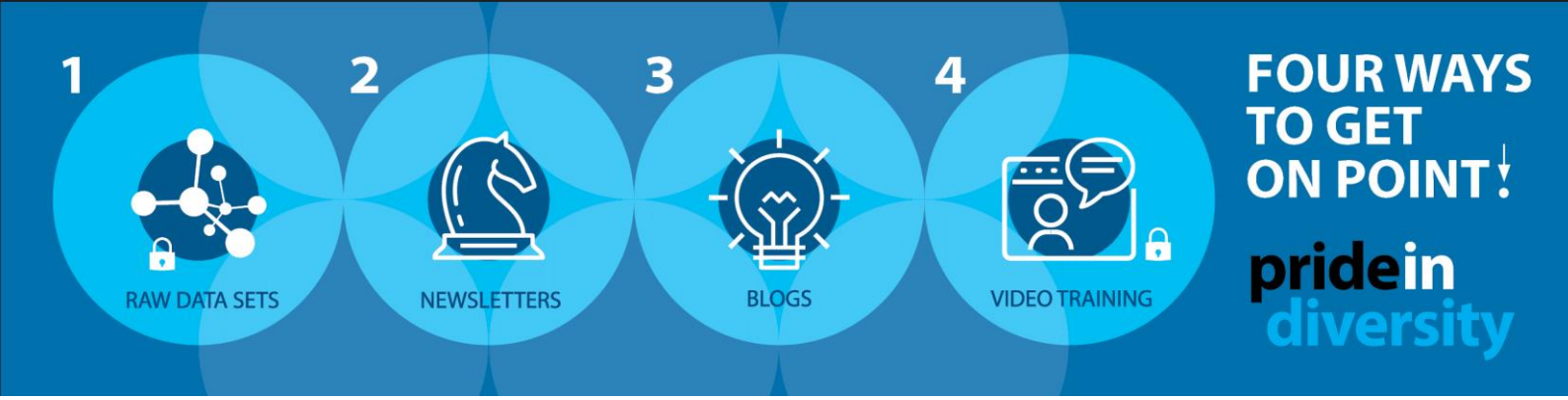


2022 BEING OUT AT WORK

Workplace experiences of people of diverse sexuality

The 2022 annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey had 186 participating organisations and a response rate of 44,224 with an additional 746 employees working for Australian organisations overseas. Of all respondents, 21.9% individuals (n9,830) identified as being of diverse sexuality and/or gender (LGBTQ). This represents an increase in the number of LGBTQ responses from 2021 (n7,930, 18.8%) back to levels seen in 2020 (n 6,787, 21.7%)

All organisations participating in the survey were active in LGBTQ inclusion, whether they be in the early or developmental stages of their inclusion journey or leading practice.

This edition looks specifically at questions relating to respondents of diverse sexuality, and their experiences when 'out' or 'not out' in their Australian based workplace.

Introduction

Each year the AWEI Survey identifies many differences in employee workplace experiences, between those who are identified as of diverse sexuality versus those respondents without a diverse sexuality.

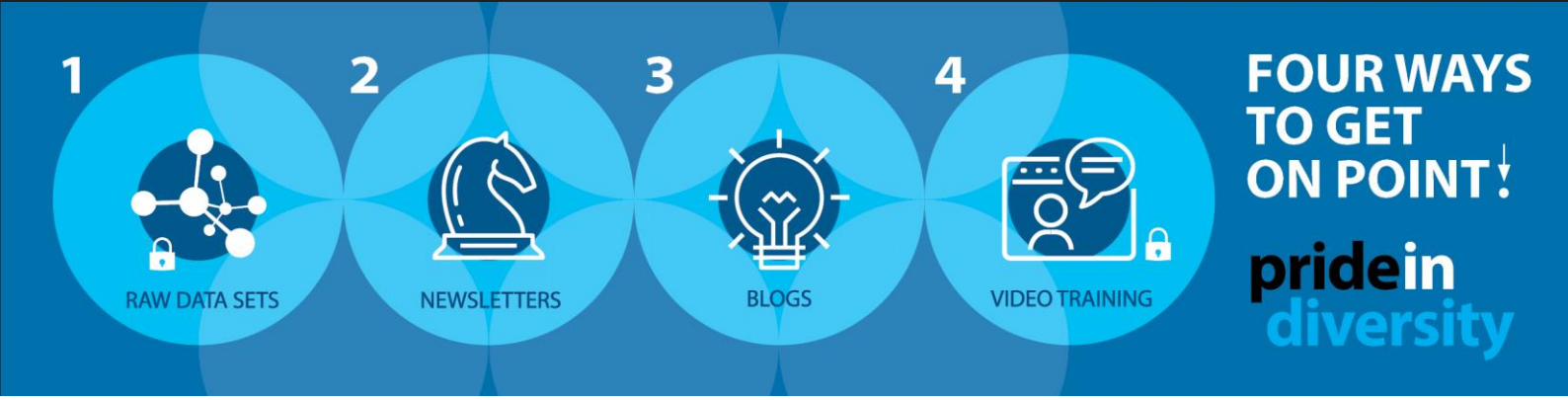
In 2022, the methodology for determining this cohort of respondents is through the use of two questions within the survey.

- "Are you someone of diverse sexuality or diverse gender (LGBTQ)?" = Yes
- "How would you best describe your sexual orientation?"= a sexuality other than straight/hetrosexual.

Respondents who selected "prefer not to respond" to either of these questions were not provided any questions directly relating to being a person of diverse sexuality.

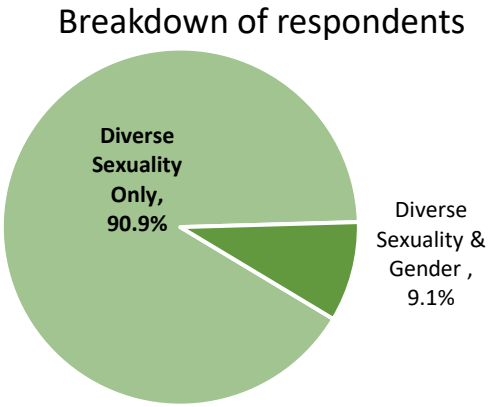
This edition looks at the unique experiences specifically of the respondents who are of only diverse sexuality, or who are of both diverse sexuality and gender[1], who work in Australia-based offices. Where there are differences between the experience of people of only diverse sexuality (n7086), compared to the experiences of people of dual diversity (n706), this data will be highlighted.

[1] For determining people of diverse gender we implemented ABS standards ('two-step method') including optional categories.



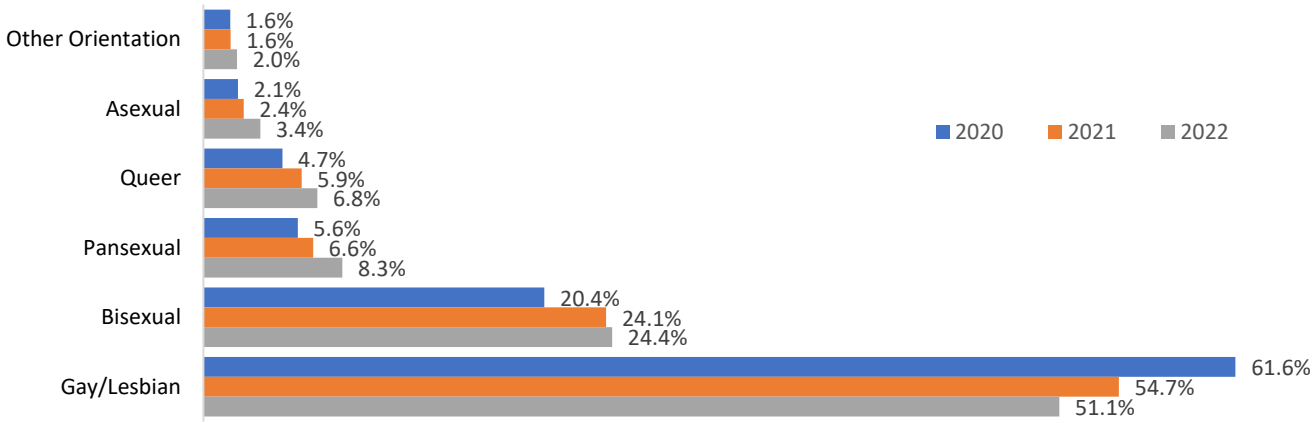
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This year we saw an increase in the number of responses from employees of diverse sexuality (7,792 from 6,560). This represents 17.3% of all respondents, in comparison to 13.9% in 2021. Of these 90.9% of respondents identify only with diverse sexuality, the remaining 9.1% identify with both diverse sexuality and gender.

