# EDITION 6:
# Impact of Visible Role Models

## Insights from the 2025 AWEI Employee Survey

This edition of the 2025 practice points focuses on the experiences of 9,240 LGBTQ+ employees when they can identify role models within their organisation or executive teams.

98.8% of LGBTQ+ respondents are people of diverse sexuality, and 13.6% are trans and gender diverse people. These cohorts include 12.4% of LGBTQ+ respondents who are within both areas.

This year, 7609 respondents of diverse sexuality responded to the statements:

- There are visible out role models within the organisation that are of diverse sexuality.
- There are visible out role models that are of diverse sexuality within senior leadership or executive positions here.

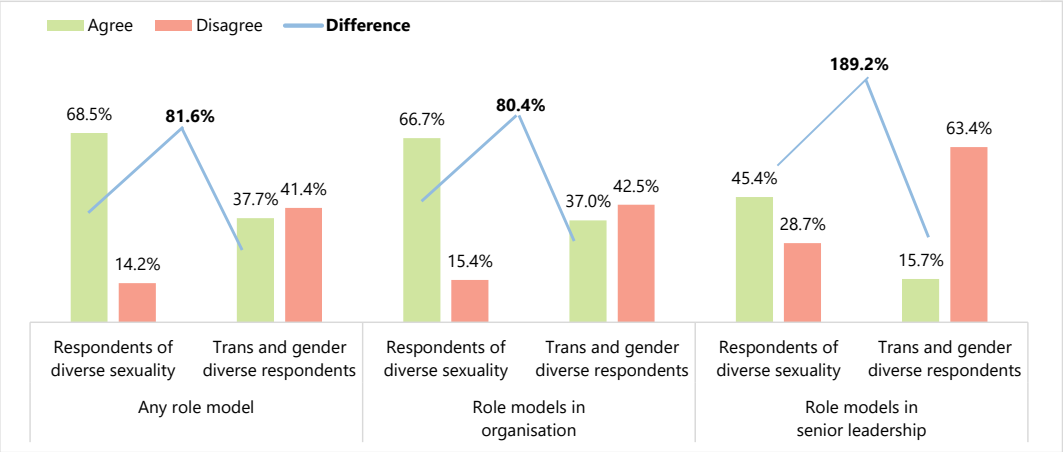
And 1023 trans and gender diverse employees responded to:

- There are visible role models within the organisation that are of diverse gender and/or trans experience.
- There are visible role models that are of diverse gender and/or trans experience within senior leadership or executive positions here.

Respondents of diverse sexuality are 81.6% more likely to know of a role model of diverse sexuality anywhere within the organisation than trans and gender diverse respondents are to know of a trans and gender diverse role model. This increases to being 189.2% more likely for respondents of diverse sexuality to have a role model within the senior leadership than trans and gender diverse respondents.

41.4% of trans and gender diverse respondents **do not** have role models, 9.8% more than those who do (37.7%).

- The presence of senior role models leads to a higher likelihood of staff being 'out' at work and less self-censorship in workplace conversations.
- Staff without senior role models are at a higher risk of workplace incivility due to their diverse gender and sexuality
- Active role models lead to an increased sense of organisational citizenship and belief in organisational commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Presence of senior visible role models increases the likelihood of awareness of and attendance at inclusion training
- Senior role models amplify the positive impacts across openness, safety, and advocacy, reinforcing the value of diverse representation at the top and the need for intentional visibility and support structures




This is not surprising, as the trans and gender diverse population is smaller than the population of people of diverse sexuality. The number of employees in senior leadership positions is generally significantly fewer than within the rest of the organisation, in fact in 2025 only 11 of the 1095 leadership level respondents were trans or gender diverse, which means that only 0.9% of trans and gender diverse respondents were in leadership roles, compared to 2% of respondents of diverse sexuality.

All 11 of the trans and gender diverse respondents identified as non-binary; there was not a single trans woman or trans man respondent who sat within the leadership of the 147 participating organisations. This means that organisations will need to consider other avenues to provide opportunities for their employees to have role models to look up to and to ensure that no unconscious bias is in play when promoting or recruiting for senior leadership roles.

