2022 –Workplace experiences of LGBTQ women & people perceived as women

The annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey had its largest response to-date this year with 186 participating organisations and a response rate of 44,224 with an additional 746 employees working for Australian organisations overseas. Of all respondents, 21.9% individuals (n9,830) identified as being of diverse sexuality and/or gender (LGBTQ). This represents a significant increase in the number of LGBTQ responses from 2021 (n7,930, 18.8%) and 2020 (n 6,787, 21.7%)

All organisations participating in the survey were active in LGBTQ inclusion, whether they be in the early or developmental stages of their inclusion journey or leading practice.

This edition looks at key findings within the 2022 response set focusing on the experiences of cisgender women, transgender women, and non-binary people who may be perceived as female or feminine (regardless of their gender identities) and therefore may face many of the same challenges.

For the sake of brevity, this group of people shall be referred to as the Sapphire cohort, to be aligned with the Pride in Diversity strategic initiative and networking program of the same name.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of respondents in the Sapphire cohort has increased from 9.5% (n3947) in 2021, to 11.4% (n5043) of all Australian respondents in 2022.

This includes:

- 4479 cisgender women who have identified as being LGBTQ (89.1%)
- 151 transgender women (3.0%)
- 397 people who have identified as non-binary, agender, or a gender not listed, and who have identified that they are perceived as a woman in the workplace (7.9%)

Location

Most of our Sapphire respondents are based in NSW, 26.2%, followed by Victoria, 21.5%, and the ACT, 16.0%.
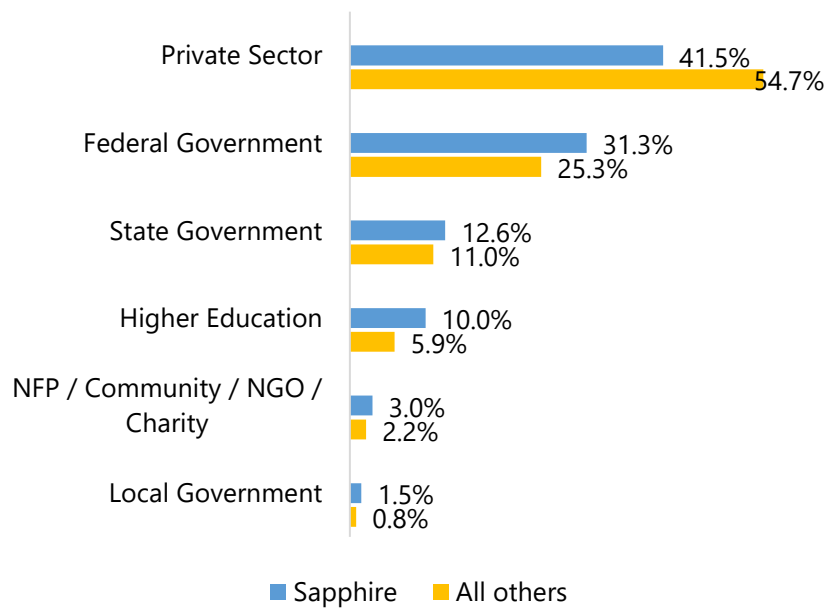
There is no significant difference in location of Sapphire respondents, with 81.6% located in the cities and 18.4% in regional areas (all others: - City:82.6%, Regional:17.4%), but the three-year trend does see a 2.7% point increased in the proportion in regional areas since 2020.

0.9%
16.0%
12.7%
4.5%
26.2%
16.0%
21.5%
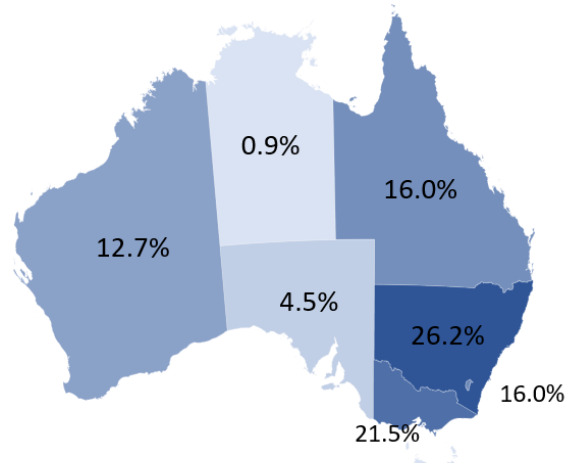
In the workplace

Sapphire respondents are most likely to work in the Private sector (41.5%), though they have a lower proportion than the other respondents where 54.7% are working in the private sector.

Regarding industry, 22% of Sapphire respondents identified working in the Public Service, 11% in Education and 7% in Banking and Financial Services. Law Enforcement and Professional Services were both identified by 6% of respondents. The only difference in ranking between these all others was a greater proportion in Education (all others: 7%).

Private Sector	41.5% / 54.7%
Federal Government	31.3% / 25.3%
State Government	12.6% / 11.0%
Higher Education	10.0% / 5.9%
NFP / Community / NGO / Charity	3.0% / 2.2%
Local Government	1.5% / 0.8%

■ Sapphire   ■ All others

Industry	Sapphire	Rank	All others	Rank
Public Service	22%	1	17%	1
Education	11%	2	7%	3
Banking & Financial Services	7%	3	11%	2
Professional Services / Consulting	6%	4	6%	4
Law Enforcement	6%	5	6%	5

Sapphire respondents are more likely to have been with their workplace for under 3 years (52.4% vs all others:38.1%), and fewer have been with their organisation over 5 years (15.4% points less). Only 4% identify their role as in senior leadership, direct reports of CEO or the CEO of their organisation, compared to 8.8% of other respondents. They are also more likely to be working in part-time, temporary or contract roles, with 21% identifying these employment types compared to 15.6% of all others.

Age

Over the past three years we are receiving more responses from individuals under 34, with those under 24 the greatest growing population.

