



LGBTGREAT

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For All: The Power of Allyship and Belonging



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Matt Cameron (He/Him)
 CEO, LGBT Great

“This is the moment for organisations and leaders at every level to make allyship not just a gesture, but a core skill.”

Foreword

Matt Cameron (He/Him),
 CEO of LGBT Great, part of Allied People Group.

In many organisations, allyship is no longer optional, it's an engine that powers belonging, wellbeing, and business success. This report shows why allyship is an essential skill for leaders everywhere.

The report draws on insights from over 2,500 professionals worldwide to answer a simple question: How does allyship and belonging shape the experience and performance of talent in the workplace?

The findings are clear: When allyship is present, talent is more likely to thrive, and when talent thrives, organisations are more likely to succeed. Allyship builds trust, fosters belonging, and it can help unlock the full potential of people and organisations.

Thank you to everyone around the world who has contributed to this landmark study. Your voices have helped shape new understanding. A special thanks to our three Headline Sponsors and our team, whose support has made this inspiring work possible.

This is the moment for organisations and leaders at every level to make allyship not just a gesture, but a core skill.

The Five Key Report Insights

1. Allyship Creates Belonging

When people experience allyship at work, they feel a stronger sense of belonging, unlocking trust, engagement, and psychological safety.

2. Belonging and Allyship Help Drive Business Success

Organisations with high levels of allyship and belonging see better morale, productivity, innovation, and retention, evidencing inclusion to be a business advantage.

3. Allyship is for Everyone

Allyship is not limited to any one group, everyone can be an ally, and practical actions from all levels make a real difference.

4. Leaders Set the Tone

Visible leadership is critical: when leaders role model allyship and stay true to organisational values, employees are more likely to follow their lead and help build a culture of belonging from the top down.

5. Leaders Need More Support

More needs to be done to equip and empower leaders to embed allyship into their leadership style, ensuring it becomes an authentic lived value at every level of the organisation.

Our Headline Sponsors



Erika Irish Brown
(She/Her)

Head of Talent Management and Engagement at Citi

“Allyship is one of the most powerful tools we have to unlock the full potential of our people and our organisation. When we show up as allies, we create an environment where every colleague feels empowered to bring their authentic self to work, and contribute their best toward stronger client and community outcomes. True allyship requires both top-down leadership and grassroots action from leaders modeling inclusive behaviors, to each of us shaping the everyday experiences that define our culture. This report highlights the data behind why allyship matters as a business driver and provides practical actions we can all take to be more inclusive allies.”



Mark McLane
(He/Him)

Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Well-being at M&G plc.

“Allyship is not symbolic, it is a responsibility to lead with empathy, act with compassion, and drive impact that uplifts every community. This groundbreaking work delivers timely insights and practical strategies to empower talent and leaders to be more effective, intentional, and impactful in building inclusion and belonging for all.”



Natalie Gill
(She/Her)

Board Director of the Diversity Project

“Allyship is an action/behaviour we’ve been advocating for some time at the Diversity Project. And yet, we still get asked by leaders what they can do that will have the most impact on fostering an inclusive workplace. This report not only evidences the powerful connection between allyship and belonging, it also sets out a clear framework for leaders to move beyond rhetoric, using allyship as a mechanism to improve psychological safety and unlock better business outcomes.”

***“It is not our differences that divide us.
It is our inability to recognise, accept,
and celebrate those differences.”***

Audre Lorde



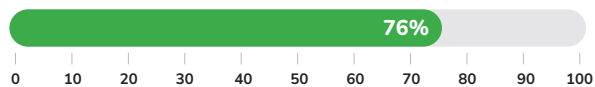
Executive Summary

What Defines an Ally?

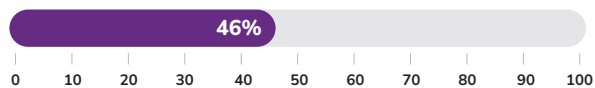
An ally is someone who takes action to help, support and uplift others, working continually to foster inclusion & belonging for all. Personal values, qualities and experiences inform allyship actions, shaping why and how individuals practice allyship.

Motivations for Allyship

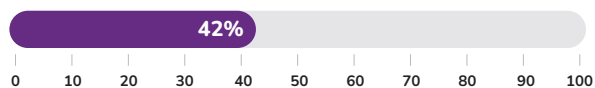
Personal Values and Principles



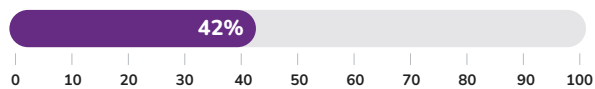
Personal Experiences of Exclusion



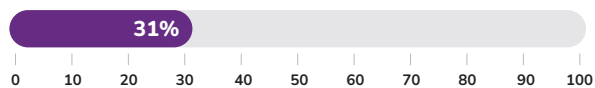
Relationship with Someone from an Underrepresented Group



Desire to Foster an Inclusive Culture in Workplaces and Beyond



Career Development or Leadership Expectations



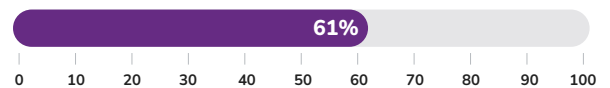
(no. of respondents = 2,207)

Qualities of an Ally

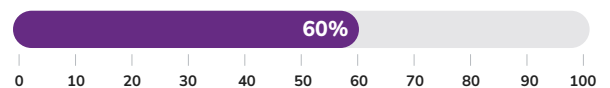
Empathy



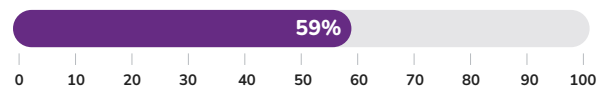
Knowledge



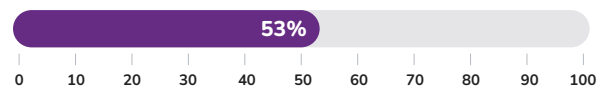
Active Listening



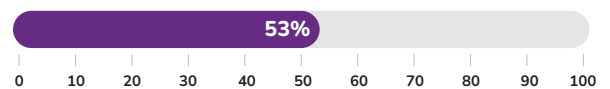
Courage



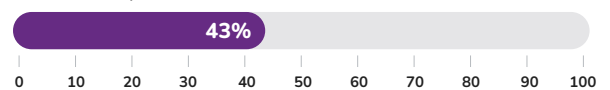
Humility



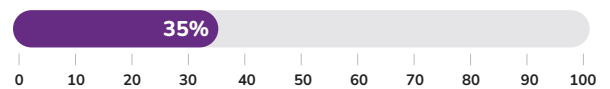
Growth Mindset



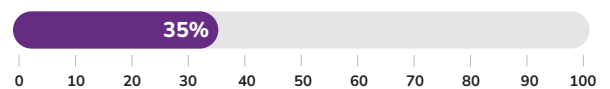
Accountability



Curiosity



Persistence

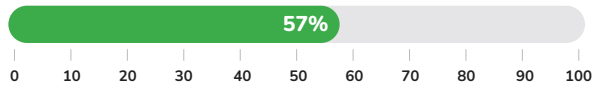


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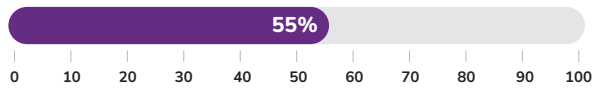


Actions of Allyship

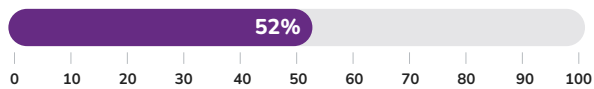
Listening to Lived Experiences



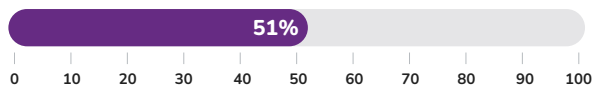
Speaking up when it's Uncomfortable



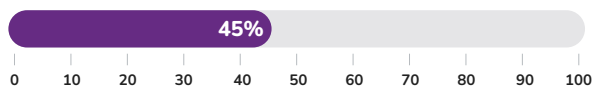
Using Inclusive & Respectful Language (e.g. Partner instead of Boyfriend/Girlfriend, People...)



Proactively Sharing Knowledge and Enhancing Awareness

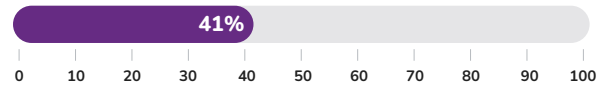


Advocating for Equitable Workplace Policies

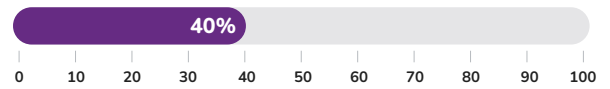


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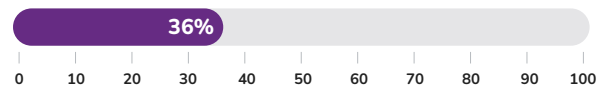
Calling out Exclusionary Behaviour



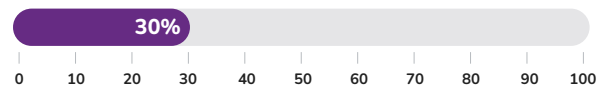
Helping Plan and Organise Initiatives & Events Spotting Different Underrepresented Groups



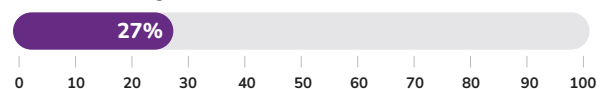
Amplifying Underrepresented Voices



Attending Marches and Demonstrations in Support of Equality



Attending Employee/Business Resource Group (ERG/BRG) Events & Meetings at Work

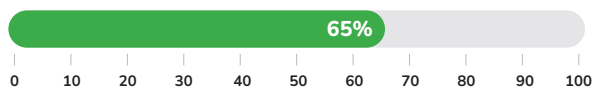


(no. of respondents = 2,207)

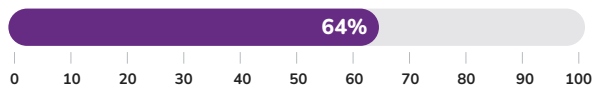
What Creates a Sense of Belonging at Work?

