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2022 –Senior leadership & LGBTQ Support

Impact of visible senior leadership support on feelings of inclusion within the workplace

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.

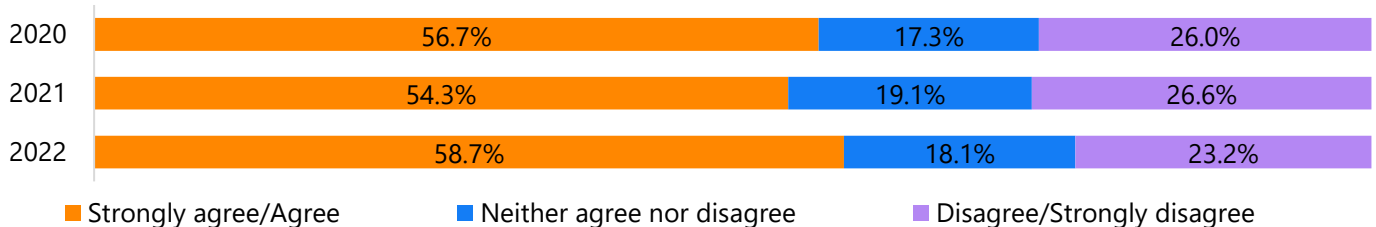
This edition looks at key findings within the 2022 response set focusing on the impact that visible Executive Allies, Sponsors and other senior leaders can have in the workplace.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Over the past three years we have asked respondents if they “know of active executive allies or sponsor/s within their organisation.”

In 2022 this question was answered by 82.8% (n37,244) of all respondents, greater than in the past 2 years (2021:77.7% and 2020: 78.0%). Over the past three years we are seeing an increasing proportion and number of respondents agreeing to this.

I know of active executive Allies or Sponsor/s within my organisation

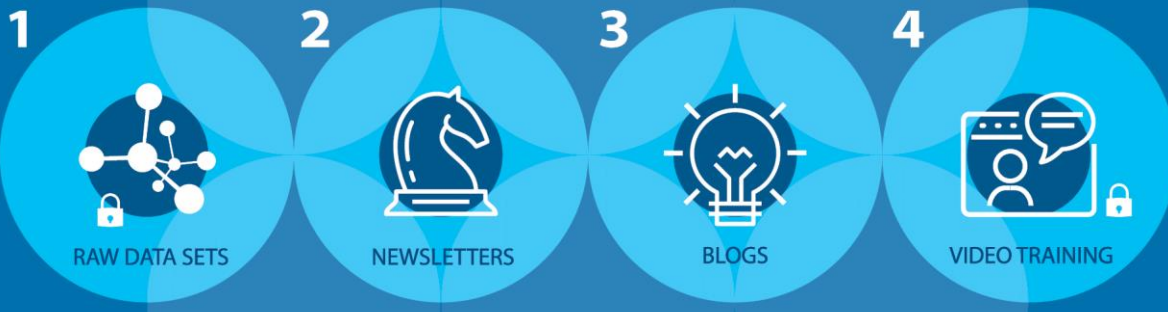


This remainder of this practice point is focused on the differences between respondents who agree (strongly agreed + agreed) vs those who disagreed (disagreed + strongly disagreed) that they knew of these allies. (2022 n30,495). Neutral responses are not included in the data set.

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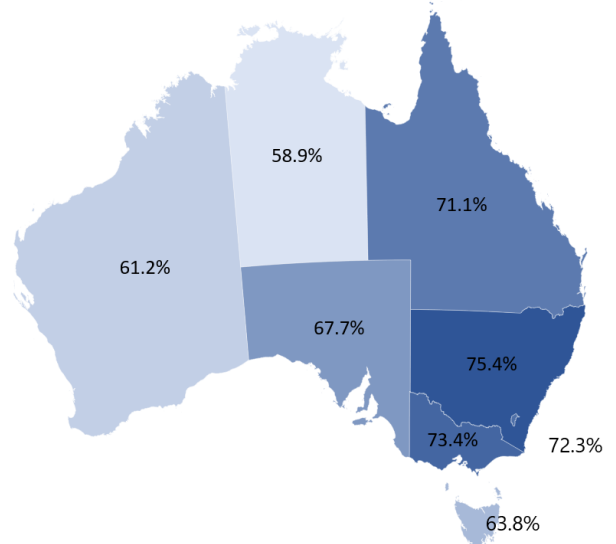
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State & Location

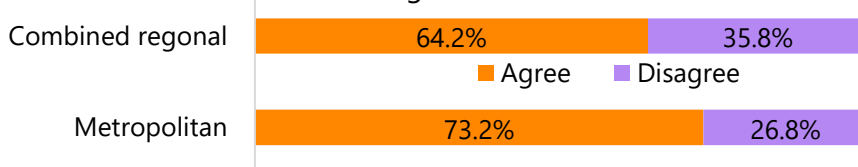
Overall 71.7% (n21,866) of respondents agree to knowing of active executive allies, and 28.3% (n8629) disagree.

When looking state by state, states that have a higher than average proportion of respondents who can identify active executive Allies or Sponsor/s within their organisation are NSW with 75.4% of respondents followed by Victoria, 73.4%, and the ACT, 72.3%, QLD, 71.1%.

Respondents working in metropolitan locations are more likely to know of active executive allies (73.2%), compared with only 64.2% of all regional (regional, rural or remote) respondents.



I know of active executive allies/sponsors with my organisation

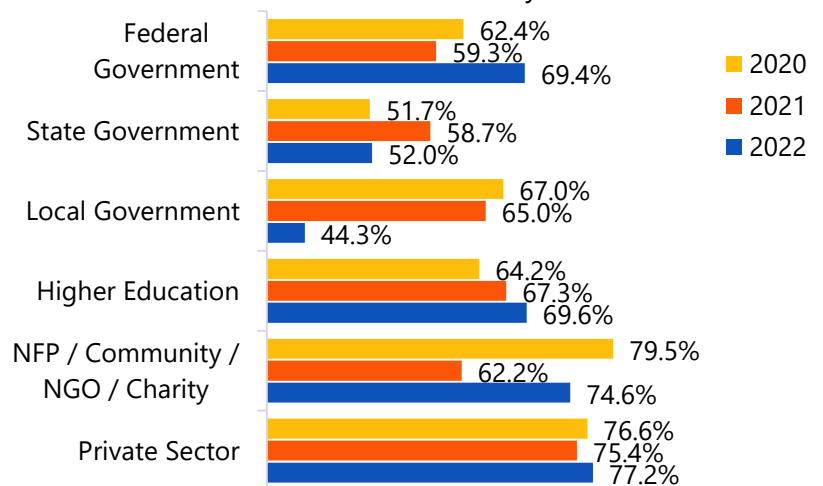


In the workplace

Active executive allies are more likely to be known by employees working in the private sector with 77.2% agreeing with the statement.

Employees at all levels of government are less likely to know of executive allies than other sectors. Additionally this year we have seen a significant drop in the proportion of respondents aware of executive allies in the local government sector (20.6% point decrease) and state government (6.7% points decrease). While Federal Government respondents are advising visibility at higher rates than last year, they are still lower than those working in the NGO or Private sector. After a large decline last year, the NGO sector has increased to 74.6% from 62.2%.

I know of executive allies - by sector



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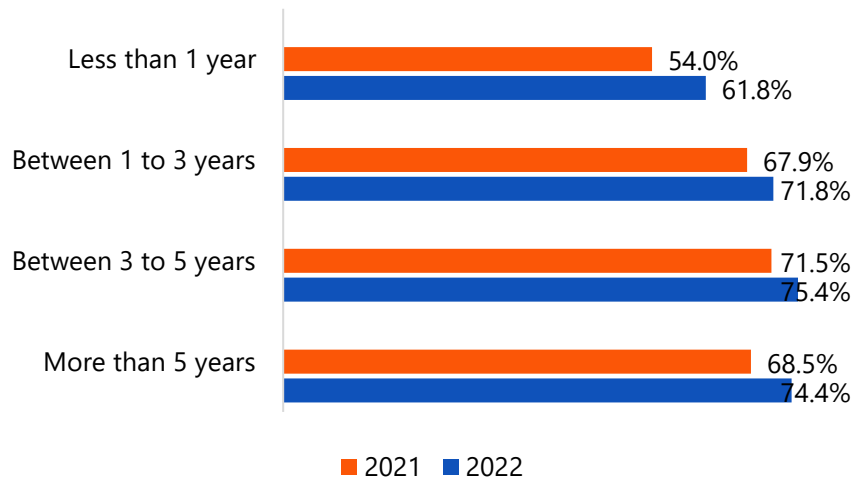
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Regarding industry, 91.1% of those in the Tourism/gaming industry agree to knowing executive allies. The Pharmaceutical, Legal, Hospitality, Professional Services / Consulting, Property, Technology / Telco, Media & Entertainment all come in between 80% and 89.6% agreement.

