sapphire pride in diversity

CRACKING the Rainbow Glass Ceiling

Applying an intersectional lens: LGBTQ+ & gender workplace inclusion

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their experiences, cultures, languages and practices, and the richness of their contributions to the places where we work, live and play.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country across Australia and their continuing connection to lands, waters, skies and communities. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Made on Aboriginal land – always was, always will be.

A note on language:

Throughout this publication we use the term 'LGBTQ+' to refer to all people of diverse sexualities and/ or genders. We acknowledge that language is continually evolving. There are many variations of this acronym, which may include intersex people, asexual people, sistergirl and brotherboy First Nations people, and others. The terminology of sexuality and gender diverse (SGD) is also gaining popularity.

Pride Inclusion Programs has also affirmed the Darlington Statement in support of intersex-led organisations driving all work and support in terms of intersex inclusion within the workplace. For more information on the Darlington Statement and how this impacts the work of Pride Inclusion Programs, please go to www.prideinclusionprograms.com.au/intersex-inclusion.

We use LGBTQ+ as shorthand for the sake of brevity, acknowledging that LGBTQ+ communities are far more diverse than this acronym suggests.

Where possible we use the following inclusive terminology:

- sexuality and gender diverse;
- people of diverse sexualities and/or genders,
- diverse sexualities and genders; or
- sexuality and gender diversity.

When using the terms 'Sapphire cohort' or 'Sapphire employees', this includes:

- Cisgender women with a diverse sexual orientation
- Transgender women
- Non-binary people who opted into the group by answering the question "If you are a non-binary or gender diverse person perceived by colleagues as female or feminine, do you believe you face the same challenges as LGBTQ+ women?".

When comparing survey responses between the 'Sapphire cohort' and the 'general population',

the cohort 'general population' includes the responses to the questions asked from ALL survey respondents based in Australia.

When referring to 'emerging identities',

these are identities that have not historically been considered in binary understandings of sexuality and/ or gender. This can include, but is not limited to, identities such as:

- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Non-binary
- Agender

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Introduction

Lack of visibility and engagement of LGBTQ+ women within workplaces is an issue that has been identified and researched since before Pride in Diversity was created, with UK-based Stonewall publishing 'The double-glazed glass ceiling: Lesbians in the workplace'[21] in 2008. Pride in Diversity's Sapphire initiative was launched in 2014, at the behest of members, to try and tackle this issue within Australian workplaces.

- 2022 AWEI employee survey data continues to show that LGBTQ+ women are less likely to be 'out' in their workplaces than LGBTQ+ men, have poorer indicators of workplace health and wellbeing than LGBTQ+ men or non-LGBTQ+ women, are less engaged than LGBTQ+ men or non-LGBTQ+ women, and are less likely to be working in senior roles than either LGBTQ+ men or non-LGBTQ+ women[1].

- When Pride in Diversity and PwC co-authored and published 'Where are all the women' in 2018, several Pride in Diversity members made LGBTQ+ women a strategic focus area within their LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies. At the time, there was not the same focus on ensuring the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in gender equity networks and strategies. While LGBTQ+ people with under-represented and/or minority genders should be included within LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives, they also need to be recognised and included within gender equity initiatives and considered in all inclusion initiatives an organisation looks to implement.

- In more recent years, many Pride in Diversity members have started to consider how to broaden the reach and focus of their gender equity initiatives to encompass LGBTQ+ people. While the work has begun, there is often less knowledge about the unique barriers facing this cohort when it comes to accessing and feeling included in these programs.

- This latest research has been completed in an ongoing effort to assist organisations further understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ women (and those perceived and treated as women in their workplaces), identify specific barriers they may face, and learn from the experiences of organisations that have made positive strides in improving the experiences of this cohort.

Sapphire is an initiative of Pride in Diversity that was developed to generate greater awareness of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people who identify or may be perceived as women in the workplace.

Pride in Diversity & Sapphire

ACON's Pride in Diversity (PID) is Australia's national not-for-profit employer support program for all aspects of LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion, and the publishers of the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI), a roadmap, benchmarking tool and engagement survey by which national standards of best practice for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion are set.

Sapphire is an initiative of Pride in Diversity that was developed to generate greater awareness of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people who identify or may be perceived as women in the workplace. This includes cisgender women, transgender women, and non-binary people who may be perceived as female or feminine (regardless of their gender identities) in the workplace and therefore may face many of the same challenges.

In 2018, Pride in Diversity and GLEE@PwC partnered and co-authored 'Where are all the women' ("WAATW"), the first report of its kind, designed to understand "the lack of same-sex attracted women across LGBTI networks within Australia" and "how organisations might start to address this imbalance".

Pride in Diversity's Sapphire initiative has continued to build upon the initial research through analysis of the AWEI employee survey data received each year. Through this data we are able to drill down into the experiences of different populations within the LGBTQ+ umbrella. As a result, we have broadened the scope of the initiative.

To collect data for this research, PID looked at quantitative and qualitative data inputs from the AWEI employee survey, alongside a series of focus groups conducted with PID member organisations. Additionally, PID has partnered with University of Queensland to develop a series of academic case studies based on key themes affecting this cohort.

Foreword

Dawn Emsen-Hough
Director,
ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs

The dual challenges within the workplace around being LGBTQ+ and being a woman, or being perceived as one by colleagues, has been identified as one of the key contributors to the lack of visibility, professional equity and active role models for young people from this cohort. While this has improved somewhat over the years, comparatively, LGBTQ+ people who are, or are perceived as women are still visibly underrepresented within workplace LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives, talent programs and leadership. While LGBTQ+ women are present in workplaces and leadership positions, if they don't feel they can disclose their identity, young LGBTQ+ people are missing out on seeing role models, which are important to their sense of safety and belonging; nor are they seeing that being out does not impact career progression. Young LGBTQ+ women are still wanting to see themselves represented both within the workplace and in leadership positions. When they look around their workplaces however, they are not seeing themselves represented to the degree that cisgender, heterosexual women or LGBTQ+ men are. The rates of visibility are even more dire when it comes to trans and gender diverse representation. The scales are not balanced and this puts people who are a part of this cohort at a very clear disadvantage.

Our first publication addressing this issue, jointly researched and published alongside PwC, set out some of the barriers that LGB women face when it comes to workplace expectations and professional advancement. Unfortunately the specific experiences of trans women were not captured in this publication, due to low research participation rates.

This publication updates that research. It looks more comprehensively at the challenges faced by cisgender women, women with a trans experience, and those who are incorrectly perceived as women, as well as diving deeper into the different experiences of people with differing sexual orientations. This new research provides new insights and useful action points, along with considerations for our gender equity initiatives.

I would like to thank Nicki Elkin and Jess Mayers for their significant contribution to this area of work. Both have been passionate advocates for awareness and change, delving deep into the issues, the considerations, and possible solutions. The Sapphire initiative is a testament to their dedication and passion, and this publication is a result of their hard work. I would also like to thank Chere De Koh for their design work within this publication, ensuring that the data is both visually appealing and accessible.

We are extremely proud of this significant piece of work and trust that, as someone interested in inclusion and equity, you will gain immense insights as a direct result of the information presented.

Nicki Elkin (they/them)
Associate Director, Quality, Training, Research - Pride Inclusion Programs)

Jess Mayers (she/her)
Senior Relationship Manager,
State Lead NSW

Data snapshot

Overview

Sapphire is an initiative of Pride in Diversity that was developed to generate greater awareness of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people who identify or may be perceived as women in the workplace.

- In 2018, Pride in Diversity and GLEE@PwC partnered and co-authored 'Where are all the women' ("WAATW"), the first report of its kind, designed to understand "the lack of same-sex attracted women across LGBTI networks within Australia" and "how organisations might start to address this imbalance".
- Between 2020 and 2022 Sapphire sought to build upon the initial research and scope, and through analysis and examination of Australian Workplace Equality Index employee survey data and comments, alongside a series of focus groups, a number of themes emerged from the data, alongside a number of action points for organisations to consider.

Outness

The Sapphire cohort continues to be out about their diverse sexuality or open about their diverse gender identity at lower rates than LGBTQ+ men

out about *diverse sexuality*

out to everyone they work with
51% of LGBTQ+ men
28% of the Sapphire cohort

not out at all at work
10% of LGBTQ+ men
26% of the Sapphire cohort

open about *diverse gender identity*

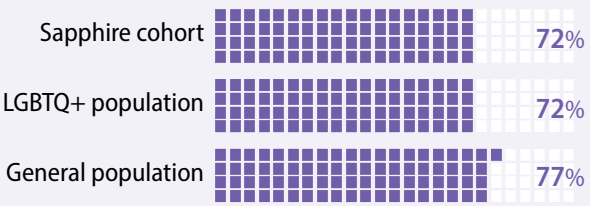
open to everyone they work with
28% of LGBTQ+ men
23% of the Sapphire cohort

not open at all at work
20% of LGBTQ+ men
29% of the Sapphire cohort

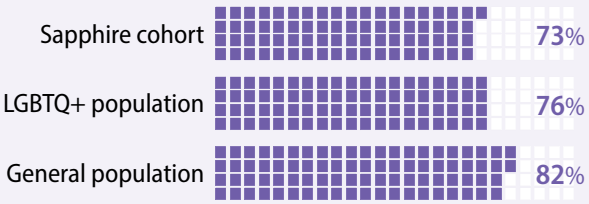
Belongingness

The Sapphire cohort believe they can be themselves and feel a sense of belonging at lower rates than the general population

I feel a sense of belonging here*



I feel a sense of belonging here*



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering this question

Data snapshot

Negative behaviours

The Sapphire cohort is

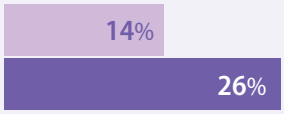
- more likely to witness negative behaviours
- less likely to think they will be acted on.

They are also

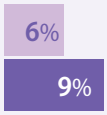
- less likely to feel safe and supported when it comes to reporting experiencing bullying and/or harassment

Any jokes/innuendo targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender are acted upon quickly here

I have witnessed negative behaviours / mild harassment targeting people of diverse sexuality or gender at work



I have witnessed more serious bullying targeting people of diverse sexuality or gender at work



Sapphire cohort General population

I would feel safe & supported reporting...

Sapphire cohort LGBTQ+ men

Sexual harassment

The Sapphire cohort experience sexual harassment at incredibly high levels

Have you ever been sexually harassed at work?

Focus areas

Leadership support

Leadership support is one of the most important factors when it comes to reducing the likelihood of being bullied at work.

An inclusive and supportive leader signals to unsupportive employees that bullying, jokes and innuendo won't be tolerated.

- Role model the behaviour you expect from your team
- Be a visible ally
- Call out jokes and comments when you hear them
- Talk about the value of inclusion
- Use inclusive language

Inclusivity of networks

In addition to the LGBTQ+ network, organisations might also like to consider the inclusivity of their gender network for LGBTQ+ folk.

LGBTQ+ network

- Look at the diversity of the leadership team.
- Consider the issues being addressed.
- What are the events being planned and are they only based around socialising and alcohol.

Gender network

- What language and imagery is used to describe the network – is it inclusive of LGBTQ+ women, and in particular trans women.
- What are the issues being discussed, are they based around assumptions and stereotypes for a particular idea of what it means to be a woman?
- Gender equity is more than man vs woman – what is being done to be more inclusive for gender diverse folk.

Focus areas

Role models & visibility

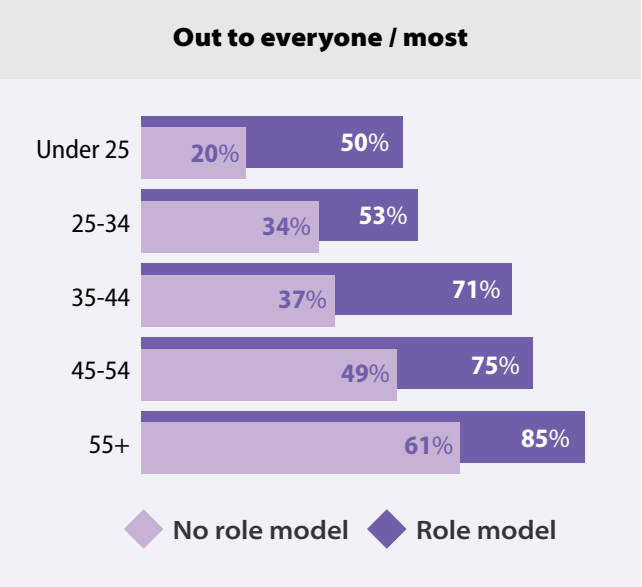
Across every age group surveyed in the AWEI, those in the Sapphire cohort who said they had a role model with a similar identity were also more likely to say they were out to most or all of their colleagues.

Consider ways to increase the understanding about what it means to be a role model, and the visibility of those that do step forward.

44% see someone with a similar identity as a **visible role model** at their organisation

78% **agree having a role model with a similar identity is important**

29% see someone with a similar identity as a **senior leader** at their organisation



Incentives for network involvement

While employee networks can be a great source of support, only half of the Sapphire cohort agree they participate in the initiatives their organisations LGBTQ+ network undertakes.

Barriers can include:

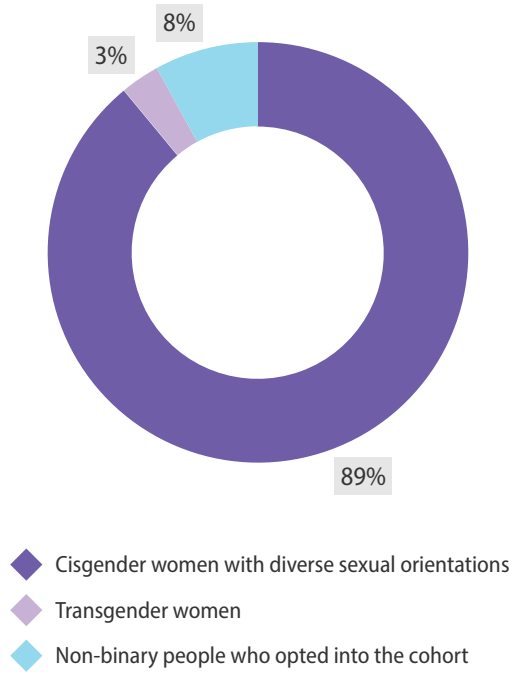
- Increased burden on a group already experiencing workplace barriers.
- A lack of recognition for the work done.
- No clear guidelines on how it contributes to career progression.

Consider:

- How employees that participate are rewarded or recognised for the additional work they take on.
- How the value of the networks is communicated to managers, and how it is considered when it comes to an employee's performance appraisal.
- Strategies for work to be undertaken in work hours, and no expectation that network activities be completed in the employee's own time.
- How involvement in the network can be incorporated into career progression matrixes or skill sets.

Who are the Sapphire cohort?

Ch. 1



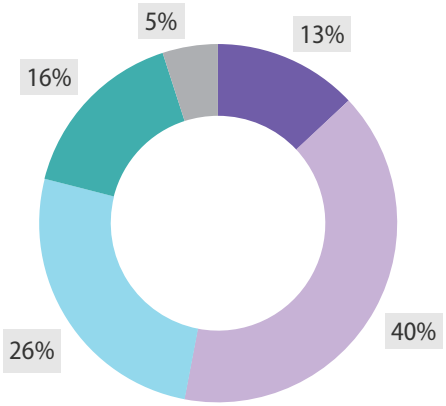
In total **5,043 respondents** of the 2022 Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) employee survey made up the 'Sapphire cohort'. The following charts are a summary of the responses from this group to the demographic questions.

They include responses from:

- Cisgender women with a diverse sexual orientation
- Transgender women
- Non-binary people who opted into the group by answering the question "If you are a non-binary or gender diverse person perceived by colleagues as female or feminine, do you believe you face the same challenges as LGBTQ+ women?". This includes both those that agreed and disagreed they felt they faced the same challenges in the workplace.[1]

1.1 Age groups

The participants ranged across all age groups, with the largest age range being 24-34 years old.

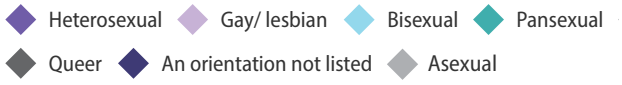


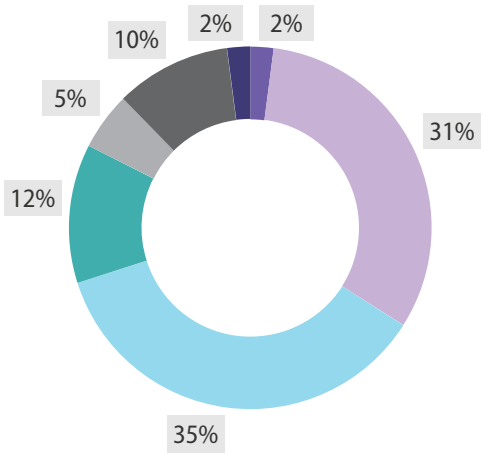
1.2 Sexual orientations

There was a range of sexual orientations represented, with those identifying as bisexual making up the largest percentage.

