- LGBTQ+ respondents in regional areas experience the lowest rates of mental health, belonging and acceptance compared with respondents from capital areas, across every measure.
- The further away from the leadership team a respondent is (geographically), the less likely they are to have seen visible signs or behaviours of inclusion in their workplace.
- Regional employees are less likely to be aware of, or have attended, awareness or ally training and are less likely to be aware of resources or information about LGBTQ+ inclusion within their organisation.
- Regional LGBTQ+ respondents are up to 85% more likely than capital city area respondents to have experienced workplace incivility, and bullying and harassment behaviours

EDITION 9: Intersectionality: Experiences of regional, rural and remote employees

Insights from the 2026 AWEI Employee Survey

In 2026, 5,333 respondents (15.1%) lived and worked in Regional, Rural and Remote locations across Australia.

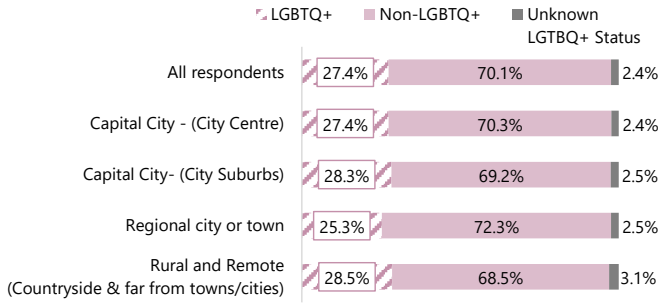
Of the 149 organisations that participated in the survey;

- 24 did not have any regional respondents, and
- 3 did not have any capital city respondents
- Of the remaining 123, the proportion of regional respondents was between 0.4% and 58.6%.

In previous practice points, we have highlighted different understandings and experiences between respondents within organisations by seniority, age, gender, sexuality, and more.

This practice point investigates the potential combined impact of intersectional experiences on employees.

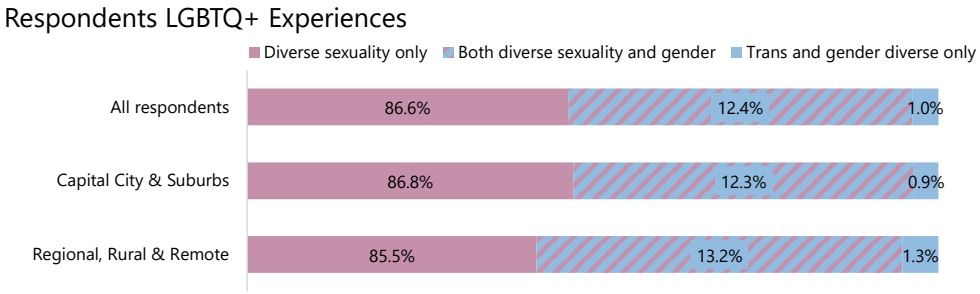
Overall, 27.4% of respondents this year are LGBTQ+. By location, LGBTQ+ respondents differ by only 3.2 percentage points across cohorts.



NOTE: For the remainder of this report, two cohorts are represented: capital city & city suburbs combined, and regional remote and rural locations are combined. Responses from the 859 individuals with unknown LGBTQ+ status are removed.

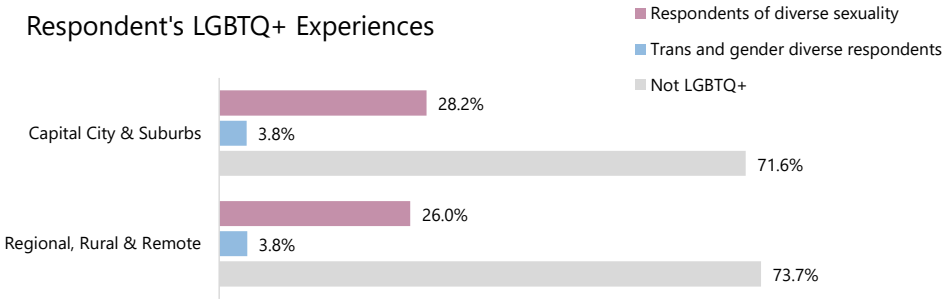
Demographics of LGBTQ+ regional respondents

A significant proportion of respondents have both a diverse sexuality and are trans and gender diverse. Of LGBTQ+ respondents overall, 12.4% have this dual diversity and are slightly more likely to be from regional locations.



