

## PRACTICE POINTS - 2025 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- The percentage of respondents 'out at work' is at its highest this year since 2021
- Respondents identifying with a sexuality other than gay/lesbian are proportionately 'out' at greater rates than in previous years
- Respondents are still reporting significant experiences of bullying and harassment, and high levels of dissatisfaction with the resolution process.
- Age continues to be the most significant demographic to contribute to being out in the workplace.
- Doing enough now doesn't mean do less later, 25.8% of respondents feel their organisation should do more, many others feel the same level needs to be maintained.

### EDITION 2: 'OUT' AT WORK

#### INSIGHTS FROM THE 2025 AWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY

In 2025, 147 organisations and 35,380 individuals took part in the Survey. Of these, 34,762 respondents are Australian-based, and 618 work in overseas locations for Australian employers.

This Practice Point focuses on the experiences of the 26.3% of respondents who identify as having a diverse sexuality. It is essential to note that we include respondents who have both a diverse sexuality and a diverse gender and/or trans experience, acknowledging that the experiences of respondents with this dual diversity may differ from those who have only a diverse sexuality.

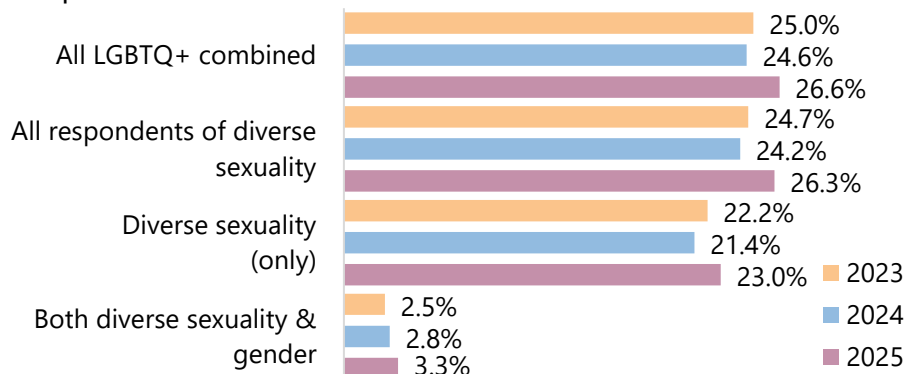
*Reminder that this is not a longitudinal study. Organisations and employees differ year to year, and as such, data showing an increase or decrease in agreement, etc, is indicative of changes over time at the aggregate level, but not at the individual level.*

*Additionally, to maximise the number of respondents, particularly LGBTQ+ respondents, this survey uses a volunteer non-probability sampling design, which means the sample may not accurately reflect the broader population.*

#### Demographics

Among the 9,145 respondents who identify as diverse in terms of sexuality, 12.5% also have a diverse gender and/or trans experience. Responses from people of dual diversity have increased by a further 17.6% from last year, rising to 3.3% of all respondents.

#### Respondents of...

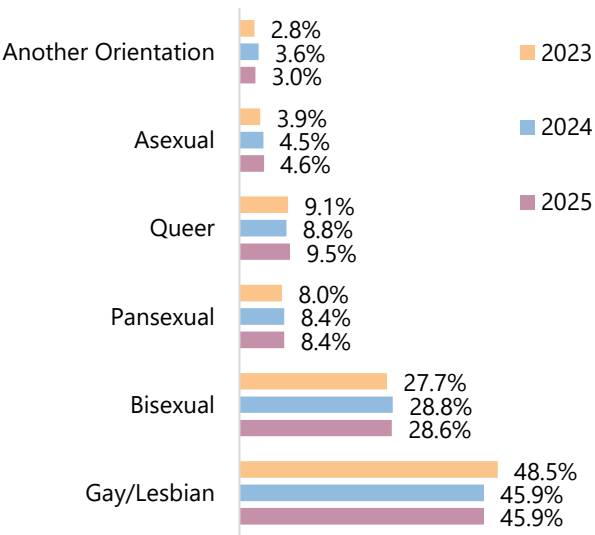


Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation describes patterns of sexual, romantic, and emotional attraction. We see an emergence of terminology for people to be able to self-identify an orientation that most resonates with them.

Respondents identifying with ‘emerging’ identities (respondents other than gay/lesbian) have not changed proportionately from last year. Within the group, we are seeing some shifts compared to 2024 with:

- 8.0% more respondents identifying as Queer after a slight decrease last year, and
- 16.7% fewer selecting “another orientation” after an increase last year.



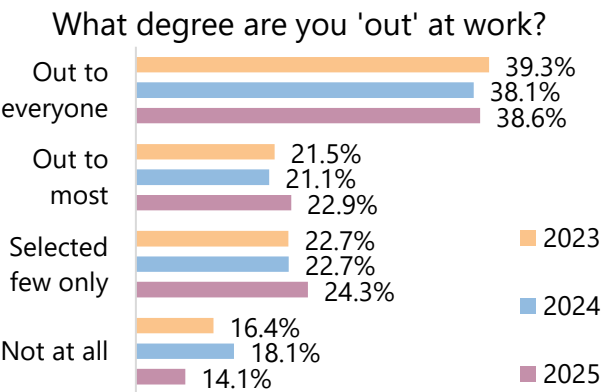
Being ‘out’ at work

Being ‘out’ at work is an individual choice, and a person feeling that they can speak about their life without self-editing is an important indicator of workplace culture and individual wellbeing.

To collect data on ‘outness’, respondents who identified in any way other than ‘straight’ were asked, “In regard to your sexual orientation, please indicate to what degree you are ‘out’ at work?”. We received 7,752 responses (437 or 5.6% chose not to disclose). For this Practice Point, those who chose not to disclose are removed from the data set. This brings the total number of respondents to 7,314.

The number of people who are ‘out to everyone’ at work has increased by 1.9% this year to 38.6%, after a 3.3% reduction between 2023 and 2024.

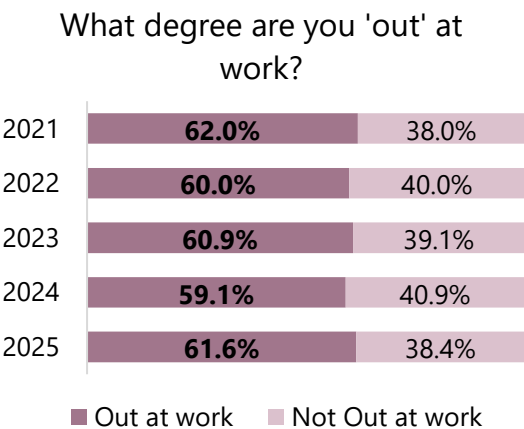
The proportion of respondents who are ‘out to most’ has increased by a further 2.3% this year, with a total increase of 6.4% since 2023



This year sees the lowest number of respondents ‘not out at all’, with only 14.1%. This equates to a 4.9% reduction since last year and a 14.3% reduction since 2023. 7.3% more are ‘out to selected few only’.

For this Practice Point, those ‘out to everyone’ and those ‘out to most’ will be considered ‘out’ in the workplace, while those ‘out to selected few only’ or ‘not at all’ will be regarded as ‘not out’.

Overall, this year’s responses show a slight increase in outness from 2023, after a 2.8% reduction between 2023 and 2024.



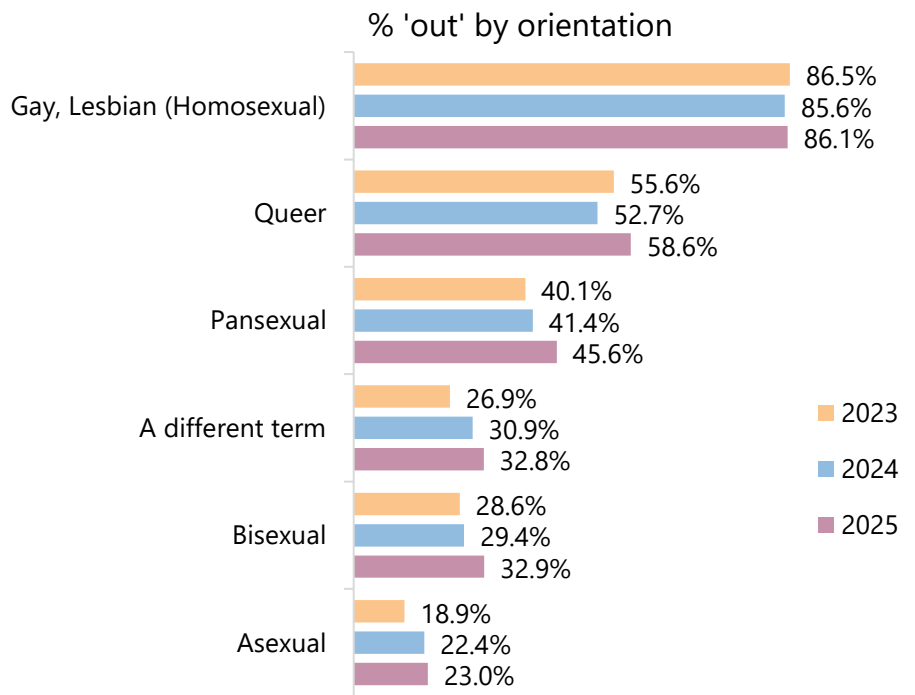
## Who is more likely to be 'out' in the workplace?

Being 'out', or 'coming out' may look different for each employee, particularly those who do not have a significant partner in their lives, or where, a person is in a relationship that may be perceived as heterosexual by others ('straight' passing).

When examining the demographics, significant differences are observed among respondents who are 'out' about their identity in the workplace.

### Sexual orientation

Orientation also plays a significant role, with those of emerging identities between 31.9% and 73.3% less likely to be 'out' compared to 86.1% for those who identify as gay or lesbian.



