

PRACTICE POINTS . 2024 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- Almost all organisations have instances of discrimination, bullying and harassment being reported
- Understanding the experiences of employees who have faced bullying in the workplace can help to target and reduce these instances
- Employees are between 80 and 445% more likely to report issues to their manager/leader than to a grievance officer.
- Organisations suffer financially due to bullying behaviours – working on a positive LGBTQ+ inclusion culture will reduce costs
- Witnessing bullying and harassment in the workplace has similar adverse effects on workplace wellbeing and productivity.

EDITION 6:

Experiences of Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, a recent impact and cost assessment calculated that workplace bullying costs Australian employers between \$6 and \$36 billion every year.¹

While financial motivation is a necessary precursor to change for many organisations, the AWEI Employee survey focuses on the effects on organisational culture and employee wellbeing that are seen when LGBTQ+ directed discrimination, bullying and harassment behaviours are experienced within the workplace. These behaviours range from verbal or physical assault to more subtle psychological abuse, jokes, innuendo and so on.

We have covered aspects of bullying and harassment in the workplace in general terms in prior practice points; this practice point focuses on the impact these behaviours have on:

- Employees who witness negative behaviours in the workplace
- LGBTQ+ employees who experience discrimination
- LGBTQ+ Employees who experience workplace incivility and more serious bullying
- Actions that take place relating to reporting this behaviour

Prevalence of discrimination, bullying and harassment

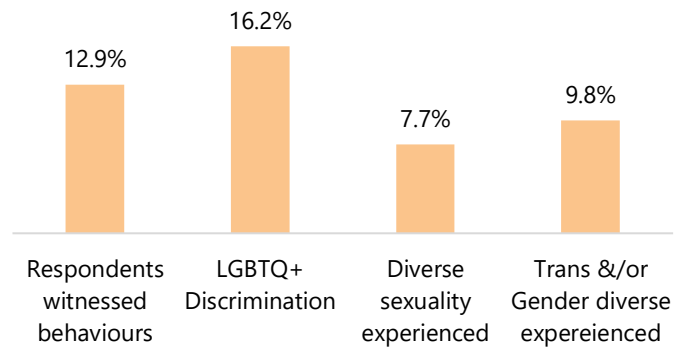
In 2024, looking at each organisation's results:

- 98.2% have respondents agree to having witnessed bullying behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender (165 of 168 organisations)
- 88.7% have had LGBTQ+ respondents advised they feel they have been discriminated against (149 of 168 organisations)
- 75.0% have had one or more employees of diverse sexuality advised they have experienced bullying and harassment (126 of 168 organisations)
- 40.1% have had one or more employees with a trans or gender diverse experience advise they have experienced bullying and harassment (61 of 152 organisations) *(note that of the 36 organisations with 10 or more diverse gender respondents, 86.1% of respondents had had an experience)*

Focusing on respondents:

- 12.9% of the 41,497 Australian-based respondents have witnessed bullying behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender,
- 16.2% of LGBTQ+ respondents (n10189) have felt discriminated against because of their diverse sexuality and/or gender
- 7.7% of people of diverse sexuality (n10058) have experienced bullying behaviours
- 9.8% of people with a trans and/or gender diverse experience (n1284) have experienced bullying behaviours.

Experience of negative behaviours



Reporting bullying and harassment

Considering the level of bullying being experienced, we are also interested in the actions that took place. If you witness bullying in the workplace, many factors may need to be considered. These include the confidential nature of the process if you choose to report it to managers/leaders or the people and culture team, as well as how safe you would feel if you chose to address or call it out yourself.

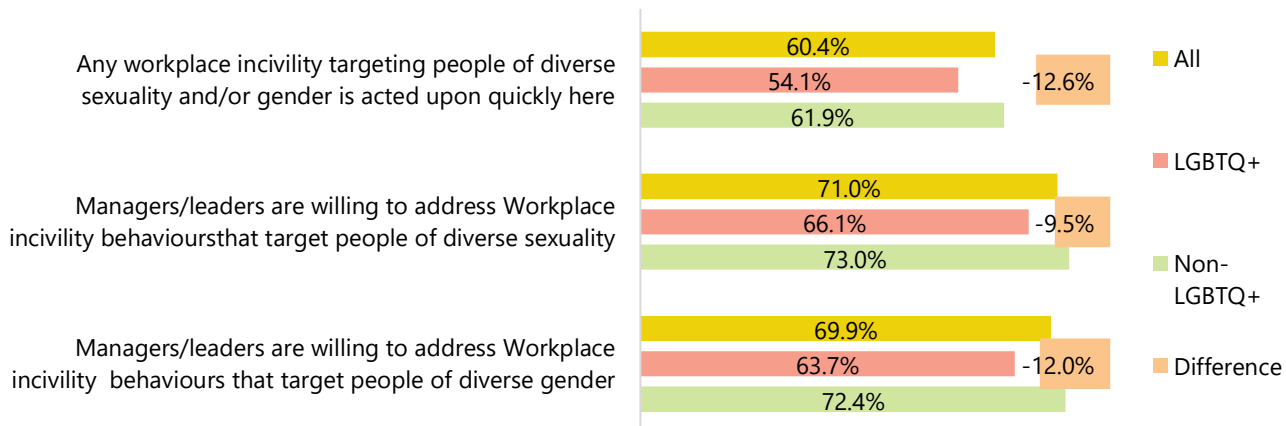
An organisation's culture plays a large part in this, with its history of managing complaints having a considerable impact on willingness to report behaviours.

Overall, just 60.4% of respondents feel their organisation acts quickly against the workplace, and around 70% agree that managers/leaders address workplace incivility targeting sexuality or gender. What we can see by comparing the LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents is that there is a significant difference in perception between the two cohorts.

