

PRACTICE POINTS

2020 DATA ANALYSIS FROM THE AWEI NATIONAL SURVEY

BEST PRACTICE FOR THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE OF DIVERSE GENDERS & SEXUALITIES IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES

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ARE OUR LEADERS OUR MOST ACTIVE LGBTQ ALLIES?

This year the AWEI 2020 annual survey of employees working within organisations active in LGBTQ inclusion saw a response rate of 33,572 of which 20.21% (n6,787) identified as being of diverse sexuality and/or gender. This third edition of Practice Points focuses on what our data tells us about our active allies (those who actively support LGBTQ inclusion within their workplaces) and explores reasons as to why others may be more passive in their approach.

DEFINING ACTIVE ALLIES

There is a difference between active and passive allies. A passive ally may support LGBTQ inclusion initiatives, agree that it is important work and acknowledge the positive impact that LGBTQ inclusion initiatives are having on the organisational culture – but do they make a difference to the experience of LGBTQ people in the workplace? The answer is typically ‘no’.

The word passive suggests that the support is there, but not visible. Inward not outward facing. Will an LGBTQ person know whether someone is a passive ally – on their side? Well, unless they have had a chance to discuss this – probably not – which is the catch-22 with passive allies. It’s good that they are an ally, but the issue is that nobody knows they are.

For this reason, we have very deliberately focused on defining active allies within our employee survey and trying to uncover that which would move a passive ally into someone more visibly supportive of this work. That’s what makes a difference to our LGBTQ employees, and clearly it does as the majority indicate that active allies have made a positive difference to their sense of inclusion within the workplace.

SURVEY QUESTION

DEFINING AN ACTIVE ALLY AS SOMEONE WHO ACTIVELY (NOT PASSIVELY) SUPPORTS AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE FOR EMPLOYEES OF DIVERSE SEXUALITY AND/OR GENDER, WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ACTIVE ALLY?

IT'S THE VISIBILITY OF ALLIES THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

In surveying LGBTQ respondents regarding the visibility of executive allies within their organisation and other allies within their immediate work area, the results were somewhat disappointing given the focus on allies within recent years. Only 61% of 5,869 LGBTQ respondents knew of executive allies within their organisation and only 66% of 5,866 LGBTQ respondents knew of allies within their immediate work area.

These results made us question the impact that allies were having on LGBTQ people. While initially, it looked as if only 53.1% strongly agreed or agreed that active allies positively impacted their sense of inclusion within the current workplace, that number rose to 65.84% when we filtered only those LGBTQ people for whom active allies were visible. The more visible the active ally to the individual, the greater the sense of inclusion.

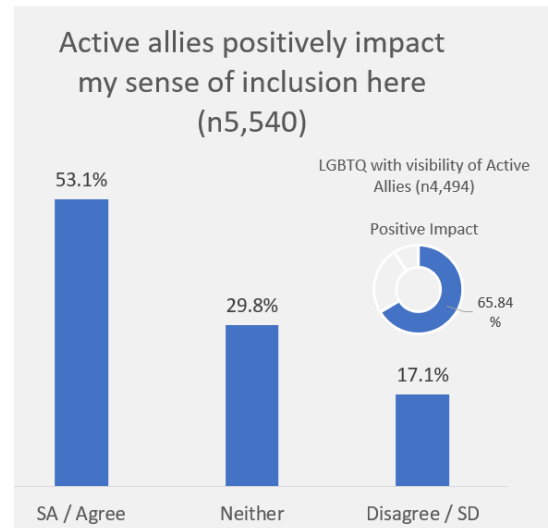


Figure 1 : Greater the visibility, greater the impact

THE SHIFT IN ALLY NUMBERS

We only saw a marginal increase in ally numbers this year (62.3% 2020 vs 60.8% 2019), however we did see a more notable and equally positive shift in the numbers of those who were undecided as to whether they were an active ally and those who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This year, the number of people disagreeing that they were allies decreased by 8.3%; the number of people undecided increasing by 5.7%. This along with the small increase in the number of people who considered themselves active allies sends a positive message, but there is still much to be learned as to *why* passive supporters aren't active and what can be done to shift the balance.