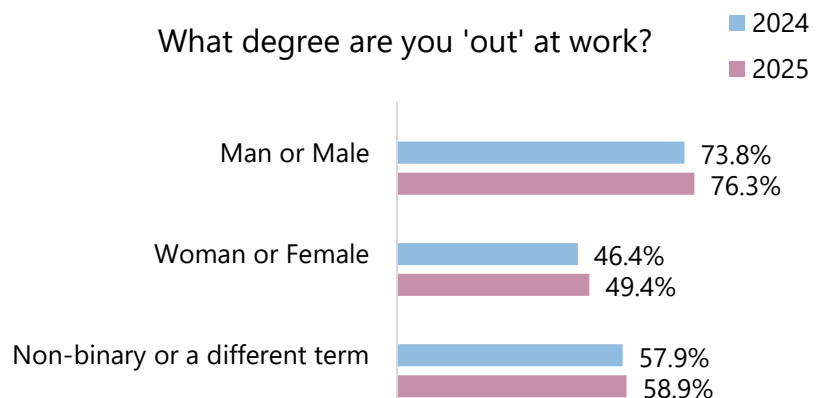
The proportion of those out across each identity has increased since last year. The smallest increase is with those in the gay /lesbian group (less than 1%), increasing to 12.0% for those who identify as bisexual. Queer and pansexual groups are up 11.1% and 10.1% respectively compared to respondents in 2024.

### Gender identity

Gender identity plays a significant role in 'outness'. Across all groups, there is a higher proportion of respondents 'out' compared to last year's cohorts. Most significantly, a 3.1% increase for women, from 46.4% last year to 49.2% this year, though they are still the least likely to be 'out' in the workplace.

Men are still significantly more likely to be 'out', 35.3% higher than women, and 29.5% higher than those with non-binary identities.

Non-binary respondents and those who identify with a different term are 'out' at slightly higher rates than last year, at 58.9%.



Cross-referencing gender identity with sexual orientation also provides an insight into these statistics and a further layer of complexity. From this year's data (and within the past years), we know that men are most likely to be 'out', & most likely to identify as gay. We also know that the most likely cohort to be 'out', are those who identify as gay/lesbian. It is not surprising that respondents who are gay men are 79.8% more likely to be 'out' in the workplace than the next cohort, who gay/lesbian women. Respondents who identify outside of these binary identities are most likely to be 'out' if they also identify as queer.

	Man or Male	Woman or Female	Non-binary & A different term
A different term	0.7%	0.7%	5.9%
Asexual	0.4%	2.4%	5.9%
Bisexual	5.4%	26.2%	15.8%
Gay, Lesbian (Homosexual)	88.8%	49.4%	20.5%
Pansexual	1.8%	9.8%	16.5%
Queer	2.9%	11.5%	35.4%

### Presence of a significant partner

We have heard, anecdotally, that one of the reasons people may be out or not is if they have a partner or LGBTQ+ relationship they want to be able to talk about. This year, a series of questions was introduced in an attempt to determine how much having a partner contributes to the likelihood of being out, and also whether if the relationship is 'straight' passing makes any difference to 'outness'.

The questions were asked in a sequence and provided based on the answer to the prior question. Only the answers in bold below received the next question. By removing all 'prefer not to answer' responses at each step, we can see that there is a correlation between having an obvious LGBTQ+ partner and being 'out' in the workplace.

Do you have a significant other(s) /partner(s) in your life? (this could be a spouse, de facto partner etc.)?

yes

no

prefer not to respond

Do you believe that if people were to be aware of your relationship(s) or meet your partner(s), they would automatically know that you are LGBTQ+, or do you feel this may be perceived by others as a 'straight relationship' or 'heterosexual relationship'?

Yes people would know this is an LGBTQ+ relationship

No people could assume I am not LGBTQ+

Prefer not to respond

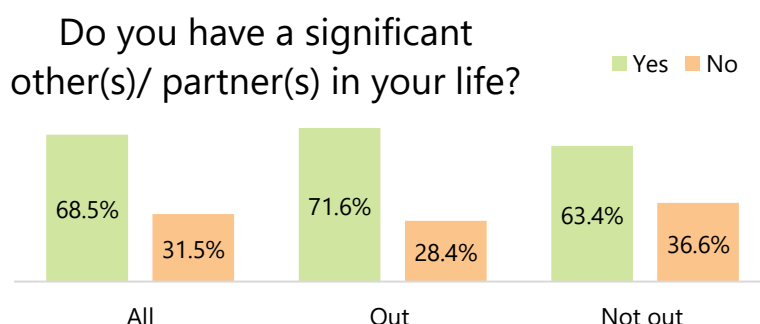
Has your relationship(s) influenced your decision to be out (or not) about your diverse sexuality at work?

Yes

No

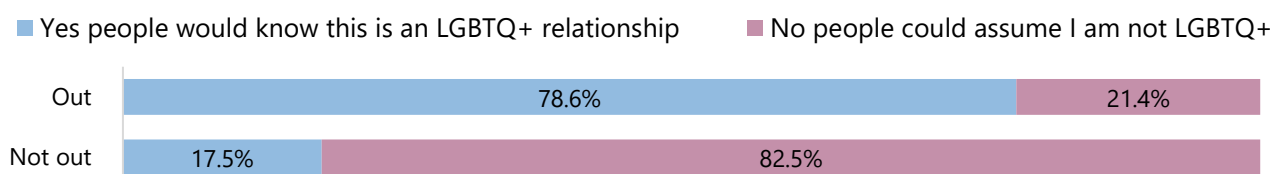
Prefer not to respond

Overall, 68.5% of respondents this year have significant others in their lives. When we examine the data relating to those who are 'out' and 'not out', we can see that those who are 'out' in the workplace are 13.1% more likely to have a significant person in their lives.

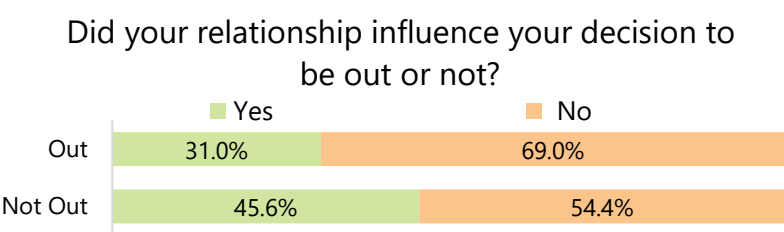


We can drill into this even more so and see that for those with partners where the relationship would be easily identified as LGBTQ+, they are 349.1% more likely 'out', while those in "straight passing" relationships are 285.5% more likely to be 'not out'.

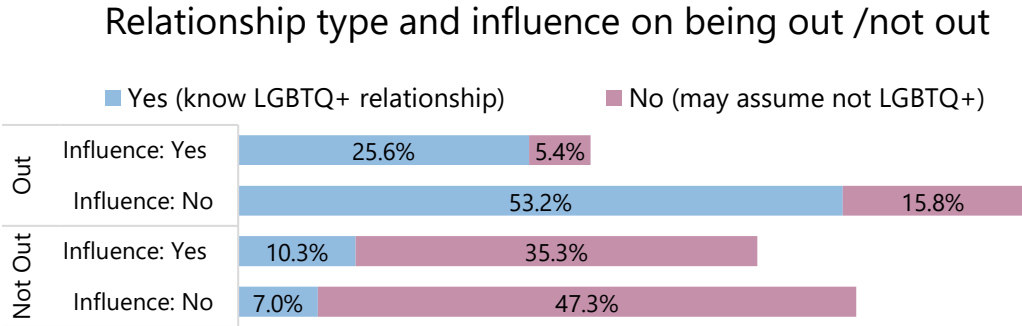
### Would people know you are LGBTQ+ due to your relationship?



The influence that being in a relationship has on being 'out' at work is also significant. A greater proportion of those who are 'not out' agree that their relationship influenced their decision (Out: 31.0% vs Not out: 45.6%).



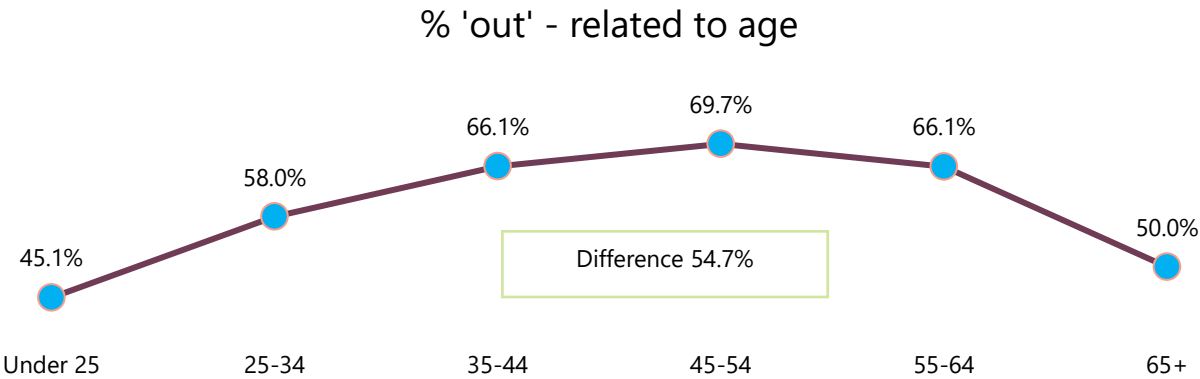
These proportions are also influenced by the respondent's view of whether the relationship is obviously LGBTQ+ or not. For the 69.0% of respondents who are 'out' in their workplace, and who advised that their relationship did not influence their decision, most are in relationships they feel would be easily identified as LGBTQ+.



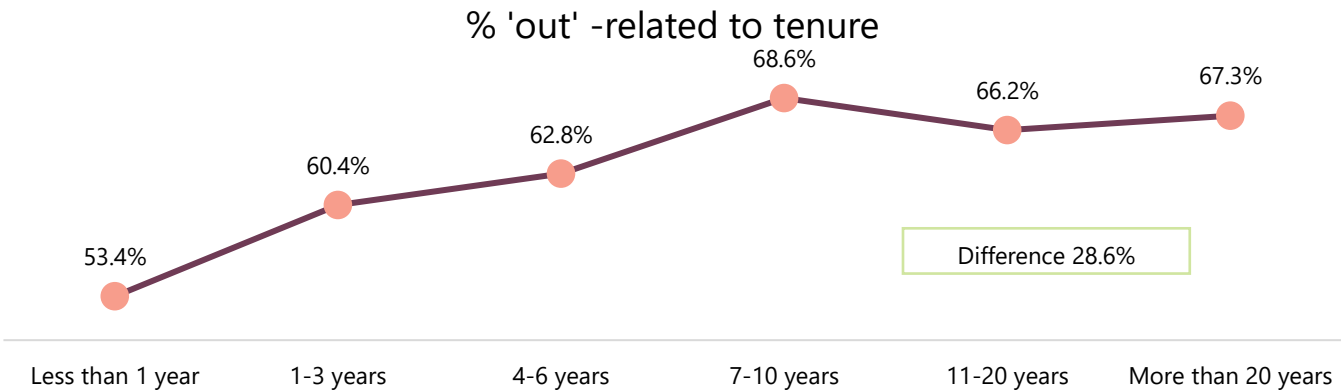
Other Demographics and impact on 'outness'

Within other demographics, the most significant variables are age, hierarchical position, and tenure within the organisation.

