

**FOUR WAYS
TO GET
ON POINT!**

**PRACTICE
POINTS**

EDITION 6: Bullying & Harassment experiences.

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2023 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The annual Australian Workplace Equality Index 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 within their organisations¹.

In this year's survey, a greater focus was placed on bullying and harassment behaviours within the workplace, particularly regarding where respondents would feel comfortable reporting these behaviours if they were witnessed.

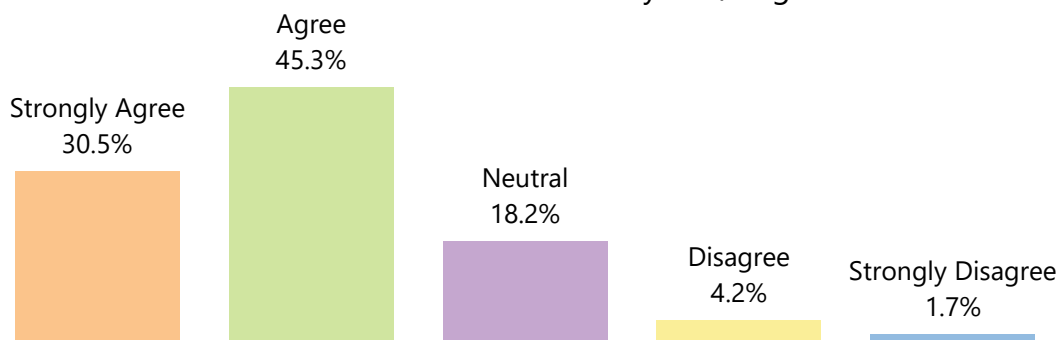
We have covered aspects of bullying and harassment in the workplace in general terms in Edition 1: Key Insights, Edition 1: Open at work, and Edition 3: Trans and gender diverse inclusion.

This Practice Point looks closely at the demographics of who is witnessing bullying and harassment, and for those that have witnessed, what actions are taking place. We are also looking at the bullying and harassment experiences of LGBTQ+ respondents, and the reporting actions which are taking place.

Reporting bullying and harassment

One of the most important considerations for people who have witnessed or experienced bullying and harassment in the workplace is the confidentiality of the reporting process. To understand this portion of company culture, this we asked all respondents to this statement:

"There are identified confidential avenues to safely report bullying/harassment related to one's diverse sexuality and/or gender"

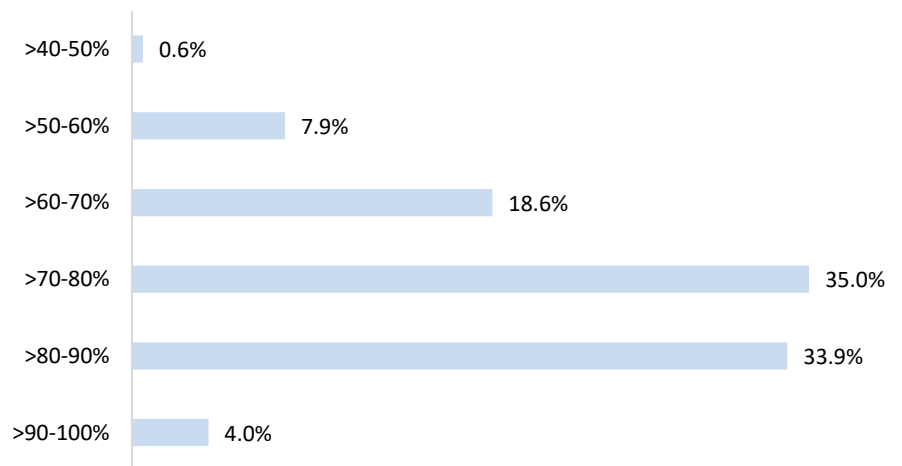


At the top level looking at all employees, of the 38,180 responses to this statement. 75.9% agreed or strongly agreed that their organization had these safe reporting structures in place.

Due to a disparity in the number of responses received per organisations it is important to look at the individual culture of organisations themselves. Of the 178 participating organisations, only 37.1% had over 80% of their respondent employees agree that confidential avenues exist.

This is an important statistic, which shows that, while organisations may have processes in place, it seems many employees are either not aware of, or do not feel confident that the process is safe and confidential.