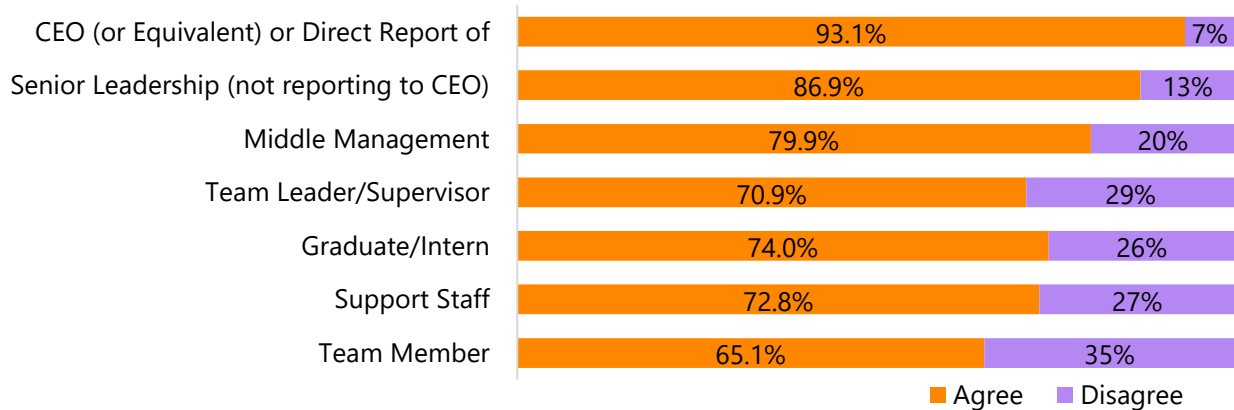
There is a significant jump (10% points in 2022, and 14% point in 2021) between those who have been with the organisation under 1 year to those over 1 year in their agreement levels.

Employment type seems to play a part in knowing active executive allies, with 73.4% of Full-Time employees agreeing, 67.7% of Part-Time employees, and around 54% of those in temporary, casual or contact roles.

93.1% of CEO's and their direct reports advise knowing of active executive allies; this steadily declines the further away from this tier an employee is, with 65.1% of those that consider themselves team members agreeing. Only 46.3% of respondents who have selected non office/outdoor role have agreed.



Proportion by organisation role

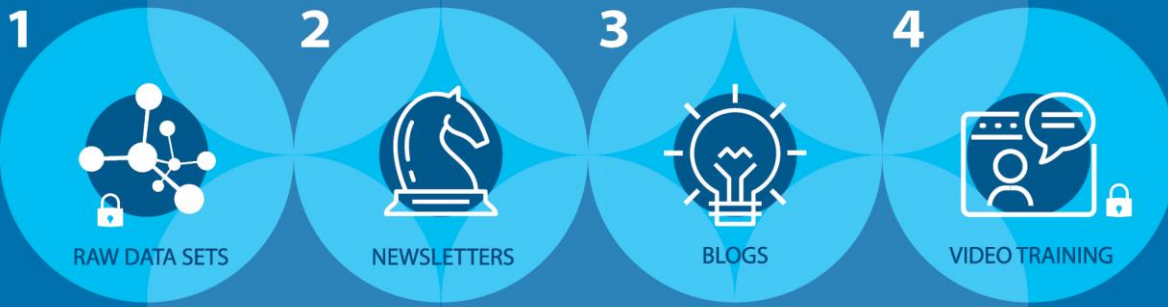


Team leader/supervisors have seen the greatest increase in agreement up 6.5% points (2021: 64.5% vs 2022:70.9%, Middle management up 5.9% points (2021:74.0% vs 2022:79.9%) and support staff are up 5.1%points (2021:67.7% vs 2022:72.8%)

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Gender Identity,

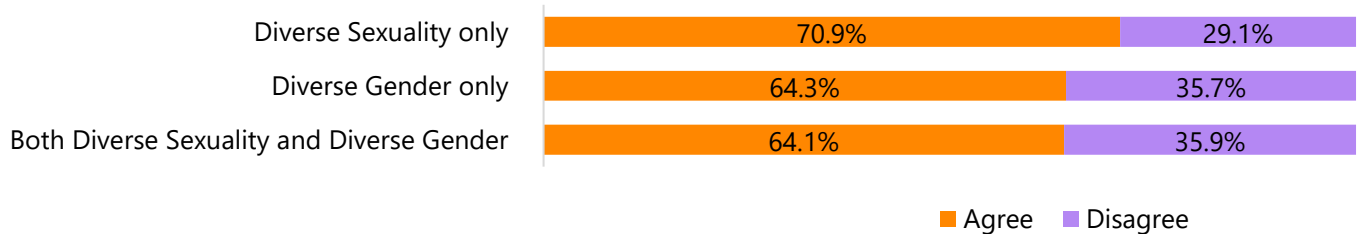
Respondents who identify as 'Woman or Female' make up the greatest proportion of all people who know of executive allies, making up 58% of the 21,866 responses.

	Agree	Disagree
<i>Man or Male</i>	72.1%	27.9%
<i>Woman or Female</i>	71.9%	28.1%
<i>Agender</i>	68.3%	31.7%
<i>Non-binary</i>	63.9%	36.1%
<i>A gender identity not listed above</i>	46.9%	53.1%
<i>Prefer not to respond</i>		

People of diverse sexuality, diverse gender or trans experience

Of the 30,495 respondents, 22.5% are LGBTQ (n6848). For those that are not LGBTQ, 72.0% agree that they know of executive allies, like LGBTQ respondents at 70.8%.

Of the LGBTQ respondents, people of diverse sexuality are the (70.9%) to know of active executive allies and sponsors. Just over 64% of those of diverse gender, or both are aware.



General Views

People who can identify active executive allies in the workplace have expressed significantly different responses to many views around LGBTQ inclusion. These differences have been seen year on year.

In 2022:

- 65.3% believe there are more than two genders (male/female) (vs non-visible: 53.9%)
- 72.1% An organisation's positive track record in this aspect of inclusion would positively influence me to join the organisation - (vs non-visible: 57.4%)
- 93.3% I personally support the work my organisation does for the inclusion of employees of diverse sexuality and/or gender - (vs non-visible: 78.4%)

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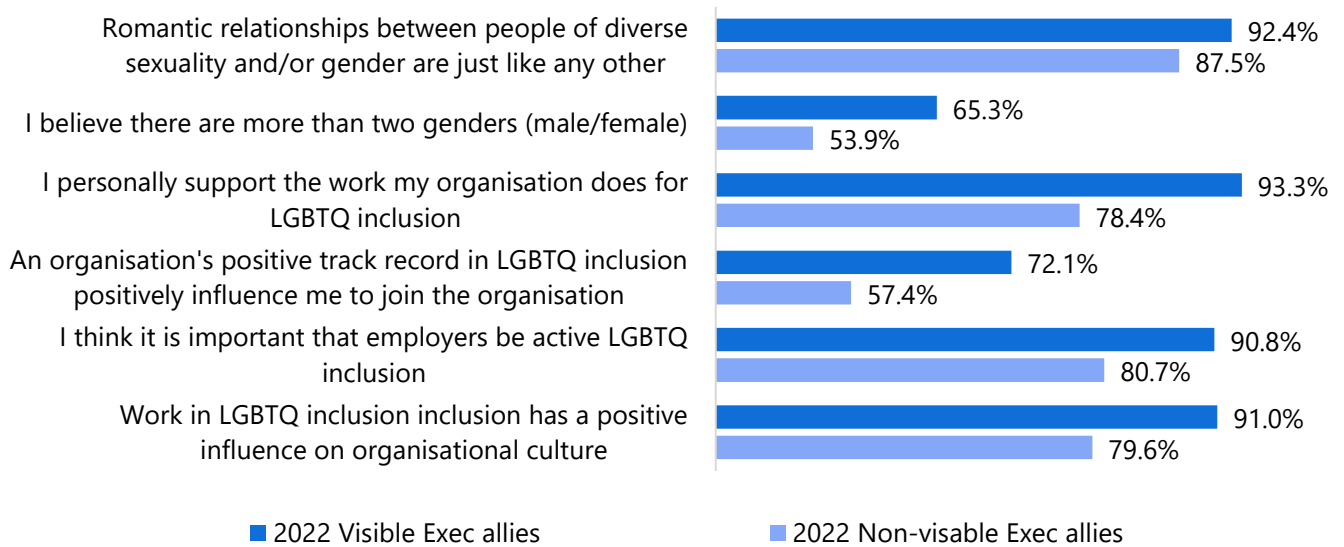


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- 90.8% I think it is important that employers be active in this area of diversity & inclusion – (vs non-visible: 80.7%)
- 91.0% Work in this aspect of diversity & inclusion has a positive influence on organisational culture – (vs non-visible: 79.6%)
- They are also less likely to believe their organisation should put more effort into this aspect of diversity & inclusion . (Visible:44.3% vs non-visible: 49.1%), potentially due to feeling that their organisation is already working enough in this area.



Organisation support for LGBTQ People

Visible signs of inclusion

Throughout the survey we ask about visible signs of inclusion within their organisation. Those who can identify active executive allies/sponsors, are also more likely to see LGBTQ inclusion initiatives within their organisation compared to those who disagreed to knowing of active allies/sponsors.

