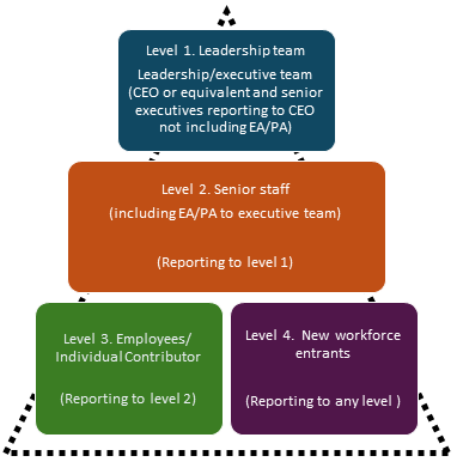
EDITION 5:
Impacts of leadership support

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2024 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- 3.8% of respondents hold positions in the leadership team of their organisation
- 53.9% of leadership team respondents consider themselves active allies
- 61.7% of respondents know of an active executive ally or sponsor in their organisation.
- Knowledge of executive allies reduces the further away an employee's position is from the leadership team.
- Respondents with executive allies known to them:
  - ✓ are more likely to be 'out' and/or 'open' at work
  - ✓ advised of greater levels of workplace wellbeing, productivity and engagement in their role
  - ✓ are more likely to understand the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion
  - ✓ less likely to witness and/or experience bullying and harassment in the workplace

Leadership support is integral to any initiative to ensure drive, influence, and a greater potential for success. The impact of the leadership team is no different within the LGBTQ+ Inclusion space.

With this in mind, the AWEI Employee survey asks respondents to self-select their hierarchical position within their organisation so we can identify their level of seniority.



These categories include the level 1 respondents, who are the CEO and their direct reports (the c-suite); level 2 employees, who report to level 1 and are generally referred to as 'middle managers'; and level 3 and 4 employees, who are all other employees. The difference is tenure within the Australian workforce.

Across all respondents this year, we had:

- 3.8% level 1 employees (n1,565)
- 27.7% level 2 employees. (n11,507)
- 62.6% level 3 employees (n25,969)
- 5.9% level 4 employees (n2,456)

This practice point is focused on these groups in two ways:

1. Allyship of these groups, their opinions of their organisation's LGBTQ+ inclusion work, and how these differ at each level
2. The availability and visibility of leadership involvement in organisations' inclusion activities by diving into the responses to
   - Allyship relating to active ally support
     "I know of active executive allies or sponsor/s within my organisation."

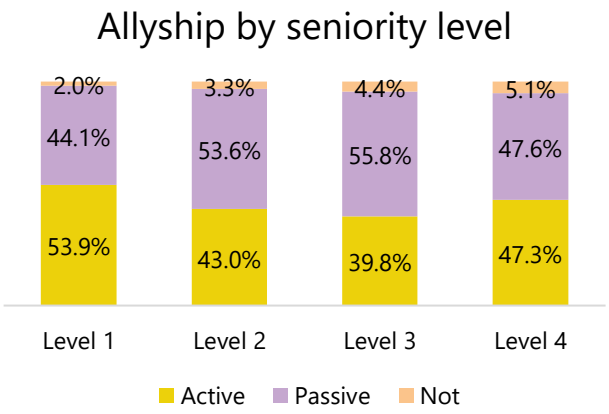
Who are our senior leadership allies?

In our previous practice point, we examined allyship in depth, but we need to review this data to begin to understand the importance of visible, active allyship within the senior leadership cohort.

Level 1 respondents are the most likely to consider themselves active allies and least likely not to be an ally at all.

Level 2 respondents are 20.2% less likely to be active allies and 65% more likely not to be an ally at all than level 1 respondents.

This dramatic difference is important because there are more level 2 employees. Between them, they manage more teams of direct reports, and, therefore, they often have the most significant influence on an organisation's culture.



The ultimate aim is that all executive team members consider themselves allies for their LGBTQ+ employees and that they actively support and promote inclusion within their organisation. When we look at the data for level 1 employees, it shows we still have some work to do. Of the 168 organisations that participated:

- 26 organisations had all level 1 employees self-identify as active allies
- 97 organisations had only active and passive respondents (no non-supporters)

However:

- 12 organisations had no level 1 employees complete the survey
- 10 organisations had only passive allies
- 23 organisations had some level 1 employees advise they were not allies at all (between 2.5% and 50% of their level 1 employees)

Fortunately, in all organisations with respondents in the not active ally category, there was at least 1 active ally.

