most likely to be 'out' (73.8%), while women/female respondents are 'out' only 46.4% of the time. Those who identify as non-binary or with a different term are 'out' slightly higher at 57.9%



Sexual orientation

Orientation also plays a significant role, with those of emerging identities less likely to be 'out' than those who identify as gay or lesbian (ranging from 38.4% for queer respondents to 73.9% for asexual respondents).

Interestingly, the outness of gay/lesbian and queer respondents has decreased by 1.0% and 5.1%, respectively, in the past year.



Other Demographics and impact on 'outness'

By employment type;

- 60.8% Full-time employees - the most likely of all paid employees to be 'out',
- 51.0% of part-time respondents are 'out', &
- 48.4% of contract and temporary/casual respondents are 'out'.

By position;

- 72.7% of respondents from leadership/executive team (CEO and C-suite, or equivalent),
- 66.4 of senior staff (including EA/PA to Executive team) respondents,
- 57.5% of employees/individual contributor respondents &
- 47.2% of new workforce entrants.

People managers are 17.8% more likely to be 'out' in the workplace than employees without direct reports (down from 19.2% in 2023).

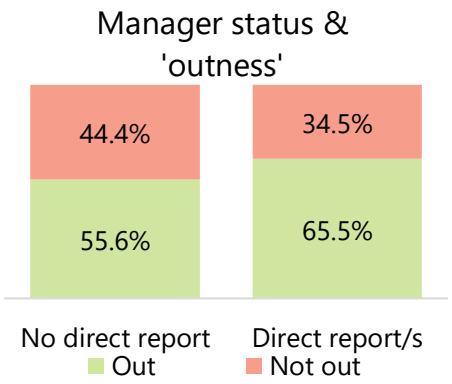
By tenure;

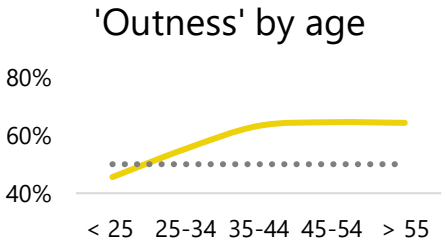
- 49.6% of respondents with a tenure of less than 1 year
- 57.3% for those with tenure between 1-3 years,
- 64.3% average for all those with tenure of 4 or more years.

By age;

- 45.6% of respondents under 25 – The only group where fewer than 50% of respondents are out.
- 55.3% of respondents 25-34
- Between 63-64% of respondents over 35 years of age.
- The likelihood of being 'out' continues until the 11–20-year group, which shows a slight decline.

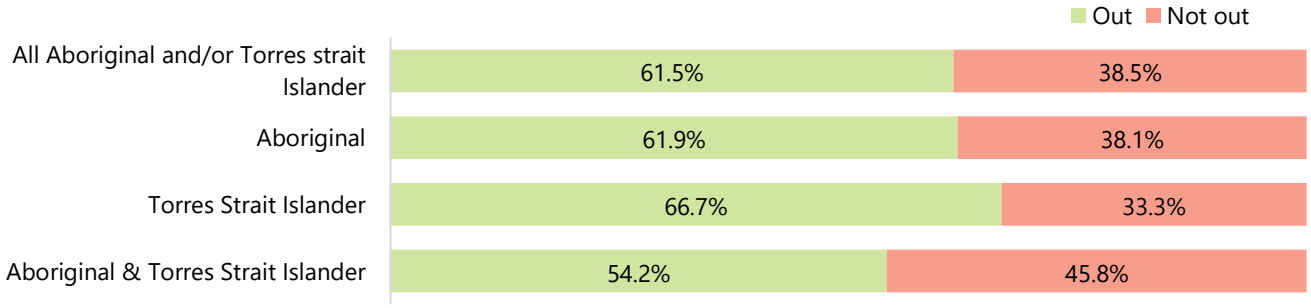
This remains the same trend as has been seen in the past 3 years.



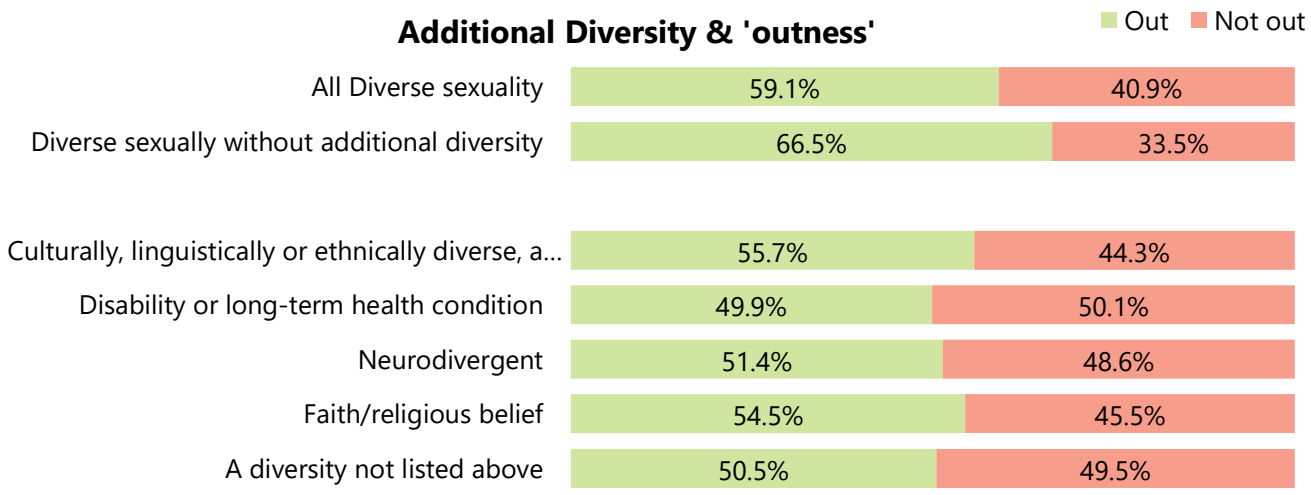


Intersectionality with personal attributes

Within respondents of diverse sexuality, 2.7% also identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, and 68.6% of respondents have another personal attribute or background of diversity.