Because so few respondents are trans and gender diverse but not of diverse sexuality, we cannot compare the three cohorts separately. When we refer to trans and gender diverse respondents, we include all people with this experience, regardless of whether they also are of diverse sexuality; the same is true when we refer to respondents of diverse sexuality.

When distributed this way, the proportion of respondents included in the trans and gender diverse population differs very little. The proportion of respondents in capital city locations who are of diverse sexuality is slightly higher than within regional respondents.



Work outcome measures.

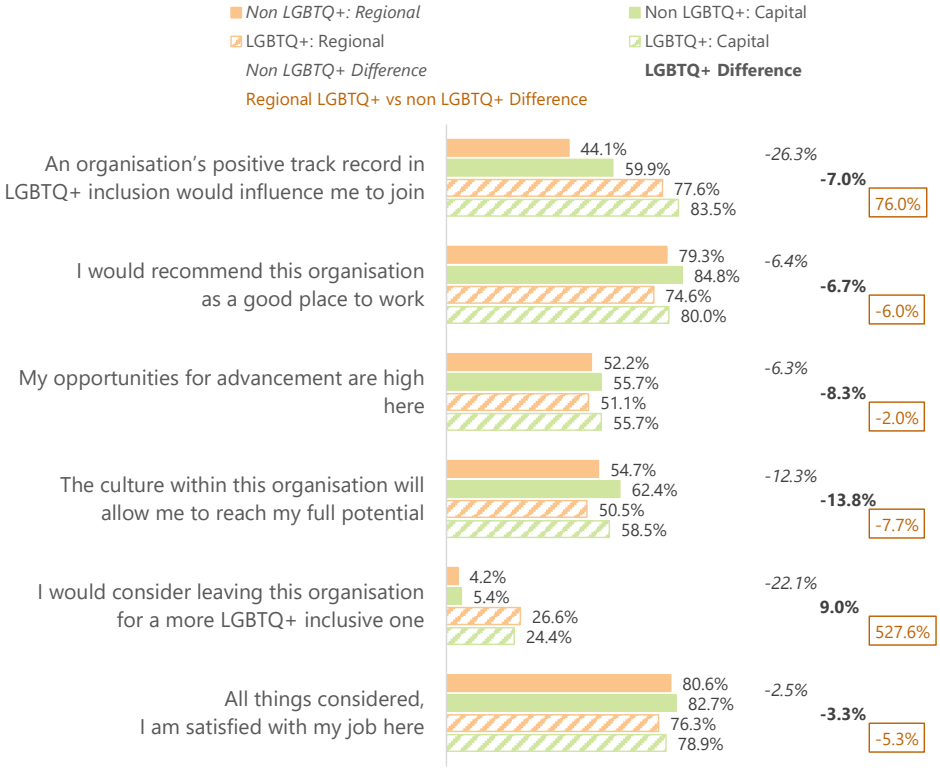
Overall job satisfaction differs little (under 5%) between regional and capital area respondents. However, LGBTQ+ respondents in both cohorts are less satisfied than the average of all respondents in the cohort.

Interestingly, while regional LGBTQ+ respondents are 7.0% **less** likely to agree that an organisation's positive track record of LGBTQ+ inclusion would influence them to join that organisation, they are 9% **more** likely to agree that they would consider leaving their current organisation for one that is more LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Compared to city area respondents, regional respondents are;

- 13.8% less likely to agree that the culture within the organisation will allow them to reach their potential
- 8.3% less likely to feel there are opportunities for advancement, &
- 6.7% less likely to agree they would recommend this organisation as a good place to work.

Attraction, retention and satisfaction



Health and Wellbeing

Across both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ cohorts, regional area respondents are less likely to agree to all health and wellbeing statements.

LGBTQ+ respondents are 3.1% to 9.9% less likely to agree, while the difference between non-LGBTQ+ respondents from capital areas and regional areas is 3.3% to 6.0%.

