

1



RAW DATA SETS

2



NEWSLETTERS

3



BLOGS

4



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EDITION 4: Impact of Allies in the Workplace

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2023 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey has been running for the past 12 years as part of the suite of offerings from Pride in Diversity.

In 2023, 178 organisations and 41,157 individuals took part in the survey. Of these, 40,331 respondents are Australian-based, and 826 work in overseas locations for Australian employers.

All organisations participating in the survey are working to increase and support LGBTQ+ inclusive practices.

Earlier Practice Points have covered general allyship, and also allyship within the cohorts of people who are of diverse sexuality or who have a trans and gender diverse experience.

This Practice Point looks at the importance of active allyship within organisations and its impact on culture, inclusion, and safety for all employees, particularly LGBTQ+ employees in comparison to cisgender heterosexual respondents.

Defining an Active Allies

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 at all (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 do not – although they are happy to support, this is not visible to LGBTQ+ employees and therefore does not contribute to a culture of inclusion. Capturing data on those who are “not an ally” allows us to investigate the reasons why some employees do not support LGBTQ+ inclusion.

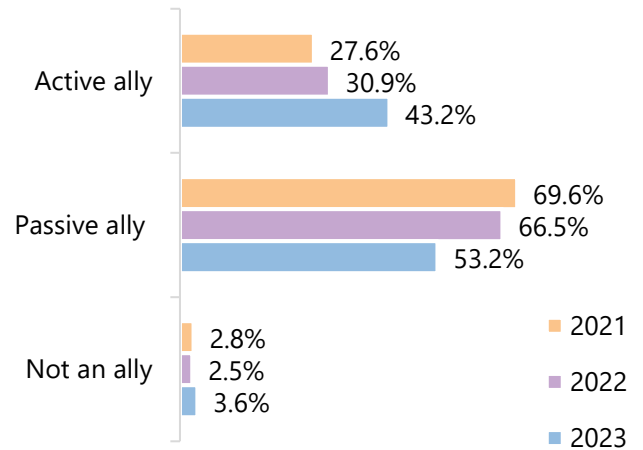
It is important to remember that LGBTQ+ employees can also be active allies to other people in the rainbow community. Likewise, LGBTQ+ employees may not consider themselves to be an ally for various reasons. When we talk about persons who are LGBTQ+, we are considering both those who are of diverse sexuality and /or trans and gender diverse.

Allyship in 2023

In 2023, 92.5% of all respondents, answered this question.

16,131, 43.2% consider themselves active allies, a further 53.2% are passive allies and only 3.6% consider themselves not an ally at all.

Compared to 2022, we have seen a 39.8% increase in active allies, but also a 41.7% increase in those who consider themselves not an ally.



Who are the active allies?

Allyship by gender identity

LGBTQ+ respondents are twice as likely to be active allies (LGBTQ+: 70.0% vs cis-het: 34.3%), though active allyship in the cis-het population has increased from 24.6% in 2022.

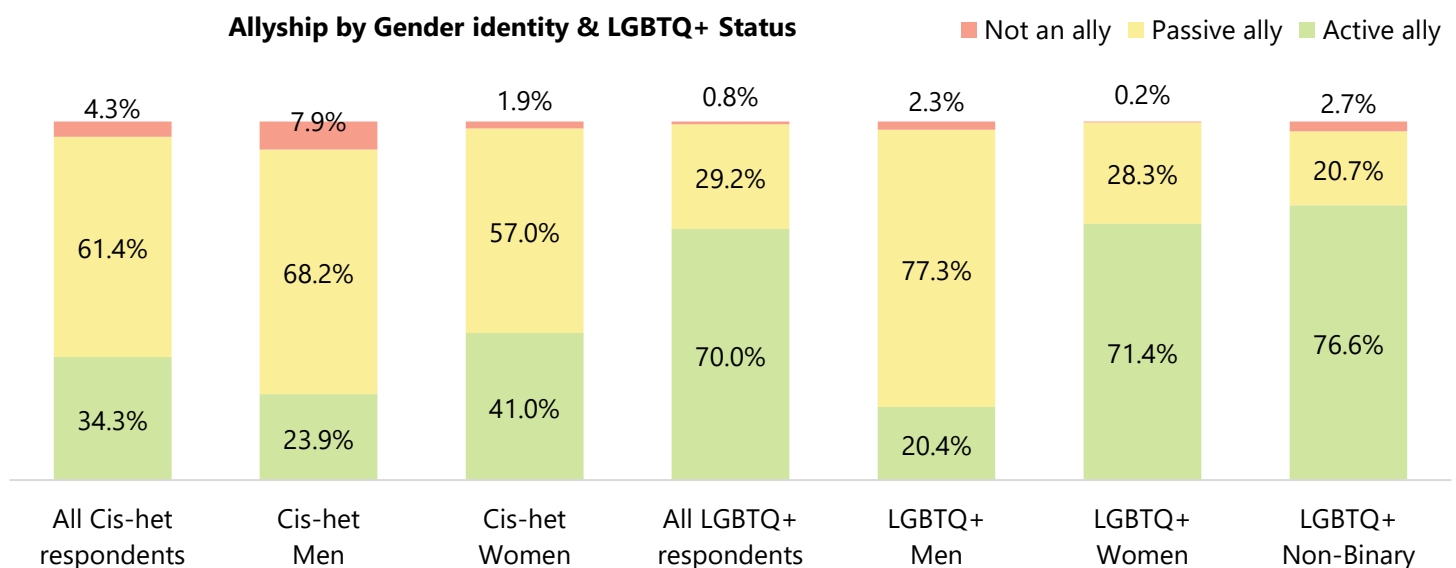
Increasing active allies within organisations is one of the most powerful ways to increase inclusion. For more information on why people are not active allies, and what actions could be undertaken to support a person to become an active ally please see Edition 1: Key insights.