What percentage of an organisations respondents agree there are confidential avenues



Witnessing bullying and harassment

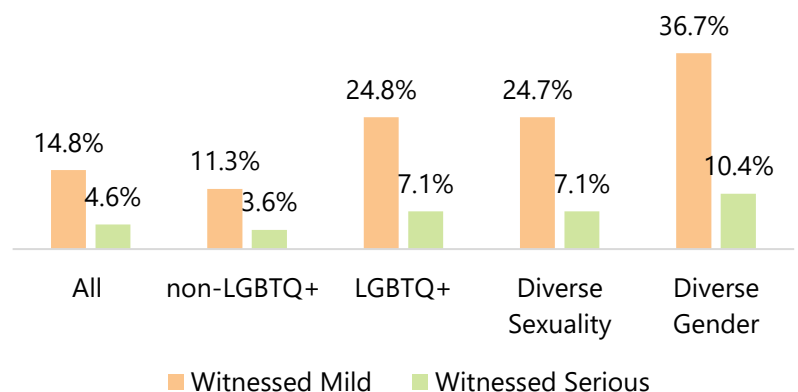
Over 15.0% of respondents have witnessed one or both types of bullying in their workplace (mild and/or serious)

In the past three years the agreement to seeing workplace incivility (mild behaviours) has increased slightly from 14.3% in 2021 to 14.8% in 2023 after a drop to 13.9% in 2022. Witnessing more serious behaviours has declined from 5.3% in 2021 to 4.6%.

We acknowledge that some cohorts are more likely to recognise and/or be sensitive to certain behaviours as constituting bullying and harassment.

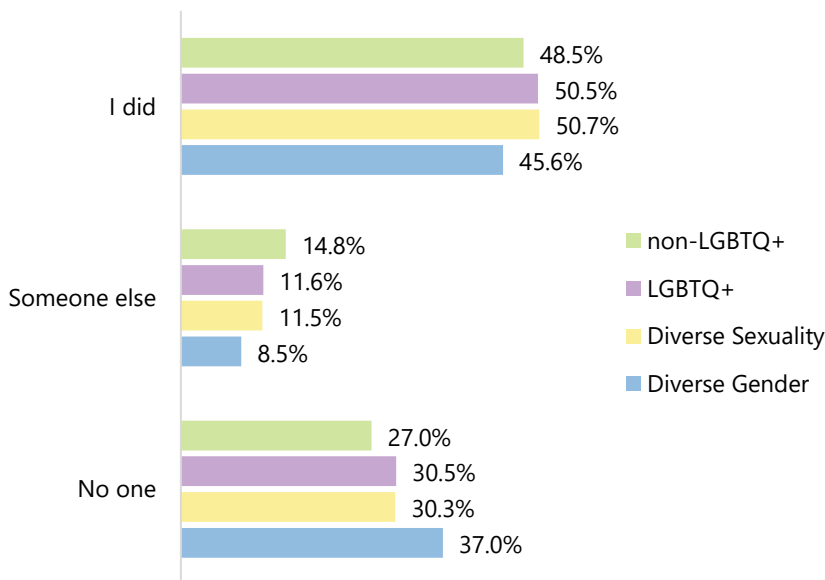
When we look at the difference between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ respondents we see that LGBTQ+ respondents are 119.2% more likely to agree to witnessing workplace incivility and 96.7% more likely to agree to witnessing more serious behaviours. This difference is more pronounced for trans and gender diverse respondents who are 223.1% more likely than non-LGBTQ+ respondent and 48.1% more likely than respondents of diverse sexuality to advise witnessing behaviours.

% respondents witnessing negative behaviours

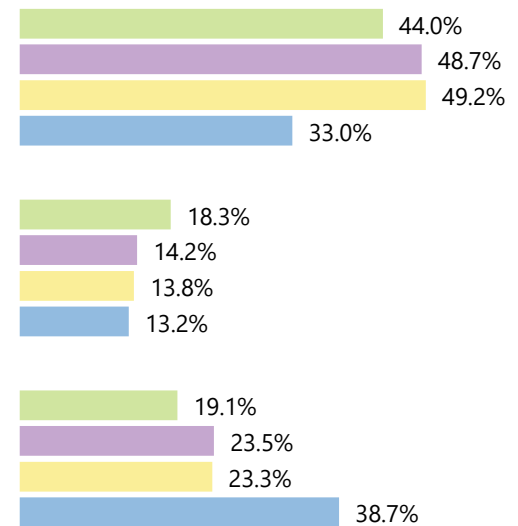


For those who have witnessed these behaviours we asked if it was called out, and if so by whom, on the *most recent* occasion.

Who called it out when mild behaviours were witnessed?



Who called it out when serious behaviours were witnessed?