Age	Sapphire 2020	Sapphire 2021	Sapphire 2022
Under24	10.9%	11.4%	13.1%
25-34	37.2%	38.5%	39.6%
35-44	27.0%	25.8%	25.9%
45-54	18.5%	17.6%	15.9%
55-64+	6.5%	6.6%	5.4%
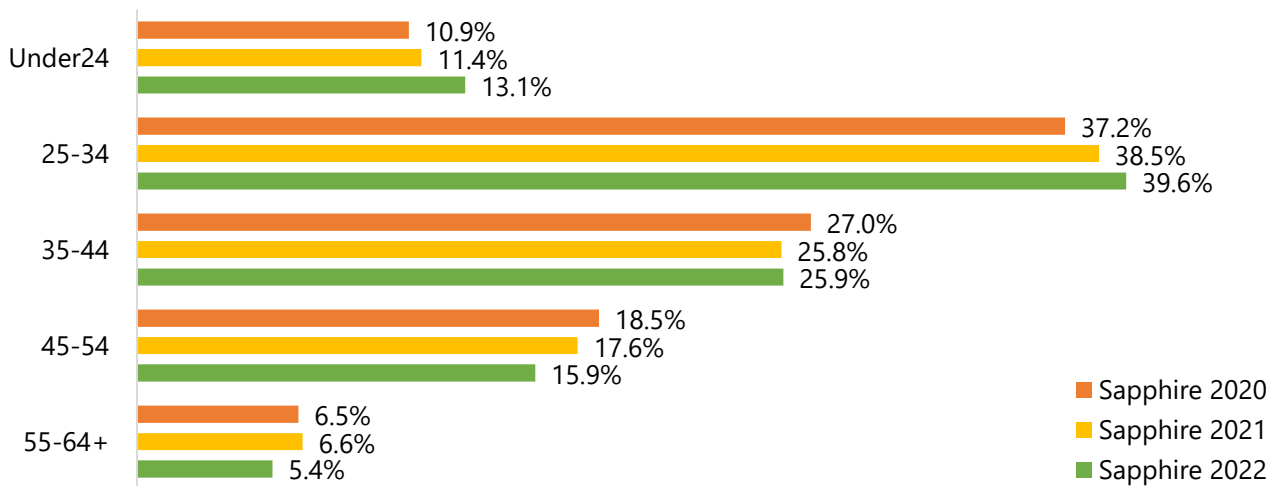
Gender Identity & Pronouns

This year, the number of employees identifying as non-binary (6.0%), Agender (0.9%) or a gender not listed (1.0%) has increased from 5.2% in 2021 to 7.9%. Those identifying as Woman or Female has reduced from 94.8% to 92.1%.

Regarding pronouns, 9.5% of respondents are using rolling pronouns. 86.7% use she/her, and 2.65% use they/them. Use of gender-neutral pronouns (either exclusively or within rolling pronouns) has increased from last year, from 9.4% to 11.8%. Less than 1% of respondents use pronouns other than he/him, she/her or they/them.
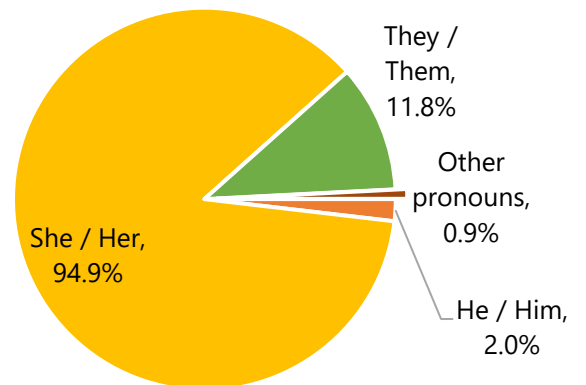
Pie chart:
- She / Her, 94.9%
- They / Them, 11.8%
- Other pronouns, 0.9%
- He / Him, 2.0%
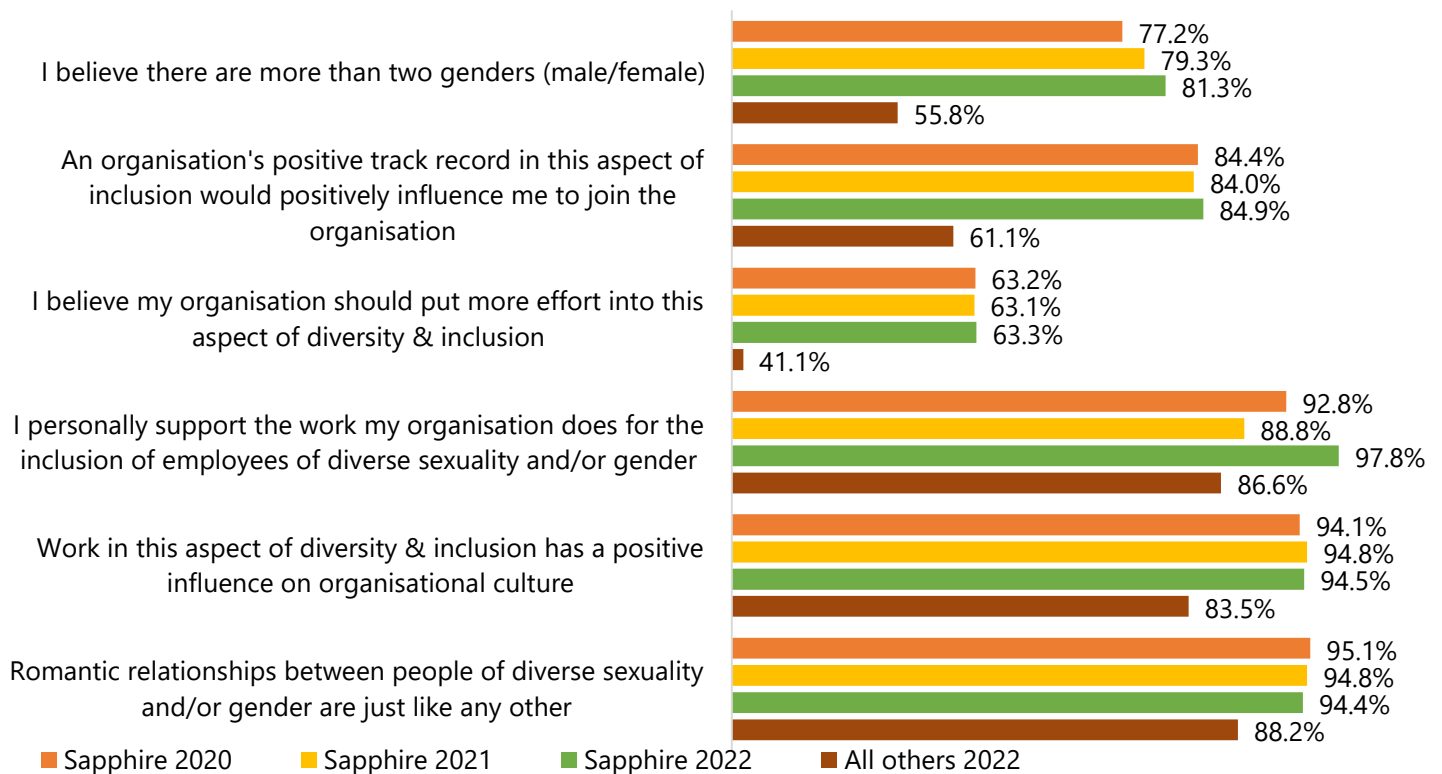
General Views

There has been slight change in views within the Sapphire respondents year on year, though there are significant differences in views between them and all other respondents. When personal views on the inclusion of sexuality and gender diverse people, 56.9% of Sapphire respondents agreed to being raised in an environment where same-sex relations or gender diverse people were not easily accepted compared to 48.2% of all others.