There is a 35.3% difference in 'outness' within the age cohorts, with respondents between 45 and 55 years the most likely to be 'out' within their organisation, and those under 25 the least likely.

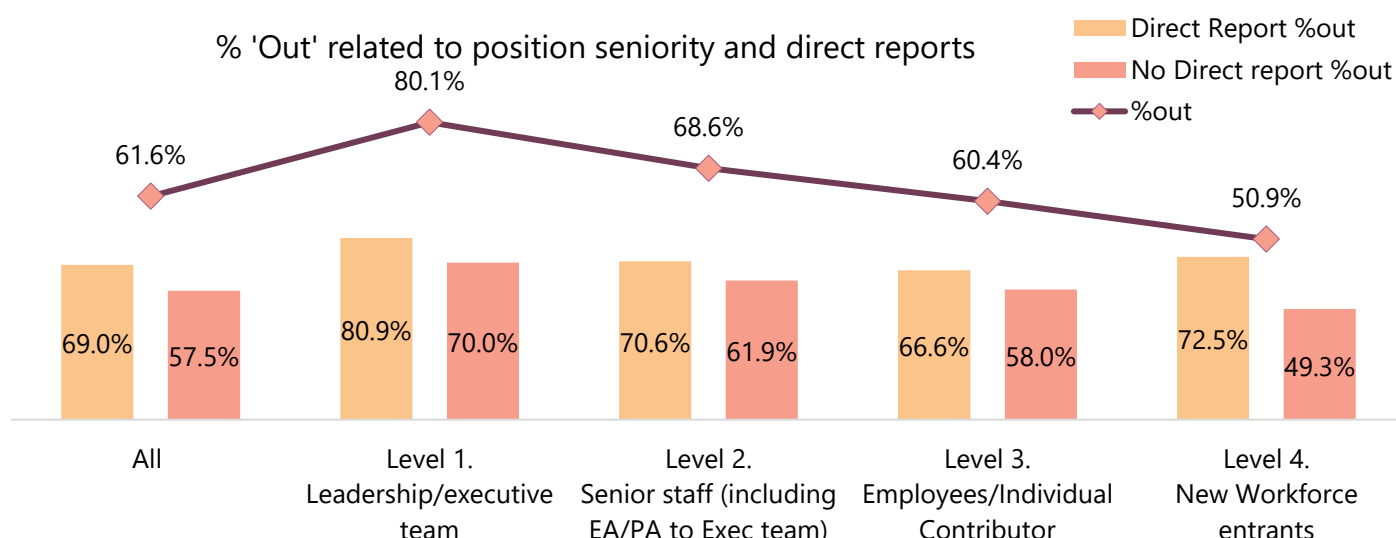


'Outness' compared to tenure shows a 22.2% difference, with respondents in their roles for over 7 years most likely to be 'out'?

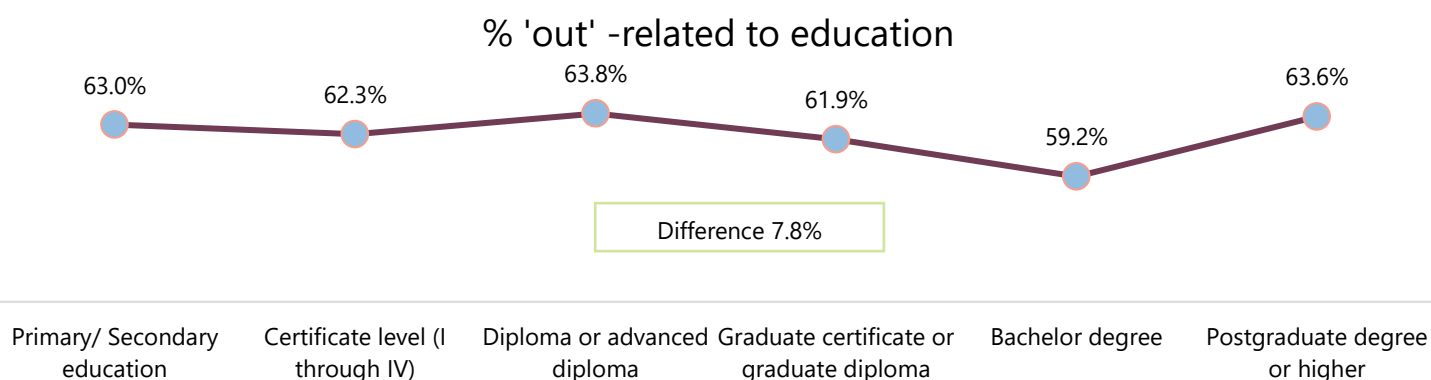


This is also reflected in role seniority, with those in more senior roles most likely to be 'out' in their organisations. This demographic comparison also shows the most significant difference between the most and least likely, with respondents who are new workforce entrants being 36.4% less likely to be 'out' than those in leadership or executive-level positions.

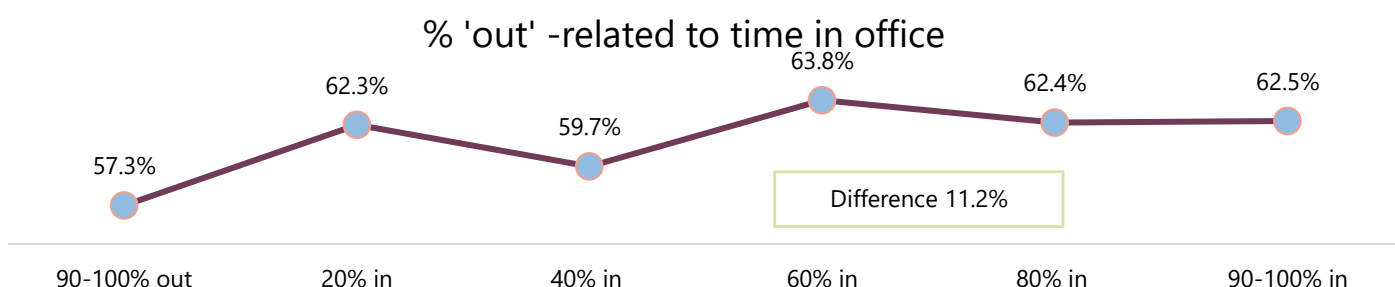
Respondents in positions with direct reports are 20.1% more likely to be 'out' than those without. When we consider the position hierarchy of the respondent, the difference becomes more significant. Those in Leadership positions are 15.6% more likely to be 'out' if they have a direct report, while level 4 respondents are 47.2% more likely to be 'out' if they have a direct report.



This year, we reintroduced a question relating to education. While we do see some spikes, there is only a 7.8% difference, indicating education level has the least impact on 'outness' of all demographics.



With more organisations working flexibly, we also examined the respondents' time spent in the office, and this shows that those who are in the office more regularly are more likely to be 'out' than those who work more outside the office, with a 10.1% difference within this demographic cohort.

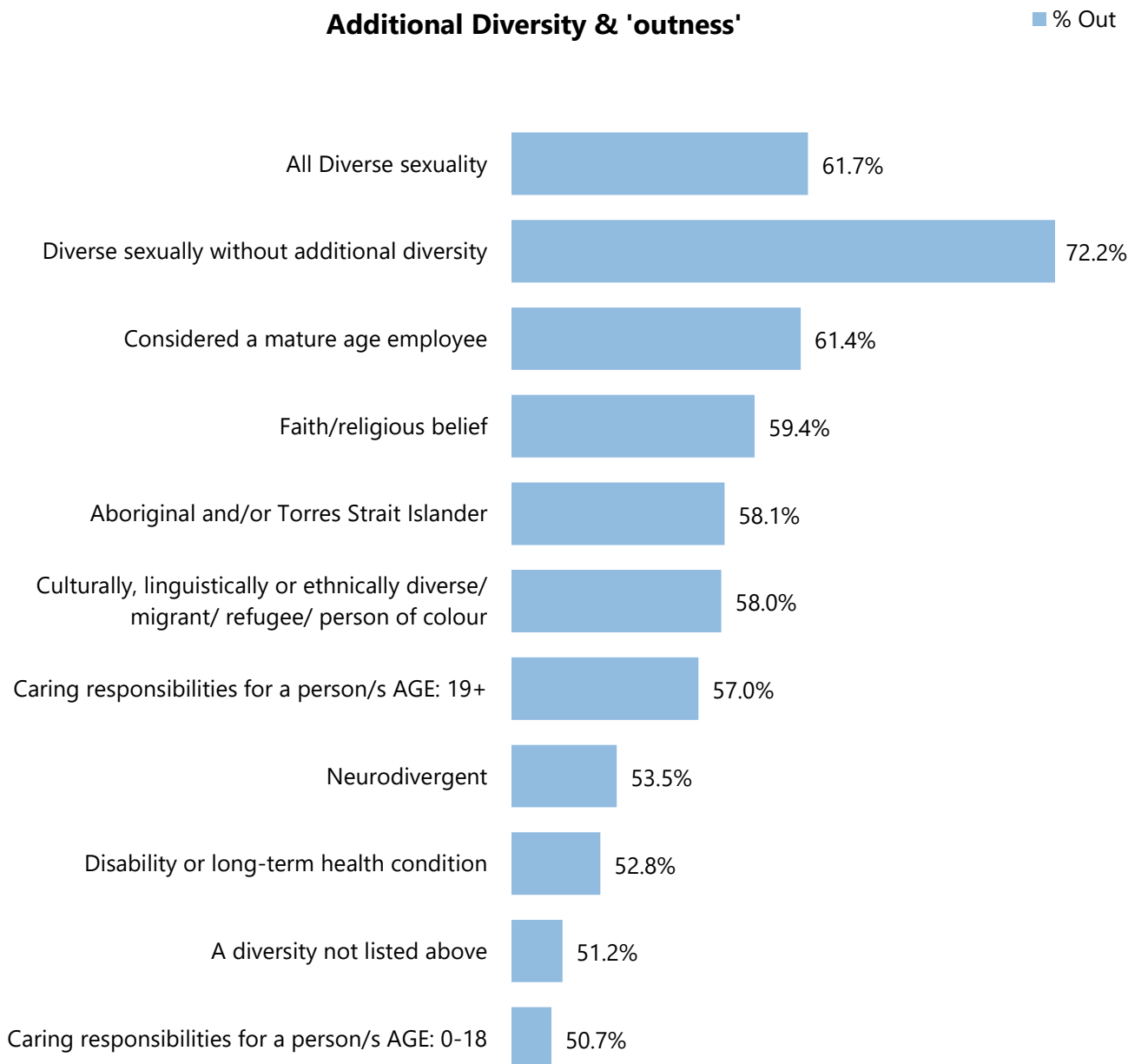


## Intersectionality with personal attributes

The impact of having a diverse sexuality and another personal attribute shows a reduction in the likelihood that a respondent is 'out' about their diverse sexuality. For those who do not have any other diversity attribute identified, 72.2% are 'out', compared to the overall average of all respondents at 61.7%.