This reflects a growing trend in the last four years of an increase in the number of respondents identifying as bisexual, pansexual, and other emerging identities, and a decrease in those identifying as gay or lesbian.

This appears to be closely linked to age, as younger employees enter the workforce.





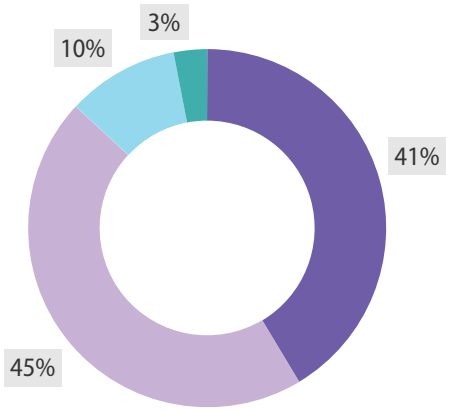
1.3 Locations

The majority of the Sapphire cohort are based in city/metropolitan areas (4,113), 603 are based regionally and 327 are rural/remote.

4,113	*city/metropolitan areas*
603	*regional*
327	*rural/remote*

1.4 Sectors

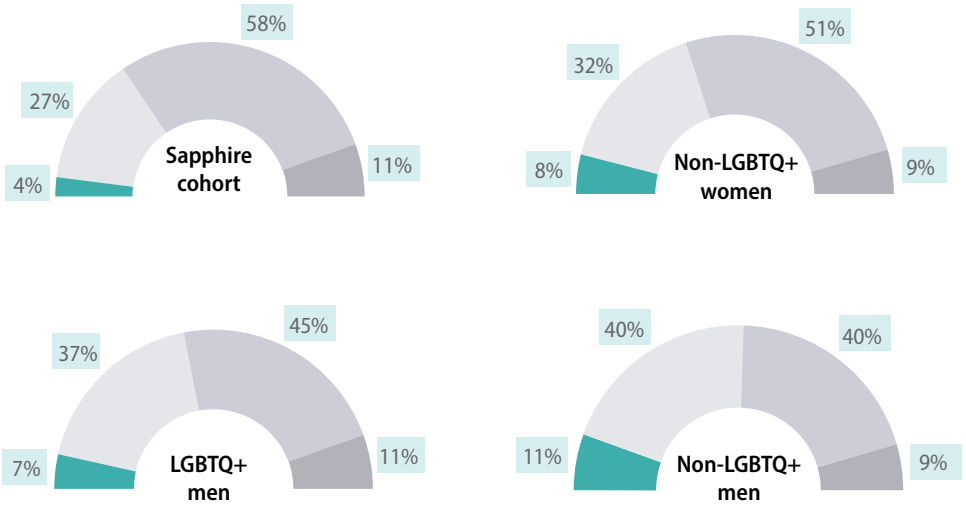
In total, the Sapphire cohort respondents worked across **29 different industries.**



- Private sector
- Government
- Higher education
- NFP/ Community/ NGO

1.5 Leadership levels

When compared with other cohorts, this data clearly shows the lack of representation of LGBTQ+ women and people perceived as women at senior leadership levels, and the dominance of non-LGBTQ+ men within these roles.



- CEO (or Equivalent)/ Direct Report of CEO (or Equivalent), Other Senior Leadership
- Middle Management / Project Manager / Team Leader /Supervisor
- Team member/ Support Staff / Academic
- Prefer not to answer / other role

How does the Sapphire cohort feel at work?

Ch. 2

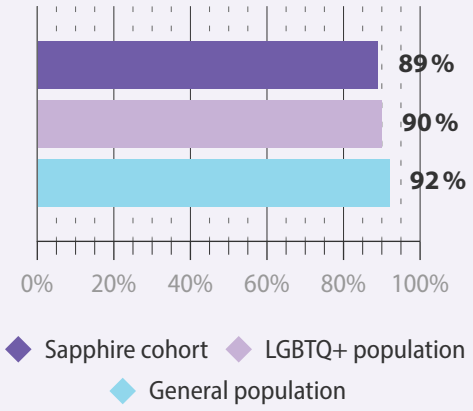
How does the Sapphire cohort feel at work?

Due to a history of high levels of discrimination, marginalisation and abuse, physical and psychological safety is still a key concern for many LGBTQ+ people.

Encouragingly, participating employees in the 2022 AWEI employee survey reported high rates of agreement that they feel safe and included within their immediate team. This was true for both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents[1].

Safety & inclusion in team

*I feel safe and included within my immediate team**



2.1 Mental health & wellbeing at work

While the Sapphire cohort did answer overwhelmingly in the positive for feeling included in their team, there are other indicators organisations should be considering.

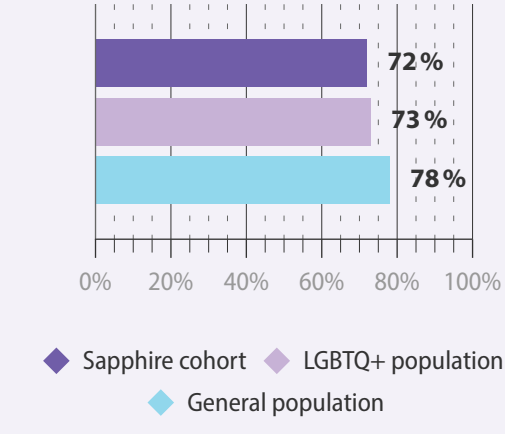
Mental wellbeing is an important aspect of a healthy and productive life. Unfavourable work environments and negative workplace incidents not only lead to psychological distress but can also diminish a worker's wellbeing.

Employees from underrepresented social groups, including employees of diverse sexuality and/ or gender, are more likely to experience negative interactions with their colleagues, such as bullying and jokes. These additional stressors and stigma can contribute to poorer mental health outcomes for the groups that experience them.

This is reflected within the 2022 AWEI employee survey data, with LGBTQ+ populations faring worse than the general population, and the Sapphire cohort doing marginally worse again.

Mentally well at work

*I feel mentally well at work**

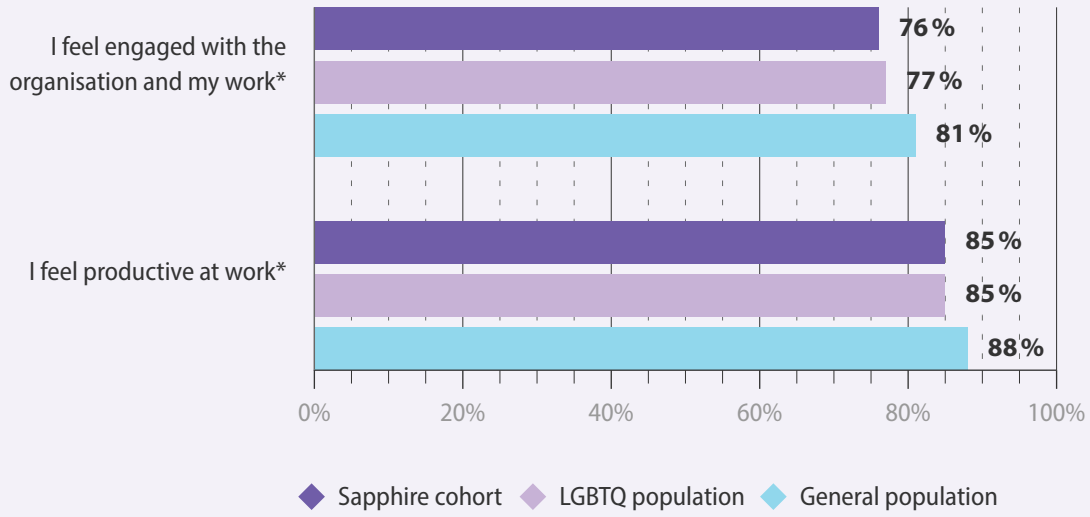


* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

2.2 Productivity & engagement

The mental health of employees has a spill over effect on their work performance and engagement within the organisation, it greatly impacts an individual's performance at work and their commitment to the organisation[4]. The 2022 AWEI employee survey data clearly shows the impact someone's sexuality and gender can have on their productivity and engagement. The Sapphire cohort fares worse than the total LGBTQ+ population and the general population.

Productivity & engagement at work



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

While it is important to consider the difference in experience between the Sapphire cohort and other groups, it is also worthwhile to remember this group is not a monolith. A case study that conducted in-depth analysis of AWEI quantitative and qualitative data revealed significant variation in the workplace wellbeing of Sapphire employees[4]:

Trans women report the lowest average scores for mental health, productivity, and engagement within the Sapphire Cohort.

Non-binary and agender employees feel less productive at work than cis women.

Employees who identify as bisexual, pansexual or queer report lower mental health, productivity and engagement than those who identify as lesbian or gay.

Being the target of jokes significantly reduces workers' mental health, productivity and engagement with the organisation.

Employees who reported lower workplace wellbeing articulated their difficulties, feelings of isolation and intent to leave. They called for more support from colleagues and senior leaders.

2.3 Impacts of improving mental health & wellbeing

Improving the mental health of employees fosters a culture of higher engagement and productivity at work. A stronger focus on the wellbeing of employees of diverse genders and sexualities could help organisations reduce employee stress, enhance performance, minimise absences, and improve retention. While the mental wellness of employees matters for the economic prospects of the organisation, it is also key for the career outcomes of employees of diverse gender and sexual identities.[4]

Recommendation

Consider the inclusivity of existing mental health support mechanisms, internal and external, for LGBTQ+ people, and in particular, the Sapphire cohort. Keep in mind the experiences of cis women, trans women and non-binary people vary, and support mechanisms provided, e.g., EAPs, should have this level of understanding.

How does the Sapphire cohort perceive inclusion at work?

Ch. 3

3.1 Ability to bring whole self to work

A key theme of 'WAATW' was the importance of a workplace's macro and micro culture. The report found that same sex attracted women expected broader workplace diversity and inclusion advocacy.

However, they only felt they could be authentic when they 'felt' their peers practice inclusive behaviours and language on a day-to-day basis.

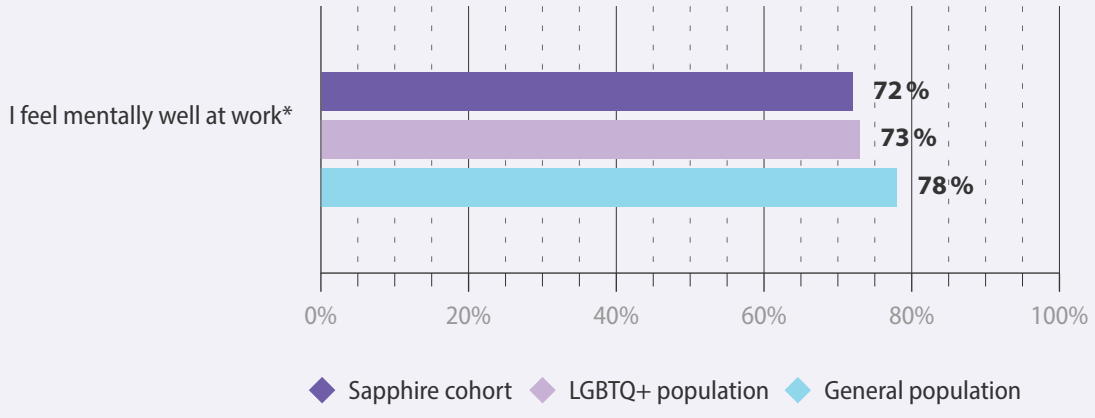
Same sex attracted women felt more comfortable to be out and authentic when workplaces promote broader diversity and inclusion initiatives. Equally, micro cultures defined their day-to-day work environment and often set an individual's sense of psychological safety.[8]

From the 2022 AWEI employee survey data, we see there is a clear gap between LGBTQ+ employees and the general population when comparing the responses of those that 'agree' they can be themselves at work. Again, the Sapphire cohort fares slightly worse when compared to the other response groups[1].

Macro culture – The 'big picture' state of inclusion in an organisation. This takes into account things such as the inclusivity of policies and processes, the commitment to inclusion from the senior leadership team, and the visibility of LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives such as the network.

Micro culture – the experience of inclusion in the day-to day and the small details. This could be influenced by things such as the language used by co-workers, the likelihood of negative comments to be called out, the inclusivity of people managers.

Ability to bring whole self to work



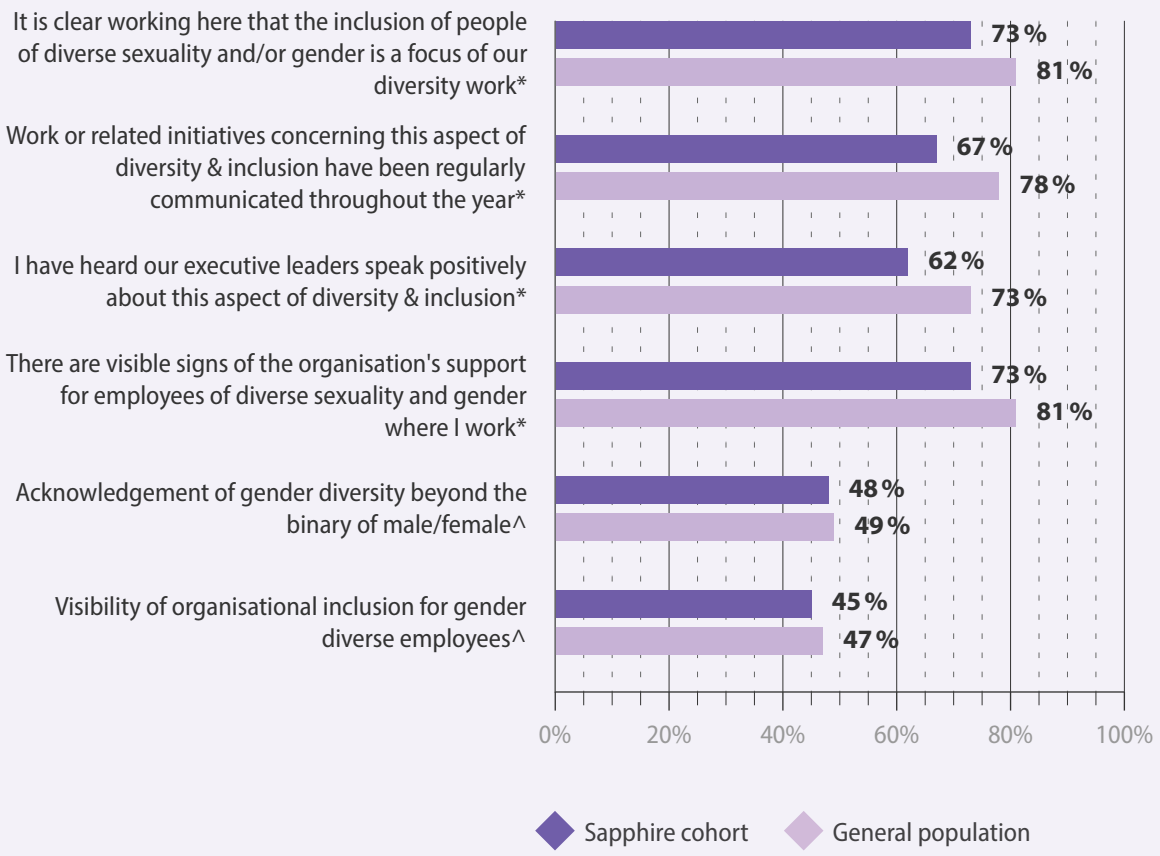
* Total percentage of respondents who answered their expectations were met or exceeded when answering these questions

3.2 Organisational support

Data regarding the perception of inclusion initiatives and negative behaviours continues to be an important metric when considering what work to implement that is aimed at the Sapphire cohort.

When asked about the work their organisations are doing, generally the majority of the Sapphire cohort agree that their employer is making some effort with LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives.

