

# 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 8: OCTOBER 2021

## KEY INSIGHTS OF THE AWEI 2021 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

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 regional, rural and remote Australia as well as a comparison to their metropolitan counterparts.

### RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Just under 8,000 responses to the 2021 AWEI Employee Survey came from employees in regional Australia, which was 18% of all responses. The highest number of responses came from NSW (34%) followed by Queensland (20%) and then Victoria (17%) and Western Australia with 15%.

Slightly more employees worked for the three levels of Government (54%) than for metropolitan responses at 45%. The sectors that were most represented by regional respondents were: Public Service (30%), Mining (16%), Community Services (6%), Education (6%) and Energy/Utilities (6%).

Of those responding from regional Australia, 44% had a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas 68% of metropolitan respondents had a higher education degree. Regional respondents had higher levels of certificates or diplomas at 38% compared with metro respondents at 20%.

The age demographic of regional respondents was slightly higher with 42% being aged 45 and older compared to metro respondents at 39%. There was no difference in the gender of respondents between regional and metro.

The percentage of LGBTQ identifying respondents in regional areas was slightly lower at 17% compared to 19% of metropolitan respondents.

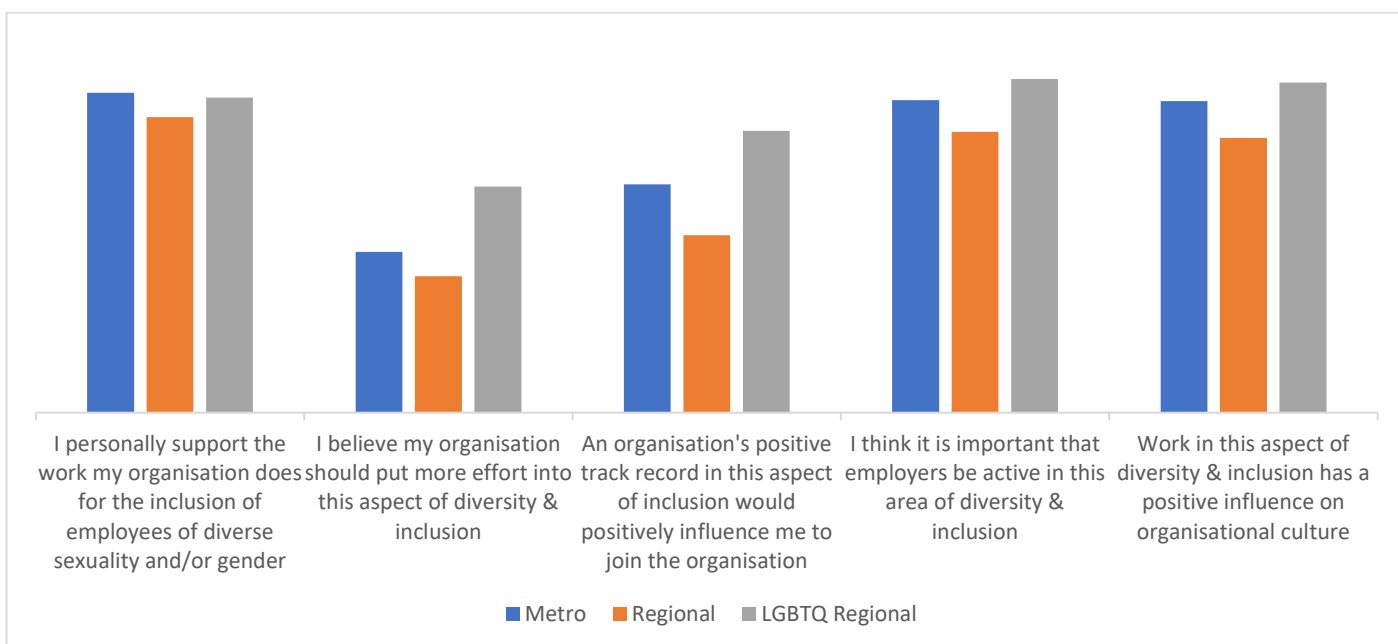
## GENERAL VIEWS OF ALL RESPONDENTS

Fewer regional respondents expressed support for their organisation's LGBTI work (80%), than their metropolitan counterparts (86%).

More metropolitan respondents (84%) thought that it was important to be active in the LGBTQ inclusion space than their regional comrades at 76%.

These statistics highlight the need for a greater effort in regional Australian workplaces for awareness of the business case for LGBTQ inclusion and for greater efforts in raising awareness and understanding of LGBTQ challenges.

When we come to visible signs of LGBTQ inclusion, only 71% of regional respondents agree that there are those signs in their workplaces, compared to 79% for metropolitan respondents. Likewise, only 65% of regional respondents have heard executive leaders speak positively on LGBTQ inclusion, compared to 72% of metropolitan respondents.



## REGIONAL ALLIES

The percentage of active allies is roughly similar at 19% for regional respondents compared to metro respondents at 20%. However, when we drill down into the visibility of active allies only 47% of regional respondents knew of active allies in their immediate work area, compared with 58% in metropolitan areas.

Similarly, only 44% of regional respondents knew of executive allies within their organisation, whereas in metro locations, 57% expressed that they knew executive allies.