What factors make you feel that you belong in the workplace?

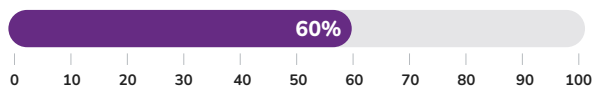
I am Accepted & Included by my Colleagues and the Organisation



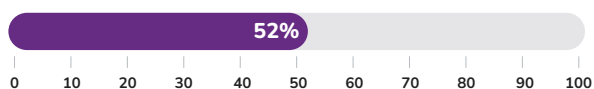
I can be my Authentic Self



I Feel Connected to my Workplace



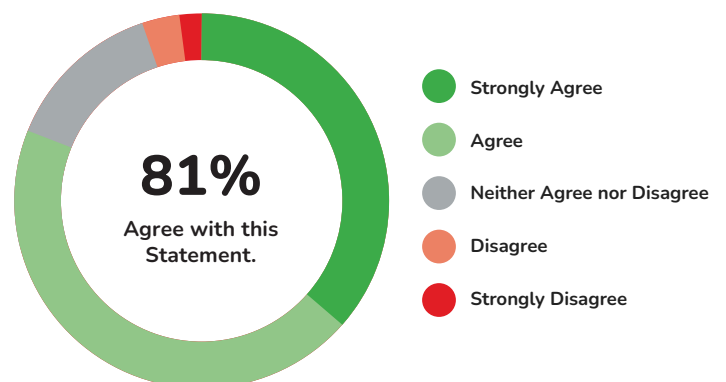
My Workplace Values Diversity and makes Active Efforts to Include Diverse Thoughts and Identities



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

How are Allyship & Belonging Linked?

Allyship in the workplace contributes to a greater sense of belonging.



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

The Impact of a Culture of Allyship

9 in 10 experience improvements in the following as a direct result of a culture of allyship:

- a) Sense of Inclusion
- b) Personal Motivation
- c) Productivity and Performance
- d) Team Collaboration
- e) Morale
- f) Psychological Safety
- g) Job Satisfaction

(no. of respondents = 2,207)



The Impact of Increased Sense of Belonging

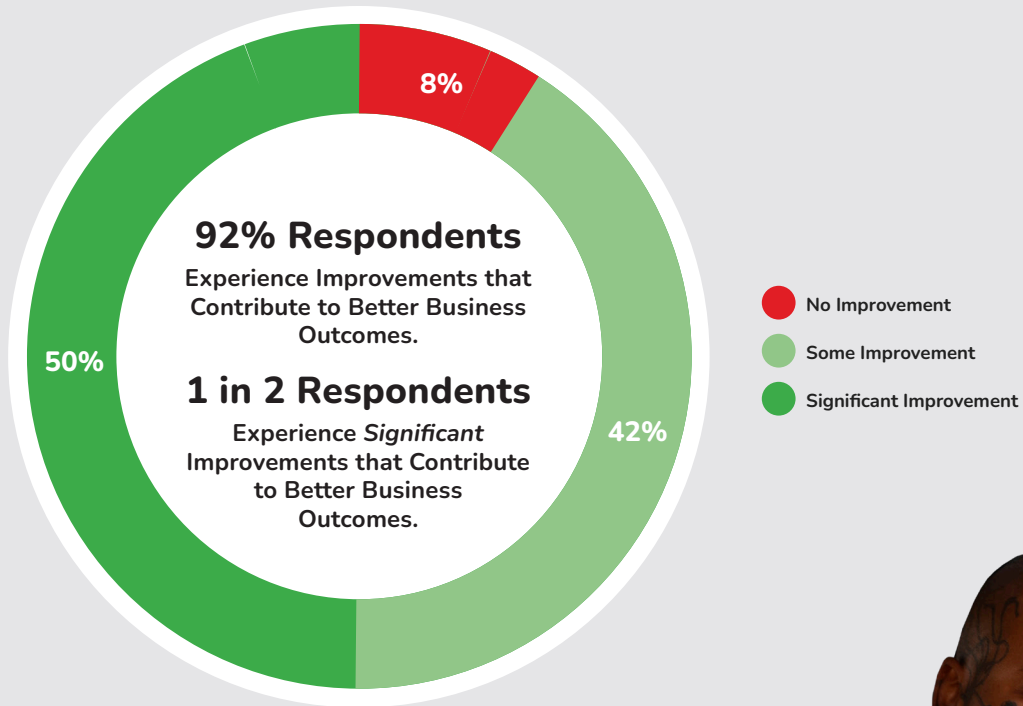
9 in 10 experience improvements in the following as a direct result of an increased sense of belonging:

- a) Mental Health and Wellbeing
- b) Psychological Safety
- c) Innovation
- d) Productivity
- e) Likelihood to Stay with the Organisation
- f) Motivation to Perform

(no. of respondents = 2,207)



The Impact of Allyship & Belonging Together



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

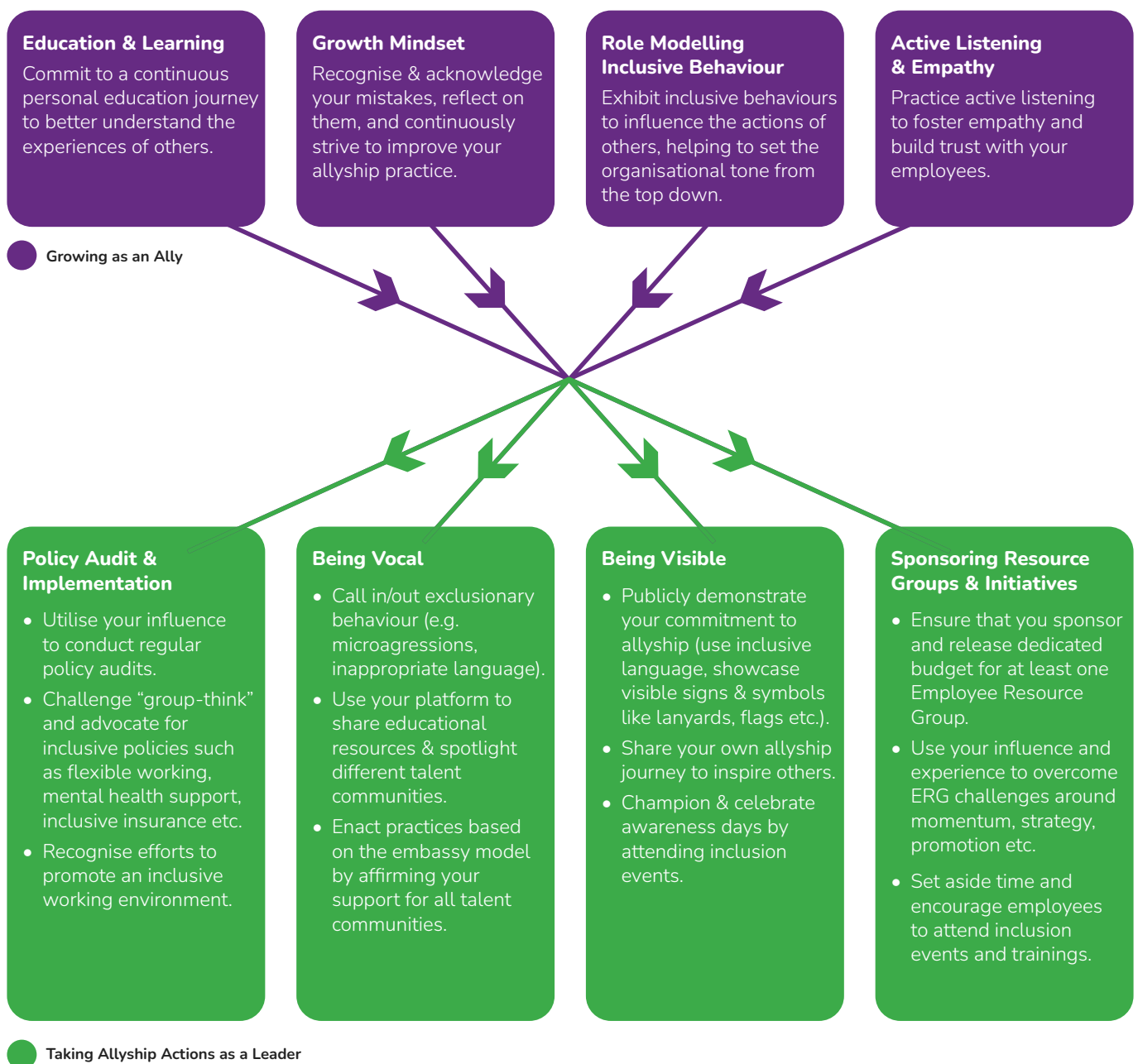


Leading with Allyship



Believe visible allyship from senior leaders is crucial to a culture of inclusion and belonging. The same proportion report being more likely to engage in allyship actions if they see leaders doing the same.

The Executive Ally Framework



“I think executive allies make a massive difference. I think leaders are in a position of a lot of power in what they do, and they have much wider reach than other employees, so just purely on the visibility that they have, I think it has a massive impact on how inclusive the environment feels. And also, a lack of vocal allyship is very loud. You don’t need to be saying the wrong things, or saying, I don’t support these causes for it to feel like it’s not a safe place. And I think leaders need to be really aware of that: that unless you’re visibly championing, supporting, getting involved, and being curious about allyship, silence can also be really loud for people because of your level of power.”



A Note on Intersectionality

This report considers allyship through an intersectional lens. In other words, we explore allyship in relation to all talent communities and groups, and consider the impact that practicing allyship has for everyone in the workplace.