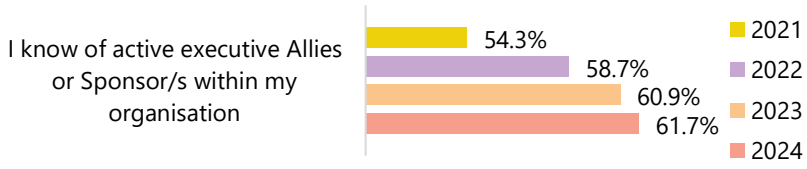
Looking at Level 2 respondents, we see significantly worse results:

- Only 4 organisations had all level 2 employees respond as active allies
- 66 organisations had only active and passive respondents (no non-supporters)
- 96 organisations had between 1 and 28 level 2 employees advise they were not allies at all (between 0.8% and 18.1% of their level 2 employees).
- Only 2 organisations had no level 2 employees complete the survey

NOTE: We do not know the make-up of each organisation, i.e. how many level 1 or level 2 employees who did not participate in the survey.

Knowledge of executive allies and sponsors

Overall, there has been a 13.5% increase in agreement with this statement among all respondents since 2021.

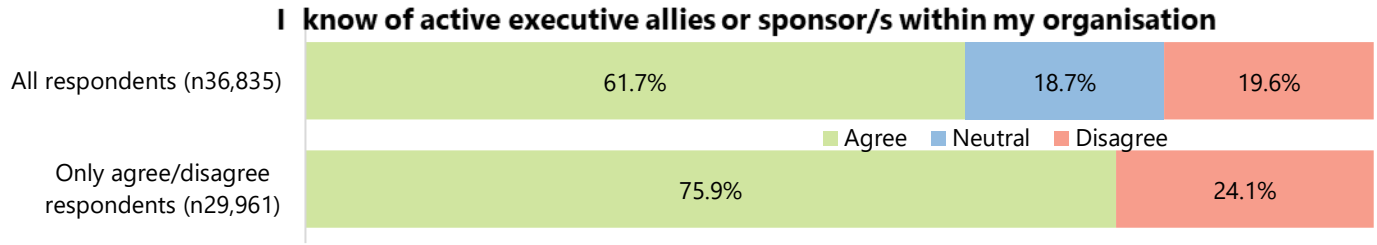


Having an active executive ally in an organisation results in significant differences in the overall health and wellbeing of employees, productivity, engagement, and instances of bullying and harassment.

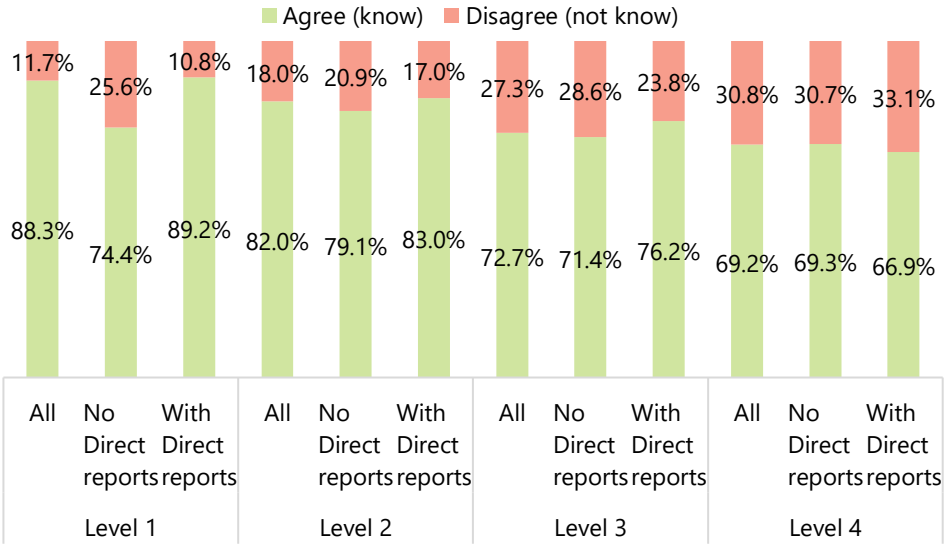
Leading from the top shows that the organisation is committed to inclusion and also increases the understanding of the kind of culture and behaviour that is expected from all staff.

What we do see is that an employee's direct manager has the most significant influence on the team's culture and that middle managers can undermine the organisation's macro culture if cultural expectations are not made clear.

While 53.9% of level 1 respondents believe they are active allies to the LGBTQ+ community, this does not necessarily translate into respondents from those organisations being aware of them as active allies or sponsors.



The remainder of this practice point looks only at those who agreed or disagreed. After removing those neutral respondents, of the almost 30,000 respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement, three-quarters advised that they knew of active executive allies within their organisation.