Significant data shows that, for respondents of diverse sexuality, the presence of further diversity reduces the likelihood of being 'out' by between 8.5% and 15.6%.



This area is the focus of a future Practice Point.

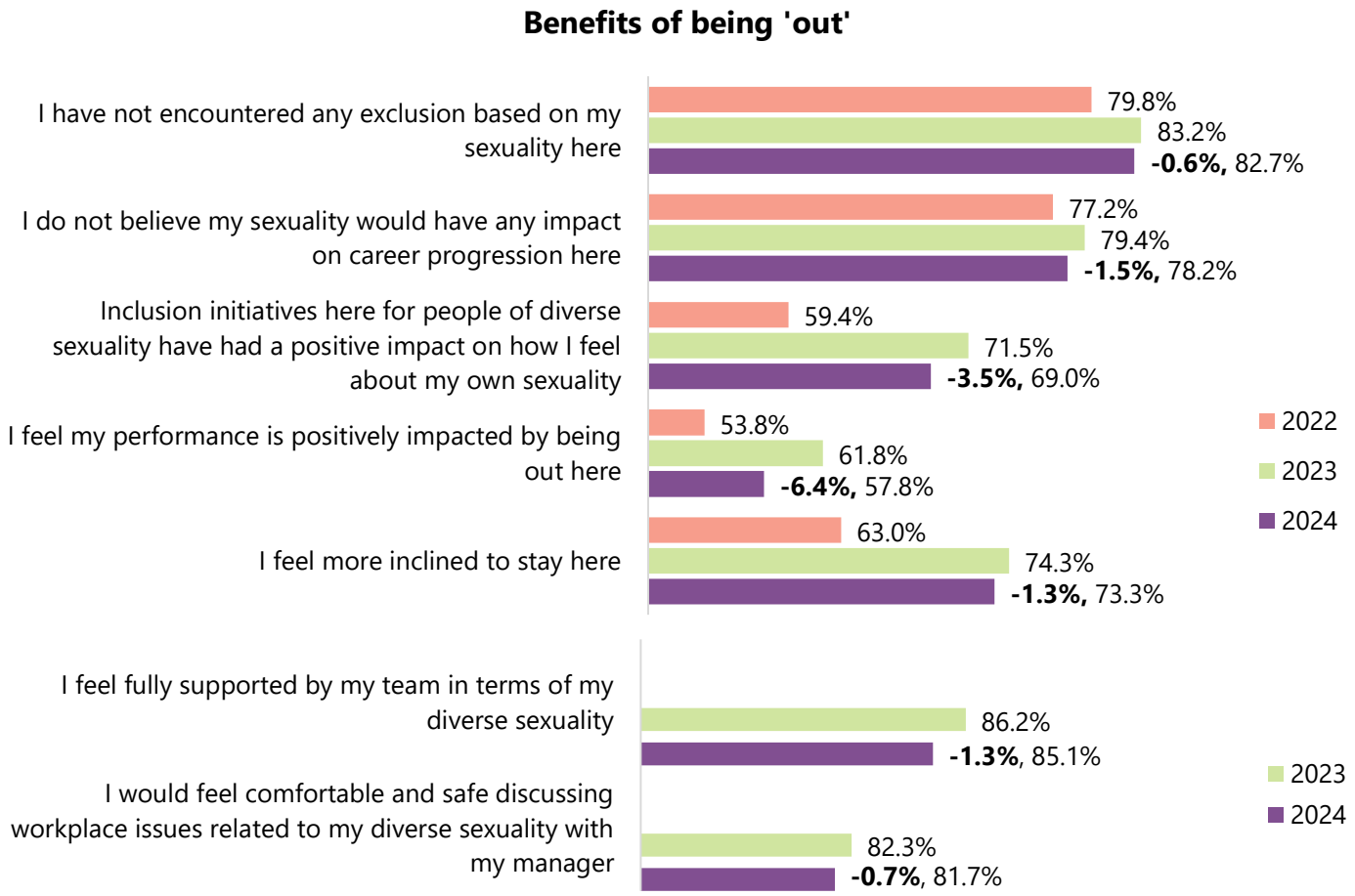
Effects of being ‘out’ or ‘not out’ at work

Being ‘out’

After reasonable increases last year, most measures of satisfaction for respondents ‘out’ in their organisation have decreased.
Most significantly;

- 6.4% fewer feel their performance has been positively impacted by being ‘out’ within their organisation, &
- 3.5% fewer agreed that inclusion initiatives had a positive impact on how they felt about their own sexuality.

Additionally, feelings of support and comfort within their team, including relationships with managers, have reduced slightly from last year, though over 80% of all respondents still agree that they are supported.