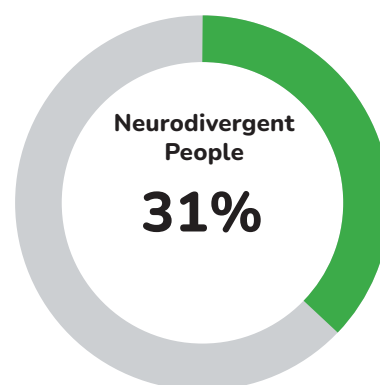
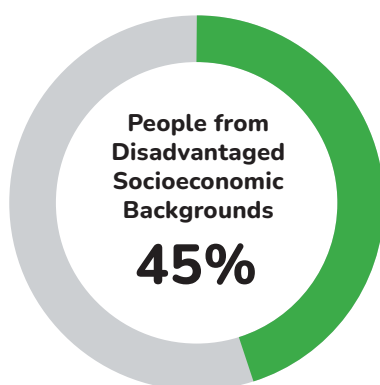
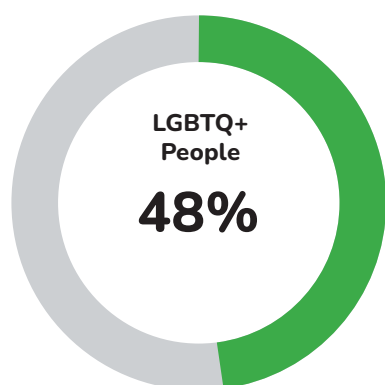
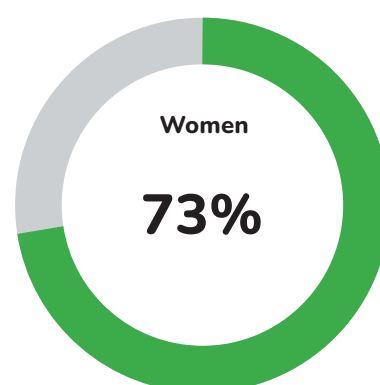
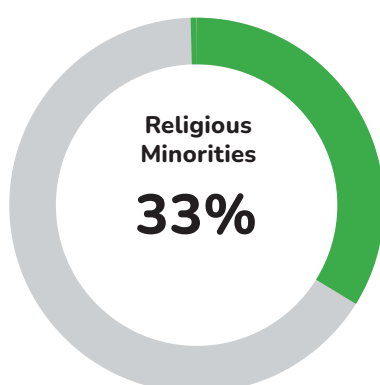
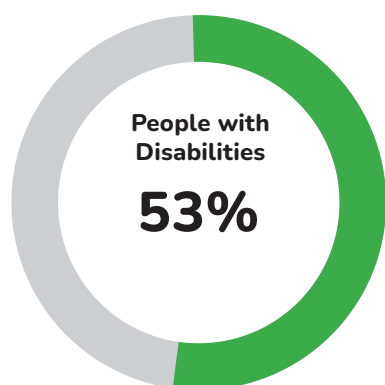
Intersectionality, a concept coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, refers to the ways that different parts of identity overlap to impact an individual's lived experience. Intersectionality

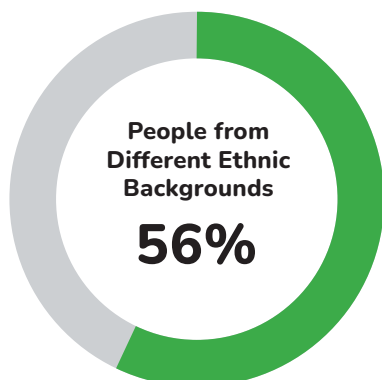
recognises that factors such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, neurodiversity, disability, socio-economic background, age and so on, interact and intersect. The more intersections an individual possesses, the more obstacles to inclusion they may face.

Therefore, allyship must be explored in such a way that takes the distinctive challenges that individuals face into account. By looking to the ways in which allyship can be deployed to

support multiple, and often intersecting, facets of identity, we gain a greater understanding of its far-reaching impact. As revealed in our fieldwork, people of a broad range of demographics consider themselves an ally to many different and intersecting talent communities regardless of their own identity, grounding the concept of intersectional allyship in lived experience.

Which of the Following Groups do you Consider yourself an Ally to?





(no. of respondents = 2,207)

Considering allyship in its broadest terms, in this report we underscore how allyship serves a wide range of talent communities and groups, and demonstrate that it has the power to support, uplift and impact everyone.



1. Becoming an Ally: The Motivation, Qualities and Actions that make an Ally

To understand the power of allyship, the first inquiry needs to be: what is an ally?

Researchers have sought to describe allyship using associated motivations, qualities and actions. Such literature typically describes allyship as an “ongoing practice of actions” that provide a “lever toward the transformation of contemporary inequalities” concerning race, sexuality, gender, disability and/ or class.¹

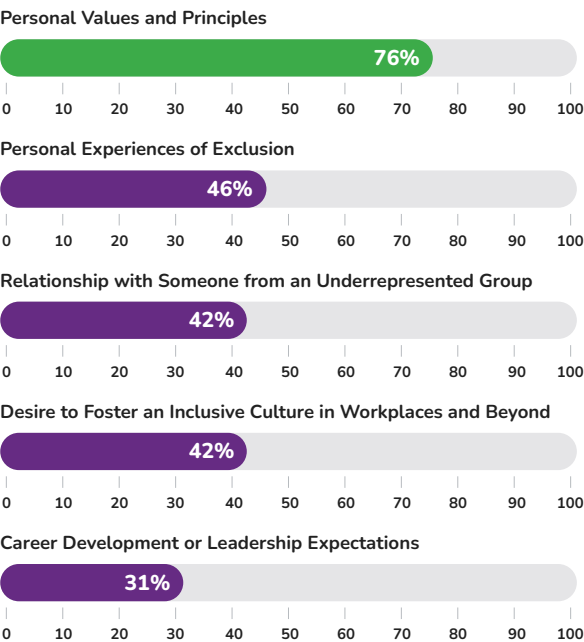
This section aims to comprehensively define allyship using the new evidence gathered in our study. Subsequently, we codify belonging and then demonstrate the evidence-backed connection between allyship and belonging.

1.1 What Motivates an Ally?

One of the central factors that informs allyship practice is motivation: motivation of an individual to be an ally to one or many groups. In our study, we asked people what motivated them to practice allyship.

The most cited reason to become an ally was personal values and principles, with three in four respondents saying that it served as a motivational factor.

Motivations for Allyship



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

“I’m an ally because I want to advocate for a humane, equal and accepting society.”

1L. De Souza, et al. (2024) ‘When People Do Allyship: A Typology of Allyship Action’, *Personality And Social Psychology Review* 29:1, 3-31; S. Atcheson (2021) ‘Allyship is Dictionary.com’s word of the Year. So What Does it Mean?’, *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatheeson/2021/12/09/allyship-is-dictionarycoms-word-of-the-year-so-what-does-it-really-mean/>; J.E. Semerau, et al. (2020) ‘Constructing Allyship and the Persistence of Inequality’, *Social Problems* 68:2, 358-373; K. Ford, et al. (2015) ‘The Not-So-Final Remark: The Journey to Becoming White Allies’, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1:2, 287-301

The second most cited motivating element revolved around personal experiences of exclusion. Respondents went further to describe their own experiences of exclusion forging a feeling of camaraderie and support for other groups going through similar experiences.

“From my own experience, when others have stepped up for me, and advocated for me, and been an ally to me, that has helped me also act that way. So that role modelling of allyship is much easier to then take and pay forward. So, I think that has a big influence on people, and I just anecdotally hear that a lot. You know, why are you helping others? Because someone helped me.”

“People that I love, that I genuinely love, have been through things that I cannot imagine, and I don’t want them to continue. I just don’t.”



1.2 What Qualities and Traits does an Ally possess?

When thinking of an ally, what qualities and traits come to your mind? That is what we asked all the respondents of our study. One central quality stood out - Empathy.

This finding corroborates previous literature which independently found that personal experiences of exclusion were significant predictors of group empathy.²

Beyond empathy, there were three additional factors that were consistently associated with allyship: Knowledge, Active Listening and Courage.



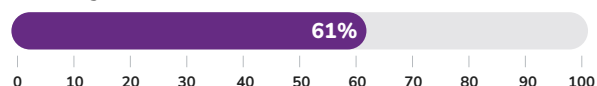
“It’s my life’s work to advocate and champion inclusion for everyone, and to do my best to contribute to a more equitable culture in the business. I think that in the first place, I was born with a propensity for empathy in a greater proportion than most.”

Qualities of an Ally

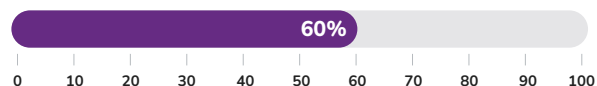
Empathy



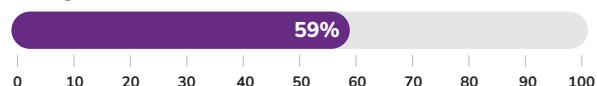
Knowledge



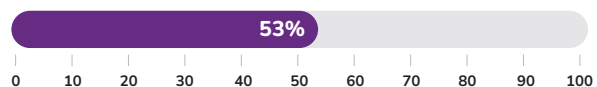
Active Listening



Courage

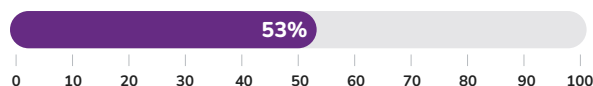


Humility

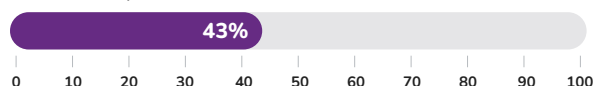


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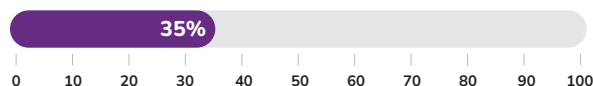
Growth Mindset



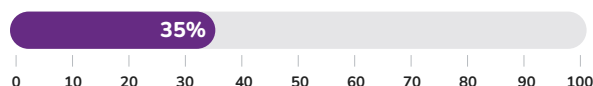
Accountability



Curiosity



Persistence



2. Schaefer, D. R., & Schmeichel, B. J. (2022). Empathy and the perception of social exclusion: Effects of emotional intelligence and perspective-taking. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 162(1), 107-124. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/chso.12549>

Knowledge:

“Someone who gets it, who has done the [educational] work and research but is still open to further learning.”