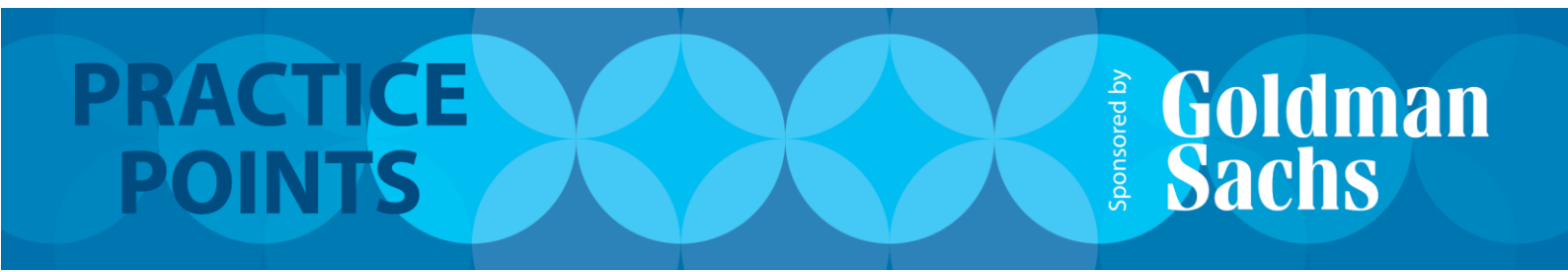


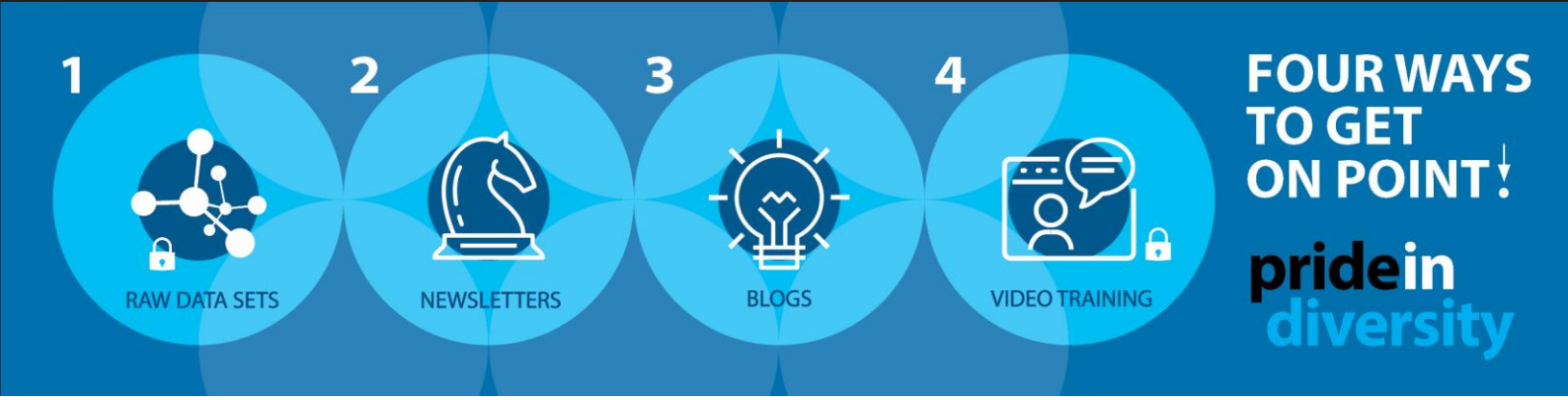
Sexual Orientation

Over the past 3 years we have seen an increasing proportion of people of diverse sexualities identifying as bisexual, pansexual, asexual and queer, and a smaller proportion identifying as gay or lesbian. This growth of 'emerging identities' appears to be closely linked to age, as younger employees enter the workforce.

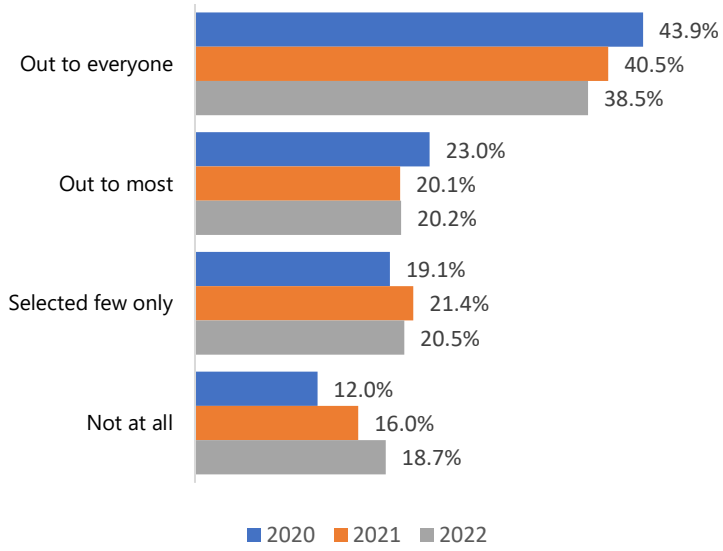


To understand 'outness' in the workplace, respondents who identify their orientation in any way other than 'straight', are asked, "In regard to your sexual orientation, please indicate to what degree you are out at work?". We received 7,787 individual responses.





What degree you are out at work?



Diverse sexuality respondents who were **not out at all** at work increased again this year (2020: 12.0% vs 2021: 16.9% vs 2022: 18.7%).

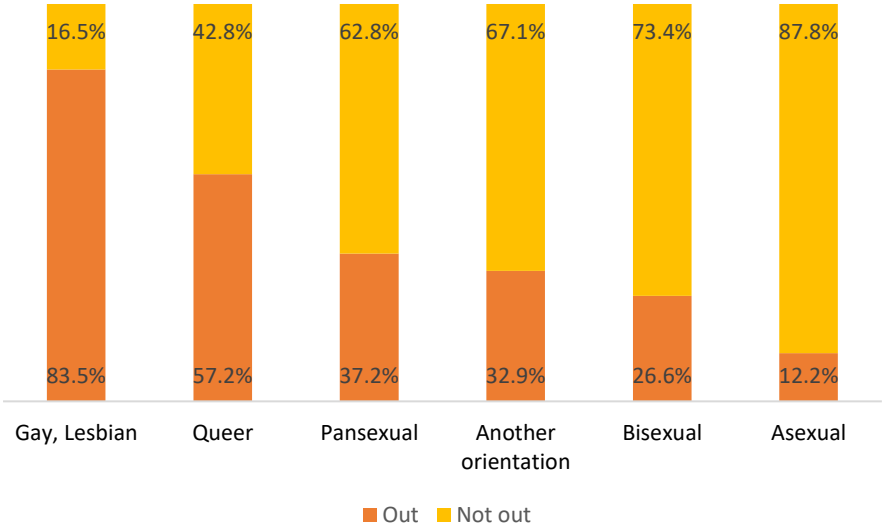
There was also a continued decrease in those who were **out to everyone** at work (2020: 43.9% vs 2021: 40.5% v 2022:38.5%).

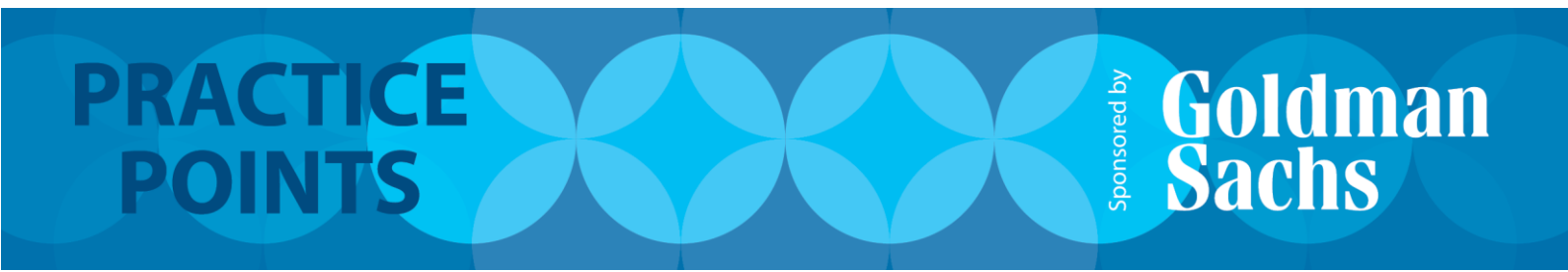
For the remainder of this edition, for the purposes of comparison, we have divided this into two groups. Those who advised they are "out to everyone" or "out to most" are considered 'out at work'" & those who responded with "selected few" or "not at all" are considered 'not out at work'.