LGBTQ+ respondents are

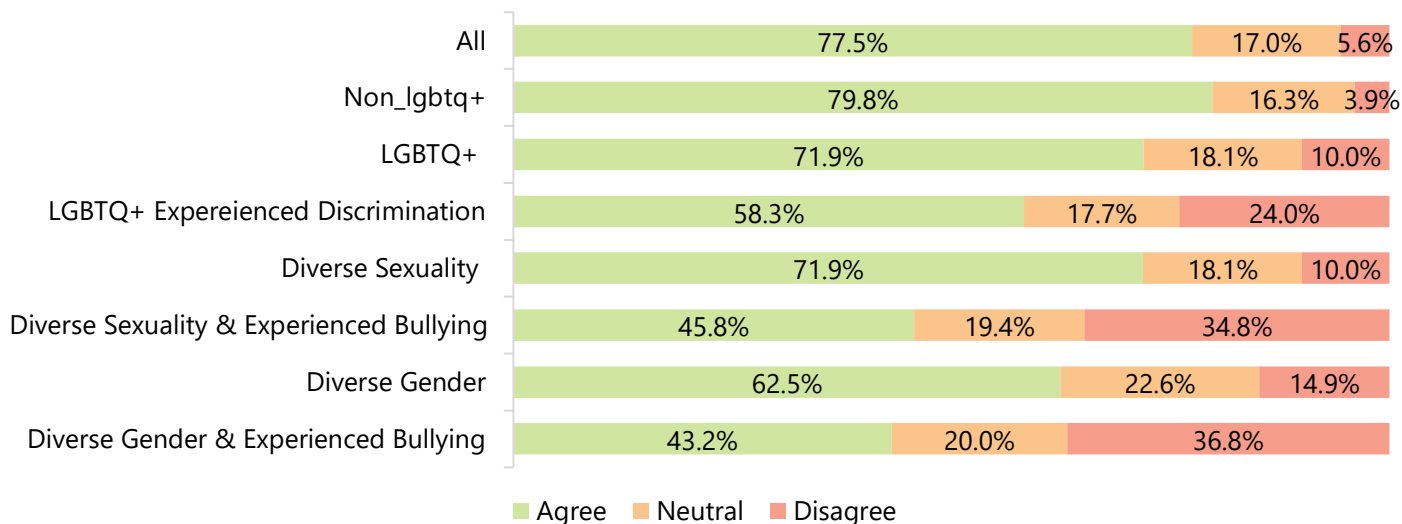
- 12.6% less likely to feel incivility is acted upon quickly
- 12.0% less likely to feel that behaviours targeting people of diverse gender are addressed, and
- 9.5% less likely to feel that behaviour targeting people of diverse sexuality is addressed

When considering the ability of employees to confidentially and safely report incidents, knowledge of these avenues is imperative.



At the top level, looking at all employees, we see a 2.1% increase from last year (from 75.9% to 77.5%),

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



indicating that their organisation had these safe reporting structures in place.

When looking at this by different cohorts, we can see that these overall numbers are inflated by respondents who are not LGBTQ+. Even within the LGBTQ+ cohort, there are significant differences when respondents had been discriminated against or bullied at the organisation:

- 18.9% fewer LGBTQ+ respondents who had experienced discrimination agreed compared to all LGBTQ+
- 13.1% fewer trans and gender diverse respondents agree compared to those of diverse sexuality,
- 36.4% fewer people of diverse sexuality who had been bullied agreed than a
- 30.9% fewer trans and gender diverse respondents who had been bullied agreed than average all trans and gender diverse

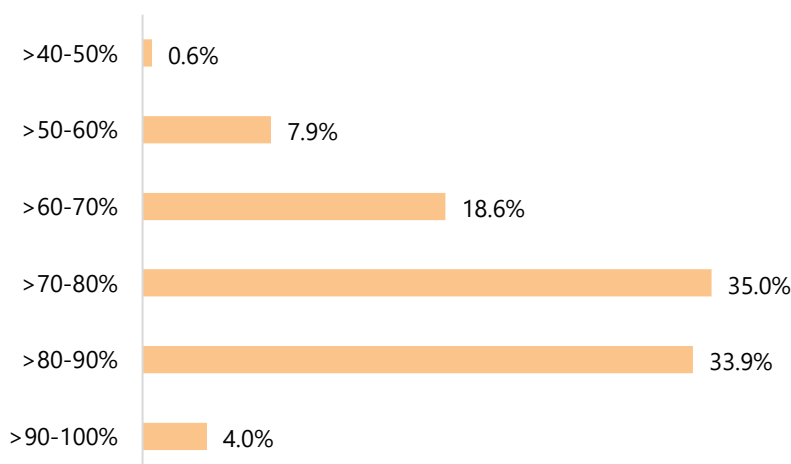
Whilst we do not have categorical evidence, the data indicated that employees in organisations with confidential avenues have reported experiencing fewer bullying behaviours.

Looking at the disparity between individual organisations with 10 or more respondents, we can see significant differences.

Overall, all respondents and all organisations fit between 50.0% and 96.6% of their respondents agreeing that confidential avenues exist, but when looking at only the LGBTQ+ respondents, this rate drops to between 0.0% and 56.7%

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

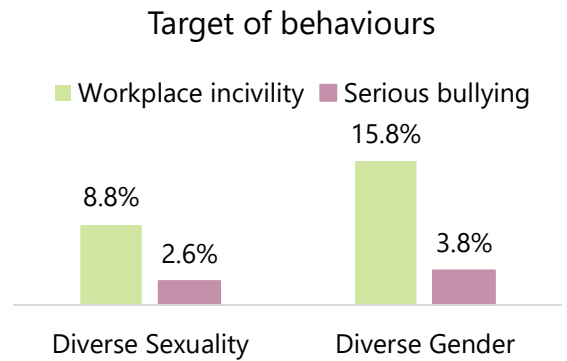
% of an organisations respondents who agree there are confidential avenues



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.

Within this year's 829 responses, fewer respondents advised being the target of workplace incivility, though incidents of more serious bullying have increased from 2.2% to 2.6% for respondents of diverse sexuality. A slight decrease from 4.0% to 3.8% is present for the diverse gender cohort.



Reporting of these experiences increased from last year with those:

- Targeted due to diverse sexuality
 - 16.3% more likely to experience workplace incivility (2024: 38.3% vs. 2023: 32.9%)
 - 12.1% less likely to report more serious experiences. (2024: 55.5% vs. 2023: 63.1%)
- Targeted due to diverse gender
 - 26.3% more likely to report workplace incivility (2024: 50.0% vs. 2023: 39.6%)
 - 6.7% less likely to report more serious experiences. (2024: 63.3% vs. 2023: 67.9%)

LGBTQ+ respondents who have experienced bullying and harassment targeting their diverse sexuality and/or gender within their current organisation view their organisations differently which is evident by comparing the responses between the whole cohort and the responses of those in the cohort who have negative behaviours, both for those of diverse sexuality or those trans and diverse gender respondents.

