

PRACTICE POINTS

2021 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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LGBTQ WOMEN

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 the experiences of LGBTQ women in the workplace.

DIVERSE SEXUALITIES

Of the record number of LGBTQ respondents to the AWEI 2021 Employee Survey, 47% identified their gender identity as woman (n3742). For the first time, an almost equivalent number of women identified as Bisexual (n1136) or as Gay/Lesbian (n1151). These respondents accounted for 36.85% and 37.33% of LGBTQ women (n3,038).

There was a 27.5% increase in the number of respondents with a diverse sexuality, including a 4% increase in Bisexual respondents and a 6% decrease in Gay/Lesbian respondents.

While Bisexual respondents (n1578) accounted for 24% and Gay/Lesbian (n3586) respondents accounted for 55% of those with a diverse sexuality, respectively:

- 72% of Bisexual respondents were women
- 71% of Pansexual respondents were women
- 31% of Gay/Lesbian respondents were women

Since 2019, there have also been slight increase of women who identify as Asexual and Pansexual.

When comparing LGBTQ men to LGBTQ women, the same trends are not being seen as an overwhelming majority of men still identify as gay (78.27%). In other words, LGBTQ Women are more likely to identify along a broader spectrum of diverse sexualities.

BEING OUT AT WORK

Across all identities, **less employees were out at work** (61%) this year and **more employees were not out at work**. This same trend appeared for LGBTQ women, who were 5% less likely to be out at work in 2021.

Gay/Lesbian women were three times as likely to be out work than Bisexual women (83.45% vs 25.46%), though Pansexual (34.68%) women were more likely to be out at work compared to Bisexual women.

Asexual women were least likely to be out at work regarding their diverse sexuality, out of the whole LGBTQ women cohort (11%).

LGBTQ women were also much less likely to be out at work to any degree compared to LGBTQ men (50.65% vs. 72.28%).

Although men are out to a higher degree than women, those men that are not out at all at work are more concerned about the effect on their career, their workplace experience and about people thinking they may have a diverse sexuality.

While LGBTQ women are less likely to be out at work, LGBTQ men are more likely to feel influenced by workplace culture as to why they are not out at work believing:

- it would be detrimental to their workplace experience (26.65% vs 40%)
- that their career would be negatively impacted ((18.05% vs 31.72%)
- it would not be accepted by some members of their team (34% vs 44.35%)
- they need to avoid inclusion initiatives for fear of people thinking they are of diverse sexuality (13.78% vs 28.05%)

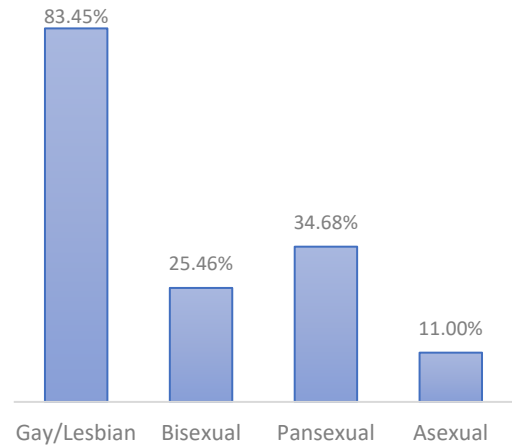
Still, the top reason women of a diverse sexuality were not out in the workplace is because they feel *it would not be accepted by some members of their team* (34%), followed by believing *it would be detrimental to their workplace experience* (26.65%). These top answers are a consistent finding in annual AWEI Survey responses.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

This year, the general cohort of LGBTQ respondents were less likely to be the target of negative behaviours in the workplace. While we might presume this could be due to a majority of Australians working remotely from the office – i.e., working from home – the witnessing of such behaviours increased slightly.

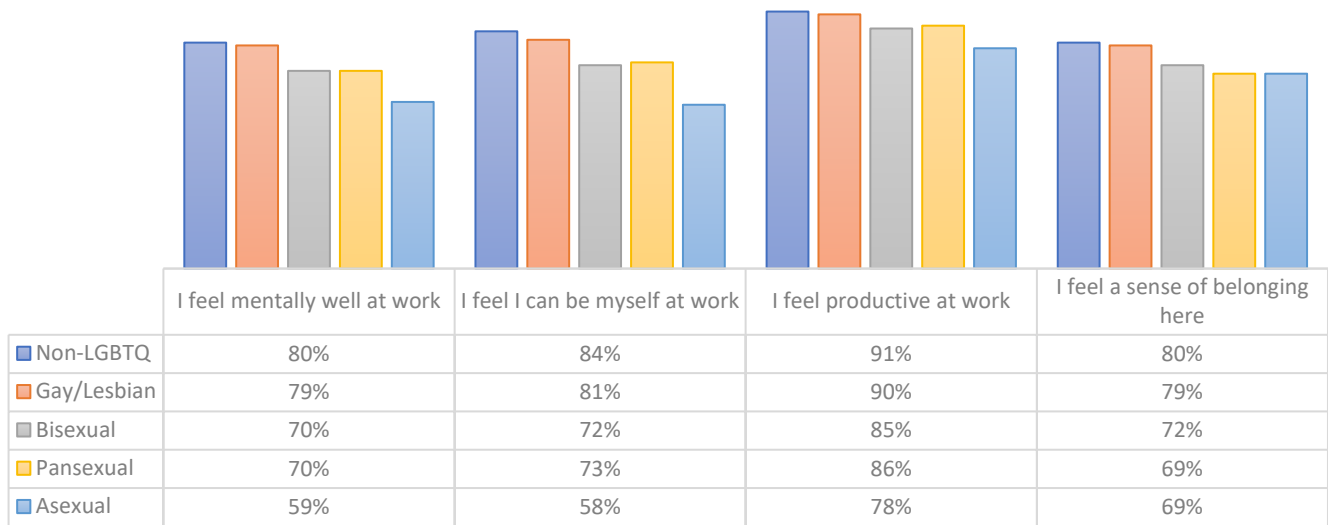
Gay/Lesbian women are most likely to witness more serious bullying targeting LGBTQ people (13.34%) than any other cohort of LGBTQ women. Along with Bisexual women (34.56%), they are also most likely to witness negative behaviours and mild harassment targeting LGBTQ people (31.97%).