In 2022:

- 86.9% have heard executive leaders speak positively about this aspect of diversity & inclusion (vs 43.2%)
- 89.1 % agree that work or related initiatives concerning this aspect of diversity & inclusion have been regularly communicated throughout the year (vs 56.8%)
- 91.3% know where to find more information on this aspect of diversity & inclusion at work (vs 59.5%)
- 91.6% agree there are visible signs of the organisation's support for employees of diverse sexuality and gender at work (60.5%)

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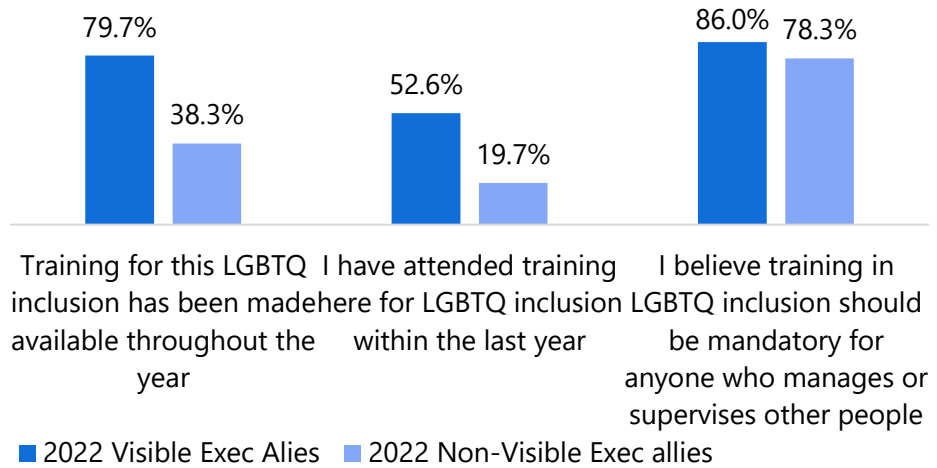
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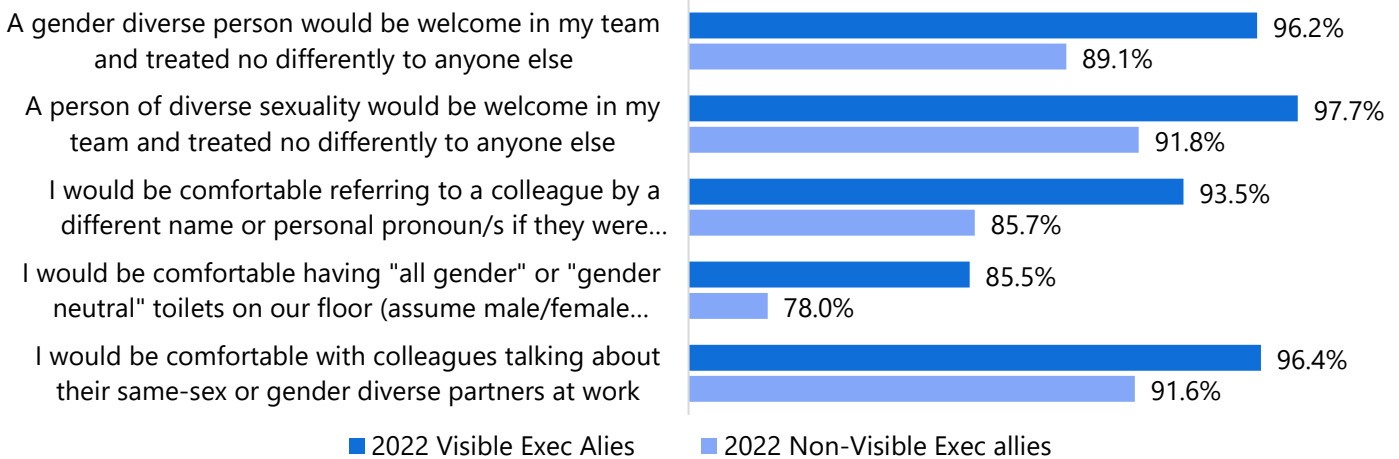
- 90.4% agree the inclusion of people of diverse sexuality and/or gender is a focus of our diversity work (vs 63.4%)

Awareness or ally Training is also more likely to be made available and attended by employees in "visible" organisations with double the percentage of respondents agreeing to being aware of training being available and almost three times more attending training. Respondents are also more likely to agree with the importance of managers undertaking this training.



Those with active executive allies advise feeling more comfortable with colleagues across all areas of LGBTQ inclusivity, including:

- 94.0% agree that a team member affirming their gender would be fully support (vs 82.9%)
- 93.5% agree to being comfortable referring to a colleague by a different name or personal pronoun/s if they were affirming their gender (vs 85.7%)
- 88.5% agree to being comfortable using they/them/their personal pronouns (vs 77.7%)
- 85.5% agree to being comfortable having 'all-gender' or 'gender neutral' toilets on their floor (assuming male/female toilets are still available) (vs 78.0%)



Year on year agreement has increased slightly (less than 1% point), with the exceptions of,

- being comfortable using they/them/their personal pronouns - increased 2.2% points, to 88.5% and
- feeling a team member affirming their gender would be fully support increased 1.3% points.to 94.0%

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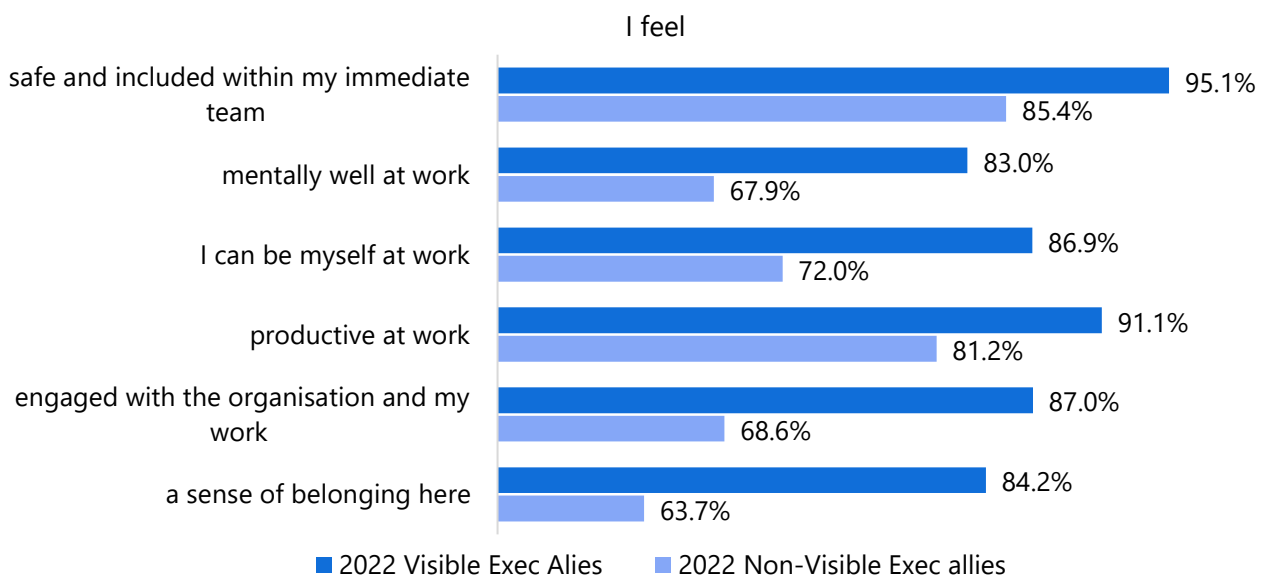
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Health and Wellbeing

All levels of health and wellbeing are significantly improved within the cohort who have identified visible executive allies and /sponsors. The difference between the two cohorts has been seen year on year for the past three years, with agreement rates in the 'visible' cohort staying steady with no more than 1% point difference between 2021 and 2022.

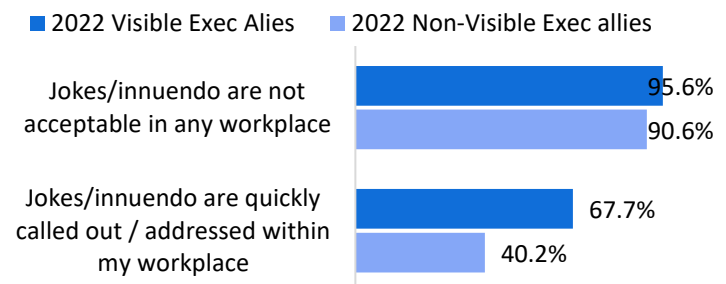


Though, from 2021 to 2022, for those in 'non-visible' organisation, there has up to 2.3% point drop in feelings of health and wellbeing.