Within the diverse sexuality cohort who are "out" at work they are:

- 38.6% less likely to recommend their organisation to others
- 33.4% less likely to feel had a positive impact on how they felt about their own sexuality
- 54.0% less likely to agree that they have not encountered exclusion based on their sexuality
- 34.6% less likely to feel comfortable discussing diverse sexuality issues with their manager &
- 45.6% less likely to be inclined to stay in the organisation

Those "not out" at work are:

- 150.4% more likely to feel they would not be accepted by members of their team
- 173.5% more likely to feel being out at work would negatively impact their career
- 188.3% more likely to be concerned about becoming the target of sexualised jokes/innuendo &
- 192.7% more likely to fear being the target of discrimination due to their diverse sexuality

For trans and gender diverse respondents, those "open" in the workplace are:

- 198.2% more likely to feel they have been deliberately misgendered in the last year,
- 49.6% less likely to feel their gender identity would have any impact on career progression
- 65.9% less likely to have not experienced exclusion based on their gender
- 49.2% less likely to be inclined to stay with their organisation &
- 41.5% less likely to feel fully supported by their team in relation to their gender identity.

Those "not open" in the workplace are:

- 46.6% more likely to feel members of their team would not be accepting,
- 49.5% more likely to feel being out at work would negatively impact their career
- 68.8% more likely to be concerned about becoming the target of gender-based jokes/innuendo &
- 70.8% more likely to fear being the target of discrimination due to their diverse gender

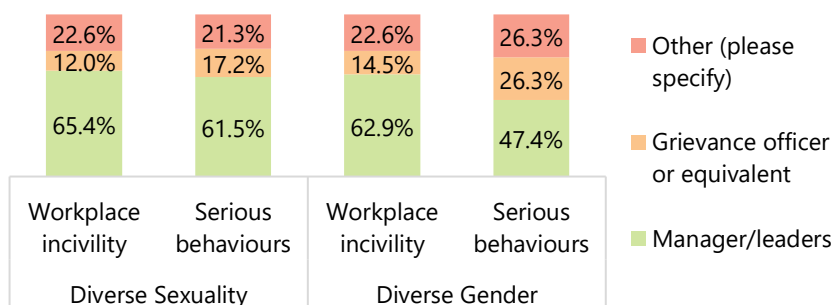
When we look at the recruitment process and policies, those who have been the target of bullying were more likely to have disclosed their gender during the application process but less likely to feel that the process was inclusive, that forms were inclusive, or that there was visibility for gender diverse employees during that period.

Reporting incidents

For those who did report, managers/leaders remain the most likely people approached across all types of bullying and harassment.

Grievance officers or the equivalent are reported when more serious behaviours occur, mainly by trans and gender diverse employees.

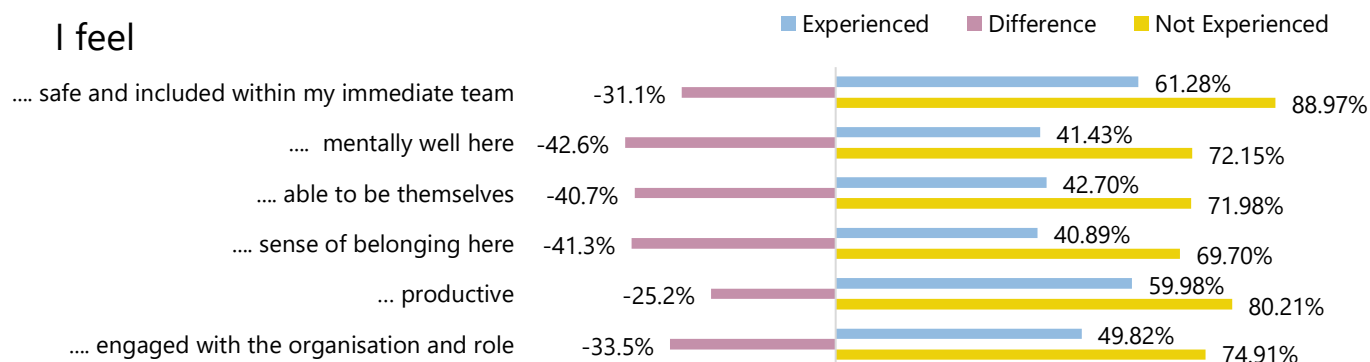
Regarding incidents around negative behaviours, who did you felt most comfortable reporting this to:



The effect of bullying and harassment on workplace wellbeing

Fewer LGBTQ+ respondents advised that they had not experienced any kind of bullying and harassment (n572) than those that had (n829).

The impact of these experiences is seen with significant discrepancies between the two group in relation to workplace wellbeing with between 25.2% and 42.6% difference across all measures.