Sapphire respondents are significantly more likely to agree with these statements:
- I believe there are more than two genders (male/female) - 25.5% points higher.
- An organisation's positive track record in this aspect of inclusion would positively influence me to join the organisation - 23.8% points higher.
- I believe my organisation should put more effort into this aspect of diversity & inclusion - 22.2% points higher.
- I personally support the work my organisation does for the inclusion of employees of diverse sexuality and/or gender - 11.2% points higher.
- Work in this aspect of diversity & inclusion has a positive influence on organisational culture - 11.0% points higher.

I believe there are more than two genders (male/female)
- 77.2%
- 79.3%
- 81.3%
- 55.8%

An organisation's positive track record in this aspect of inclusion would positively influence me to join the organisation
- 84.4%
- 84.0%
- 84.9%
- 61.1%

I believe my organisation should put more effort into this aspect of diversity & inclusion
- 63.2%
- 63.1%
- 63.3%
- 41.1%

I personally support the work my organisation does for the inclusion of employees of diverse sexuality and/or gender
- 92.8%
- 88.8%
- 97.8%
- 86.6%

Work in this aspect of diversity & inclusion has a positive influence on organisational culture
- 94.1%
- 94.8%
- 94.5%
- 83.5%

Romantic relationships between people of diverse sexuality and/or gender are just like any other
- 95.1%
- 94.8%
- 94.4%
- 88.2%

■ Sapphire 2020   ■ Sapphire 2021   ■ Sapphire 2022   ■ All others 2022

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Organisation support for LGBTQ People

Visible signs of inclusion

The Sapphire cohort is less likely to agree that visible signs of inclusion are available within their organisation compared to all other respondents, but in the following areas agreement has increased in 2022 compared to 2021:

- It is clear working here that the inclusion of people of diverse sexuality and/or gender is a focus of our diversity work – (2022: 73.3% vs 2021: 70.8%)
- Work or related initiatives concerning this aspect of diversity & inclusion have been regularly communicated throughout the year – (2022: 67.2% vs 2021: 63.5%)
- There are visible signs of the organisation's support for employees of diverse sexuality and gender where I work – (2022: 73.4% vs 2021: 71.3%)
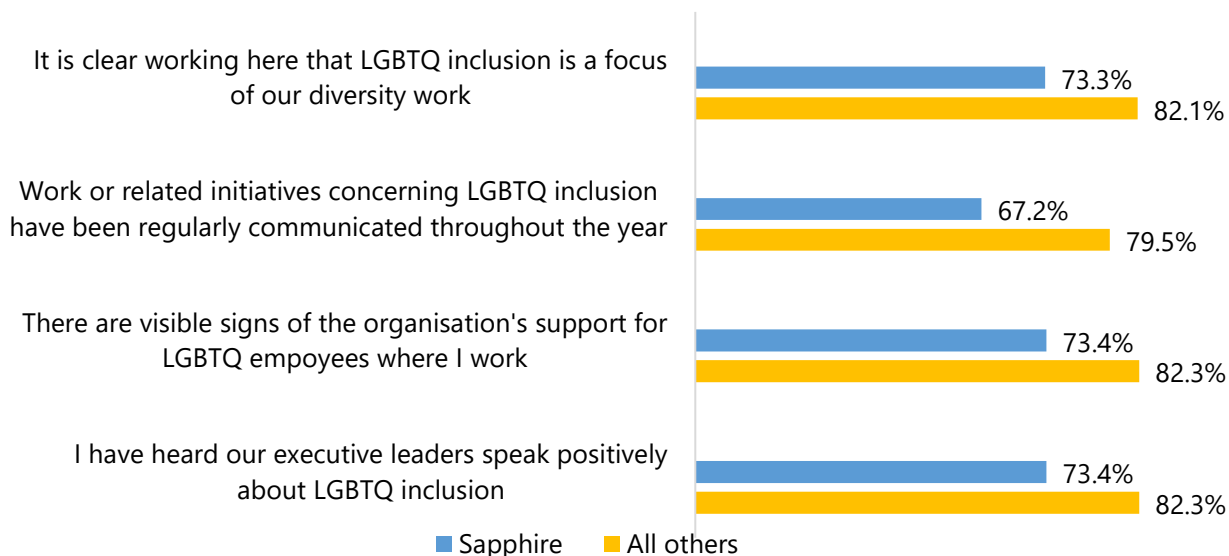
Awareness and ally training is also an identified discrepancy with only 57.2% of Sapphire respondents advising knowing training was available (all others: 66.7%), but this has risen from 48.9% in 2021.

Sapphire respondents are more likely to agree that ally and awareness training should be mandatory for all people managers and supervisors with 93.1% agreeing, compared to 79.3% of all other respondents.

Sapphire respondents are more comfortable across all areas of LGBTQ inclusivity with colleagues, including referring to a colleague by a different name or pronoun (98.3% vs 87.9%), using they/them pronouns (86.7% vs 81.3%) and having all-gender toilets alongside male/female toilets (93.1% vs only 79.0%).

When considering LGBTQ inclusion within their team, Sapphire respondents are less likely to feel that colleagues of diverse gender would be welcomed or supported within their team.

A person of diverse sexuality would be welcome in my team and treated no differently to anyone else — 93.3% / 95.4%

A gender diverse person would be welcome in my team and treated no differently to anyone else — 88.8% / 94.1%

If a member of my team were to affirm their gender (transition male to female or vice versa, or to non-binary), they would be fully supported by my team — 85.6% / 90.3%

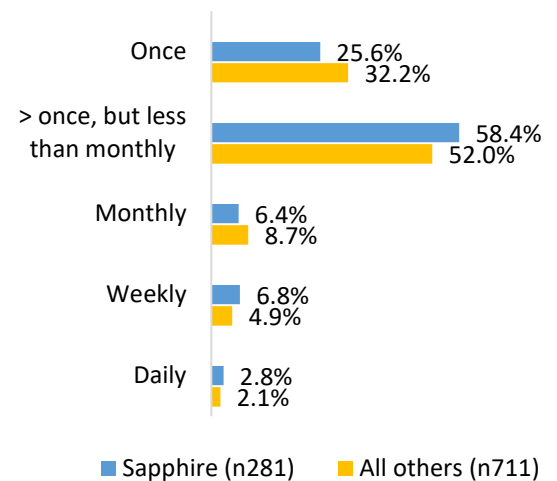■ Sapphire   ■ All others

Bullying and harassment behaviours

As has been seen within other cohorts, there is strong agreement that jokes and innuendo targeting LGBTQ people are not acceptable in any workplace (93.9%), but only 47.6% of Sapphire respondents agree that their workplace calls out this behaviour (all others: 60.6%).