Organisational support



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering this question
^ Total percentage of respondents who answered their expectations were met or exceeded when answering these questions

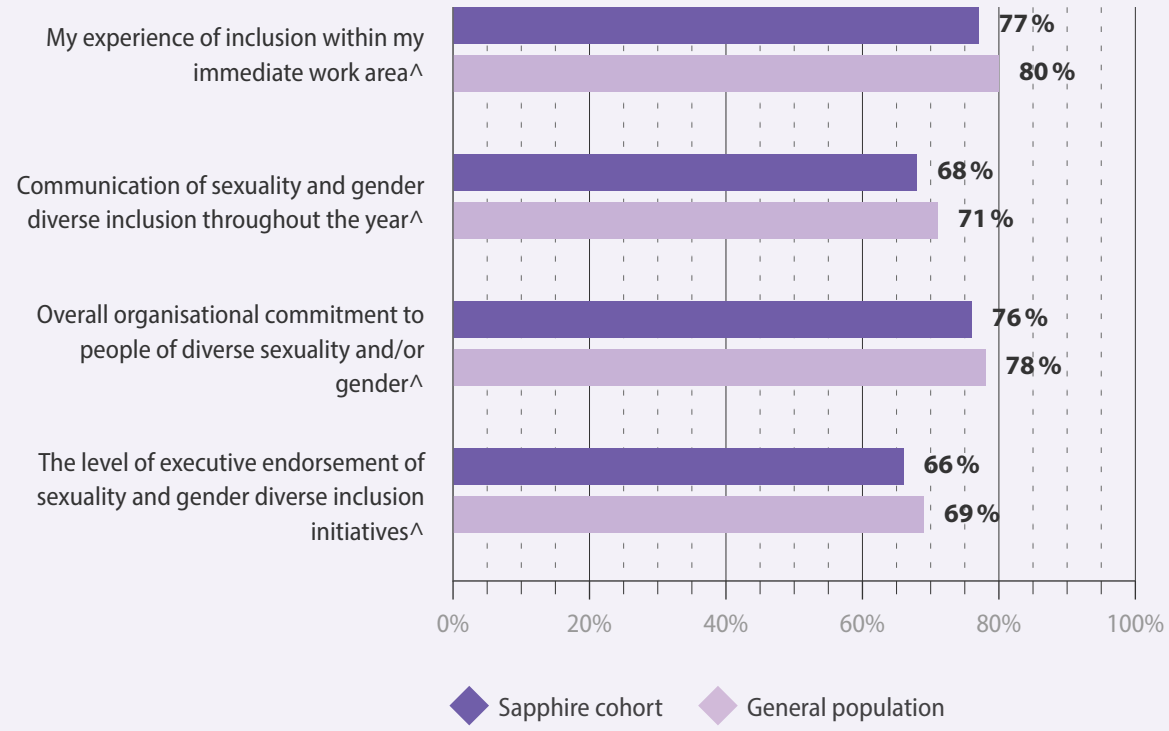
Actions organisations could consider:

- The method of communication to team members
- The diversity of imagery and language being used in messaging
- Increasing the knowledge of managers and leaders around this area and their ability to talk positively about diversity & inclusion

3.3 LGBTQ+ employees experience of inclusion

Again, while the majority of LGBTQ+ respondents said their expectations had been met in these areas, there is still a large percentage of the Sapphire cohort in particular that feel organisations are not yet getting it right. Specifically, executive endorsement and communications are areas organisations may consider focusing on.

LGBTQ+ employees experiences of inclusion



^ Total percentage of respondents who answered their expectations were met or exceeded when answering these questions

Actions organisations could consider:

- More regular executive communication on LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Making diversity and inclusion a standard agenda item at all team meetings, in particular leadership meetings
- More representation of senior leaders at events for LGBTQ+ inclusion or gender equity
- Reviewing communication methods and how to reach those not regularly at a computer

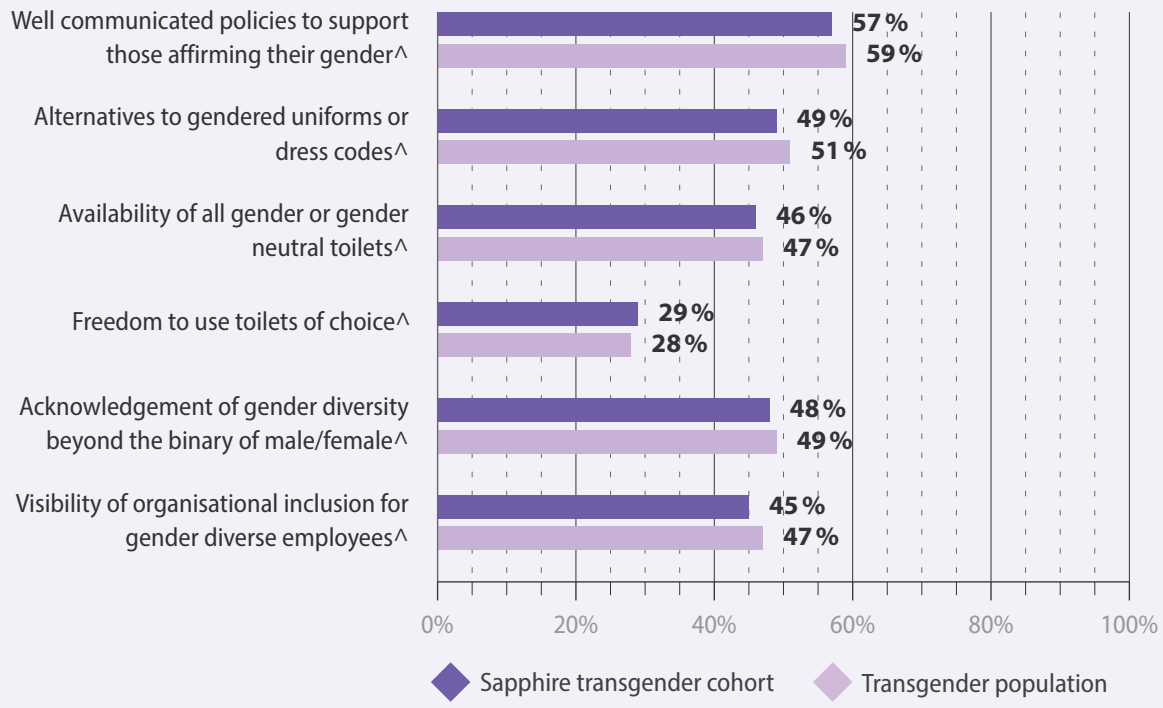
3.4 Perception of initiatives for trans inclusion

When we look specifically at the policies and processes designed to support employees with transgender experiences, the expectations of the Sapphire trans cohort (trans women and non-binary people) have been met or exceeded at lower rates than for inclusion initiatives that are targeted at supporting the whole LGBTQ+ cohort. This suggests there is still some work to be done in terms of considering the unique challenges and barriers that exist for trans employees in workplaces, and the implementation of strategies to help overcome those barriers.

Overall, there is not much difference when comparing the experiences of the Sapphire trans cohort and the total trans cohort. The majority of trans employees are not having their expectations met across all areas measured.

This suggests policies, process or initiatives are not feeling inclusive for trans employees, or not taking into account their unique challenges or needs.

Trans experiences of inclusion initiatives



^ Total percentage of respondents who answered their expectations were met or exceeded when answering these questions

Actions organisations could consider:

- Reviewing policies to ensure best practice for inclusion of trans people
- Offering inclusive gender options in forms and IT systems
- Reviewing gender affirmation support offered and communicating to all team members

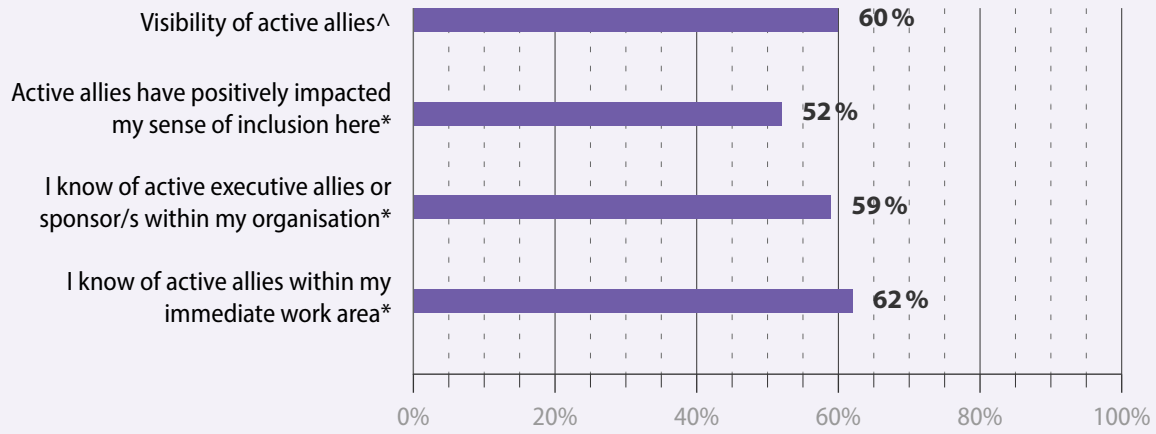
3.5 Visibility and impact of allies

The impact of allies in the workplace can't be overstated. They have a huge influence on feelings of safety, and also help to further inclusion throughout the organisation.

In the 2022 AWEI employee survey, less than two thirds of Sapphire respondents agreed they know of active allies in their work area. Just over half agreed allies had positively impacted their sense of inclusion.

While there is a majority agreeing they know of allies and have been positively impacted, there is still a large part of this cohort not agreeing. This suggests the colleagues of Sapphire employees may not be aware of the actions they can be taking to be visible and active allies or aren't aware of why it is important to do so. Education campaigns through training and communications could help to fill any knowledge gaps around actions that could be taken.

Visibility & impact of allies on the Sapphire cohort



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering this question
^ Total percentage of respondents who answered their expectations were met or exceeded when answering these questions

Actions organisations could consider:

- Having an awareness around assumptions and language
- Making it clear negative comments targeting LGBTQ+ people are inappropriate for the workplace
- Calling out negative comments or jokes that target women or people of under-represented genders
- Having an awareness around the additional labour carried out by employees of minority identities, and look for ways to contribute

Recommendation

Develop ally programs with education on active ally actions, include content on the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ women and those perceived as women.

3.6 Perceptions of inclusion and negative behaviours in the team

All respondents

As highlighted in chapter 2, the prevalence of jokes targeting people of diverse sexuality and gender has a substantial impact on mental wellbeing, productivity and engagement[4], and there is a clear link between this and people's perceptions of inclusion. While addressing negative behaviours against any employee is crucial, there can be unique challenges for LGBTQ+ people, and the Sapphire cohort specifically, that managers may need to consider as part of the process. For the reporting employee, this can include concerns around:

- Disclosure and the possibility of having to come out to report the incident
- Identity being accepted and understood as part of the reporting process
- The stigma that may come with being identified as being LGBTQ+

It is important to provide an inclusive reporting process and consider how issues will be dealt with.

On the face of it, it appears that the Sapphire cohort believe their organisations and teams would be accepting of LGBTQ+ employees, with similar percentages of both the general population and the Sapphire cohort specifically agreeing that sexuality diverse and gender diverse colleagues would be accepted by their teams.

However, while there is very high agreement that jokes/innuendo targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender are not acceptable in any workplace (94% Sapphire cohort, 93% general population), the Sapphire cohort is less likely to think any negative behaviours will be called out, and more likely to notice when negative behaviours are taking place.

For organisations committed to creating a workplace where LGBTQ+ employees generally, and the Sapphire cohort specifically, feel safe and supported, allies may look to further their knowledge around what macro and micro aggressions towards LGBTQ+ people can look like. Being proactive in calling out negative behaviour when they do see it, and not leaving it up to their LGBTQ+ colleagues is one of the most important actions an ally can take.

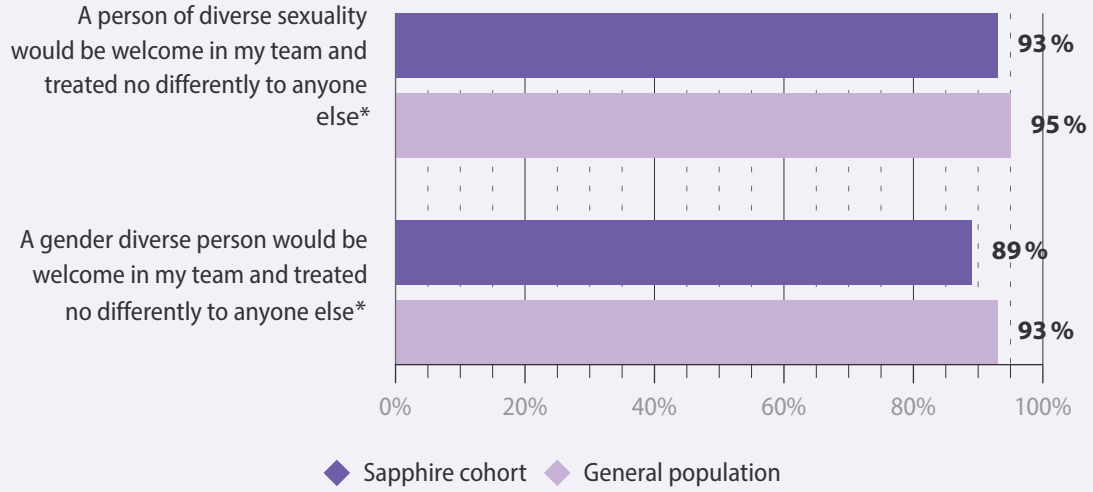
Calling out inappropriate behaviour can feel daunting but doing so does not have to be confrontational. There are many methods that can be used to call out an inappropriate joke or comment that gets the point across without creating an unfriendly work environment.

Actions organisations could consider:

- Having an awareness around assumptions and language
- Making it clear negative comments targeting LGBTQ+ people are inappropriate for the workplace
- Calling out negative comments or jokes that target women or people of under-represented genders
- Having an awareness around the additional labour carried out by employees of minority identities, and look for ways to contribute

(con't) 3.6 Perceptions of inclusion and negative behaviours in the team

Inclusion in teams



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

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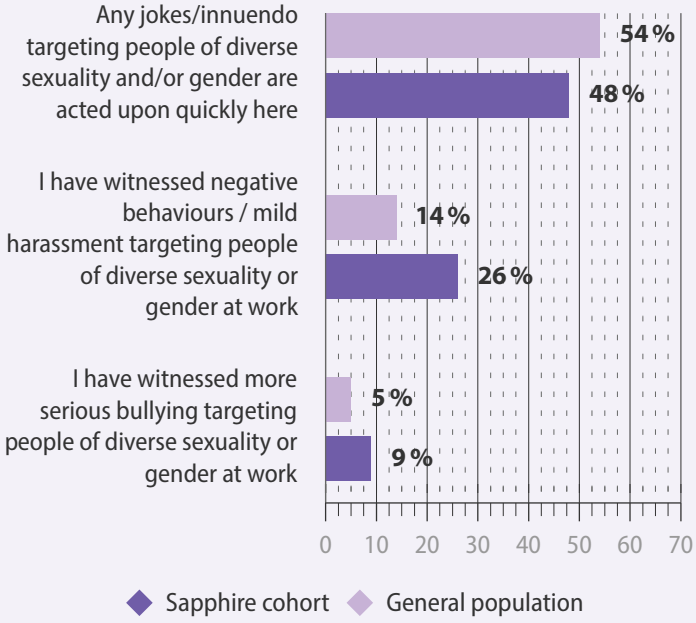
Negative behaviours



(con't) 3.6 Perceptions of inclusion and negative behaviours in the team

Sapphire respondents

The 2022 AWEI Employee Survey data shows that, for those in the Sapphire cohort who are out to most or all of their colleagues, experiences of bullying and harassment continues to be high.

Experiencing bullying & harassment – sexual orientation

10% of the Sapphire cohort have been the target of unwanted jokes, innuendo or commentary as a direct result of their sexuality

4% of the Sapphire cohort have been the target of more serious bullying as a direct result of their sexuality

Experiencing bullying & harassment – gender diversity

14% of the Sapphire trans cohort have been the target of unwanted jokes, innuendo or commentary as a direct result of their gender diversity

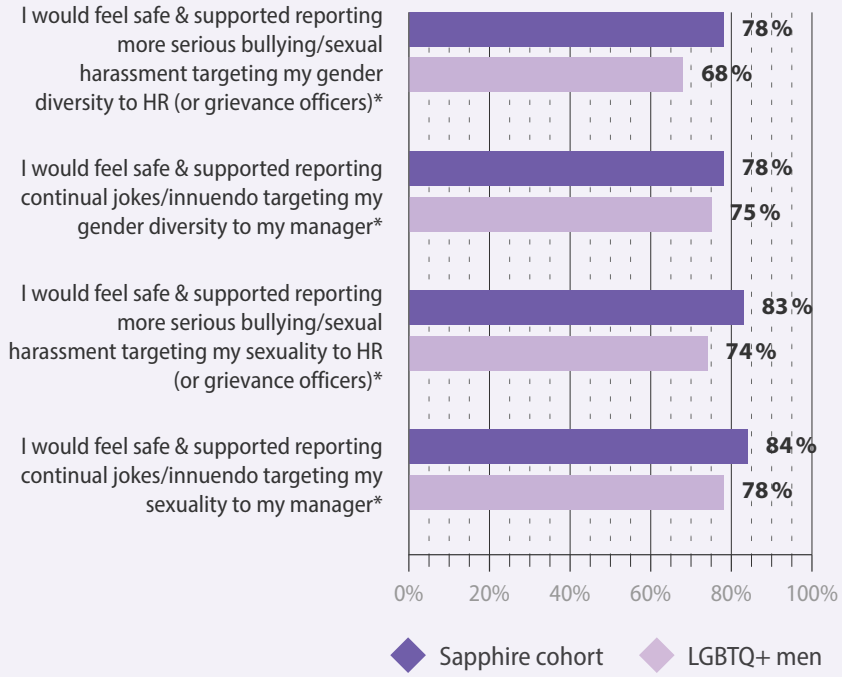
8% of the Sapphire trans cohort have been the target of more serious bullying as a direct result of their gender diversity

(con't) 3.6 Perceptions of inclusion and negative behaviours in the team

Sapphire respondents

When it comes to reporting negative experiences, a large percentage would not feel safe reporting the incident to their manger or HR, and also feel less safe than LGBTQ+ men.