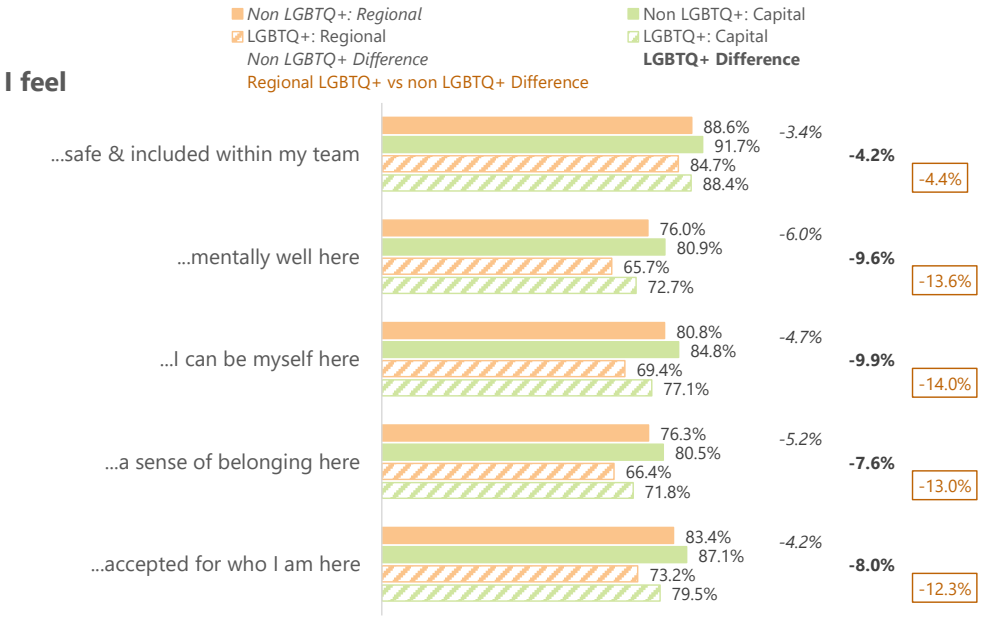
When we consider the difference between regional cohorts, respondents who are LGBTQ+ are less likely to agree with statements by up to 14.0%.

This shows that not only are regional respondents **not** experiencing the same levels of mental health, belonging and acceptance as respondents from capital areas, but LGBTQ+ respondents in regional areas are experiencing the lowest rates of every measure.

Comparisons between the highest agreement cohort – non-LGBTQ+ respondents vs LGBTQ+ regional respondents show the most significant reason why LGBTQ+ inclusion requires consideration of the intersectional and overlapping experiences. Regional respondents are:

- 18.1% less likely to feel mental well-being
- 18.1% less likely to feel they can be themselves in the workplace
- 17.5% less likely to feel a sense of belonging

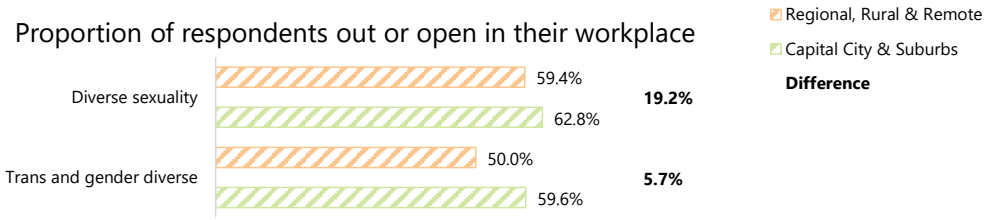
- 16.0% less likely to feel accepted for who they are in the



Being out and open

Regional respondents are 5.4% less likely to be 'out' to all or most regarding their diverse sexuality, and 16.1% less likely to be 'open' to all or most regarding their diverse gender.

26.2% of regional respondents agree they spend time editing conversations or hiding who they are in the workplace, compared with 31.8% of capital city-based respondents.



Visibility of inclusion

From previous practice points, we know that LGBTQ+ inclusion in organisations is significantly improved when respondents can see visible, positive signs of inclusion.

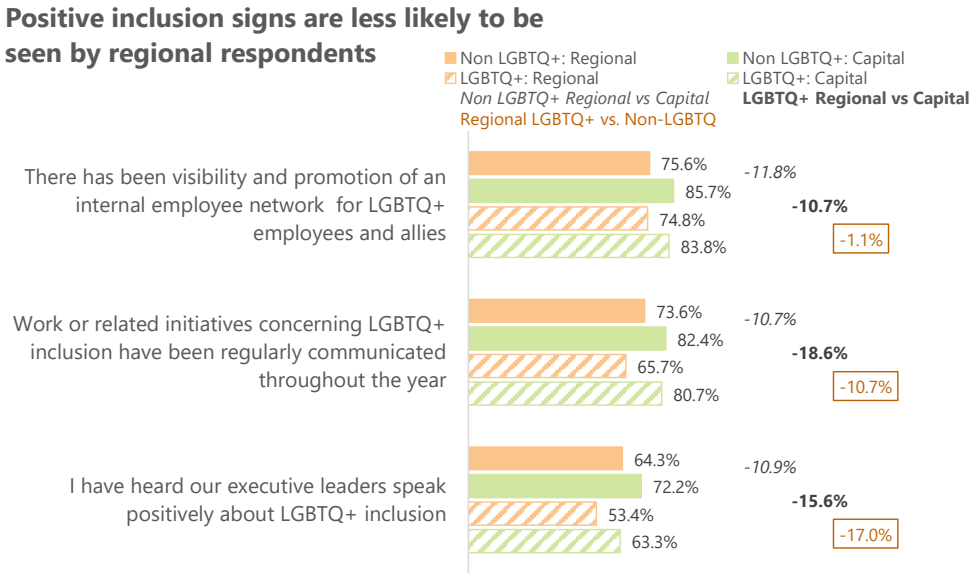
We also have seen that the further away from the leadership team a respondent is, the less likely they are to agree that they have seen these visible signs. 87.7% of all Leadership /executive team members and 86.8% of senior staff members (middle managers) are from capital city locations.