## Impact on the position of role models

In previous practice points, we have discussed the impact that role models have on work outcomes, particularly regarding their recommendation of the organisation as a good place to work, and how the organisation's culture enables the respondent to reach their full potential.

Respondents of diverse sexuality, with senior role models (compared to those with role models elsewhere in the organisation), are 5.8% more likely to be 'out' in the workplace, and 7.9% more likely to be 'out' to their manager if they are only out to most or selected few people within their organisation.
Additionally, they are more likely by:

- 8.1% to have heard executive leaders speak positively about LGBTQ+ inclusion (senior: 82.4% vs elsewhere: 76.2%)
- 6.1% to agree that workplace incivility targeting people of diverse sexuality is acted upon quickly (senior: 70.0% vs elsewhere: 66.0%)
- 6.4% % to agree that workplace incivility targeting people of diverse gender is acted upon quickly (senior: 67.3% vs elsewhere: 63.2%)
- 10.3% to have called out workplace incivility themselves (senior: 35.2% vs elsewhere: 31.9%),
- 16.1% to have called out serious bullying behaviours (senior: 25.8% vs elsewhere: 22.2%),
- 7.4% to have reported serious bullying behaviours (senior: 23.4% vs elsewhere: 21.7%).

Those with senior role models are 8.4% less likely to spend time editing conversations or hiding who they are within the workplace.

Trans and gender diverse respondents, with a role model within the senior leadership team, are 9.2% more likely to be open to all or most in the workplace, and slightly more likely (0.9%) to be open to their manager if they are only open to most or select few within the organisation.

Additionally, they are more likely by:

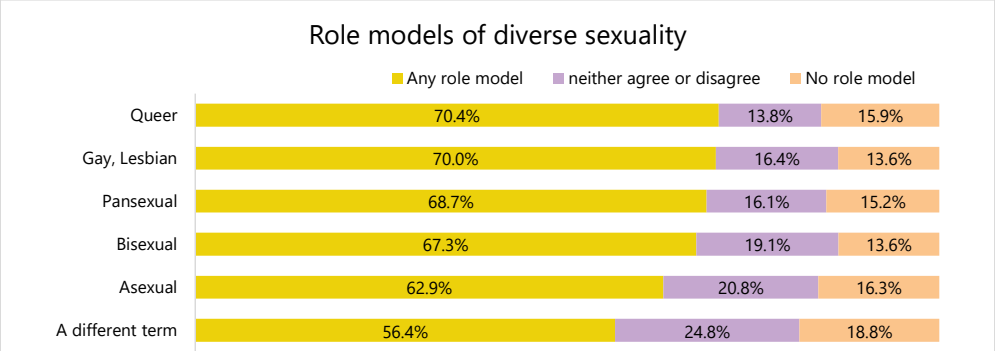
- 9.4% to believe initiatives concerning LGBTQ+ inclusion have been regularly communicated (senior: 85.6% vs elsewhere: 78.3%).
- 6.3% to believe that a team member affirming their gender would be fully supported (senior: 86.9% vs elsewhere: 81.8%).
- 7.1% to agree that workplace incivility targeting people of diverse sexuality is acted upon quickly (senior: 66.7% vs elsewhere: 62.2%)
- 15.5% to agree that workplace incivility targeting people of diverse gender is acted upon quickly (senior: 69.0% vs elsewhere: 59.7%)
- 30.0% to have reported workplace incivility to managers, etc (senior: 21.9% vs elsewhere: 16.8%)
- 42.9% to have called out serious bullying behaviours themselves (senior: 33.3% vs elsewhere: 23.3%)

34.4% less likely to have witnessed workplace incivility targeting trans and gender diverse people in the workplace (senior: 15.6% vs elsewhere: 23.8%)

Overall, there are some differences, depending on the position of the role model. Still, the presence of any role model has an impact on respondents' positive beliefs and feelings towards their organisation's inclusion actions.