Bisexual & Asexual women are witnessing negative behaviours and more serious bullying at lower rates than the other cohorts. This could be because of the lower visibility of Bi and Ace women due to being out at much lower rates than Gay/Lesbian women and Pan women.



ENGAGEMENT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Within the LGBTQ women cohort, Gay/Lesbian women record higher rates of feeling mentally well, engaged and productive at work when compared to Bisexual, Pansexual and Asexual women. Further, Asexual women were least likely to feel such positive rates compared to the other cohorts.



This could be a direct correlation to those who are most likely to be out at work – Gay/Lesbian and Pansexual women. Feeling safe enough to be out at work leads to higher rates of productivity, as a direct result of feeling a sense of belonging and able to bring their whole selves to work.

Non-LGBTQ women recorded higher rates of positive mental health and wellbeing, compared to LGBTQ women, and were more likely than non-LGBTQ men to be Active Allies in the workplace (27% vs 22%). However, LGBTQ women record the highest levels of Active Ally-ship of any demographic (52.97%) – which is a reminder of the importance of being an active ally to fellow rainbow community people.

TRANS WOMEN

The experiences of Trans women in the workplace still need to be addressed, as 16% are still likely to experience exclusion based on their gender diversity within the workplace.

They are as likely as cisgender LGBPQ women to have been a targets of inappropriate workplace behaviours based on their sexuality (12%). Based on their diverse gender, 11% have been the target of such behaviours and 10% have been a target of more serious bullying and harassment within the last year.

Trans women (62.84%) feel more positively about the positive impact that workplace inclusion initiatives have on their diverse gender than cisgender LGBPQ women (55.15%) do regarding the positive impact of the same inclusion initiatives on their own diverse sexuality.

“LONELY, EXHAUSTING AND TINGED WITH ANXIETY. I STRUGGLE TO FORM ANY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK AND FEEL THAT EVEN IN THE VARIOUS WOMENS’ GROUPS AND LGBTQ GROUP, I AM A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY.”

Despite the importance of having visible out role models (79.91%) for Trans women, they still feel under-represented with visible role models (43.7%), senior leadership (30.41%), and less involved in their employee networks (54.38).

IN CONCLUSION

According to respondents in the 2021 AWEI Employee Survey, LGBTQ women are feeling left behind. They are 22% less likely to be out at work than LGBTQ men. Further, as with all respondents, they are less likely to be out at work (to any degree) and more likely to be not out at work. Gay/Lesbian women are three times as likely as Bisexual women to be out at work, while a majority of Bisexual women are not out at all at work. We wonder, are LGBTQ women feeling a need to go back into the closet?

Thought LGBTQ women are less likely to be out than LGBTQ men, the latter report high rates of concerns regarding their career and safety in the workplace should they come out at work.

Gay/Lesbian women are most likely to have witness inappropriate workplace behaviours, including more serious bullying and harassment. Despite this, the record the highest rates of mental health and wellbeing, productivity, and sense of belonging at work when compared to Bi, Pan and Ace women. Non-LGBTQ women fare most positively.

ACTION POINTS – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

It is essential to understand the dual impacts or “double glass ceiling” that LGBTQ Women deal with in the workplace, being both a woman and someone of diverse sexuality and gender.

Have you reviewed your gender equity programs to ensure they feel inclusive for LGBTQ people?

Have you considered celebrating *Days of Significance* for LGBTQ Women? Such days include **Lesbian Visibility Day** (26 April), **IDAHOBIT** (17 May), **Bisexual Visibility Day** (23 September), **International Lesbian Day** (8 October).

Does the leadership structure of your employee *Pride Network* include representation of LGBTQ women?

Has your organisation promoted the *visibility of employees* who identify as LGBTQ women across the organisation?

Are their LGBTQ women in management or executive roles, or within *senior leadership*?

Promote membership of *Pride in Diversity's* [Sapphire Initiative](#) to your employees.

Doing any of the above will curate a positive atmosphere for LGBTQ women, leading not only to more productivity and engagement, but also safer and respectful working environments.

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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