However, the further away from the leadership team, the less likely employees are to be aware of active executive allies. Disregarding employees who were neutral in their answer, less than 12% of level 1 employees are not aware of any executive allies in their organisation; this increased to 18% for level 2 employees and further increased to over 25% for level 3 and 4 employees.

In other areas:

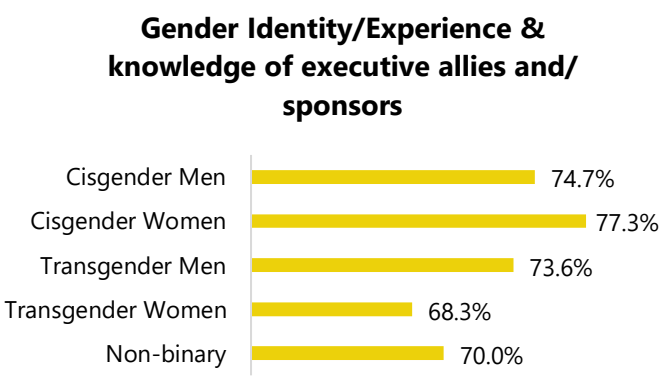
- Direct reports: Respondents with one or more direct reports are up to 19.9% (level 1) more likely to know of active executive allies in their organisation than those who do not have reports.
- Age: all groups agreeing between 72% and 77%,
- Location: 66.4% of regional-based respondents know of executive allies versus 77.5% of Capital city-based respondents. We know that the majority of head offices are based in capital city locations. This implies that the physical closeness to the leadership team increases the likelihood of knowing active executive allies.
- Position Type: Full-time and part-time staff are the most likely to be aware of executive allies, at 76.8% and 75.2%, respectively. Only 61.2% of temporary staff and 62.4% of contracted staff agreed, equating to a 25.7% difference across employment types. This disparity has risen from 19.2% last year.
- Tenure: a 15.6% difference with those being with the organisation at 7-10 years most likely to know (79.4%) and those with the organisation under one year least likely (68.7%).

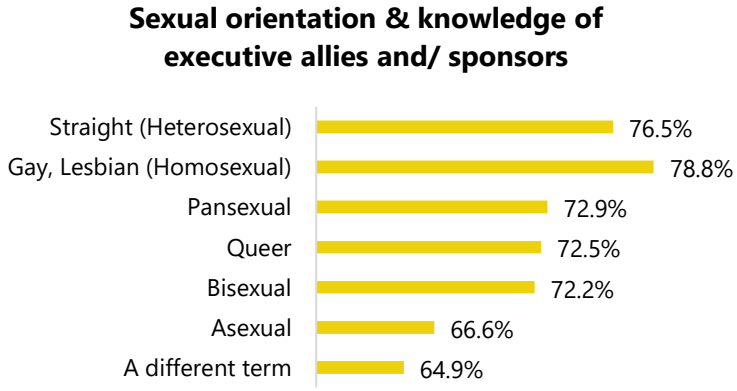
Overall, LGBTQ+ respondents are more likely to know of executive allies:

- Within the Level 1 group, LGBTQ+ respondents are 5.6% less likely to know executive allies (non-LGBTQ+73.5% vs. LGBTQ+: 69.3%)
- At all other levels, LGBTQ+ respondents are more likely to know of active executive allies.
    - level 2: 9.4% (non-LGBTQ+61.9% vs. LGBTQ+: 67.7%)
    - Level 3: 12.2% (non-LGBTQ+50.1% vs. LGBTQ+: 56.2%)
    - level 4: 7.0% (non-LGBTQ+46.2% vs. LGBTQ+: 43.2%)

Looking further into gender, this year, transgender women are least likely to agree they know of executive allies, and cisgender women are most likely.

When looking at people of diverse sexuality, there are significant differences. Straight respondents know of executive allies at around the average, while those who identify as gay/lesbian are the most likely at 78.8%. Knowledge rates drop to 64.9% of respondents who identify with a different term.