THE 'WHY' AND 'HOW' STILL KEY REASONS FOR NOT BEING AN ALLY

49.5% of people who were not active allies stated that they were just too busy. 45.3% stated that they just didn't have any interest in the area. *We may not* be able to do a lot about this. However, the next two commonly cited reasons for not being an ally, we can do something about. 42.8% of people who were not active allies stated that they didn't know enough about *how* to be an active ally and 34.6% stated that they didn't know enough about *why* they should be one. With 68% of non-active allies saying they are happy to support passively; we can assume that the support is there so our next questions have to be:

- Will ramping up our education or resource materials for allies help shift this group of people?'
- Are people thinking that being an active ally requires a significant amount of time? Is this what is holding people back?
- Are people aware of why allies are so important?
- Are we providing enough information on how time-poor people can be active allies?

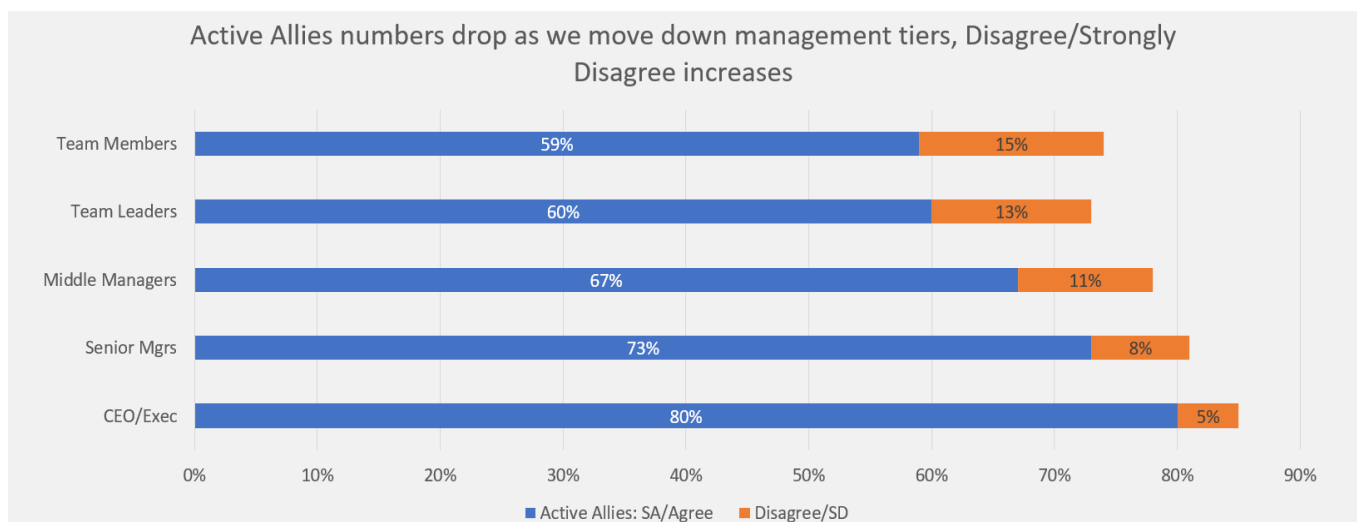
WOMEN ARE OUR STRONGEST NON-LGBTQ ALLIES

We wanted to filter the data by various demographics to see if we could pinpoint any patterns in active ally support. For non-LGBTQ respondents, women were 19% more likely to be active allies than men (66% vs 47%) with their top two reasons for not being active stated as 'don't know how' and 'too busy'. While men also stated 'too busy' as being their second most identified reason, their top reason was identified as not having a personal interest in this area.

Interestingly, only 77% of LGBTQ respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were active allies. Being too busy was their top reason for not being an active ally closely followed by 'don't know how'. 5% of LGBTQ respondents responded with 'not applicable'. This begs the question of whether we need to provide any specific guidance as to how LGBTQ people can be allies for others within their community and how.