Men are less likely to be active allies than women, regardless of whether they are cisgender-heterosexual (cis-het) or LGBTQ+. Cis-het men are more likely to identify as not an ally than any other cohort, and over 300% more likely to not be an ally than cis-het women.

The most likely cohort to be active allies are those who responded with non-binary gender identities, though this cohort is also the most likely of all LGBTQ+ respondents to identify as not an ally.

NOTE: LGBTQ+ Non-Binary includes anyone identifying as 'non-binary' or 'a different term'.

Allyship by Gender identity & LGBTQ+ Status

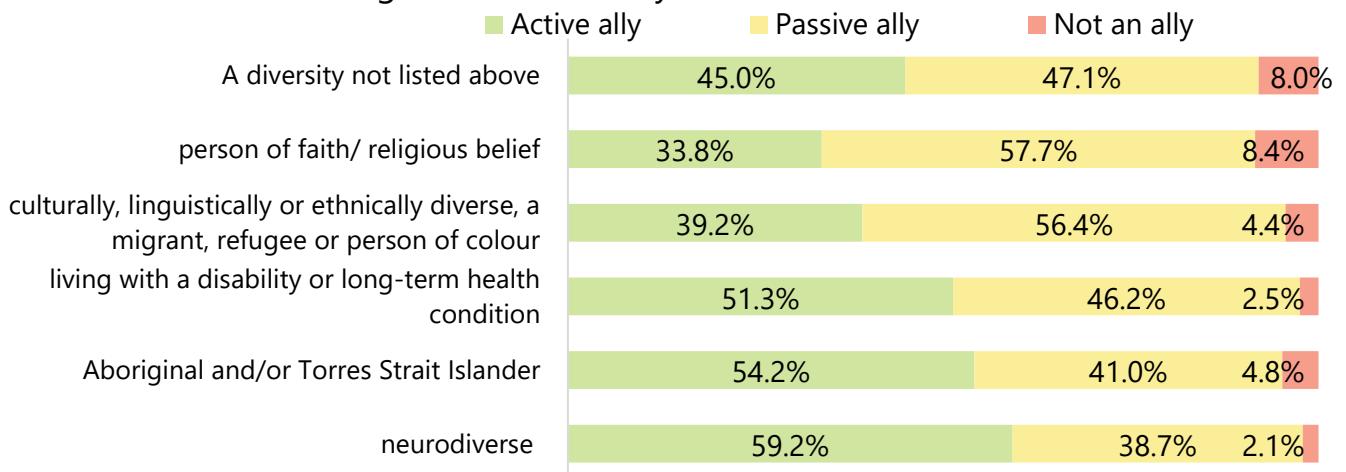


Allyship and other diversities

When considering the presence of other diversities or background elements for respondents we can see that those who are neurodiverse, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or who have a disability are more likely to be an active ally.

Respondents with a “diversity not listed” (e.g., carers, parents, mature aged etc) also have a high proportion of active allies.

Background or diversity other than LGBTQ+

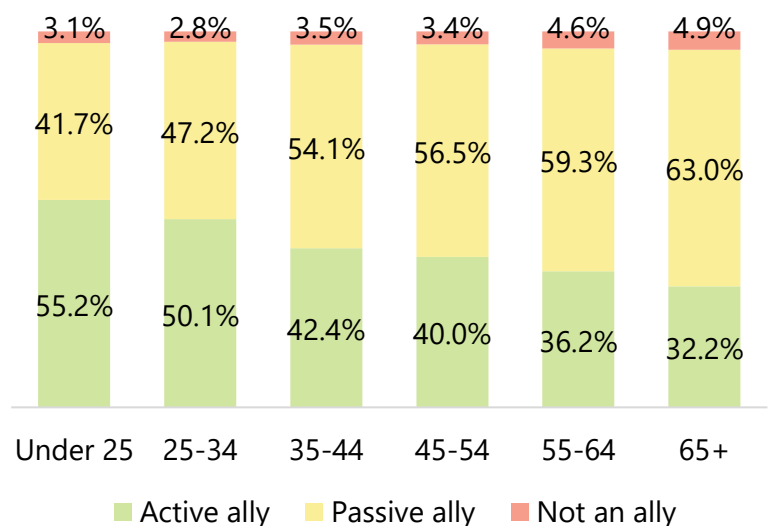


Allyship by age

The younger our respondents are the more likely they are to be active allies to the LGBTQ+ community.