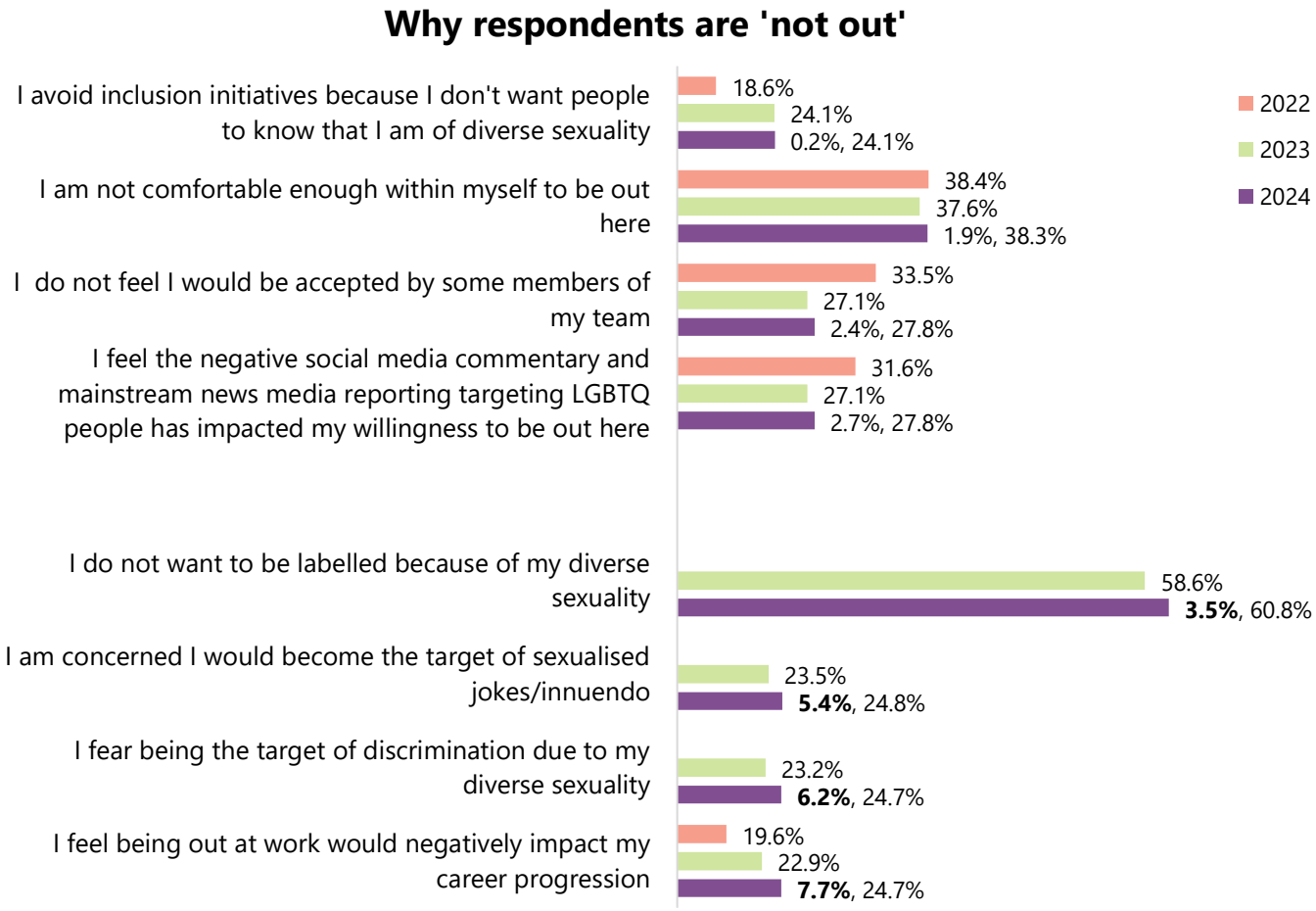
Being ‘not out’

For respondents who are ‘not out’, not wanting to be labelled because of their diverse sexuality remains the most prominent reason (60.8% - up 3.5% from 2023).

Concerningly, the most significant increase (7.7%) was among respondents who felt that being ‘out’ would negatively impact their work experience.

Across the board, more respondents agree with the reasons for not being ‘out’ provided vs. 2023.

Being ‘out' impacts a respondent’s ability to speak freely and not self-edit (i.e., hide part of themselves or life outside of work). 45.9% of respondents who are ‘not out’ in their organisation feel they spend time self-editing, while only 21.1% of those ‘out’ agree, a 117.0% difference.



Beliefs on inclusion

The data provides an insight into respondents' personal beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion within the workplace and shows some significant differences between those who are of diverse sexuality vs. those who are heterosexual and also between responses of those 'out' vs. 'not out'.

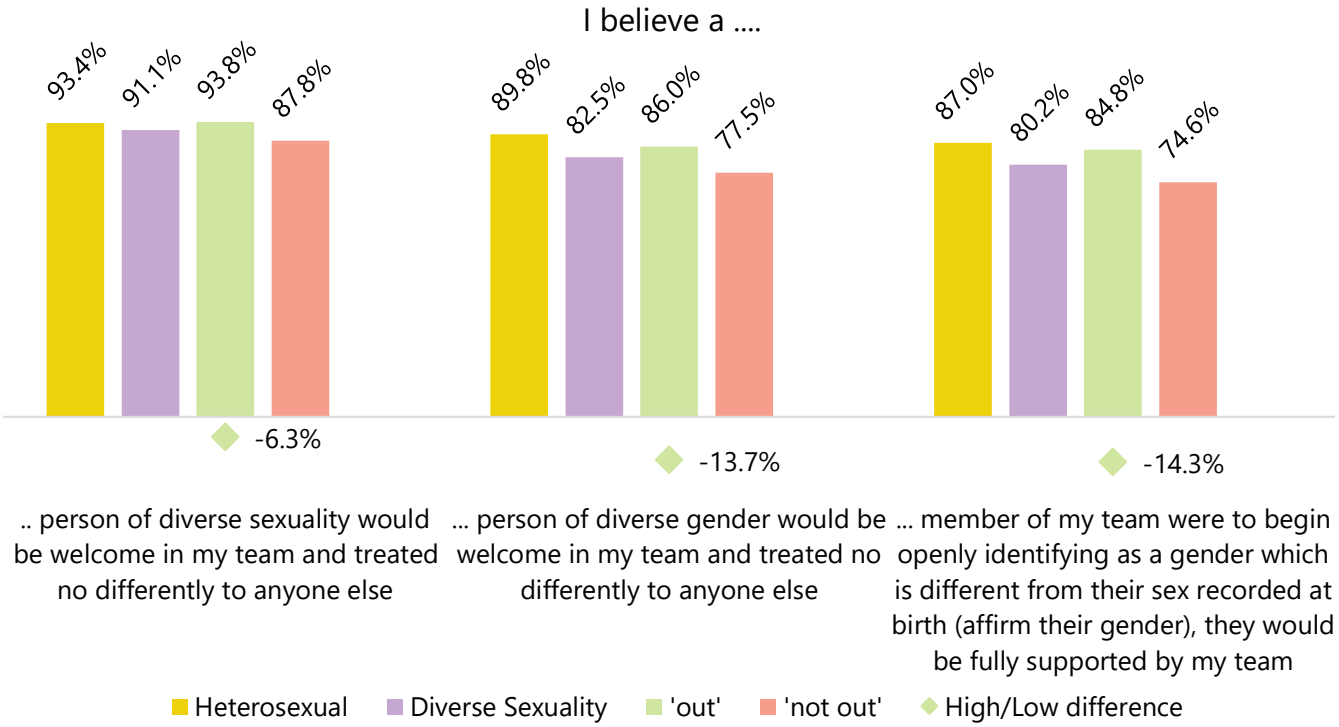
Compared to heterosexual respondents, respondents of diverse sexuality are;

- 48.7% more likely to believe there are more than two genders (heterosexual: 52.0% vs. diverse sexuality: 77.3%),
- 20.0% more likely to believe they understand some of the unique challenges that LGBTQ+ face in the workplace (heterosexual: 77.8% vs. diverse sexuality: 93.3%),
- 10.1% more likely to think LGBTQ+ inclusion work has a positive influence on organisational culture (heterosexual: 83.8% vs. diverse sexuality: 92.2%).