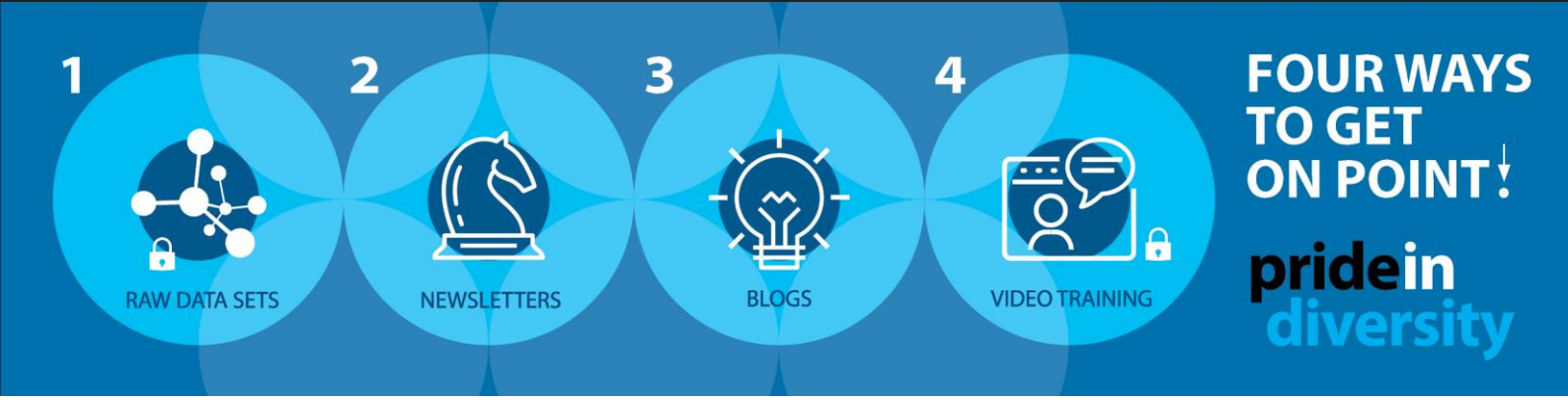
Category	2020	2021	2022
Out at work	66.9%	60.6%	58.7%
Not Out at work	31.1%	37.4%	39.2%

In 2022 those identifying as Gay/Lesbian are the most likely to be Out (83.5%), followed by those who identify as Queer (57.2%). Separately, respondents who identify as bisexual are out less (26.5%) than those who identify as pansexual (37.2%).

Outness by orientation







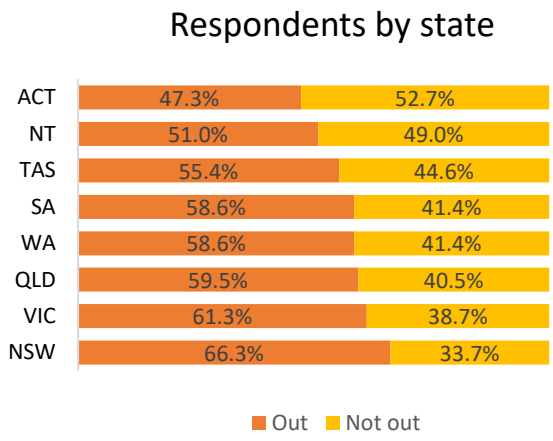
Location

Of the 7,620 responses the split across the 8 states and territories is similar to that seen in full data set.

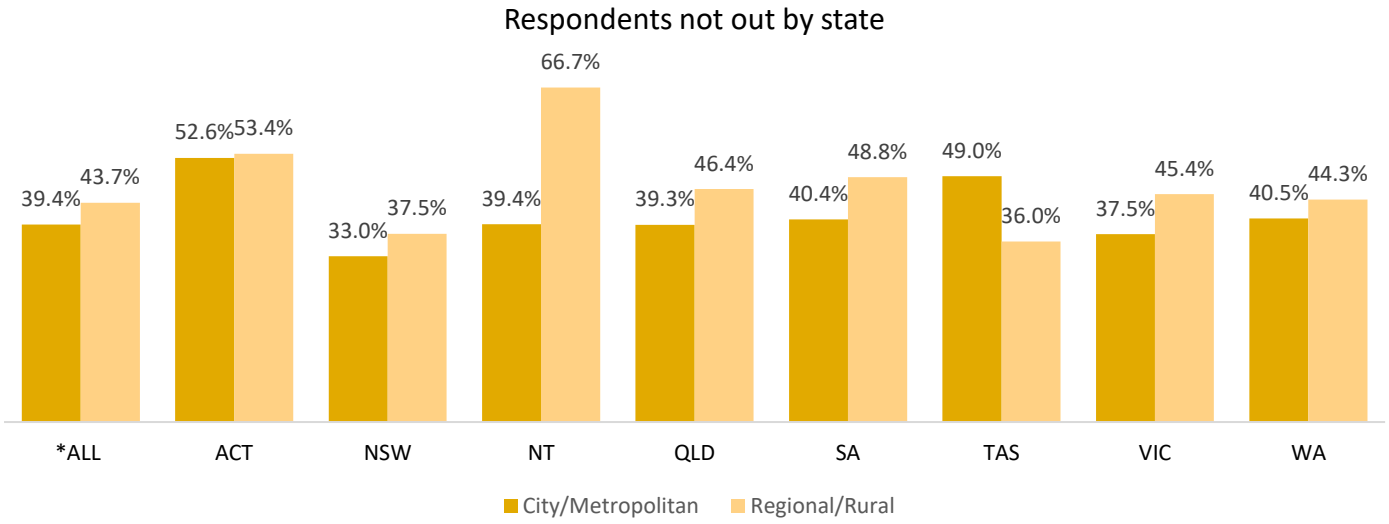
NSW has the highest percentage of individuals reporting as being out (66.3%), while ACT sits at 47.3%.

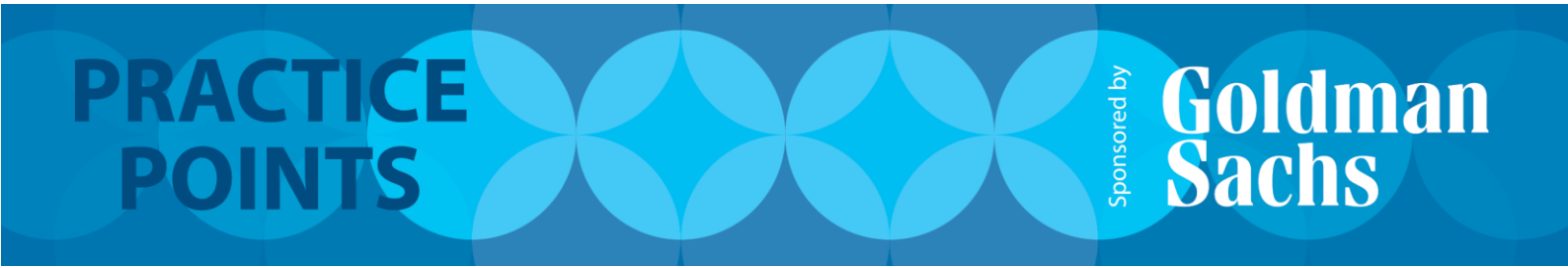
This year, nationally, we see similar rates of 'outness' between metropolitan and regional areas, with people with a sexual diversity marginally less likely to come out in their workplace in regional areas. However, at state level there is greater variation.

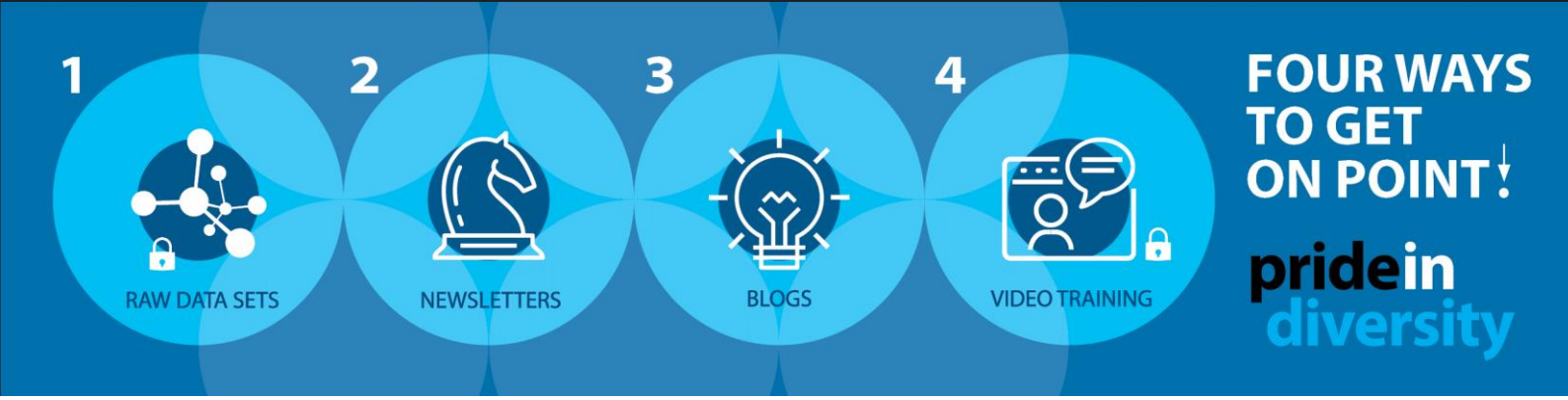
Of the Northern Territory respondents (n51), 35.3% of these are located outside metropolitan areas. Overall across the state, the NT has the closest match between those out and not out. However, when comparing regional and city area rates, we see the have greatest disparity. Respondents living in regional/rural areas are **not out** 66.7% of the time, in comparison to those who work in metropolitan areas who not out 39.4% of the time.