Over 50% of respondents under the age of 35 are active allies. For the over 45-year-olds this drops to 40% or under.

Encouragingly, the rate of identifying as not an ally is relatively steady between 18-54 but increases above 4.5% in the 55 and over respondents.

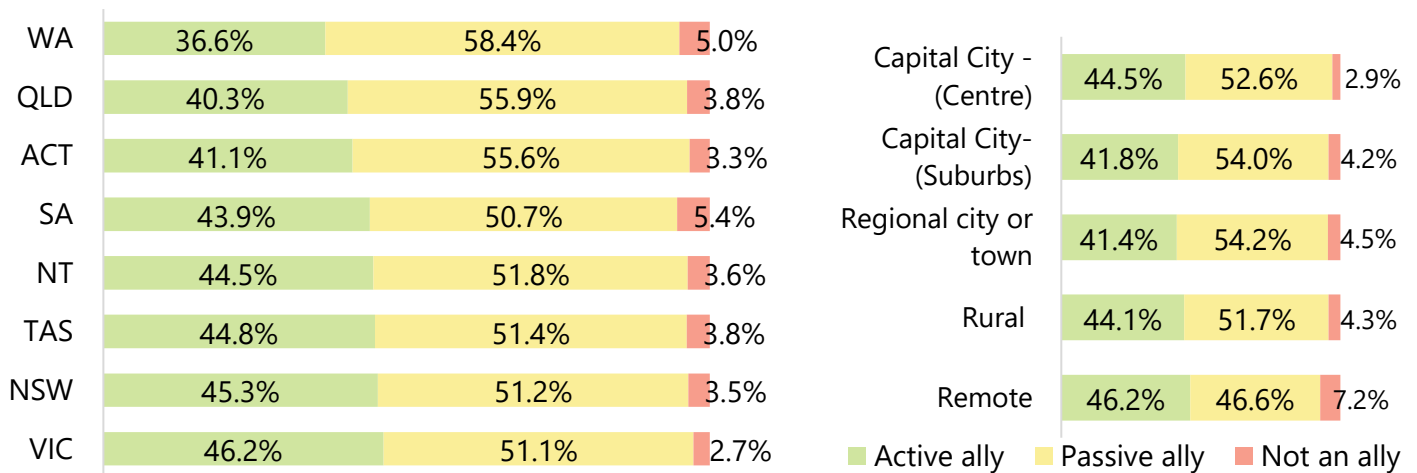


This data indicates that societal changes are having an impact on allyship, and while active allies may currently be lower in some organisations, as the population ages, active allyship is likely to increase proportionately.

Allyship by location

Breaking down the results by state, we can see that our Victorian respondents are most likely to be allies, with NSW, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory less than 2 percentage points behind.

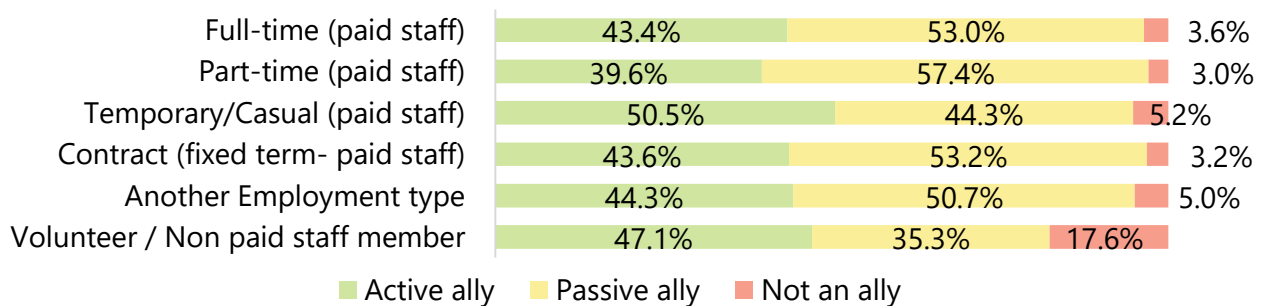
South Australia has the greatest percentage of respondents who feel they are not allies at all but come in 5th place regarding active allies and has the smallest proportion of passive allies.



When we look at geographic location as an influence on allyship, we see that remote participants are both the most likely to be an active ally, and not an ally at all. This might be attributed to the small number of respondents (n446), of which 28.3% identify as LGBTQ+. Of all remote respondents who are active allies, 52.2% are not LGBTQ+.

With this in mind, the AWEI data suggests there is a positive trend of inclusion initiatives having an impact on the rates of allyship in regional areas. Organisations with regional centres should consider how to target those areas with their activities.