Twice as many Sapphire respondents have witnessed mild harassment toward LBGTQ people (26.1% vs all others: 12.2%), though this has decreased from 29% last year. Witnessing more serious bullying of LGBTQ people has also decreased slightly, from 10.9% to 9.3%, but again is double that of the other respondents (4.6%).

Concerningly 43.9% of Sapphire respondents have been sexually harassed at work, compared to 25.2% of all others. Of those harassed in the past 12 months, 74.4% have advised that this harassment was not a one-off, compared to 67.8% of all others.

Incidents of Sexual Harassment past 12 months

Once — 25.6% / 32.2%

> once, but less than monthly — 58.4% / 52.0%

Monthly — 6.4% / 8.7%

Weekly — 6.8% / 4.9%

Daily — 2.8% / 2.1%

■ Sapphire (n281)   ■ All others (n711)

While 67.6% did not report the harassment, this is 4.3% points lower than all others (71.9% not reporting). Of those that did report, only 41.8% felt it was satisfactorily dealt with (slightly lower than all others at 42.7%).

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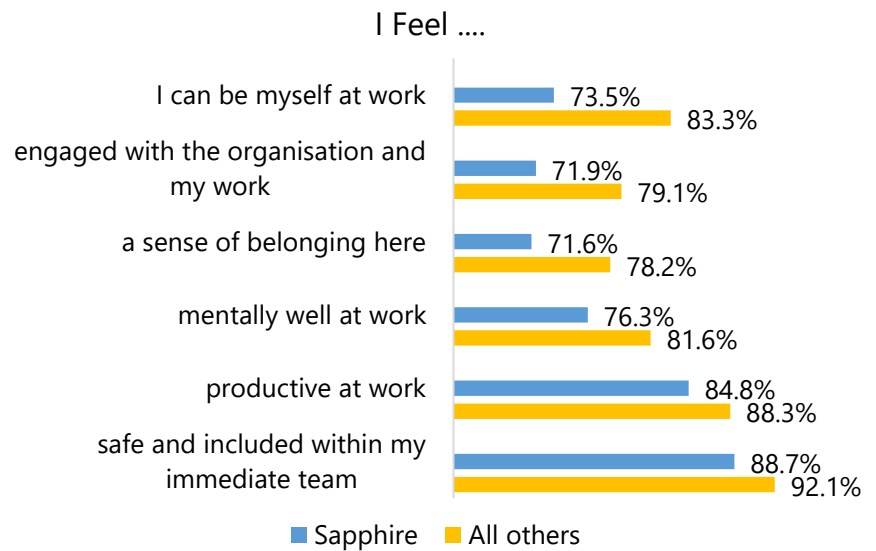**4** VIDEO TRAINING

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Health and Wellbeing

Feelings in the workplace have stayed steady over the last 3 years, with 70% or more of the Sapphire cohort agreeing to feelings of health and wellbeing across the statements.

When compared to all others, LGBTQ women, or those perceived as women in the workplace are advising of lower levels of agreement with health and wellbeing statements.

Most significantly is "I can be myself at work" with a 9.8% point difference, followed by feeling engaged with the organisation and work (7.2% point difference).

I Feel ....

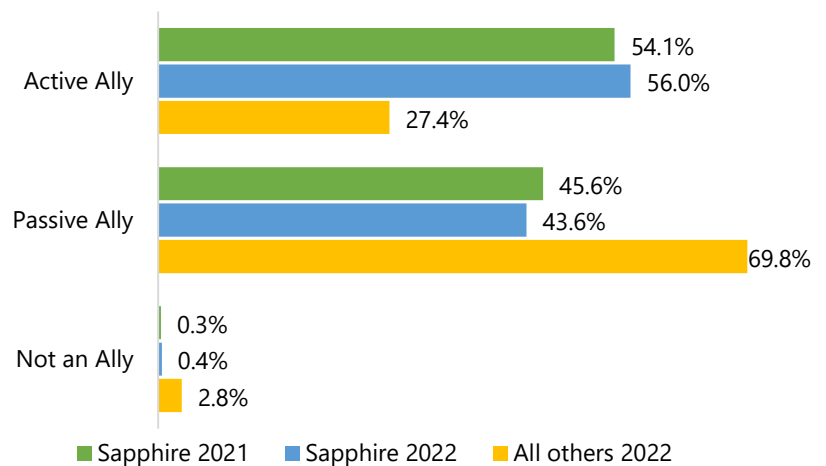| Statement	Sapphire	All others
I can be myself at work	73.5%	83.3%
engaged with the organisation and my work	71.9%	79.1%
a sense of belonging here	71.6%	78.2%
mentally well at work	76.3%	81.6%
productive at work	84.8%	88.3%
safe and included within my immediate team	88.7%	92.1%

■ Sapphire ■ All others

Allies

Sapphire respondents are significantly more likely to be active allies, 28.6% point higher than all others.

Only 0.4% (n19) are not an ally, compared to 2.8% (n918) of the remainder of the respondents.

Personal views on allies for Sapphire respondents has mostly stayed steady across the last 3 years, though "I know of workplace material or training available that would show me how to be an active Ally", has risen from 46.4% in 2021 to 53.3% in 2022. These rates are all within 1% point of all other respondents.

	Sapphire 2021	Sapphire 2022	All others 2022
Active Ally	54.1%	56.0%	27.4%
Passive Ally	45.6%	43.6%	69.8%
Not an Ally	0.3%	0.4%	2.8%