Active Listening:

“I think effective communication. So, you know when to speak versus to deeply listen. And I think that comment from earlier that is I think the key skill is active listening. But then with that effective communication.”

Courage:

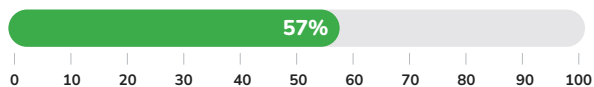
“I think it takes an element of bravery to be an ally, which it shouldn’t, really. But I think it’s someone - that’s what I meant to be vocal - someone who’s willing to be bold enough or brave enough to say something when the moment might not be the most comfortable’.”



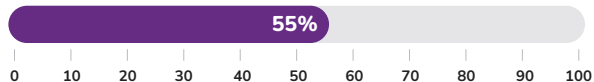
1.3 What Actions do Allies Take?

Actions of allyship

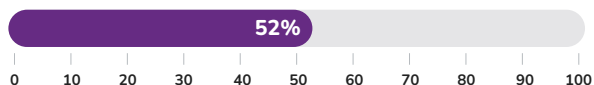
Listening to Lived Experiences



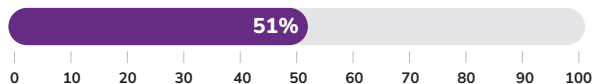
Speaking up when it's Uncomfortable



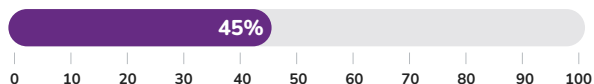
Using Inclusive & Respectful Language (e.g. Partner instead of Boyfriend/Girlfriend, People...)



Proactively Sharing Knowledge and Enhancing Awareness

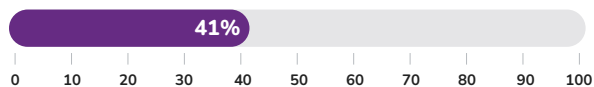


Advocating for Equitable Workplace Policies



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

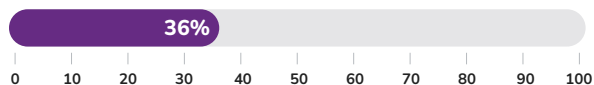
Calling out Exclusionary Behaviour



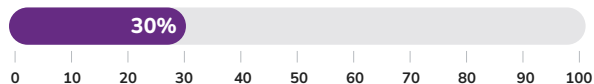
Helping Plan and Organise Initiatives & Events Spotlighting Different Underrepresented Groups



Amplifying Underrepresented Voices



Attending Marches and Demonstrations in Support of Equality



Attending Employee/Business Resource Group (ERG/BRG) Events & Meetings at Work



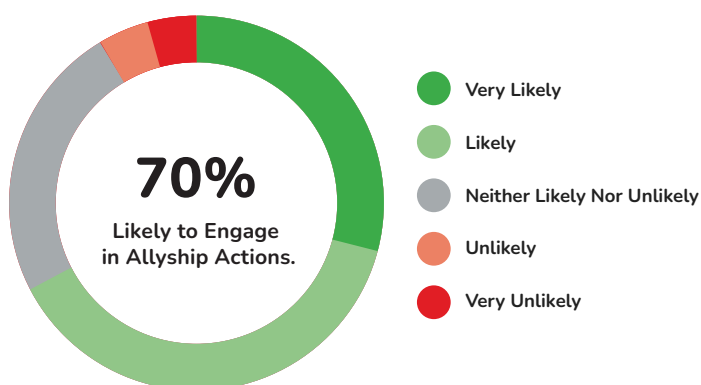
(no. of respondents = 2,207)

With 70% of respondents reporting that they were likely to engage in allyship actions at work, it is important to understand what such actions comprise. Surveying participants about what specific actions they deemed to constitute effective allyship, four main themes emerged. Reflecting the allyship qualities outlined above, these themes can broadly be construed as listening, learning, advocating and vocalising.

Amongst survey respondents, 'listening to lived experiences' emerged as the principal allyship action, with one in two people associating it with effective allyship. Active listening was routinely raised by focus group participants as being an important allyship action.

"Allyship involves listening to my experience and observing my experience. That ally then can take action to make sure that my experience in this world is just."

How likely are you to Engage in Allyship Actions at Work?



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

“When it comes to allyship, of course knowledge is important, but also sharing that knowledge is equally as important because people aren’t going to know or do the research themselves sometimes and you need to be able to educate people. So, I think that’s an important aspect of allyship. Sharing what you learn. That’s an ongoing journey.”

Education likewise emerged as an important theme, with one in two respondents believing that ‘Proactively sharing knowledge and enhancing awareness’ was a crucial allyship action. This similarly emerged as a key theme across focus groups, with participants frequently referencing the importance of learning and knowledge sharing in relation to effective allyship actions.

Advocating for others and being vocal also arose as an important theme, with one in two respondents answering that ‘Speaking up when it’s uncomfortable’, and two in five respondents thinking that ‘Calling out exclusionary behaviour’, were important allyship actions. This was viewed by some focus group participants as being particularly important in negating risk for some groups.

“I think sometimes the role of an ally is to speak on your behalf when you’re not in a position of strength. So, it can be something really positive. And instead of putting the person at risk, or the minority in the firing line, they’re doing it for you.”

As we have established so far in this section, the help and support that an ally offers to others manifests in explicit and identifiable actions. Such actions include, but are not limited to, active listening, knowledge sharing, speaking up, advocating for others, and calling out exclusionary behaviour. An ally may take different actions in different circumstances, and it is important to understand that no allyship action is innately better than another, nor are allyship actions mutually exclusive. As our data demonstrates, an ally often possesses specific qualities – such as empathy and courage – that work to inform their allyship practice. Though individuals take different paths to becoming an ally, our findings indicate that the motivations of allyship are overwhelmingly personal, with personal values and principles, personal experiences, or personal relationships most commonly cited as motivating allyship practice.

Our Definition of an Ally

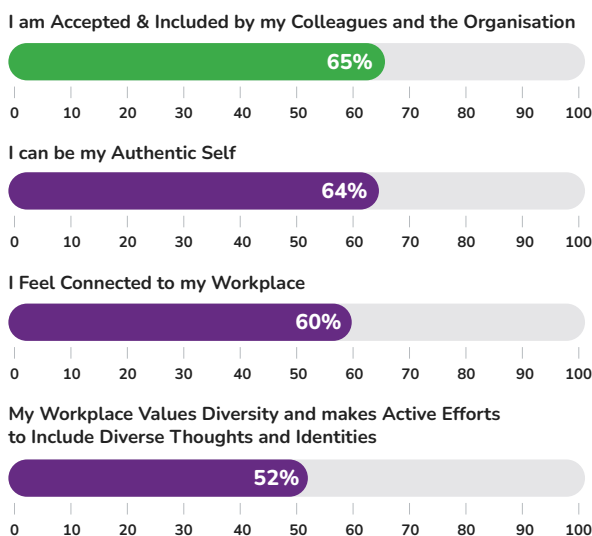
‘An ally is someone who takes action to help, support and uplift others, working continually to foster inclusion & belonging for all. Personal values, qualities and experiences inform allyship actions, shaping why and how individuals practice allyship.’

1.4 How can we Define Belonging?

Belonging remains a hard concept to categorise, much like any other concept that relates to an internal feeling unique for every individual. One of the most robust codifications of organisational belonging (OB) comes from an article authored by Blau, Golbderg and Kyser which comprises a rigorous review of previous literature to classify OB into four different pillars: Being yourself, Acceptance, Value of Diversity and Connection.³

We used this classification to understand the perception of belonging in our survey. We found that approximately two in three respondents believed that being accepted, included and feeling connected to a workplace that valued diversity and proactively includes differences, were key pillars that constituted a sense of belonging: an affirmation of previous literature.

What factors make you feel that you belong in the workplace?



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

³ Blau, G., Goldberg, D., & Kyser, D. (2023). Organizational belonging – proposing a new scale and its relationship to demographic, organization, and outcome variables. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 38(3), 226–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15555240.2023.2178448>

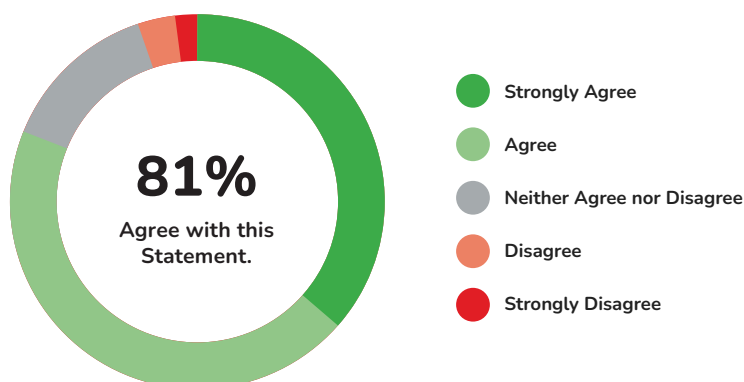


1.5 Allyship & Belonging- Connecting the Two Constructs

Having utilised respondent sentiment to formulate and define the concepts of allyship and belonging, we now turn to explore the connection between both. In our survey, we asked respondents if they believed allyship at work contributed to a greater sense of belonging.

81% of all respondents agreed with this statement. In our focus groups, this finding was further affirmed with the majority of participants organically citing the intertwined relationship between allyship and belonging.

Allyship in the Workplace Contributes to a Greater Sense of Belonging.