Allies by position



Temporary or casual staff are the most likely to consider themselves active allies, with part time paid staff most likely to be passive allies. 17.6% of non-paid or volunteer staff are not allies at all.

Allies by seniority and management position

In this year's survey we implemented a 4-tier seniority system to provide an understanding of experiences and beliefs at different levels within organisations.

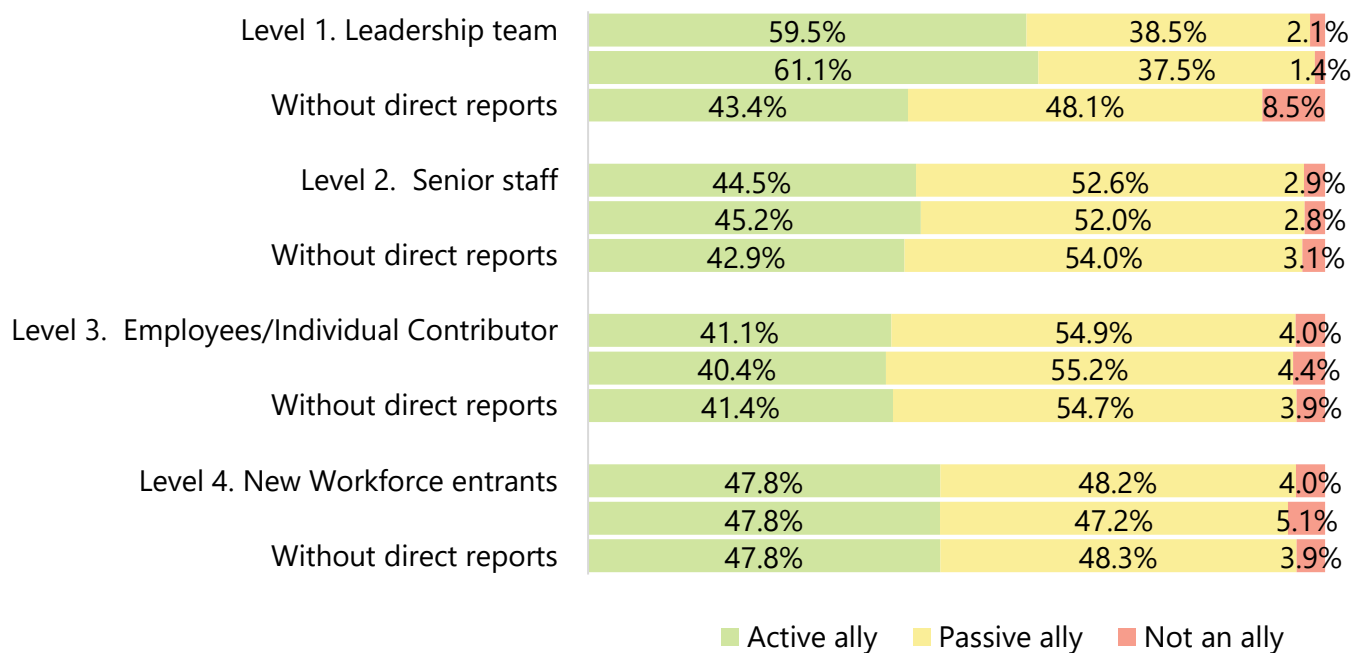
- Level 1. Leadership team - Leadership/executive team (CEO or equivalent and senior executives reporting to CEO not including EA/PA)
- Level 2. Reporting to level 1 - Senior staff (including EA/PA to Executive team)
- Level 3. Reporting to level 2 - Employees/Individual contributor
- Level 4. Reporting to any level - New workforce entrants

In addition to this we asked if the respondent managed other employees.

The data shows the significant difference between allies in the leadership team who do or do not have direct reports. On average 59.5% of level 1 respondents are active allies, but those without direct reports are 500% more likely to not be an ally at all, and almost 30% less likely to be an active ally.