For those 'out' in their organisation, the difference further rises compared to heterosexual respondents with;

- 51.9% more believe there are more than two genders (heterosexual: 52.3% vs. 'out': 78.9%),
- 23.3% more understand unique challenges (heterosexual: 78.1% vs. 'out': 95.9%),
- 13.3% more think LGBTQ+ inclusion has a positive influence on culture (heterosexual: 81.4% vs. 'out': 94.9%), &
- 9.7% more 'out' respondents personally support the work the organisation does for LGBTQ+ inclusion (Heterosexual: 82.2% vs. 'out': 90.4%).

Heterosexual respondents are most likely to believe the organisation is genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion, 17.7% more than those 'not out'.

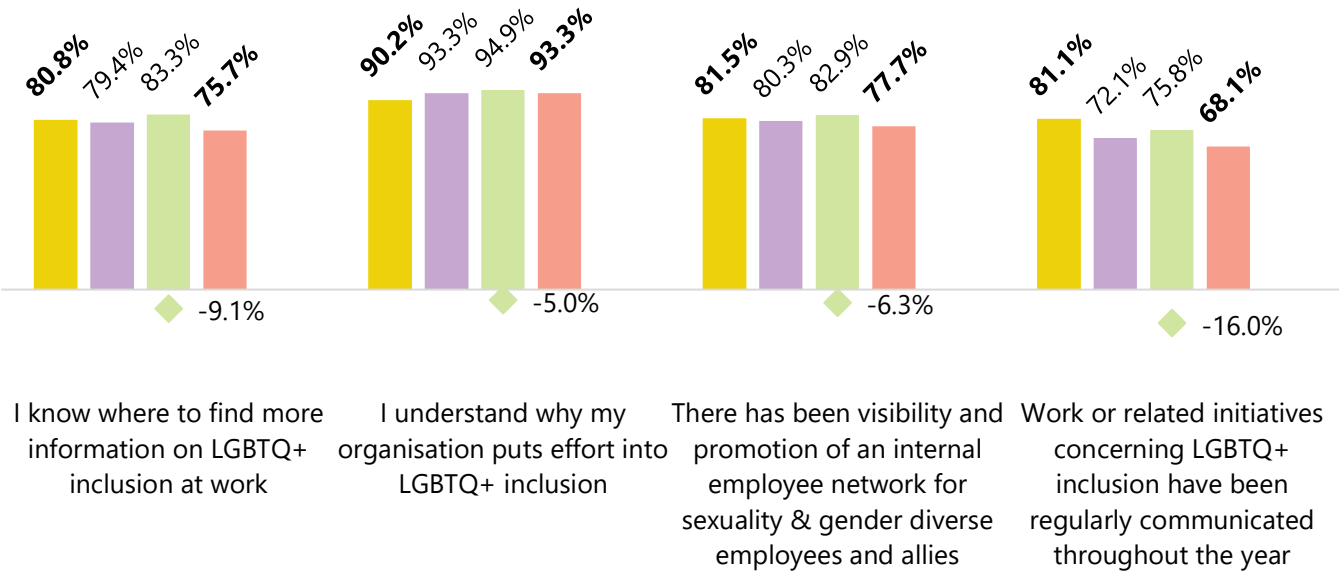


In other areas;

- 29.7% more people of diverse sexuality agree that an employer's positive track record in LGBTQ+ inclusion influences joining the organisation (Diverse Sexuality: 83.4% vs. Heterosexual: 64.8%),
- Over 90% of all cohorts understand why their organisation puts effort into LGBTQ+ inclusion,
- 'Out' respondents are the most likely to know where to find more information on LGBTQ+ inclusion (Heterosexual: 81.5% vs. not out: 77.7%).

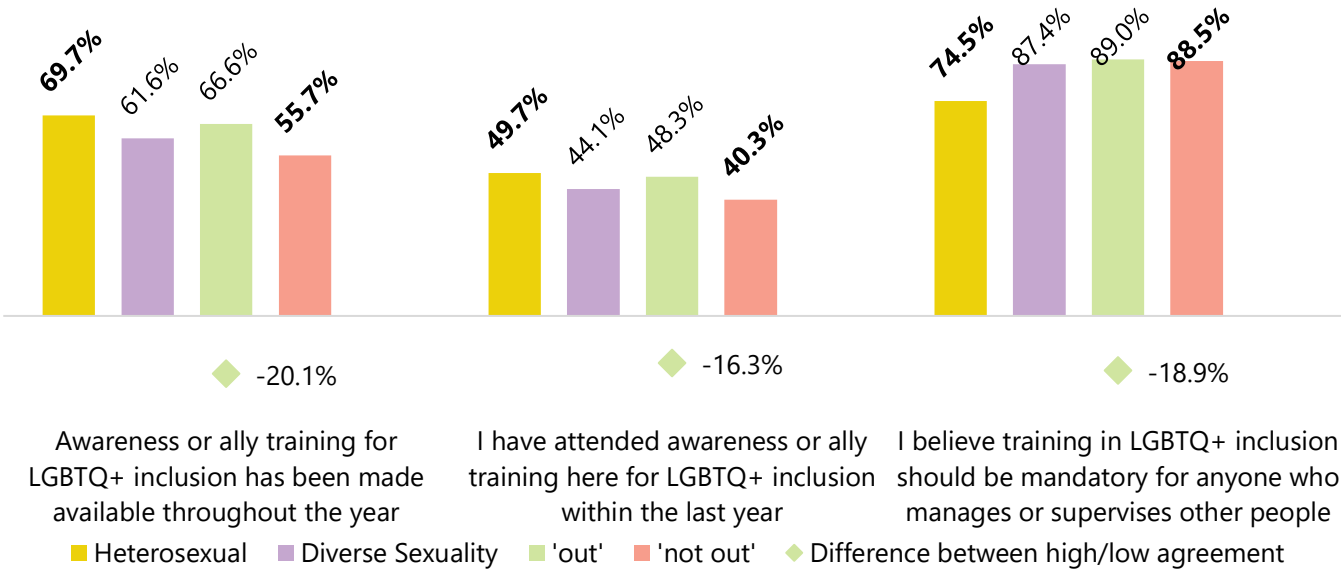
When looking at communication and visibility of initiatives, agreement is lower, dropping to under 85% across the board this year. The most significant difference is between heterosexual and 'not out' respondents where;