When we come to reasons that people are not active allies, 12% of regional respondents say that it would conflict with their personal views. This is higher than for metro respondents at 8%. The most common reason for not being an active ally, was that people were too busy (37% for regional and 43% for metro). However, the second highest reason for not being an ally, was not having a personal interest in LGBTQ inclusion (30% for regional and 23% for metro).

Having more visible LGBTQ identifying people telling their stories and allies telling theirs, can make a huge difference in increasing interest in LGBTQ inclusion.

When regional respondents were asked to state what would influence them to become an active ally, a better understanding of how to be an ally garnered 36% agreement and more information on being an active ally when there is limited time, achieved 35%. These percentages are 5% lower than their metropolitan counterparts. A more disturbing statistic was the response that nothing would influence regional respondents to become an ally. 40% agreed with this statement compared to 30% in metropolitan Australia.

## LGBTQ RESPONDENTS

When asked to describe their sexual orientation, 49% identified as gay or lesbian compared to 56% in metro areas. However, 27% identified as bisexual compared to 24% in metro areas.

Regional respondents with diverse sexualities who were out to all at work were slightly lower at 39% compared to metro areas at 41%. Those regional people not out at all at work was higher at 19% compared to metro areas at 15%.

When asked why they were not out at work, 50% of regional workers said that they would not feel accepted by members of their team. Only 37% felt the same way in metropolitan workplaces.

The experiences of people with diverse sexualities in regional workplaces are less positive by more than 5% than in metropolitan areas. Experiences that rated lower were, support in coming out, not feeling excluded, and overall engagement. More problematic are the lower scores on feeling supported to report jokes, innuendos, and negative commentary (regional: 77% vs metro: 84%) and similarly with support in reporting bullying and sexual harassment (regional: 74% vs metro: 82%).

In regional workplaces 20% of respondents stated that they had been the target of unwanted jokes, innuendo and negative commentary compared to 11% in metro workplaces.

The regional respondents who identify as someone of a diverse sexuality and/or gender, generally rated their employers lower by 5% than their metro counterparts on their expectations of inclusion being met. The areas covered were:

- Communication of inclusion initiatives for sexuality and gender diverse employees during the recruitment
- My experience of inclusion within my immediate work area
- Communication of sexuality and gender diverse inclusion throughout the year
- Visibility and promotion of inclusion or ally training regarding sexuality and gender diversity
- Visibility and promotion of an internal employee network for sexuality & gender diverse employees and allies
- Willingness of managers to address negative commentary/jokes that target people of diverse sexuality and/or diverse gender
- Confidential avenues to safely report bullying/harassment related to diverse sexuality and/or diverse gender
- Visibility of active Allies

**"I HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE DEHUMANISED, BULLIED, HARASSED, AND VICIOUSLY CAMPAIGNED AGAINST IN MY LIFE THAN I HAVE WORKING IN THIS ENVIRONMENT. SIMPLY FOR BEING A WOMAN. I CERTAINLY WOULD NEVER HAD ADMITTED TO BEING BISEXUAL."**

The positive responses from women of a diverse sexuality and/or gender are generally lower in regional Australia. When asked about their organisation's network inclusivity of women, regional respondents, only 61% agreed (vs 69% of metropolitan employees).

Pleasingly there is no significance difference in the reported personal experiences of people of a diverse gender or with a trans experience between regional and metropolitan respondents, although regional responses are all less positive.

However, there is still plenty of room for improvement.

**“I’M INVISIBLE. NON-BINARY IS NOT UNDERSTOOD. THE POWER OF PRONOUNS IS NOT UNDERSTOOD AT WORK.”**

## IN CONCLUSION

On every metric of LGBTQ inclusion, positive regional responses were lower than metropolitan ones. This is a consistent trend in AWEI findings every year. While some are slightly lower, others are significantly lower, which is a call to action for organisations with regionally based employees.

## ACTION POINTS – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Raising awareness and visibility of LGBTQ inclusion is difficult for many regional employers, especially those whose employees do not sit in front of a computer screen. Here are a few things to consider:

In order to have more visible regional LGBTQ allies in regional workplaces, consider having *ally or awareness training* for your regional site managers and employees.

Celebrate *LGBTQ Days of Significance* like Sydney Mardi Gras, IDAHOBIT and Wear It Purple in regional locations.

When you hold regional *manager meetings*, include time for conversations regarding LGBTQ inclusion initiatives.

Ensure that your organisational-wide LGBTQ inclusion initiatives reach regional sites by implementing a *site champion* at every regional workplace to receive LGBTQ inclusion material.

Make use of *podcasts for regional employees* who do not regularly work with computers, which are accessible regardless of location.

For more information on ideas to increase regional inclusion, download the PiD Regional Inclusion – A How to Guide. [Publications | Pride in Diversity \(prideinclusionprograms.com.au\)](https://prideinclusionprograms.com.au)

Doing any of the above will help curate LGBTQ inclusion in locations across Australia, where LGBTQ employees continue to feel overlooked.

**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.**

© AWEI2021, Pride in Diversity, ACON, [www.pid-awei.com.au](http://www.pid-awei.com.au)

Permission is given to cite any of the data within this factsheet providing the reference above is utilised.