Reporting negative behaviour targeting sexuality or gender diversity



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering this question

Recommendation

Review bullying and harassment processes and consider if there is an understanding of the different rates of experiencing and reporting negative behaviours, and whether strategies or methods to encourage reporting are required.

(con't) 3.6 Perceptions of inclusion and negative behaviours in the team

Sapphire respondents

Most concerning is that the Sapphire cohort also experience sexual harassment in the workplace at incredibly high levels:

44%

of the Sapphire cohort have experienced sexual harassment, compared to *28%* of the general population

6%

of the Sapphire cohort have experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months, compared to *3%* of the general population

75%

agree that if they were to experience sexual harassment at work in the future, they would feel safe and supported reporting it to their employer compared to *82%* of the general population

3.7 Workplace incivility

All of this data indicates that the Sapphire cohort are experiencing unacceptable levels of negative behaviours at work, and many are not confident to report it.

These types of negative behaviours may be collectively referred to as 'workplace incivility'. Studies have shown that jokes appear to be the most predominant form of workplace incivility perpetrated by heterosexual employees against employees of diverse sexualities and/ or gender identities, and that sexual-minority women are more likely to experience workplace incivility than sexual-minority men[5].

Workplace bullying and incivility are negatively correlated with the engagement, productivity and wellbeing of Sapphire Cohort members, which underscores the need for employers to intervene.

There are marked differences in levels of workplace incivility experienced by different populations within the Sapphire cohort. Employees who identify as bisexual, pansexual, and queer are significantly less likely to report being bullied at work compared with those who identify as lesbian or gay; they are also less likely to report being exposed to jokes/innuendo. This is likely to be because they are out in the workplace at lower rates, and therefore less likely to be targeted[5].

Bullying and jokes or innuendo are more commonly experienced by trans women compared to cis women, and non-binary and agender employees report the highest likelihood of experiencing these aggressions[5].

3.8 Leadership support as a buffer

Analyses reveal there are organisational factors that can act as a buffer, reducing the likelihood of being bullied in the workplace or at the receiving end of jokes/innuendo; two of these factors are leadership support and supportive colleagues.

Leadership support, in particular, appears to signal to unsupportive employees that bullying and jokes or innuendo against Sapphire cohort members will not be tolerated, even when colleague support is low[5].

> "I feel valued and welcomed under the current leadership and executive group. We have previously been a bit conservative but seem to have progressed. Being out at work has changed my life for the better."[1]

> "My organisation and Executive have shown great leadership in all areas of diversity including sexual, gender and multi-cultural with a number of initiatives that makes me proud of the steps they have taken."[1]

> "I feel valued, respected and supported by my immediate team and leadership teams for what I bring to my organisation. I've been promoted and included in Leadership meetings for what I bring to the organisation." [1]

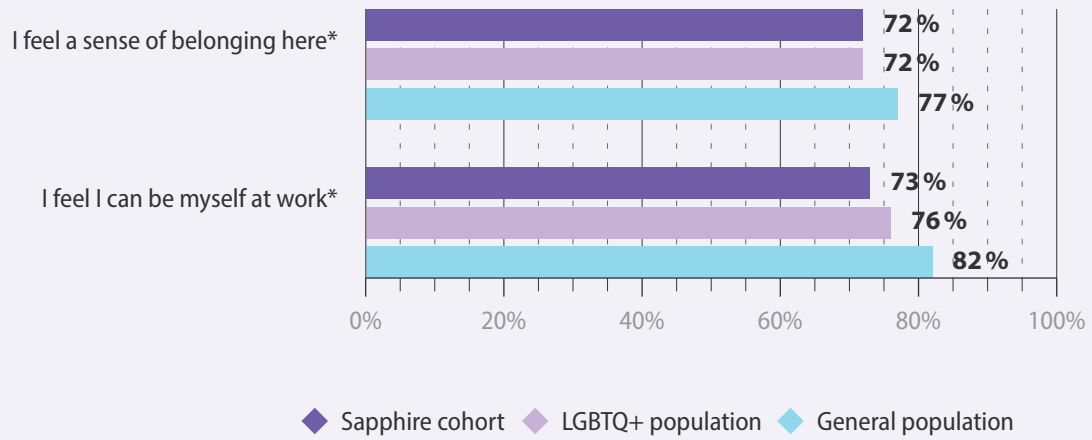
Recommendation

Provide information and support to senior leaders so they feel confident in how they can show visible, active allyship for LGBTQ+ employees and be a role model for their teams.

Impact of inclusion at work

Ch. 4

4.0 Feelings of belongingness



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

Workplace belonging generally refers to feelings of connectedness with colleagues and social inclusion at work.

Fostering belongingness at work is an important goal of many diversity and inclusion initiatives. The organisational culture, including relationships with and support from colleagues, plays a key role in developing workplace belonging among LGBTQ+ people[6].

AWEI data reveals that both the total LGBTQ+ employee population and the Sapphire cohort specifically believe they can be themselves and feel a sense of belonging at lower rates than the general population[1].

Feeling excluded at work is a common issue for gender and sexual minority employees, who will often choose not to reveal their authentic selves at work to try to avoid this negative behaviour. While this can offer some protection, the decision not to reveal their sexual orientation often reduces a person's sense of workplace belonging. A negative organisational culture could inhibit the ability of LGBTQ+ employees to be themselves and contribute to them feeling less valued and engaged[6].

Employees who identify as bisexual, pansexual and queer report significantly higher workplace belonging than lesbian or gay employees[6]. It would be interesting to investigate further if this is influenced by the fact someone in a 'straight-appearing' relationship has no need to come out to talk authentically about a partner. Additionally other factors such as organisational culture and a person's socio-demographic background would certainly have an influence. Not coming out may lead to less exposure to workplace incivility[5] and so positively impact on feelings of belongingness.

The workplace belonging of trans women is not significantly different from that of cis women, however, those who identify as non-binary, agender or 'other' report significantly lower workplace belonging compared with cis women[6].

Research has shown that feeling included at work can:

- Reduce job turnover
- Improve mental health and wellbeing

4.1 What can impact on 'feelings of belongingness'?

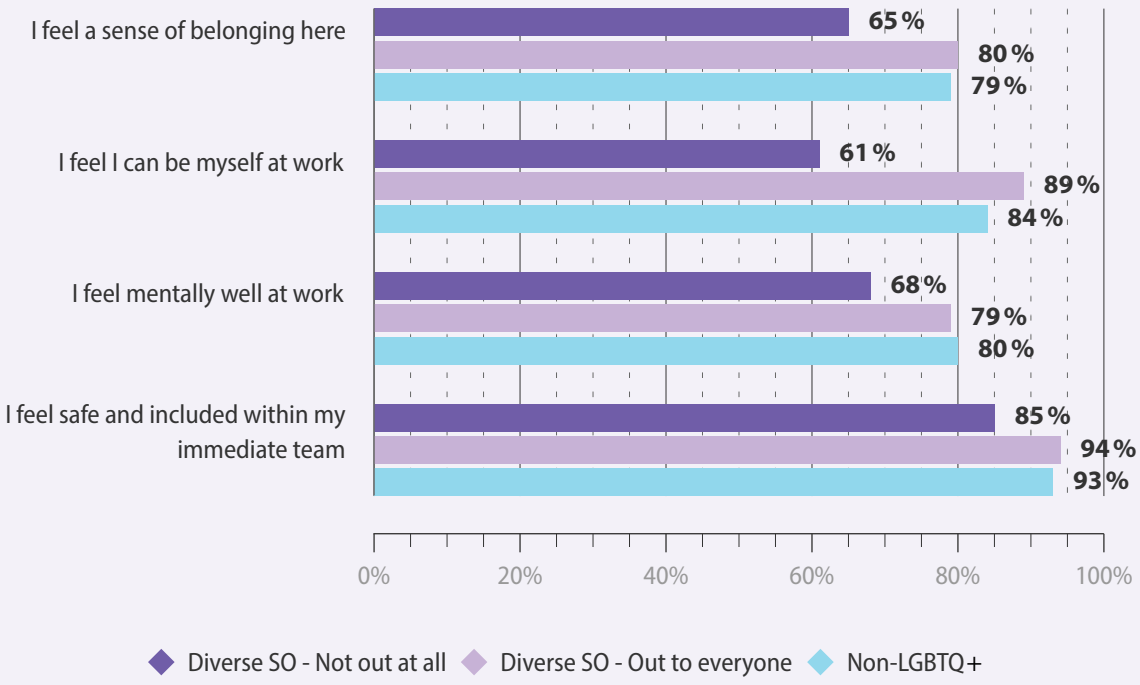
Reporting negative interactions at work, such as being bullied or being the target of jokes, is associated with decreased feelings of belongingness[6], reinforcing that organisations should be addressing bullying and harassment processes, including mitigation, with a specific lens for the Sapphire cohort.

In contrast, receiving greater levels of support from colleagues and senior leaders at work fosters workplace belonging[6], again, reinforcing that organisations should be working to develop allyship programs for both general employees, but also for people managers and senior leaders, paying particular attention to the requirements of the Sapphire cohort.

The degree of outness regarding one's sexual orientation is also a significant contributor to workplace belonging. Specifically, a higher degree of outness is associated with greater workplace belonging[6]. Therefore, 'outness' may be used as a metric to gauge an employee's perception of the inclusiveness of their organisation.

'Outness' refers to the extent to which a person's sexual orientation or gender diversity is known to others around them. Research has shown that 'being out' acts as a protective factor for the mental wellbeing of sexual minorities[4]. This is reflected within AWEI employee data survey data, with a clear correlation between 'outness' and health and wellbeing metrics[1].

Feelings of belonging – by outness of sexual orientation



(con't) 4.1 What can impact on 'feelings of belongingness'?

What this data shows is the incredible value there is in having a workplace where LGBTQ+ people are able to be completely out or open about their diverse sexuality and/or gender if they choose. By removing the additional stressors of having to hide or be worried about reactions from colleagues, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to feel they belong at work and included in the team.

However, there are large differences in experiences between those with a diverse sexual orientation, and those with a diverse gender. While a greater percentage of trans people that are open to everyone agree they feel more mentally well at work, they are still lagging behind those that are out to everyone about their sexuality. This is even more apparent in the responses from those that are 'not out/ open to anyone'.

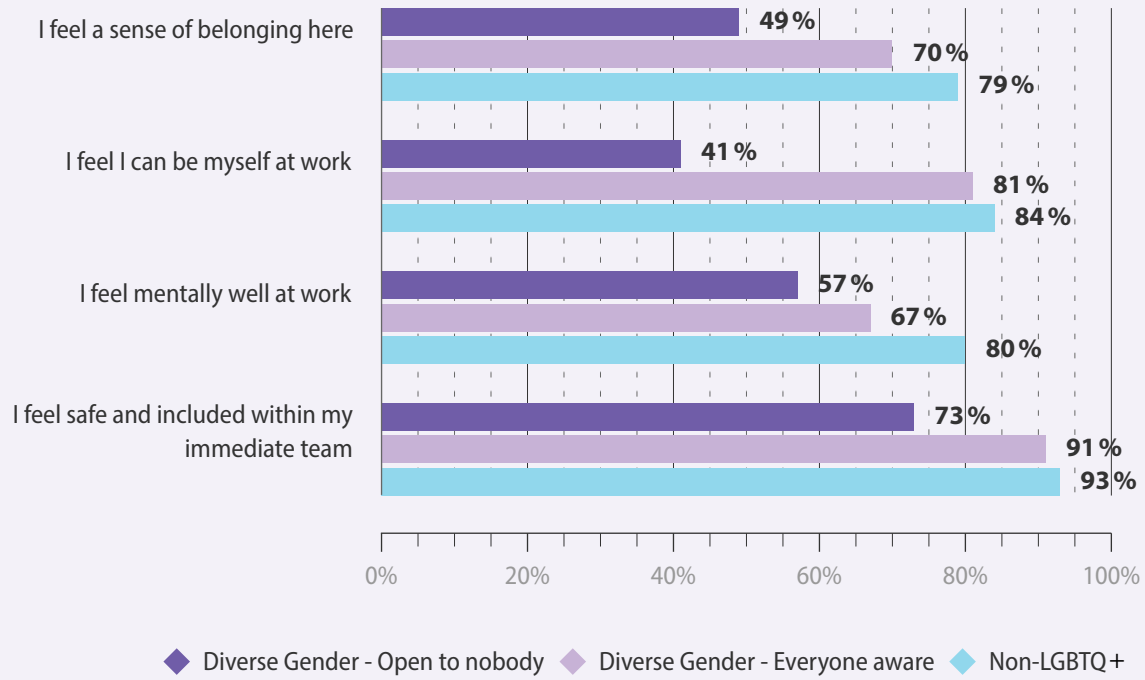
Organisations could consider progressing initiatives that have a direct impact on trans inclusion, such as:

- Non-binary gender options in recruitment and HR systems
- All-gender bathrooms
- Inclusive dress codes or guidelines that allow people to dress in a way congruent with their gender identity

For a more comprehensive move towards a work environment that is inclusive for trans employees, organisations can also consider how they can ensure all processes, policies and initiatives are inclusive for trans employees. While this is not an exhaustive list, some examples an organisation can consider are:

- Review all external facing language and imagery, and ensure a diversity of genders are represented
- Review targets and KPIs based around gender, and move toward the inclusion of under-represented genders
- Consider the specific challenges trans people may face in the workplace and the support mechanisms that exist, and how these supports are communicated

Feelings of belonging – by outness of diverse gender

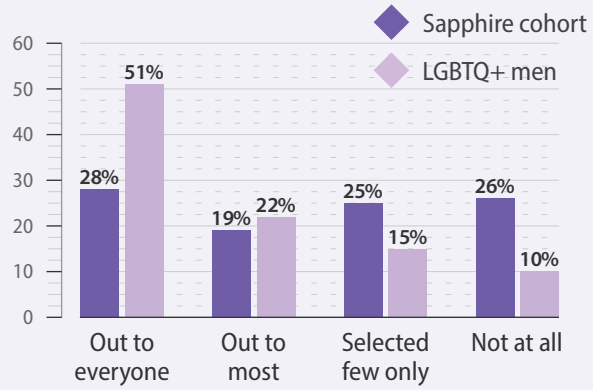


4.2 Differences in likelihood of being out at work – Sapphire vs LGBTQ+ men

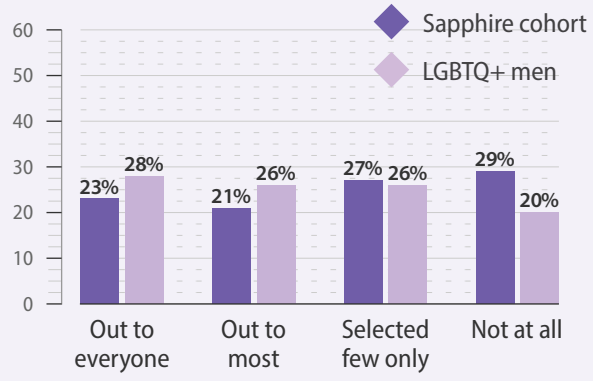
It is widely understood that the Sapphire cohort is less likely to be out in their workplaces than LGBTQ+ men.

This continues to be reflected in the 2022 AWEI employee survey data; fewer Sapphire participants are out or open to everyone about their sexual orientation or gender identity, and more are not out or open to anyone.

Out at work – sexual orientation



Out at work – gender identity



The 2008 Stonewall publication 'The double-glazed glass ceiling' identified that many LGBTQ+ women did not want to add an additional layer of potential discrimination on top of the gender-related glass ceiling they already encounter[21]. This experience was reinforced by the 'WAATW' research a decade later[8] and continues to be reflected in the AWEI employee survey today. When gender is already acting as a barrier in the workplace, perceptions around adding additional barriers may contribute to some in the Sapphire cohort deciding not to come out.

"While I respect the difficulties of sexuality and gender identity in the workplace, sexuality in particular does not impact on how I do my job and hence it's not something that feels important to disclose. But we still struggle with gender and being a woman in the workplace, and this subsequently impacts on gender identity and how people who identify as women are treated in the workplace."[1]

"A lot of lesbians in the workplace don't want to put their hands up twice: once for being a woman and then secondly 'by the way, I'm a lesbian"[21]

"Being a woman is harder in tech in general so the other differences I have seems like too much to manage."[2]

"Being female is more of an issue for me when it comes to work than my sexual preferences. I can easily hide my sexual orientation (and this is the reason I am not out at work), I can't hide being female."[1]

4.3 Factors affecting the likelihood of being out

When the degree of outness of the Sapphire cohort is split out by sexual orientation, there are significant differences found.