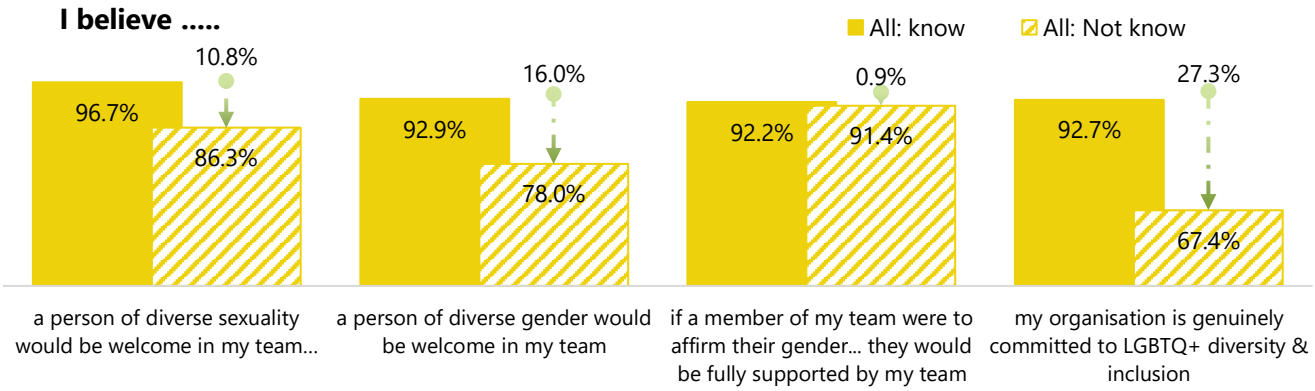


Impact of active executive allies & sponsors

While we can identify the respondents who are more likely to be aware of or know of executive allies, what is more important are the differences in responses from those who are in organisations with or without known executive allies and sponsors and, most importantly, the impact on LGBTQ+ employees.

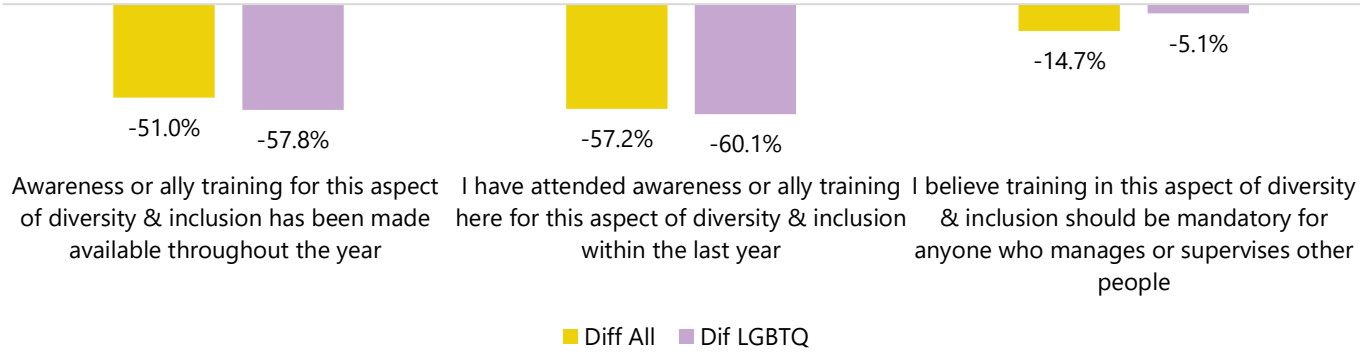
Awareness of executive allies increases agreement that a team would welcome a person of diverse sexuality or gender or support someone affirming their gender in the workplace.

Significantly, there is a 27.3% greater agreement that the organisation is genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion when there are known executive allies.



The availability and attendance of LGBTQ+ training significantly increases for respondents who know of executive allies. Those participants who are not aware of any executive allies in their organisation are less likely to know about or attend training than respondents who have these allies.

Difference between knowing and not knowing executiveallies - by respondent cohort

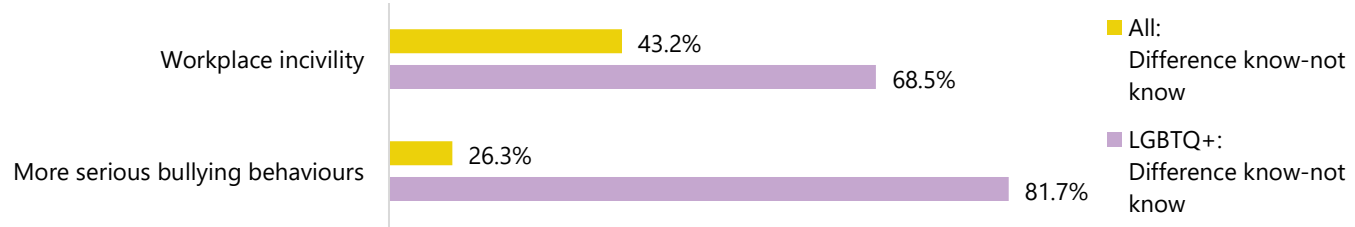


Experiences of negative behaviours, including workplace incivility and more serious bullying behaviours, are significantly lessened when there are known executive allies.