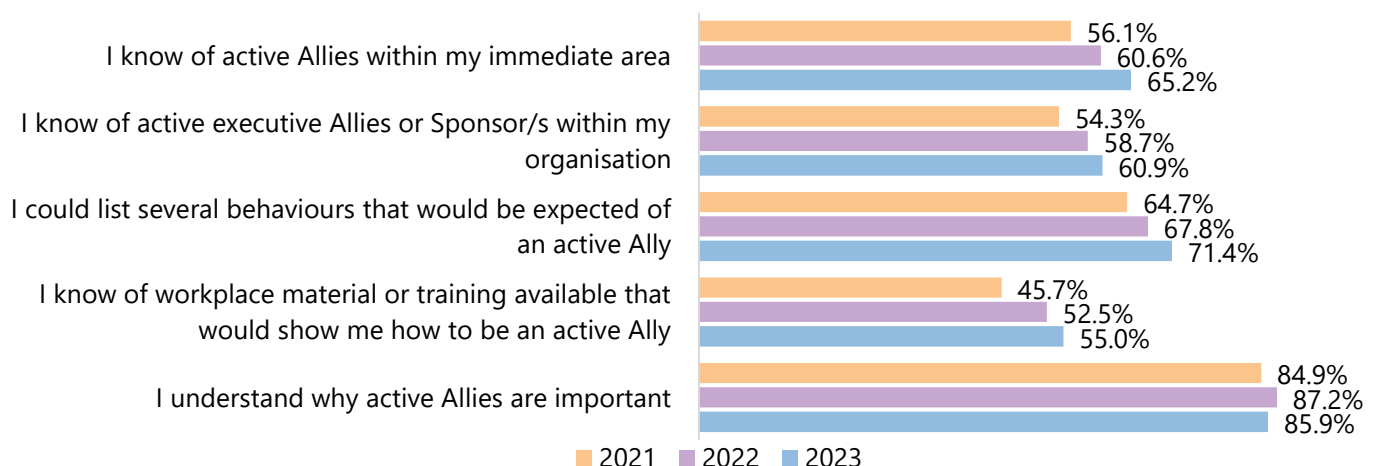
A difference is also seen in the level 2 group where those who are not managers are 4.9% less likely to be an active ally, and 9.6% more likely to not be an ally at all. We will look at these two leadership groups in more detail in a future Practice Point.

Just under 47.8% of new workforce entrants and 41.1% of level three employees are active allies.



Visibility of allies

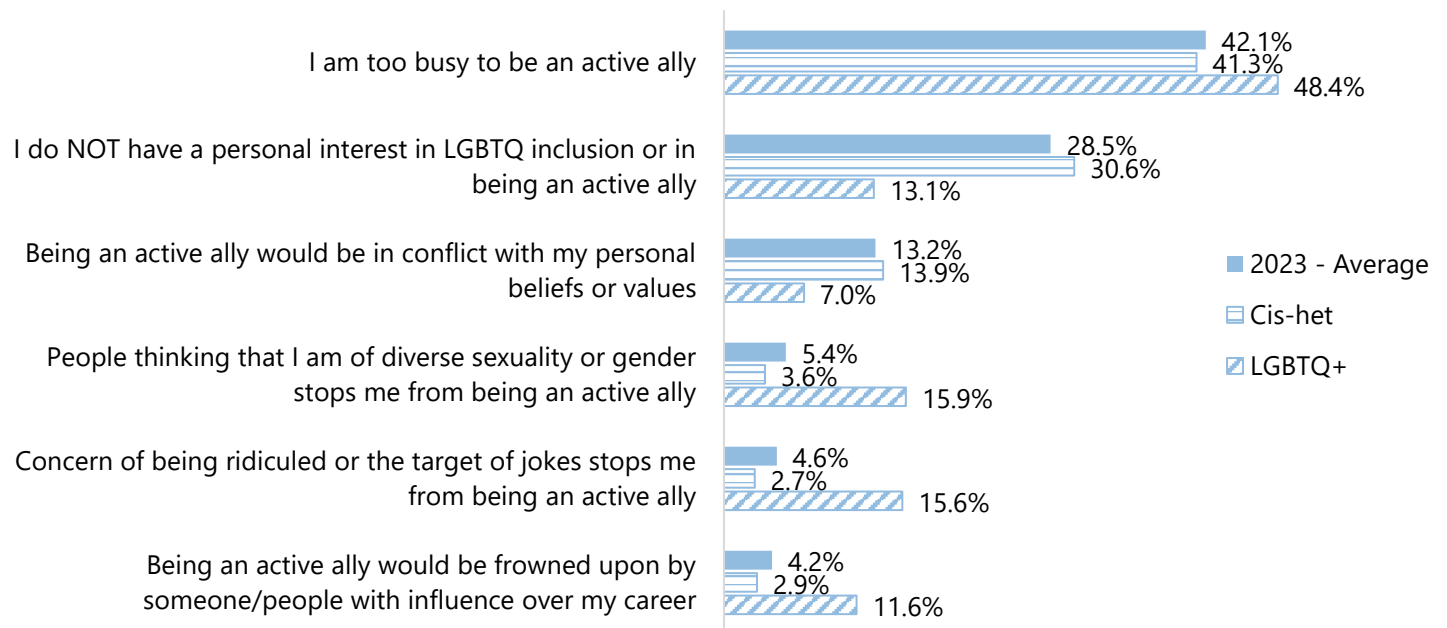
Respondents were asked to reflect upon the active allies in their workplace, across five statements. This year, the **impact** and **visibility** of allies has increased again across most statements except for a small drop of respondents who feel they understand the importance of active allies. This highlights the significance of this Practice Point in supporting the understanding of allyship to all employees.



Barriers to Active Allyship

Comparing the cisgender heterosexual to LGBTQ+ respondents, we see significant differences in the reasons why a person may choose to not be an active ally.