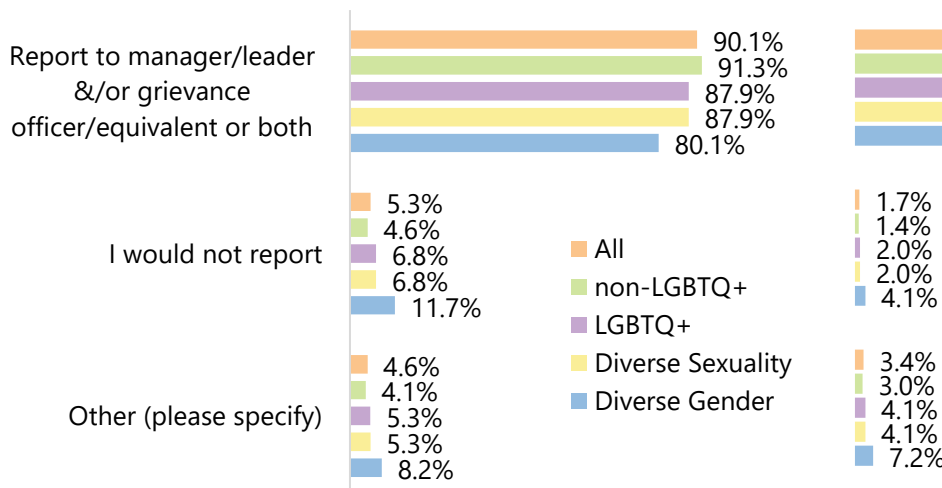
Overall, 28.6% of respondents advised that no one called out the mild behaviours that were witnessed and 21.3% when more serious behaviours were witnessed.

Regardless of whether it is mild or more serious, LGBTQ+ respondents are *more* likely to call out the behaviour and respondents of diverse sexuality are the *most* likely to call out the behaviour of all cohorts. non-LGBTQ+ respondents are most likely to say someone else called out the behaviour, and trans and gender diverse respondents most significantly advise that no action took place.

Respondents were also asked to theorise who they would feel more comfortable reporting witnessed incidents to in the future.

mild behaviours

serious behaviours



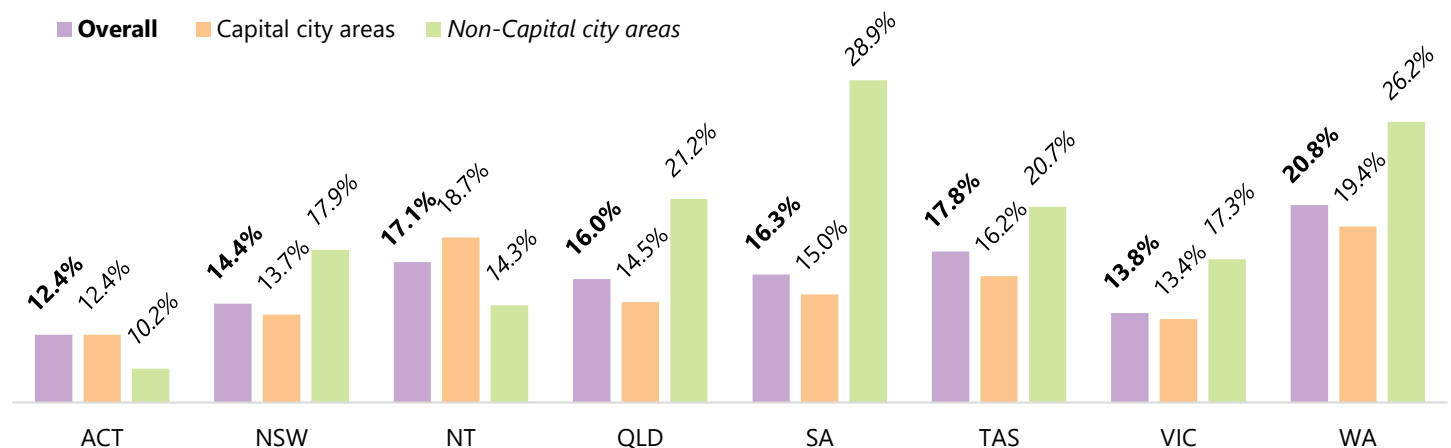
Only 5.3% of respondents said that they would not report mild behaviours and 1.7% would not report more serious behaviours. non-LGBTQ+ respondents are more likely to report only to their manager/ leader, while LGBTQ+ respondents are more likely to report to both the manager/leader and the grievance officer or equivalent in mild cases.

In more serious occasions, over 50% of all cohorts would report to both parties.

Who is most likely to witness?

Of those that have witnessed any type of bullying in their organisation, we see some significant differences between states. There is a 67.6% greater likelihood that respondents from Western Australia will agree to having witnessed bullying and harassment compared to ACT respondents.