- 2.3% point reduction - I feel engaged with the organisation and my work (2021: 70.8% vs 2022 68.6%)
- 1.4% point reduction - I feel mentally well at work (2021: 69.3% vs 2022 67.9%)
- 1.7% point reduction - I feel productive at work (2021: 82.9% vs 2022 81.2%)
- 1.5% point reduction - I feel a sense of belonging here (2021: 65.3% vs 2022 63.7%)

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, though employees in organisations with visible executive allies, are significantly more likely to see bullying and harassment behaviours called out and addressed in the workplace (27.5% points).



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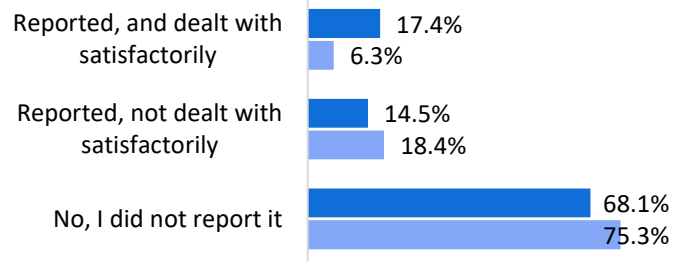
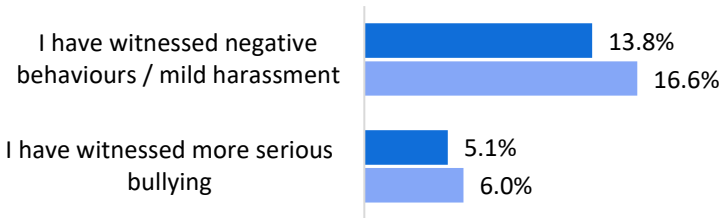
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Witnessing negative mild behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality or gender is also reduced (visible: 13.8% vs non-visible: 16.6%) and more serious bullying (visible: 5.1% vs non-visible: 6.0%)

Rates of sexual harassment do not differ greatly (visible: 28.0% vs non-visible: 31.5%). Individually, those in 'visible' organisations tend to advise experiencing sexual harassment less frequently (advising only once in the year - visible: 36.4% vs non-visible: 12.39%)

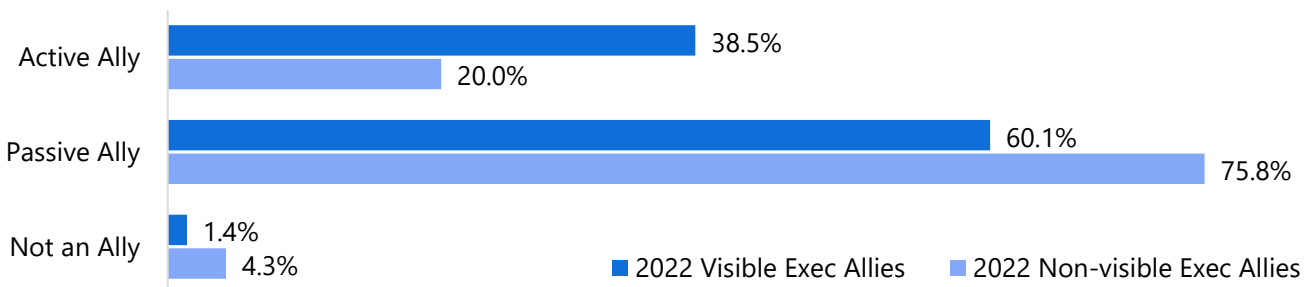
86.2% of both cohorts have experienced harassment at their current organisation, but again those in 'visible' organisation are more likely to report it (visible: 31.9% vs non-visible: 24.7%) and are more likely to feel that it was dealt with satisfactorily.

When considering future possible experiences of sexual harassment, 86.7% of respondents in 'visible' organisations also would "feel safe and supported reporting it to their employer" vs 70.3% of those in 'non-visible' organisations.



Allies

Compared to last year, there has been an increase in active allies (visible: 2.7% points & non-visible: 3.3% points) and a reduction of both passive (visible: 2.4% points & non-visible: 2.7% points) and non-allies (visible: 0.2% points & non-visible: 0.5% points).



This year, respondents in 'visible' organisations are almost twice as likely to be an active ally. (visible: 38.5% vs non-visible: 20.0%) Respondents in 'non-visible' organisations are three times more likely to not be an ally at all. (visible: 1.4% vs non-visible: 4.3%)

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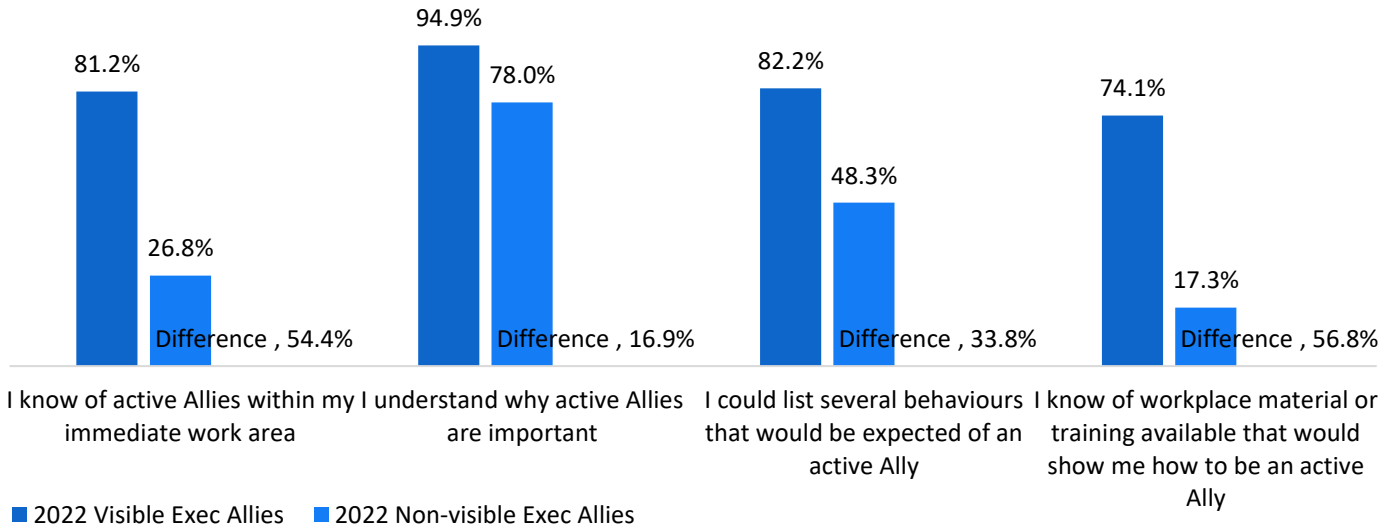


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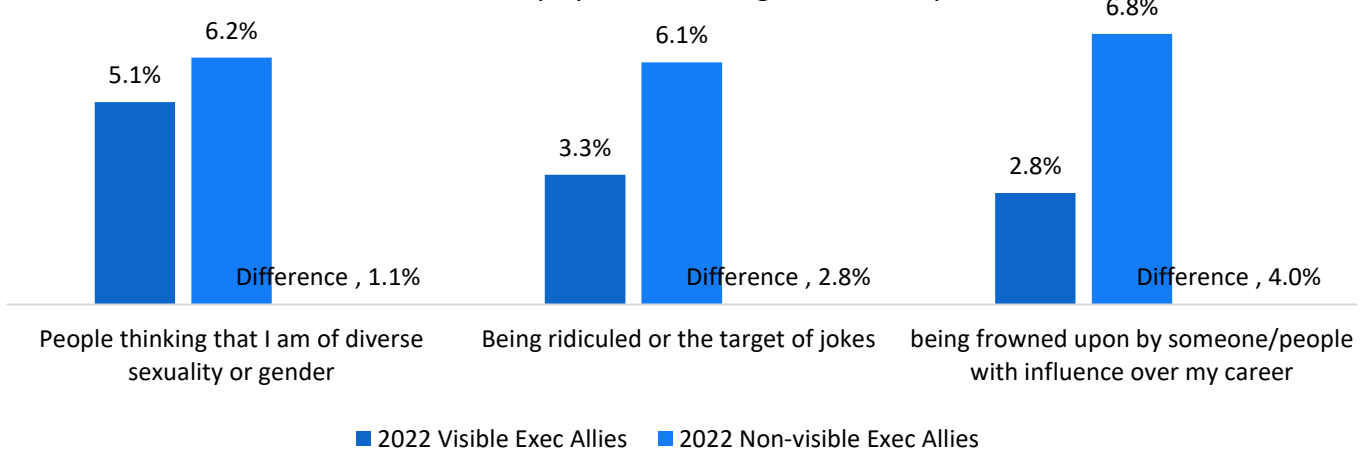
Overall awareness of allies in 2022, shows significant differences between the two cohorts, including over 50% point difference in knowing of workplace material and training, and also knowing active allies within their immediate work area. These differences have increased year on year for the past 3 years.



For respondents who are passive or not an ally, all agree that being too busy is the main reason for not being an active ally, which is the same for every proportion of data analysed, but the difference a visible executive ally makes shows in the feelings of people regarding reactions around them in the workforce.

The greatest difference is when considering how it may be perceived by someone with influence over their career.

What stops you from being an active ally?