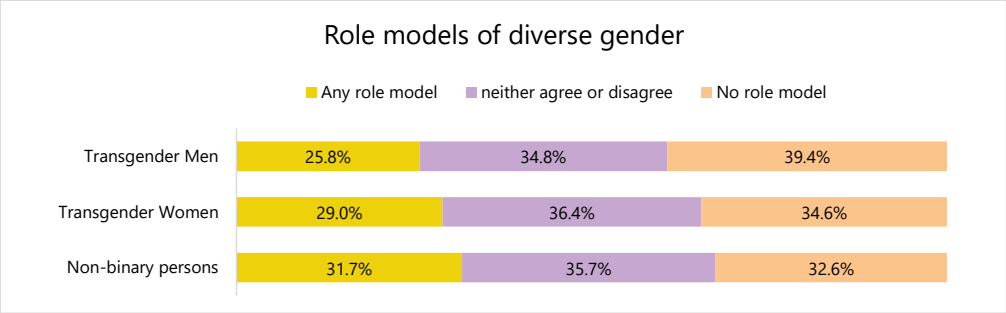
## Respondents' knowledge of role models

Within the cohorts of all people of diverse sexuality, respondents who identify as queer, gay or lesbian are most likely to feel they have a role model in the organisation, with those who identify with a different term the least likely to know of a role model of diverse sexuality. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with either or both role model questions.




Non-binary respondents are the most likely of all trans and gender diverse respondents to agree to having a role model within the organisation. To note is that over one third of trans and gender diverse respondents did not agree or disagree with either or both role model questions.

**Commented [NE1]:** And there were no level 1 trans men or trans women respondents




For organisations where respondents are neutral, it is necessary to consider what might be contributing to this ambiguity or doubt for LGBTQ+ employees. For instance, are there LGBTQ+ employees in the senior leadership team who do not want to act as a role model to others? Do potential role models have the availability or time to take on this role within your organisation? Would employees feel that those who are role models are approachable?

For the remainder of this practice point, we will compare whether respondents know of any role models with those who do not.

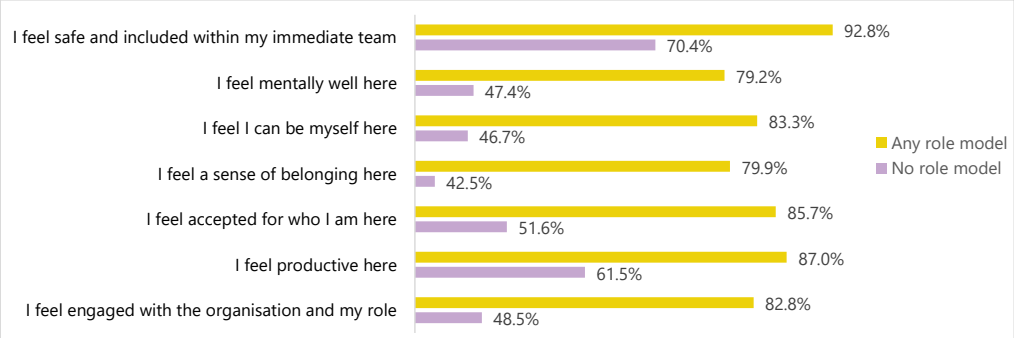
## Impact of role models of diverse sexuality

When we compare respondents of diverse sexuality who agree to know of a role model within their organisation with those who do not know of any role models, those with role models are more likely by:

- 66.3% to agree there has been visibility and promotion of an internal employee network for LGBTQ+ employees and allies.
- 105.4% to agree that work or related initiatives concerning LGBTQ+ inclusion were regularly communicated throughout the year.
- 172.3% to have heard executive leaders speak positively about LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- 117.2% to have had awareness or ally training for LGBTQ+ inclusion available throughout the year.
- 110.8% to have attended awareness or ally training here for LGBTQ+ inclusion within the last year.
- 121.6% to believe the organisation is genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ diversity & inclusion.
- 142.8% to know of active executive allies or sponsors within my organisation.