- 4.9% more agreeing there has been visibility and promotion of internal employee networks &
- 19.1% more agreed to regular communication throughout the year regarding LGBTQ+ related initiatives



Availability and importance of training also differs, with heterosexual respondents most likely to agree training has been made available and to have attending training, but the least likely to feel training should

be mandatory for anyone who manages or supervises others, 16.3% less than those 'out' in their organisation.

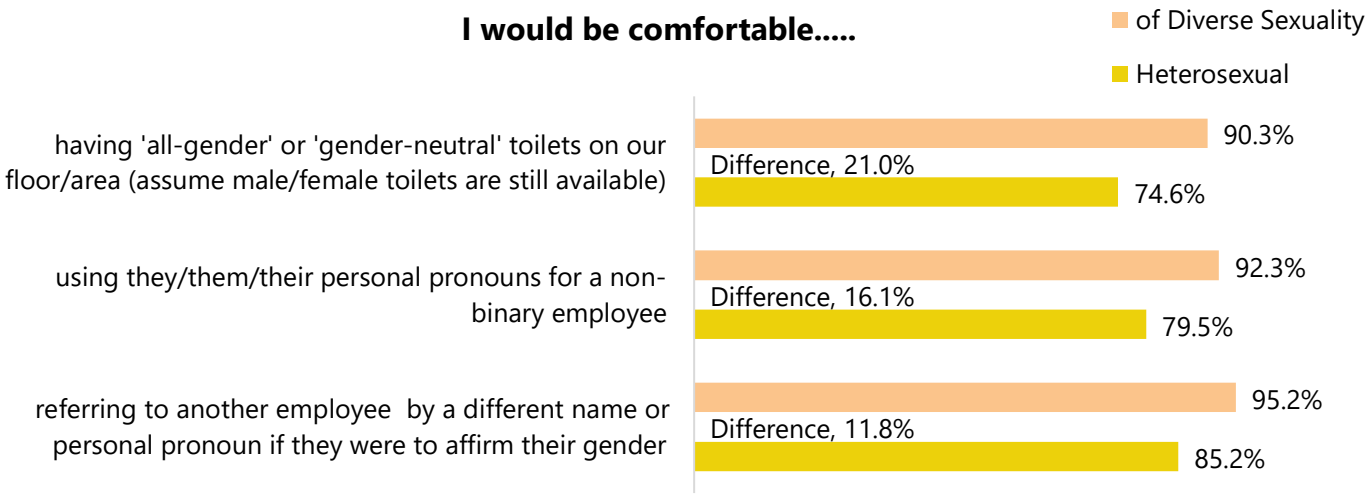


Working with others

Slightly down on last year's 98.1%, this year, 97.3% of respondents of diverse sexuality are comfortable with colleagues talking about their same gender or gender diverse partners at work (vs. 90.4% of heterosexual respondents).

There is a 5.5% difference in comfort around colleagues bringing their same gender or gender diverse partner to work events (heterosexual: 93.2% vs. diverse sexuality: 98.4%)

The differences are more significant in comfort working with trans and gender diverse people, including non-binary employees.



There is no significant difference between those 'out' or 'not out' to these questions.

Workplace wellbeing

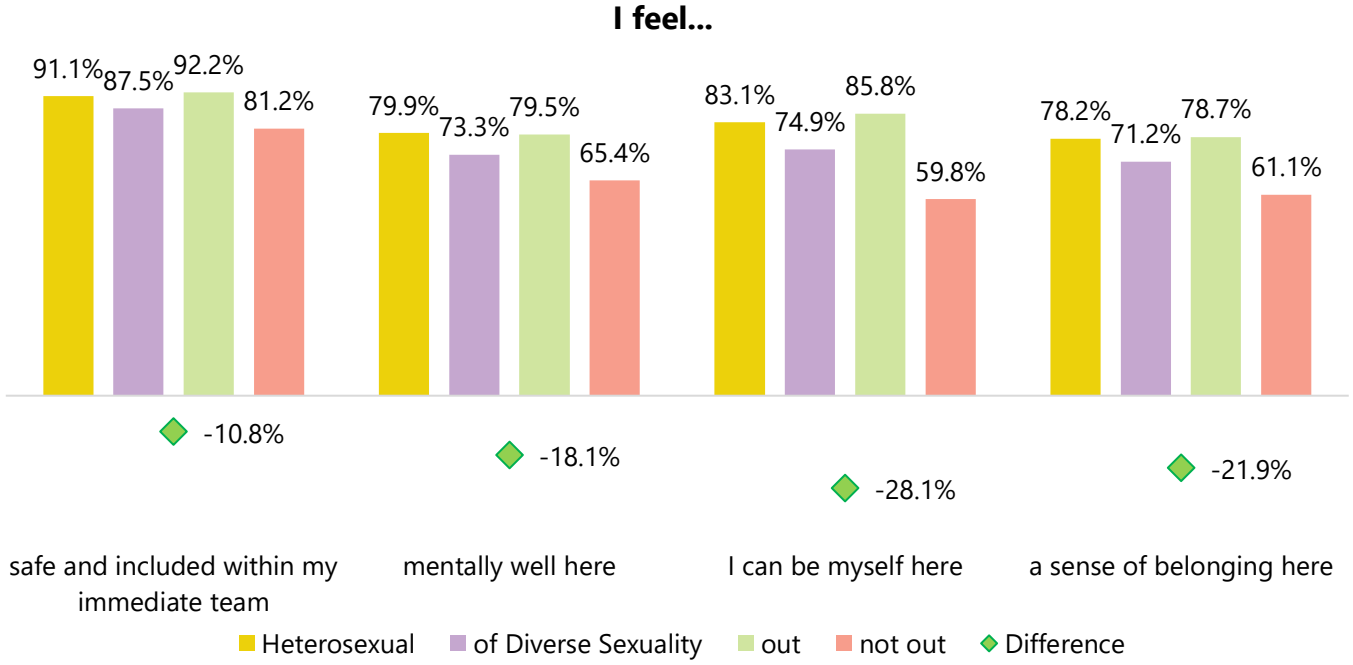
As an entire cohort, people of diverse sexuality are still reporting feeling lower levels of safety, health, and wellbeing than heterosexual respondents (between 4.0% and 9.9% less), with the gap growing year-on-year.