■ Sapphire 2021 ■ Sapphire 2022 ■ All others 2022

Understanding why active allies are important was agreed to by 94.9% of the Sapphire cohort compared to 86.2% of all others. and the question with the biggest difference was "I could list several behaviours that would be expected of an active Ally" which is 17.1% points higher than all others (82.8% vs 65.7%).
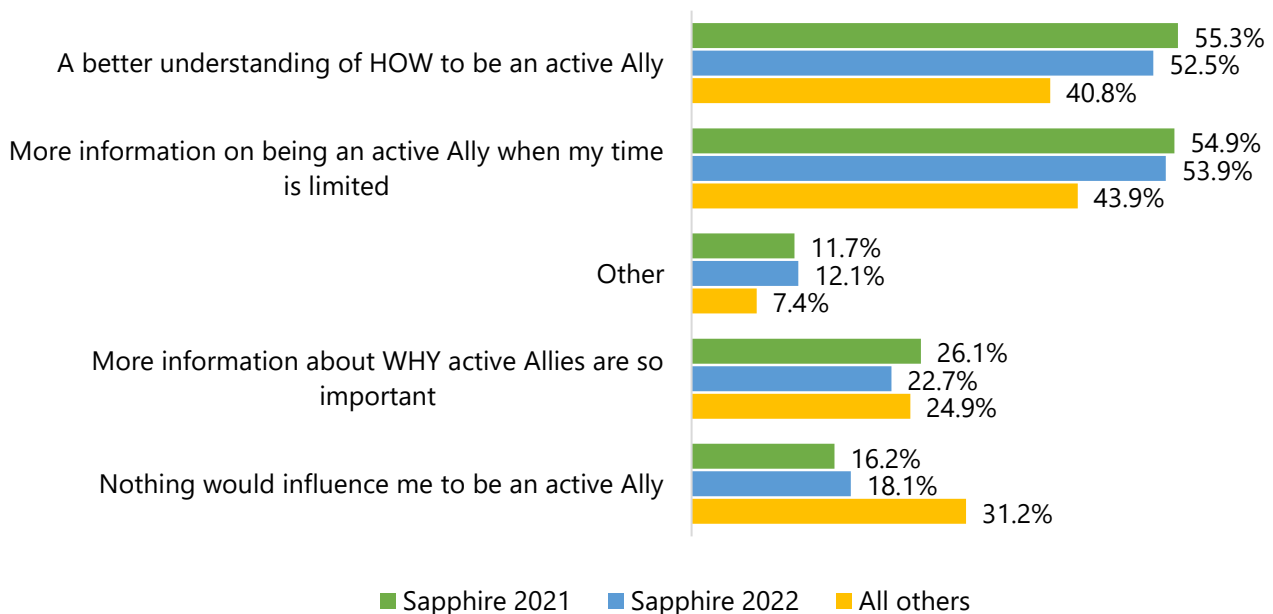
- 64.9% of all others feel that the organisation has met or exceeded their expectations regarding the visibility of active allies in the workplace, compared to 60.0% for Sapphire.
- "Active Allies have positively impacted my sense of inclusion here" was agreed to by 52.1% of the Sapphire cohort compared to 55.3% of all others who are LBGTQ.

For non-active allies in the Sapphire cohort, "People thinking that I am of diverse sexuality or gender stops me from being an active Ally," has the biggest increase year on year, with 16.0% agreeing to this reason this year (compared to only 4.1% of all others). The concern that "Being an active Ally would be frowned upon by someone/people with influence over my career" is 7.4% points higher for Sapphire respondents at 10.7%

As always, time is a barrier to becoming an active ally for 44.6% of Sapphire respondents, and "More information on being an active Ally when my time is limited" is the top potential influencing factor in becoming an active ally (53.9%).

There is a minor increase in the number of respondents who are advising that "nothing would influence" them to become an active ally.

	Sapphire 2021	Sapphire 2022	All others
A better understanding of HOW to be an active Ally	55.3%	52.5%	40.8%
More information on being an active Ally when my time is limited	54.9%	53.9%	43.9%
Other	11.7%	12.1%	7.4%
More information about WHY active Allies are so important	26.1%	22.7%	24.9%
Nothing would influence me to be an active Ally	16.2%	18.1%	31.2%

■ Sapphire 2021   ■ Sapphire 2022   ■ All others

Workplace experiences of the Sapphire Cohort

Over the past 3 years, most Sapphire respondents have not been able to identify individuals who are the same or similar identity to themselves in the workplace.

The greatest difference has been seeing similar people active within the employee network which has fallen 3.9% points over three years.

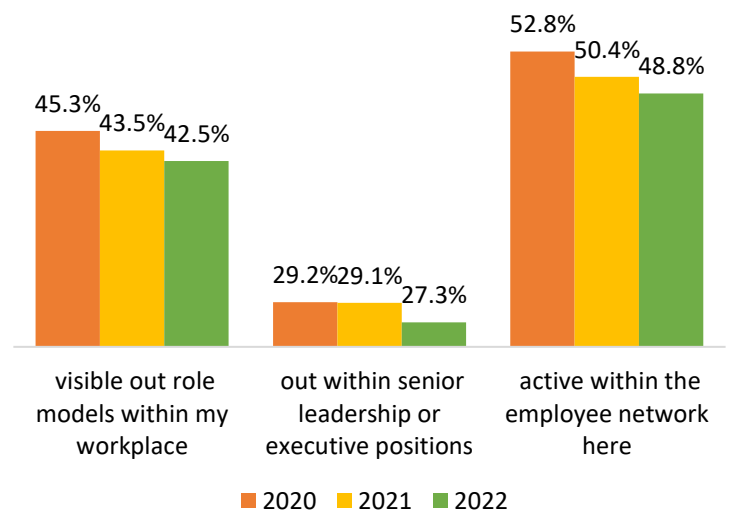Involvement in LGBTQ activities is down from 49.7% to 46.7% since 2020.

Feelings on all other areas have stayed steady over the past three years with around 1% point movement:

There are women of similar, or the same, identity as me who are....

- 66.2% agreement that "I can easily separate the unique challenges of being a woman in the workplace and those of being of diverse sexuality and/or gender" (2021: 66.7%, 2020: 65.5%)
- 68.1% agreement that "Our employee network feels inclusive of women of diverse sexuality and/or gender" (2021: 67.7%, 2020: 68.7%)
- 37.9% agreement that "The challenges of a diverse sexuality and/or gender feel greater in terms of career progression than those of being a woman" (2021: 38.8%, 2020: 38.7%)
- 77.0% agreement that "Having visible out women as role models of the same or similar identity is important to me" (2021: 77.4%, 2020: 78.6%)

Across the board, Sapphire respondents in non-metropolitan areas, (regional, rural or remote locations), do not feel as favourably as the remainder of the regional population. Local office inclusion events or initiatives have only been noted by 42.2% of respondents compared to 52.3% of all other regional employees.

The feeling that communication with regional offices around inclusion activities is adequate has a 13.5% point difference (Sapphire: 52.3% vs Other:65.8%), and there is an 11.2% point difference regarding adequacy of local management/leadership communication regarding LGBTQ support or work in this area (49.4% of Sapphire regional respondents agree compared to 60.6% of all other regional respondents).