They are also less likely to believe the organisation needs to put in more effort into LGBTQ+ inclusion by 42.1%.

The health and wellbeing of respondents with role models is also significantly higher across all statements, with up to 87.8% greater agreement.



When considering negative behaviours, those with role models are more likely to agree by:

- 116.3% that workplace incivility behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality are acted upon quickly.
- 123.4% that workplace incivility behaviours targeting people of diverse gender are acted upon quickly.
- 97.8% that managers are willing to address workplace incivility behaviours that target people of diverse sexuality.
- 75.1% to report serious bullying behaviours to a manager or grievance officer.

And less likely by:

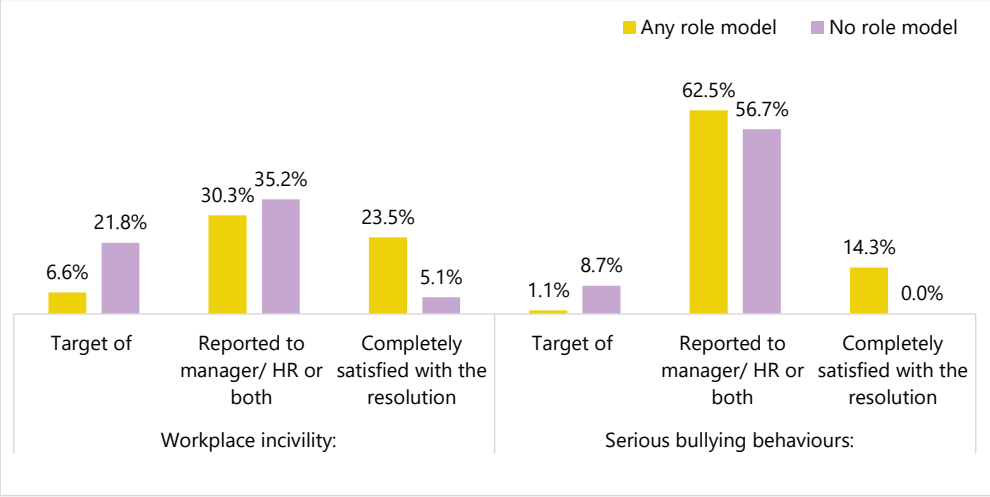
- 58.1% to have witnessed workplace incivility behaviours &
- 52.2% to have witnessed serious bullying behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality.
- 34.5% to advise that no one called out workplace incivility behaviours.
- 46.9% to agree that no one called out serious bullying behaviours.

When considering personal experiences of discrimination, bullying and harassment, those with role models are:

- 67.1% less likely to have experienced discrimination.
- 70.0% less likely to have been the target of workplace incivility.
- 86.9% less likely to have been the target of serious bullying.

The presence of role models also seems to increase satisfaction towards workplace incivility resolution. Those with a role model, who have experienced workplace incivility and have reported it, are 363.8% more likely to be completely satisfied and 111.7% more likely to be partially satisfied with the resolution.

For serious bullying reporting, no respondents without role models were completely satisfied with the outcome of the process, and those with role models were 82.1% more likely to be partially satisfied than those without.




'Out' respondents are more likely to have positive feelings toward the impact their sexuality would have on their role, and are more likely by:

- 60.6% to feel their performance is positively impacted by being out.
- 71.6% to believe there would be no negative impacts on their career progression by being out.
- 51.9% to have not encountered any exclusion based on their sexuality.
- 41.7% to being fully supported by their team.

Those not out in their organisation are less likely by:

- 61.5% to fear exclusion by people within their team,
- 68.3% to feel that being out would negatively impact their career.
- 62.1% to being concerned they would become the target of workplace incivility.
- 60.6% to fear being the target of discrimination.