Lesbian/ gay people are much more likely to be out to most or all of their colleagues than people of other diverse sexual orientations – this is not only evident in AWEI employee survey data, but also in recent research from the US showing that bisexual adults are less likely to be out than lesbian/ gay adults[4].

Figure 1: Degree of outness at work

As well as sexual orientation, there are other factors that may predict the likelihood of an employee being out at work:

- Individuals in management/leadership positions are more likely to be out
- The youngest and oldest employees surveyed were the least likely to be out[4]

The main reasons cited by people in the Sapphire cohort for not being out were:

- Concern about not being accepted by the team
- Negative impacts to their careers
- Not feeling comfortable within themselves to be out to colleagues[4]

(con't) 4.3 Factors affecting the likelihood of being out

There was significant variation in response rate to the question asking about reasons for not being out at work.

Despite fewer bisexual/ pansexual/ queer employees being out, their response rate to the options offered was lower than lesbian/ gay employees. This suggests that the experiences and challenges of bisexual, pansexual and queer employees are unique and that other factors could explain their lower degree of outness at work[4].

From write-in comments in the AWEI survey it seems that for many people, being 'out' allows them to interact with their colleagues without 'self-editing' details of their lives. This is especially true for people who are in same-gender relationships or whose partner is gender diverse.

For those whose relationship is 'straight-appearing', there is no requirement to disclose their diverse sexuality in order to avoid their partner being misgendered. This may also contribute to the low likelihood of asexual people being out at work. In addition, there are many respondents who describe fears of bi-erasure or biphobia.

> "As a bi woman married to cis man, most people assume I am straight. I don't have the energy to continually correct people's assumptions." [1]

> "I don't really talk about my sexuality as my partner is of the opposite sex, so it doesn't come up and I am happy for people to think whatever they like."[1]

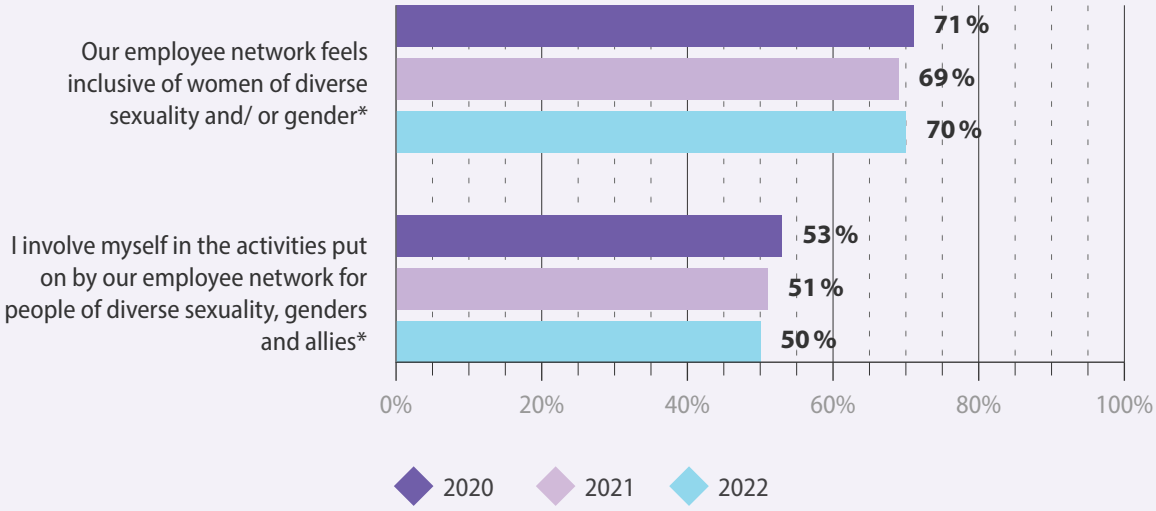
> "I've never had anyone "out" themselves as bisexual, talk about the challenges for bisexual people or even acknowledge that things like bringing a partner to work might be challenging, particularly if the gender of that partner changes (i.e. I might bring a man to the Christmas party one year then a woman a few years later). So, I don't bring anyone. There's no visibility of us - I feel like my sexuality is invisible." [1]

4.4 The inclusivity of networks

A factor that may be indicative of people's perceptions of inclusivity of their organisation is the likelihood of them participating in activities put on by their organisation. One of the findings from both 'Double-glazed glass ceiling' and 'WAATW' was that respondents felt that LGBTI networking events were often dominated by gay men and that LGBTI networks largely focused on social activities. As a result, respondents commented that events and initiatives did not necessarily appeal to same-sex attracted women, impacting their willingness to prioritise them.[8,21]

We continue to see this in the AWEI data; while LGBTQ+ networks can feel inclusive to the majority of the Sapphire cohort, 50% are not participating in the events put on by the network[1], and this has not changed significantly over the last 3 years, since the publication of 'WAATW'[2,3].

Inclusivity of LGBTQ+ employee networks



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering this question

Equally, some LGBTQ+ women find that the gender equity initiatives run by their organisation may also not feel welcoming or relevant to them, often failing to demonstrate an understanding of their experiences of having a diverse sexuality or gender diversity[8,21].

> "[There is a] lack of recognition of the intersectionality between gender equity and LGBTQ+."[1]

> "The Women's/Gender Equity Network seems very focused on the issues affecting heterosexual women and nuclear families."[1]

Recommendation

Consider initiatives to address low levels of engagement of the Sapphire cohort with both LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives and gender equity programs and initiatives.

Barriers to feeling included

Ch. 5

5.1 Heterogeneity

A key difference between the Sapphire cohort vs LGBTQ+ men is that the Sapphire cohort is far more heterogenous. When we look at sexual orientation and gender diversity of LGBTQ+ men –

- 78% are gay
- 98% are cisgender

There is far more variety within the Sapphire cohort -

- 35% are bisexual
- 31% are lesbian or gay
- 12% are pansexual
- 94% are cisgender

More specifically –

- 28% are cisgender, bisexual women
- 24% are cisgender, gay or lesbian women

meaning almost half of the population falls into other (emerging) gender and/or sexual identities[1].

This may have multiple impacts:
Certain populations will have specific needs or challenges. Where a group is more homogenous there will be a larger chance that the majority of the population will find the same activities relevant. A group that is heterogenous in composition will have different and at times conflicting needs or challenges, and so the same initiative will meet the needs of fewer members of this cohort. This means there needs to be a diverse range of initiatives considered and implemented to support the diversity of identities in the heterogenous group.

For more homogenous groups, the majority population is relatively large and visible, therefore there is more chance of an individual seeing somebody with a similar identity to their own, which will increase their sense of belonging. For populations made up of multiple 'emerging' identities, an individual will have fewer role models, reducing their sense of belonging.

Heterogeneity – the quality or state of being diverse in character or content.

Homogeneity – the quality or state of being all the same or all of the same kind.

Oxford Languages | The Home of Language Data (oup.com)

For the multiple 'emerging' identities, we would assume lower levels of awareness about what these identities mean, both from within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community. This could potentially change the type of negative behaviours experienced (theme of jokes and comments) and could reduce the confidence and ability of others to be active allies for these populations.

As previously discussed, many people within the Sapphire cohort perceive that the LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives run by their organisation are focused on the experiences of gay men, and that the networks are dominated by gay men. Historically, many networks signalled a limited focus with their choice of name, with many networks initially using the words 'gay and lesbian' in their name. Over the last few years, many organisations have gone through rebranding exercises to change their names to be more inclusive of other identities. This is a good start, but there is scope to go beyond this and update any exclusionary language used to communicate and promote initiatives and ensure active inclusion of a broader diversity of people.

For those working on LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives such as education programs, events, visibility raising initiatives etc, an awareness around emerging identities and their distinct experiences will ensure a focus on elevating different voices. This is especially true for the Sapphire cohort, where there is a greater diversity in sexual orientations and gender identities.

Recommendation

Work toward increasing awareness and visibility of minority identities within the LGBTQ+ population and have a mindfulness of those identities when designing support initiatives.

5.2 Data collection

One of the biggest barriers to understanding our workforces is the lack of accurate data. Demographic questions about gender and sexuality are often not asked in surveys, and HR systems don't capture this information. Even in organisations where self-ID questions are asked, there can be a lack of trust around what the organisation will do with the information and take up is often low. This leads to a challenge of not understanding the full diversity we have within our organisations, and also whether the work we are doing is having an impact on the employee groups we have[16,18,19,20].

For organisations that want to identify particular cohorts for talent or career pathway development, not having this data available can make it more difficult to find the people you are targeting[16,18,19].

During July and August 2021, Pride in Diversity ran 5 focus groups with a mix of member organisations. The purpose of these conversations was to understand what organisations are focusing on within both their LGBTQ+ inclusion and gender equity plans, to create an inclusive culture for LGBTQ+ women, or people perceived as women. Discussions around data initially centred on the fact that data was poor and lacking in what was able to be captured. Options available for employees are often limited, leading to people having to identify as someone they are not, or not identifying at all. Having inaccurate or 'othering' questions is another common barrier to capturing accurate and meaningful data[16,19,20].

For organisations that did have self-ID questions in HR systems, often these were completed when new employees joined an organisation, before trust was established. Employees rarely went back to update details later, especially if the questions were not mandatory. Some organisations have implemented initiatives to encourage completion at later stages in an employee's tenure[18]. Additionally, the LGBTQ+ population, as a whole, is relatively small.

What does 'othering questions' mean?

The words we use to ask a question matter. Only offering 'expected' responses, or not using inclusive language may lead to some people feeling unseen and unheard. For example, consider the below question:

What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Other

The use of the word 'other' in survey questions has the potential to imply anyone who doesn't select one of the expected options is 'other'.

Better practice would be:

Which of the following would best describe your gender identity?

- Man or Male
- Woman or Female
- Non-binary
- I use a different term
- Prefer not to respond

(con't) 5.2 Data collection

Once organisations start drilling down into different sexualities, genders and other diversity facets, these populations become even smaller. This may preclude any analysis for fear of identifying individuals, or the data not being statistically significant and so not able to be used for significant analysis[16,18,19,20]. One barrier identified was that often the network members don't have specific skills in data analysis, and the data analysts in their organisations don't have enough knowledge of the populations to be able to provide valuable insights. Developing data analyst skills within the network would be highly beneficial when organisations do start working in this area[16].

Additional complexity comes from the impact of offering more identity options on downstream systems (e.g., the ATO, superannuation, payroll systems); not all systems will recognise, for example, additional gender options, which will lead to errors when the information is fed through[16]. Organisations may want to consider, for example, having internal-facing records, that reflect a person's identity, and external-facing records that reflect their legal status and that won't cause issues with the information supplied to downstream organisations.

One of the key themes discussed within PID member focus groups was the need to create cultural safety first. If people don't feel safe to disclose, it won't matter what options you offer; there won't be the uptake.

Once organisations are ready to roll out self-ID options in their HR system or surveys, it will be necessary to explain what the questions are, why the organisation is asking them, and what will be done with the data. Communications should be led from the top, with leaders equipped with the information and scripts necessary to inform and encourage their teams to update details or participate in surveys[16]. As part of their campaigns, some of our members also conducted Pride network led Q&A sessions detailing why providing the information is important and how it would be used[16].

Cultural safety

Cultural safety in the workplace establishes actions, ideas and processes that recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identities of all workers.

This means workers can have their cultural expectations understood, not quashed; their rights recognised, not ignored; and their needs safely met, not unfulfilled.

What is Cultural Safety | CXC Australasia (cxcglobal.com)

Recommendation

Review demographic data collection methods in internal surveys and IT systems and whether population data and appropriate analysis is available to support inclusion initiatives.

5.3 Intersecting identities

For the Sapphire cohort, being both LGBTQ+ and perceived as a woman can result in feeling excluded, facing negative behaviours, and experiencing barriers in their career progression. Because of this, organisations should not only be considering the inclusivity for the Sapphire cohort of their LGBTQ+ initiatives, but also the LGBTQ+ inclusivity of those initiatives that are in place to support women.

These initiatives are extremely important, but they often leave out some of our most vulnerable people. We know that many LGBTQ+ women don't feel like they fit into women's programs and spaces. They can often feel cis-hetero-normative, and not inclusive for women of a diverse sexuality and/or gender[21].

There are also women who don't fit into societal norms of femininity. Individuals perceived to have non-conforming gender expression are often victimized and subjected to discrimination[9,10]. While there are heterosexual gender non-conforming people who experience bullying and verbal or physical abuse based on their expression, studies have found sexuality diverse populations are more likely to be gender non-conforming[9]. This leads to gender non-conforming lesbian, gay and bisexual people experiencing increased homophobic and biphobic stigmatization[10].

Both trans women and cis gender non-conforming women are viewed more negatively than cis women who conform to gender norms of appearance or behaviour, regardless of their sexual orientation[12]. Women report higher levels of gender non-conformity related discrimination than men[11]. As a result, many gender non-conforming women may have an expectation of marginalisation, and so may not feel safe or welcome in women's spaces.

Another phenomenon that organisations should be aware of is a small but increasingly vocal societal sentiment of anti-trans beliefs. Some groups are vocal in denying trans women their identity as women and hold the view that women's spaces and programs should only be for cisgender women. This may impact on how safe trans women expect women's spaces to be and their expectation on how they will be treated within them.

> "Being a relatively butch looking woman impacts the way that I am perceived at work. Some colleagues don't know how to place me because I don't fit traditional stereotypes of what a woman should look like or how she should carry herself. Becoming a parent has added to that complexity in that people have expectations that I do not meet and that makes them uncomfortable[1].

(con't) 5.3 Intersecting identities

In addition, there may be non-binary people within the Sapphire cohort, who face workplace and career barriers because of how they are perceived by colleagues. Because of this they may want to access gender equity initiatives. It is important that there is not inadvertent misgendering of non-binary people by implying they are 'women-lite', and equally important to consider how they can access the career supports they may need in a safe an inclusive way. Exclusively using women-centric language may add a barrier for other under-represented genders accessing initiatives.

Review the language and practices used in diversity and inclusion initiatives to ensure they are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people who might need to access these programs, paying special attention to the gender equity initiative when planning support for the Sapphire cohort.

> "Personally, I've never been interested, because it was for women. I'm non-binary so I was thinking "okay that's not me" [19]

Recommendation

Review the language and practices used in all Diversity & Inclusion initiatives and whether they are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people who might need to access these programs.

> "There was quite a bit of work done around changing the language, so that the whole process of working on salary gap, working on progression, working on promotion, had a bit of reach into everyone who identifies within the workplace. So hopefully that would increase participation and increase the range of the people involved in the initiative.[20]

5.4 Stereotypes

Each year in the AWEI Employee Survey, a common fear LGBTQ+ respondents identify in relation to coming out is being negatively judged and labelled. People want to be treated on the merits of their work, and who they are as a person, rather than being judged based on a stereotype.

A key focus of 'WAATW' was related to the stereotype of being a same sex attracted woman and how it impacts on the likelihood of coming out in the workplace. The report highlighted that, whilst some of the stereotypical terms associated with this cohort weren't negative to everyone, many had negative connotations and impacted 72% of the respondents, who mostly did not believe they fit the stereotype[8].

Of further concern was that stereotypes are reinforced through comments and remarks within the micro culture of a workplace[8], i.e. they can be weaponised and used to attack people with particular identities.

When we start to consider emerging identities, often there is not enough understanding of them to have any well-known or well-understood stereotypes. As a result, negative comments are often broader, and could question or challenge the very existence of a person's identity.

One of the key recommendations received from the 'WAATW' respondents was, to overcome the single stereotypical dimension of same-sex attracted women, more diverse stories and images of same-sex attracted women should be shared[8]. Organisations can build on this advice by sharing stories and increasing visibility of a broad range of LGBTQ+ people, with different identities, experiences, backgrounds, ways of expressing their gender, etc.

It is also important to understand how these stereotypes may be used within the context of bullying and harassment, often in the form of a 'joke' so it can then be excused as not serious. Information can be included in policies, procedures, training, etc. to mitigate against this.

Recommendation

Challenge negative stereotypes by sharing stories and increasing visibility of a broad range of LGBTQ+ people.

Recommendation

Challenge the perpetuation of negative stereotypes within the context of bullying and harassment policies and processes.

Barriers to being out/visible

Ch. 6

6.1 Role models

AWEI survey data consistently shows having a role model with a similar identity, in particular a senior role model, has a strong positive effect on an employee being out about their diverse sexual orientation[4].

"If there are fewer of you in the workplace, it is an uncomfortable fact that you will be more conspicuous". Although this quote was used to explain the heightened visibility of women in the workplace decades ago, it still applies to the Sapphire cohort today. Research, as well as anecdotal evidence, has pointed to the importance of visibility of women in leadership positions to inspire other women. The same argument applies to people with diverse sexualities. Having visible out role models is important to them; not only does it provide a support network, but it also signals that people like them can thrive in their workplace[4].