Respondents in organisations without executive allies are:

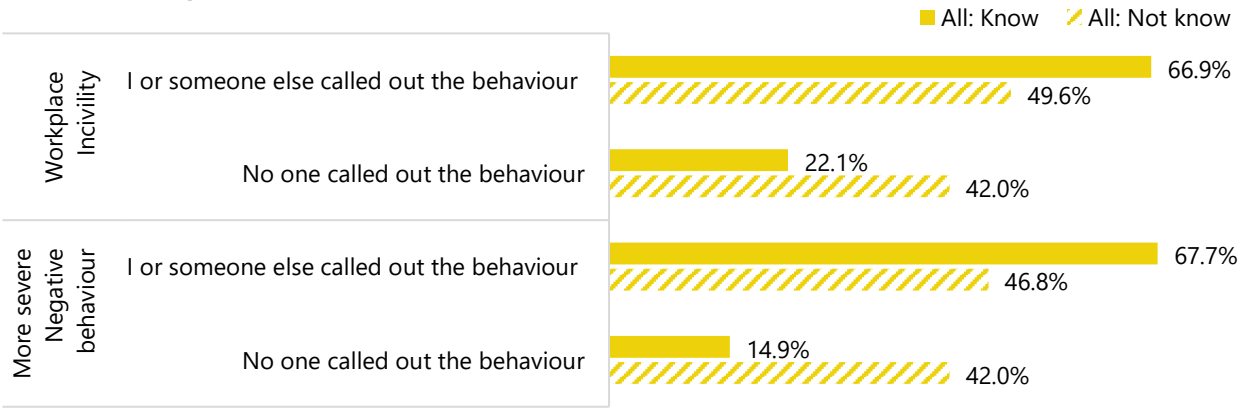
- 44.6% less likely to feel that *negative commentary targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender is acted upon quickly* (All: know: 70.2% vs. don't know: 38.9%)
- 36.1% less likely to feel *managers are willing to address mild bullying behaviours targeting diverse sexuality* (All: know: 80.1% vs. don't know 51.2%)
- 37.2% less likely to feel *managers are willing to address mild bullying behaviours targeting a person's diverse gender* (All: know: 79.1% vs. don't know 49.7%)

More employees have witnessed bullying behaviours in organisations without executive allies, with between 26.3% and 81.7% difference in witnessing severe behaviours.



Employees who know of executive allies are more likely to agree that they, or someone else, called out witnessed negative behaviours, and are half as likely to advise that no one called out workplace incivility or more severe bullying behaviours.

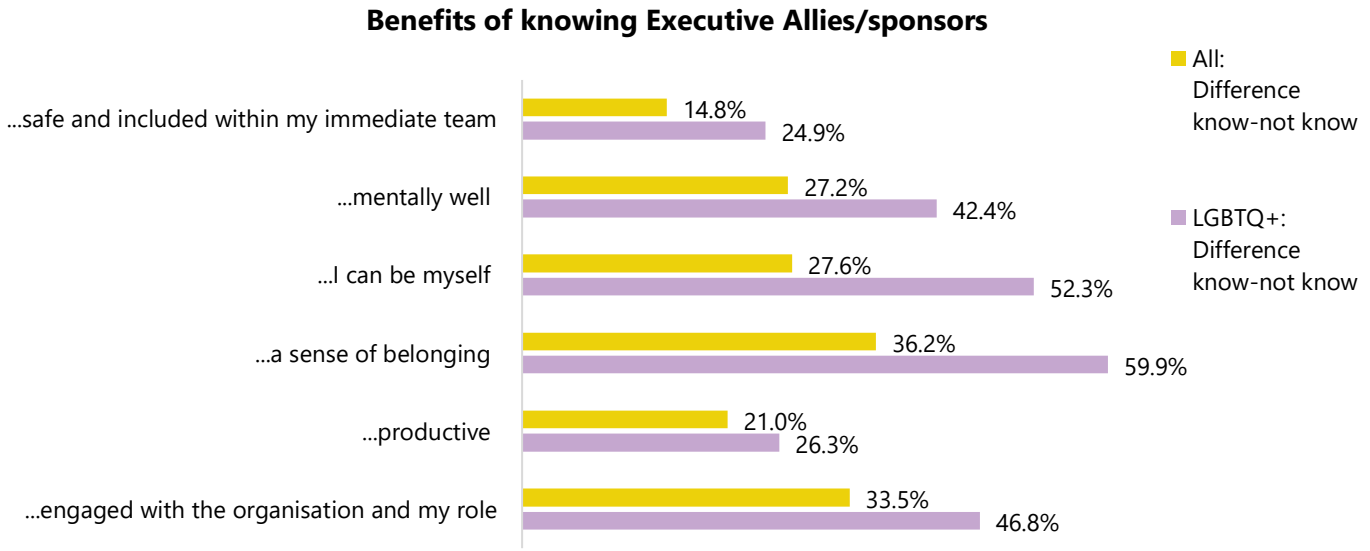
Action taken when negative behaviour witnessed



The awareness of active executive allies improves workplace health and wellbeing, engagement, and productivity. While the increase is more pronounced within the LGBTQ+ cohort, all respondents benefit. LGBTQ+ respondents are 59.9% more likely to feel *a sense of belonging* and 52.3% more likely to *feel they can be themselves*.