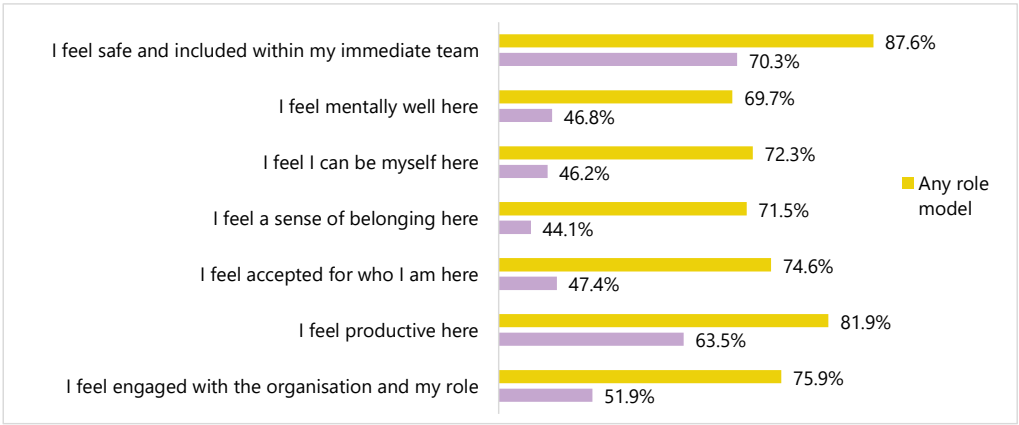
## Impact of trans and gender diverse role models

When we compare trans and gender diverse respondents who agree they know of a role model within their organisation with those who do not know of any role models, those with role models are more likely to agree by:

- 79.1% that awareness or ally training for LGBTQ+ inclusion had been made available throughout the year.
- 88.4% to have attended the awareness training.
- 50.6% to believe a person of diverse gender would be welcome in their team and treated no differently to anyone else.
- 52.8% to believing a team member who was affirming their gender would be fully supported by the team.
- 72.8% to believe the organisation is genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ diversity & inclusion.

They are also 33.3% less likely to feel their organisation needs to put more effort into LGBTQ+ inclusion.

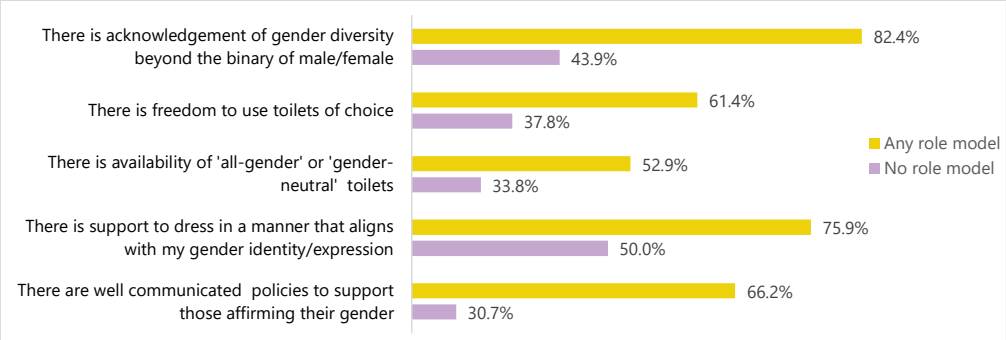
The health and wellbeing of respondents with role models is also significantly higher across all statements, with up to 62.1% greater agreement.




Organisational policies relating to employees of diverse gender have higher agreement by those with role models, where agreement is more likely by:

- 87.8% that there is an acknowledgement of gender diversity beyond the binary.
- 62.3% that there is freedom to use the toilets of choice.
- 66.0% that the LGBTQ+ employee network is fully inclusive of employees of diverse gender.
- 56.3% that there is availability of gender neural toilets.
- 51.8% that there is support to dress in alignment with gender identity/expression.

The most significant difference is that respondents are 116.0% more likely to agree that there are well-communicated policies to support those affirming their gender.