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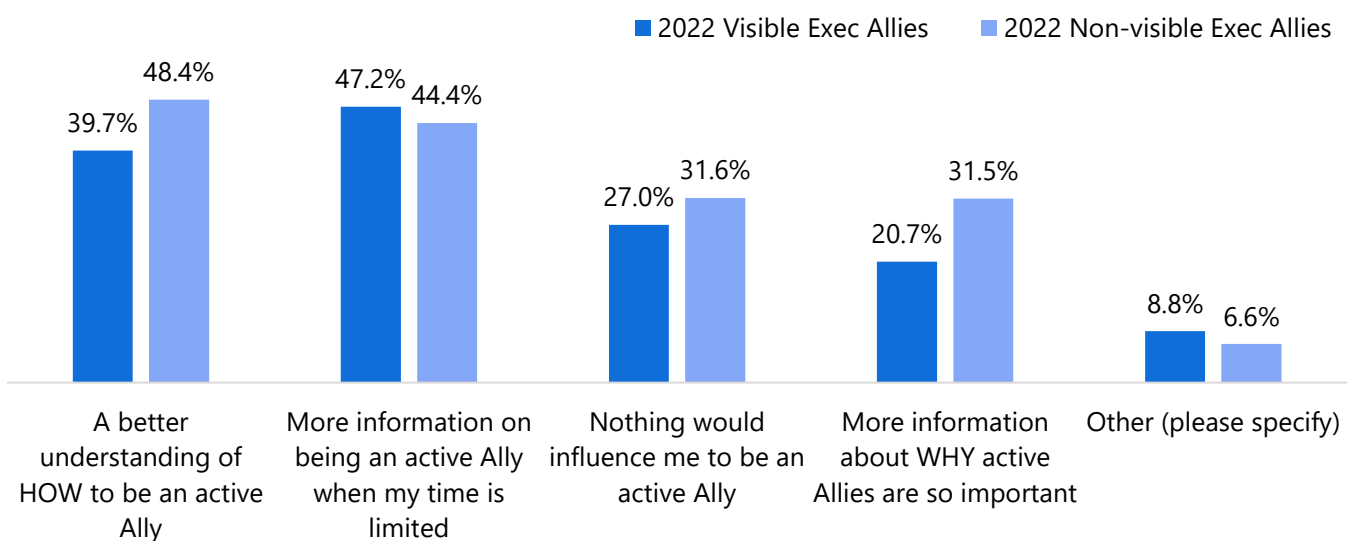
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When considering what would influence non active allies, in 'non-visible' organisations the top influencer is gaining a better understanding of how to be an active ally (visible: 39.7% vs non-visible 48.4%)

The area with the greatest difference, is information on why active allies are important (visible: 20.7% vs non-visible 31.5%)

27.0% of respondents in 'visible' organisations versus 31.6% in 'non-visible' organisations have agreed to the statement, "nothing would influence me to be an active ally."



Experiences of employees of diverse sexuality and /or gender

When considering an organisation's capacity to meet the expectations of its employees of diverse sexuality and/gender, responses show the significant impact visible active executive allies and sponsors have.

In 2022, there was between 15.4% and 31.8% points difference between those in 'visible' organisations and those not within this range of questions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 90.3% of respondents from 'visible' organisations agreed that they would recommend their organisation to others of similar diversity to themselves compared to 59.2% of the 'non-visible' cohort, and 72.0% of respondents agreed that active allies have positively impacted there since of inclusion versus 18.3% of those without visible executive allies.

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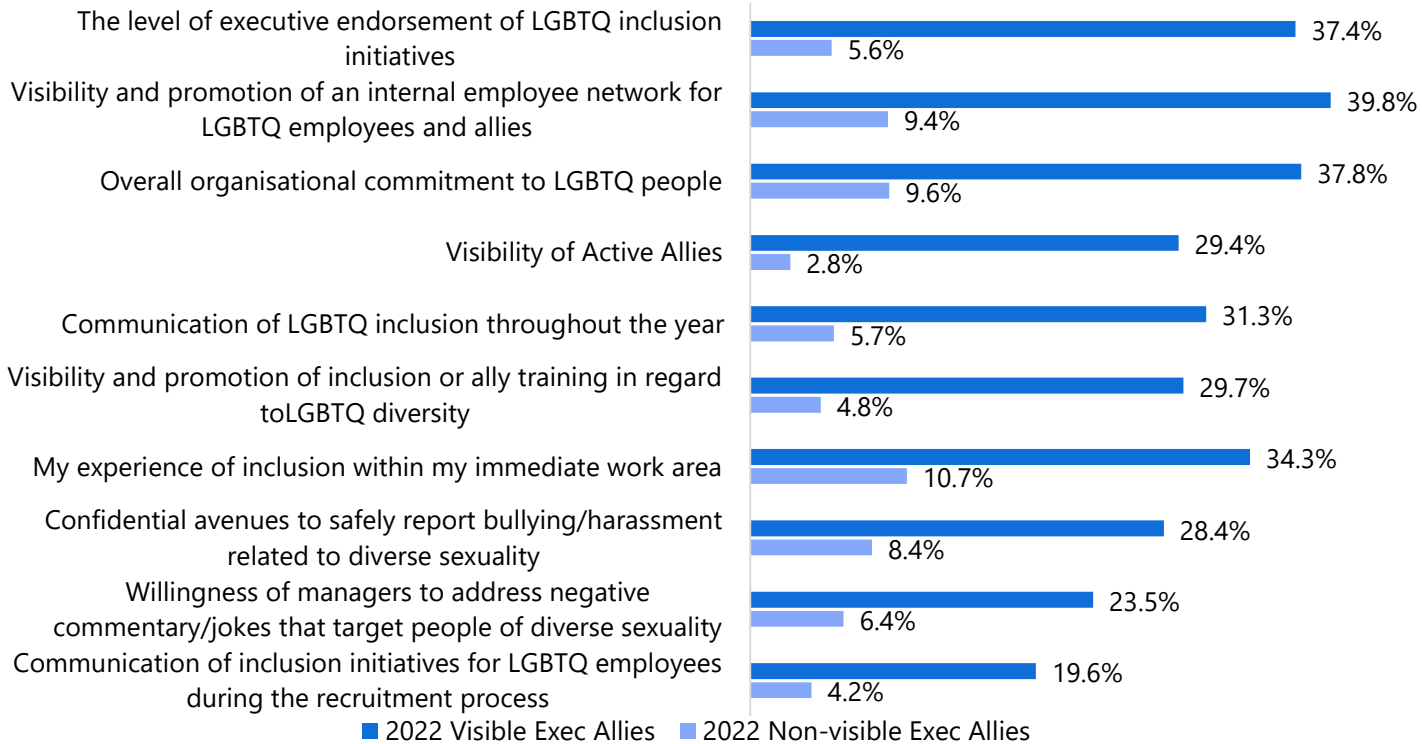


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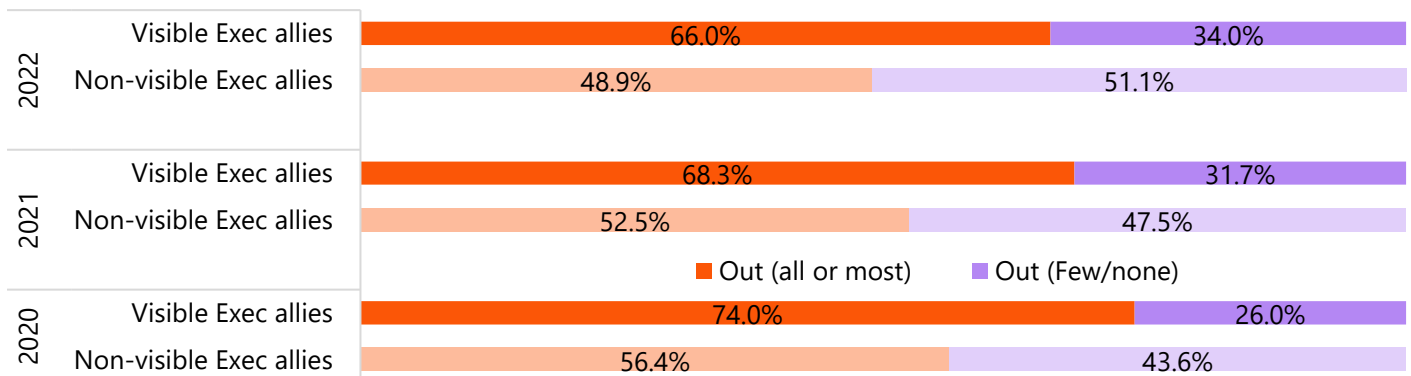
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My organisation has met or exceeded my expectations regarding:



Diverse sexuality - Being out at work.