PRACTICE POINTS

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Diverse sexuality

Of the Sapphire cohort who identified as of diverse sexuality, 32.0% are gay or lesbian compared to 77.8% of all others (note that LGBTQ men are much more likely to identify as gay). Sapphire respondents are also more likely to identify as bisexual, pansexual, queer or asexual than the remainder of the respondents These increases can be seen year-on-year from 2020 through to 2022.
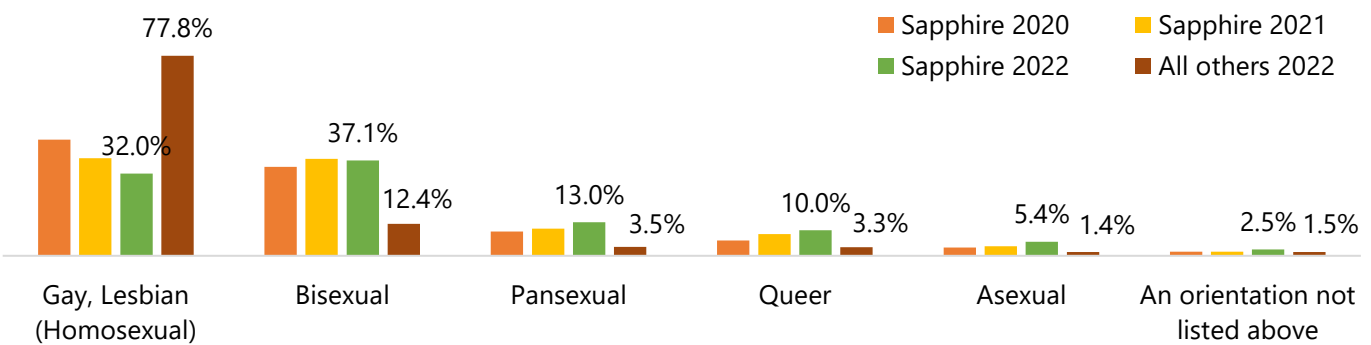
Being out at work

Over the past three years, the proportion of Sapphire respondents out in the workforce has reduced from 56.1% down to 47.9%.
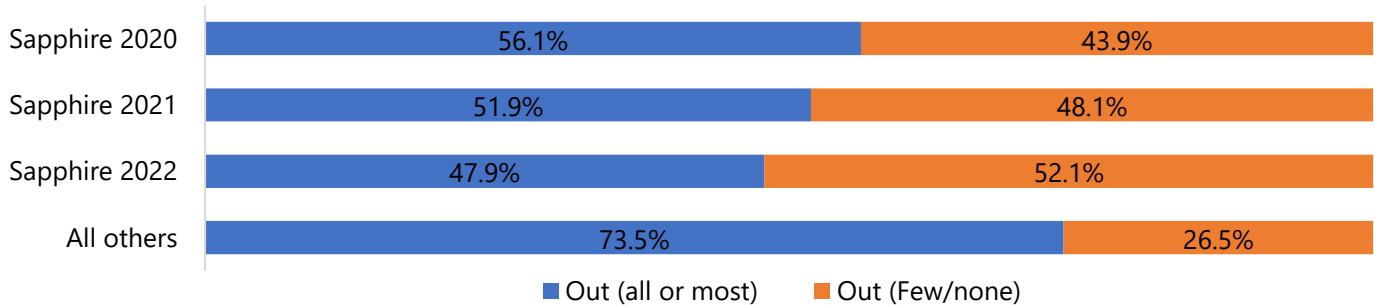
Experiences of being 'out' in the workplace

In addition to two statements which have been asked year on year, four new statements were asked in 2022 to gauge the experiences of those out in the workplace. Sapphire respondents out in the workplace (n1903), have advised declining positivity at being out in the workforce regarding their performance (from 65.1% to 47.5%), and engagement (73.9% to 55.0), over the past three years, and these rates are significantly lower (12% points) than the non-sapphire respondents out in the workplace.

Legend: ■ Sapphire 2020   ■ Sapphire 2021   ■ Sapphire 2022   ■ All others 2022

For the new metrics , the Sapphire cohort continues to score lower rates of agreement and satisfaction than the remainder of the 'out' respondents, by between 6.7% points, and 9.3% points.

78.1% of Sapphire respondents advised they have not encountered any exclusion based on their sexuality at their current organisation, down from 82.3% last year, and lower than the all other LGBTQ respondents who came in at 81.3%.

Differences in comfort levels around reporting between Sapphire and all other LGBTQ respondents are also concerning. Reporting "continual jokes/innuendo targeting my sexuality" to their manager is 3.2% points lower than last year, (2022: Sapphire: 78.0% vs all others:83.9%), and more serious bullying/sexual harassment to HR (or grievance officers) was 6.3% points lower than 2021 (2022: Sapphire:74.2% vs all others:82.5%)

The reason for not being out in the workforce have not significantly changed year on year for Sapphire respondents, and they tend to agree less with the statements than other respondents.

Sapphire respondents agreed that they avoided inclusion initiatives for fear of people thinking they are of diverse sexuality 15.1% of the time (compared to 26.4% for other respondents). The most prevalent reason for Sapphire respondents to not be out in the workforce is that they are "not comfortable within themselves," followed by concern they "would not be accepted by members of their team."

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I feel....

Legend: ■ Sapphire ■ All others

Statement	Sapphire	All others
I am not comfortable enough within myself to be out at work	37.2%	41.3%
I would not be accepted by some members of my team	31.8%	37.4%
the current social/political sphere outside of the workplace has negatively impacted my willingness to be out	28.8%	37.9%
being out at work would be detrimental to my workplace experience	23.0%	32.0%
being out at work would negatively impact my career progression	16.6%	26.1%
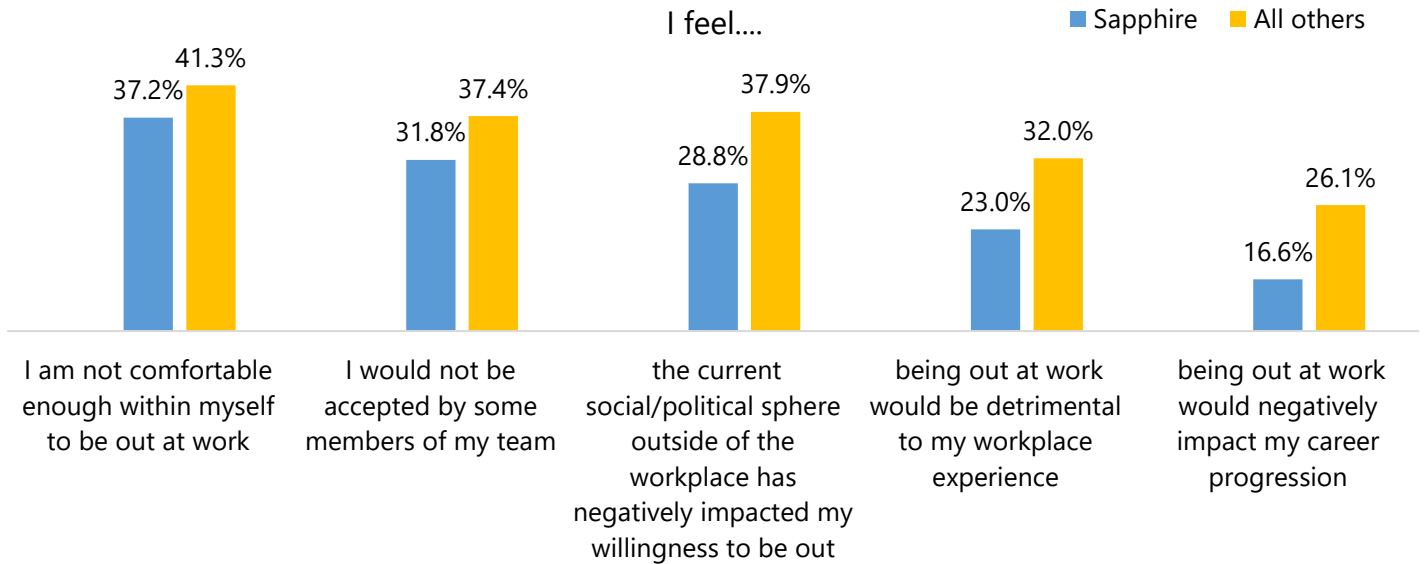
Diverse gender and/or trans experience – experiences of recruitment