The impact on overall allyship in the organisation is significant. Those with known executive allies are:

- 83.5% more likely to also be an active ally (know: 50.7% vs. don't know: 27.6%)
- 27.1% **less** likely to be a passive ally (know: 47.4% vs. don't know: 64.9%)
- 73.9% **less** likely to be not an ally at all (know: 1.9% vs. not: 7.4%)
- 179.0% more likely to know active allies in their immediate area (know: 85.2% vs. don't know: 30.5%)
- 304.9% more likely to know of material on how to be an active ally (know: 77.7% vs. don't know: 19.2%)
- 178.9% more likely to agree that employees are supported to be allies (know: 91.4% vs. don't know: 32.8%)



For those who are not active allies, the reason why is 63.2% less likely to be because it *would be frowned upon by someone with influence* over their career. (know: 3.1% vs. don't know: 8.3%)

Benefits for LGBTQ+ Employees

Feelings of inclusion within the organisation are significantly different between the two cohorts. Those with known executive allies are:

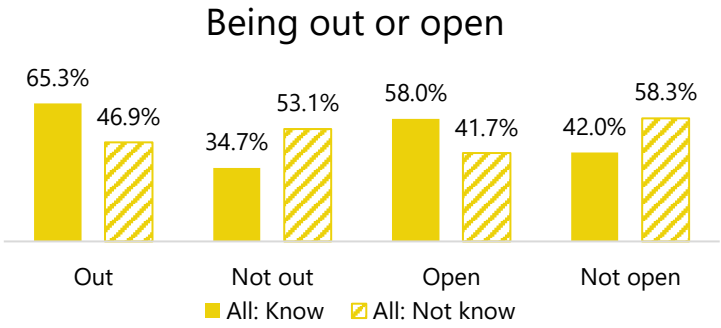
- 186.4% more likely to agree that e*xecutive endorsement of sexuality and/or gender diverse inclusion initiatives has been positive* (know: 83.2% vs. don't know: 29.0%)
- 123.8% more likely to agree that active allies have a positive impact on their *sense of inclusion within the organisatio*n (know: 74.2% vs. don't know: 33.2%)
- 67.8% more likely to feel the organisation's *commitment to people of diverse sexuality and/or gender has been positive* (know: 88.9% vs. don't know: 52.9%), &
- 52.5% more likely to have had a *positive experience of inclusion within their immediate work area* (know: 81.8% vs. don't know: 53.6%)

Importantly, they are 43.2% **less** likely to feel they *spend time editing conversations or hiding* who they are (know: 25.9% vs. not: 45.7%)

Being 'out' or 'open'

Organisations with executive allies seem to have a more comfortable culture, enabling respondents to be 39.2% more likely 'out' about their diverse sexuality and 39.3% more likely to be 'open' about their diverse gender.

91.9% of respondents in 'know' organisations would recommend their organisation, compared to 67.4% of 'don't know' employees.



Employees in 'know' organisations are more likely to feel optimistic about their careers, safety, and support within the organisation. They are:

- 121.8% more likely to know of *visible 'out' role models with the same or similar sexuality* as themselves. (know: 76.2% vs. don't know: 34.4%)
- 111.5% more likely to feel *Inclusion initiatives here for people of diverse sexuality have had a positive impact* on how they feel about their sexuality (know: 79.0% vs. don't know: 37.3%)
- 70.0% more likely to feel their *performance is positively impacted by being out* (know: 64.8% vs. don't know: 38.1%), and
- 56.0% more likely to be *inclined to stay with the organisation*. (know: 80.4% vs. don't know: 51.5%)

Even for those 'not out' they are generally less likely to agree with the likelihood of negative repercussions:

- 49.8% less likely to feel being out *would negatively impact their career progression* (know: 18.8% vs. don't know: 37.5%)
- 47.8% less likely *to fear being the target of discrimination*. (know: 19.5% vs. don't know: 37.3%)
- 50.2% less likely to be *concerned about becoming the target of sexualised jokes or innuendo*. (know: 18.9% vs. don't know: 38.0%)