Interestingly Tasmania is the only state where employees are not out at a lower rate in the regions (36.0%) than their metropolitan colleagues (49.0%)





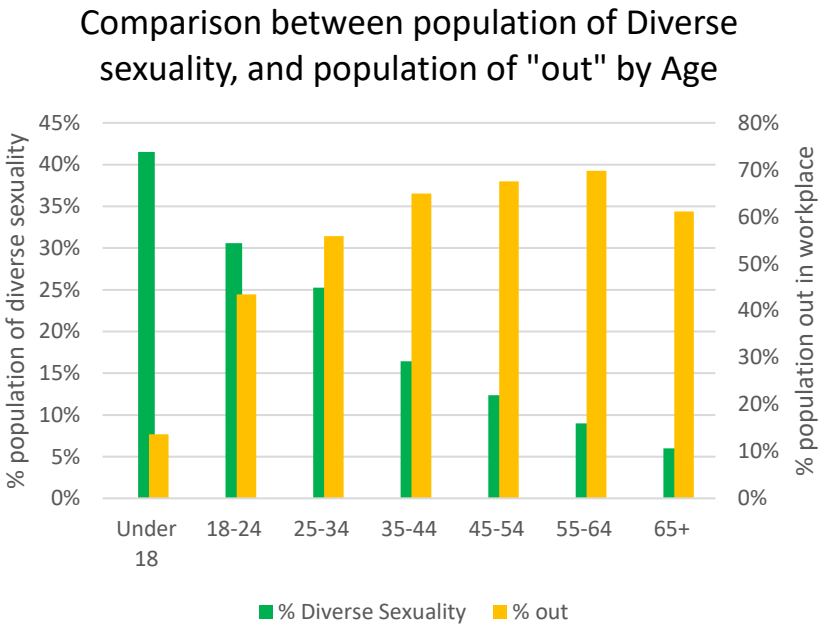


Age

Of all respondents identified as being of diverse sexuality, the greatest proportion (36.3%) are between 25-34 years of age.

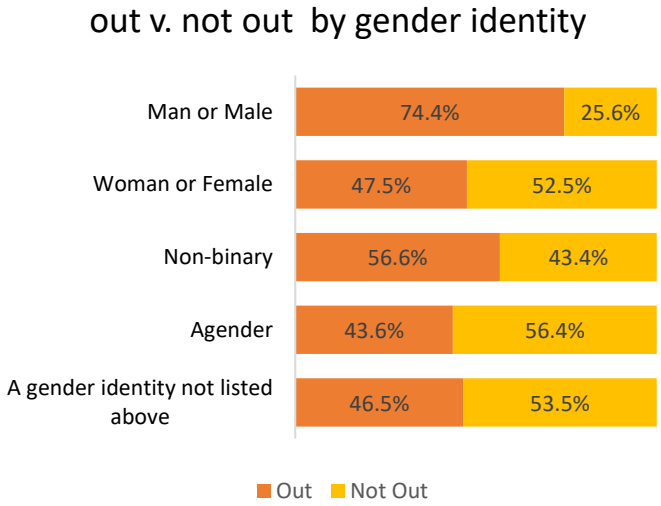
Looking at the respondents by age, we can see that the younger age groups have a higher proportion of the population identifying as of diverse sexuality, but at the same time, have a lower proportion who are 'out' in their workplace.

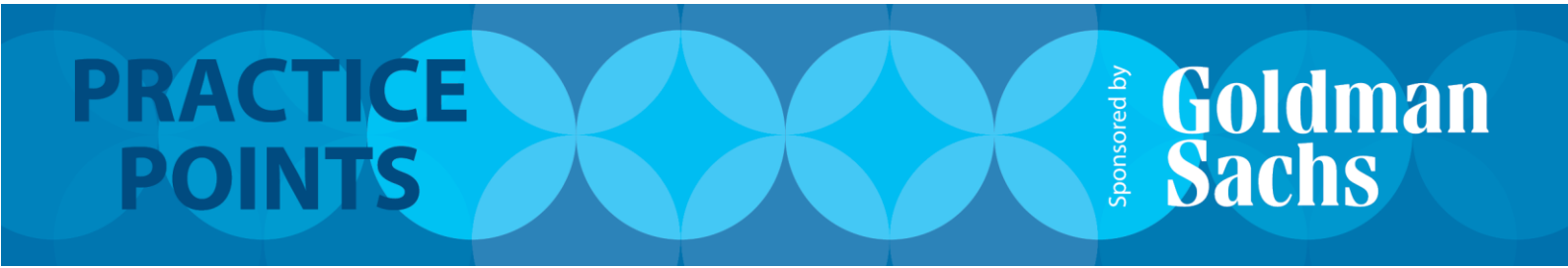
70% of all respondents between the ages of 55-64 are out in the workplace and both the 35-44 & 45-54 year grouping also come in above the 60% average with 65% and 68%.

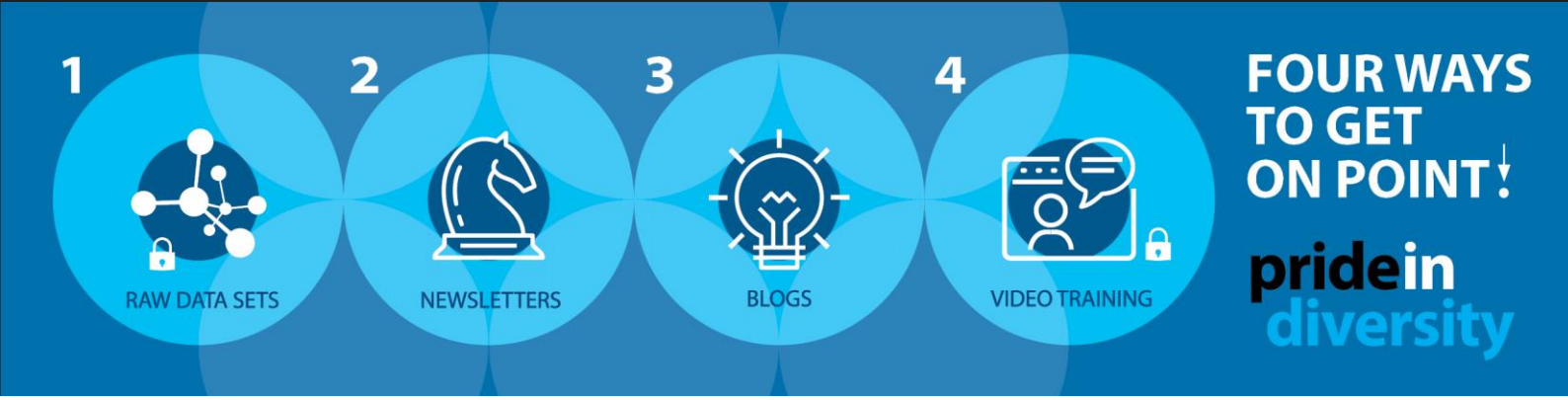


Gender Identity

On average 68% of individuals who are of diverse sexuality are out in the workplace. Respondents who identify as man/male, are more likely to be out regarding their diverse sexuality (74.4%) than any other gender identity and are the only gender which is out at a greater rate than the average. Respondents who selected non-binary as their gender identity are more likely to be out about their diversity sexuality (56.6%) than respondents who identity as woman/female (47.5%). This trend has been seen for the past 2 years.





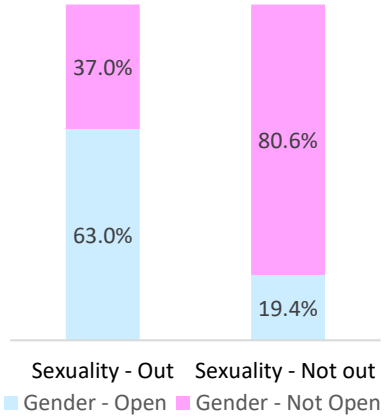


Overall, for those who are out about their diverse sexuality, 63.0% are also open about their gender diversity.

Of the 642 respondents of dual diversity 35.2% are both out about their sexuality and open about their gender in the workplace, while 35.5% are not out or open.