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

“Allyship creates impact through strength in numbers and makes me feel like I can belong here.”

“Allyship is this thing that’s kind of bringing you closer, making you more connected, generating more relationships. And all of these things are things that we need as human beings to actually feel belonging.”

2. What Impact does Allyship and Belonging have on Business?

In the previous section, we explored and established the constituting elements of allyship and belonging as well as their causative relationship; organisational cultures with higher degrees of allyship lead to a higher sense of individual belonging.

In this section, we evaluate and measure the impact of allyship and belonging, first individually, followed by a joint analysis of their interconnected impact.

2.1 The Impact of Allyship

On Cultural Indicators

Before conducting the research, we hypothesised that cultural indicators would see improvements if talent experienced greater degrees of allyship at work. This turned out to be overwhelmingly true with 9 in 10 respondents reporting improvement under the indicators listed below:

- a) Sense of Inclusion
- b) Morale
- c) Psychological Safety
- d) Job Satisfaction

On Performance Indicators

Not only was it important to establish the impact of allyship on workplace culture, but we also sought to understand the impact that this had on performance indicators. Asking respondents to consider how a culture of allyship impacted their performance in the workplace, we again found 9 in 10 respondents reporting improvement in the following areas:

- a) Personal Motivation
- b) Productivity and Performance
- c) Team Collaboration
- d) Creativity and Innovation

Improvement in Different Areas When People Feel a Strong Culture of Allyship at Work

Morale



Sense of Inclusion



Team Collaboration



Job Satisfaction



Creativity and Innovation



Productivity & Performance



Personal Motivation



Psychological Safety



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

● No Improvement
 ● Some Improvement
 ● Significant Improvement

(no. of respondents = 2,207)

“Signalling that it’s a psychological safe space makes others feel comfortable and identified.”

“Allyship now means more than ever – it affects morale and workplace culture.”

“I think, speaking from my perspective, my experience, if you don’t feel comfortable; we spend a lot of time hiding, and it’s a lot of work to do this. Because you’re always thinking about what people think, or what they may judge about you. So not having that, it’s quite a release, psychologically and physically as well, not to experience that.”

“You want to give back to the environment that makes you feel safe.”

“But looking back [on my early career] gives me goosebumps. Like, I had to go through a lot to be who I am. And I think, looking back, I think that’s why I always ensure that everyone is comfortable, happy, secure: because I know I give my best when I’m accepted.”

“I think it [an inclusive culture at work] does trickle down into my day-to-day productivity. The more that I feel I can be myself, and that people accept me, and are not judging me, and putting me in a box and in different groups, but just that we can all just get along and be respectful of each other, and accepting of one another. I can exhale and come to work and just get my work done.”

“And I would think that as a person who’s part of the community, if you come to your work where you spend such a huge amount of your life and you have to hide part of that life, that would be very demotivational and very hard and very stressful.”



“There is a direct link: if you can be yourself like in the workplace I think you’re going to really maximise; you’re going to be able to produce; you’re going to be able to be yourself; you’re going to be happy; you’re going to be able to concentrate and be productive. And, you know, I’ve seen that. I’ve felt it.”

“I think it encourages that collaboration. I think it gives us a better understanding of one another, so that we can build these trusted relationships. And when you have that trust, you have that safety. People can speak freely. You get better ideas, better perspectives. Because everything’s kind of thrown into the mix, which generally leads to better outcomes.”

“We also know from the data points that belonging is more likely to drive performance in teams. People are more likely to share their views, share their perspectives to challenge when they feel psychologically safe. Part of that is around: do we feel seen, do we feel safe, do we feel valued?”

2.2 The Impact of Belonging

On Cultural Indicators

Extending our inquiry, we asked respondents to report any improvements in cultural indicators when experiencing a greater sense of belonging in the workplace. Again, approximately 90% of respondents reported improvements, consistent with results from the previous section on the impact of allyship. The following saw improvements:

- a) Likelihood to Stay with the Organisation
- b) Mental Health & Wellbeing
- c) Psychological Safety
- d) Willingness to Share New Ideas
- e) Job Satisfaction

On Performance Indicators

We repeated the previous exercise and asked about the impact of increased belonging on explicit markers of performance. We again found approximately 90% respondents experiencing improvements in the following with nearly 1 in 2 expressing significant improvement:

- a) Innovation
- b) Productivity
- c) Motivation to Perform

Improvement in Different Areas When People Feel a Strong Sense of Belonging at Work

Likelihood of Staying with the Organisation



Willingness to Share New Ideas



Psychological Safety



Job Satisfaction



Mental Health & Wellbeing



Innovation



Productivity



Motivation to Perform



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

● No Improvement ● Some Improvement ● Significant Improvement

(no. of respondents = 2,207)



“So it’s really important that you recruit [from] a broad pool of talent, but you make it really clear that it’s really important and that everyone’s included and supported because that’s how you create a network and you create a community for people, which means that they’re far more likely to want to stay. And then they drive the right behaviours as they move through the organisation. So, it’s a sort of, it’s a virtuous circle, right? If you can do it right and create opportunities to retain people that will drive the right behaviours through the organisation.”

“Obviously, if employees can feel themselves, and they can feel more engaged and they feel happier at work, then they want to stay at the organisation.”

“So being able to show up and direct more of their energy to being as creative and as productive and as fulfilled as possible in the workplace leads to better business outcomes. It leads to an environment where people can collaborate in a way that they feel more psychological safety because of the trust they have between colleagues.”

“Where I feel psychologically safe, I am a lot more likely to contribute my thoughts and ideas.”

“Visual allyship makes me want to push harder in my work and motivates me to stretch even further.”

“Allyship is good for business. It boosts productivity and speaks to customers who are different than the norm.”



2.3 Bridging the Impact - How Allyship and Belonging Together Contribute Towards Better Business Outcomes

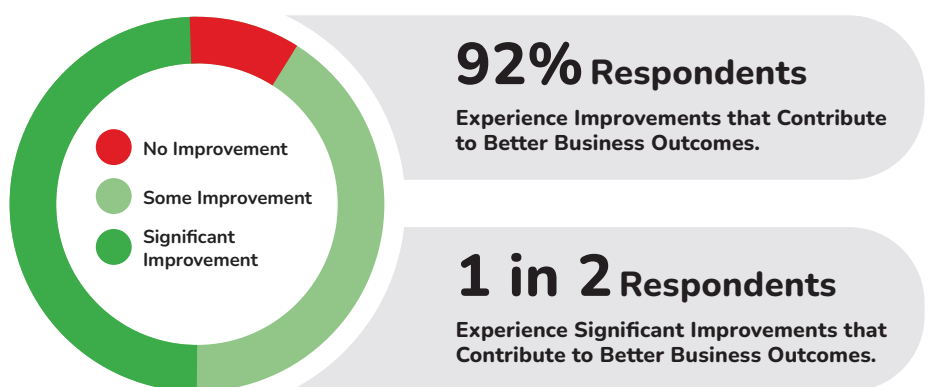
This subsection aims to paint a holistic picture of the joint impact of allyship and belonging on overall business outcomes. To measure this, we created a latent variable that amalgamates data collected from the following dimensions as depicted in the chart to the right.

We created this variable using a popular statistical paradigm called confirmatory factor analysis; more details on the variable's creation and subsequent analytical intricacies can be found in the methodology section in the appendix.

We named this new variable "business outcomes". The dimensions to create this variable comprehensively cover outcomes that are directly related to employee productivity and organisational culture.⁴ It is important to acknowledge that there are other factors that also create better business outcomes. Such factors include external investments, skills-based capability, market forces and external competition, and are outside the scope of this research. Thus, when we talk about business outcomes, we only refer to outcomes that can be improved through culture and employee experience. Based on this assumption, we then aggregated our descriptive findings under the latent variable of "business outcomes" finding that 92% of people reported direct improvements which contribute to better business outcomes, with 50% of respondents reporting significant improvements.



The Impact of Allyship & Belonging Together



Thus, these findings dictate that we can expect business outcomes -connected to culture and performance- improve significantly in organisations which foster environments of belonging through allyship.

(no. of respondents = 2,207)

⁴ Anitha, J. (2014). Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *International Journal of Research in Business Management*, 2(10), 1-13.; Cooke, R. A., & Szumal, J. L. (1993). The Organizational Culture Inventory. *Group & Organization Management*, 18(3), 329-358.; Hassan, S., Ali, H., Tariq, A., & Ali, S. (2024). The Impact of Organisational Culture on Workforce Productivity and Employee Satisfaction. SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4944166

3. Effective Allyship by All, for All

We have now explored two key questions that this report sought to answer:

- 1) How can one define and codify allyship and belonging?
- 2) What impact does allyship and belonging have on cultural and performance indicators in organisations?

This section turns to the final key question:

- 3) How can organisations and talent leverage allyship to foster inclusion and belonging?

We begin by introducing key practices for allies at all levels, before moving on to explore allyship at the executive level. Through our executive allyship framework, we provide guidance for senior leaders to help support them in driving inclusive workplace culture whilst improving their own allyship practice. Our final subsection outlines organisational recommendations that can help cultivate a culture of allyship and belonging.

3.1 The Allyship Manual

This manual builds on the qualities and actions of an ally outlined in section one, with the objective of providing the reader with accessible and pragmatic ways of practicing allyship to support different talent communities.



Qualities of an Ally:

As seen in section 1.2, these are the most important qualities that constitute allyship which every individual on their allyship journey should embrace and foster.

Empathy:

“I don’t think there’s a one-size-fits-all of how to be a good ally. How I’m a good ally to you will not be how, necessarily, I’m a good ally to someone else. So, there’s that - I always think of that phrase of treat everyone how you’d like to be treated. Actually, that’s wrong. I think it’s treat people how they like to be treated. So, I think really effective allyship is about understanding.”

Knowledge:

“But I think, self-reflecting, I’ve realised that, maybe there’s things that I don’t know and that I need to educate myself on more. So, that I’m not just accepting, but also understanding, and then you also have the power to advocate, by knowing.”

