

# 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 6: OCTOBER 2021

## ACTIVE ALLIES IN THE WORKPLACE

The annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey had its largest response rate ever this year, including 186 participating organisations. The 2021 Survey saw a response rate of 44,915 employees across Australia, of which 18.8% individuals (n7,930) identified as being of diverse sexuality and/or gender (LGBTQ).

Respondents were employees working within organisations active in LGBTQ inclusion, whether they be in the early or developmental stages of their inclusion journey or well versed in advancing and advocating workplace experiences for LGBTQ people and their allies.

This edition looks at employees who consider themselves allies in the workplace and the impact they have on their LGBTQ colleagues.

### DEFINING AN ACTIVE ALLY

In defining an ally as someone who supports LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace, we ask respondents to define themselves as an:

- Active Ally (active in their support)
- Passive Ally (supporting LGBTQ inclusion but wouldn't consider themselves active)
- Not an Ally (do not support LGBTQ inclusion)

We define allyship this way as Active Allies provide a clearly visible sense of support or inclusion to LGBTQ people, whereas Passive Allies are not involved – although they are happy to support and have good intentions. Those Not an Ally allows us to investigate employees who do not support LGBTQ workplace inclusion and why this is.

It is important to remember that LGBTQ employees can also be Active Allies to other people in the rainbow communities. Likewise, LGBTQ employees may not consider themselves to be an ally for various reasons.

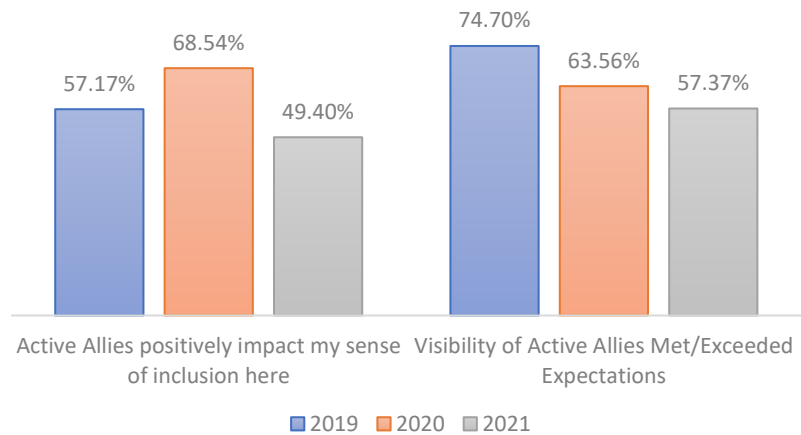
## IMPACT AND VISIBILITY OF ALLIES: LGBTQ RESPONDENTS

This year, the **impact** and **visibility** of allies say a considerable drop as LGBTQ employees (n7,930) were “less likely to know of active allies within their immediate work area” (6% drop from 2020). They were also 3% less likely to “know of executive allies within their organisation;” “able to list several behaviours of an active ally;” or “know of workplace material / training regarding being an LGBTQ ally.”

In turn, there was a 16% drop in the impact Active Allies have on LGBTQ employees’ sense of inclusion at work. Likewise, there was a 7% increase in the same cohort of LGBTQ employees unlikely to feel positively impacted.

Further, the expectations of allyship within the organisation have seen a steady decline since 2019.

While the pandemic and remote working may have played a factor in this this year’s responses, it is unlikely to represent the entirety of this significant decline in allies’ impact of LGBTQ employees. Therefore, we wonder what else could have influenced these dramatic shifts?



## WHO ARE OUR ACTIVE ALLIES?

This year, 27.6% of respondents considered themselves Active Allies (n6,911) and 69.4% considered themselves Passive Allies (n21,713). This is in stark contrast to response from the previous survey, where 62.3% of respondents considered themselves Active Allies.

**Does this mean we have less than half the number of Allies in the workplace as we did before?** The answer is, no – not necessarily. While this is yet another concerning shift in responses, there could be a variety of reasons that employees would not have considered themselves as an Active Ally this year.