LGBTQ+ respondents are more than three times as likely to agree the reason they are not an active ally is because they are concerned people will think they are LGBTQ+, that people will ridicule them, or that it would be frowned upon by someone with influence.



For respondents who are **not allies at all**, the main reason for either cohort a lack of personal interest in LGBTQ inclusion or in being an active ally (cis-het: 85.7% s LGBTQ+: 56.6%)

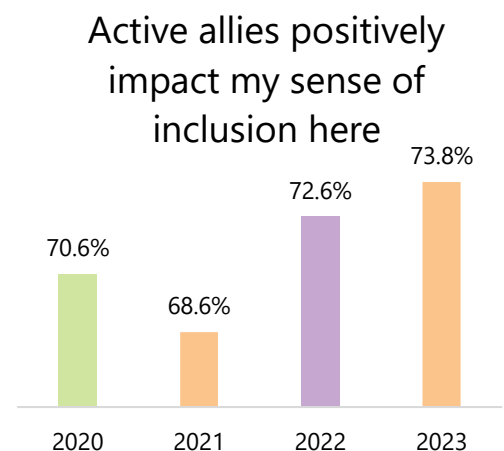
For respondents who are **passive allies** main reason for either cohort is being too busy to be an active ally (cis-het: 41.6% s LGBTQ+: 48.8%)

Impact of active allies

When looking at the impact of active allies on the 72.1% of LGBTQ+ respondents who know of active allies in their immediate work area growth has been increasing consistency.

Agreement that active allies have positively impacted their sense of inclusion within their organisation has increased to 73.8% this year. This trend has been seen for the past 2 years and equates to a 7.6% increase since 2021.

For LGBTQ+ employees that know of active executive allies or sponsor/s within their organisation, the positive impact increases to 76.9%.

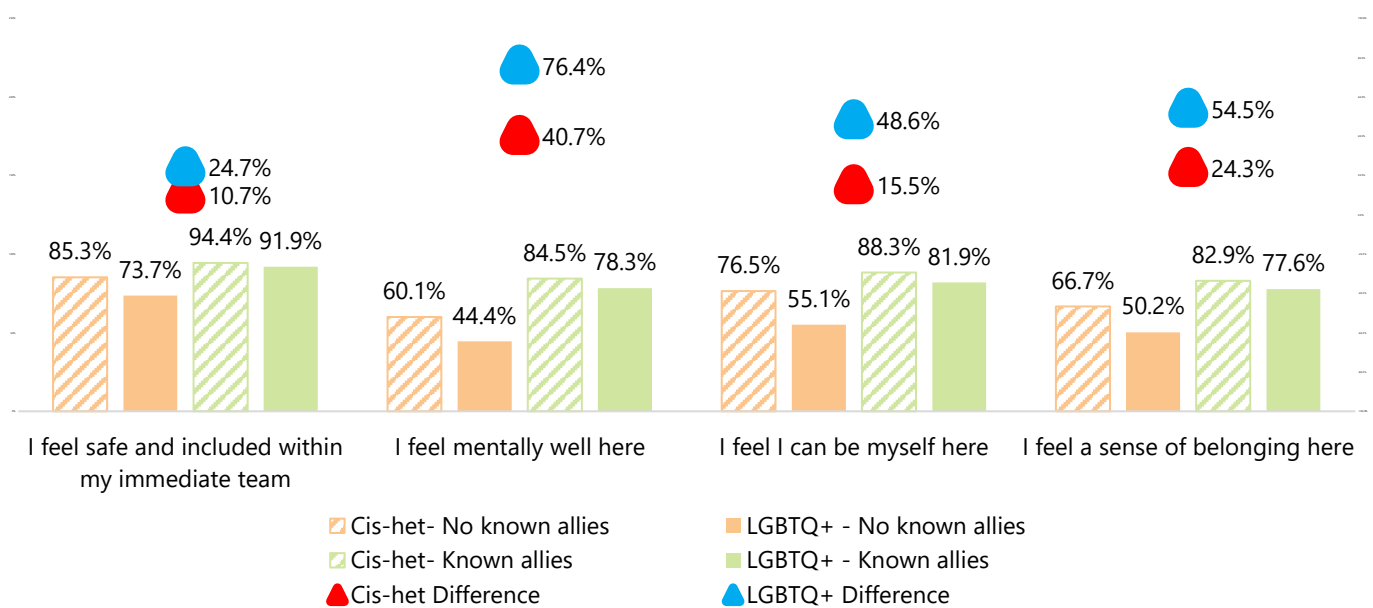


Personal impacts for employees

The impacts of knowing allies in the organisation are significant when looking at employee feelings of health and wellbeing and differ dependant on whether the ally is an executive or part of the respondent's immediate work area. While cisgender respondents report higher levels of health and wellbeing when allies are known in the workplace, the differences within the LGBTQ+ population are more significant.

Feeling mentally well, for LGBTQ+ respondents in organisations with allies, is 76.4% higher than if there are not known allies. For the same metric within the non-LGBTQ+ population the difference is 40.7%.