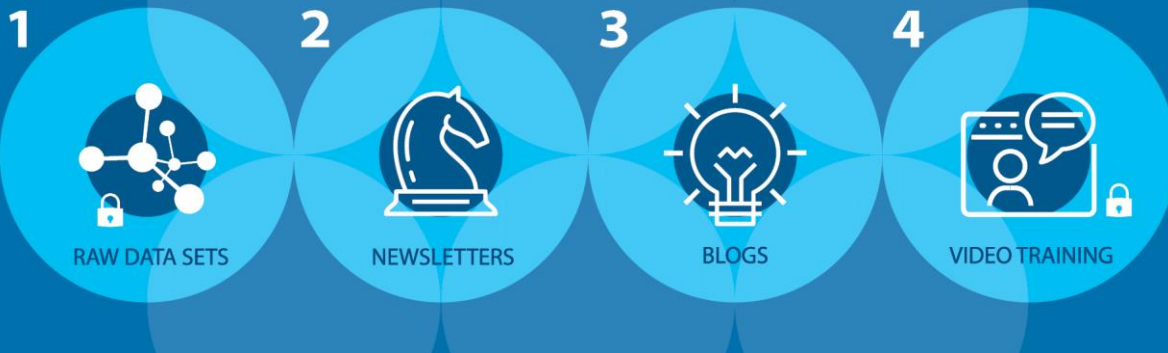
Respondents are significantly more likely to be out at work regarding their diverse sexuality where active visible executive allies are present, but we are still seeing a reduction in the year on year data of people being out which has reduced from 74.0% in 2020 to 66.0% in 2022 (8% point drop). This trend is mirrored within the cohort in 'non-visible' organisations, with a 7.5% point reduction over the past 3 years.



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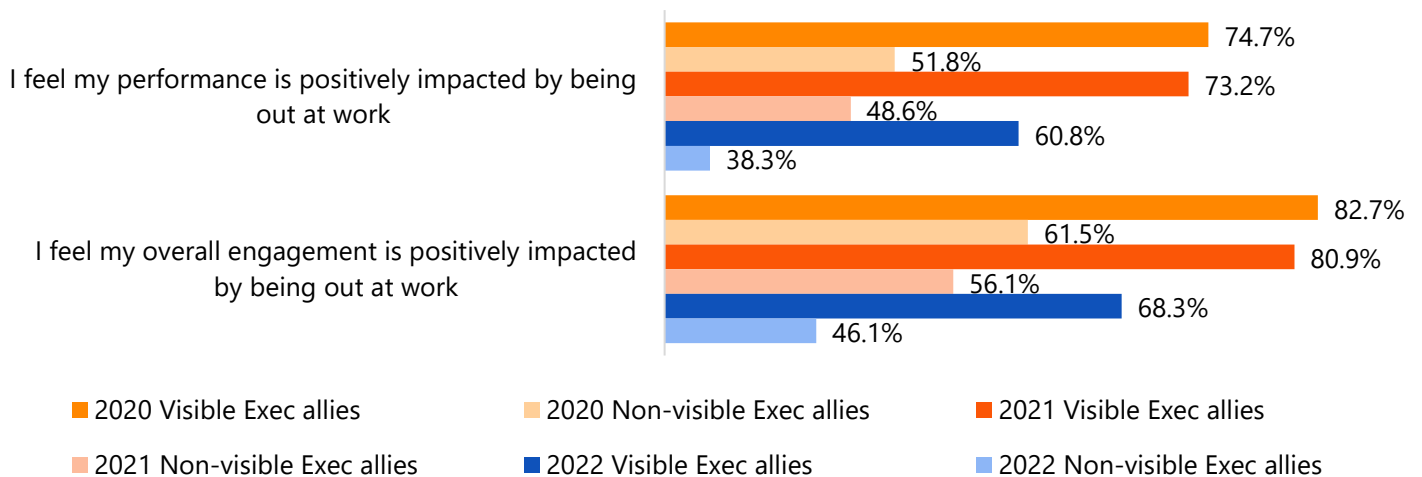
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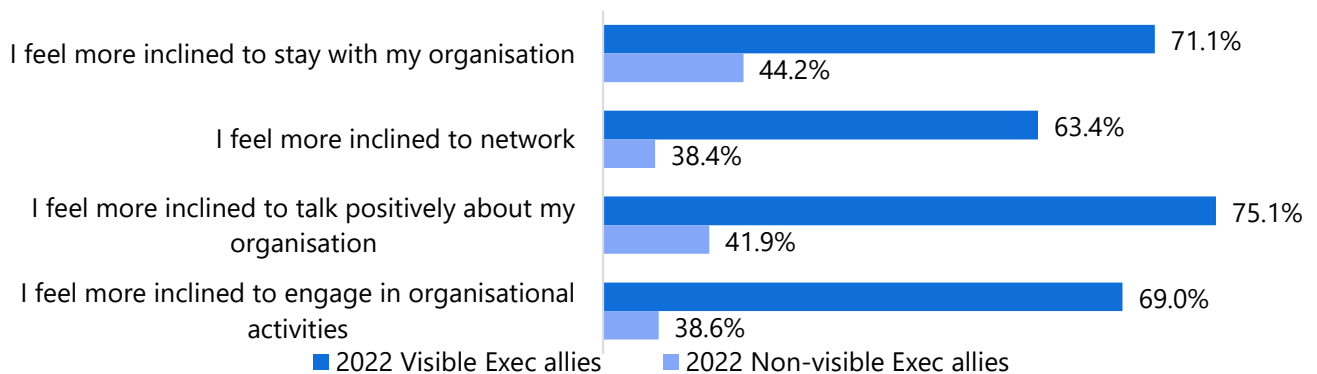
Experiences of being 'out' in the workplace

The impact on performance and engagement has reduced year on year for both cohorts when considering if this, within the organisation, has been positively impacted by being out in the workforce. The difference between cohorts is still over 22% points.



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. There is no situation where having a visible executive ally, does not significantly increase the experiences of employees in the workplace.

84.9% of out respondents in 'visible' organisations advised they have not encountered any exclusion based on their sexuality at their current organisation, down from 86.6% last year, compared to those in 'non-visible' organisations who have agreed at only 67.1%.



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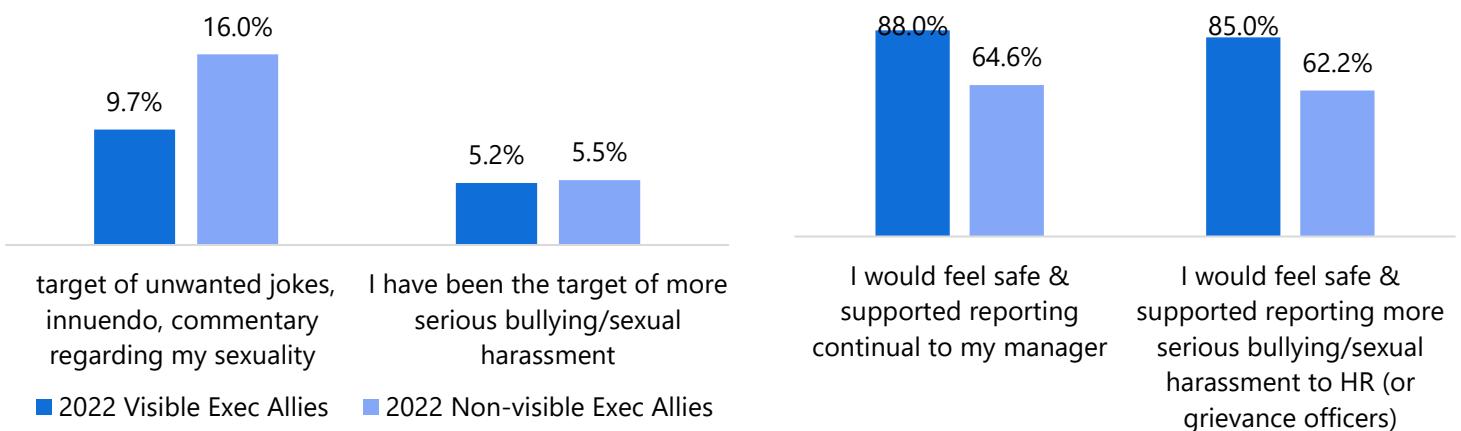
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Other impacts include feeling that "sexuality would not have an impact on career my progression", with 22.8% point difference (visible: 83.7% vs non-visible: 61.0%) and workplace initiatives having a positive impact on an employee's feelings around their own sexuality (visible: 70.5% vs non-visible: 33.5%).