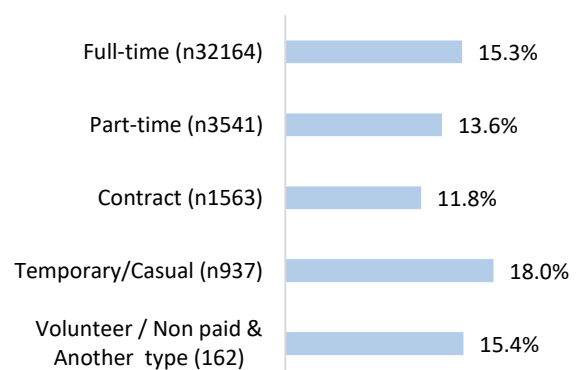
When we compare both state and region, overall, those in non-capital city locations are more likely to witness than those in capital cities. (capital city: 14.2% vs non-capital city: 20.0%). South Australian respondents outside of capital city areas have agreed 28.9% of the time followed closely by Western Australia with 26.2%.



Note: a small number of responses from NT and the ACT may explain why a lower rate of non-capital city areas employees who have witnessed bullying and harassment behaviours.

By Employment type

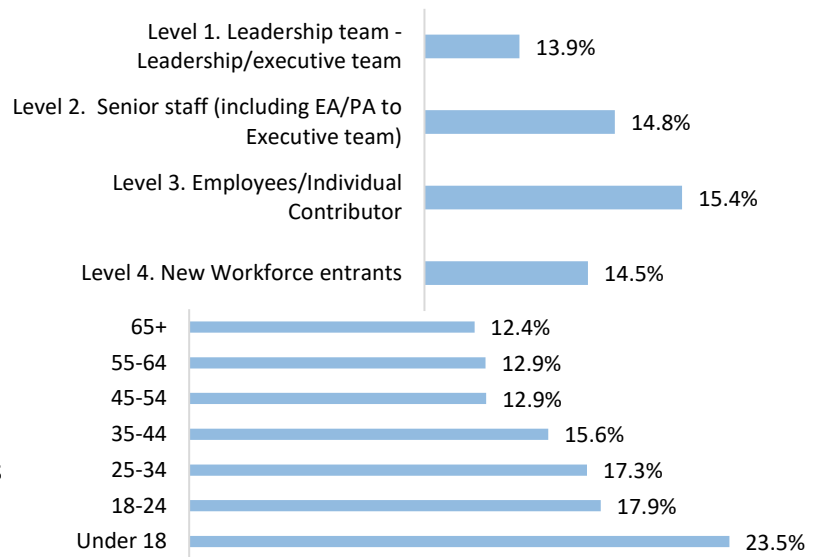
Respondents in temporary / casual positions are reporting witnessing at a greater rate than all other employment types, with 18.0% agreeing they have witnessed some kind of bullying and harassment. To understand this more it is important for organisations to look at their results. This could be an anomaly due to lower numbers of responses within these categories, though could also be influenced by the roles these staff are undertaking, the industries they are working in or their exposure to inclusion culture. Individual organisations should ensure that workplace safety within spaces with high temporary, casual and volunteer roles is held to the same standards as all other areas of the business, and that these staff have access to training and resources to reduce these experiences.



By position seniority & age

Employees in level three position are the most likely to witness behaviours of the four levels. All four levels of employment are close together in this area, with only 1.5% points difference between Level 1 and level 3 staff, which equates to a 10.8% greater proportion of level 3 employees.

Age also has a part to play with those under 34 more likely to advise seeing bullying and harassment behaviours in the workforce. As this age group is also more likely to fall into level 3 positions, these two groups align.



By industry

Within industries, respondents in organisations classified as wholesale trade are the least likely to advise they have witnessed bullying and harassment at 7.9% of employees, and 50.3% less likely than the median. On the other end of the scale with over 53.7% more likelihood of witnessing are those in the mining industry, 50.9% more likely in retail trade and 45.7% more likely in accommodation & food services. There is also a correlation between these industries and employment types, which will be discussed in a future practice point.