Active Listening:

“So, you have to be able to listen, but you also have to know that you don’t know everything. And so, and you have to act with grace. Because you don’t know everything, and you certainly have never lived in someone’s shoes. And so, it’s so important to just listen and understand.”

Growth Mindset:

“When [inclusive allyship is] done right it will always be a core enabler in business. So, it’s about performance. It’s about talent. It’s about evolving in terms of client expectations. It’s about growth.”

Practical Allyship Actions:

More than two in three respondents reported being likely to engage in allyship actions at work, reiterating employee desire to support different talent communities. Below, we present some examples of practical allyship actions derived from the findings outlined in section 1.3. The aim of this section is to equip readers with pragmatic actions that they can incorporate into their intersectional allyship practice with relative ease.



Promoting Inclusive and Respectful Team Culture:

- Support respectful communication by ensuring everyone's voice is heard, for example, stepping in when someone is being interrupted.
- Encourage a positive environment by addressing jokes or comments that may be inappropriate or hurtful.
- Foster team unity by making sure all colleagues feel welcome at informal gatherings and social events.

Amplifying Voices From All Backgrounds:

- Clearly acknowledging and crediting ideas from colleagues.
- Sponsoring colleagues for opportunities.
- Sharing and spotlighting the work of others, for example, on professional platforms and intranet forums.

Proactively Sharing Knowledge:

- Circulating tools and resources.
- Sharing insights from training or events.
- Sharing learning in informal settings.

Speaking Up When it's Needed:

- Ensuring the voices of all talent communities are accounted for in decision making where possible.
- Addressing inappropriate language, regardless of seniority.

Using Inclusive Language:

- Referring to "partner" instead of assuming gender and avoiding gendered group terms like "guys".
- Using "they" for unknown pronouns.
- Including pronouns in email signatures and meeting introductions.

Advocating for Inclusive Policies:

- Supporting flexible work for caregivers.
- Promoting inclusive health insurance and benefits which cover needs for all talent communities.
- Recommending inclusive parental leave.

Listening to Lived Experiences (Allyship is a Personal Journey of Lifelong Learning):

- Attending storytelling sessions and social forums.
- Engaging with first-person accounts which detail different lived experiences.
- Reflecting and learning from feedback given by different talent communities.

Helping Plan Engagement Activities:

- Volunteering for internal or external community events.
- Assisting with admin and logistics for awareness campaigns.
- Connecting different talent communities together using universal themes.

3.2 The Executive Allyship Framework

Building on the above, this section extends the allyship blueprint to provide an executive allyship framework that senior leaders can utilise as influential drivers of workplace culture.

Through the data collected as part of this study, it is clear that in many organisations executives play an important role both in directly fostering feelings of belonging among different talent communities through specific allyship actions, and more indirectly through encouraging and influencing the allyship practices of employees by modelling best practice. Indeed, three in four employees believe visible allyship from senior leaders is crucial to a culture of inclusion and belonging and they are more likely to engage in allyship actions if they see leaders doing the same.

Senior Leaders in my Organisation are Visible & Vocal Allies



I Would be More Likely to Engage in Allyship Actions if I saw Senior Leaders Doing the Same



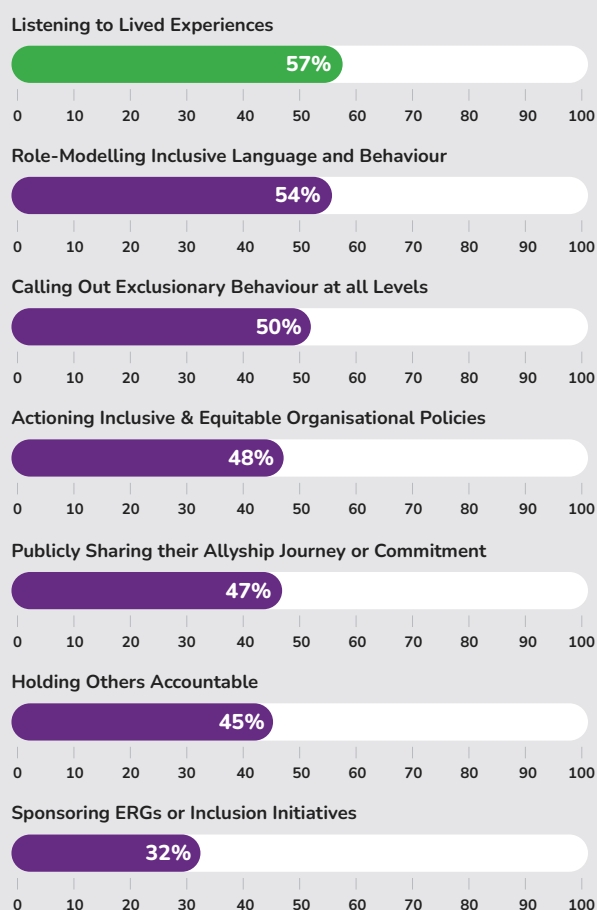
Despite 75% of employees being willing to emulate allyship from their senior leaders, only 60% of respondents believe their leaders are visible and vocal allies. This 15% shortfall highlights a clear action gap, underscoring the need for senior leaders to actively and visibly demonstrate allyship in order to bridge the action gap and influence positive change.

“I think executive allies make a massive difference. I think leaders are in a position of a lot of power in what they do, and they have much wider reach than other employees, so just purely on the visibility that they have, I think it has a massive impact on how inclusive the environment feels. And also, a lack of vocal allyship is very loud.”

“You don’t need to be saying the wrong things, or saying, I don’t support these causes for it to feel like it’s not a safe place. And I think leaders need to be really aware of that: that unless you’re visibly championing, supporting, getting involved, and being curious about allyship, silence can also be really loud for people because of your level of power.”

To gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which executives effectively practice allyship, we interviewed executives from leading organisations. Alongside these individual interviews, we surveyed employees to establish the impact that executive allyship actions and behaviours have on workplace culture and feelings of belonging.

Which of the Following Actions from Senior Leaders have a Positive Impact on Fostering a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging in Organisations?



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

This saw four key themes emerge that were essential to executive allyship: learning and education, role modelling inclusive behaviours, growth mindset, and active listening & empathy.

These themes shape our executive ally framework, with evidence-based recommendations outlining how business leaders can both improve their own allyship practice and take concrete actions to transform organisational culture.

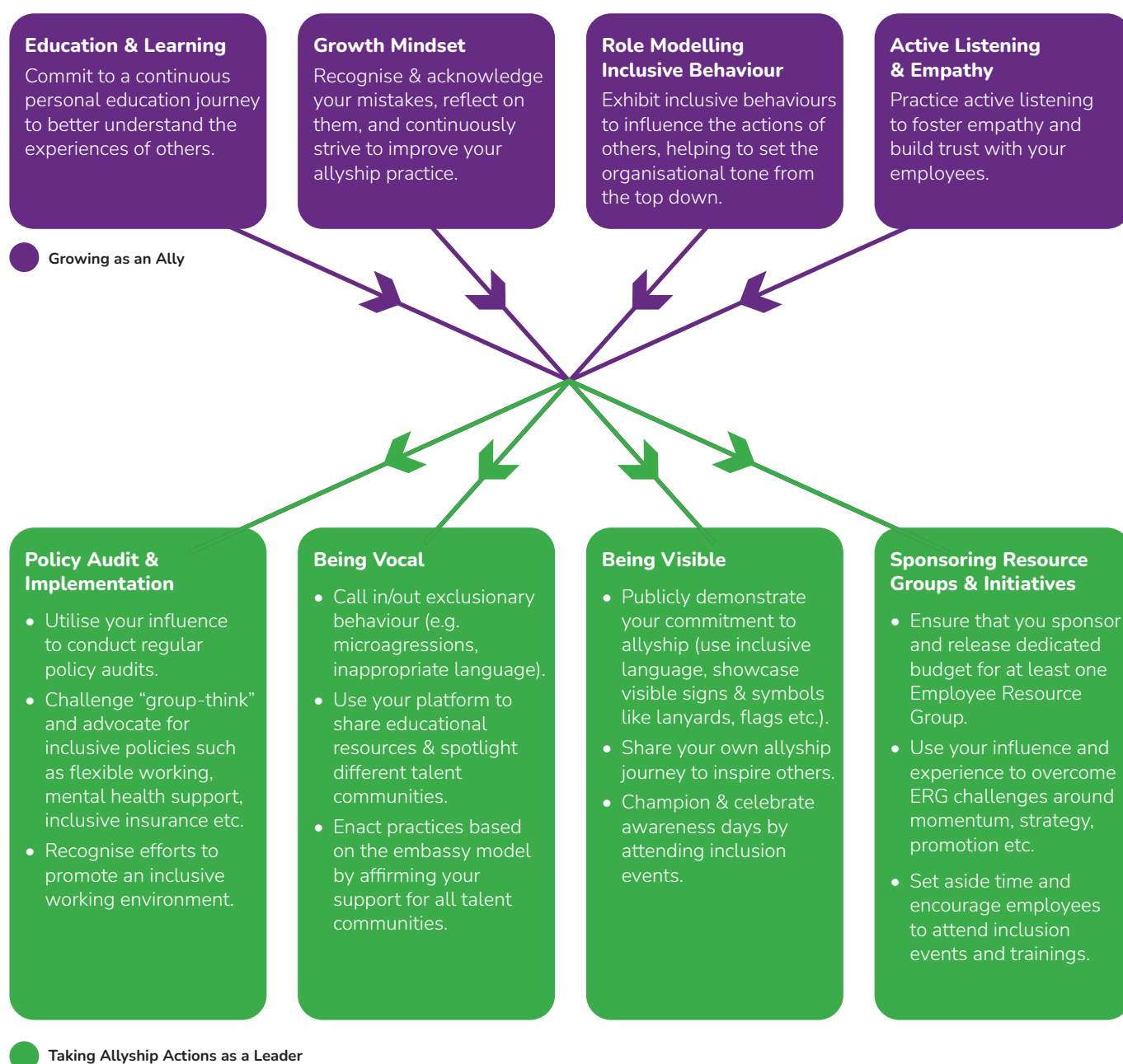
Leading with Allyship



**3 in 4
Employees**

Believe visible allyship from senior leaders is crucial to a culture of inclusion and belonging. The same proportion report being more likely to engage in allyship actions if they see leaders doing the same.