Outcomes are significantly worse for those who are 'not out', sitting between 10.6% and a staggering 28.1% less agreement to workplace wellbeing measures than heterosexual respondents.

Compared to heterosexual respondents, those 'not out' are;

- 28.1% less likely to feel they can be themselves,
- 21.9% less likely to feel a sense of belonging,
- 18.1% less likely to feel mentally well.

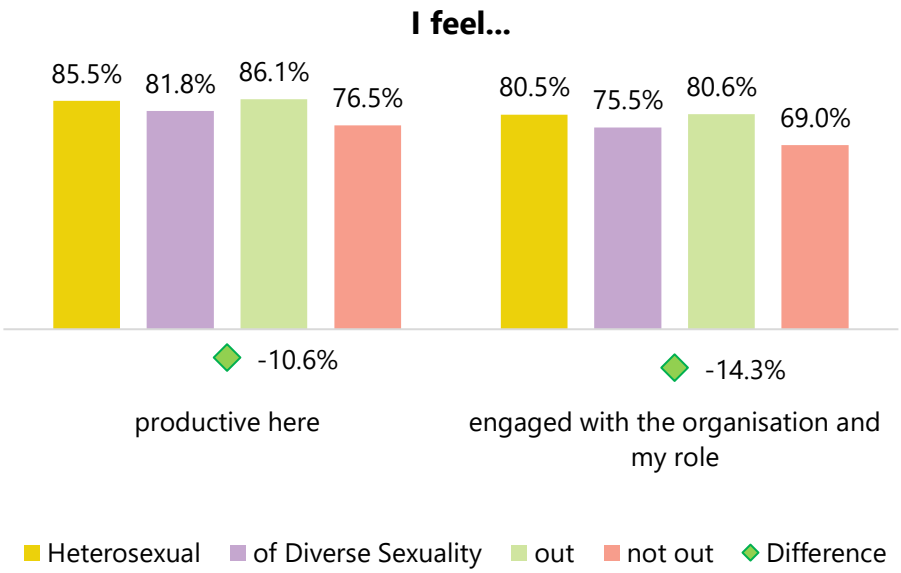
Importantly, those 'out' in the workplace are experiencing better levels of *workplace* wellbeing than heterosexual colleagues in 3 out of 4 measures.



Productivity and Engagement

Feelings of productivity and engagement with organisations have stayed steady for the past three years. Again, we see that heterosexual employees are experiencing higher levels of engagement and productivity compared to their colleagues of diverse sexuality.

For those 'not out', we see further declines in feelings of productivity and engagement (productivity: 10.6% less than heterosexual respondents, 6.5% less than 'out', and engagement: 14.3% and 8.7% less, respectively).



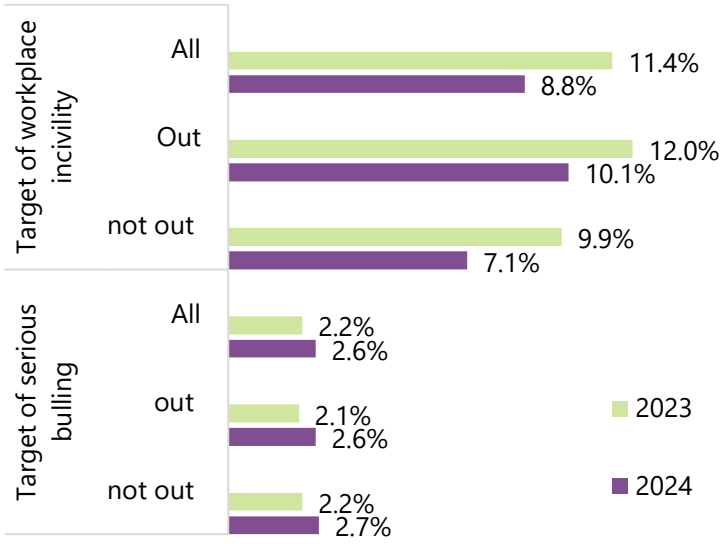
Discrimination, Bullying & harassment.

Compared to the 2023 data, fewer respondents have advised being the target of workplace incivility behaviours, though the number of respondents experiencing more serious bullying has increased.

Compared to last year;

- 15.8% fewer respondents 'out' in the workplace, and 28.3% fewer 'not out', have been the target of workplace incivility.
- 18.2% more respondents have been the target of serious bullying and/or harassment.

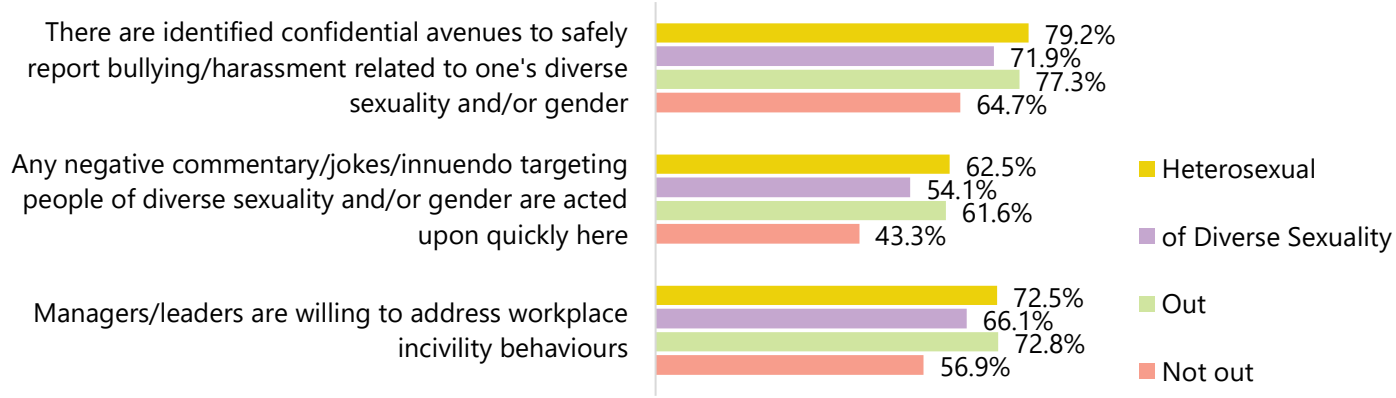
There is little change vs. 2023 regarding awareness of identified confidential reporting avenues; we are still seeing that those 'not out' in their organisations are least likely to feel these safe avenues exist.