Those in the Sapphire cohort, felt that they were disadvantaged during the recruitment process at double the rate (8.7%) compared to 2021 (4.7%) and compared to all other 2022 trans and gender diverse respondents (4.3%).

They were less likely to feel that background/criminal checks (Sapphire: 6.8% vs Other: 13.7%) or reference checks (Sapphire: 7.4% vs Other: 12.1%) were barriers to employment for them, but in both situations, there was an increase in barriers advised between 2021 and 2022. There was also a significant increase in the proportion of people who had fears of being discriminated against during recruitment.

| Statement	2021	2022
I have fears of being discriminated because of my gender identity	25.9%	47.8%
I felt disadvantaged during the recruitment process as someone of diverse gender	4.7%	8.7%
I disclosed my gender diversity during the application process	15.4%	20.3%
I have fears of being outed during the recruitment process	14.2%	18.3%
I faced barriers with reference checks with former colleagues where I was known by another name or gender…	2.9%	7.4%
Background/criminal checks were a barrier because I was known by another name or gender identity	3.5%	6.8%

Legend: ■ 2021 ■ 2022

They were less likely to fear being outed during the recruitment process (Sapphire: 18.3% vs Other: 25.3%) There was a significant increase (4.9% points) in those who disclosed their gender diversity during the application process (2022: 20.3% vs 2021:15.4%).

Being 'open' at work

The methodology for asking this question was changed in 2022, so a direct comparison is not available.

In 2020 56.4% of respondents agreed with the question "most people I work with are aware of my gender diversity".

This year, there is a significant difference between the Sapphire cohort and all others, being open in the workplace with the Sapphire cohort advising being open only 47.9% of the time.

	Out (all or most)	Out (Few/none)
Sapphire 2022	47.9%	52.1%
All others	73.5%	26.5%
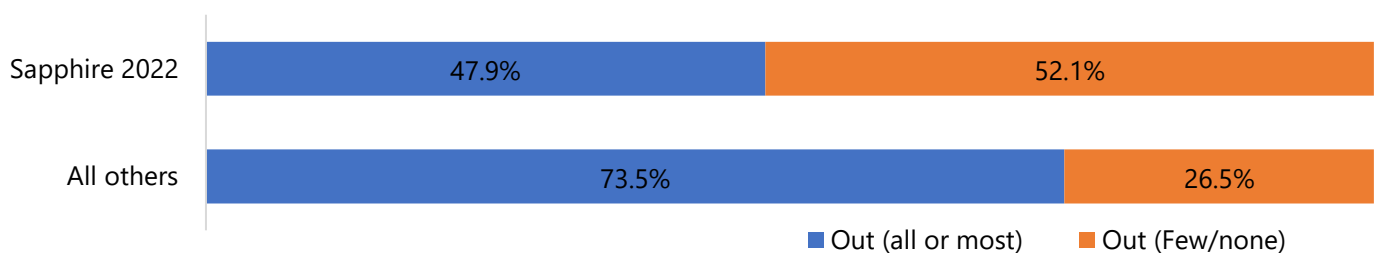
Gender affirmation in the workplace

There was no significant difference between the cohorts regarding undertaking gender affirmation processes in the workplace, with:

- 44.2% not having affirmed their gender in any workplace (all others:45.3%)
- 46.4% having affirmed their gender in some way in their current workplace. (all others:43.4%)
- 9.4% affirmed but in previous workplace (all others:8.9%)

Of those who have affirmed their gender in the current workplace, and who have advised they are Open to all or most in the workplace, 68.5% those in the Sapphire cohort (n178) are happy with the process they have undertaken at their current organisation compared to 73.3% of all others (n60).
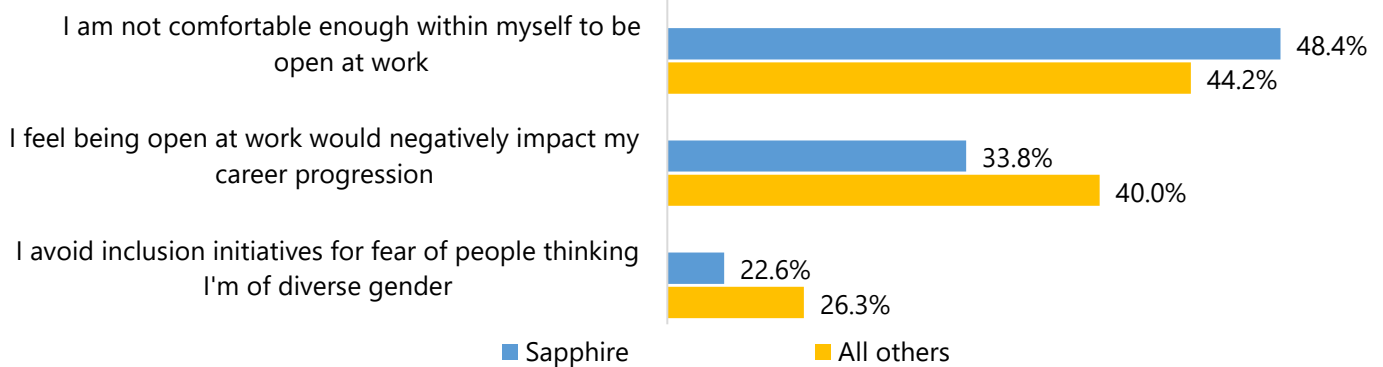
Experiences of being open or not open in the workplace

For those Open in the workplace, Sapphire respondents are agreeing at a greater rate with all statements, both positive and negative, when compared to all other respondents of diverse gender. Agreement that people make an effort to use their correct pronouns is 62.9%, but 22.4% feel that they have also been deliberately misgendered in the past 12 months.