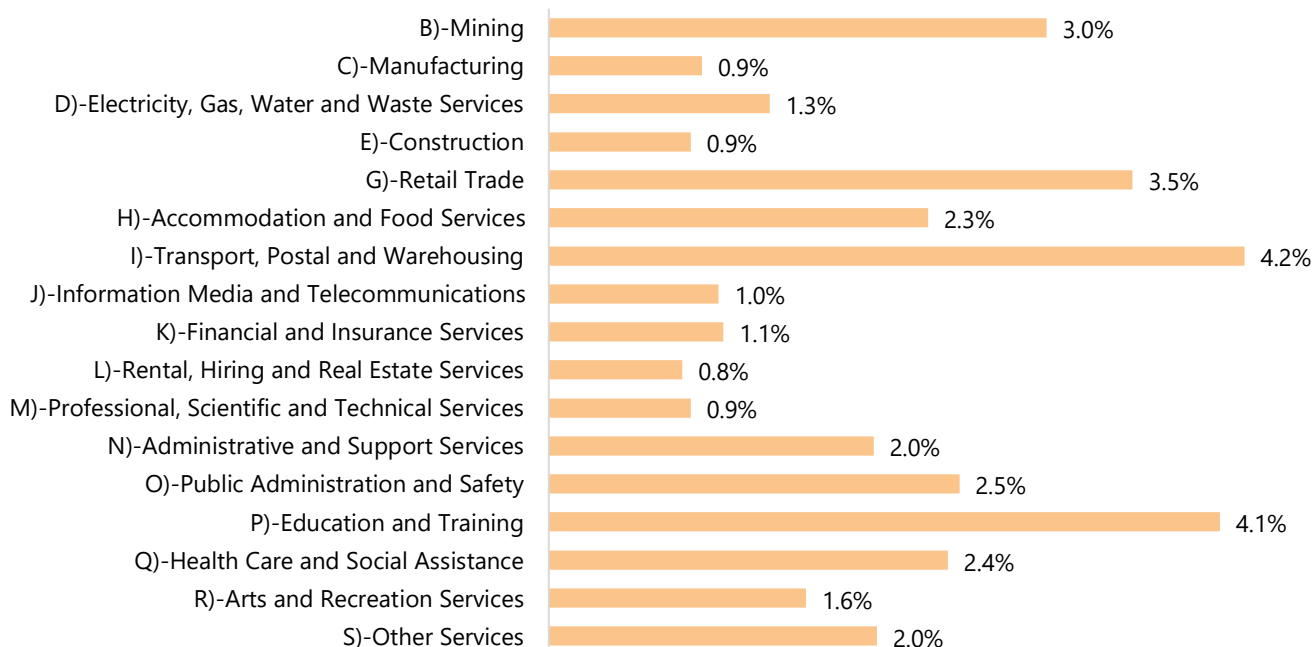
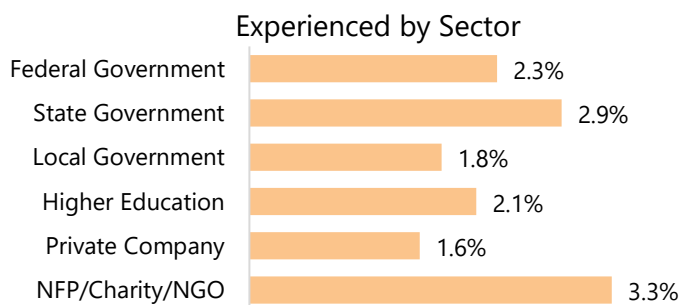
Demographics: Who is more likely to experience bullying and harassment in the workplace?

Sector and Industry challenges

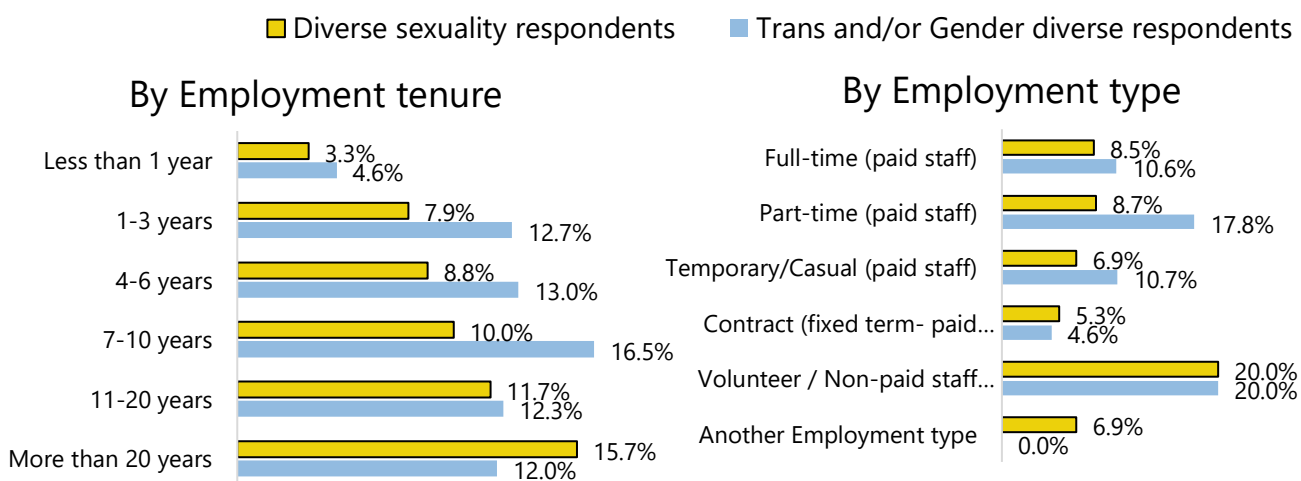
Combining the experiences of all LGBTQ+ responses regarding being the target of workplace incivility or serious bullying behaviours regardless of whether their diverse sexuality or trans and gender experience was the subject of the behaviour can show some idea of the level of bullying and harassment occurring.

When responses are compared by sector, the proportion of respondents who have experienced bullying is highest among respondents from non-profit organisations, followed by state government departments.

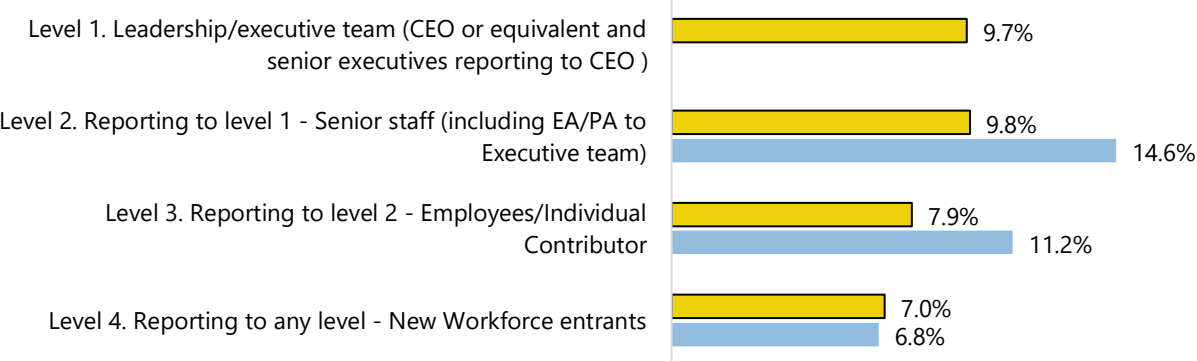
Within the industry designation are three significant outliers: Retail trade organisations, Transport, postal and warehousing and Education and training.