8.3% of respondents of diverse sexuality have also identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both. 74.3% of respondents have identified one or more personal attribute or background of diversity from the options provided as impacting their ability to bring their whole selves to work.

This data shows that, for respondents of diverse sexuality, the presence of further diversity reduces the likelihood of being 'out' by between 15.1% and 29.8%. *This area is the focus of a future Practice Point.*





## Effects of being 'out' or 'not out' at work

LGBTQ+ people often feel that they need to monitor themselves and their behaviour in everyday settings until they feel comfortable that they will not be subject to negative experiences. For this reason, a series of questions that were previously asked only of those 'out' have now been added to questions asked of all respondents of diverse sexuality.

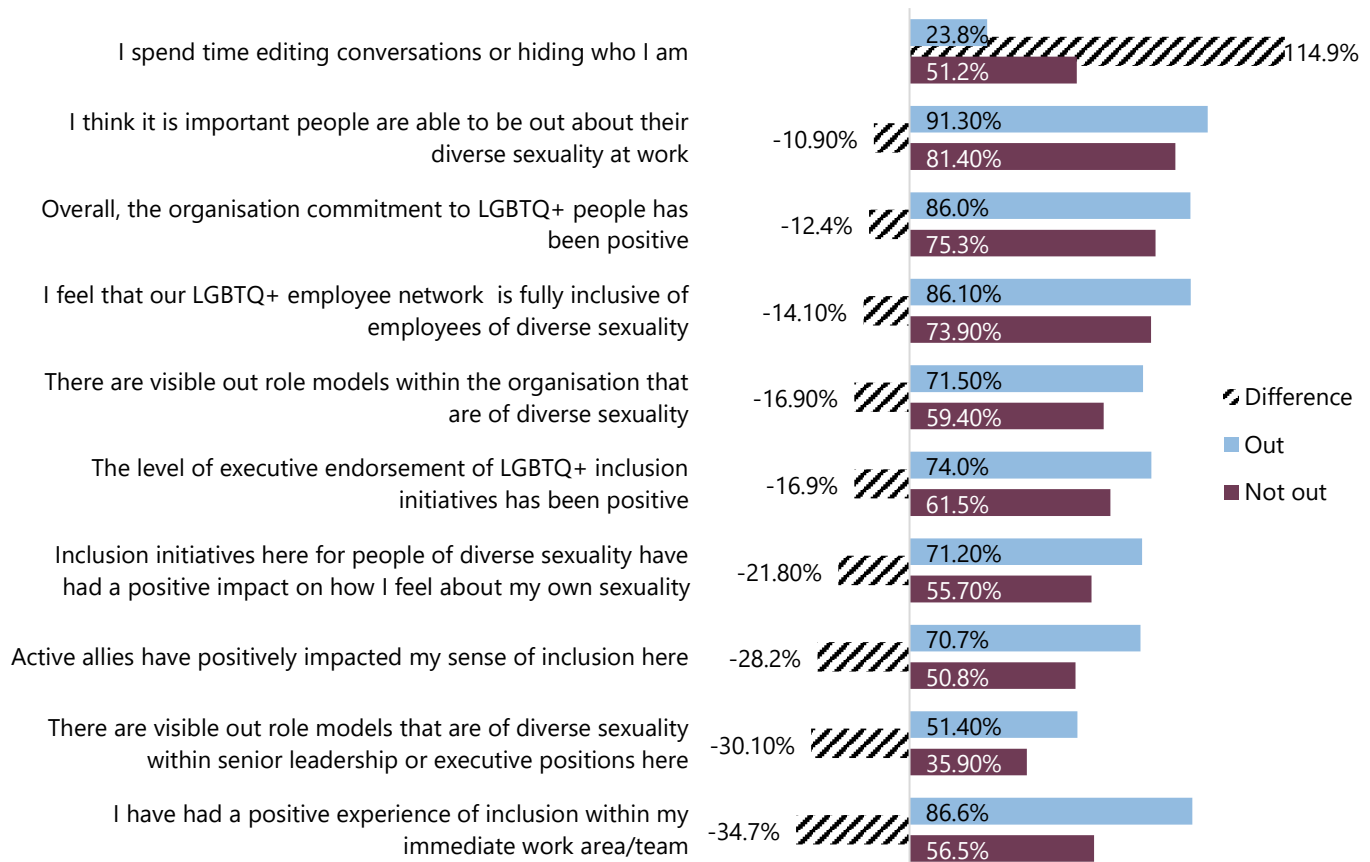
While understanding that these experiences occur, it is also important to visualise the difference in feelings between respondents who are 'out' or not within the organisation, as this is essential to creating a picture of what helps respondents feel comfortable being 'out'.

By comparing the % of agreement to inclusion statements based on respondents who are 'out' or 'not out', we can see significant differences. There is a 24.9% higher agreement in those 'out', agreeing they have experienced discrimination that they suspect or know was attributed to being of a diverse sexuality (or gender). For those that have experienced discrimination, those 'not out' are 29.2% less likely to report this discrimination.

When 'not out' there is a:

- 114.9% difference in respondents agreeing that they spend time self-editing/hiding themselves at work
- 34.7% lower agreement that the respondent has had a positive experience of inclusion at work
- 16.9% lower agreement that there is positive executive endorsement of LGBTQ+ inclusion and
- 12.4% lower agreement that their organisation's commitment to LGBTQ+ people has been positive.

### Organisation inclusion: Impact on being 'out' at work





## Being 'out'

When respondents consider the personal impact and benefit of being 'out' in their organisation, only just over half feel that their performance is being positively impacted. Compared to last year's respondents, agreement is 5.2% lower, following a significant reduction of 6.4% last year.

### Benefits of being 'out'



Compared to last year's respondents, there is a difference of less than 3% in agreement, with all statements exceeding 80.0%. Overall, 89.5% of respondents feel comfortable with their decision to be 'out' relating to their diverse sexuality within their organisation.

## Being 'not out'

For respondents who are 'not out', not wanting to be labelled because of their diverse sexuality remains the most prominent reason. However, it has decreased slightly among this year's respondents, with 'not being comfortable enough within oneself to be 'out' being the second most agreed-upon reason again this year, although it has declined by 3.7% to 36.9%.

Concern about becoming the target of discrimination (25.7%) has increased by 4.9% from last year's cohort. However, the most significant increase in agreement is the impact that negative social and/or mainstream media commentary regarding LGBTQ+ people has had on respondents' willingness to be 'out', up 16.2% from 2024 and 26.1% from 2023, now sitting at just under one-third of all respondents (32.3%).

This year, 25.3% of respondents are not out because they fear exclusion from within their team.

## Why respondents are 'not out'



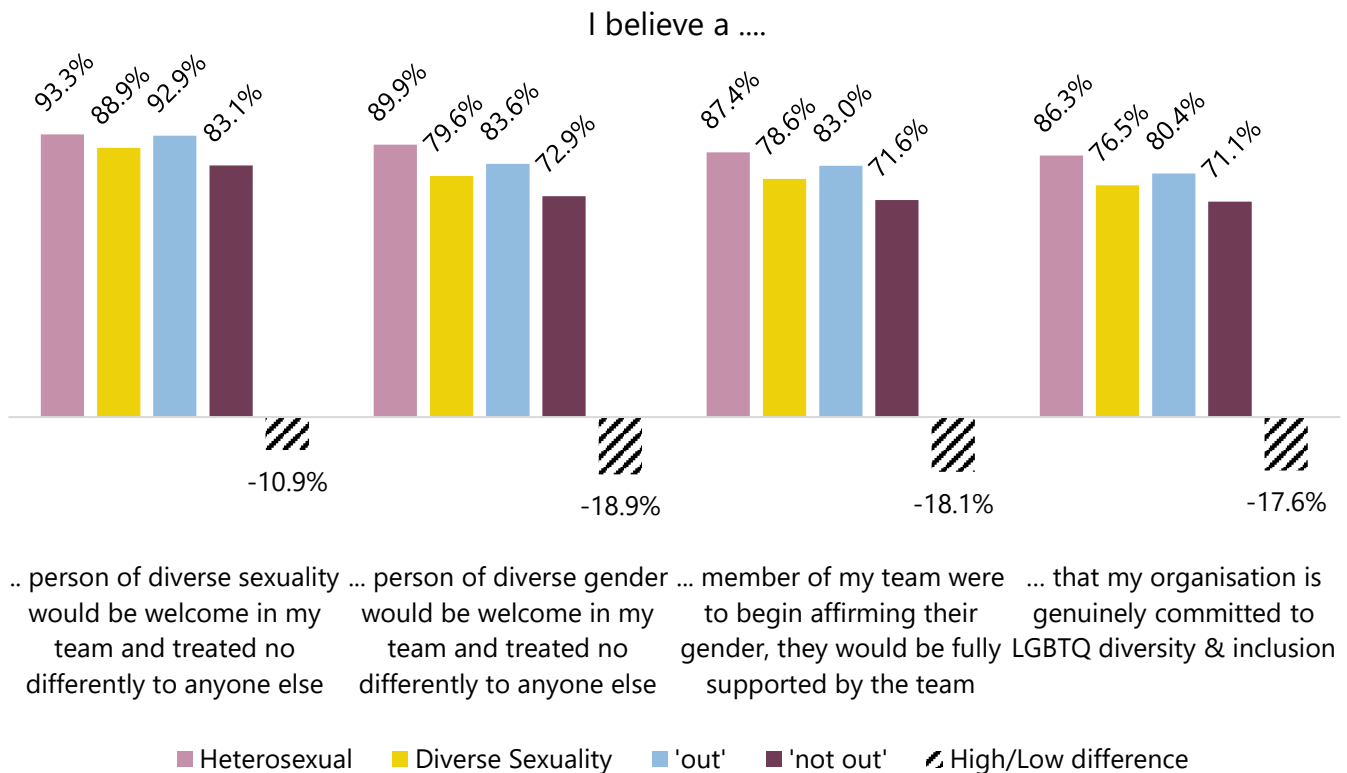
## Beliefs on inclusion

This year's cohort shows some significant differences regarding personal beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion within the workplace. These are seen between those who are of diverse sexuality vs. those who are heterosexual, and also between responses of those 'out' vs. 'not out'.