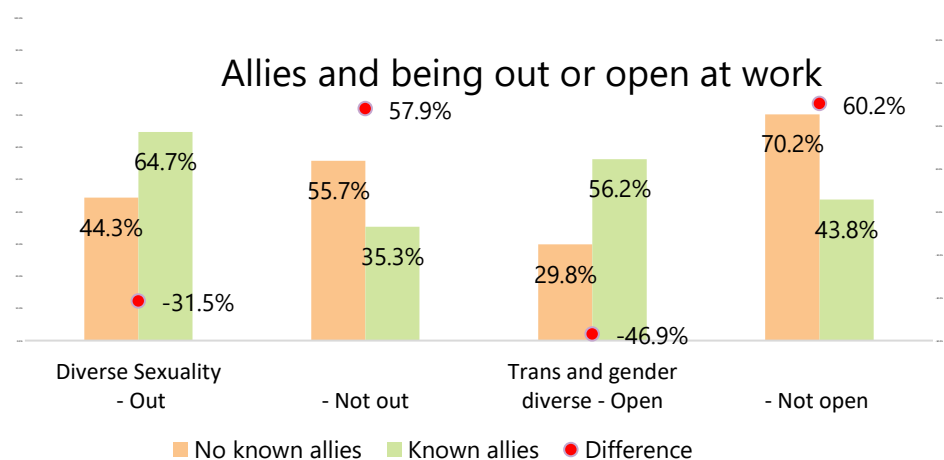
In every metric, the difference in agreement is more significant within the LGBTQ+ population.



From this we can assume that the presence of active allies in the workplace is not the only factor which can affect an employee's feeling of health & wellbeing, but the data shows that the presence of active allies does have a significant difference for LGBTQ+ employees.

Working within an organisation with active allies also increases the likelihood of a respondent bringing their whole selves to work.

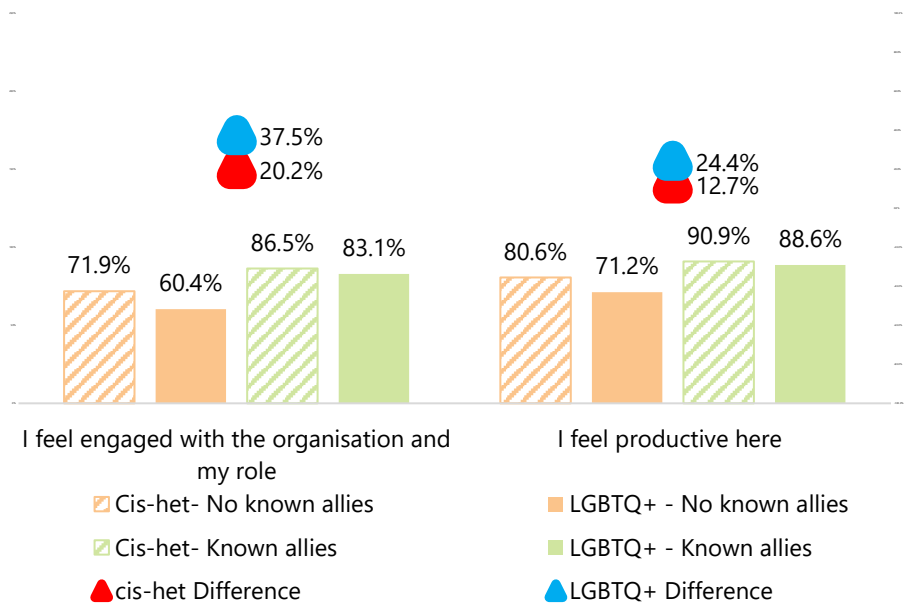
People of diverse sexuality are 57.9% more likely to **not** be out in organisations without known allies, and this rises to 60.2% more likely **not** to be open for trans and gender diverse employees.



Impacts for organisations.

Not only do LGBTQ+ respondents have greater sense of health and wellbeing, but they are also significantly more likely to feel engaged with their organisation and to feel productive within their role when there are allies known to them,

Like health and wellbeing indicators, the difference between those that are aware of vs not aware of allies is also present within feeling engaged with the organisation (20.2%-37.5% difference) and feeling productive at work (12.7-24.4% difference) between LGBTQ+ and cisgender respondents.



The higher levels of feelings of engagement and productivity when there are known allies in the organisation is likely to translate to decreased staff turnover, absences and complaints, and increased output for the organisation.