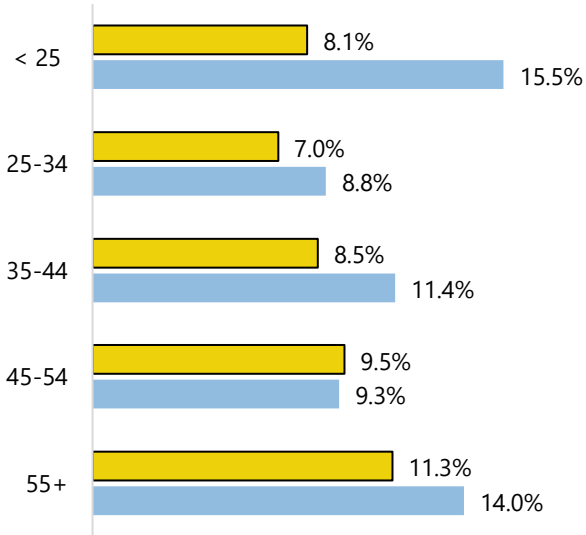
The following data compares those who have experienced workplace incivility, serious bullying or both within the past year, with all other respondents in the cohort. All data below considers all negative experiences.



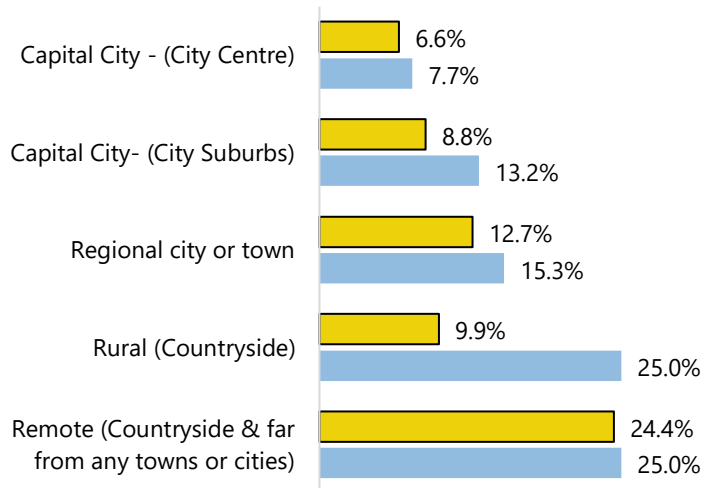
By position seniority



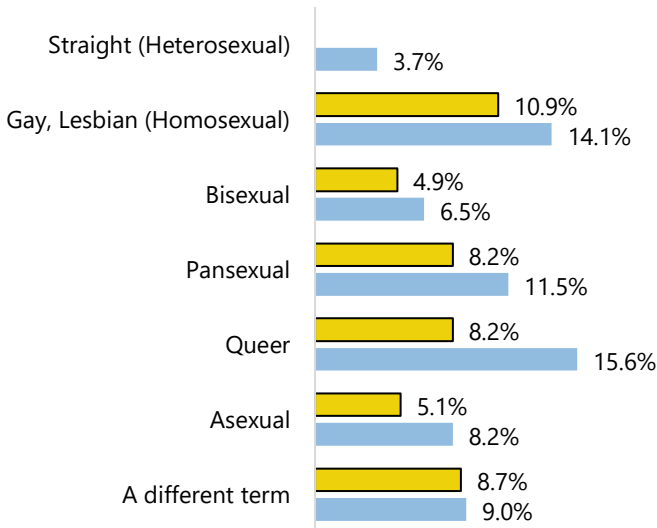
By Age



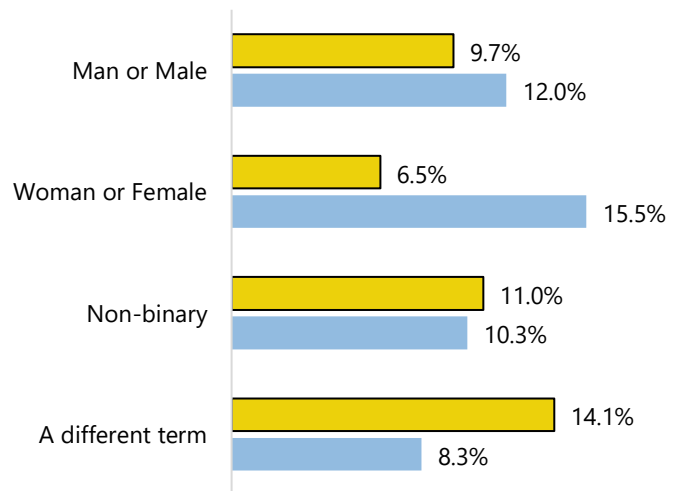
By Location



By sexual orientation



By Gender identity



Witnessing bullying and harassment

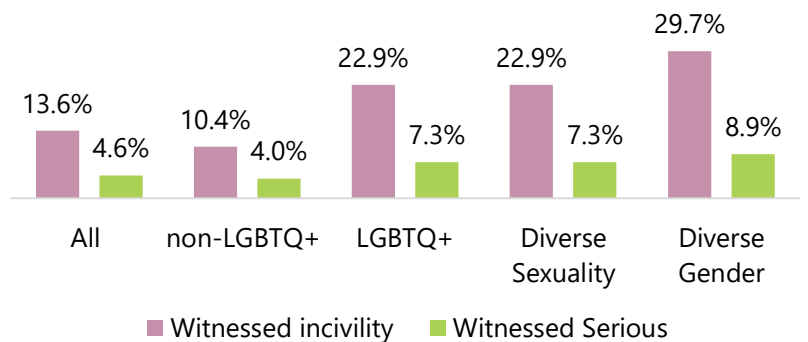
Whilst experiencing bullying and harassment has significant effects on the individual, others in the workplace witnessing these incidents are also negatively affected.

This year, 14.0% of respondents had advised that they had witnessed workplace incivility, serious bullying, or both within their organisation. This proportion has seen only marginal changes for the last three years.