When comparing responses, we consider disparities between heterosexual respondents and respondents of diverse sexuality. Knowing that in most cases those 'out' in their workplace agree with statements slightly higher than the average of respondents of diverse sexuality. By doing this, we can see that heterosexual respondents are:

- 15.3% less likely to believe they understand some of the unique challenges that LGBTQ+ individuals face in the workplace (heterosexual: 80.3% vs. diverse sexuality: 94.8%). Agreement sits at 96.6% for those out and 93.8% for those not out.
- 15.5% less likely to think it is important that employers be active in LGBTQ+ inclusion (heterosexual: 76.8% vs. diverse sexuality: 90.9%). Agreement sits at 92.9% for those out and 89.7% for those not out.
- 21.0% more likely to think LGBTQ+ inclusion work has a positive influence on organisational culture (heterosexual: 76.4% vs. diverse sexuality: 92.4%). Agreement sits at 94.5% for those out and 91.1% for those not out.

This year's heterosexual respondents are 21.3% more likely than respondents who are 'not out' to believe the organisation is genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion, this is a more significant difference than last year's cohort where there was a 17.7% difference. The belief that LGBTQ+ people would be welcomed and treated the same as non-LGBTQ+ team members is also highest within the heterosexual cohort, with those of diverse sexuality 'not out' in their organisation between 10.9% and 18.1% less likely to believe this.



19.7% of heterosexual respondents feel their organisation should put **more effort** into LGBTQ+ inclusion, 53.8% less likely than respondents of diverse sexuality.

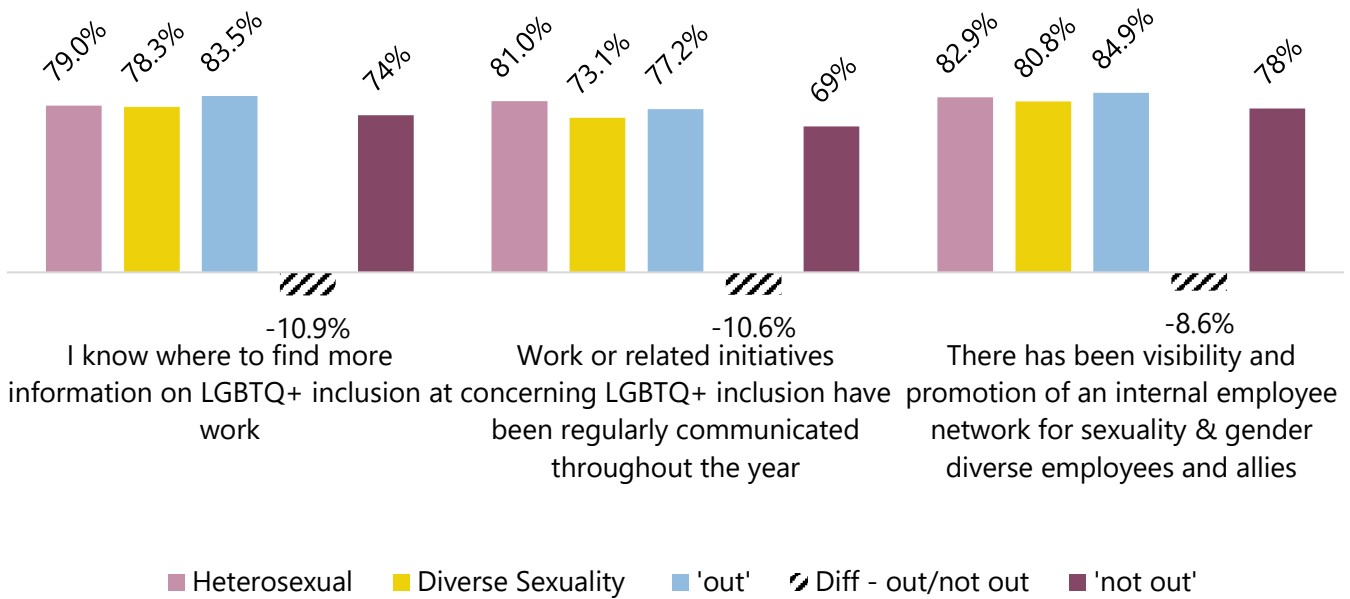
For those who feel *no more effort* is needed, when asked why they felt this way, responses centred mainly around four themes:

1. The level of effort in LGBTQ+ inclusion is good, and other areas require effort or increased effort
2. More effort should be put into treating everyone the same, as labels and grouping people can increase isolation.
3. Respect for all should be the goal, rather than focusing on any one group.
4. Sexuality has no place in the workplace

Those who feel *more effort* is needed, themes include:

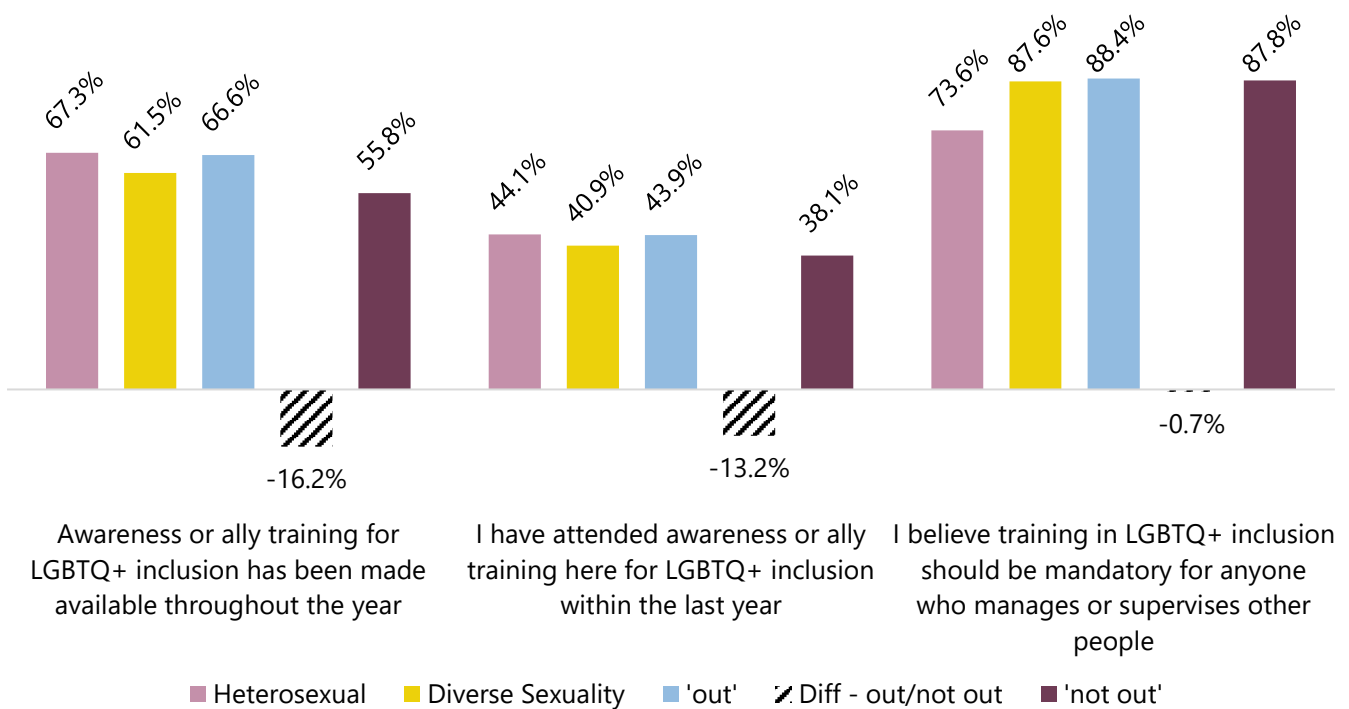
1. The current state of geopolitics and the constant media attention has created a situation where companies need to continue/expand on their LGBTQ+ acceptance/awareness and inclusion efforts
2. While there is unconscious bias, there's always more that can be done
3. There is not very much/any senior leadership representation or support
4. There is still significant negative talk/hate heard around the office with no repercussions

Heterosexual respondents are the most likely to believe that LGBTQ+ activities, initiatives and communication are occurring within the organisation. The differences in agreement between those 'out' and 'not out' indicate that where these initiatives are visible, employees are more likely to be comfortable to be 'out'.



Availability and importance of training also differs, with heterosexual respondents most likely to agree that training has been made available and to have attended training. Those 'not out' in their organisation are less likely to feel that training has been made available (16.2% less than those 'out'), and are also less likely to have attended training (13.2% less than those 'out').

Heterosexual respondents again this year are the *least* likely to feel training should be mandatory for anyone who manages or supervises others, 16.0% less than those of diverse sexuality. In contrast, there is less than 1.0% difference between those 'out' or 'not out' relating to mandatory training.



