PRACTICE POINTS

2021 DATA ANALYSIS FROM THE AWEI NATIONAL SURVEY

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

AWEI ISSUE 1: AUGUST 2021

KEY INSIGHTS OF THE AWEI 2021 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey had its largest response to-date this year, including 186 participating organisations. The 2021 Survey saw a response rate of 44,915 employees across Australia (with an additional 584 employees working for Australian organisations overseas). Of all respondents, 18.8% individuals (n7,930) identified as being of diverse sexuality and/or gender (LGBTQ).

All respondents worked in organisations active in LGBTQ inclusion, whether they be in the early or developmental stages of their inclusion journey or highly experienced in this aspect of diversity & inclusion.

This edition looks at some of the key findings within the 2021 responses.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Unsurprisingly, a majority of respondents live in New South Wales (29.59%) and Victoria (22.08%), with Queensland (15.05%) and Western Australia (13.65%) following. Of all respondents, 18.87% live outside of metropolitan areas (n7,994); compared to 16.74% of LGBTQ employees.

Similar to last year, 1.52% of respondents worked in overseas locations, predominantly in Asia (28.35%), North America (21.48%) and Oceania (28.87%).

Industries most applicable to respondents' organisations included Banking & Finance (6.38%), Education (4.99%), Energy/Utilities (6.99%), Law Enforcement (6.19%), Mining (5.75%), Professional Services/Consulting (5.37%), Public Services (24.04%) and Technology/Telco (6.18%).

In regard to length of time with their current employer, 53% of respondents have been with their current organisation for over five years; 42% of LGBTQ employees.

Regarding multi-faceted aspects of diversity experience within the workplace, 41.2% of all respondents also identified as having a diverse identity (n19,641); compared to 40.88% of LGBTQ respondents (n3,561). These include: being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; person of colour; identifying with a CALD background; living with a disability; being neuro-diverse; person of faith; or mature age employee.

12,557 of these respondents also participated in last year's Survey.

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GENERAL VIEWS OF ALL RESPONDENTS

While a majority of all employees personally support the work their organisation does for the inclusion of employees of diverse sexuality and/or gender, we did see a 2.63% drop in those who strongly agree/agree to this question. In 2020, the response rate was 87.65%;this year it was 85.02%.

A majority of employees (82.68%) think that it is important that employers be active in this area of diversity and inclusion. They also believe that such work has a positive influence on organisational culture (82.16%).

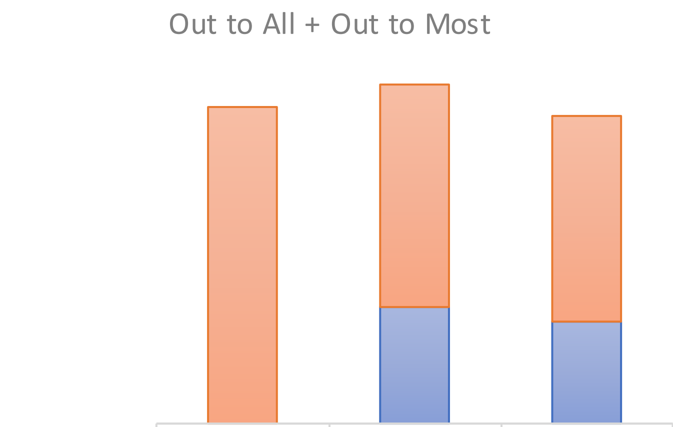
While most respondents feel positive levels of comfort with their LGBTQ colleagues, we also saw increased support for LGBTQ colleagues in regard to:

- bringing partners to work related events (.3% increase)
- referring to a colleague by a different name or pronoun if they were affirming their gender at work (1.4% increase)
- using they/them/their pronouns for non-binary colleagues (1.76% increase)
- having ‘all gender’ or ‘gender neutral’ toilets and facilities made available (1% increase)

DIVERSE SEXUALITY: BEING OUT AT WORK

There was a 27.5% increase in the number of respondents with a diverse sexuality this year (n6,560). There was also a 4% increase in the number of respondents identifying as Bisexual (n1,578); and 6% decrease in those identifying as Gay or Lesbian (n3,586).

One of the key findings this year was yet another increase in those who were **not out at a**ll at work (2019: 10.65% vs 2020: 12.47% vs 2021: 15.86%) and the decrease in those who were **out to all** at work (2019: 62.4% vs 2020: 43.86% vs 2021: 40.54%).



	*2019	2020	2021
Out to all	62.40%	43.86%	40.54%
Out to Most	0.00%	22.97%	20.10%

*’Completely Out’: In 2019 and years prior, there was no option for ‘Out to Most’.

As these concerning rates appeared for the first time in 2020, multiple tests across the various breakdowns continued to show that fewer employees were willing to be out at work in regard to their diverse sexuality.

It was only when we added in the 2020 figures to include those that were ‘**out to most**’ did we see numbers anywhere near comparable to 2019.

However, in 2021, there was a 6% drop in the total of employees who were **out to all** or **most**.

Likewise, those **not out at all** has increased approximately 3% every year over the last three years.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Despite the above, for the first time we saw an improvement in the general health and wellbeing of employees not out at work and a slight decrease in the same areas for employees out at work.

Health + Wellbeing (Strongly Agree/Agree responses)	2021 Out to All (n2517)	2020 Out to All (n2339)	2021 Not Out (n985)	2020 Not Out (n665)
I feel safe and included within my immediate team	94.23%	95.27%	82.12%	80.24%
I feel mentally well at work	79.78%	83.89%	66.84%	61.04%
I feel I can be myself at work	88.85%	91.15%	55.05%	48.40%
I feel a sense of belonging here	79.90%	82.35%	62.55%	59.88%
I feel productive at work	83.07%	86.62%	81.75%	81.22%
I feel engaged with the organisation and my work	83.07%	86.29%	71.91%	71.08%

However, it is important to note that employees who are out to all fare better on all scales of engagement and wellbeing. There is no data in the survey to indicate this pleasing but unexpected change in the positive shifts regarding employees not out at work.