Compared with heterosexual respondents, those of diverse sexuality are:

- 17.8% less likely to feel that their organisations quickly address workplace incivility behaviours targeting LGBTQ+ employees; again, this is similar to 2023.
- 8.8% less likely to agree that managers and leaders are willing to address workplace incivility - this at 8.1% higher rates than in 2023 (61.1% vs. 2024: 66.1%).

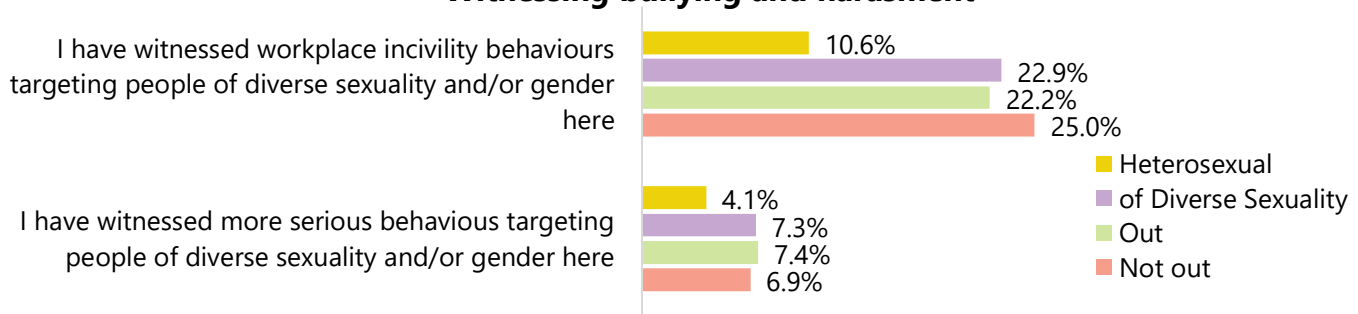
Addressing bullying and harrasment



People 'not out' are;

- 135.6% more likely to have witnessed workplace incivility behaviours &
- 53.0% more likely to advise there was no action taken when they last witnessed this.

Witnessing bullying and harasment



As seen in 2023, 18.6% of people of diverse sexuality have experienced discrimination within their current organisation.

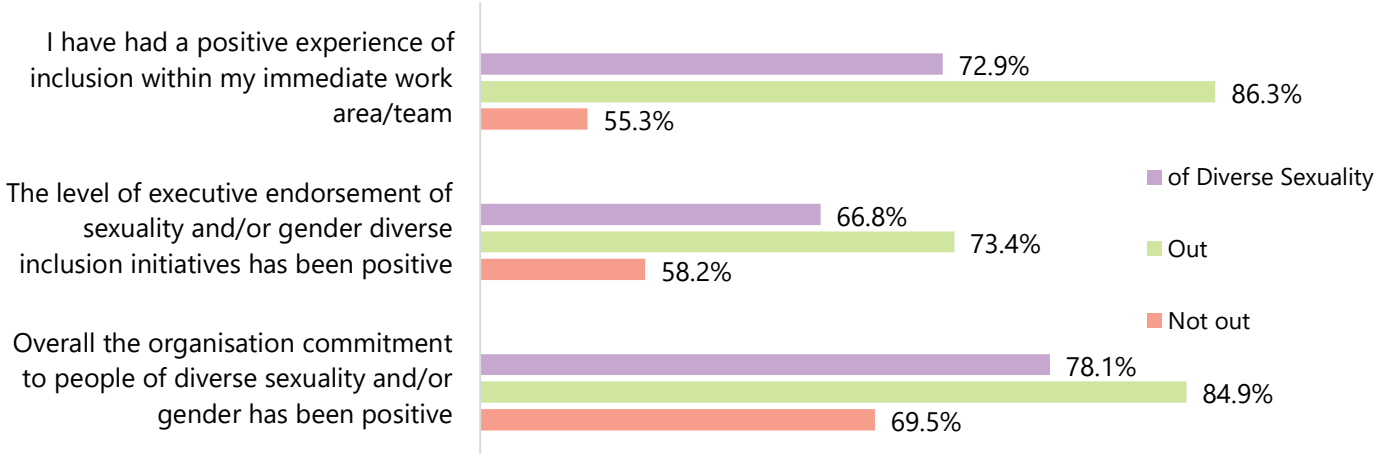
A future practice point will contain further analysis of negative behaviours and actions when witnessed or experienced and reporting of these experiences.

Feelings on organisation inclusion

In a continuing trend, respondents 'not out' have poorer experiences in the workplace.

Overall, 86.3% of 'out' respondents agreed they had had a positive experience of inclusion within their immediate work area; however, only 55.3% of 'not out' respondents agreed.

This year, there has been a further drop in agreement that there has been a positive level of executive endorsement of LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives, with 73.4% of 'out' respondents agreeing, compared to 58.2% of those 'not out' (26.3% difference).