Regarding witnessing workplace incivility:

- 8.1% fewer respondents agreed this year (2023: 14.8% vs. 2024: 13.6%)

% respondents witnessing negative behaviours

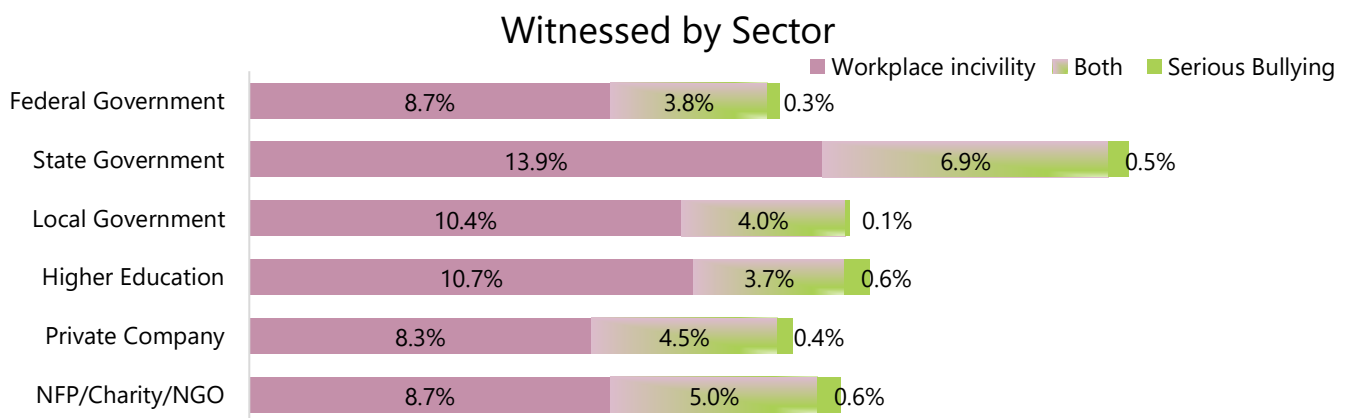


- Trans and gender diverse respondents are 185.6% more likely to witness workplace incivility & 122.5% more likely to witness more serious bullying than non-LGBTQ+ respondents
- Respondents of diverse sexuality are 120.2% more likely to witness workplace incivility & 82.5% more likely to witness more serious bullying than non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

We acknowledge that some cohorts are more likely to recognise and/or be sensitive to specific behaviours that constitute bullying and harassment. However, these cohorts are also being affected by the behaviours in a more personal way, and this data should be taken seriously when looking at where policies and practices may be falling short.

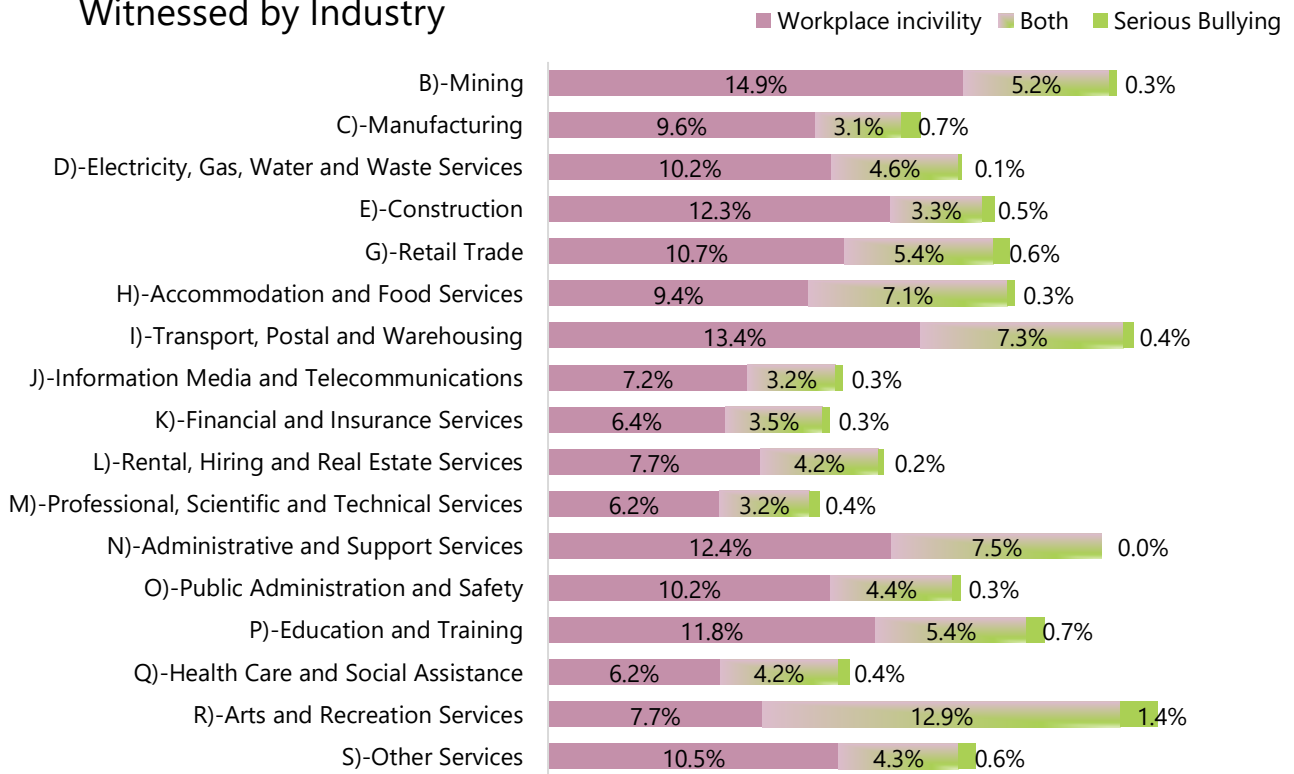
Bullying and harassment behaviours occur across all sectors and industries.

The data shows that within the participating organisations, State Government respondents are most likely to witness these behaviours in the workplace.