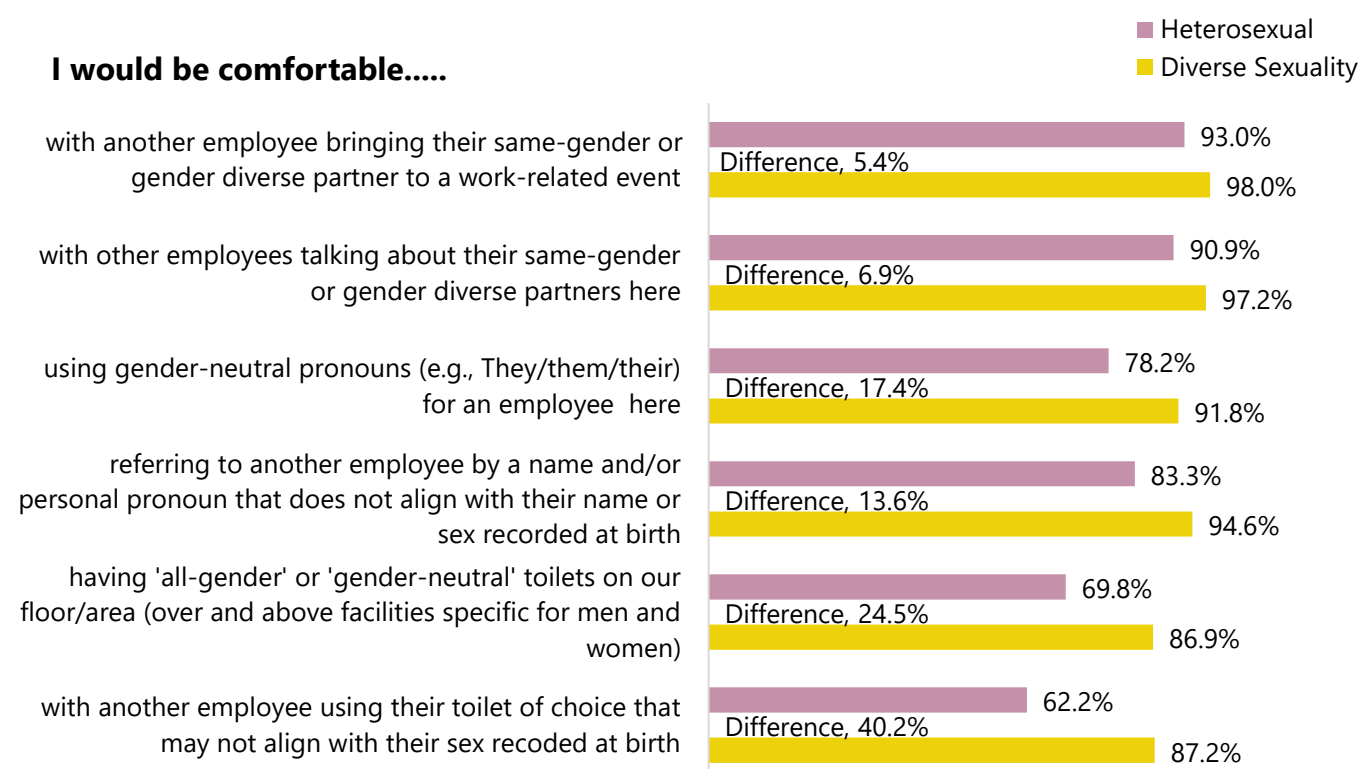
## Working with others

Similar to last year, 97.2% of respondents of diverse sexuality are comfortable with colleagues talking about their same gender or gender diverse partners at work (vs. 90.9% of heterosexual respondents).

There is a 5.4% difference in comfort around colleagues bringing their same gender or gender diverse partner to work events (heterosexual: 93.0% vs. diverse sexuality: 98.0%)

The differences are more significant in comfort working with trans and gender diverse people, including non-binary employees, including having all gender facilities available and allowing a colleague to select the most appropriate toilet for themselves, regardless of their sex recorded at birth; there is a 40.2% difference between this year's heterosexual and diverse sexuality respondents.

There is less than a 5% difference between those 'out' and 'not out' to these questions.



## Workplace wellbeing

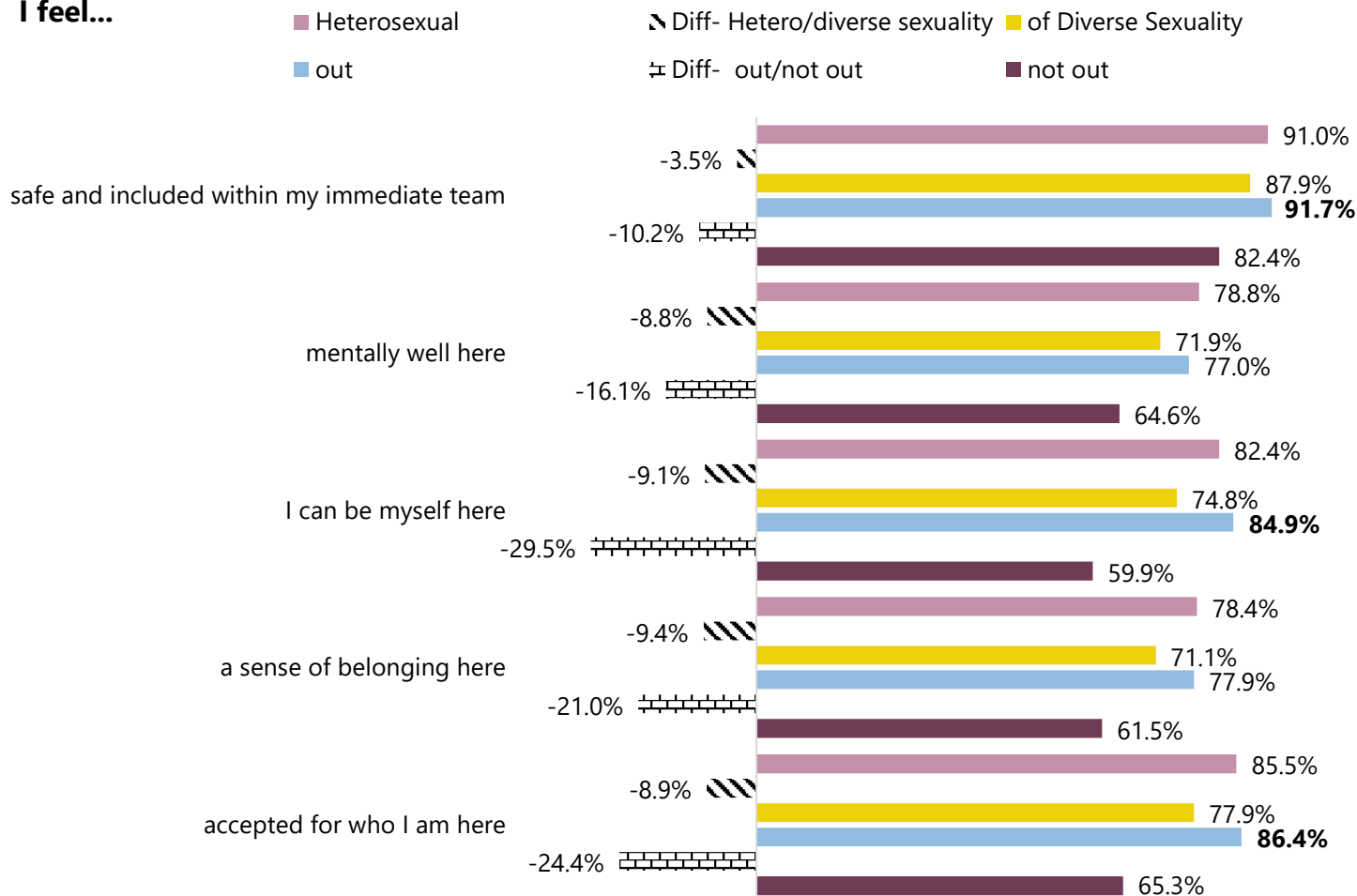
As an entire cohort, people of diverse sexuality continue to report lower levels of safety, health, and wellbeing than heterosexual respondents (between 3.5% and 9.1% less. As we have seen year after year, those 'out' in the workplace actually experience higher levels of workplace wellbeing than heterosexual colleagues in 3 out of 4 measures highlighted below.

Outcomes are significantly worse for those who are 'not out', sitting between 10.2% and a staggering 29.5% poorer workplace wellbeing than 'out' respondents.

Compared to those 'out' respondents, those 'not out' are:

- 29.5% less likely to feel they can be themselves,
- 21.0% less likely to feel a sense of belonging,
- 16.1% less likely to feel mentally well.

## I feel...

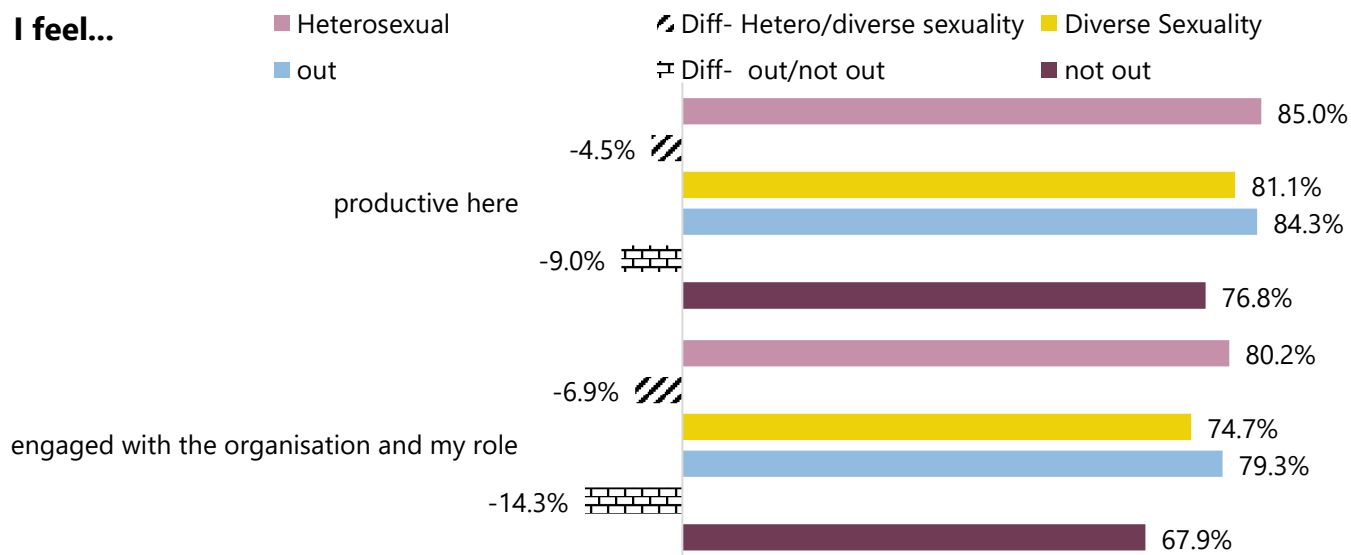


## Productivity and Engagement

Feelings of productivity and engagement with organisations have stayed steady for the past three years. Again, we see that heterosexual employees are experiencing higher levels of engagement and productivity compared to their colleagues of diverse sexuality, until we consider 'outness'.