The Executive Ally Framework



3.3 What can Organisations do to Enable a Culture of Allyship?

This section offers organisations seven actionable recommendations to foster an inclusive culture:

1) Provide Learning and Development Opportunities

Education is a key theme that has consistently emerged across our fieldwork. Respondents urged organisations to facilitate awareness building initiatives that disseminated knowledge in order to catalyse a stronger allyship culture for different talent communities.

“Education is crucial; what you don’t know, you can’t help with. Organisations need to promote awareness and facilitate genuine conversations to provide their employees with a starting point.”

2) Focus on Community Building and Bringing People Together

Mandated incorporations of metrics and KPIs that urge employees to participate in inclusion initiatives can oftentimes be counterproductive. Rather, we recommend organisations employ informal mechanisms that organically foster inclusion and a sense of community. Below we outline some ways to achieve this:

- Empower employee involvement by offering dedicated work hours for Employee Resource Group (ERG) volunteering and inclusion-related initiatives.
- Celebrate inclusive leadership through internal awards and recognition programmes that highlight individuals making a meaningful cultural impact.
- Connect company values to a culture of inclusion and support for different talent communities.

“But do you know something the company can do to help us do these things? It should recognise what we do as co-chairs or members of the steering committee, and all the work we do for this. Because it is a lot of work to get all the approvals, budget, HR, compliance. It takes a lot of our time, and sometimes we cannot even put it in our mid-year review or end-of-year review.”

3) Celebrate and Recognise Talent

Our 2023 study titled **Seeing is Believing**, found that people tend to imitate behaviours of their role models in organisations and beyond. This finding highlights the importance of organisations spotlighting exemplary employees who foster an inclusive workplace. At LGBT Great, we recognise such trailblazers under our Project 1000 campaign which aims to spotlight 1000 role models in our membership community and beyond. Some of our most popular campaigns include Top 100 Gamechangers, Top Executive Allies and Top Trans & Non-Binary Role Models.

“Congratulate, recognise, and offer positive reinforcement: reward good examples of allyship role modelling.”

4) Invest in Inclusion

This report robustly reiterates the importance of investing in stronger workplace culture where everyone feels like they belong. To do this:

- Establish a dedicated budget for inclusive culture building as a central part of business strategy.
- Support & encourage executives to sponsor initiatives that empower and uplift all talent communities.
- Allocate building spaces for company forums that seek to provide opportunities for employees to share their experiences, practice active listening and foster psychological safety.

“We need money. And if you haven’t got any, it’s really hard. And obviously, when we do those events, we throw in some education, we definitely have the right people in the room to promote allyship. But we need the money to actually do it.”





5) Focus on Diagnostic Tools and Measures of Success

“What you cannot measure, you cannot improve”
Lord Kelvin

This quote stands the test of time. Barriers to improvements in culture and policy often manifest due to ambiguity around what needs to be improved. Our 2024 report entitled **Redefining the Future** also found that 55% of allies prefer working for employers that have had a formal organisational assessment on the inclusion of different talent communities. Numerous frameworks exist to help organisations assess inclusive policies and culture, which can be effectively leveraged to drive improvements in these areas. You can contact us at info@lgbtgreat.com to find out more.

6) Inclusive Communications

All communications, especially company-wide communications, should strive to be inclusive of all talent communities. This can be achieved by:

- Having a centralised comms strategy that ensures language is intersectionally inclusive and speaks to everyone.
- Ensuring that different talent communities feel seen, heard, supported and affirmed.
- Creating or referring to an inclusive language guide.

“Work with the right departments to ensure that you’ve got all the right references and terminology that are relevant for today. Because they do change. And making sure you stay up to date on that.”



7) Supportive and Empowering Policies

Policy and culture are deeply entwined and reciprocally affective. Therefore, it is important that organisations prioritise policy structures that ensure positive outcomes for all talent communities. Some examples of this include:

- Ensure employment policies and benefits reflect the needs of all employees.
- Dedicated policies that comprehensively protect different talent communities from harassment, discrimination and bullying.
- Implementing flexible working policies and providing benefits that help employees with varying needs.

“Put it in writing. Change your HR policy, your benefits, make sure everything is included. Have clear guidelines on harassment and hate speech and cyberbullying. Have documents that are inclusive. And if people are not feeling the benefit, they have the handbook to go back to and say, “hey, this is what should be happening.”

Conclusion

This research paper set out with an aim and a hypothesis that were innately interconnected. The aim was to comprehensively (re)define the concepts of allyship and belonging using data from our fieldwork. We arrived at a definition of allyship as well as the qualities, motivations and actions that are associated with an ally. Through a similar exercise, we also identified the core components that create a sense of belonging at work.

After successfully defining allyship and belonging, we put our hypothesis to the test. We anticipated that allyship & belonging, discretely and together, would have a positive impact on business and employee outcomes. Our cogent analysis found overwhelming evidence for our hypothesis: when employees experience a culture of allyship and an increased sense of belonging, it improves productivity, motivation, psychological safety, morale, mental health & wellbeing, performance and innovation. In summary, these improvements contribute to better overall business outcomes.

While our predictions were corroborated, our fieldwork also revealed a widespread concern. People expressed often observing the misrepresentation of allyship in organisations as a fallacious zero-sum game, increasing tension between different talent communities instead of uniting them under the banner of reciprocal support. This has urged us to offer our community a novel perspective on how we can shift the rhetoric around allyship in organisations, and by extension, cultivate belonging for all.

An Impact for All: A Fresh Perspective on Allyship

“You don’t understand anything until you learn it more than one way”

Marvin Minsky

As we conclude this report, we would like to put forth a new perspective on the perception and impact of intersectional allyship in organisations. By this, we do not mean a fundamental reconception, but rather how it connects allies to communities that they seek to support.

First and foremost, we believe that everyone has the capacity to be an ally: regardless of what identity group(s) one belongs to, there are always talent communities one can support. This is what we propose to be an authentic form of intersectionality in allyship practice.

Secondly, we often observe that allyship practices in organisations are (mis)conceived as only benefitting the talent community that allies seek to support. The evidence in this report consistently demonstrates otherwise: the impact of a workplace culture centred around allyship extends far beyond any specific talent community, resulting in holistic & significant improvements for a myriad of cultural and performance indicators.

With such a profoundly positive impact across the board, it is imperative that we reframe the discussion on allyship to bring everyone on the journey. For those already on this journey, this means recognising that their actions not only benefit individuals, but also improve organisational culture and performance. For those yet to embrace the journey, the evidence in this report offers a powerful reason to perceive allyship in a new light. And ultimately, for organisations, this is about weaving a culture of allyship and belonging into the very fabric of the company, enriching employee experience, and in turn, improving the bottom line.

“I was just going to say that to me allyship can, in any workplace, help can create a more inclusive environment, so everyone can feel equal. So, it just causes us to all get along, to understand each other. And we can all feel like we are in the same playing field.”

“Allyship and belonging are critical tools for cultivating psychological safety and confidence. When businesses and teams create this foundation, talent is empowered to contribute more fully, bringing broader perspectives and richer insights to the table. The result is stronger decisions, better outcomes, and a culture where everyone thrives. This report is a vital contribution to the inclusion and culture agenda, shining a light on the power of allyship and belonging as drivers of psychological safety, innovation, and performance. Its insights provide business leaders with the clarity and confidence to act, and the practical strategies to turn commitment into impact.”

Rain Newton-Smith, CEO of the CBI

Appendix

Research Design & Methodology

For this research, we wanted to explore the impact of allyship and belonging using both rich qualitative data and vast quantitative data. The research design was informed using three different data collection methods: survey data capture, focus group and exec ally interviews. All methods comprised of five central themes which informed the questionnaires:

- What describes an ally? (Qualities, Behaviours, Motivations, Actions)
- What describes a sense of belonging at work?
- How does allyship and belonging impact individuals and businesses?
- How can employees and leaders be better allies?
- How can organisations support employees in becoming better allies?

All data was fully anonymised unless there was an explicit request (only available to qualitative respondents) for a report feature.

Method 1: Survey Data Capture (n=2,207)

We conducted a 2,207-respondent survey across Singapore (353), USA (689), UK (430) and India (735). These markets represented the regions APAC, EMEA and North America and were chosen together with the headline sponsors.

Our sample breakdown was guided by the nature of our study. As a cross-sectional study designed to understand employee sentiment on allyship and belonging while being LGBTQ+ sensitive as well as intersectional, we prioritised populations that identified themselves as an ally to any identity group and/or an LGBTQ+ person. The fieldwork was completed on a best-efforts basis. Our survey for this method consisted of Likert scale questions as well as open text responses. Additionally, we cleaned the dataset by removing speeders and added a red herring question to control respondent quality.

The research was conducted from an industry agnostic lens underpinned by the assumption that there would be no statistically significant differences of sentiment on the conception and importance of allyship & belonging across different industries.

Method 2: Focus Groups

We ran 15 focus groups with approximately 298 participants in total. We had employee representation from US, UK, India, and the Philippines. The focus group sessions were guided by a structured questionnaire derived from the five central themes of the project.

Method 3: Exec Ally Interviews

In 2024, LGBT Great ran “Top Exec Allies”, a role modelling initiative that spotlighted executives and other senior leaders who were exemplars of allyship practices at the top. We interviewed seven such executives to understand why their allyship practice stood out and what made it effective. Off the basis of these interviews, Method 1 survey responses, and focus group findings, we devised the executive ally framework.