When considering negative behaviours, those with role models are more likely to agree by:

- 67.6% that workplace incivility behaviours targeting people of diverse sexuality are acted upon quickly.
- 90.5% that workplace incivility behaviours targeting people of diverse gender are acted upon quickly.
- 55.3% that managers are willing to address workplace incivility behaviours that target people of diverse gender.
- 32.2% to report workplace incivility behaviours to a manager or grievance officer &
- 146.1% to report serious bullying behaviours to a manager or grievance officer.

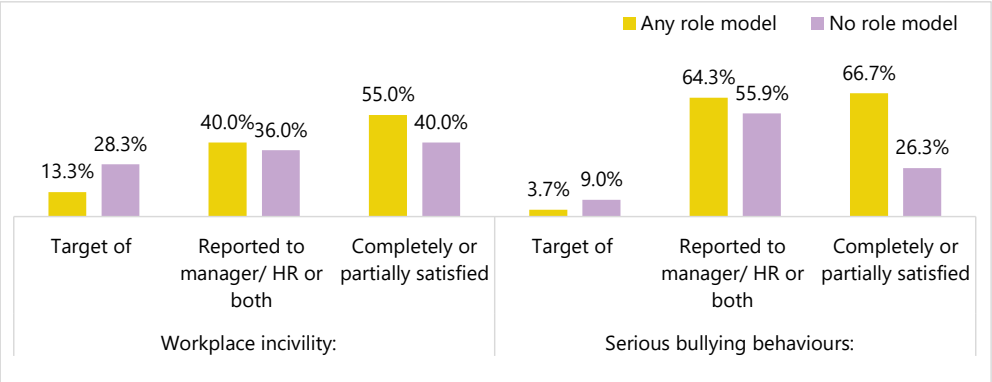
Regarding behaviours targeting people of diverse gender, they are less likely by:

- 39.9% to have witnessed workplace incivility targeting people of diverse gender.
- 57.9% to have witnessed serious bullying behaviours.

When considering personal experiences of discrimination, bullying and harassment, those with role models are:

- 44.1% less likely to have experienced discrimination directly attributed to being LGBTQ+
- 52.9% less likely to have been the target of workplace incivility.
- 58.5% less likely to have been the target of serious bullying.

Due to the small number of trans and gender-diverse respondents, the proportions of respondents who are completely or partially satisfied with the resolution are not reportable individually; however, combined, they show that there are greater favourable outcomes in organisations where role models are present.




Respondents with role models who are 'open' regarding being trans and gender diverse, are 36.3% more likely to feel their colleagues make an effort to use their pronouns, and 42.0% less likely to feel they have been deliberately misgendered.

Their positive feelings toward the impact their gender diversity would have on their role are more likely by:

- 43.5% to feeling their performance is positively impacted by being out.
- 89.4% to believe there would be no negative impacts on their career progression by being open.
- 52.3% to have not encountered any exclusion based on their sexuality.
- 60.1% to being fully supported by their team.

Those not out in their organisation are less likely by:

- 45.7% to fear exclusion by people within their team,
- 27.4% to fear exclusion by people outside their team
- 31.8% to feel being out would negatively impact their career.
- 62.1% to being concerned they would become the target of workplace incivility.
- 28.0% to fear being the target of discrimination.

## Actions

1. Participate in the annual AWEI survey, to better understand the status of workplace inclusion in your organisation and develop an action plan based on the identified gaps.
2. Conduct an analysis of the survey data to identify underrepresented LGBTQ+ populations within your organisation and develop appropriate plans for enhanced inclusion.
3. Encourage a strategic level conversation with leadership to discuss the survey results and the value of senior allyship and visible role models.
4. Consider developing platforms to increase visibility of LGBTQ+ people in your organisation.
5. Consider partnering with external providers to develop LGBTQ+ talent development as a pathway to ensuring LGBTQ+ employees have opportunities for leadership and management roles.
6. Utilise the extent of employee-led networks to emphasise intersectionality and leverage off each other to enhance inclusion and visibility of LGBTQ+ role models across the organisation.
7. Engage in regional outreach and community events to expose your more isolated employees to your organisation's initiatives and support from leadership

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Pride in Diversity (2025). Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey. ACON's Pride Inclusion Prograr