Again, for those 'not out', their self-assessment of their productivity and engagement is less than those who are 'out' (productivity: 9.0% less than 'out' respondents; engagement: 14.3%).

## I feel...

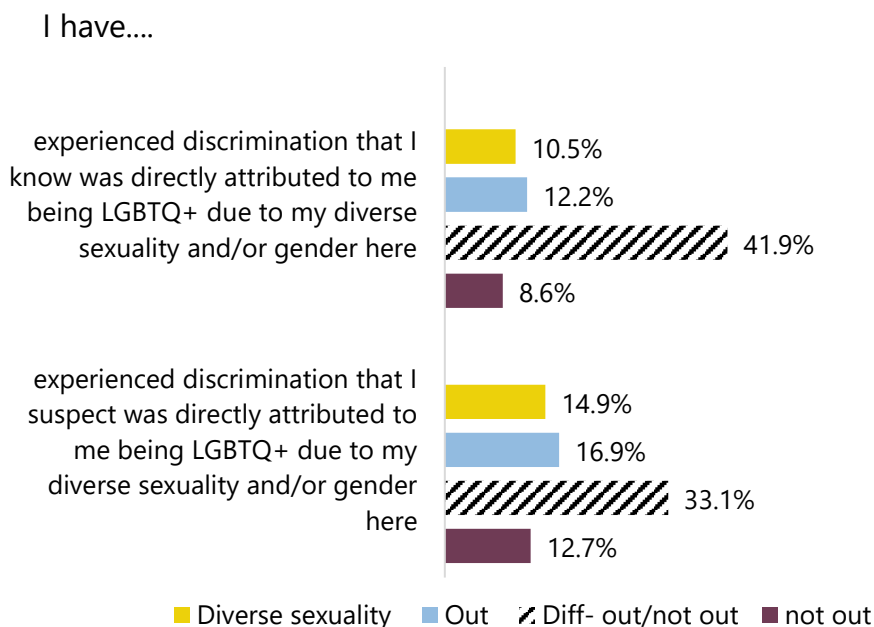


## Discrimination, bullying & harassment.

This year's LGBTQ+ respondents were asked in different ways to consider their experiences of discrimination, bullying and harassment in their current workplace. Looking specifically at the experiences of people of diverse sexuality, we are seeing continued experiences of both workplace incivility and more serious bullying behaviours.

When considering discrimination, 12.2% of respondents 'out' in the workplace have agreed they have experienced discrimination attributed to their LGBTQ+ experience. It is understandable that those 'out' have agreed 41.9% more than those not 'out' as their sexuality is known to others in the workplace.

We also asked if respondents had experienced discrimination that they *suspected* was due to their LGBTQ+ experience. 14.9% of respondents agreed to this statement, 42.9% higher than the agreement to "known" discrimination. The difference between those 'out' and 'not out' is more minor but still significant at 33.1%.

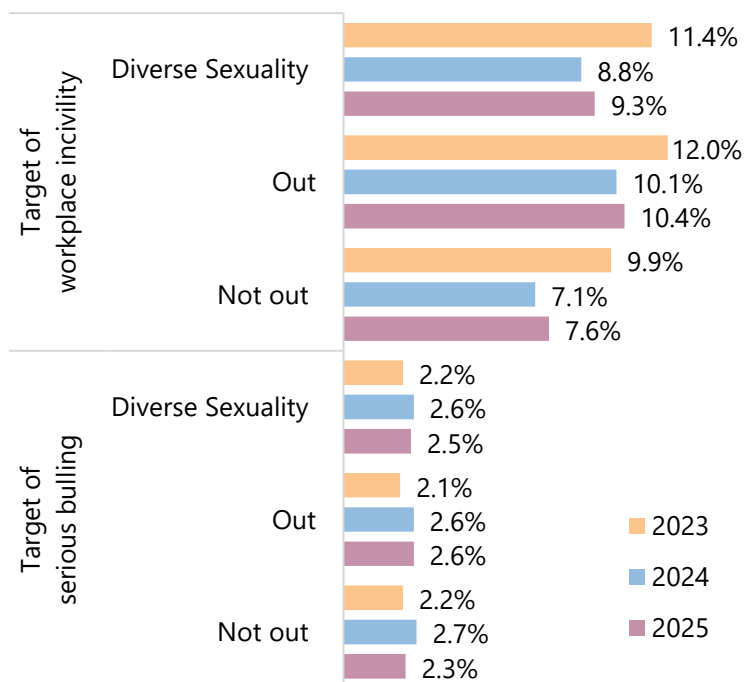


Compared to the 2024 respondent data, 5.7% more respondents reported being the target of workplace incivility behaviours, although the proportion of respondents experiencing more serious bullying has decreased overall by 3.8%.

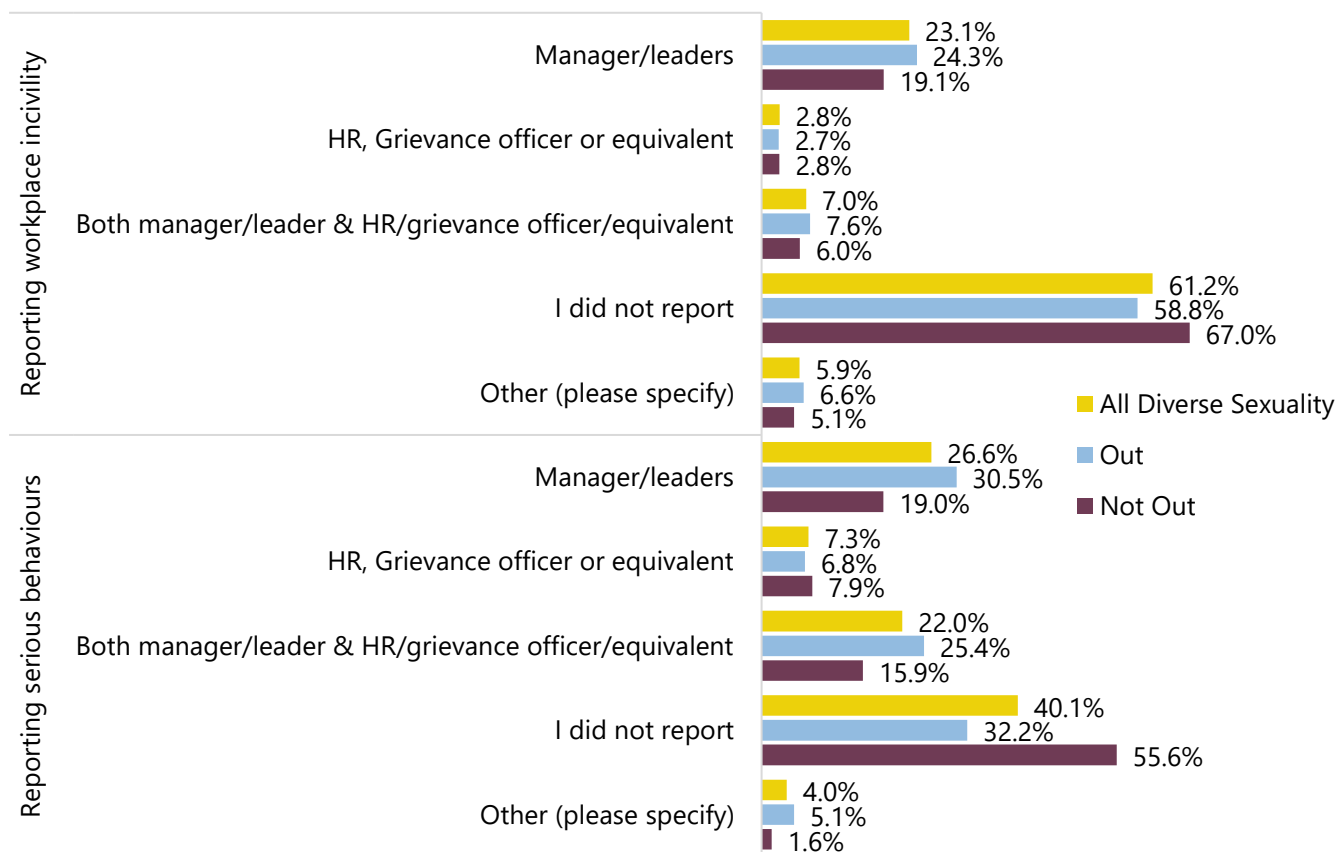
Compared to last year's cohort:

- 3.0% more respondents 'out' in the workplace, and 7.0% more 'not out', have been the target of workplace incivility.
- 14.8% fewer respondents 'not out' have been the target of serious bullying behaviours, while those 'out' remained at 2.6%

Reporting of these experiences differs depending on severity, though concerningly, overall, 61.2% of respondents advised they had not reported the workplace incivility behaviours, and 40.1% did not report the serious bullying behaviours. For those 'not out' in the workplace, this increases to 60.7% and 55.6% respectively.



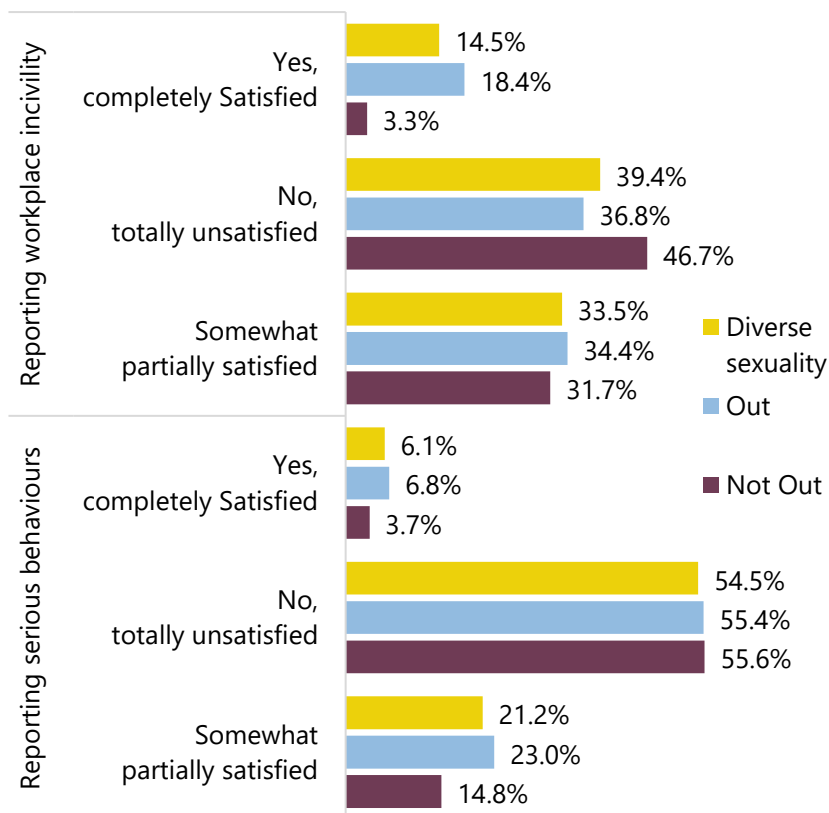




Respondents who had reported to Managers, leaders, HR/Grievance officer or equivalent or both, were asked to consider their satisfaction relating to the reporting process and resolution.