Organisations should ensure inclusion work is equally visible and accessible to employees across areas.

This year we can see that respondents in regional areas are less likely to agree they have seen visible signs of inclusion, including;

- 12.0% less likely to have heard their executive leaders speak positively about LGBTQ+ inclusion &
- 11.5% less likely to agree that there has been visibility of an LGBTQ+ employee network.
- 10.8% less likely to agree that initiatives have been communicated throughout the year.

These differences are mostly greater when comparing LGBTQ+ respondents from capital areas vs regional areas.



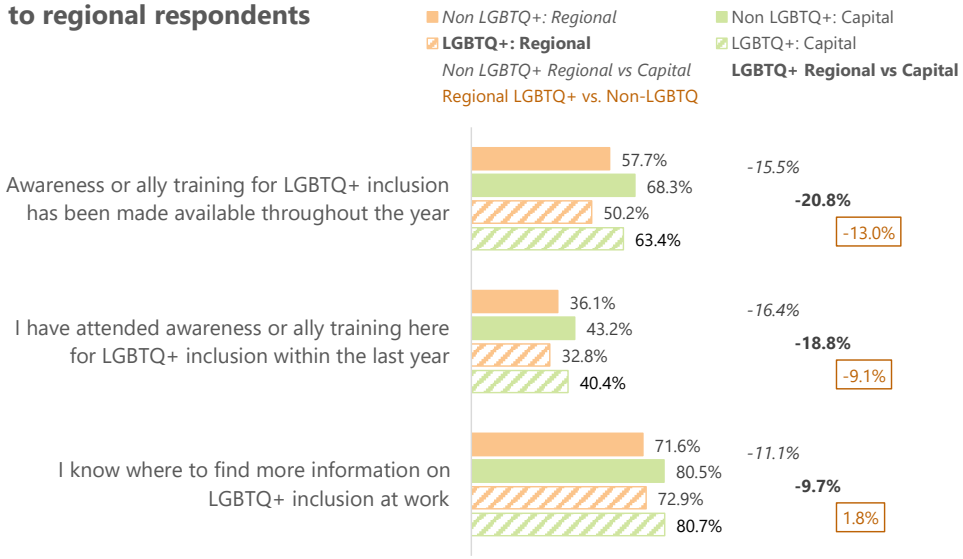
When it comes to awareness or ally training, regional respondents are over 16% less likely to have been aware that this training was available or to have attended it.

They are also less likely to be aware of resources or information about LGBTQ+ inclusion within their organisation.

For LGBTQ+ respondents, capital cities are more likely to be aware of the availability of training and more likely to have attended it than regional respondents.

Consider your communications & training methods – ensure a variety of options are used to increase the likelihood that employees, regardless of location or type of employment, are aware of your inclusion initiatives

Training and information is less available to regional respondents

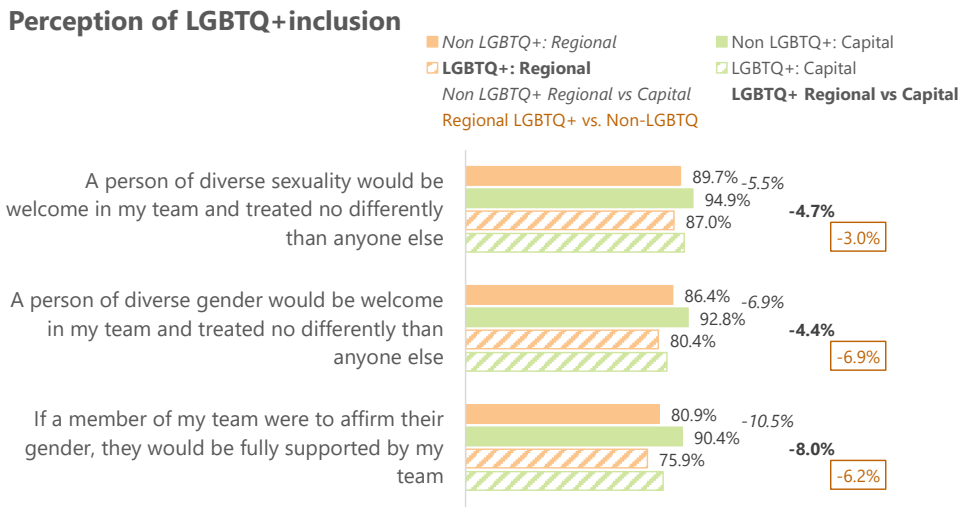


Employee inclusion and acceptance

Respondents generally feel that LGBTQ+ employees would be accepted and included in their teams, though this perception is more likely in the capital area cohort. Comparing non-LGBTQ+ respondents, the regional cohort is;

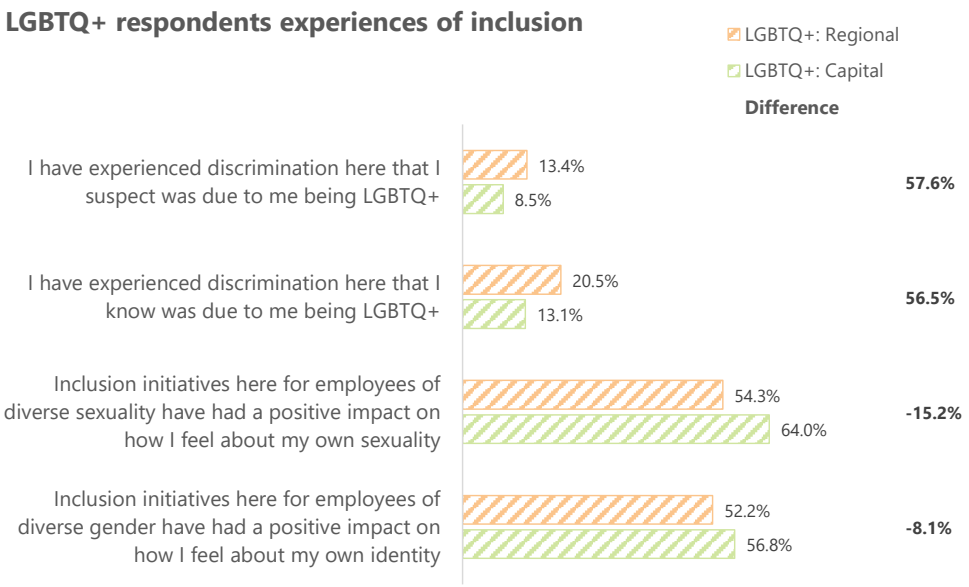
- 5.5% less likely to agree people of diverse sexuality would be welcomed, and
- 6.9% less likely to agree trans and gender diverse people would be welcomed.
- 10.5% less likely to agree that a person beginning the process of affirming their gender in their workplace would be fully supported by their team.

Perception of LGBTQ+inclusion

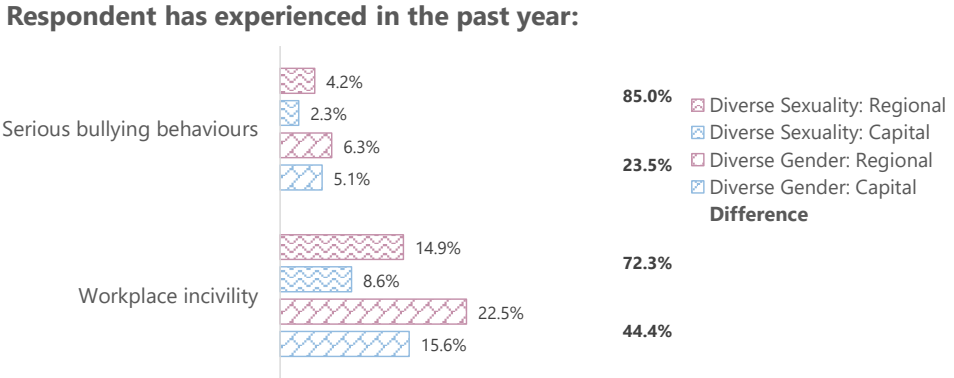


Data from LGBTQ+ respondents provide further insight into how LGBTQ+ employees experience inclusion. Respondents in regional areas are almost twice as likely to have experienced discrimination that they know or suspect was due to their being LGBTQ+.

Regional respondents are less likely to agree that the inclusion initiatives of their organisation have had a positive impact on their own sexuality or gender identity.

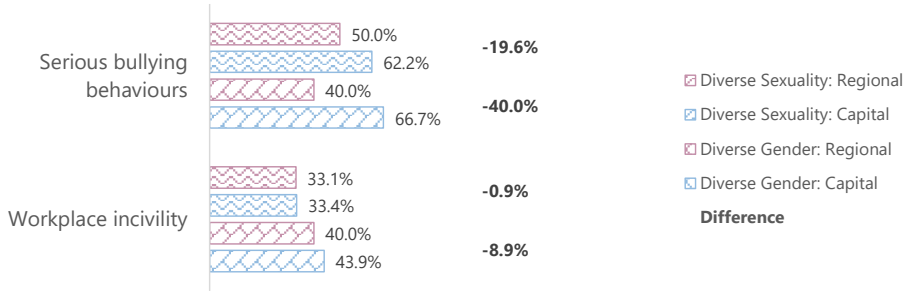


Regional LGBTQ+ respondents are up to 85% more likely than capital city area respondents to have experienced bullying and harassment behaviours. 22.5% of trans and gender diverse regional respondents have experienced workplace incivility, and 6.3% have experienced serious bullying behaviours.



Regional respondents are up to 40.0% less likely to have reported the behaviours to anyone.

Respondent reported the most recent incident:

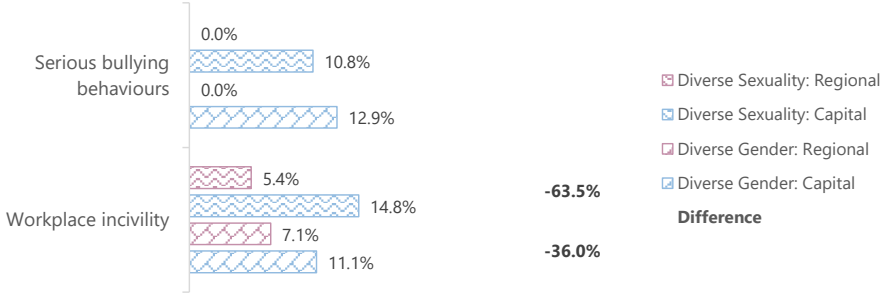


Of those who did report, no regional respondents were completely satisfied with the organisation's outcome of their reporting *serious bullying behaviours*.

When it came to outcome satisfaction regarding *workplace incivility,* regional respondents were

- 63.5% less likely to be satisfied when behaviour was directed towards a person's diverse sexuality, &
- 36.0% less likely to be satisfied when behaviour was directed towards a person's gender identity.

Completely satisfied with outcome:



ACTIONS:

1. Diversity Champions provide this report to senior executives with staff in regional and remote offices, along with an internal assessment of their own organisational data.
2. Regional and remote offices to ensure visible signs of inclusion in the workspace beyond Days of Significance.
3. Learning and Development (L&D) can review organisational data on take-up of training by geographic cohort to understand their operational paradigm best.
4. L&D ensure remote and regional offices have equal knowledge of, and access to, training, noting the reliance on training delivered virtually
5. Leadership at all levels in regional areas attend LGBTQ+ Awareness training as a minimum included as part of their performance agreements.
6. Organisational Pride networks consider more effective approaches to engage and include regional work locations; virtual event offerings, travel to attend events/training.
7. Diversity Champions seek to establish a *regional* champion, perhaps for all D+I cohorts.

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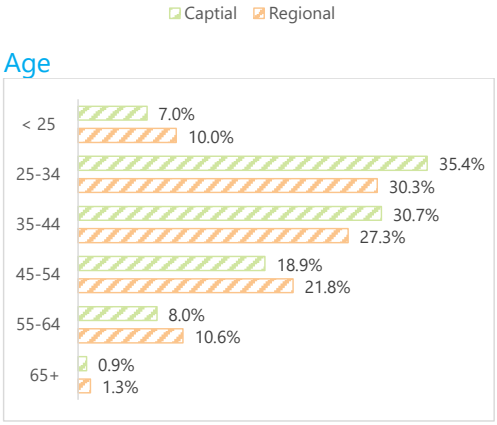
Pride in Diversity (2026). Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Employee Survey. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs

Commented [NE1]: Recommend rewording into action statements:

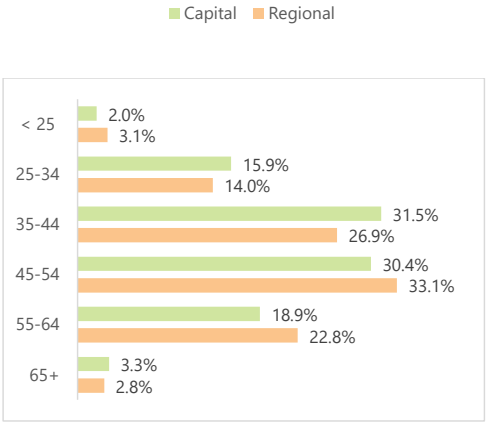
Diversity Champions provide this report to senior executives with responsibility for staff in regional and remote locations, alongside an assessment of relevant organisational data.
Regional and remote offices maintain visible signs of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace throughout the year, beyond Days of Significance.
Learning and Development (L&D) review training participation data by geographic cohort to identify differences in engagement and inform approaches to regional and remote delivery.
L&D ensure staff in regional and remote locations have equal awareness of, and access to, training opportunities, including appropriate access to virtually delivered training.
Leaders at all levels in regional and remote locations complete LGBTQ+ Awareness training as a minimum requirement, with this expectation incorporated into performance agreements.
Organisational Pride networks develop approaches to increase the participation and inclusion of regional and remote staff, including virtual events, regional activities, and opportunities to travel for events or training.
Diversity Champions consider establishing regional champions to strengthen local engagement and visibility, potentially across multiple diversity and inclusion cohorts.