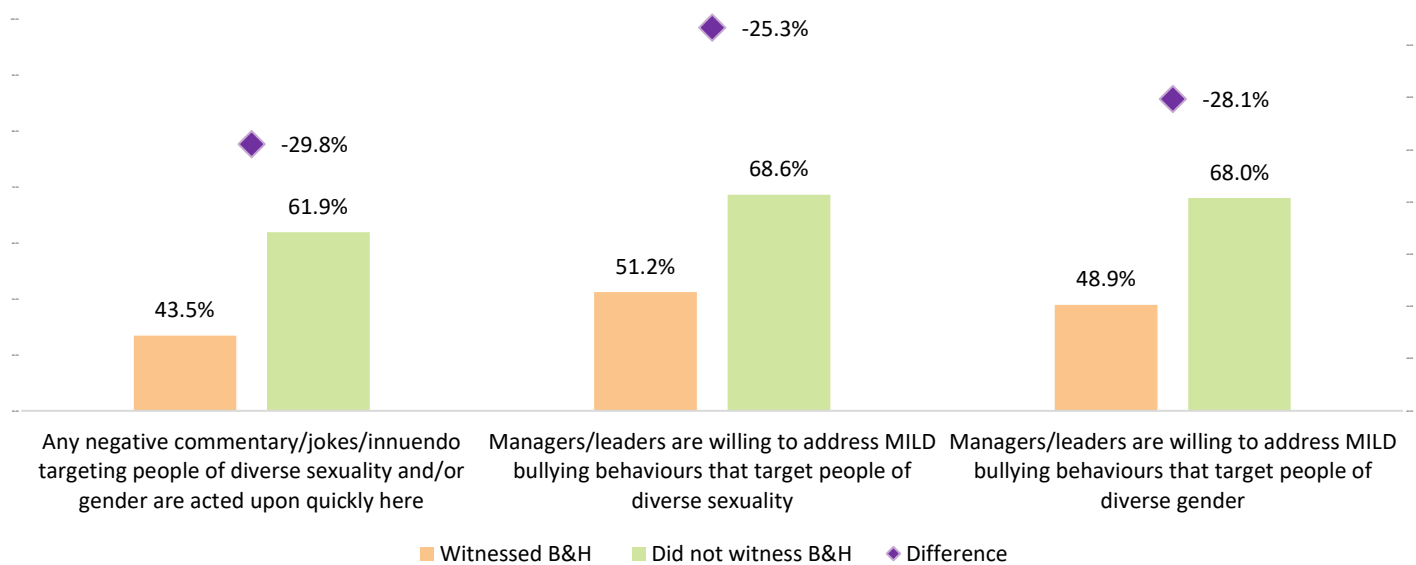
Industry	% Witnessed	% from median
Wholesale Trade (n928)	7.9%	↓ -50.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (n6329)	10.5%	↓ -33.7%
Arts and Recreation Services, Other Services & unknown (n810)	10.9%	↓ -31.4%
Financial and Insurance Services (n6171)	11.7%	↓ -26.3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (n1838)	12.2%	↓ -22.7%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (n1447)	13.0%	↓ -17.9%
Manufacturing (n527)	14.2%	↓ -10.1%
Information Media and Telecommunications (n1476)	14.5%	↓ -8.4%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (n349)	15.8%	↓ -0.5%
Construction (n1025)	15.9%	↔ 0.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance (n3976)	16.2%	↗ 2.3%
Education and Training (n2455)	16.8%	↗ 6.0%
Public Administration and Safety (n6396)	18.5%	↗ 17.0%
Administrative and Support Services (n464)	22.2%	↗ 40.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing (n1224)	22.5%	↗ 41.9%
Accommodation and Food Services (n1101)	23.1%	↗ 45.7%
Retail Trade (n515)	23.9%	↗ 50.9%
Mining (n1336)	24.3%	↗ 53.7%

Whilst knowing who is witnessing or experiencing behaviours in the workplace is important, understanding if these behaviours are being reported, where are they being reported to and who is most likely to report creates a more significant picture of the culture within the organisation around these behaviours.

Those who have witnessed vs not witnessed behaviours in the workplace.

When comparing respondent feelings about their organisations willingness to address mild bullying behaviours, those who have witnessed behaviours in their workplace are less likely to feel their organisation, or the managers/leaders, are willing to address workplace incivility targeting employees of diverse sexuality or gender.