Statement	Sapphire	All others
LGBTQ workplace Inclusion initiatives have had a positive impact on how I feel about my own gender diversity	54.9%	36.2%
I have not experienced any exclusion based on my gender diversity within this workplace	61.1%	57.9%
I would feel comfortable and safe addressing workplace issues related to my gender identity with my manager	73.9%	61.8%
I feel that our LGBTQ Employee Network is fully inclusive of gender diverse employees and those with a trans experience	65.6%	54.0%
I feel fully supported by my team in terms of my gender identity	67.6%	60.5%

■ Sapphire   ■ All others

For those Sapphire respondents 'not open' in the workplace, feeling they "would not be accepted by some team members" is the most significant reason (59.1% vs all others:51.6%), followed by "the current social and political sphere" which ranks highly for both cohorts at around 55%. Just under half of both cohorts feel it would be

Statement	Sapphire	All others
I am not comfortable enough within myself to be open at work	48.4%	44.2%
I feel being open at work would negatively impact my career progression	33.8%	40.0%
I avoid inclusion initiatives for fear of people thinking I'm of diverse gender	22.6%	26.3%

■ Sapphire   ■ All others

detrimental to their workplace experience. The difference between the cohorts are:

Intersectionality

In 2022, 46.5% of Sapphire respondents identify a further diversity experience within the workplace, compared with 42.4% of all other respondents; this is a 5.6% point increase from 2021.

Sapphire respondents are significantly more likely to identify as being neuro diverse (28.7%), with living with a disability (16.3%), or being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander (5.9%) than the rest of the respondents.

Category	Sapphire	All others
I am Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	5.9%	3.2%
I am a person of colour	13.2%	15.6%
I identify with a CALD background	13.8%	17.4%
I am someone living with a disability	16.3%	7.1%
I am neuro-diverse (example: Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia)	28.7%	7.1%
I am a person of faith / religion	8.3%	21.1%
I am a mature age employee	13.8%	28.4%
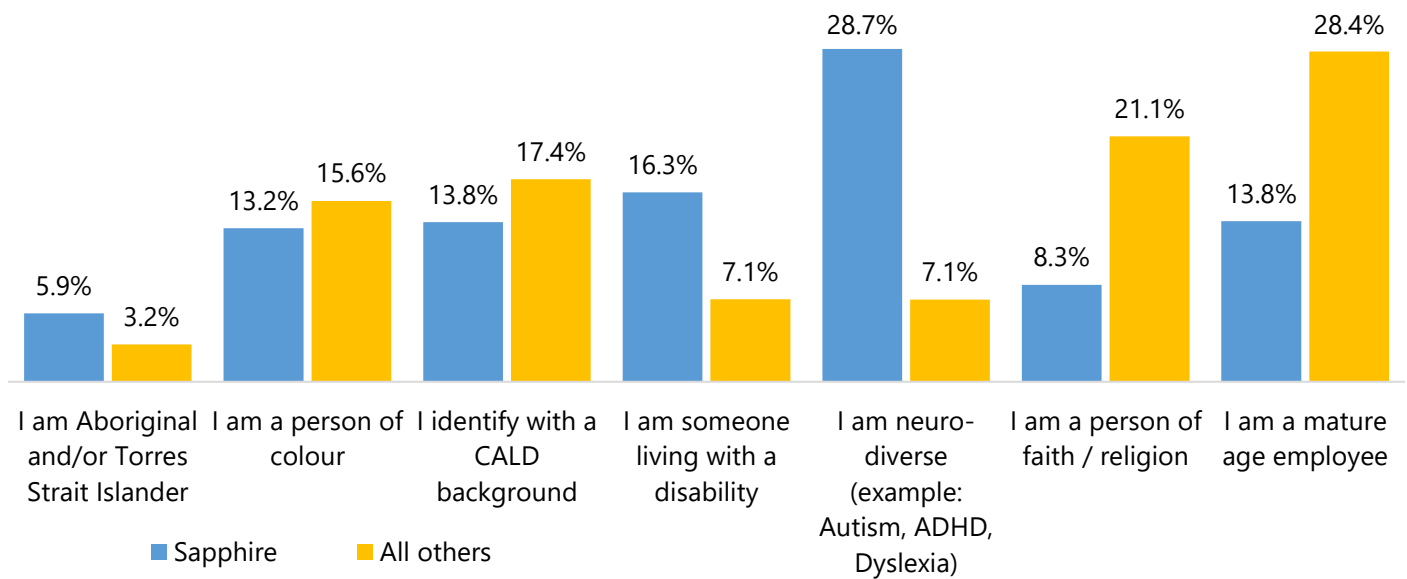
IN CONCLUSION

We are continuing to see differences between the sapphire cohort, other LGBTQ populations and the general population. In particular, the Sapphire population is less likely to be out in the workforce and this seems to be impacting the health and wellbeing, and productivity and engagement of individuals in the workplace.

It is essential to understand the dual impacts or "double glass ceiling" that LGBTQ people who are or may be perceived as women deal with in the workplace. This is most apparent when looking at those who are in senior leadership roles where those in the sapphire cohort are than half as likely to be in these roles than the remainder of respondents.

Emerging identities, a younger respondent population and visibility of role models all need to be considered when looking at increasing engagement, involvement and allyship for LGBTQ women and those perceived as women in the workplace.

ACTION POINTS

Consider if:

1. your gender equity programs feel inclusive for LGBTQ women and those perceived as women,
2. your organisation is celebrating days of significance that are specifically about raising the visibility people in the sapphire cohort,
3. your organisation is amplifying the voices of the Sapphire cohort on other days of significance,
4. the leadership structure of your employee *Pride Network* includes representation of the Sapphire cohort.
5. your organisation has promoted the *visibility of employees* who make up the Sapphire,
6. there are LGBTQ women in management or executive roles, or within s*enior leadership,*
7. there are gender diverse folk in leadership positions and positions of influence,
8. you promote membership of *Pride in Diversity's Sapphire Initiative* to your employees.

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

Keep an eye out for a more in depth look at the state of inclusion for the Sapphire cohort coming soon! Pride in Diversity will soon be releasing a new publication that takes a closer look at AWEI data. It will also provide guidance and strategies for organisations to consider and implement to further the inclusion and visibility of the Sapphire cohort in workplaces.