Organisation inclusion culture

LGBTQ+ respondents in an organisation with known allies are 17% less likely to agree that they have experienced discrimination within their current workplace (Known allies: 18.0% vs No known allies: 21.7%)

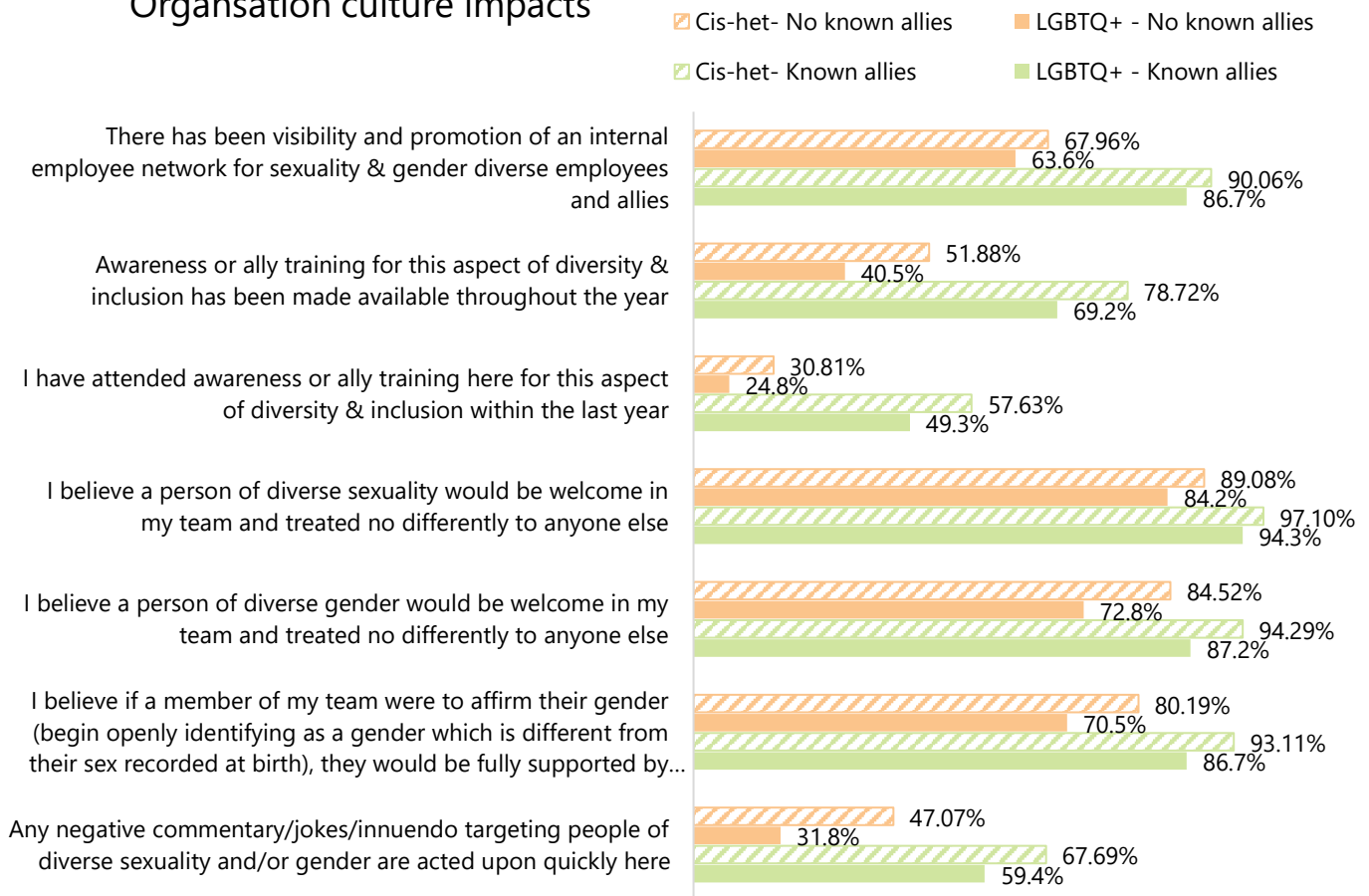
Organisations where employees are aware of active allies are far more likely to also have visibility and promotion of an internal employee network for sexuality & gender diverse employees and allies. 88.8% of respondents in organisations with known allies agreed their organisation had an LGBTQ+ employee network compared to 61.5% of those without known allies.

Awareness of LGBTQ+ inclusion training is 66.5% higher, and attendance at training is more than double.

In all areas the presence of known allies increases feelings of inclusion for all staff, not just those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Importantly, respondents in organisations with visible active allies are 185.7% more likely to feel that they would be supported to be an active ally themselves if they wished to be (Known allies: 83.7% vs No known allies: 29.3%).

Organisation culture impacts



Conclusion

The visible presence of active allies within workplaces is one of the most important factors in improving organisation culture and inclusion for employees, not only for health and wellbeing, but also demonstrating significant improvements in productivity and employee engagement within the organisation and their teams.

Continuing to increase visible active allyship within organisations requires positive leadership, active engagement with days of significance and a concerted effort to implement policies and strategies that reinforce positive inclusion and behaviours.

Actions

1. Promote education on how to be an active ally for all leaders.
2. Develop and promote ally guides that are easily located on your internal intranet.
3. Have your senior allies tell their ally stories on days of significance. Record them, promote them, and have them available on your intranet.
4. Have visible signs of inclusion available for all allies who want them.