We suspect that the flexible measures as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted the variety of ways organisations, employee pride networks and their employees have been able to actively demonstrate their support for LGBTQ inclusion and LGBTQ colleagues.

For example, an employee may not realise the variety of ways that they can still demonstrate Active Allyship while working remotely from behind a computer screen. Rainbow lanyards and badges, using personal pronouns in email signatures, and sharing LGBTQ inclusive content on internal social platforms would all show Active Allyship despite the perceived limits of a virtual workplace.

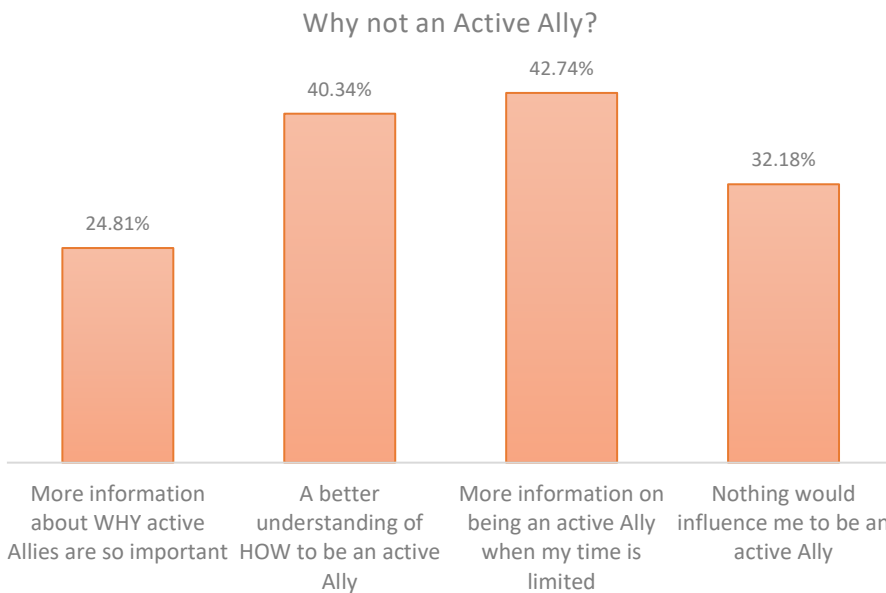
When looking at non-LGBTQ employees, a consistent finding in the AWEI Employee Survey is that non-LGBTQ women are almost twice as likely to be an Active Ally than non-LGBTQ men. However, of those not active, almost all of these respondents are Passive Allies. Of those Not an Ally, non-LGBTQ men are six times more likely than non-LGBTQ women (6% vs. 1%).

Only 51% of LGBTQ respondents (n7,930) would consider themselves an Active Ally (compared to 78% last year).

## WHY NOT AN ACTIVE ALLY?

We asked both Passive Allies (n21,713) and those Not an Ally (1,060) why they don't consider themselves and Active Ally. Every year, the top two reasons for these respondents is that they are "too busy" (42%) or they "don't have any personal interest in this" (23%).

Further, 9% of these respondents state that "it would conflict with their personal beliefs."



On potentially becoming an Active Ally, 43% would like "information on being an Ally as their time is limited" and 41% need "a better understanding of HOW to be an Active Ally."

Of those Not an Ally (who do not support LGBTQ inclusion), 80% "it would conflict with their personal beliefs."