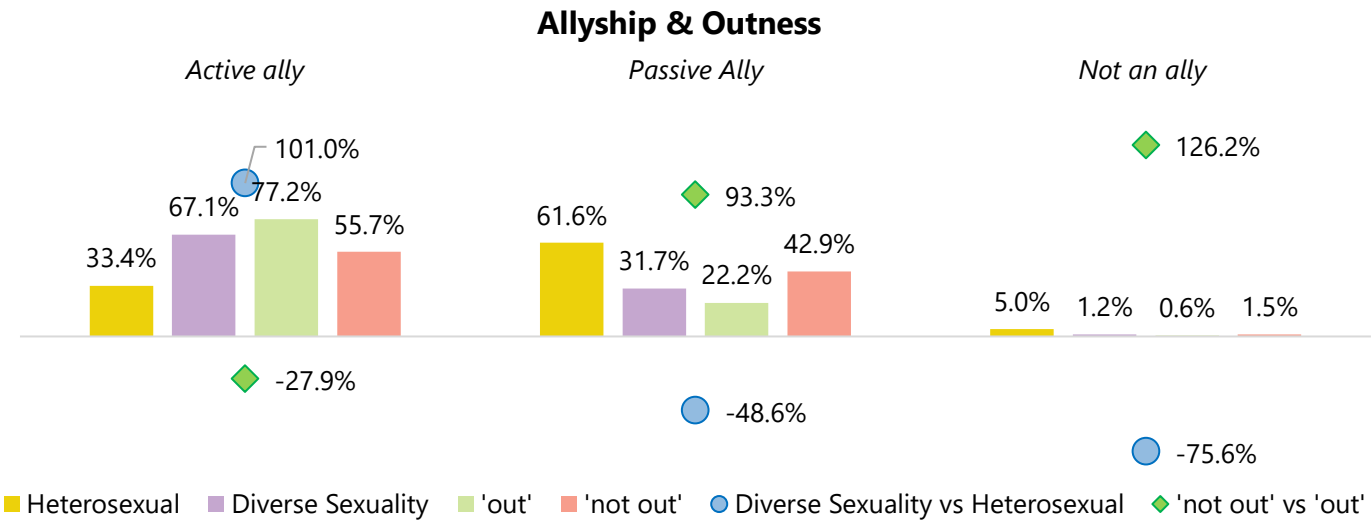


Allyship

Across the whole survey, 41.7% of respondents are active allies, and 4.1% are "not an ally"; this data is skewed heavily by respondents of diverse sexuality.

People of diverse sexuality are;

- 101.0% more likely to be an active ally than heterosexual respondents (though this has dropped from 70.2% in 2023 to 67.1% this year),
- 48.6% less likely to consider themselves passive allies, &
- 75.6% less likely to be not an ally at all.



We also see significant differences between those 'out' and 'not out'. 'Not out' respondents are;

- 27.9% less likely to be an active ally,
- 93.3% more likely to be a passive ally. &
- 126.2% *more* likely to advise not being an ally at all in the workplace,

To note this year, the percentage of people of diverse sexuality considering themselves not an ally has increased from just under 1% in 2023 to 1.2% in 2024.

The reasons for those 'passive' or 'not at all' respondents differ. For those 'not out', the top three reasons from 2023 are maintained, though the difference between the cohorts has reduced.
Those 'not out' agree;

- 158.1% more to "...people thinking that I am of LGBTQ+" ('out' 9.2% vs. 'not out': 23.6%)
- 131.2% more to "concern of being ridiculed or the target of jokes… "('out' 9.5% vs. 'not out': 22.0%)
- 95.4% more to " it would be frowned upon by someone/people with influence over my career" ('out' 8.3% vs. 'not out': 16.2%)

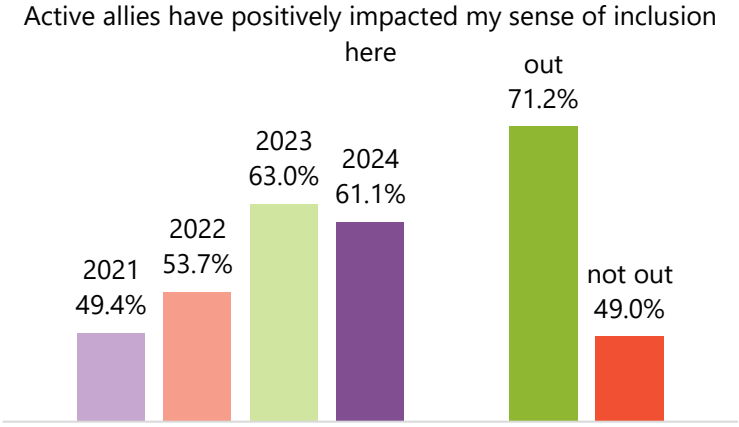
Concern that it would be frowned upon has increased from 14.6% in 2023 for those 'not out'.

The impact of allies in the workplace is significant for people of diverse sexuality, though respondents this year have agreed slightly less than last year.

Unfortunately, we also see that those 'not out' are feeling the positive impact at the rate received in 2021. This disparity is also seen among people who know of active allies in the immediate area.

Those 'not out' are:

- 31.2% less likely to agree that active allies have had a positive impact on their sense of inclusion,
- 23.0% less likely to know of active executive allies or sponsors
- 20.8% less likely to agree that executive endorsement of LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives has been positive &
- 19.5% less likely to agree to know active allies in their immediate area,



This further highlights the impact of management opinions and the importance of manager allies at all levels. A future practice point will analyse this and other effects of Allyship.

2024– Calls to action

1. Not sure where to start? Use the AWEI Submission Foundation and Advanced documents as a road map to begin your journey
2. Capture LGBTQ+ inclusion data and use it to inform your inclusion plans and activities.
3. Not sure how to continue? Use the AWEI Submission Foundation and Advanced documents to guide your internal processes, ensuring they are up-to-date and inclusive, and use best practice language.
4. Trying to attract LGBTQ+ talent? External-facing websites need to show visible examples of inclusion.
5. Be up to date: Younger cohorts are more likely to identify with emerging identities. Ensure the language you use is current and accurate and reflects all the emerging identities so initiatives are relevant and impactful.
6. Look at the groups who are less comfortable, less out, and feeling less positive – this is where impact is the greatest
7. Promote your LGBTQ+ employee network, activities and events to all employees.
8. Create an environment where non-LGBTQ+ employees are comfortable being allies by ensuring all employees understand the difference between being passive and active allies
9. Do not ask employees to do their 'gay job' on top of their day job – allow adequate time in the day.
10. Celebrate the successes you have made in increasing LGBTQ+ inclusion externally and internally.

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Pride in Diversity (2024). Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs