

Hear our voices: Improving the environment for Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce

2022 Report



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Questions?

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Research methodology

The research in this whitepaper was commissioned by That Comms Co. on behalf of Indeed and conducted by YouGov. The study was conducted online between 11-17 January 2022 involving 2076 working age Australians (aged between 18-64) currently in either full or part-time employment, or actively looking for work.

Age, gender and location quotas were applied to the sample and following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by age, gender and location to reflect the latest ABS Australian working age population estimates.

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Sources:
1 Comscore, Total Visits, September 2021
2 Google Analytics, Unique Visitors, February 2020

Contents

Diversity and inclusion: what it is and why it matters	04
The case for improving support for LGBTQI+ workers	07
Case Study: Sarah Weaver, Associate Director, Accenture Group	10
Understanding the nuances	14
Suggested steps to becoming a more conscious employer	16
Common issues affecting Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce	18
Types of discriminatory behaviours to look out for	20
Suggested initiatives to drive inclusivity and belonging for LGBTQI+ employees	27

Diversity and inclusion: what it is and why it matters

In Australia, there is a growing awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion (D&I) at work, recognised for its potential to have a positive impact on people's working lives, their health and wellbeing and business performance. With D&I championed and supported by a rising number of employers and employees, initiatives designed to promote D&I are becoming increasingly widespread across Australian workplaces and are rapidly gaining momentum. In collaboration with YouGov, Indeed has carried out one of the most comprehensive studies into D&I within Australian workplaces.

Celebrating our differences

Representing the broad spectrum of cultural and social differences that make up Australian society, diverse workforces bring together and support individuals who each have their own life experiences, perspectives, and personalities. Enriched by people who all think in different ways, a high level of diversity in an organisation is closely linked to improved productivity, innovation, problem-solving and decision-making. With the freedom to be your true self in an environment that drives opportunity and supports equality, diversity is also integral to building positive and motivating workplace cultures.

Creating environments where everyone feels they are accepted and belong

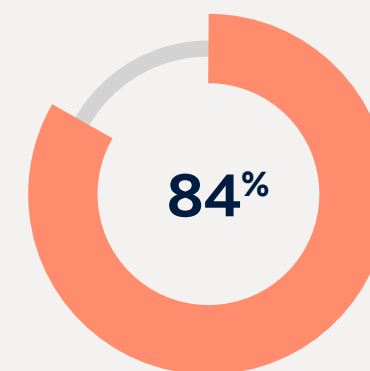
Diversity within a workforce can be achieved when inclusivity is entrenched in organisational culture. Intangible and hard to measure, inclusivity encompasses the many invisible social and environmental forces that support and give confidence to diverse employees. Company hiring practices, organisational values, communication styles, and the way people act and behave are just some of the factors that can make the difference between an environment where everyone feels accepted, valued, and able to contribute, and one where people don't.

Their individuality becomes an important part of the story.

Employers that make D&I a reality within their workplace create the conditions to enable all employees, regardless of their social and cultural background, to feel they truly belong. By forming meaningful connections with colleagues and the environment they work in, diverse employees experience equal freedom to grow within an organisation, not only while staying true to their individuality and values, but also while their individuality becomes an important part of the story.

Supporting our future of work

With the benefits of diversity, inclusion and belonging now widely known on both sides of the employer-employee fence, it's not surprising that organisational values and initiatives promoting D&I have become key to attracting talent and retaining employees in a modern job market. With the potential to have an impact on business success, working experiences, and career pathways, the Indeed/YouGov survey shows that when looking for a new job, most Australians (84%) think it's important the organisation they apply to promotes D&I for all staff.



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The case for improving support for LGBTQI+ workers

Workplaces can do more for Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce

In the Indeed/YouGov survey, one-in-ten (10%) working age Australians identify as part of the LGBTQI+ community, but the results of the survey also suggest that Australian workplaces could be paying more attention to the issues affecting this group at work. These issues can include a variety of environmental and cultural factors which cause LGBTQI+ employees to conceal their identity and feel uncomfortable at work, which ultimately affects their wellbeing, performance, and job satisfaction.

While a third (33%) of all working age Australians say their organisation has publicly supported or championed gender equality in the past, followed by racial and cultural equality (31%) and disability causes (24%), only 22% say their organisation has supported or championed LGBTQI+ causes.

The apparent inequality in support for LGBTQI+ workers highlights the importance of having a coordinated strategy to ensure different identities within the community are included and feel like they belong in the workplace. Currently, the survey shows that six-in-ten Australian employers are unlikely to have a D&I policy, even though more than eight-in-ten (81%) working age Australians say it is important their workplace supports D&I – an increase since the 2020 survey.

10%

10% of workers identify as LGBTQI+

41%

41% of workers say their employer has a D&I policy

There's plenty of room for improvement

Having confidence that the people around you respect and support your identity and individuality is the foundation of building strong and healthy working relationships, and this confidence can be drawn from an organisation's actions and initiatives, company policies and values, workplace culture, or a combination of each. Meaningful relationships of mutual trust and respect are at the core of what it means to feel truly included at work and empowered to innovate and embrace opportunities, regardless of your differences.

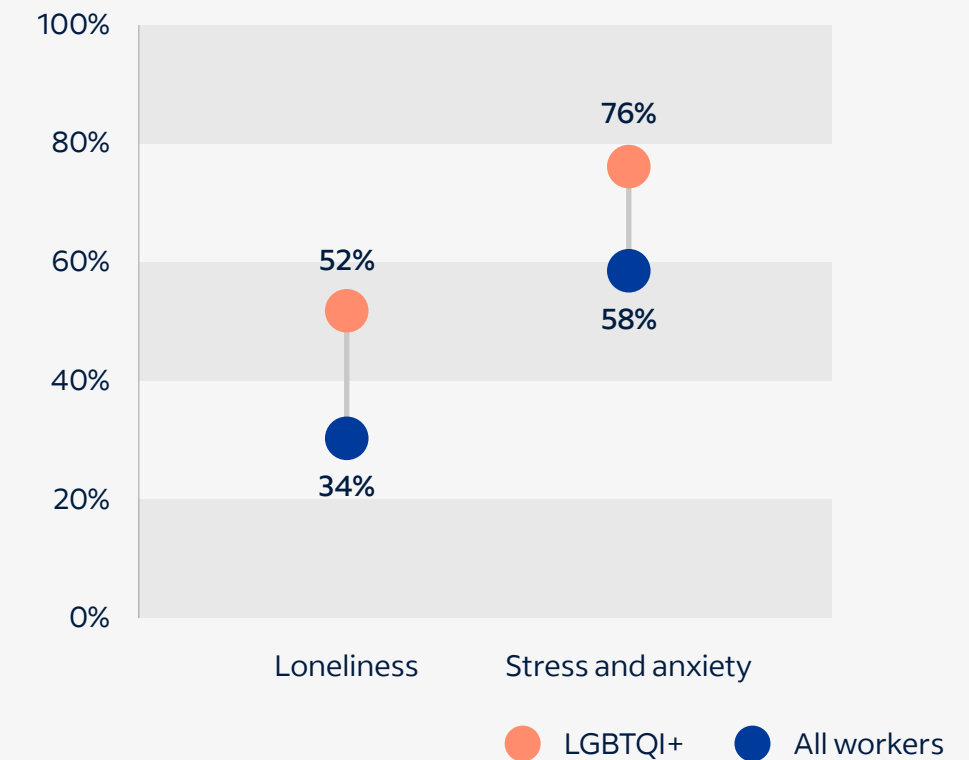
While we know from our 2022 survey workers in Australia feel that publicly supporting LGBTQI+ causes is lacking in organisations compared to other important causes, around half of Australia's LGBTQI+ workers say there has been no improvement to their general relationship with colleagues (50%) or with their direct manager or leader (47%) over the past year. Meanwhile, more than one-in-ten say that each relationship has become worse – 10% and 14%, respectively.

Why it's so important to boost support for LGBTQI+ employees

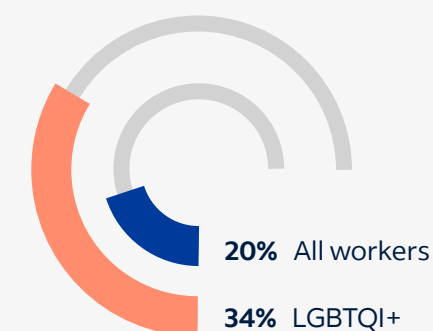
The survey shows levels of stress and anxiety among LGBTQI+ working age Australians have been significantly higher over the past 12 months compared to all working age Australians – 76% versus 58%. Meanwhile, more than half (52%) of LGBTQI+ workers have also experienced feelings of loneliness in the past year compared to only 34% of all working age Australians.

Maintaining mental health and wellbeing is critical to productivity, performance, and career success. Without offering more support, employers could be at risk of inadvertently putting Australia's large pool of skilled LGBTQI+ workers at a disadvantage.

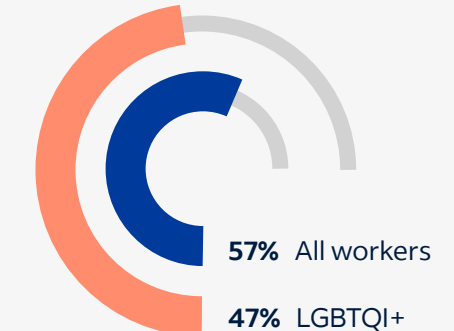
It also appears LGBTQI+ employees are more likely to work in direct customer-facing roles (34%) compared to all working age Australians (20%), with more than one quarter (26%) working in the retail and hospitality industry compared to less than one-in-five (18%) for all workers. As retail and hospitality jobs typically involve shift-work, this statistic is likely to be linked to the results which show that fewer LGBTQI+ workers are likely to be employed full-time compared to all Australians (47% compared to 57%).



Work in customer facing roles



Employed full-time



Employers across all industries should be reminded of the importance of creating safe and inclusive environments to attract and support equal opportunities for Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce, especially as mental health challenges appear to be elevated for LGBTQI+ employees generally.



CASE STUDY

Sarah Weaver

Associate Director,
Accenture Group

The following case study references sensitive topics including self-harm.

Tell us about your role with Accenture Australia?

I am a Master Technology Architect. My role can be quite varied, depending on what is needed for a given client. I view my work as helping our customers to create technology solutions that support and enable their business objectives, while allowing them to focus on their core areas of expertise.

Do you feel that trans people at work receive the same recognition and support as other minority groups, including members of the LGBTQI+ community, and why do you think this is?

In some workplaces, like Accenture, trans people are afforded the same recognition and support as other minority groups. I think because of my seniority, I have been lucky to receive more support than perhaps more junior

people have had before I came out. The support trans people are receiving now is starting to change and that is due to having visibility from leaders. At Accenture, I am working internally to advocate and provide concrete support for all team members. I believe that being visible – as is the case for all minority groups in the workplace – makes a huge difference.

However, we still have a long way to go to create equal recognition and support across all workplaces. Transphobia and discrimination are also regular occurrences for many trans people looking to find work. I think this comes down to a combination of bigotry and a lack of understanding from cis people on what the trans experience is like. There are a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings about us in the broader community that need to be eradicated. These can be shifted through creating greater visibility, training and education.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges for trans people in a professional setting?

One of the biggest challenges for trans people is being able to live authentically and feeling

“The number one thing that I would like to see more of is financial support and leave for trans people going through gender affirmation.”

trans people back in both their personal and professional lives.

The other major challenge I see is once a trans person is out, it comes down to having their transition recognised initially. This includes the correct pronouns, changing their legal name and the recognition that they have changed genders. These challenges usually wane over time but it can be difficult at first.

supported by their workplace when they do come out. When I reflect on my own experience, one of my biggest fears was that I would be rejected by my workplace when I did come out and it would ruin the career I had built. That fear of not being supported is one that holds many

What can employers do to improve the working experiences of trans workers (such as ensuring they are able to be their true selves and have access to equal opportunities)? Are there any initiatives from your experiences that you think work well?

The number one thing that I would like to see more of – and there's a couple of organisations in Australia doing it now – is financial support and leave for trans people going through gender affirmation. The reason I say that is because it is an incredibly expensive process which isn't currently supported by Medicare and costs upwards of \$200,000 over a number of years for some people.

Typically, a trans person would have to take out annual leave and spend their life savings to undergo gender affirmation while cisgendered people are able to plan for retirement and take holidays. Seeing organisations offering gender affirmation leave and/or financial support is a major step to creating equal opportunities for trans people and allowing them to feel like their authentic selves. I think it would be the most valuable thing that any organisation can do for their people.

What advice would you give to employers when it comes to the best ways to engage with and listen to the voices of LGBTQI+ workers?

Everyone should feel equally accepted in the workplace and that they can bring their full, authentic selves to work. Whether the person is trans or gender diverse, has a disability, or comes from a different background, everyone

“Whether the person is trans or gender diverse, has a disability, or comes from a different background, everyone needs to feel accepted for who they are and feel as though they are part of the community.”

needs to feel accepted for who they are and feel as though they are part of the community.

Pride networks are incredibly important but they really need to be backed by senior executive level sponsorship and support so that it doesn't just feel like it is an advocacy

group. It should be a group that listens to the voices of LGBTQI+ workers and can make meaningful change happen within the organisation. Having a support network and training are both amazing but businesses need to actually stand up and let trans staff know they understand what they are going through is challenging by having the sponsorship of senior executives.

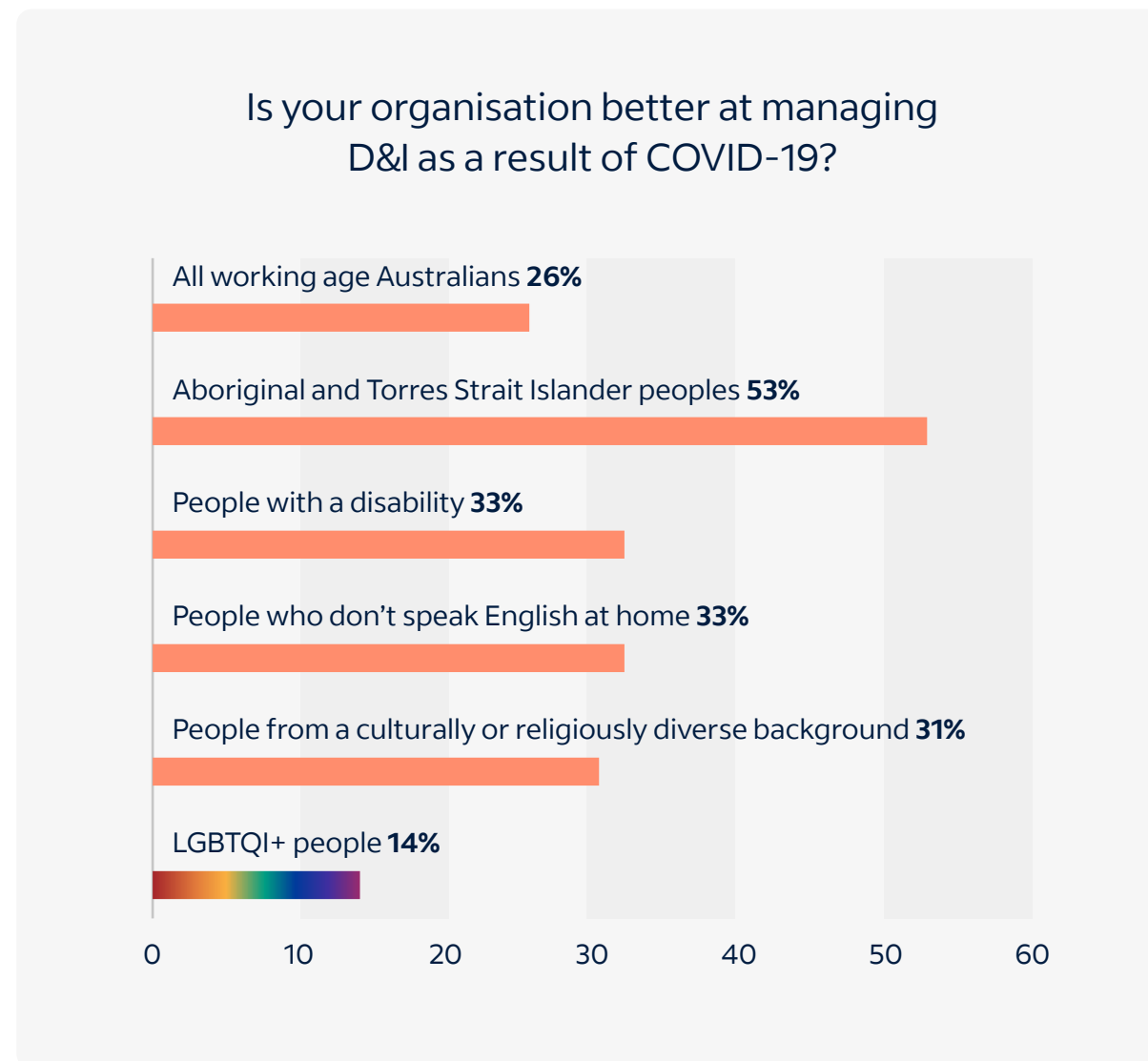
Can you share some of the key benefits (personally and professionally) you have experienced while working in an environment that you know recognises and openly supports your identity as a trans person?

Prior to coming out, I struggled a lot with feeling like my authentic self and this permeated throughout both my personal and professional life. I suffered daily with depression and anxiety which led to self-harm ideation and behaviours. Being able to come out and live authentically with the support of Accenture has helped me deal with and overcome these challenges. Going from feeling misaligned in my gender identity and struggling to get through the day to receiving the support I have had through this transition has helped me tremendously. I no longer suffer from the same level of anxiety and depression that I once had, meaning I can feel comfortable in my workplace. At Accenture, I have also been lucky enough to be able to advocate for and act as support for other trans people going through the process. This has been hugely rewarding and I hope will have a positive impact for other trans people in the workplace moving forward so we can all live to be our true selves.



Understanding the nuances

Interestingly, the Indeed/YouGov survey shows that less than half as many LGBTQI+ employees think their organisation has become better at managing D&I since the pandemic compared to other minority groups. But what could be the reason for the gap?



The stark contrast between LGBTQI+ workers' perception of their organisation's efforts to support and improve D&I with that of other minority groups could be an indication that employers are struggling to understand and respond to the very different issues and challenges experienced by identities within the LGBTQI+ community.



"Asexuality is mostly unknown, and I don't feel like explaining it to people."

– Female, 22, VIC

Without this understanding, generalised efforts are unlikely to be effective whether they are to do with how an organisation publicly shows support and champions causes, or how it goes about ensuring all members of the LGBTQI+ community are treated equally and feel included in the workplace. An article by management consulting company McKinsey & Company recently suggested that many

"Some workplaces are not inclusive or understanding of non-binary or trans identities, and so sometimes I will hide this from colleagues."

– Non-binary, 18, WA

employers focus more on supporting sexual orientation diversity in the workplace than on gender identity or expression – also revealing that transgender adults are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to those who are cisgender, and that cisgender employees make 32% more money per year compared to transgender employees.¹

¹ McKinsey & Company, 2021, [Being transgender at work](#)

Suggested steps to becoming a more conscious employer

Listen at an individual level

Publicly showing support for LGBTQI+ workers and rolling out D&I initiatives in the workplace is an important part of being a supportive employer. However, we believe that giving every employee a voice is also an important, if not critical, first step in improving experiences for everyone. You can get to know the different identities that make up your workforce and develop a deeper understanding of their individual experiences and perceptions by making authentic connections which invite real, actionable insights.

Listening techniques might include sending out surveys, encouraging one-on-one catch ups between team members and their managers, and arranging group meet-ups where individuals feel safe to be open and discuss their issues. Each forum could be an invaluable source of information around different identities within the organisation, their individual experiences at work, and what can be done to ensure everyone is treated equally and empowered to achieve their best.

Audit talent acquisition and development processes

To get a clear picture of the state of play when it comes to equal opportunity, it's important to stay informed about the backgrounds of new employees joining the organisation as well as those who are promoted from within.

With this transparency, employers can identify any patterns or trends that might be indicative of conscious or unconscious biases which may be affecting the representation LGBTQI+ employees within the organisation

or the career opportunities available to them. For example, a disproportionate number of LGBTQI+ staff in junior-level roles compared to management or executive-level might be a sign that your approach to talent acquisition or development needs an overhaul with a D&I focus.

Provide awareness training to employees, business leaders and decision-makers

Research indicates that many organisations focus on sexual orientation diversity more than other LGBTQI+ identities such as transgender and non-binary, which could be a sign of lagging awareness and understanding of other identities. While it's fair to say that society has gradually progressed in its understanding and acceptance of sexual orientation issues over a few decades, other LGBTQI+ identities are only recently becoming recognised and listened to.

Employers can help drive change and improve experiences for all LGBTQI+ employees by educating workers at all levels of the business about the different identities and specific challenges they face. Creating platforms for transgender and non-binary employees or other role models to discuss their experiences and views with their workforce could be a great way to promote awareness and recognition in an organic and authentic way.

Create an environment that doesn't inadvertently ignore LGBTQI+ employees

Generalisations around people's identity can leave LGBTQI+ employees feeling isolated, unseen, and unheard. In the workplace, this often crops up in communications, such as using 'he' or 'she' pronouns against a person's preferences or using the terms 'husband' or

'wife' instead of 'partner'. Aside from avoiding language that only recognises the majority in a diverse work environment, establishing unisex toilets is another way an organisation can avoid making prejudicial assumptions about workers' identities and personal preferences.

Common issues affecting Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce

What are some of the common issues for Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce today?

Nearly half (44%) of working age LGBTQI+ Australians say they have experienced discrimination at work which includes either a personal experience of discrimination or witnessing it happening to others. A study by global analytics and advisory company, Gallup, points out that discrimination at work can cause disengagement, affect wellbeing and the perception of organisational culture, and negatively impact a person's opportunities and their feelings of psychological safety, belonging and their ability to work at their best.²

"I do not want to be entirely personified by my sexuality, and therefore when meeting new people...unless it is relevant, I do not tend to volunteer the information that I am gay."

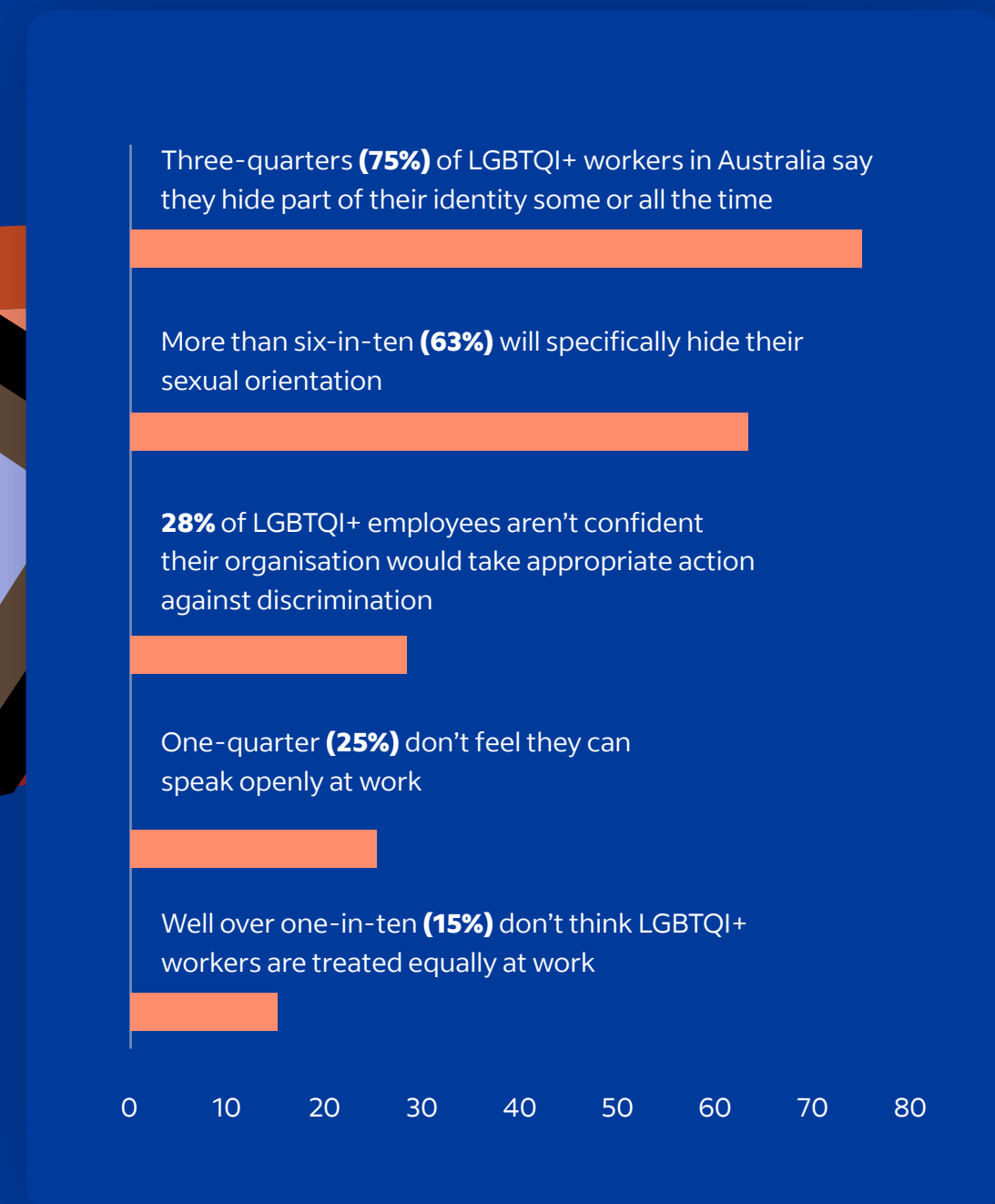
– Male, 34, NSW

The Indeed/YouGov survey highlights several issues currently playing out among Australia's LGBTQI+ workforce which could be alleviated by employers doing more to champion and prevent the marginalisation of LGBTQI+ workers. Importantly, all have the potential to impact wellbeing, productivity, and performance which can have a flow-on effect on working relationships and career progression.

"I am a non-binary person who is also bisexual. It is hard to open up for fear of being treated unkindly for my gender and my sexual preferences. I also do not like being stereotyped and have resulted in being quiet with my sexuality."

– Non-binary, 19, Victoria

² Gallup, 2021, Understanding the Effects of Discrimination in the Workplace



Types of discriminatory behaviours to look out for

Discrimination in the workplace, regardless of whether it is overt or subtle, can cause LGBTQI+ workers to feel increasingly disconnected from their organisation and colleagues which can lead to the many consequential issues identified by the Indeed/YouGov survey. Some of the common behaviours which should be recognised and addressed include:

Casual stereotyping

Stereotyping can occur in a variety of ways and circumstances, but generally, it involves making broad-brush assumptions about a particular group of people without regard to the personal characteristics of individuals. An example of casual stereotyping might include a worker suggesting a colleague will be better or worse at a particular task because certain skills or personal qualities are stereotypically associated with their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It's also important to be mindful of the quieter forms of stereotyping which can prevent workers from getting to know each other personally and interacting effectively. This might include workers who hold negative views of colleagues based on their belonging to the LGBTQI+ community, which influences how they treat LGBTQI+ employees, irrespective of their individual qualities and characteristics.

Unjustified exclusion (or inclusion)

Making assumptions about whether a person is likely to participate in activities based on their sexuality or gender identity is a common way LGBTQI+ employees can feel discriminated against. It's also important to recognise that while this behaviour might sometimes appear positive on the surface, it may have a detrimental impact.

Not inviting colleagues to join sports teams or events because it's not considered consistent with their sexual orientation, or on the other hand, targeting specific individuals to join or participate in certain social events or activities based on their gender identity or sexual orientation are examples to watch out for. In both cases, these exclusive or inclusive actions ignore the personal traits of LGBTQI+ employees and give the impression that their true selves are overlooked by others.

Harassment

Harassment doesn't have to occur in an overtly negative way, such as workers making unwanted derogatory comments or even abusing LGBTQI+ colleagues. Quite often, harassing behaviour is framed in a positive light, including when LGBTQI+ workers are regularly asked unsolicited questions about their sexuality or personal life that are unlikely to be asked of others.

While it's usually easier to recognise when someone is the subject of negative harassment in the workplace, it's important to be vigilant of more stealthy types of harassing behaviour and respond accordingly. Be mindful of those targeted questions that start with "What's it like being...", "What do you do when/if...?", "So, do you like...?", "How do you...?", "Have you seen/ been/tried...?"

"I don't really hide part of my identity as such, but I now refuse or avoid answering the same questions again and again."

– Female, 50, ACT

Making assumptions about identity

Assuming a person is (or isn't) of a specific sexual orientation based on a superficial judgment of their personal life, interests, or appearance shouldn't be tolerated. Quite often, these assumptions lead to erroneous conclusions and serve as a sobering reminder that the LGBTQI+ community are all too often perceived according to stereotypes, devoid of individuality beyond their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Misunderstanding the separate concepts of gender, sex, and sexuality

Treating members of the LGBTQI+ community as 'one' will get in the way of efforts to tackle the different issues and challenges experienced by LGBTQI+ identities while creating a safe and inclusive environment for all. It could even lead to some members of the LGBTQI+ workforce being disproportionately discriminated against or misunderstood compared to others.