For trans and gender diverse respondents in organisations with known executive allies, positives for those open are:

- 49.9% less likely to feel they have been deliberately misgendered. (know: 18.2% vs. don't know: 36.4%)
- 336.8% more likely to know of *visible 'out' role models with the same or similar gender* as themselves. (know: 47.6% vs. don't know: 10.9%)
- 116.0% more likely to feel *inclusion initiatives here for people of diverse sexuality have had a positive impact* on how they feel about their own gender diversity (know: 71.3% vs. don't know: 33.0%)
- 70.5% more likely to feel their gender identity will *not impact their career progression* (know: 66.7% vs. don't know: 39.1%)
- 42.9% more likely to feel *comfortable discussing any issues* with their manager (know: 81.9% vs. don't know: 57.3%)

Those 'not open' are generally less likely to agree with the likelihood of negative repercussions:

- 29.3% less likely to feel being open *would negatively impact career progression* (know: 39.4% vs. don't know: 55.6%)
- 38.9% less likely to *fear being the target of discrimination* (know: 34.9% vs. don't know: 57.0%)
- 33.9% less likely to feel *some members of the team would not accept it* (know: 46.4% vs. don't know: 70.2%)
- 38.7% less likely to be *concerned about becoming the target of jokes or innuendo* (know: 34.9% vs. don't know: 57.0%)

22.1% more individuals have undertaken affirmation processes within their current organisation, and those with known executive allies agree 102.2%% more that they are happy with the processes they have undertaken (know: 67.4% vs. don't know: 33.3%).

Impact on discrimination, bullying and harassment.

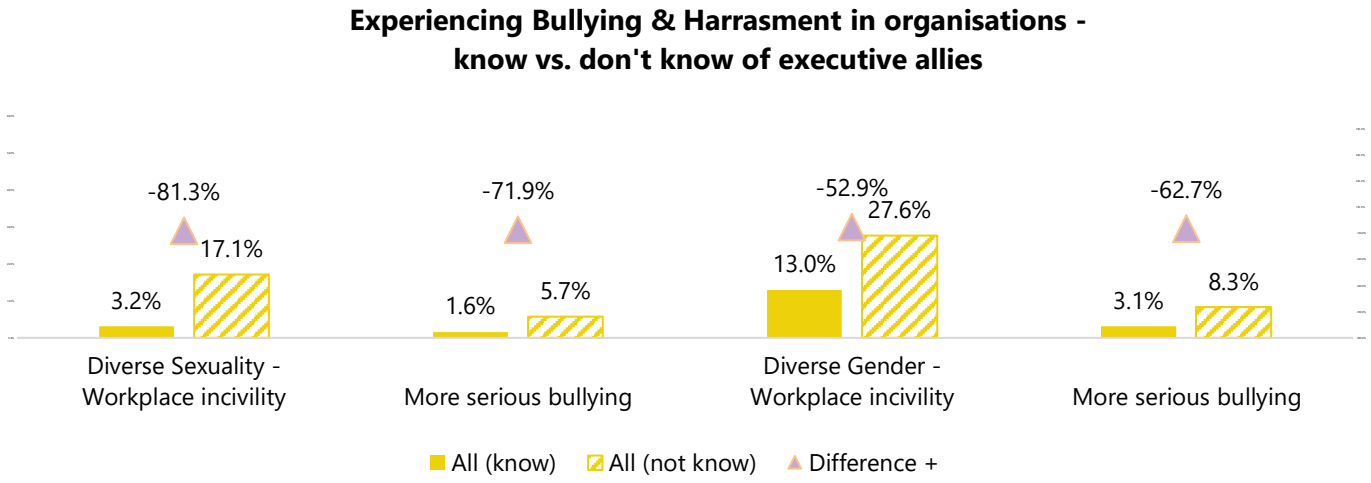
All LGBTQ+ respondents were asked if they had experienced discrimination in the past due to their diverse sexuality and/or gender within their current organisation. Those with executive allies only agreed 16.6% of the time, compared to 26.1% of those without known executive allies, a 36.5% difference.

Incidents of workplace incivility or more serious bullying behaviours are impacted when executive allies and sponsors are present.
For respondents of diverse sexuality:

- 63.6% fewer experienced workplace incivility, and 13.0% more reported it to managers or grievance officers.
- 71.2% fewer experienced serious bullying and harassment, and 35.2% more reported it to managers or grievance officers

For trans and gender diverse respondents:

- 52.8% fewer experienced workplace incivility, and 14.6% more reported it to managers or grievance officers,
- 62.7% fewer experienced serious bullying and harassment, and 33.3% more reported it to managers or grievance officers.