Whilst the cohorts are small, the following is significant in that it shows that respondents who reported and completed the resolution process were most likely to advise that they were totally unsatisfied with the resolution they received. Just under 15% of all respondents of diverse sexuality who reported workplace incivility were satisfied with the resolution they received, and only 6.1% were completely satisfied after reporting serious bullying behaviours.

Understanding why respondents are unsatisfied with the resolution is not in the scope of the survey. We did ask respondents if they felt there were confidential avenues to report bullying and harassment safely, and only 74.5% of respondents of diverse sexuality agreed with the statement.



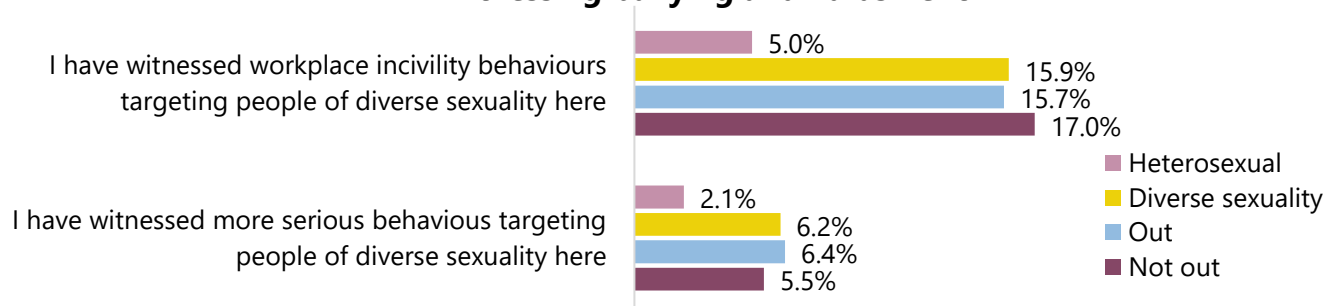
It is important organisations review their individual data, policies and processes, to increase their understanding of these experiences for employees and to attempt to provide more satisfactory outcomes.

Previously, we combined questions relating to bullying and harassment to encompass all LGBTQ+ experiences. This year, we amended the questions to gain a better understanding of whether respondents reported that behaviours targeting an employee's diverse sexuality were acted upon or addressed differently than those targeting an employee's diverse gender or trans experience.

People who are 'not out' are the most likely to have witnessed workplace incivility behaviours, while those who are 'out' are most likely to witness more serious behaviours. When considering the action taken when behaviours were witnessed, overall,

- 25.6% of people of diverse sexuality and 20.3% of heterosexual respondents advised that no one 'called out' the workplace incivility behaviour, and
- 21.9% and 16.5% respectively advised that no one 'called out' the serious bullying behaviour.

### Witnessing bullying and harassment

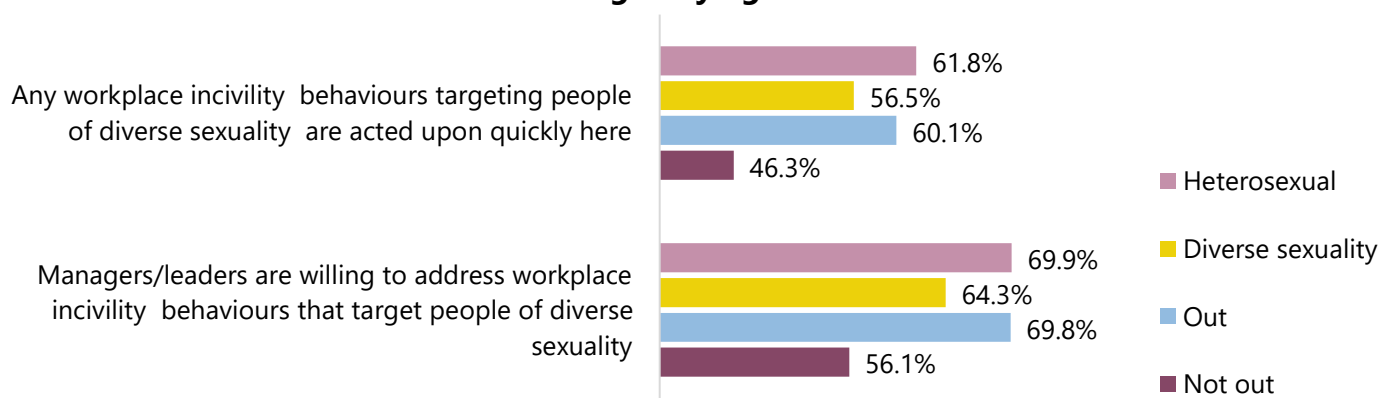


Responses relating to an organisation's reputation to address behaviours quickly, and managers' willingness to address these behaviours, also show disparities.

Overall, compared with heterosexual respondents, those of diverse sexuality are:

- 6.0% less likely to feel that their organisations quickly address workplace incivility behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality,
- 8.8% less likely to agree that managers and leaders are willing to address workplace incivility

### Addressing bullying and harassment



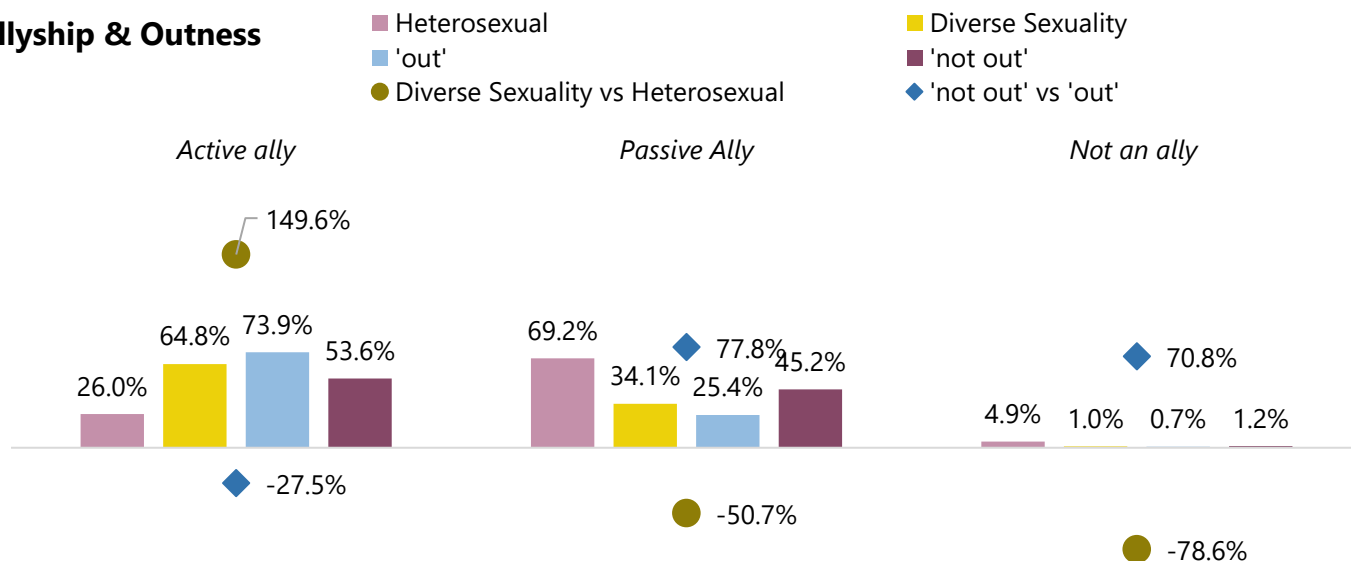
## Allyship

This year, we have seen a 12.8% reduction in the proportion of respondents who are active allies (2025: 36.3% vs. 2024: 41.7%), and a 10.0% increase in passive allies (2025: 59.7% vs. 2024: 54.2%).

People of diverse sexuality are:

- 149.6% more likely to be an active ally than heterosexual respondents (though this has continued to decline from 70.2% in 2023 to 67.1% in 2024 and 64.8% this year),
- 50.7% less likely to consider themselves passive allies, &
- 78.6% less likely to be not an ally at all.

## Allyship & Outness



We also see significant differences between those 'out' and 'not out'. 'Not out' respondents are:

- 27.5% less likely to be an active ally,
- 77.8% more likely to be a passive ally. &
- 70.8% more likely to advise not being an ally at all in the workplace, a significant decrease from last year's 126.2% more likely.

*Further analysis into the impact of allies and allyship is the subject of a future practice point.*

## 2025 – Calls to action

1. Unsure of where to begin? Use the AWEI Submission Foundation and Advanced documents as a road map to begin your journey
2. Encourage your organisation to participate regularly in the AWEI survey to gain insights from employees.
3. Investigate your data – consider who you have in your organisation, and who you do not. While being 'out' is not mandatory, if you have no one in your organisation who is an 'out' role model, consider why and how that gap could be filled.
4. If you have low levels of satisfaction relating to bullying and harassment complaint outcomes, consider why this is occurring, and if it is impacting employees' willingness to report
5. Check your language – when was the last time you reviewed your policies and processes to ensure that language and references were up to date, accurate and engaging?
6. What process do you have in place to ensure your organisations message of inclusion is filtering through all levels, and all offices? Often the more remote people are from the leadership team, the less they are able to see the work being done.
7. Inclusion is not a one and done – continue the work to ensure that the achievements you have made are not lost
8. Celebrate the successes you have made in increasing LGBTQ+ inclusion externally and internally