		Diverse Gender	
		Open	Not open
Diverse Sexuality	Out	226 (35.2%)	133 (20.7%)
	Not Out	55 (8.6%)	228 (35.5%)
		281	361

Convergence of dual diversities



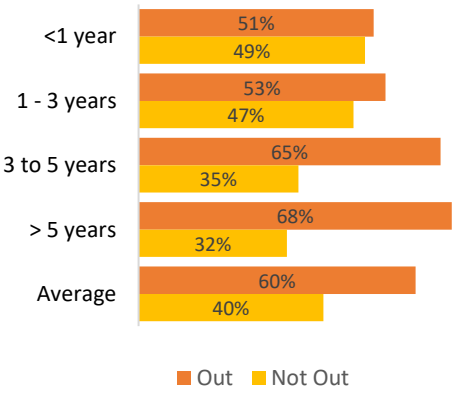
Employment and Tenure

In 2022, 83.3% of respondents are working full time with their employer, and 61% of these full-time staff are out at work, down from 64% in 2021. The least likely staff to be out at work are those who are on a temporary or casual contract with only 46.8% of these respondents out at work (5 percentage points less than 2021). The only group which saw a rise in being out at work was those on a fixed-term contract from 50.3% to 53.7% in 2022.

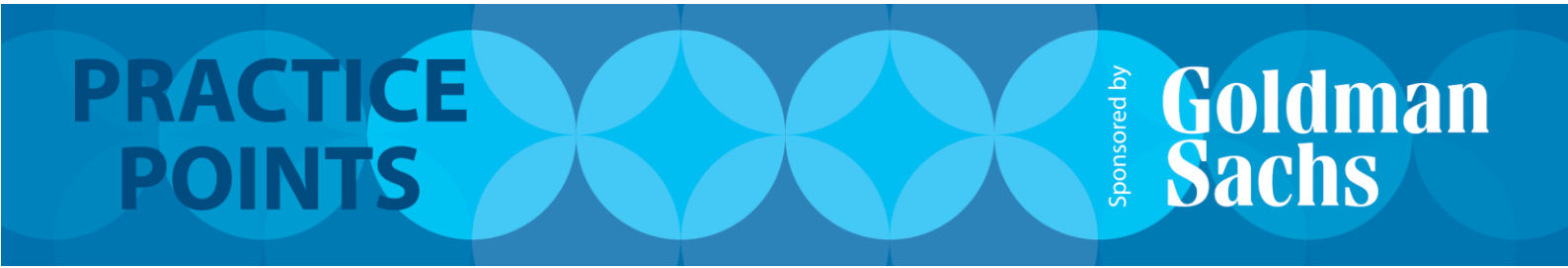
Regarding length of tenure, 37.7% of employees with a diverse sexuality have been with their current organisation for over five years; a lower rate when compared to 46.7% of all respondents.

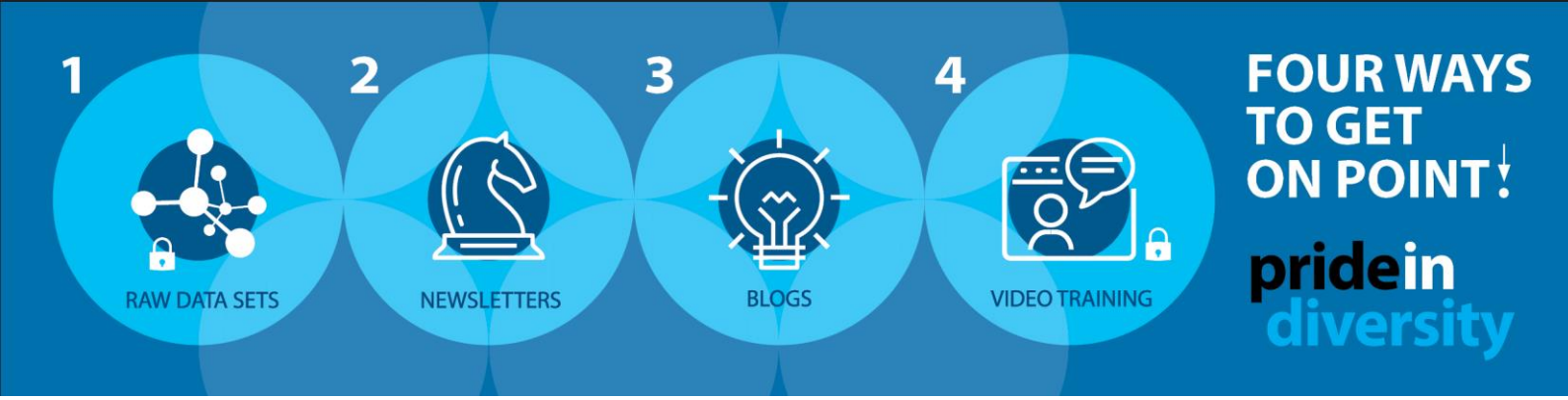
Length of employment with the current employer influences an individual being out in the workplace. Those having worked for less than 1 year with the organisation reporting being out in only 50.9% of cases, while 65% those having been with the organisation more than 3 years reporting being out.

Outness by length of time with organisaiton



"I have been in the organisation for 40 years, it has been wonderful that I can be my whole self for the past 7 years and I can be someone the younger generation can look up to "

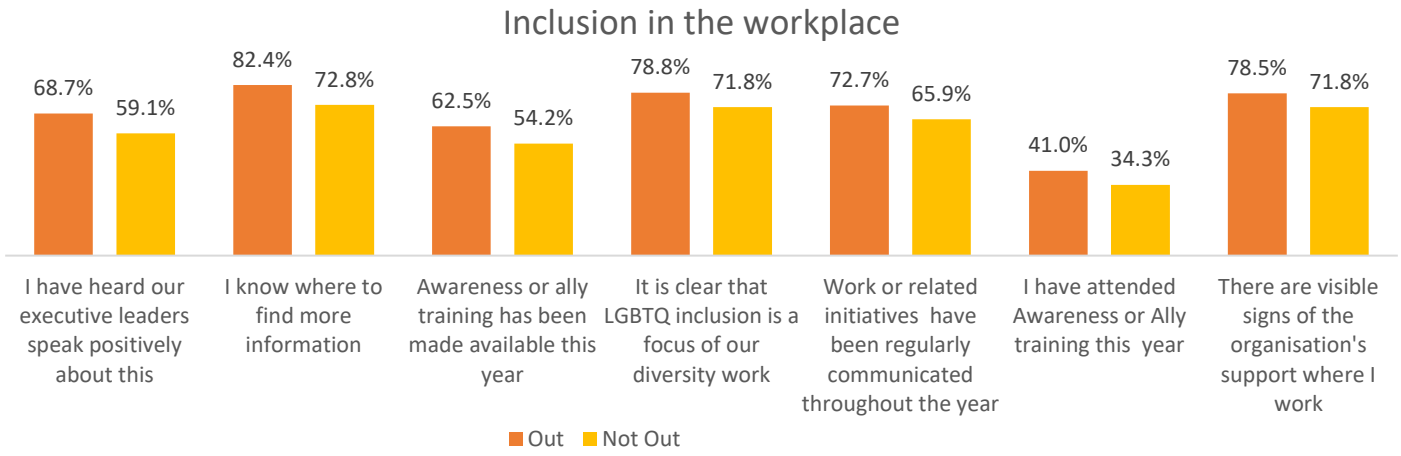




GENERAL VIEWS OF ALL RESPONDENTS

Workplace inclusion

When asked about personal beliefs and views on inclusion in the workplace, there was little difference between those that were out vs. those not out in most areas. However, when looking at questions regarding visible support of their employer, those that are out advised that they saw these elements of inclusion at a greater percentage then their 'not out' colleagues with differences between 6.6 and 9.6 percentage points.



Those not out in the workplace did not feel that jokes and innuendo targeting people of diverse sexuality and/or gender are quickly called out or addressed within the workplace to the same degree. Only 44.6% of not out respondents answered positively to this, compared to 56.3% of 'out' employees.

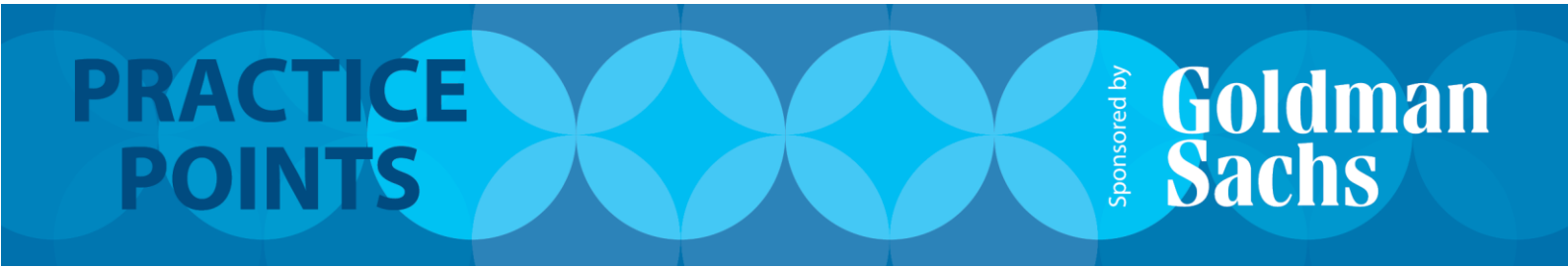
'Out' employees are also more likely to feel that a person of diverse sexuality would be welcomed on their team (95.3% v 90.9%), and more positive around team support for an individual affirming their gender in the workplace (89.4% v 83.2%).