The desire for role models is clear - in the 2022 AWEI employee survey, 78% of Sapphire participants agreed or strongly agreed with the question "Having visible out women as role models of the same or similar identity is important to me". Their impact was reflected in 'WAATW', which told us that role models are critical to helping same-sex attracted women build a sense of belonging and vision for the future[8].

The link between availability of role models and 'outness' is consistent for all age groups and all hierarchical positions within the Sapphire cohort. Having someone as a role model with a similar, or the same identity has the effect of almost doubling the likelihood of employees being out to all or most of their colleagues[1].

Despite the 2022 AWEI data showing there is a need for role models and the impact they can have, it also shows there is still a dearth of role models for the Sapphire cohort:

- **44%** see out role models with similar or the same identity as them
- **29%** see senior leaders with similar or the same identity as them

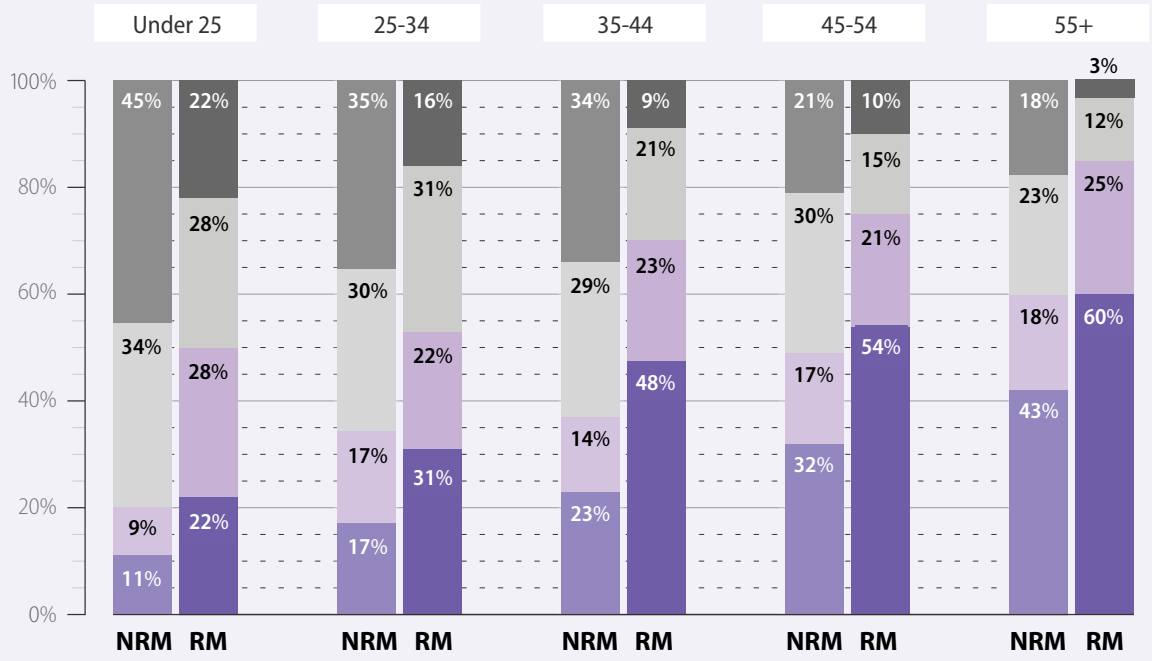
> "I feel that as a woman, being open about my sexuality is more difficult and less accepted than it is for men of diverse sexuality. Men of diverse sexuality seem more accepted and more empowered to be open in the workplace[1].

> "People who identify as male and LGBTIQ have always been more visible than women in my last 2 workplaces. I am a mature aged woman over 55, who identifies as LGBTIQ; as such I feel I do not have enough role models in my workplace. While diversity both in sexuality, gender, is outwardly acknowledged in my workplace, a lot of the activity focuses on training for allies and communication of inclusion. Having visible support networks and role models that identify as women and LGBTIQ is more valuable than just having allies in a company[1].

Impact of role models on outness – by age group

Out to everyone · Out to most · Selected few only · Not at all

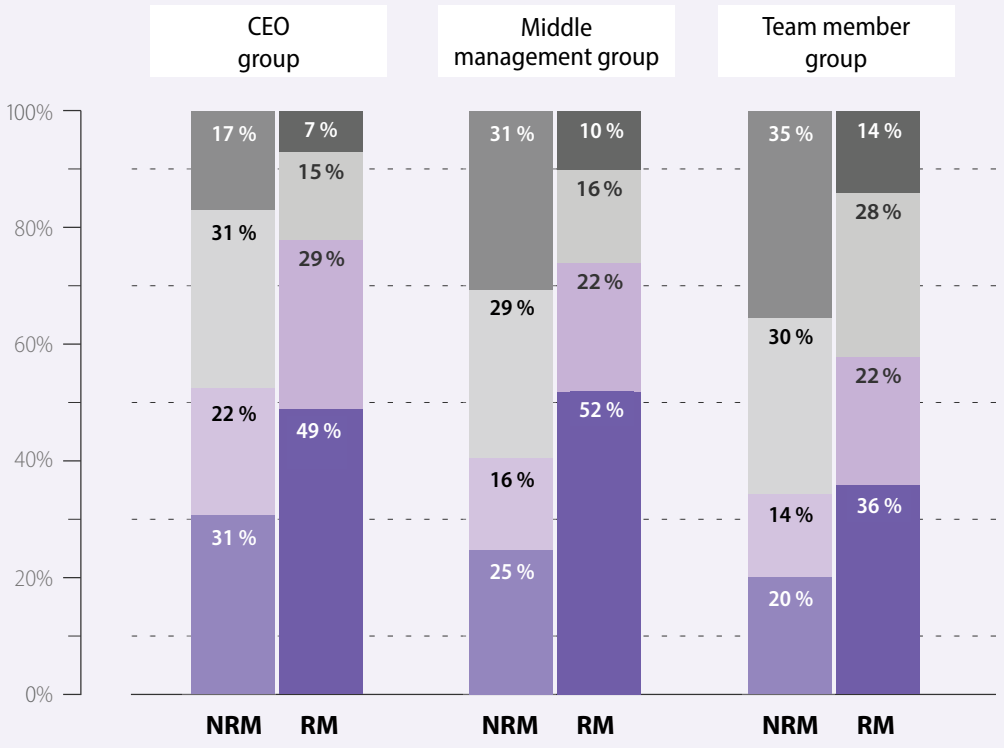
No role model – **NRM**
Role model – **RM**



Impact of role models on outness – by hierachical position[Δ]

Out to everyone · Out to most · Selected few only · Not at all

No role model – **NRM**
Role model – **RM**



(con't) 6.1 Role models

'WAATW' also found that, while many respondents were willing to be role models, they were limited in their understanding of what defines a role model or had a traditional view of who a role model should be.

Key advice was that everyone can be a role model; someone can be a visible and prominent senior figurehead or can be a role model through day-to-day actions and authentic behaviours[8].

Organisations may consider how to increase the likelihood of LGBTQ+ people who are, or may be perceived as, women thinking of and positioning themselves as role models. This can include but is not limited to:

- Creating opportunities and platforms to increase the visibility of out Sapphire employees
- Providing training and resources to empower people to be visible within networks
- Ensuring pathways exist to support the Sapphire cohort into senior leadership positions

There are some organisations that have taken this on board and have focused on how they can increase visibility of the Sapphire cohort.

> "A role model with a similar, or the same identity has the effect of almost doubling the likelihood of employees being out to all or most of their colleagues[1].

Δ

- CEO group includes 'CEO (or equivalent), Direct Report of CEO (or equivalent), Other Senior Leadership'.
- Middle management group includes 'Middle Management, Project Manager, Team Leader, Supervisor'.
- Team member group includes 'Team member, Support Staff, Academic'.

(con't) 6.1 Role models

Recommendation

Consider initiatives that will increase the likelihood of people thinking and positioning themselves as role models.

This can be through:

- Creating opportunities and platforms to increase visibility of out Sapphire employees,
- Providing training and resources to empower people to be visible within networks, and
- Pathways that support the Sapphire cohort into leadership roles so they may act as role models for others.

6.1.1 **Network governance**

A number of PID member organisations reported they have followed guidance in the 'Sapphire Toolkit' and restructured the LGBTQ+ network leadership committee to allow for more diversity within the key roles, with a focus on visibility of under-represented identities. Some organisations have noted that, often, members of the Sapphire cohort do a lot of work behind the scenes, but don't necessarily get given the opportunity to be highly visible[16,28], and also that there are people who may not feel confident to put themselves forward as the network leaders[20].

Acknowledging this, some PID members have reported that they have created more robust streams that network members can opt into. Taking part in the sub-committees and working groups can offer opportunities to develop skills and confidence. They can also provide a formal pathway into leadership positions within the main committee[20].

Some members report that the Sapphire cohort often experience a form of 'imposter syndrome' when considering network leadership positions. It may not be enough to put out a call for EOIs; there may be a need for a direct approach to members of this group to get involved. This may be enough, but there may also be a need to nurture confidence around things like 'being the face' of the network. Reinforce why visibility is important and lay out communications plans around the use of various visibility platforms.[16,18,20]

(con't) 6.1 **Role models**

6.1.2 **Story sharing**

Within focus groups, Pride in Diversity members mentioned that while initially it was difficult to find people to agree to share their story, once a few had started sharing their stories, others felt comfortable to do so. One organisation reported they had a clear strategy of ensuring there were always people from the Sapphire cohort speaking at or attending events, commenting on social media, particularly around days of significance. As this increase in visibility began to be noticed by those outside the network, they found more people were volunteering. This, again, initially involved 'tapping people on the shoulder', targeting a range of people, from executive level to more junior people[16].

Other organisations with a smaller presence in Australia mentioned they have leveraged the stories of Sapphire employees based in other regions, or those working in other organisations within the same industry. One Sapphire member reported that the key influencer for her to be more visible within the workplace was hearing from a more junior colleague about how important role models were for her. The more senior employee had not had out role models when she was junior in her own career, so had not considered the positive impact she could have on other LGBTQ+ people in her organisation[18].

> "It was really powerful... understanding how much that meant to her to have me in a senior position."[1]

Some organisations have developed story sharing guides to help people craft their messages. One of the key messages that should be included for the Sapphire cohort, when sharing their story, is WHY they are sharing their story, since this may influence others to consider become more visible[16].

6.1.3 **Creating platforms for being visible / role modelling**

There are a range of other platforms that PID member organisations have reporting using to ensure visibility[16,18,19,20]:

- Profile videos, particularly of senior leaders
- Profiles in network newsletters
- Podcasts featuring internal and external guests
- Internal social media groups for the cohort
- A focus on increasing diversity on all panels, including panel pledges
- Imagery communicating culture and inclusion initiatives
- Specific events around the experiences of the Sapphire cohort

Barriers to participation

Ch. 7

One of the key employee supports many organisations develop are employee networks or resource groups for those with under-represented identities. Many organisations have several, including LGBTQ+ networks and gender equity programs.

However, these support programs will only benefit employees who can access the resources and participate in initiatives. There may be several reasons someone may feel they can't, such as:

- Lack of inclusivity of network or events
- Accessibility of resources or initiatives
- The location of events
- The time of day/ scheduling conflicts
- Concern around being thought of as LGBTQ+ if not out at work

One of the key findings from 'WAATW' was that same-sex attracted women perceive the purpose of LGBTI networks as providing support to LGBTI colleagues and promoting a more inclusive workplace. However, that purpose was not necessarily being met through LGBTI network events, creating a disconnect between the perceived purpose of the network and participation. Respondents felt that LGBTI networking events were often dominated by gay men and that LGBTI networks largely focused on social activities and not activities that directly impact the inclusivity of the broader workplace. As a result, respondents commented that events and initiatives did not necessarily appeal to same-sex attracted women, impacting their willingness to prioritise them[8].

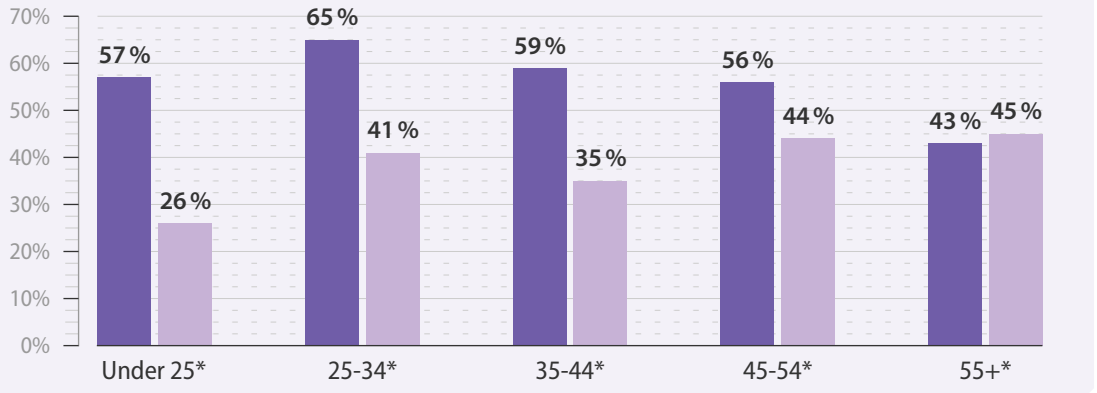
While this may be true, diving into the AWEI data reveals two other significant factors, which impact on the Sapphire cohort's willingness to participate in their LGBTQ+ employee networks.

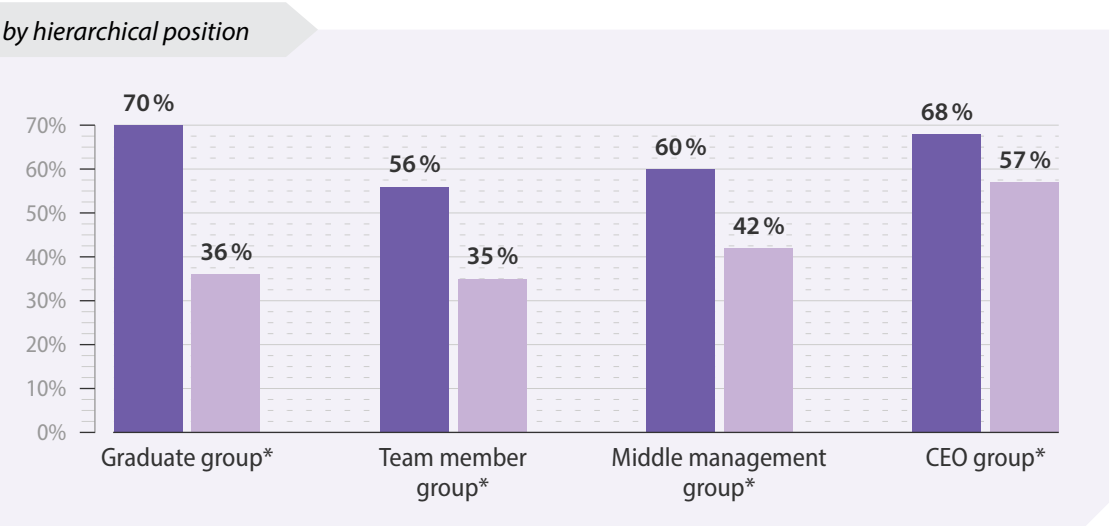
7.1 Likelihood of involvement in LGBTQ+ network

Impact of outness in the workplace

How out someone is in the workplace has an impact on their likelihood of being involved in LGBTQ+ network activities. The more out someone is, the more likely they are to involve themselves in network activities (or vice versa). This is true across all age groups and roles; however, the impact is most pronounced when comparing participation rates in the youngest cohort and for the most junior staff[1].

I involve myself in the activities put on by our employee network for people of diverse sexuality, genders and allies





* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

Recommendation

Consider how to increase participation in networks when employees are not out.