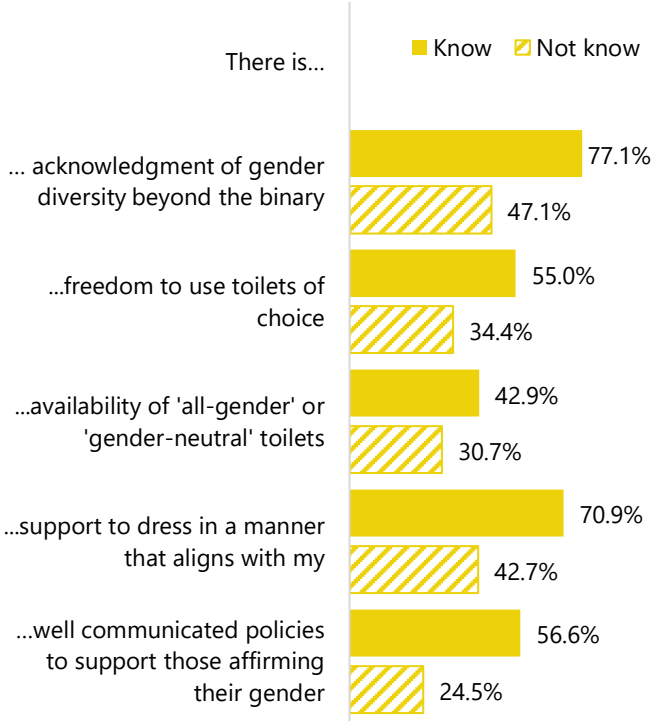


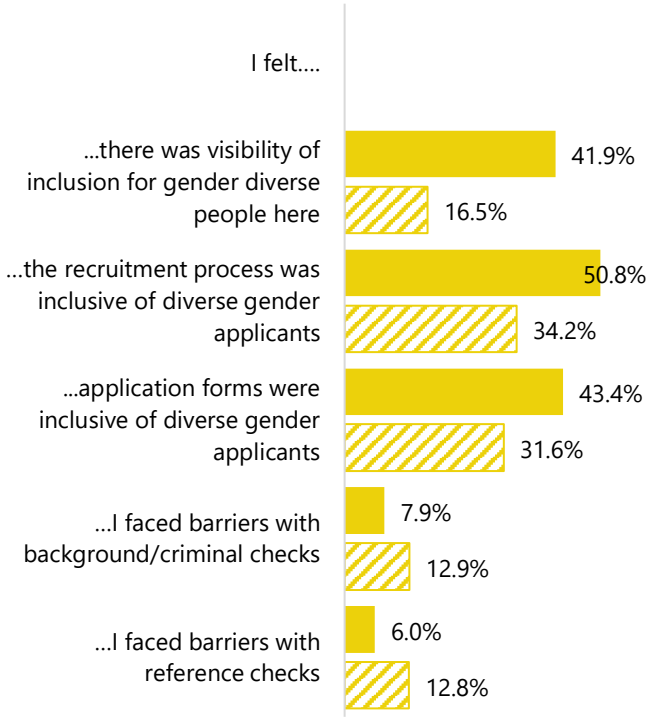
Impact on trans and gender diverse recruitment experiences & Policies

For trans and gender diverse respondents, even prior to beginning to work for an organisation, the impacts are noticeable.

Where respondents report they do not have executive allies, they advise they experienced more recruitment barriers with background/criminal (62.0% higher) & reference checks (111.4% higher).

Once onboard, the employee policies are also perceived as more inclusive in organisations where there are known executive allies. Respondents with known executive allies and sponsors are more likely to agree that *there is freedom to dress* according to their gender identity and expression and freedom to use the toilet of choice, and they are 131.7% more likely to agree that there are well-communicated policies *to support those affirming their gender*.





Actions

1. Progress might be slow, but don't give up.
2. Once you reach your goal, continue working on inclusion to ensure that progress achieved is not lost
3. Don't view your data in isolation. Compare your data year on year to see where your activities are most impactful.
4. Use all the resources available to you. Other organisations in your industry, other industries, and even other sectors' data can help to show gaps.
5. Increase knowledge across your entire organisation so that all employees understand the culture you are promoting, not just those in the leadership team.
6. Ensure that executive teams and all managers are educated in LGBTQ+ inclusion and know how to be active, visible allies.
7. Help executives understand the impact that their visibility as allies has on the broader LGBTQ employee base.
8. Have executive allies advocate for more LGBTQ+ diversity in senior recruitment and talent programs

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