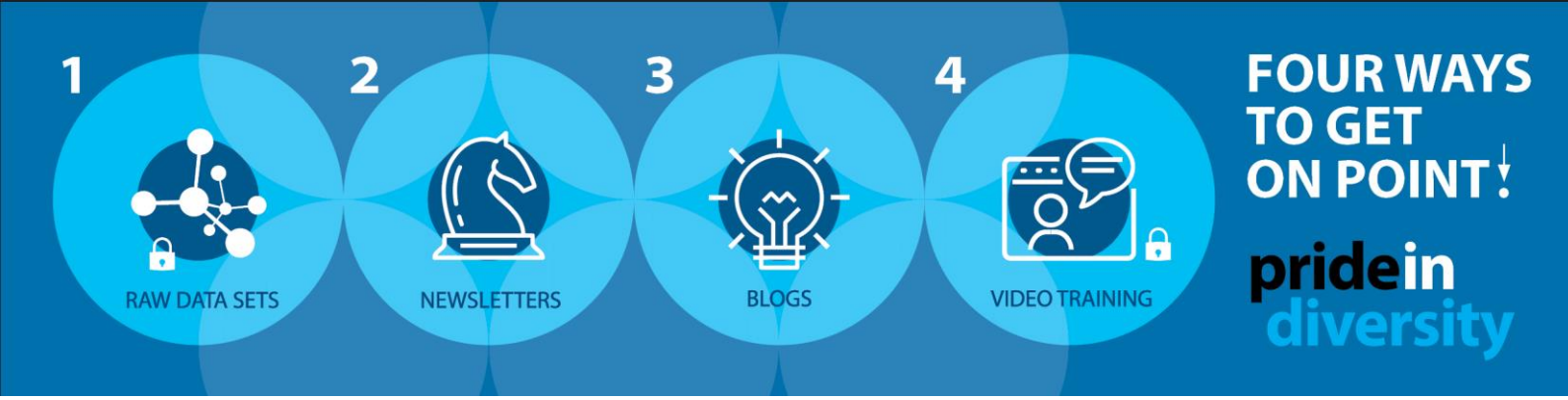
Health and Wellbeing

Feelings of safety and wellbeing at work were generally higher within the LGBTQ Population in 2022 compared to 2021 & 2020. There were slight declines in productivity and engagement but it is difficult to determine the reason behind these drops; these surveys were conducted within the COVID pandemic, which is an additional factor.

Those out in the workplace reported feeling safe and included in their team 93.43% of the time; this is almost the same as their non-LGBTQ colleagues (93.51%). Of those not out in the workplace the rate drops to 85.3% feeling safe and included in their team.

When looking at feeling of personal health and wellbeing the difference between those out and not out is significant.





Those not out in the workplace have lower agreement to all statements than their out colleagues. The most significantly, unsurprisingly, is the feeling of being able to be "myself" which has a 24.6% difference between the cohorts.

- I feel productive at work (82.3% v 87.9%)
- I feel engaged with the organisation and my work (72.8% v 80.7%)
- I feel mentally well at work (67.8% v 77.1%
- I feel a sense of belonging here (66.3% v 77.7%)
- I feel I can be myself at work (61.8% v 86.3%)

Being out in the workplace

For those out in the workplace, there was a drop of those that felt their performance was positively impacted (2022: 53.7% v 2021: 65.7%) and that their overall engagement was positively impacted by being out at work down 12.2% (2022: 61.2% v 2021: 73.4%) by being out at work.

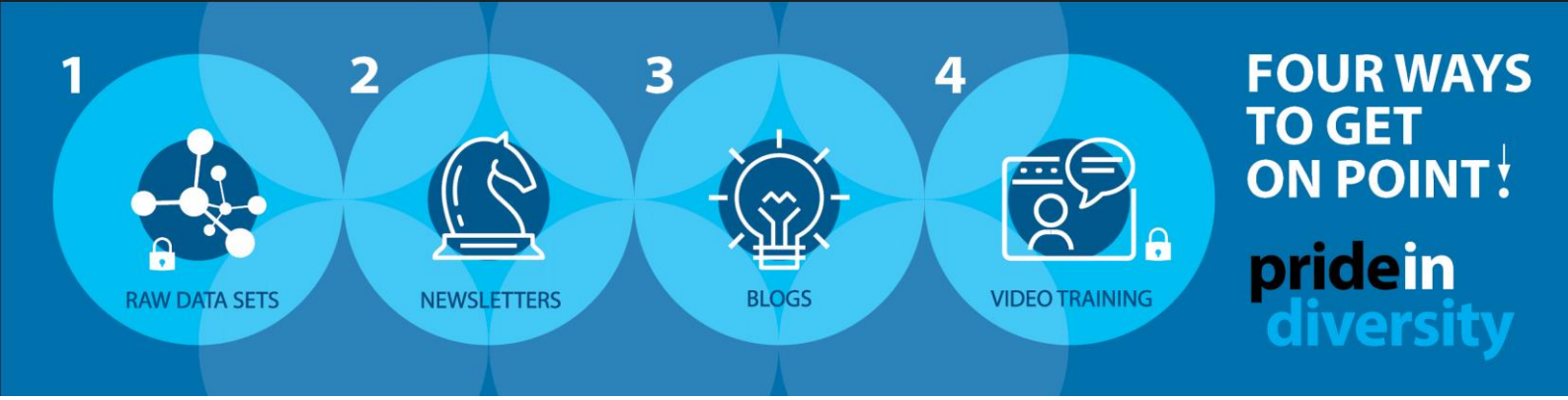
This year we asked 'out' employees if they felt more inclined to stay with their organisation; 63.1% agreed. 65.2% felt more inclined to talk positively about their organisation, and 59.8% felt more inclined to engage in organisational activities.

67.9% of 'out' employees felt they would be supported to come out to people outside of their organisation, down from 78.4% in 2021. There was also a drop from 80.7% in 2021 to 77.2% in people who felt that their sexuality would have **no** impact on career progression within their organisation.

Being not out in the workplace

For those not out in the workplace, 38.4% agreed that their reason is that they are not comfortable enough with themselves to be out at work, and 31.6% feel that the current social/political sphere has an impact of their willingness to be out at work.

Encouragingly over the past three years we are seeing fewer people feeling that being out would be detrimental to their workplace experience, would impact career progression, or would be not accepted by their team



Bullying and harassment

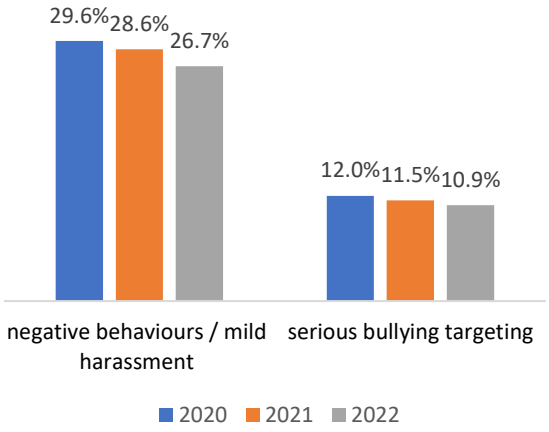
For those out in the workplace, there was a reduction in feeling comfortable to report jokes /innuendo regarding sexuality to management, by 1.6% and to HR by 2.5% points.

All respondents were asked about witnessing negative/mild behaviours and/or more serious bulling targeting those with diverse sexuality or gender at work. Respondents of diverse sexuality are reporting mild negative behaviours at a significantly higher rate than those not of diverse sexuality (25.88% V 10.33%).

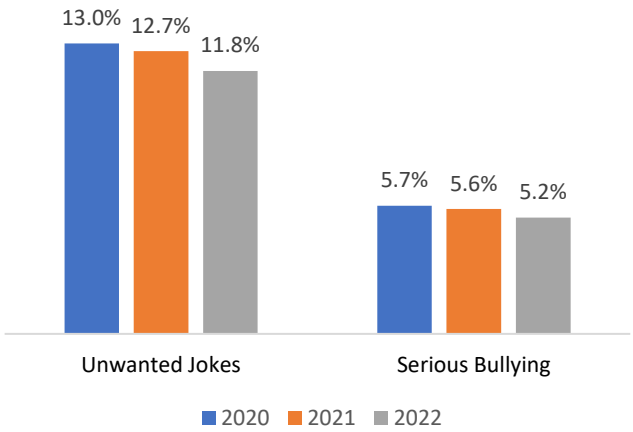
More serious bullying is witnessed by LGBTQ employees more often than their non-LGBTQ employees, and in this instance employees out in the workplace, report witnessing bulling 10.91% v not out at 8.3%.