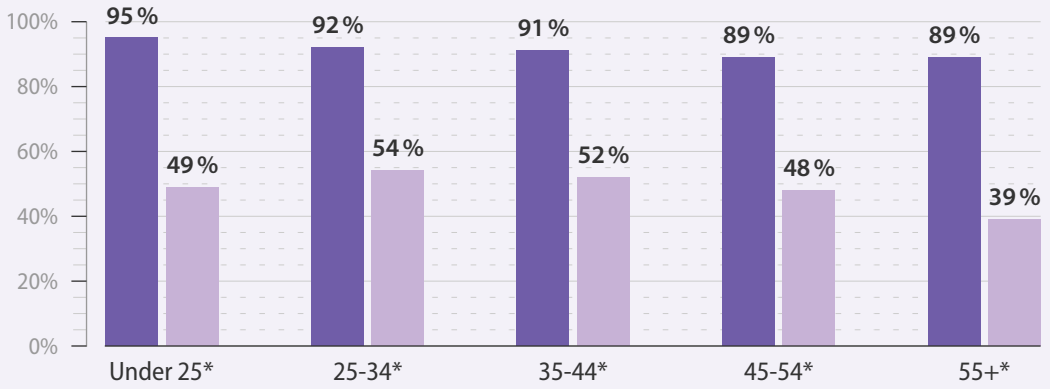
(con't) 7.1 Likelihood of involvement in LGBTQ+ network

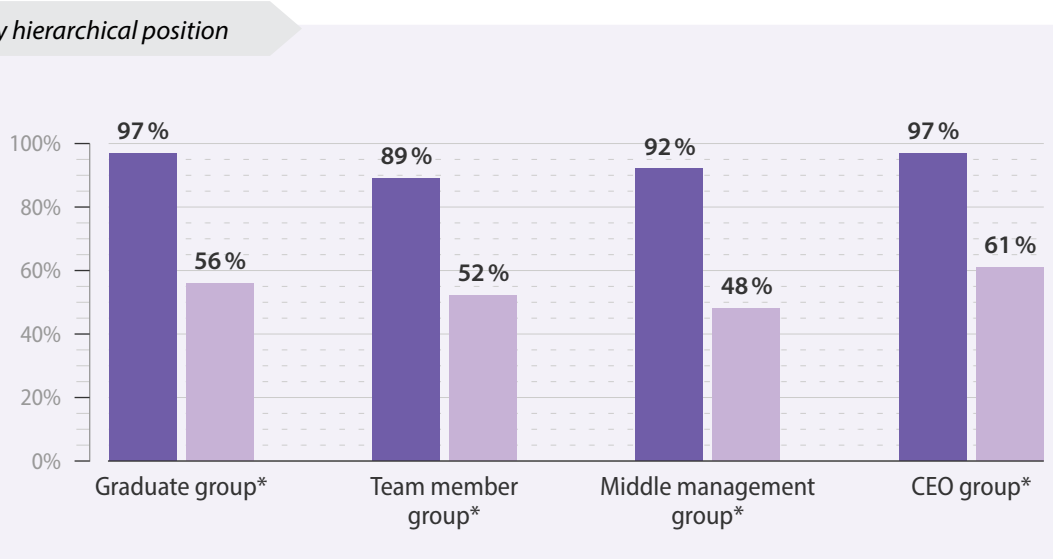
Impact of role models

The presence of visible role models, people of similar, or the same identity, in both the general workplace and within senior leadership, significantly impacts both how inclusive the network feels, and the likelihood of getting involved in the network activities[1]. Again, we see this impact clearly across all age groups and roles.

The impact of role models on network involvement from the youngest cohort and the graduate/ intern cohort is particularly notable[1], and something that organisations that have large graduate intake programs should be particularly aware of. An initiative that could be considered is how to actively involve the

Our employee network feels inclusive of women of diverse sexuality and/or gender





* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

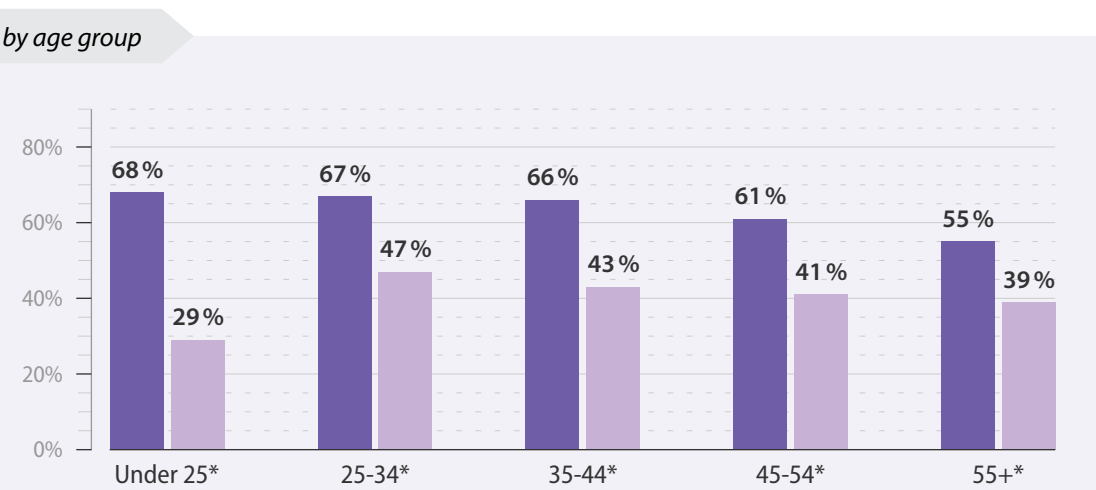
(con't) 7.1 Likelihood of involvement in LGBTQ+ network

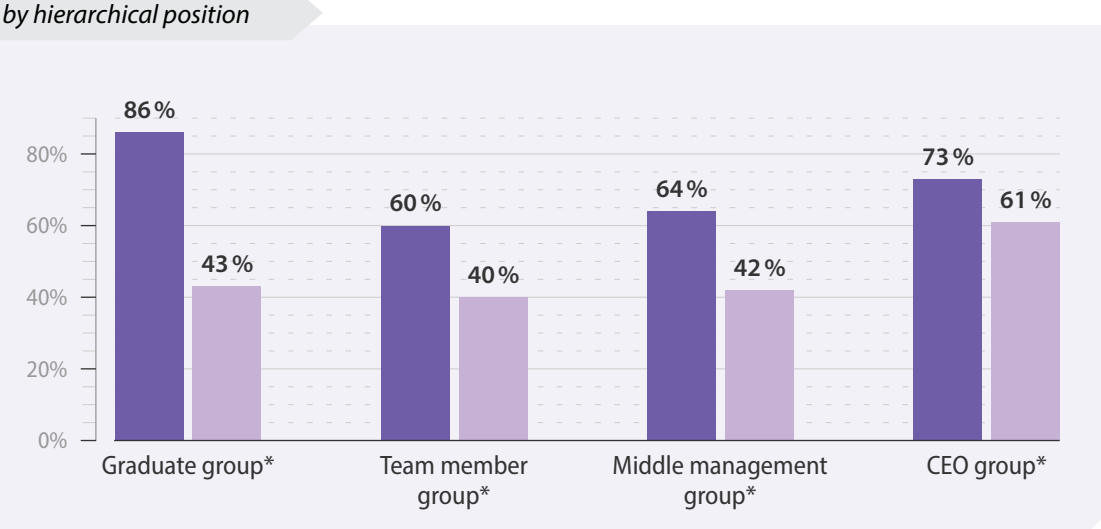
onboarding processes in general, and graduate programs specifically. It is especially important to ensure the involvement by someone from the Sapphire cohort to encourage this particular group to get involved.

This information further highlights the importance of creating additional opportunities and platforms to increase the visibility of out Sapphire employees.

In order to do this, there first there needs to be a focus on creating an environment in which the Sapphire cohort can be comfortable being out to the majority of employees. If employees do not feel they can safely be out at work, they cannot act as role models for others which has a significant knock-on effect for other people within the Sapphire cohort[1].

I involve myself in the activities put on by our employee network for people of diverse sexuality, genders and allies





* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

7.2 Concerns around participation

Burden on participating employees

While the majority of the Sapphire cohort feel that LGBTQ+ networks are inclusive for women with diverse sexualities and genders, only half agree that they participate in network activities[1].

One area of concern that was discussed at length in the 2021 focus groups was the burden placed on the volunteers that run employee resource groups like Pride networks, both in terms of being able to request the time needed and a lack of recognition for the work done to achieve the group's strategy[16].

While these challenges are not exclusive to the Sapphire cohort, data suggests this group is more interested in participating in initiatives that address the additional barriers they face when it comes to career progression and workplace safety[8]. When they have to work harder to be recognised and advance in the workplace, they are less likely to participate in initiatives if there is no career value. By tying network participation to improving and increasing skills and leadership exposure, organisations can help to increase the participation of the Sapphire cohort in LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives.

Lack of recognition for participating employees

Barriers to participation was discussed at length within the PID member focus groups. Participants agreed that the work done by networks adds a great deal of value to organisations. They make workplaces more inclusive through the initiatives they advocate for and implement, make the organisation a more attractive option for potential job applicants, and by helping to diversify the workforce also add a return on investment. [16, 18]

And yet, often there is a lack of recognition for the work being done by network leadership teams, and also an expectation that the network actions will be done without impacting on the time you spend on your 'day job'. Many of the focus groups spoke of the trouble with, firstly, finding LGBTQ+ women to be involved, and then when they were, keeping them active and accountable. Often, they would slip away when their jobs got busier, or they were pressed for time. There was a common feeling that while organisations agreed this was important work, there was a lack of "allocating time or allowing people the space to do this work."[16]

(con't) 7.2 Concerns around participation

Network activities not seen as 'important' by managers

Another issue that emerged was the perception of network activities and their importance compared to their 'day job'. Some of the participants spoke of how employees' ability to dedicate time in the workday depended on how each individual manager viewed inclusion. Others discussed how participation in the Pride network could be spoken of unfavourably within performance reviews, with the view being "If you've got time to do this, then you should be focusing on your day job"[16], and it won't help your career.

> There was a common feeling that while organisations agreed this was important work, there was a lack of "allocating time or allowing people the space to do this work."[16]

Time commitment and impact on career progression

Career advancement is still an area of concern for LGBTQ+ women due to the dual barrier of being LGBTQ+ and a woman or being perceived as one. Many of the Sapphire cohort may be reluctant to spend time voluntarily on tasks that don't seem to be adding to their career progression, especially if the activities have no appeal. There was also often a lack of awareness around how to be involved and how much time it takes out of the workday. [16, 17, 18]

Being actively involved when not out at work

Finally, a large barrier for some was the threat of being outed if they participated openly in network activities.[18]

7.3 Initiatives to increase participation

Being a part of the network adds no value to my career.

Networks would ideally conduct a review of their structure and activities to establish where value-adds may exist for the network leadership team or working group members:

- Exposure to senior leadership through the executive sponsor
- Increased visibility and skills development through opportunities to present to senior leadership team
- Skill development and increased exposure through opportunities to project manage pieces of work for the network
- 'Buddying' or mentoring with previous network members who have advanced in the organisation
- Adding value to network participation through incentives, whether through time, bonus or other financial means.

These value-adds can be communicated and promoted to the organisation as part of membership recruitment drives.

Network leads should also be encouraged to talk about the skills they are developing and exposure they are leveraging as part of their performance review.

I don't have time.

Organisations could consider having a top-down education piece around the value of networks and what they bring to organisations. Reframe networks from a side project or something to be done in an employee's spare time, to recognising it for the value it adds to an organisation and why these activities are potentially as important as someone's 'day job'. Check that leadership teams, from SLT down to frontline managers, understand the importance and value of networks and why their teams should be enabled and empowered to do this work.

Most importantly, consider mechanisms to allow employees to dedicate time in their workday to network activities.

For example:

- For organisations that work on billable time, allocating employees a 'D&I budget' or 'D&I hours' to 'spend' on attending D&I initiatives[18]
- Network leadership supporting network members to advocate with managers for dedicated time to spend on initiatives, with exec sponsor support if needed[18]
- Including role in network, successful completion of network initiatives and resulting skill development, in performance appraisals
- Having accurate 'job descriptions' for network roles or projects and the expected time commitment
- Encouraging and enabling allies to take on and lead initiatives, rather than leaving the work to LGBTQ+ network members[16]

(con't) 7.3 Initiatives to increase participation

Network activities aren't relevant/ convenient for me.

- Consider the type of events being planned – who the expected audience is and their needs?
- Hold a variety of events. Talk to different groups and ask them what they would like to see more of
- Be considerate of the timing – after work may not be convenient for everyone[20]
- Consider other means of joining an event. Can it also be held virtually to allow more attendees, or to allow people to attend confidentially if they are not out[16]?

I'm not out in my workplace, and don't want to participate in case this 'outs' me.

Networks can offer a place for LGBTQ+ employees to find a support network of people with similar identities and lived experiences and a place to all interact. They can help to reduce feelings of isolation and also act as a place to find allies and role models. The data shows that those who are not out are less likely to participate in network activities and so miss out on these sources of support and community[1].

A barrier to participation when not out may also be that attendance at events in work hour requires manager approval, which could risk outing the employee. Rather than taking that risk, employees that are not out may instead choose not to participate at all.

Having a variety of avenues of participation that don't require in person attendance can help to include employees that can't ask for time away from their 'day job' to attend events.

Some of the methods that can be implemented include:

- Virtual events that allow anonymous attendance[16]
- Closed, invitation-only social media groups[16]
- Newsletters distributed to confidential contact lists[17]
- Utilising 'coffee catch-ups' or other informal one-on-one or small group meet ups that won't necessarily be seen as 'network' activity[16]

For those that are not out, it can feel safer to join the network as an ally; consequently, networks may want to consider how best to use individual stories of why someone is an ally to dispel the myth all those involved are LGBTQ+ people. A visible and vocal ally group that regularly attend network meetings and/ or events and talk about what they learn to their teams will encourage the idea everyone can be involved.

Effectively communicating non-LGBTQ+ ally stories and empowering them with information on how to be a visible ally can assist in creating a space where employees that are not out can join in network initiatives without the concern it will out them to do so.

Career barriers

Ch. 8

While the focus so far has been on belongingness, sense of inclusion, outness, likelihood of participation, etc., it is critical that we also address career barriers that are experienced by the Sapphire cohort.

Although there has been some progress in recent years, when we look at leadership teams in most organisations, they are still typically comprised of white, cisgender men. A lot of workplaces know that they need to diversify, and for many the starting point is putting in place initiatives or targets related to gender equity[20]. In order to be successful, however, organisations need to have an awareness of where their weaknesses lie, and what can be done to combat them.

It has long been accepted that many women face barriers to advancing their careers that aren't as present for men. Many employers have programs and initiatives in place to balance this, including the use of employment targets and quotas, and a lot of organisations monitor metrics around gender balance in workplaces and within leadership roles. Until recently, gender initiatives have traditionally only focused on women, and the main barriers for the workplace participation and career progression of cisgender, heterosexual women.

> "According to Stonewall research, many LGBT women choose not to come out for fear that the "double glazed glass ceiling" effect may limit their career prospects. Add other identities to the mix, like being an ethnic minority, or having a disability, or coming from a different socioeconomic background than the majority, and employees' and managers' perceptions around advancement become even more complex." [24]

When looking at the Sapphire cohort, the added factor of having a diverse sexuality, gender identity or gender experience has not historically been considered in gender equity initiatives.

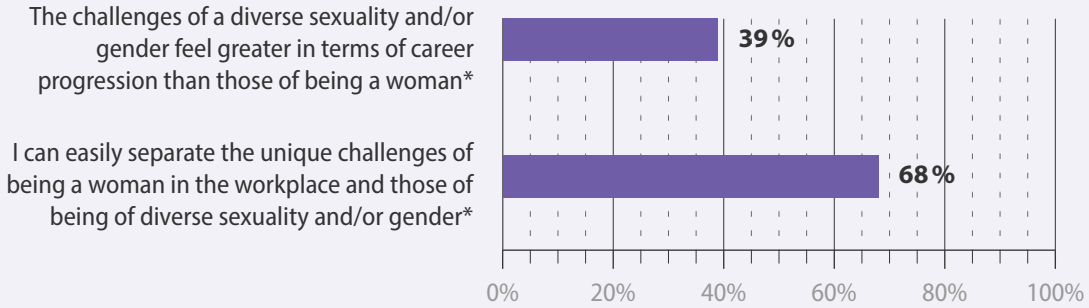
AWEI data shows that, compared to non-LGBTQ+ men (11%), both GBTQ men (7%) and non-LGBTQ+ women (8%) hold senior leadership roles at similar, lower rates. But the Sapphire cohort is significantly lower again, with just 4% holding senior leadership positions[1]. This data clearly points to a phenomenon highlighted by Stonewall; the double-glazed glass ceiling[21]. Similarly, 'WAATW' recognised that there was a dual effect of gender and sexuality, with same sex attracted women more likely to doubt themselves and less likely to have a strong sense that they belong in the workplace. This compounded the effect of the gender-related glass ceiling as confidence and belonging are critical traits in overcoming the gender challenges all women face[8].

Clearly, both being (or being perceived as) a woman AND being LGBTQ+ are facets that intersect, and many people are unable to unpick these. The 'WAATW' research found that 29% of respondents believed being same sex attracted inhibits their ability to progress their career, whilst 51% believe that being female is an inhibitor. When asked which was more important, 79% said that both gender and sexuality equally impacted on their career progression. The dual impact of gender and sexuality strengthens the gender-related glass ceiling and makes it even more challenging for same-sex attracted women to thrive and develop in their working environment[8].

The AWEI data shows that the majority of the Sapphire cohort are able to separate the challenges they face based on these two facets, and the majority do not agree that being LGBTQ+ is the most challenging1. This highlights that focusing on gender equity, but ensuring that an LGBTQ+ lens is applied, is critical for organisations to support the advancement of the Sapphire cohort.

> Being a woman in a very male dominated tech/ maths/ engineering team can be a bit challenging[1].

> I face more challenges being a woman in a male dominated workplace as this is visible than I do being a bisexual woman[1].