Demographics of Regional respondents

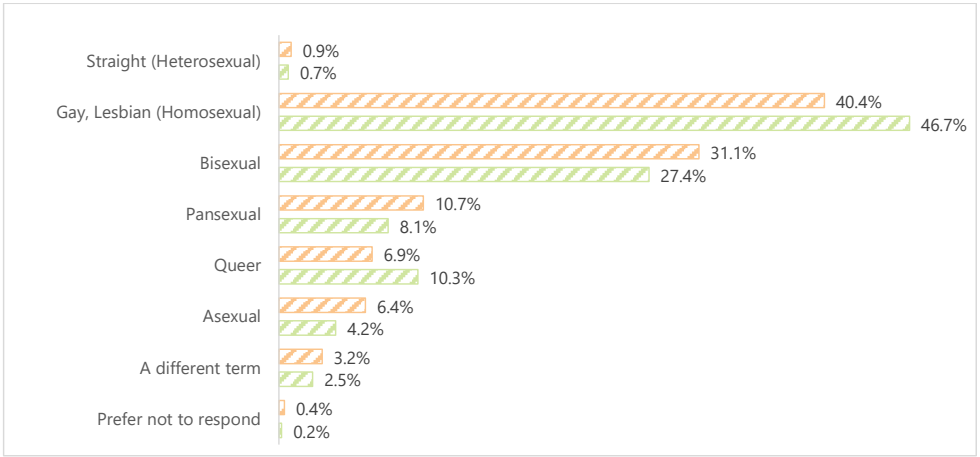
LGBTQ+



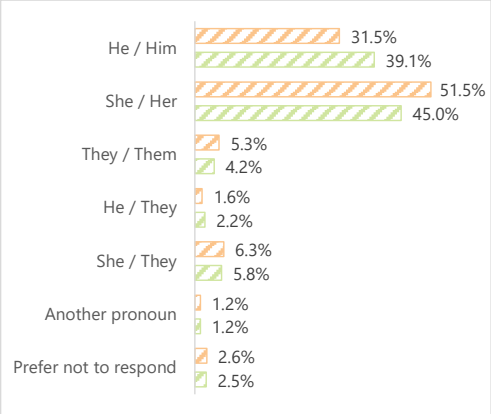
Non-LGBTQ+

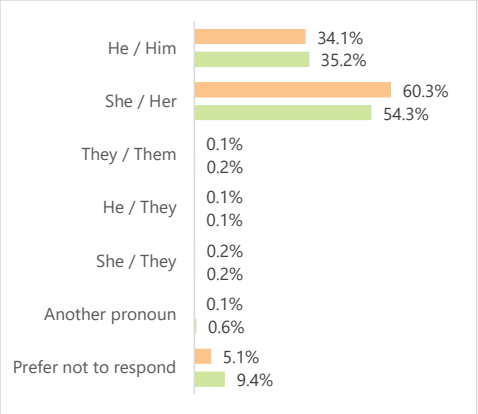


Sexual orientation

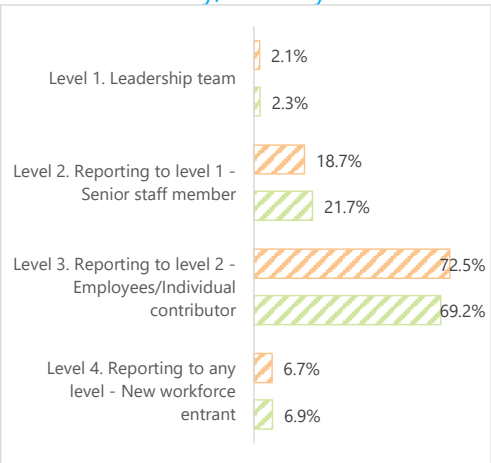


Pronouns

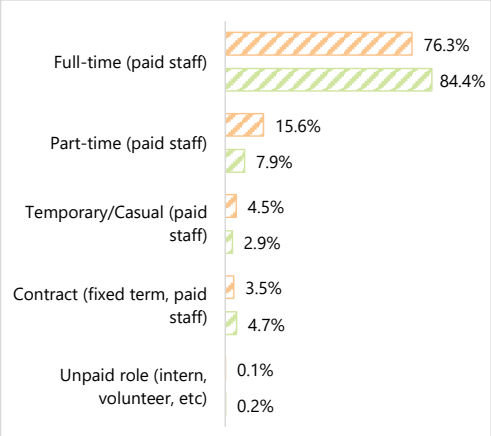


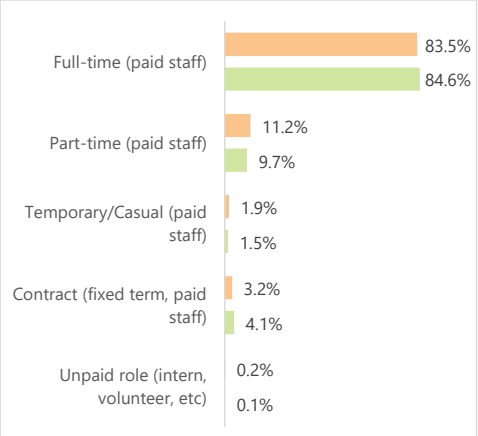


Position Heirarchy/seniority

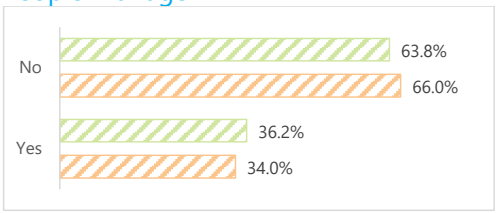


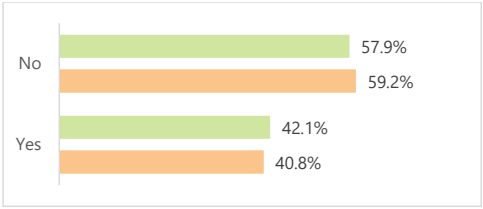
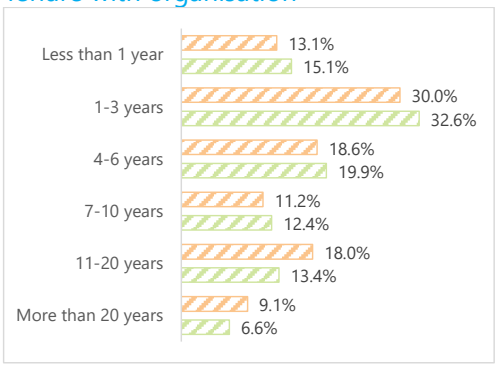
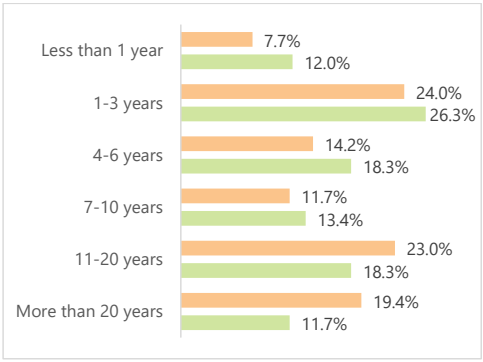
Position type





People Manager





Tenure with organisation