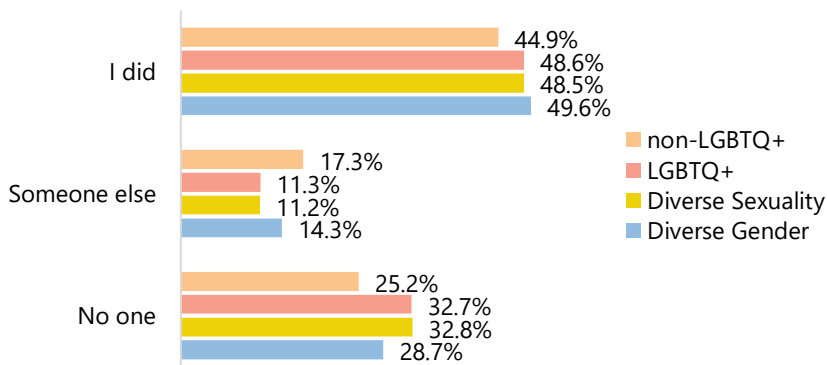
When we compare by primary industry type, three industries stand out from the rest: Mining, Transport, Postal and Warehousing, Administrative and Support Services and Arts and Recreation Services, all sitting around 20% of respondents in total witnessing these behaviours.

Witnessed by Industry

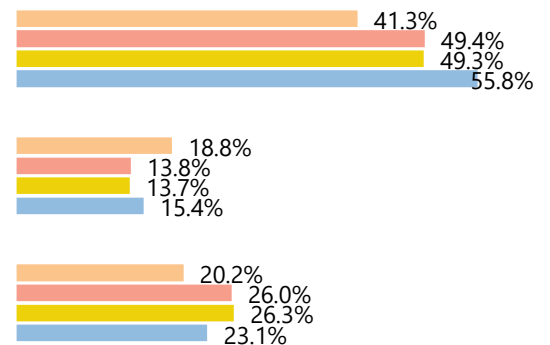


For those who have witnessed these behaviours, we asked if they were called out, and if so, by whom on the *most recent* occasion.

Who called it out when mild behaviours were witnessed?



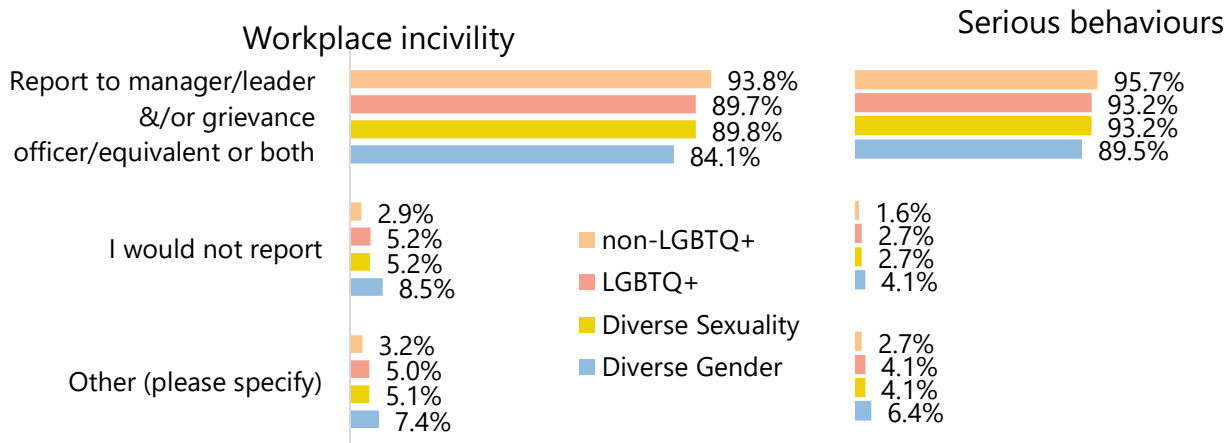
Who called it out when serious behaviours were witnessed?



Overall, 28.6% of respondents advised that no one called out the workplace incivility, which is no change from 2023, though 7.9% more people advise that more serious behaviours were not called out (2023: 21.3% vs. 2024 23.0%)

Regardless of whether it is incivility or more serious, LGBTQ+ respondents are *more* likely to call out the behaviour. This year, trans and gender diverse respondents were 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 respondents of diverse sexuality most likely advise that no action took place.

Respondents were also asked to theorise what action they would take and, if reported, to whom they would feel more comfortable reporting witnessed incidents in the future.



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

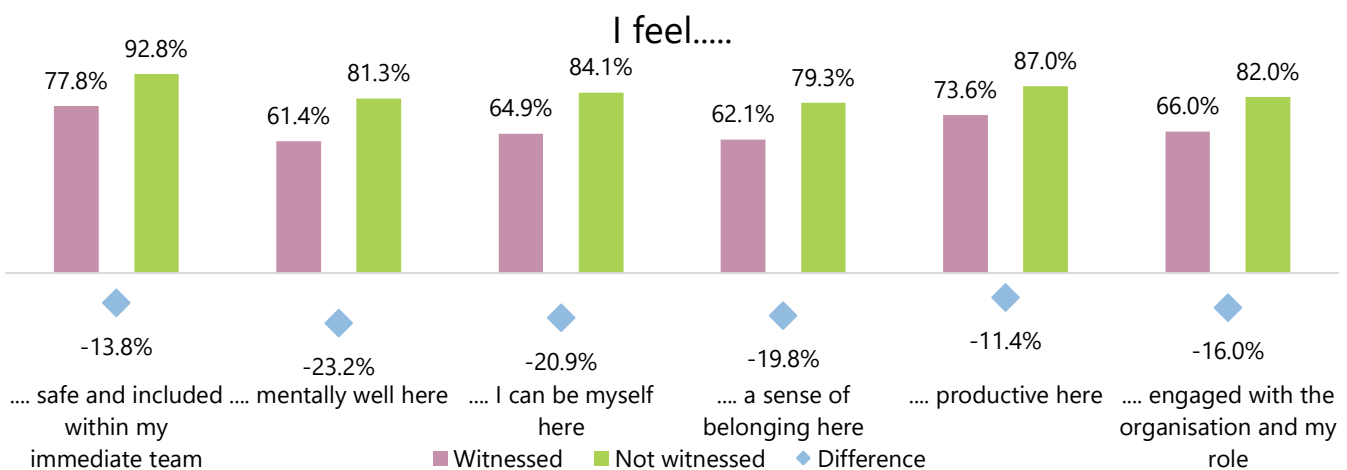
While the actions that occur when witnessing negative behaviours are essential, the more significant impact relates to an employee's feeling toward their organisation when we place this lens across the results.