* Total percentage of respondents who answered agree or strongly agree when answering these questions

Addressing career barriers for the Sapphire cohort was a major topic of discussion within the focus groups conducted by Pride in Diversity in 2021. Virtually all the participating PID members had some well-developed formal programs within their gender equity initiatives, however few had managed to fully consider the LGBTQ+ element that also impacts this cohort. Discussion covered a wide range of areas.

8.1 Unconscious bias disruption

One of the biggest barriers to women advancing into leadership positions is unconscious bias, and the perceptions people making decisions have about the type of workers women are compared to men, or the value ascribed to what are seen as 'women's traits' compared to 'men's traits'. Add in the stereotypes that exist around being LGBTQ+, and the Sapphire cohort is fighting against two sets of biases.

Unconscious bias can affect everything from hiring practices, performance reviews and project or work allocation. Biases can manifest in a variety of ways.

As a group, humans generally want to feel a sense of belonging; we gravitate towards those who have similar identities, life experiences, viewpoints, or interests. The problem arises when this tendency, this affinity bias, extends into the workplace and the decisions we make there. Despite a 2015 McKinsey & Co report showing that companies with gender diversity in the leadership teams are 15% more likely to perform better than the national industry median[23], efforts to diversify leadership teams have been slow.

Common biases that impact decision making[22]

Affinity bias is a tendency to favour people who are Like us, resulting in homogenous teams and group think

Confirmation bias happens when we seek to confirm our beliefs. preferences or judgements, ignoring contradictory evidence

Halo effect occurs where we like someone and therefore are biased wto think everything about that person is good

Social and group think bias is the propensity to agree with the majority or someone more senior to us to maintain harmony

Recommendation

Consider training and initiatives that can actively minimise gender and/or sexuality-based biases that exist within career decision making processes.

(con't) 8.1 Unconscious bias disruption

Organisations that want to minimise the bias that enters decision making can actively employ a number of bias disrupters:

1. **Review the makeup of recruitment or remuneration panels;** how diverse are they? Are there participants that can disrupt or counter any propensity to only hire or reward people with similar personalities or experiences as the recruiter or manager?[22]

2. **Skills based**
   - Focused on related or relevant criteria
   - Applied equally to all candidates/employees
   - Devoid of any gendered language, or terms that are stereotypically associated with one gender over another

3. **Insist on diverse candidates from the recruitment team and advertise in different places.** If possible, reach out to groups or organisations that work with particular populations and work with them to get job ads in front of their clients or customers

4. **Structure interviews so that:**
   - Candidates are asked to respond to the same questions based on skills, not personality type
   - All candidates are provided with the same opportunities
   - You are aware of any stereotype-based assumptions you may be making, or looking for evidence to confirm
   - The opportunity for biases regarding shared interests or backgrounds are identified and challenged

5. **When comparing employees or candidates, detail why one may be viewed more favourably than another/others.** Ensure factors for comparison are based solely on individual skills and performance, not subjective opinions based on stereotypes or appearance.

6. **When evaluating the performance of employees, clarify what criteria they should be meeting,** and focus evaluations against that benchmark, not on potential they may be considered to have, or not have, based on stereotypes.

7. **Feedback should be tied to goals or outcomes and only based on a candidate or employees' performance,** not emotional or vague attributes such as appearance or stereotypical perceptions about the communication style of people of a particular identity.

(con't) 8.1 Unconscious bias disruption

Another area to be aware of is the dual effect of gender and sexuality, and how multiple marginalised personal characteristics increase the barriers people can face, adding an additional layer of complexity.

For LGBTQ+ people who are or may be perceived as women, while gender may be the area identified as the main barrier when it comes to career progression or workplace experience[18], being LGBTQ+ adds an element that is not there for cisgender, straight women. Whether it's fear that the stereotype will increase instances of micro and macro aggressions, a lack of role models showing the way, or an inability to be your authentic self at work, there is a difference in experience between LGBTQ+ women and non-LGBTQ+ women. This should be considered and understood to ensure any initiatives not only take these differences into account, but also work to make sure they are inclusive for the LGBTQ+ cohort.

Gender equity work and LGBTQ+ inclusion work often tends to happen in silos. For organisations keen to break down the barriers that exist for the Sapphire cohort, finding ways for these two groups to work together is paramount.

This bias can manifest itself in many different decision processes, impacting the rate of success for the Sapphire cohort in recruitment, promotion, remuneration decisions, etc. The focus groups discussed specific programs or considerations that those organisations had applied in these areas.

8.2 Recruitment Considerations

Diversity questions in job applications

These questions allow the option for candidates to self-identify as LGBTQ+ among other things and for organisations to measure the rates of different populations entering and successfully navigating their recruitment processes.

In order to maximise the number of candidates providing this information, organisations can develop communications around the diversity questions to help recruits understand the benefits, and to allay any fears that this information may be used negatively or will be visible to all within the organisation[20]. Once organisations can measure this, they can start to set targets or quotas, which are common within organisations for some of these areas.

"At KPMG, we are committed to creating an inclusive workplace that promotes and values diversity. We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, ages, religions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, those with a disability, women and people with a cultural or linguistically diverse background.

"Our graduate application process asks a diverse range of questions about candidates' backgrounds which are voluntary. We use these in aggregate to build a statistical picture of our progress in achieving a diverse workforce. We are clear with applicants that the information will not, and never has, impacted an individual's application."

(con't) 8.2 Recruitment considerations

Specific support for LGBTQ+ applicants

Some organisations spoke about providing a specific working party for supporting potential applicants, offering the option to request a confidential conversation with an LGBTQ+ employee or LGBTQ+-trained HR specialist before applying. They also explicitly communicate support processes to help candidates that face specific barriers through any application and recruitment barriers. For example, a trans applicant may have concerns around providing legal ID or completing criminal record checks due to misalignment between their legal and affirmed information[16].

Outreach

School and University outreach programs aimed at increasing representation of certain populations within the industries of some of the focus groups. There might be an assumption that, for example, very male-dominated industries would not be a safe place for women or LGBTQ+ people to work. The program works to engage with students and address such concerns for those thinking of entering the industry.

One organisation has worked hard to promote women in STEM topics and have had some success increasing the number of women entering the construction industry. They discussed having LGBTQ+ employees go to schools and universities to talk about the industry while weaving something of their life into the presentation. They aim to increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ employees to people who are just entering the workforce[18]

Recommendation

Consider targeted recruitment programs for under-represented populations. Factors to influence for such programs include:

- What systemic barriers exist?
- Can barriers be removed or do alternate processes need to be developed?
- Are specific candidate support mechanisms in place?
- Targeted communications campaigns that include information on specific inclusion initiatives,
- What analysis and reporting methods need to be implemented to measure of the success of the program?

8.2 Career progression considerations

Guidance around career progression

One interesting topic from the focus groups was around a perceived lack of clarity or understanding regarding requirements for and expectations of career development by women. One participant commented that their organisation had conducted formal research into career barriers for women and found that men seem to have many informal networks allowing them to understand how the system works, whereas women don't have access to this information[19].

Off the back of this learning, the organisation has developed a guide on career development, which has become a podcast featuring people with different career trajectories and journeys, presenting listeners with a wide range of possible outcomes. In a similar vein, another organisation discussed overhauling their formal promotions processes to allow for achievement relative to opportunity. Another discussed they were developing a leadership framework, mapping positions to leadership competencies, allowing them to address gaps in skills that (potential) senior leaders might be lacking[19].

Formal pathways

Two organisations in the higher-education sector discussed that there were formal pathways to promotion for academic staff, but nothing similar for professional staff[19]. This is similar in other industries, for example some law firms have formal partnership pathways for legal staff, but nothing similar in place for other employees. Organisations could consider clarifying / developing formal routes to career progression so both employees and their managers understand what steps need to be taken to advance someone's career.

Intersectional considerations

Much of the current work in this area is focused on barriers relating to a single part of someone's identity, i.e., gender. However, one organisation highlighted a significant piece of work they had done, led by the gender equity working group. It involved a comprehensive 'career barriers' survey that covered intersectionality within the questions, with a focus on perceived career barriers due to gender plus other factors, such as being LGBTQ+.

Recommendation

Develop and clarify formal routes to career progression so that both employees and their managers understand what steps need to be taken to advance someone's career.

8.3 Mentoring / sponsorship programs

The focus group discussions covered both mentoring and sponsorship programs, acknowledging that they are different and often combined as part of organisational talent programs.

Research suggests that for the Sapphire cohort, mentoring without sponsorship will not have a notable positive effect on their career advancement, due to all the other factors affecting this population[25]. Several members commented on the positive impact implementing specific sponsorship programs[16] had on the careers of women in their organisations.

There was discussion around the need for sponsorship development programs, including driving understanding and sponsorship skills of senior (often male) leaders as to what they need to do as influencing sponsors. Such programmatic work is designed to highlight the difference between a performance relationship and a sponsoring relationship, in terms of creating space, providing opportunities, and being more active in supporting career progression[16].

> "Understanding the difference between sponsorship and mentorship is key to ensuring that women and members of historically marginalised communities are fully supported in their careers. Mentorship involves direct support of a protégé, while sponsorship focuses on others' impressions of that person[26]".

> "Sponsorship is a kind of helping relationship in which senior, powerful people use their personal clout to talk up, *advocate* for and place a more junior person in a key role. While a mentor is someone who has knowledge and will share it with you, *a sponsor is a person who has power and will use it for you*. When it comes to this important distinction, the evidence is also clear: **women tend to be over-mentored and under-sponsored**[25]".

One organisation spoke about two initiatives they have been running, linked to talent development and sponsorship.

1. **Access to senior leaders** - people at a certain level who have been put onto talent development plans or succession plans, are given the opportunity to meet members of the group senior leadership team. During these meetings they have career conversations and establish sponsorship relationships. The success of this led to the design of an organisational-wide program that matched identified employees with somebody a level higher than themselves.

2. **Exposure to strategic planning** - every senior leader has the opportunity to bring a 'plus one' employee from their part of the organisation to leadership forums and leadership meetings. Attendance at these meetings leads to an increase in visibility, hearing firsthand strategic direction initiatives, and being able to work with other leaders in the business. This was historically focused on women, but the organisation is hoping to reintroduce it with an active 'general diversity' lens; this is a great way to apply across all pillars within the D&I strategy taking into account the implications of intersecting identities[18].

Recommendation

Develop formal sponsorship programs that can be linked to inclusion strategies via talent development programs.

8.4 Talent programs / leadership training

"Despite progress toward gender equality at work, it still takes women longer to get promoted than men, and few make it to the top of the corporate ladder [27]".

Many organisations have formal talent programs designed to recognise and develop their existing employees to become the future leaders of the organisation.

However, as previously discussed, bias can be rife, with extremely strong societal perceptions about the types of traits and, therefore, types of people who make good leaders. There is also the propensity for individuals to support people who look like themselves, further perpetuating gaps that exist between different populations.

Despite many initiatives being implemented, including legislation designed to promote workplace gender equity, we still see men vastly over-represented within senior leadership roles, and research shows it takes women longer to get promoted than men.

While many organisations are fairly advanced in their gender equity work, some are taking steps to develop similar leadership development programs for other under-represented populations, including LGBTQ+ employees.

LGBTQ+ leadership specific development programs

One organisation spoke about the success they had achieved with their specific LGBTQ+ talent program, targeting LGBTQ+ managers and above, in helping participants take the next step in their career[16]. The program was designed to build leadership skills, but also addressed authentic values driven leadership, challenging the societal perceptions of what makes a good leader; instead of asking an employee to fit into a box of 'leadership traits'. The program addressed how someone's identity can influence and be a strength of their leadership style. The existence of this program shows that the organisation recognises the many different types of people that can make good leaders, and that it wishes to support all their employees, including LGBTQ+ employees, to achieve that level in the organisation.

Targeting specific population groups in established development programs

Another organisation spoke about the success they had achieved utilising their generic development program, with a single-population group – in this case a group of women lawyers. There had been a concern about losing too many women before they reached partner level, and so utilised their development program to target this group and reduce the attrition rate. They wanted the women involved in the program to have the extra time to focus on their career, and to be able to have open and frank discussions about the issues that impacted them. That included talking about gender dynamics and not shying away from the topic, as might happen in a mixed group[18]. While this initiative was not specifically targeted at LGBTQ+ employees, it shows the impact offering a space where a group with a particular identity can talk about their specific career barriers can have.

(con't) 8.4 Talent programs / leadership training

Biases in selection process for under-represented groups

While many workplaces do have specific programs in place to try and advance the career of their women employees, and some are looking at programs for LGBTQ+ employees, the Sapphire cohort are women (or those perceived as women) AND LGBTQ+. The combination of these two facets means that many will not feel included in, or be considered for, organisational gender equity initiatives or LGBTQ+ initiatives. Therefore, organisations could consider how they can eradicate biases in the selection processes, including within targeted initiatives such as the above leadership programs.

One of the focus groups discussed the challenges they had faced around this. They acknowledged that there can be great programs and active executive sponsors, but there were a number of other considerations.

- Programs must engage with the populations they are designed to support, to ensure they meet the needs of all the people they are there for.
- They should be actively promoted to those populations, to overcome any identity-related assumptions of exclusion.
- The line managers or directors of potential participants will need to be engaged with, to ensure that any biases are addressed, their team members are considered for development opportunities and support with time out of their 'day jobs' to dedicate to the development programs.
- Once a participant has completed a program, the organisation should ensure they continue to be supported through career conversations and other opportunities that will build upon their newly honed leadership skills[16].

Recommendations

Review the inclusiveness of talent development programs and associated processes, consider:

- The purpose of the program
- The content covered in the program
- The language and imagery used in communications to advertise the program and the nomination process
- The mix of participants and how that may impact on participation and discussion
- The knowledge of people managers and leaders involved in nominating and supporting team members to develop their leadership skills

Chapter	Recommendation	Resource
Ch 2	Consider the inclusivity of existing mental health support mechanisms, internal and external, for LGBTQ+ people, and in particular, the Sapphire cohort. Keep in mind the experiences of cis women, trans women and non-binary people vary, and support mechanisms provided, e.g., EAPs, should have this level of understanding.	PID Factsheet – EAP
Ch 3	Develop ally programs with education on active ally actions, include content on the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ women and those perceived as women.	Allyship Guide
Ch 3	Review bullying and harassment processes and consider if there is an understanding of the different rates of experiencing and reporting negative behaviours, and whether strategies or methods to encourage reporting are required.	PID Factsheet – B&H
Ch 3	Provide information and support to senior leaders so they feel confident in how they can show visible, active allyship for LGBTQ+ employees and role model for their teams.	Allyship Guide
Ch 4	Consider initiatives to address low levels of engagement of the Sapphire cohort with both LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives and gender equity programs and initiatives.	Engagement Guide
Ch 5	Work toward increasing awareness and visibility of minority identities within the LGBTQ+ population and have a mindfulness of those identities when designing support initiatives.	PID Glossary
Ch 5	Review demographic data collection methods in internal surveys and IT systems and whether population data and appropriate analysis is available to support inclusion initiatives.	n/a
Ch 5	Review the language and practices used in all Diversity & Inclusion initiatives and whether they are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people who might need to access these programs.	n/a
Ch 5	Challenge negative stereotypes by sharing stories and increasing visibility of a broad range of LGBTQ+ people.	PID Factsheet – Storytelling PID Factsheet – Panel Pledge
Ch 6	Challenge the perpetuation of negative stereotypes within the context of bullying and harassment policies and processes.	PID Factsheet – B&H

Chapter	Recommendation	Resource
Ch 6	Consider initiatives that will increase the likelihood of people thinking and positioning themselves as role models. This can be through: • Creating opportunities and platforms to increase visibility of out Sapphire employees, • Providing training and resources to empower people to be visible within networks, and • Pathways that support the Sapphire cohort into leadership roles so they may act as role models for others.	n/a
Ch 8	Consider how to increase participation in networks when employees are not out.	Participation Guide
Ch 8	Consider training and initiatives that can actively minimise gender and/or sexuality-based biases that exist within career decision making processes. • What systemic barriers exist? • Can barriers be removed or do alternate processes need to be developed? • Are specific candidate support mechanisms in place? • Targeted communications campaigns that include information on specific inclusion initiatives, • What analysis and reporting methods need to be implemented to measure of the success of the program?	Bias Disruption Guide
Ch 8	Develop and clarify formal routes to career progression so that both employees and their managers understand what steps need to be taken to advance someone's career.	n/a
Ch 8	Develop formal sponsorship programs that can be linked to inclusion strategies via talent development programs.	n/a
Ch 8	Review the inclusiveness of talent development programs and associated processes, consider: • The purpose of the program • The content covered in the program • The language and imagery used in communications to advertise the program and the nominating process • The mix of participants and how that may impact on participation and discussion • The knowledge of people managers and leaders involved in nominating and supporting team members to develop their leadership skills	n/a

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We're here to help make the places where our community members live, work, study and play more inclusive of LGBTQ+ people. We do this by working with a range of organisations to help ensure that LGBTQ+ people feel welcome, included and supported.