Difference between those who have and have not witnessed behaviours

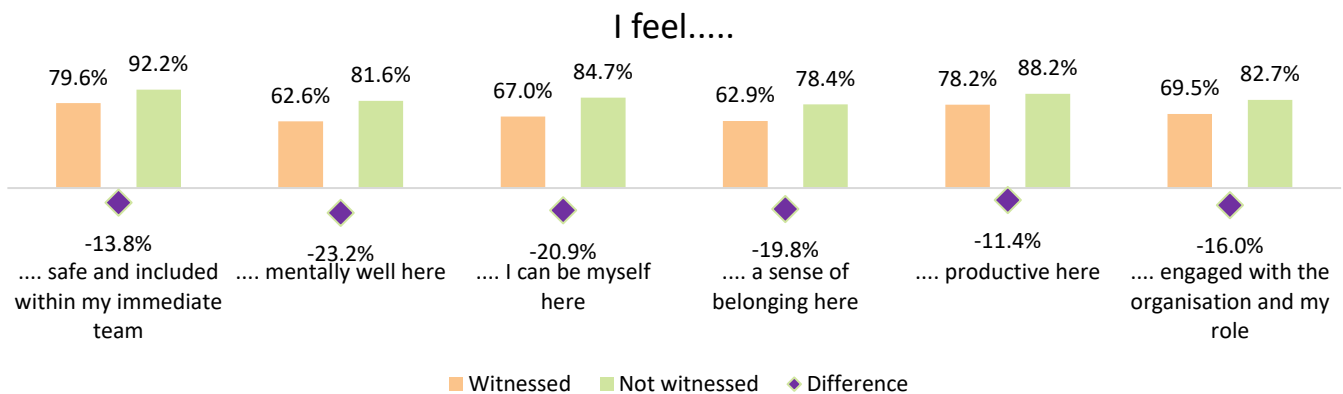


For those who have witnessed behaviours they are:

- 10.3% less likely to believe that a person of diverse sexuality would be welcome in my team and treated no differently to anyone else (witnessed: 85.2% vs not witnessed: 95.0%)
- 15.8% less likely to believe a person of diverse gender would be welcome in their team and treated no differently to anyone else (witnessed: 76.6% vs not witnessed: 91.0%)
- 16.6% less likely to believe a member of their team affirming their gender would be supported (Witnessed: 74.4 vs not witnessed: 89.2%)
- 11.9% less likely to feel work or related initiatives concerning this aspect of diversity & inclusion has been regularly communicated throughout the year (witnessed: 72.2% vs not witnessed: 82.0%)
- 11.7% less likely to agree that awareness or ally training for this aspect of diversity & inclusion has been made available throughout the year (witnessed: 61.2% vs not witnessed: 69.4%)
- 13.9% **more** likely to believe that training in this aspect of diversity & inclusion should be mandatory for anyone who manages or supervises other people (witnessed: 87.7% vs not witnessed: 77.0%)

From these statistics we can see that while many employees believe that their organisation is doing well regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion, those who have witnessed mild or more serious harassment within their organisation do not believe as strongly that the culture of their organisation is welcoming or as accepting as those who have not.

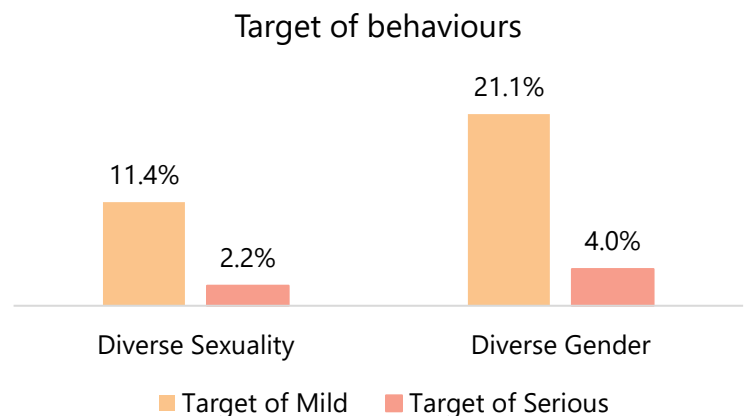
Feelings of health and wellbeing also suffer for those who have witnessed this behaviour.



Experiencing Bullying and harassment

Our next consideration for company culture is the prevalence of respondents experiencing bullying and harassment behaviours targeting their diverse sexuality and/or gender.

11.4% of respondents of diverse sexuality and 21.1% of trans and gender diverse respondentsⁱⁱ have agreed they have been the target of mild bullying behaviours within the last year at their current organisation.