That said, given the unique experiences from 2020, we suspect that working remotely / working from home presented unique challenges for employees who are proudly out at work. Likewise, employees not out at work may have felt safer working away from the office.

VISIBILITY OF ALLIES

In surveying LGBTQ respondents regarding the visibility of executive active allies within their organisation and allies within their immediate work area, the results were somewhat disappointing.

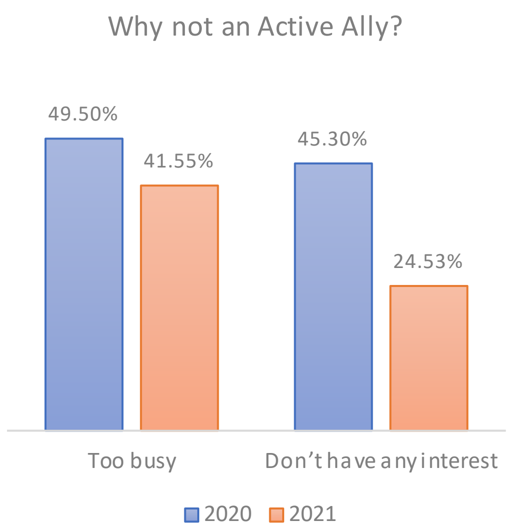
Only 58% knew of executive allies within the organisation (a similar response rate to last year). There was a significant drop in the percentage of LGBTQ respondents who knew of active allies within their immediate work area (2020: 66% vs 2021: 66%). Perhaps of more concern is the 16.4% drop of LGBTQ respondents who feel that active allies positively impact their sense of inclusion in the workplace (2020: 65.84% vs 2021: 49.4%).

While a drop in these response rates *may* be attributed to remote working and the innovative ways we need to find to create visibility of active allyship for LGBTQ people and colleagues, these differences seem too considerable to attribute to only one cause.

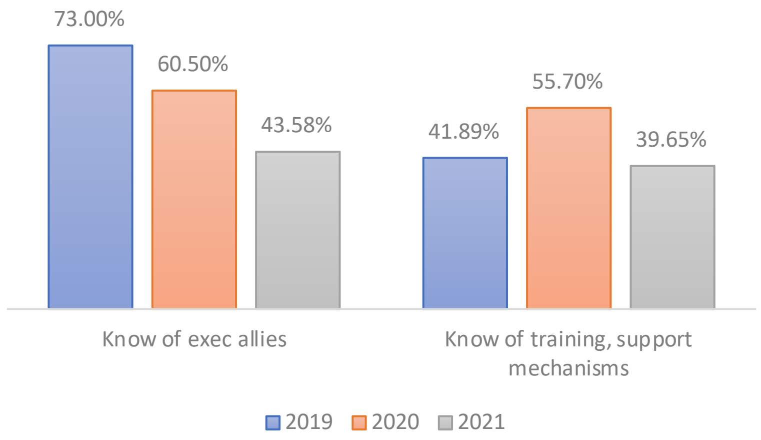
While we saw a marginal increase in Ally numbers from 2019 (60.8%) to 2020 (62.3%), 2021 saw only 27.54% of all respondents consider themselves Active Allies (n6,911). However, 69.42% consider themselves Passive Allies (happy to support but do not consider themselves active in this space).

Of Passive Allies (n24,291) and those Not an Ally (n1,060) (who do not support LGBTQ workplace inclusion), 32.3% said nothing would influence them to become an Active Ally and 42.74% said a better understanding of HOW to be an Active Ally would encourage them.

Despite this, 78% of Passive Allies and 14% of those Not an Ally still support mandatory training in LGBTQ inclusion for all people managers.



REGIONAL AUSTRALIA



We know that non-metropolitan employees and offices continue to be overlooked, especially regarding LGBTQ workplace inclusion.

This year's Survey continued to illustrate this trend, especially when looking at LGBTQ employees' knowledge of executive allies within the organisation (16.92% drop) or knowledge of training and support mechanisms (15.95% drop).

DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

40.89% of LGBTQ respondents identified as having another diversity identity (n3,561).

Of LGBTQ respondents, 18.7% (n1,490) identify as having **both** a diverse sexual orientation and diverse gender. While levels of experience bullying and harassment decreased for these respondents, they are still more likely to experience discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

65% of LGBTQ respondents with another diversity identity feel most valued for their diverse sexual orientation. While this response rate appears positive, it is important to note that they have also experienced the highest rates of exclusion (49%) and stigma (52%) based on their diverse sexual orientation. 39% also believe it is the least accepted aspect of their identity.

IN CONCLUSION

Despite efforts in LGBTQ workplace inclusion practices and a general majority of support of work in this area of diversity and inclusion, employees with a diverse sexuality still appear to be 'going back into the closet' as percentages of those not out at work continue to increase.

While overall health and wellbeing fares better for employees out at work, we saw positive shifts for employees not out at work this year (perhaps due to remote working).

The visibility of Active Allies and their positive impact on LGBTQ colleagues is down, especially in Regional Australia.

LGBTQ employees with multiple diverse identities are most valued for their diverse sexuality but this aspect of their identity still experiences the most stigma and exclusion and least acceptance.

Please speak to your Relationship Manager regarding how to use this information to influence your activities and promote a more inclusive workplace for LGBTQ employees.