Respondents with a dual diversity, report witnessing behaviours at a greater proportion again. 63.6% of those who are of both diverse sexuality and diverse gender agree to witnessing mild harassment, and 13.5% have witnessed more serious bullying

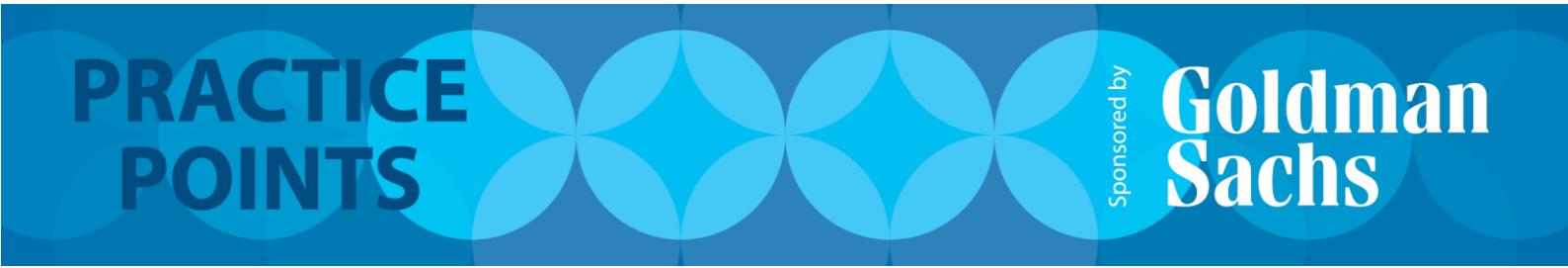
All Staff:
Witnessing behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality or gender at work

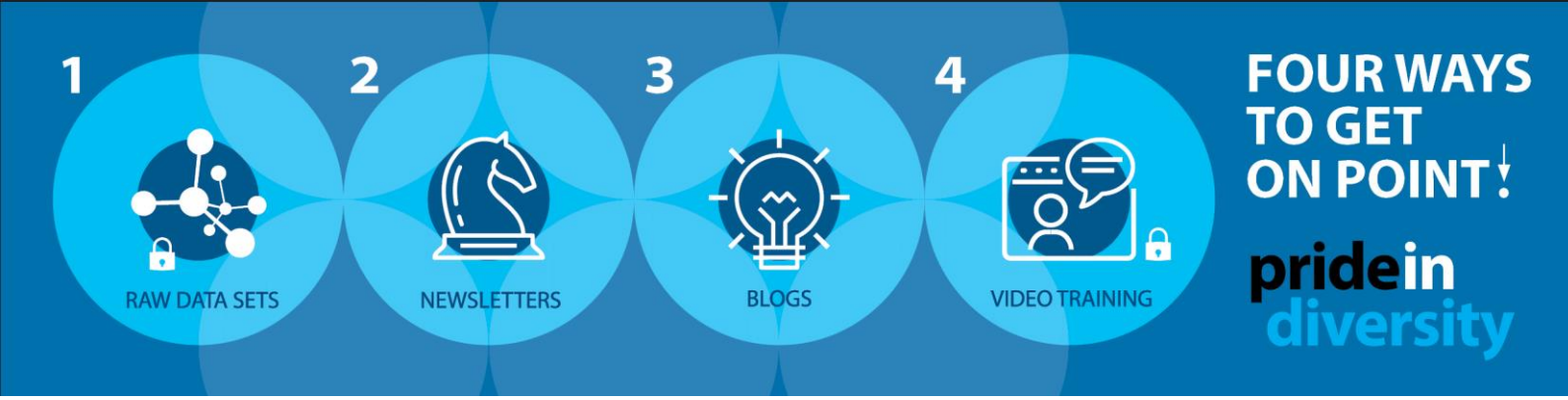


Due to my sexual diversity, I have been the target of:



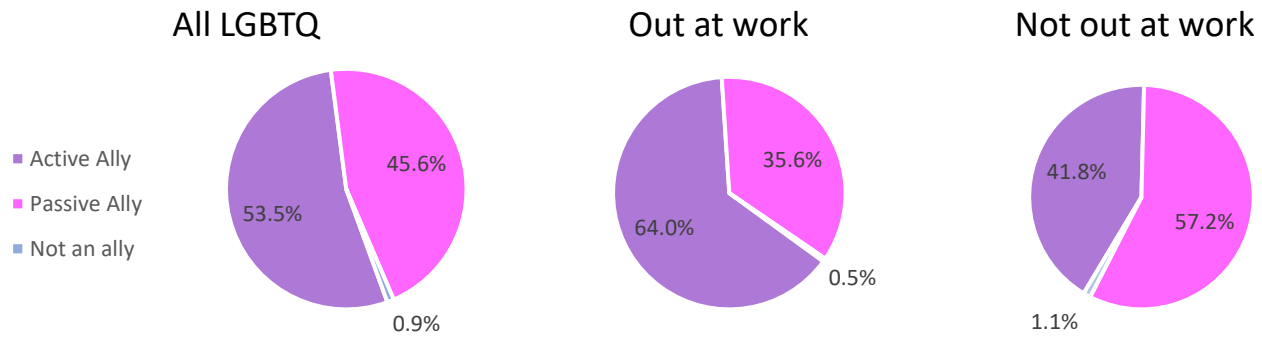
For those out in the workplace, being a target of inappropriate workplace behaviours based on their diverse sexuality has continued to decrease year on year (2020: 13.02%, 2021: 12.67% , 2022: 11.79%). Targeting with more serious bullying/sexual harassment has also declined over the past three years, but to a lesser extent (2020: 5.74%, 2021: 5.60%, 2022: 5.22%)





Being and ally

Overall those employees who are of diverse sexuality or gender identify as active allies, 53.5% of the time. This rate changes significantly when looking at people who are out verses not out at work. 63.9% of those out at work report being active allies in comparison to 41.8% of those not out at work.



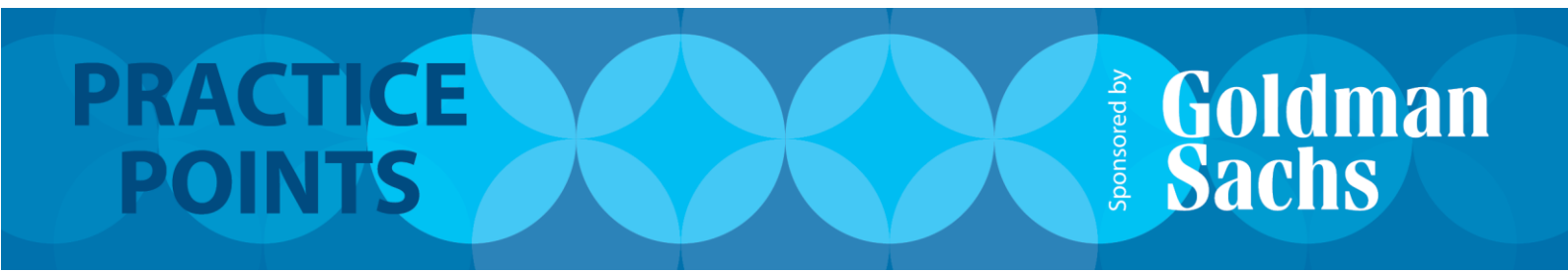
Respondents not out in the workplace were also less likely to be able to identify allies in their immediate work area (70.3% v 55.6%), or know of active executive allies (67.6% v 52.3%).