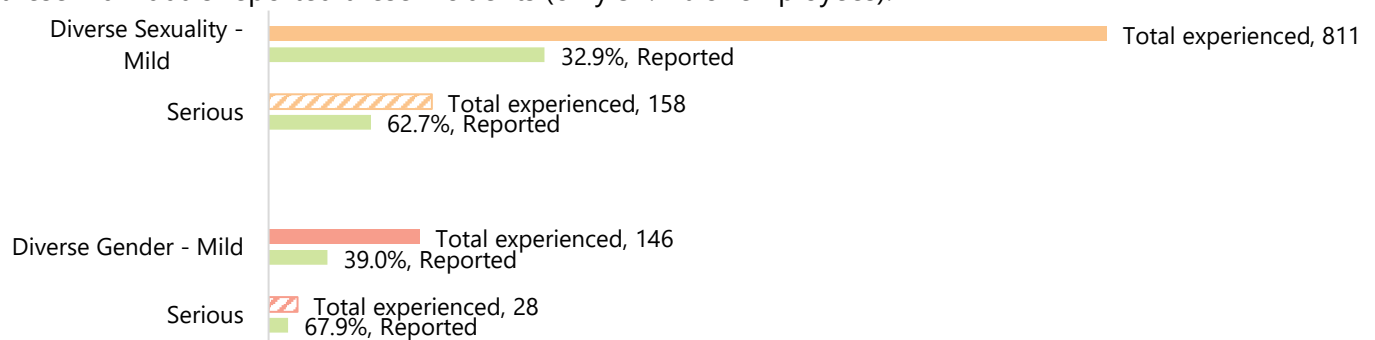


Being the target of more serious bullying behaviours within the last year has been experienced by 2.2% and 4.0% respectively.

For LGBTQ+ respondents who have experienced bullying and harassment targeting their diverse sexuality and/or gender within their current organisation, there are some stark differences.

Of the LGBTQ+ respondents who responded to these questions, 12.6% have agreed that they have been the target of bullying behaviours due to their diverse gender and/or sexuality within the past year.

Overall, 907 individual respondents agreed they have experienced bullying and harassment, but only 337 of these individuals reported these incidents (only 37.2% of employees).



Of these we can see that serious behaviours are far more likely to be reported than mild behaviours. This leads us to question whether through encouragement of reporting of mild behaviours we could create a culture where fewer mild behaviours are experienced and there is less likelihood of these behaviours escalating into the more severe and damaging bullying actions?

Experiences by industry

We have combined the experiences of all LGBTQ+ responses regarding being the target mild or serious bullying behaviours regardless of whether their diverse sexuality or trans and gender experience was the subject of the behaviour.

Of the 907 respondents who have had experiences, 27.7% are from Public Administration and safety industry organisations. Over 12.1% come from the Financial and insurance industry, and 14.6% from the health and social assistance industry organisations.

The below table provides an understand of the percentage of LGBTQ+ respondents from each industry who have experienced any, mild or serious forms of bullying and harassment, Those in the administrative industry, or in retail trade have advised proportionally more bullying and harassment behaviours than any other industry with those in professional services, and realestate the least likely to have agreed to experiencing these behaviours in their workplace.

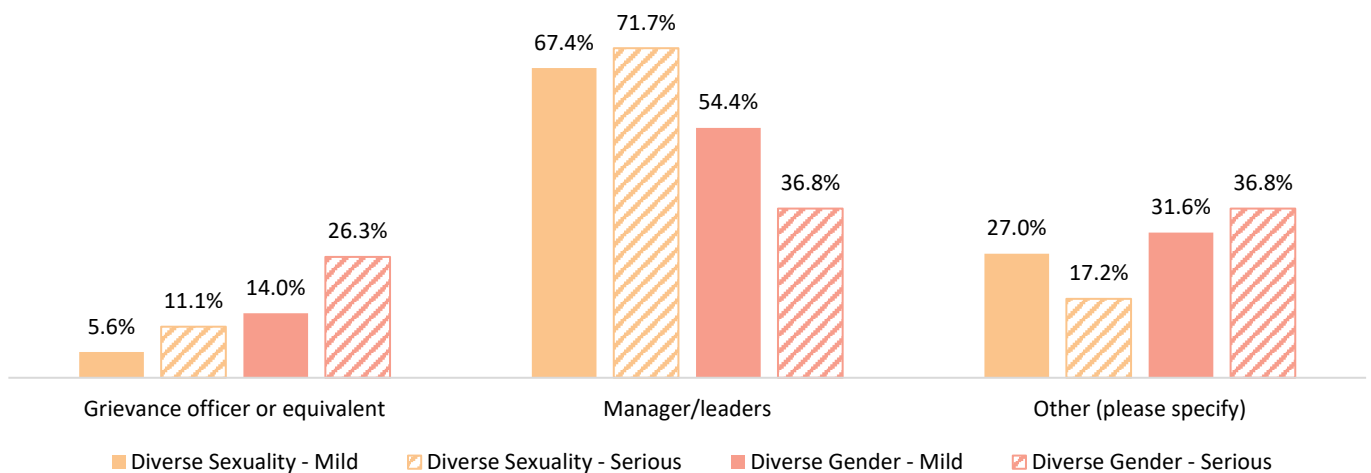
Industry	Any	Mild	Serious
<i>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (n1124)</i>	6.0%	5.9%	1.2%
<i>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (n249)</i>	6.4%	6.4%	0.8%
<i>Manufacturing (n67)</i>	7.5%	7.5%	1.5%
<i>Construction (n131)</i>	7.6%	7.6%	0.8%
<i>Wholesale Trade (n104)</i>	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%
<i>Financial and Insurance Services (n1242)</i>	8.9%	8.8%	1.3%
<i>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (n160)</i>	10.6%	10.6%	1.9%
<i>Arts and Recreation Services, Other and unknown (n192)</i>	10.9%	10.4%	2.1%
<i>Education and Training (n656)</i>	11.6%	11.6%	1.7%
<i>Information Media and Telecommunications (n249)</i>	11.6%	10.8%	2.4%
<i>Accommodation and Food Services (n129)</i>	14.0%	14.0%	2.3%
<i>Transport, Postal and Warehousing (n275)</i>	15.6%	14.9%	3.3%
<i>Health Care and Social Assistance (n753)</i>	17.5%	17.4%	3.3%
<i>Public Administration and Safety (n1382)</i>	18.2%	17.8%	4.3%
<i>Mining (n216)</i>	19.0%	18.5%	4.2%
<i>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (n64)</i>	20.3%	20.3%	1.6%
<i>Retail Trade (n178)</i>	21.3%	21.3%	3.4%
<i>Administrative and Support Services (n51)</i>	21.6%	21.6%	3.9%