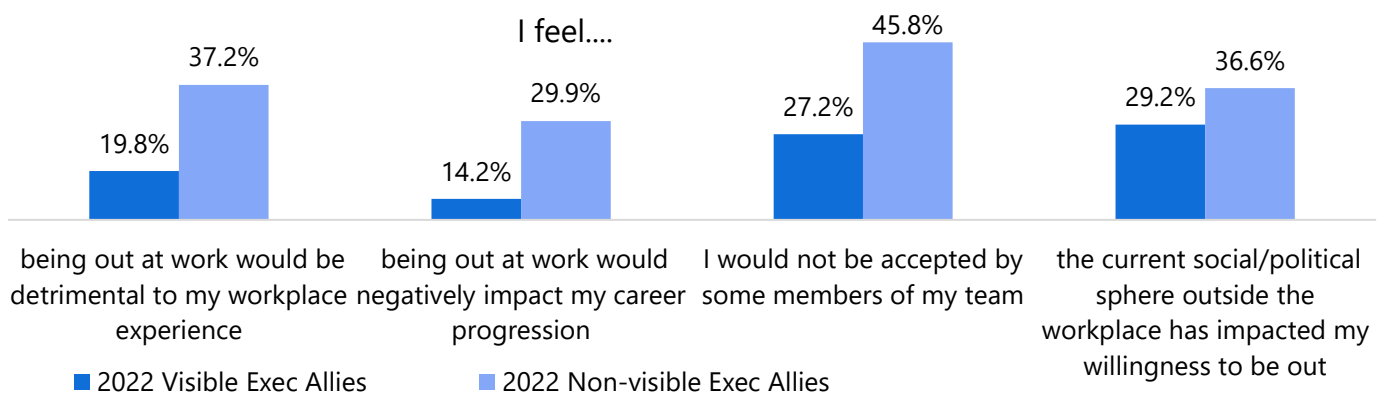
Presence of visible executive allies also makes a difference in comfort levels around reporting jokes, innuendo and sexual harassment. Respondents in 'non-visible' organisations are advising higher levels of harassment and over 22% points lower rates of feeling safe to report this behaviour.



Those not out in 'non-visible' organisations:

- are twice as likely feel it would be detrimental to their workplace experience (visible: 19.8% vs non-visible: 37.2%)
- feel that it would negatively impact their career progression (visible: 14.2% vs non-visible: 29.9%) and
- 27.2% do not feel they would be accepted by members of their team (vs non-visible: 45.8%).

For 'visible' organisations employees it seems that outside influences are more of a consideration than internal, with 36.6% vs 29.2% feeling the current social/political environment has had an impact on their willingness to be out.



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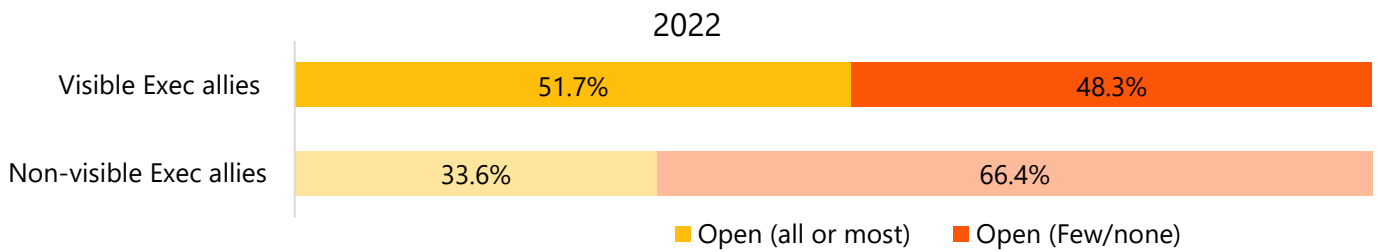
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Being 'open' at work

In 2020 34.7% of respondents in 'visible' organisations, agreed that "most people I work with are aware of my gender diversity" vs 17.4% of those in 'non-visible' organisations.

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

This year, 51.79% of respondents in 'visible' organisations are open within their workplace, compared to 33.6% of those in 'non-visible' organisations.

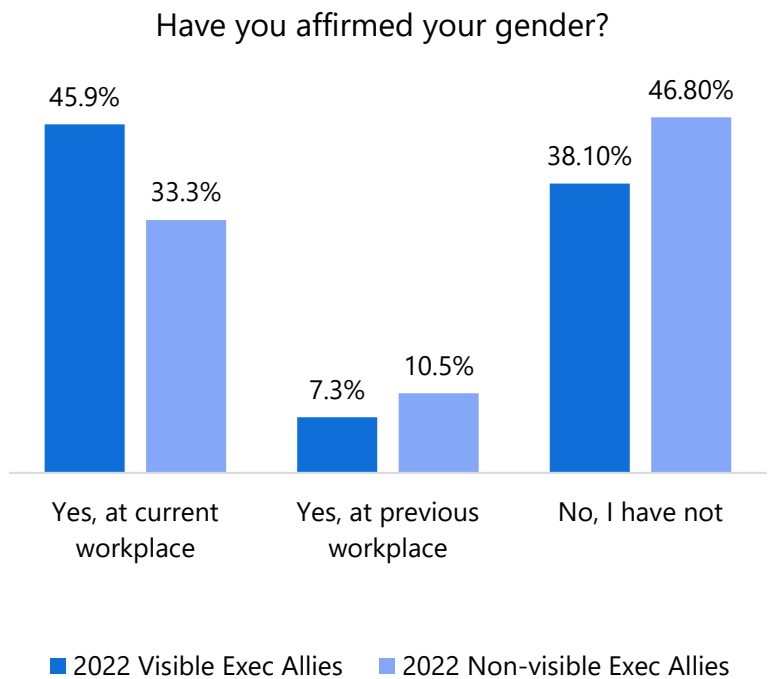


Gender affirmation in the workplace

There is a significant difference between the cohorts regarding undertaking gender affirmation processes in the workplace, with 45.9% of those in 'visible' organisations advising having undertaken some form of gender affirmation in their current workplace.

Of those who have affirmed their gender in their current workplace, and who have advised they are 'Open' to all or most in their workplace, 69.2% are happy with the process they have undertaken at their current organisation compared to 41.2% of those in 'non-visible' organisations.

We do note that there are many reasons why people choose not to affirm their gender in the workplace, including the feeling of it not being necessary as they had undertaken the process prior to their current employment.



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People of diverse gender and/or trans experience & experiences of recruitment

Even from the very beginning, during the recruitment phase, having visible executive allies makes a difference in the experiences for people of diverse gender and/or trans experience.

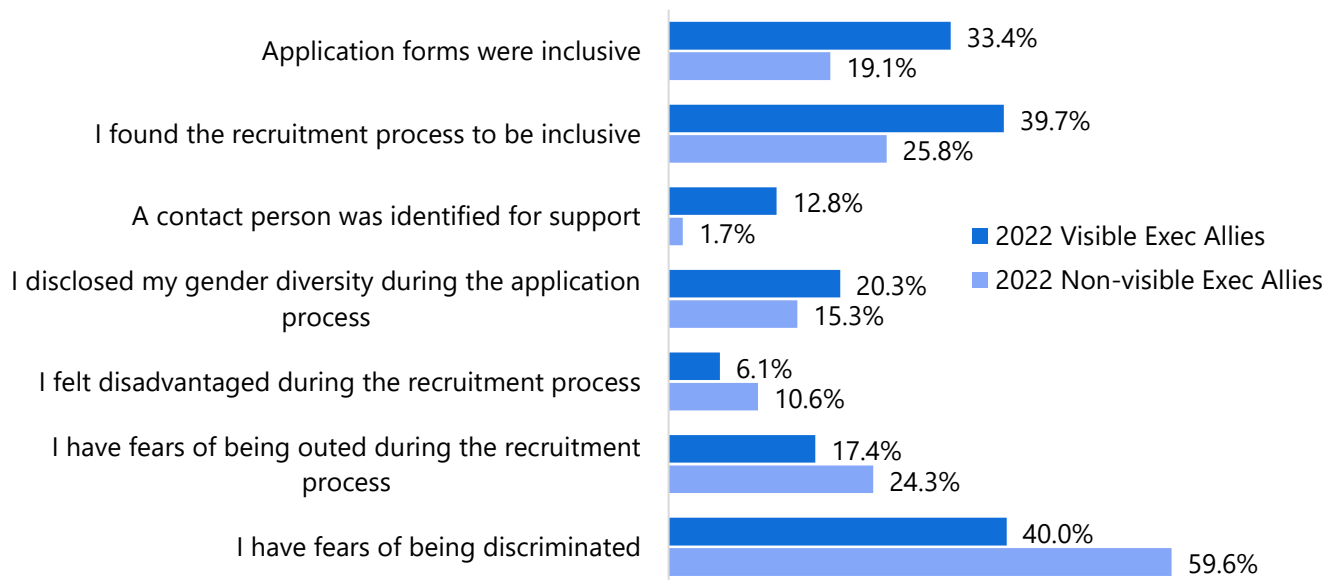
Those in 'visible' organisation are more likely:

- to feel application forms and the recruitment process were inclusive,
- to disclose their gender diversity during the application process, and
- to know of a contact person to support diverse gender applications, though this is still low at 12.8%

There was little difference in the cohorts when considering background and reference check barriers with both coming in at around 8.5%.

During the process they were less likely to fear being outed during recruitment (visible: 17.4% vs non-visible: 24.3%) There was a significant difference (19.6% points) in those who have fears of being discriminated against due to their gender identity.