ARE OUR LEADERS OUR MOST ACTIVE LGBTQ ALLIES OVERALL?

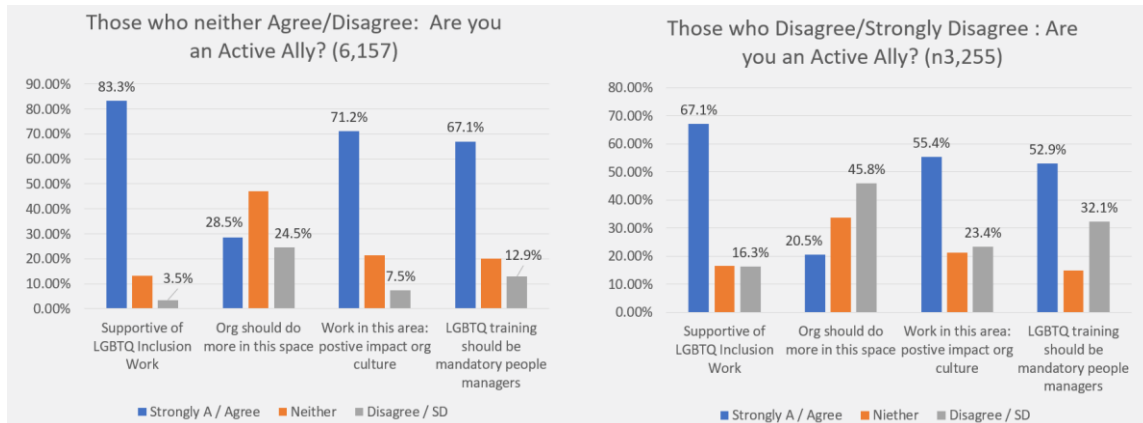
One of the most interesting findings for us was the clear pattern of declining active allyship once we start to move down traditional reporting lines. The further down the reporting lines, the smaller the number of active allies and the greater the number of those who disagree or strongly disagree that they are active allies.



We could hypothesise from this data that visible inclusivity is more important, the higher we move up traditional organisational hierarchies. We have long spoken of inclusion being a valued leadership quality and the higher someone moves within traditional hierarchies the more important this behaviour becomes. If this is correct, then what we appear to be missing is the clear message of its importance as we move further down the line. Is the importance of inclusive behaviour (regardless of the diversity dimension we are focusing on) being communicated enough as a valued leadership quality or is it about greater accountability and reward for those who exhibit those behaviours?

DOES THAT MEAN NON-ACTIVE ALLIES ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE?

As mentioned earlier, 68% of all non-active allies are happy to support LGBTQ inclusion passively; which indicates that the support is there. We filtered the data by several key questions to determine just *how* supportive passive allies are. We compared those who neither agreed nor disagreed that they were active allies with those who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This is what we found:



In summary:

- Between 67% and 83% of all non-active allies supported the work of LGBTQ inclusion
- The majority (55%-71%) believed that work in this area had a positive impact on the organisation's culture
- And more than half (52.9%-67.1%) believed that training in this area should be mandatory for all people managers.

While there was less support for organisation's doing more in this space, the importance of this work and the need for people managers to be trained in LGBTQ inclusion was overwhelmingly positive, particularly given the number of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were active allies themselves.

DO WE SEE THE SAME PATTERNS IN OUR REGIONS?

If anything, the positive shift in active allies was much more apparent within our regions, with active ally respondents up by 10% and awareness of support mechanisms for allies up by approximately 13.8%. The only negative pattern that we were able to detect within our regional/rural areas was the decline in visibility of executive allies – this number dropping by approximately 13%.

IN SUMMARY

In summary, the majority of non-active allies' support LGBTQ inclusion, even to the point of believing that training in this area should be mandatory for people managers. We do, however, still have work to do on imparting information on why allies are important, how to be a 'time-poor' active ally and the importance of visibly inclusive behaviours within people management roles.

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