Reporting incidents

Due to the small sample sizes as can see above, further analysis is difficult. High level analysis of the results does show that for respondents who have experienced serious bullying and harassment and who have reported it, there are higher levels of health and wellbeing, productivity, and engagement with the organisation. Without greater response numbers meeting these criteria we are unable to explain these differences, and hope in the future we continue to not be able to analyse this data point to any greater extent due to a decrease in bullying and harassment within workplace environments.

For those who did report, overwhelmingly managers/leaders are the most likely to be the person approached across all types of bullying and harassment. Grievance officers or the equivalent are reported to when more serious behaviours occur particularly by trans and gender diverse employees.

Regarding incidents around negative behaviours, who did you felt most comfortable reporting this to:



For those who selected 'other' there were a variety of responses. For Mild behaviours, around half of respondents advised that they called out the behaviour themselves or addressed it directly with the person without getting others involved.

Unfortunately, a number of respondents advised that they did not believe there was any point in reporting as "...no one does anything about it", or "Leaders heard what was said and did nothing about it", or "these things are done by managers who you are meant to report it to, and some of it is subtle".

For others their experience of reporting was not positive: "Reported and no action taken by People and Culture - refused to investigate", "I reported it but wouldn't say I felt comfortable or supported in doing so, see previous comments about still being misgendered", and "I did not report as earlier reports put me in more danger".

This further reinforces that organisations need to ensure that their reporting avenues are safe, LGBTQ+ Friendly and literate, and that management processes lead to positive actions to reduce future experiences.

Conclusion

Bullying and harassment of LGBTQ+ employees, whether mild or serious, continues to be underreported due to a lack of trust in reporting avenues. While organisations may have processes in place, many employees are either not aware of, or do not feel confident that the process is safe.

Respondents in temporary / casual positions are reporting witnessing at a greater rate than all other employment types. Individual organisations should ensure that workplace safety within spaces with high temporary, casual and volunteer roles is held to the same standards as all other areas of the business, and that these staff have access to training and resources to reduce these experiences.

People who witness and/or experience mild or more serious harassment within their organisation do not believe as strongly that the culture of their organisation is welcoming or as accepting as those who have not. Feelings of health and well-being also suffer for those who have witnessed this behaviour.

Actions

1. Actively promote the availability of resource/s to all staff that provide clear guidelines on what is both inclusive language and negatively perceived language regarding LGBTQ populations.
2. Have a trained grievance officer (or someone equivalent, trained in addressing and/or processing organisational grievances or complaints) who is:
 - a) clearly communicated as a contact for LGBTQ-related grievances; AND who is
 - b) clearly identified as someone who has been trained in LGBTQ inclusion and awareness
3. Ensure your organisations has documentation that is easily located within your bullying and harassment policy/guidelines that provide clear behavioural examples of what constitutes LGBTQ+-related bullying/harassment.
4. Have a formal process to extract and report on LGBTQ-related incidents of bullying and harassment throughout the year so that actions can be taken if necessary.

ⁱ Results reflect the attitudes and knowledge of respondents from organisations working in inclusive practices.

ⁱⁱ Note that respondents may be of diverse sexuality, diverse gender or both, and if they fit within both categories their responses are counted in both categorisations.