While gender can be expressed in different ways, such as through behaviour or appearance, and includes male, female, a combination of both, or neither, sex refers to biological sex characteristics including male, female, or natural variations. Sexuality, on the other hand, refers to a person's sexual attraction to others. Crucially, it shouldn't be assumed that a person's gender is indicative of their sexuality or sex characteristics – or vice versa.

“Some people feel weird when they know you're bisexual and often think that just because we're bi, we like everyone.”

– Female, 21, VIC

Whether it's for support or socialising, members of the LGBTQI+ workforce forming alliances is positive – except for when they only arise through their perceived exclusion as outsiders who are unlikely to 'fit in' with the majority. Regardless of the type of activity or project, LGBTQI+ employees should always be made to feel equally included and able to participate.

Maintaining close communication with the LGBTQI+ workforce to hear about their experiences with others as well as monitoring their representation across activities and projects beyond day-to-day job functions could reveal useful insights into the existence of unspoken 'othering' in an organisation.





LGBTQI+ employees are more likely to see feelings of safety and the ability to be your true self as key to D&I at work. But why – and what can we learn from this?

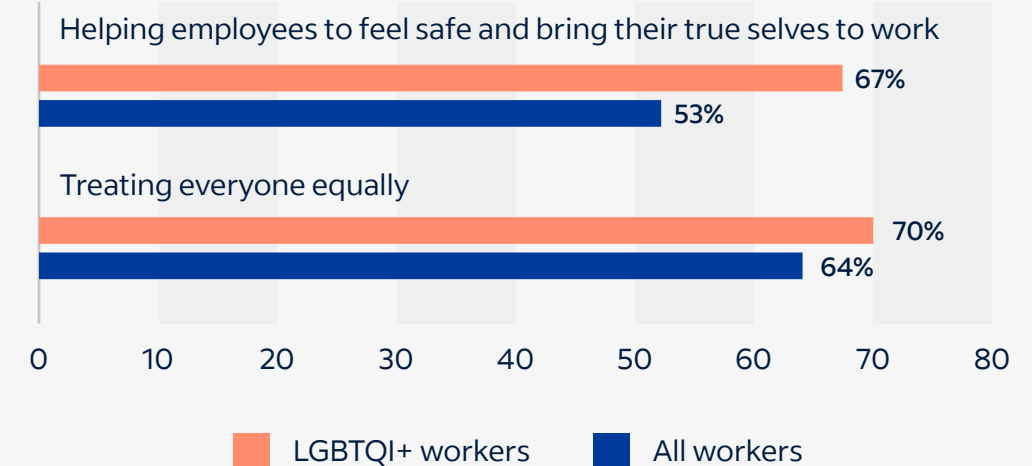
The Indeed/YouGov survey shows just over half (53%) of all working age Australians think that helping employees to feel safe and able to bring their true selves to work is important to D&I, but this rises to more than two-thirds (67%) of working age Australians who identify as LGBTQI+. At the same time, while 70% of

LGBTQI+ working age Australians also say that treating everyone equally is integral to D&I, this falls to 64% for all working age Australians. Crucially, while we've already seen that three-quarters (75%) of LGBTQI+ employees hide part of their identity at least sometimes, this drops to 64% for all working age Australians.

“I am non-binary however, I still wear more traditionally female clothes at work when I would rather wear something more masculine.”

–Non-binary, 52, WA

What does D&I in the workplace mean to you?



The Indeed/YouGov survey findings suggest that our priorities at work can sometimes be driven by our own experiences. In other words, because most employees may not know what it's like to hide part of their identity and not be their true selves at work, there is a risk that policies and initiatives designed to promote safety and openness for LGBTQI+ employees fall short on the D&I agenda.

When developing a framework to promote D&I in the workplace, it's important that Australian employers are mindful of the need to ensure support is appropriately balanced for LGBTQI+ identities who sometimes find themselves hidden or silenced compared to others.

“I don't actually hide anything at work, it's just that an option to say wasn't there.”

–Male, 38, NSW

Suggested initiatives to drive inclusivity and belonging for LGBTQI+ employees

Create an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for LGBTQI+ employees.

ERGs are designed to support underrepresented groups in the workplace through an employee-led community that offers its members personal and professional support. Importantly, while members of an ERG usually share characteristics, such as being part of the LGBTQI+ community, they should also be inclusive of supportive advocates who may not be part of the minority group themselves.

While an ERG creates a safe space for employees who share common characteristics, another key aspect of the role of ERGs is to bring together insights and develop a louder voice for the group in an organisation. An ERG can be an important vehicle for influencing workplace policies, driving cultural change, and promoting professional growth and development for its members by building stronger connections with people across the business.

2. Support and champion LGBTQI+ business leaders.

Raising awareness of role models in the business who are part of the LGBTQI+ community could go a long way towards helping others feel accepted and able to confidently express their true selves. Aside from offering encouragement and inspiration, ensuring members of the

LGBTQI+ community are represented at senior levels of the organisation will put the organisation in a better position to make well-balanced business decisions and drive cultural development with the needs and challenges of LGBTQI+ employees in mind.