In relation to applicants of diverse gender



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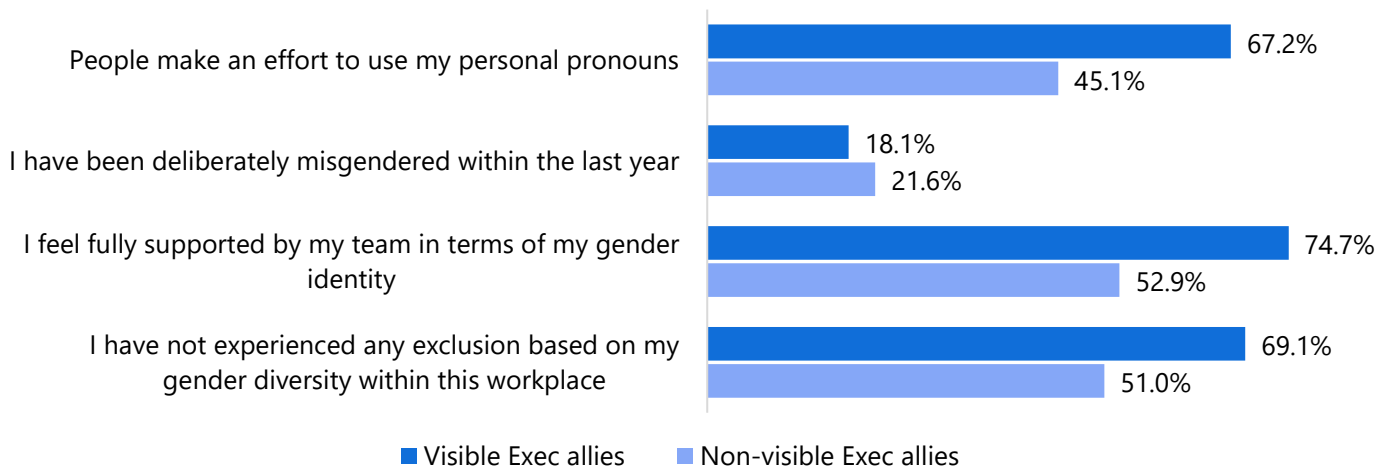
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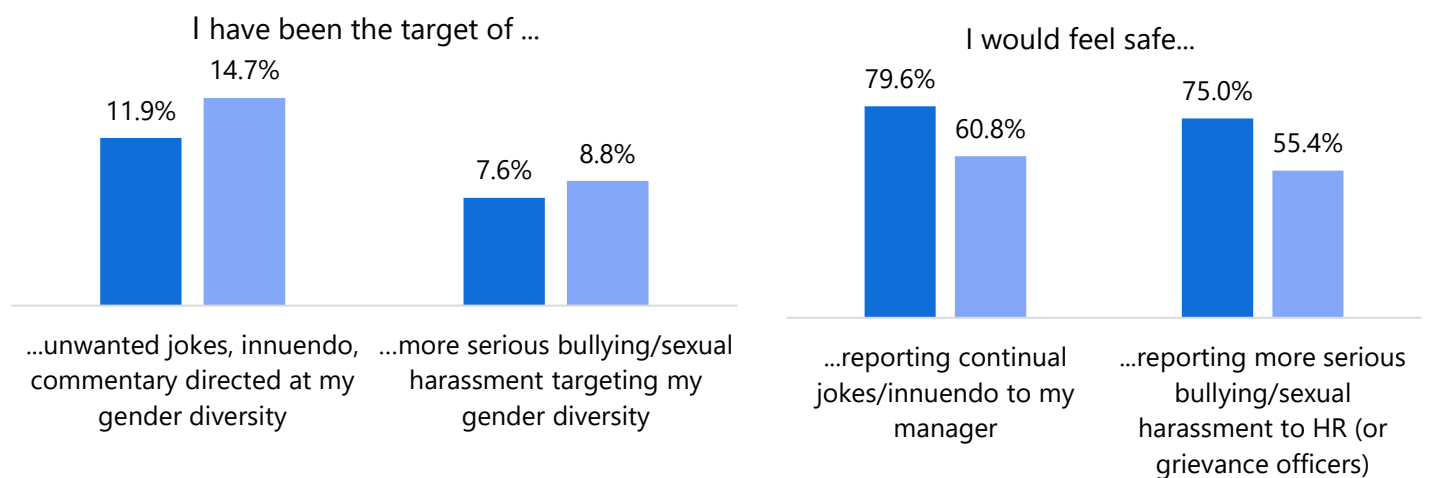
During employment

For those open in the workplace, organisations with visible executive allies, continue to surpass those without, when employees are considering experiences of being open at work.

67.2% of respondents from 'visible' organisations feel that more effort is put in to using correct personal pronouns, and less deliberate misgendering is occurring (3.4% points lower). Support from team members and lack of exclusion within the wider organisation are also significantly higher.



Differences in comfort levels around reporting jokes, innuendo and sexual harassment are also stark. Respondents in 'non-visible' organisations are advising higher levels of harassment and 20% points lower rates of feeling safe to report this behaviour directed at their gender diversity.



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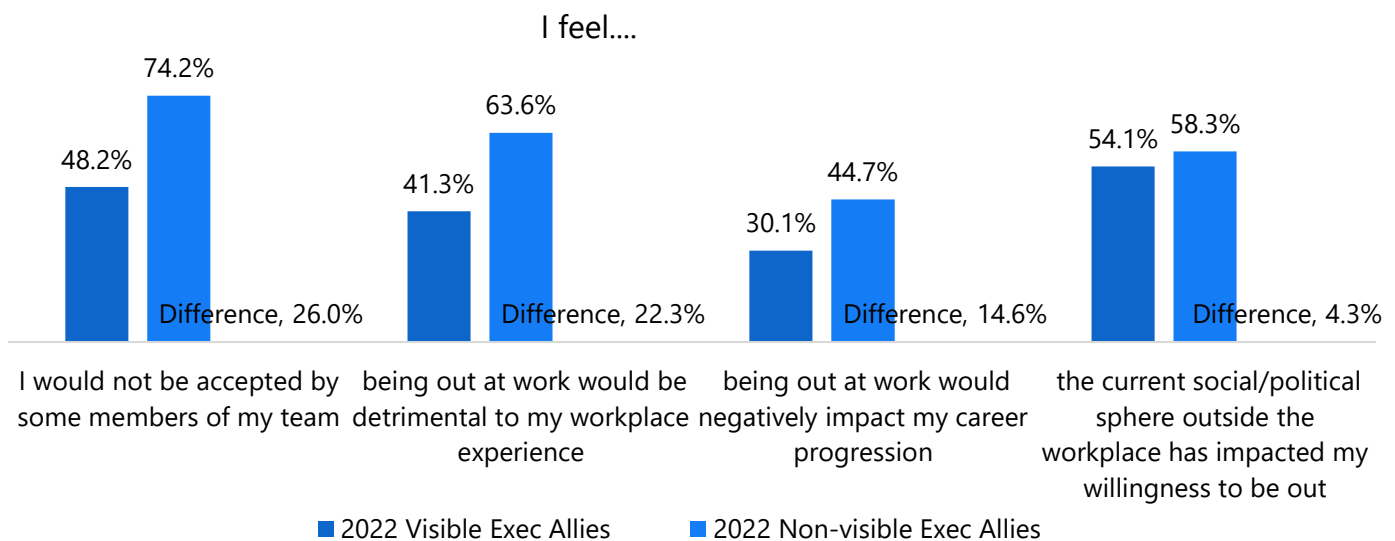


VIDEO TRAINING

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For those 'not open' in the workplace, feeling they "would not be accepted by some team members" is the most significant reason (visible: 48.2% vs non-visible: 74.2%), followed by feeling it would be detrimental to their workplace experience. The impact of the current social and political sphere, which ranks highly for both cohorts, has the least difference.



IN CONCLUSION

The presence of senior / executive allies has a significant impact within an organisation, on employee support for organisational LGBTQ inclusion initiatives, and specific support for LGBTQ employees, including support for inclusion actions. Employees are more likely to attend awareness training if there is a visible executive ally in their organisation, and more likely to be an active ally themselves.

Visible executive allies within an organisation have a significant impact on improving feelings of health and wellbeing, inclusion, belonging and acceptance. They reduce incidents of bullying and harassment and contribute to an environment where people feel safer to support negative behaviours.

They also impact on the behind-the-scenes inclusion work, with more inclusive policies and processes in organisations where there is a visible executive ally.

The power of visible leadership from the top levels of an organisation cannot be understated, and organisations should consider how to empower their senior leaders and give them the knowledge and confidence to actively speak about the benefits of LGBTQ inclusion.

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ACTION POINTS

Consider if:

1. your CEO and senior leaders have shown visible internal support for LGBTQ inclusion within the last 12 months.
2. your CEO and senior leaders have sufficient knowledge and confidence to talk credible about LGBTQ populations and LGBTQ inclusion.
3. your executive teams have access to peer-led LGBTQ inclusion support beyond general organisational training.
4. executive allies and sponsors are part of diversity and inclusion committees, even if they are not the leads of the committee.
5. your CEO and senior leaders are executive are leading by example.
6. using inclusive language, wearing ally pins, pronoun badges or inclusion on signatures are simple and effective ways of being a visible ally or sponsor to the LGBTQ employees within your organisation.

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.

Contact Deputy Director, Chris Keely for specific support for senior leadership teams.

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