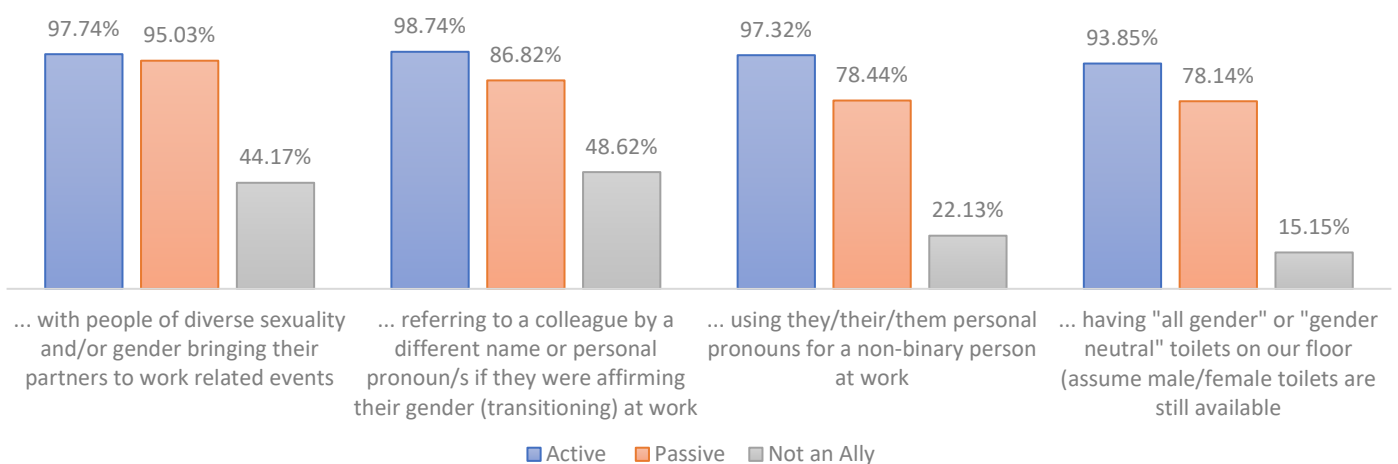
87.6% of this same cohort said that "nothing would influence me to be an Active Ally."

8% also identified as someone of a diverse sexuality and/or gender.

While a majority of employees would not consider themselves an Active Ally, an overwhelming majority support LGBTQ workplace inclusion (86% Passive vs 17% Not an Ally) and believe work in this area has a positive impact on organisational culture (82% vs 11%). They also believe that training in this aspect of diversity and inclusion should be mandatory for people managers (78% vs 14%).

While those who are Not an Ally are less likely to support such initiatives, a substantial but small portion of respondents are still inclined to understand the importance of this work.

Passive Allies are still very inclined to feel comfortable with their LGBTQ colleagues. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for those Not an Ally.



## IN CONCLUSION

Despite continued efforts in LGBTQ workplace inclusion practices, the visibility and impact of Active Allies in the workplace as gone down significantly as LGBTQ employees are less likely to know of allies in their immediate work area or know of executive allies within their organisation.

The employees who do not consider themselves Active Allies are “too busy,” but it is possible to show active allyship without it having any impact on time restraints.

While less employees are likely to consider themselves Active Allies when compared to previous years of the AWEI Survey, a majority still have overwhelmingly positive support for LGBTQ workplace inclusion initiatives as they agree:

- it has a positive impact on organisational culture
- it is important that employers are active in this area of diversity and inclusion
- this type of training should be mandatory for people managers

For the first time in the AWEI Survey, we saw a negative shift in employees who would consider themselves Active Allies and the impact this has on LGBTQ employees. Therefore, it is crucial that this work continues to ensure a safe workplace is curated for all employees.

## ACTION POINTS – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

When discussing LGBTQ inclusion, it's crucial to curate education and awareness about what it means to be an Active Ally to LGBTQ people.

Has your organisation communicated any *information on what it means to be an Ally*? Think about ways employees can show active allyship despite the constraints of remote working or time management.

*Ally and awareness training sessions* are readily available with Pride in Diversity, for members and non-members alike. Has your organisation made such training available to all employees?

Have your *executive leaders communicated to all staff of the importance of being an ally to LGBTQ employees*? Many executive leaders define themselves as an Active Ally – so it is important that their messages reach across the organisation on how employees can be allies to LGBTQ people.

Does your organisation host any type of event for any *LGBTQ Days of Significance*? **IDAHOBIT** and **Wear it Purple** are two (among many!) days that employees can widely show support to the rainbow communities.

*Consider being an Active Ally to the LGBTQ community from within the LGBTQ community* – we can and should all be allies to each other.

**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.**

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