3. Make LGBTQI+ identities visible.

Employers can do a lot to improve the sense of inclusion and belonging for LGBTQI+ workers through their communications strategy. Including LGBTQI+ identities in marketing assets such as company case studies, videos and other promotional materials is one of the most obvious opportunities to improve visibility. Offering a platform for LGBTQI+ employees to share their stories and experiences with the wider workforce, such as at company-wide events and celebrations, could also be an effective way to improve the recognition of LGBTQI+ employees and increase their confidence at work.

Improving visibility of LGBTQI+ employees is also about driving targeted changes in culture or 'normalised' behaviours which have traditionally left LGBTQI+ workers feeling ignored, misunderstood, and overlooked. For example, policies which expressly advocate a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination against LGBTQI+ employees, instead of being generalised, are likely to foster a workforce that is more mindful and respectful of their LGBTQI+ colleagues' specific issues and challenges.

While organisations can use external speakers to deliver ongoing training sessions, there are also plenty of online resources available to develop dynamic training modules and presentations internally.

4. Provide workforce training.

Any training program designed to eliminate discrimination and promote inclusivity in the workplace should be extended to include LGBTQI+ identities. While organisations can use external speakers to deliver ongoing training sessions, there are also plenty of online resources available to develop dynamic training modules and presentations internally.

Some of the key features of a training program designed to educate workforces around D&I through the lens of LGBTQI+ employees might include: the use of gender-neutral language; addressing conscious and unconscious bias; LGBTQI+ terminology and their definitions; what discrimination, harassment and bullying look like and how to respond; and how employees can best support their LGBTQI+ colleagues.

5. Make it real.

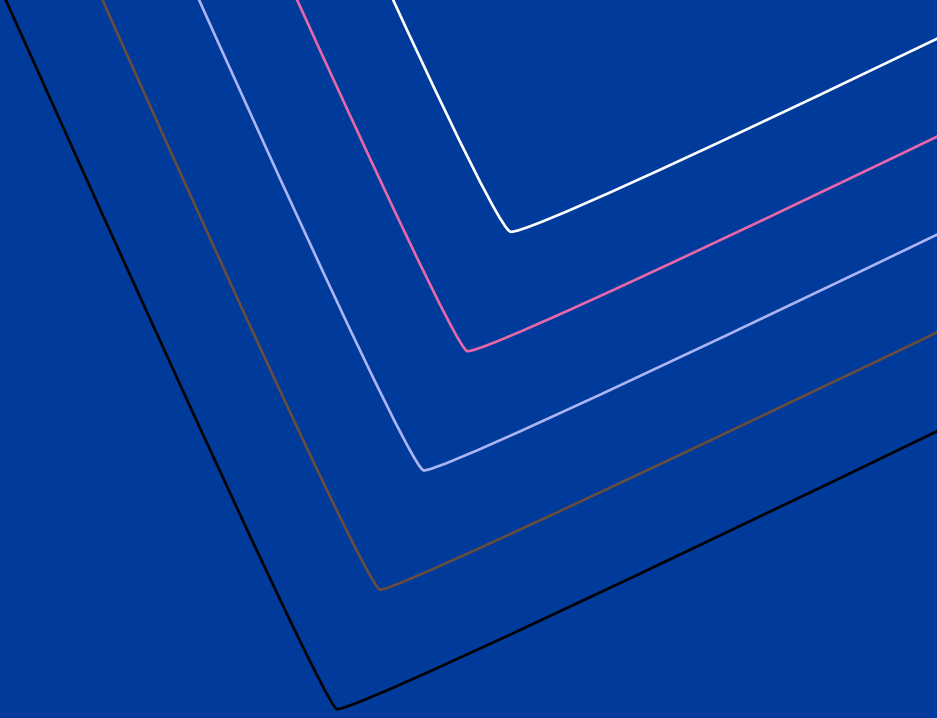
Give employees a reason to be proud of where they work by publicly showing your support for LGBTQI+ causes. Examples of openly supporting the LGBTQI+ community might include participating in key awareness events, being vocal about LGBTQI+ issues and causes on digital platforms like social media or a company website, and donating to or sponsoring LGBTQI+ charities and causes.

Crucially, showing support for LGBTQI+ identities through real actions isn't just essential for LGBTQI+ employees, but also the majority (84%) of all workers who now say that when looking for a new job, it's important the organisation they apply to promotes D&I for all staff.

6. Establish and communicate clear reporting and response processes.

When discrimination, harassment, or bullying behaviour is experienced or witnessed by an employee, employers must be poised to take consistent and meaningful action – otherwise they risk eroding the credibility of their D&I policies and initiatives as well as the faith and general wellbeing of employees including LGBTQI+ identities.

While all employees should be notified of where to go to confidentially report instances of discrimination, harassment, and bullying, business leaders and managers should be knowledgeable about the exact steps to take to investigate and proactively deal with the matter.



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