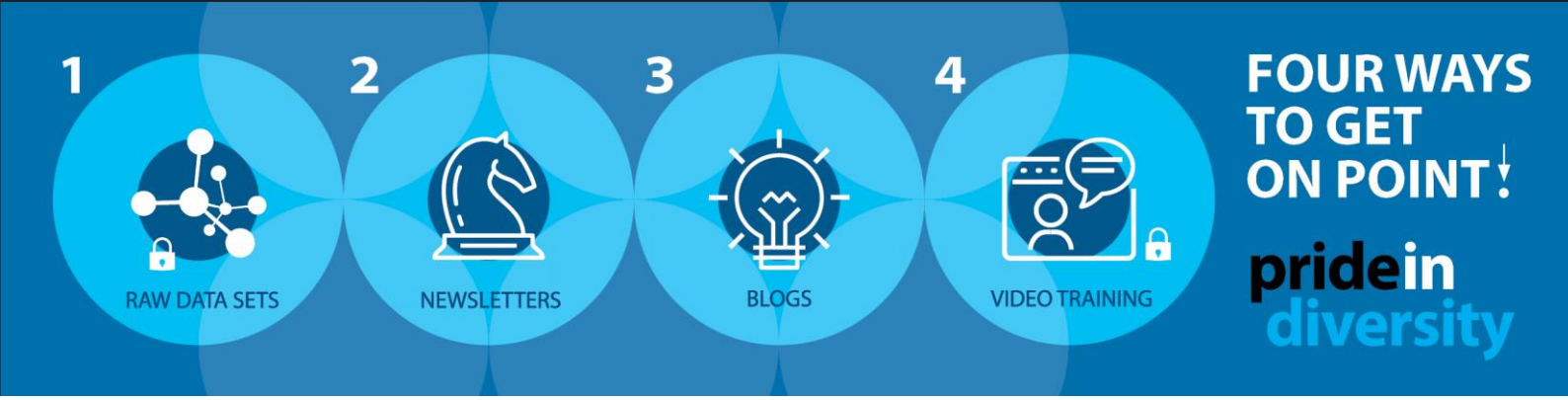
Reasons for not being an active ally differ between the two cohorts. Respondents can provide multiple reasons why they are not allies. Of note:

- Being too busy is the top reason for both groups, (out: 47.38% v not out:45.9%).
- For those out at work, conflicting with personal beliefs is up from 2.5% 2021 to 3.5% in 2022 and those not out at work to from 3.9% to 5.2%.
- For those not out at work, 24.3% of those agree they are concerned people will think they are of a diverse sexuality or Gender, and 18.7% agree that it is concern over being the target of jokes or ridicule.

For all people of diverse sexuality, the majority felt that they could be influenced to become an active ally, and advised that the following could influence them:

- more information on how to be an ally with limited time (51.9%)
- a better understanding of how to be an active Ally (47.1%)
- more information about why active allies are important (23.7%)



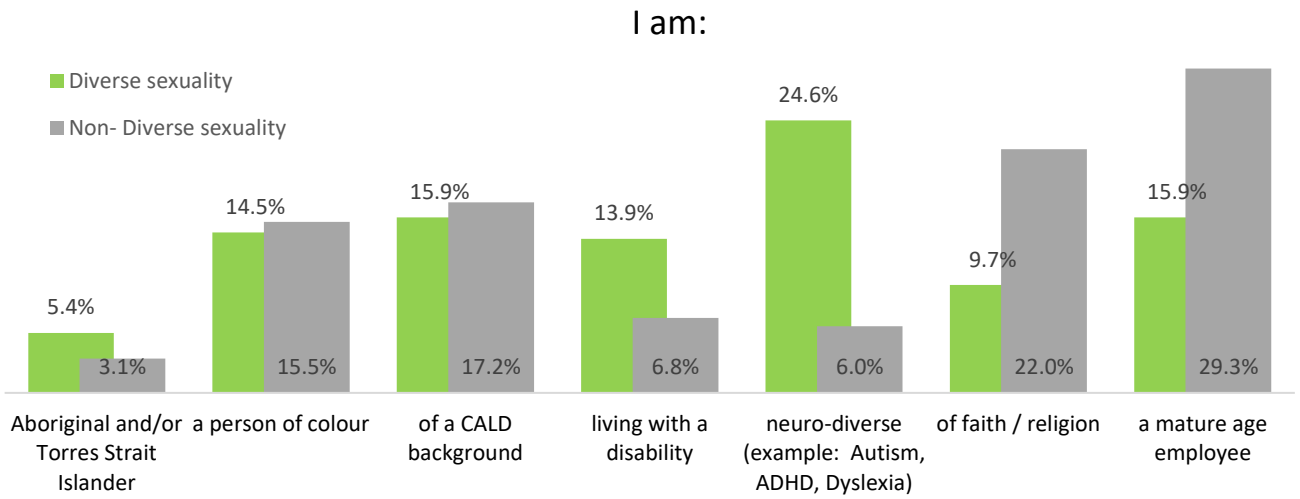


Intersecting diversities

Respondents were asked to advise if there were any other areas of diversity they believed were relevant to them.

Employees of diverse sexuality reported being neuro-diverse at a higher rate 24.6% than the heterosexual respondents(6.0%).

Other significant differences include higher rates of living with a disability or being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander.

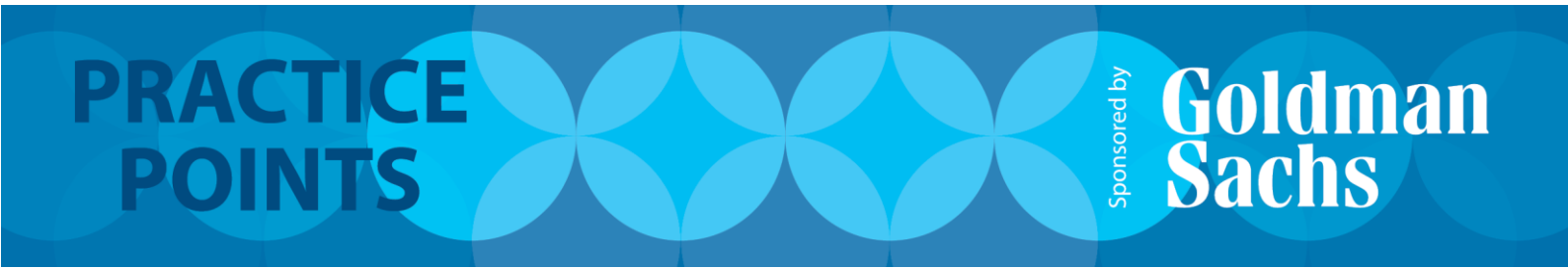


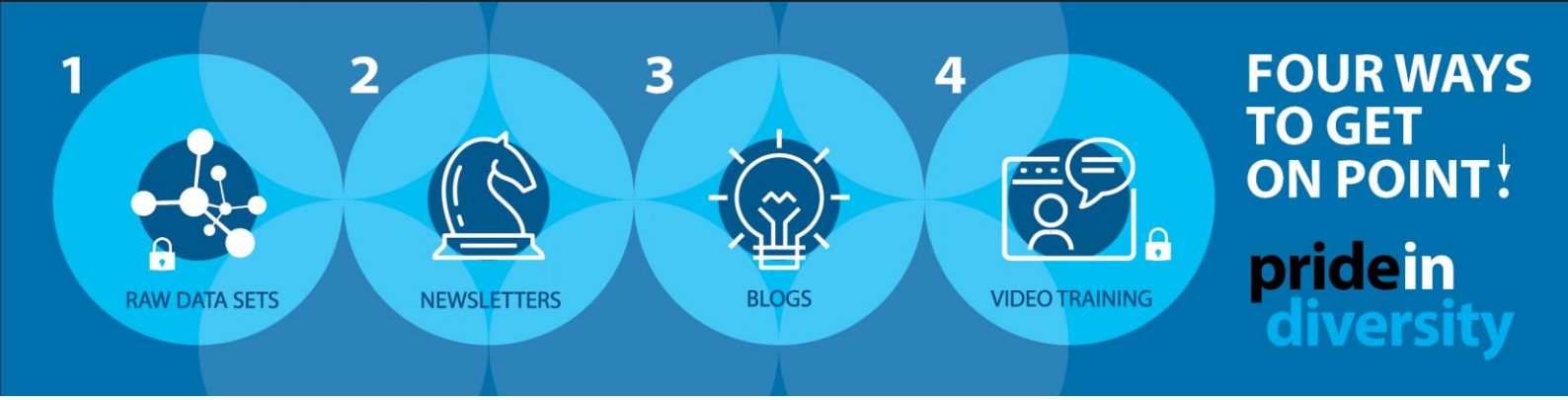
IN CONCLUSION

A further increase in the percentage of staff not out at work was seen again this year, a trend which has been reported for the past 4 years. Across all areas those not out at work, are less likely to be engaged, feel productive, and more likely to feel that their employers did not meet their expectations regarding communications, inclusion, and support within the organisation. Those not out at work are also less likely to recommend their workplace to other LGBTQ people.

While a significant proportion of those not out identify external factors, i.e. "current social/political sphere" as having an impact on their willingness to be out at work, this still contributes to negative impacts for the organisation.

Organisations should ensure they are aware of and address all the issues that may impact on someone's likelihood of being 'out', even those that are happening outside the organisation.





Fortunately, over the past 3 years a greater proportion of respondents can identify active allies in their team and workplace, and are also advising that they, themselves, are active allies in their workplace.

For those respondents who are not active allies, the top reason is "too busy". Organisations providing time to employees to actively be involved in Pride groups, training and other initiatives would have the greatest impact on the level of active allies.

We continue to see that younger employees are most likely to have a diverse sexuality, but are least likely to be out in their workforce. Similarly, employees with the shortest tenure with their organisation are least likely to be out. This points to a required focus on both new workforce entrants and new employees. It should also be noted that younger employees are more likely to have an 'emerging' identity, so the relevance of 'traditional' inclusion activities should be reviewed

Please speak to your Relationship Manager regarding how to use this information to influence your activities and promote a more inclusive workplace for LGBTQ employees.

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