Those who have advised witnessing these behaviours are:

- 11.8% less likely to believe that a person of diverse sexuality would be welcome in my team and treated no differently to anyone else (witnessed: 83.9% vs. not witnessed: 92.3%)
- 17.8% less likely to believe a person of diverse gender would be welcome in their team and treated no differently to anyone else (witnessed: 74.3% vs. not witnessed: 90.5%)
- 18.8% less likely to believe a member of their team affirming their gender would be supported (Witnessed: 71.6% vs. not witnessed: 88.1%)
- 13.7% less likely to feel work or related initiatives concerning this aspect of diversity & inclusion has been regularly communicated throughout the year (witnessed: 70.1 % vs. not witnessed: 81.3%)
- 13.4% less likely to agree that awareness or ally training for this aspect of diversity & inclusion has been made available throughout the year (witnessed: 60.6% vs. not witnessed: 69.9%)

All of these areas have increased in the difference from last year.

Workplace health and wellbeing measures are a significant indicator, with differences up to 23.2%. These respondents have lower productivity by 11.4% and lower engagement by 16.0%.



The involvement of the executive leadership team is also seen in a reduction of training or promotion of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Those who have witnessed behaviours are also:

- 13.4% less likely to have had LGBTQ+ awareness or ally training available throughout the year (witnessed: 60.6% vs. not witnessed: 69.9%)
- 11.1% **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%)
- 6.6% less likely to know of active allies or sponsors (witnessed: 59.5% vs. not witnessed: 63.7%)
- 16.6% less likely to have heard executive leaders speak positively about LGBTQ+ inclusion (witnessed: 63.4% vs. not witnessed: 76.0)

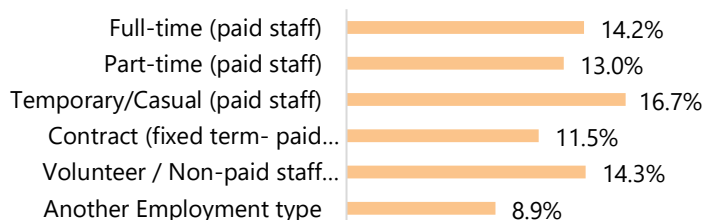
Interestingly, those who have witnessed these behaviours are 32.6% more likely to be Active allies (witnessed: 54.5% vs. not witnessed: 41.1%). From these statistics, we can see that those who have witnessed workplace incivility or more serious bullying behaviours do not believe as strongly that their organisation's culture is welcoming or accepting as those who have not.

Demographics: Who is most likely to witness behaviours?

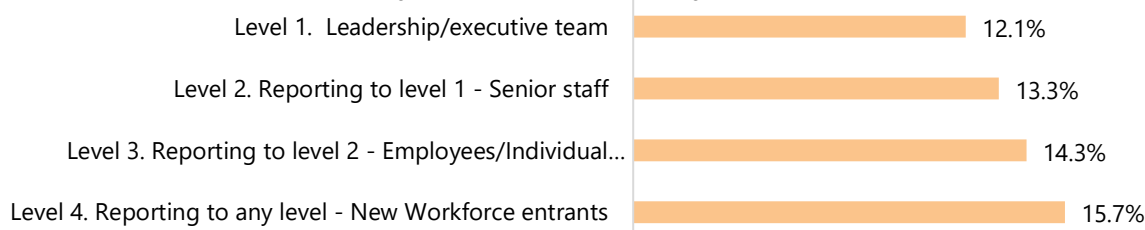
By Employment tenure



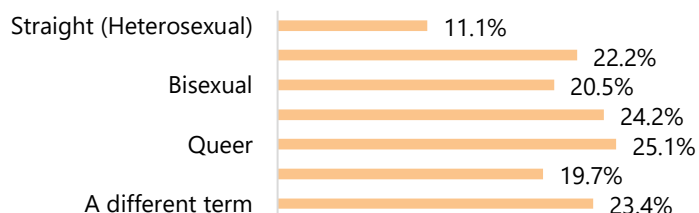
By Employment type



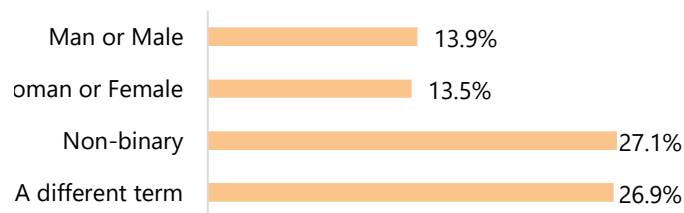
By position seniority



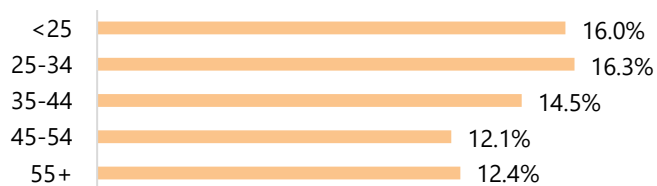
By sexual orientation



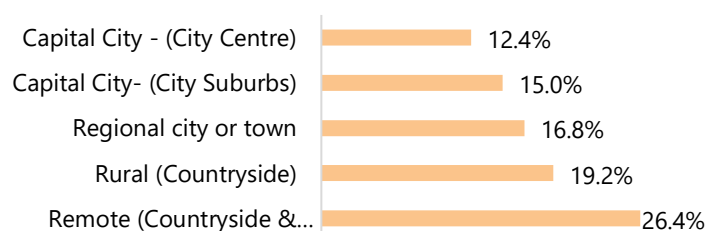
By Gender identity



By Age



By Location



Action Points – What can you do?

1. Promote allies training to help employees understand their role in calling out negative behaviours
2. Create and promote an internal ALLY guide, to support all employees to understand the different possible actions of allyship.
3. Ensure your reporting process is easy to encourage and increase reporting actions.
4. Actively promote the availability of resources to all staff that provide clear guidelines on what inclusive language is and what language is negatively perceived regarding LGBTQ populations.
5. 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
6. Ensure your organisation has easily accessible documentation within its bullying and harassment policy/guidelines that provides clear behavioural examples of what constitutes LGBTQ+ -related bullying/harassment.
7. 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.

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Pride in Diversity (2024). Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs

ⁱ Good Practice, Good Business; Eliminating discrimination and harassment from your workplace
(https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/info_for_employers/pdf/7_workplace_bullying.pdf)