Analysis

Descriptive Technique:

In our quant fieldwork, we asked people to rate improvements for different dimensions according to a 3-point Likert Scale centred around improvement: No Improvement, Some Improvement, Significant Improvement. We also infrequently utilised a 5-point Likert Scale centred around agreement: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

We reported on the selection of these across the respondents. All our qualitative data was transcribed to limit bias and retain respondent sentiment in its truest form. Then we cleaned the dataset to ensure consistent syntax and semantics. Everything was anonymised unless a respondent explicitly asked for non-anonymity for a report feature. After data cleaning was complete, we conducted thematic analysis to identify the key patterns and themes that arose across all focus group data sets.

Inferential Technique:

Our primary inferential technique involved integrating the impact of allyship and belonging into a latent variable using confirmatory factor analysis: an inferential method that identifies a common factor that has the potential to explain underlying relationships between correlated variables and associate them with a latent factor. 11 reported dimensions across 2,207 respondents that covered the impact of allyship and belonging

separately were utilised to create the latent factor that was named “business outcomes” under allyship and belonging. Our CFA analysis resulted in a CFI (Comparative Fit Index) value of 0.991, SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value of 0.026 and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value of 0.040. All three indicated a strong fit for our inferential framework.

It is important to note that business outcomes in this case only alluded to cultural and performance shifts, and does not include any other dimension typically associated with outcome evaluation for businesses.

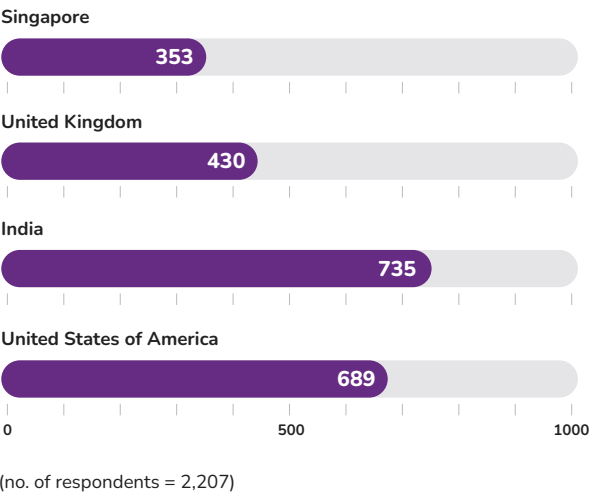
Research Gap & Limitations:

- This research does not address any cultural differences outside of organisations that exist in different regions of the world. Our assumption that organisational culture exists in a homogenous vacuum, uninfluenced by externalities, remains a limitation.
- The constructs of allyship and belonging do corroborate previous literature, however, there are always gaps in our understanding of immanent phenomena that can be bridged with future research.
- As with any Likert scale analysis, these are self-reported measures commonly used in sentiment analysis. Our usage of the term marker to describe improvements is therefore quite deliberate, given the indirect nature of our observations.

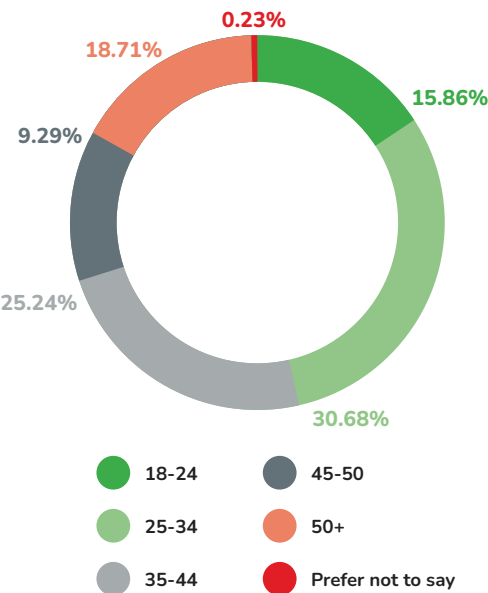
- While CFA and its grounding are theoretically backed, there are other inferences that you can make as with any latent variable. Contentions of such nature are bound to exist when inferential techniques are utilised.
- The usage, or the lack thereof, of certain terminology typically considered within the scope of this research are not necessarily reflective of intentional omission but rather take into consideration global legislative variability (at the time of writing) and its subsequent effects on organisations. This is especially pertinent for language around identity groups.

Demographic Breakdown

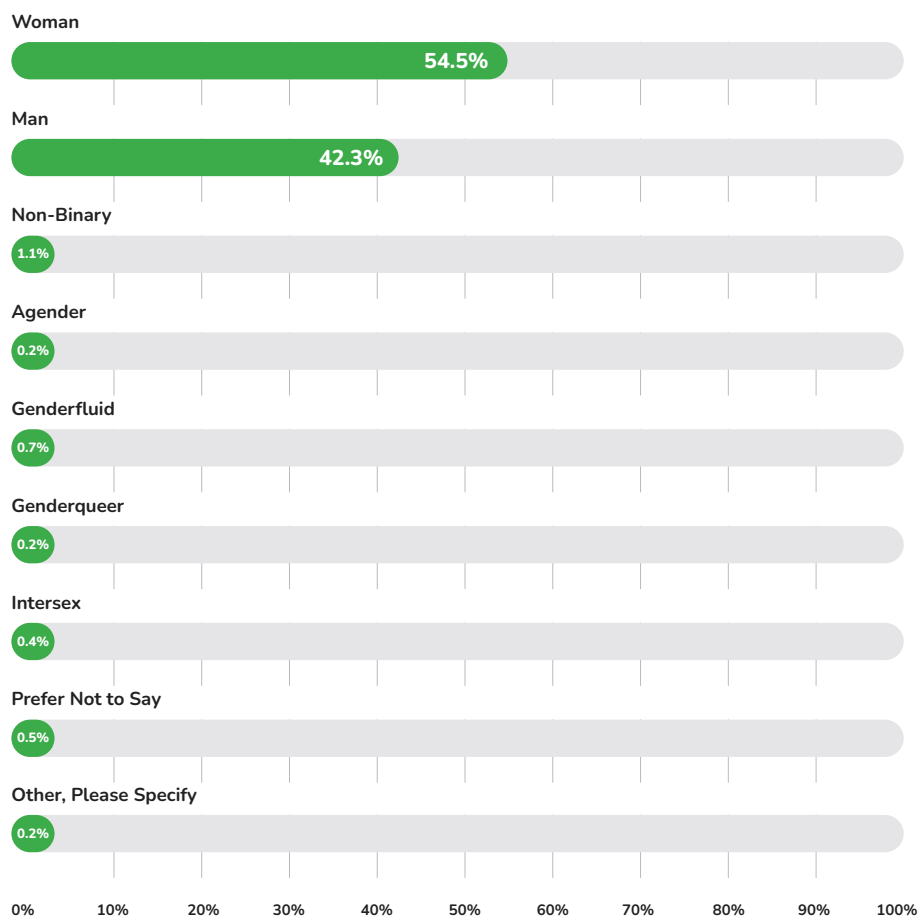
Market Breakdown | Singapore, UK, India, USA



Age | Aggregate, All Markets

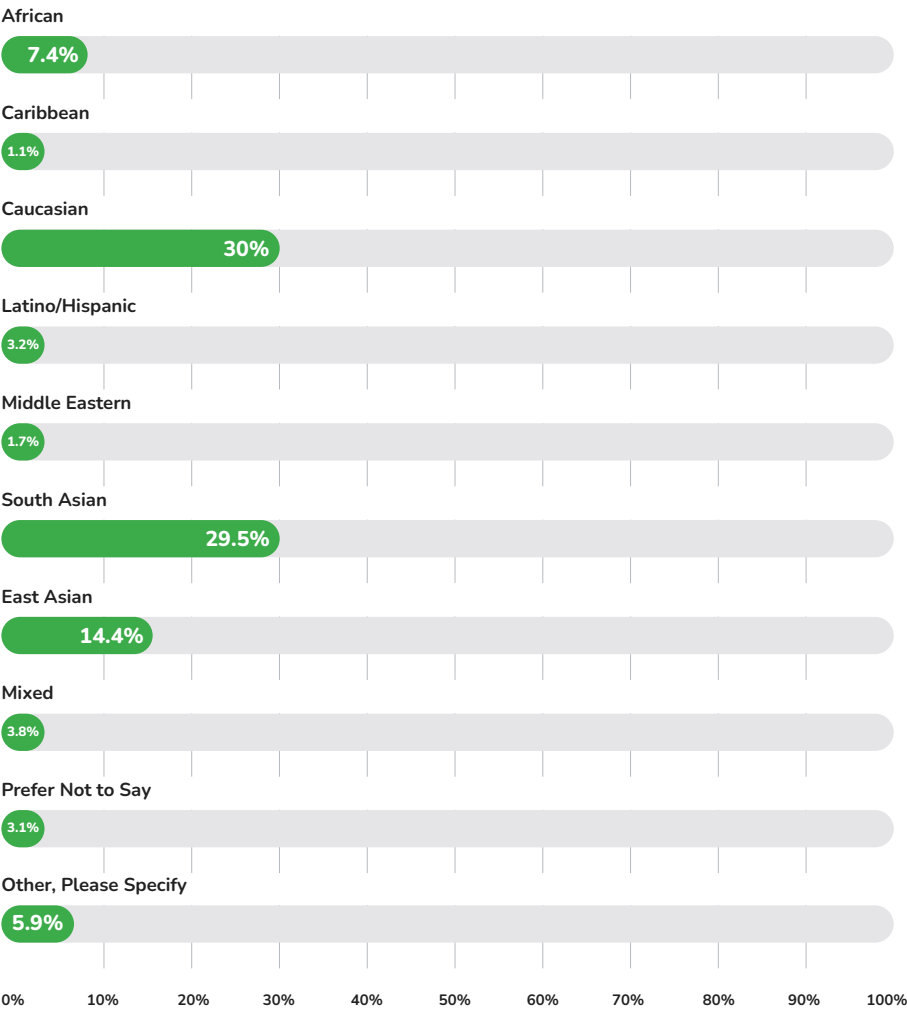


Gender Identity | Aggregate, all markets



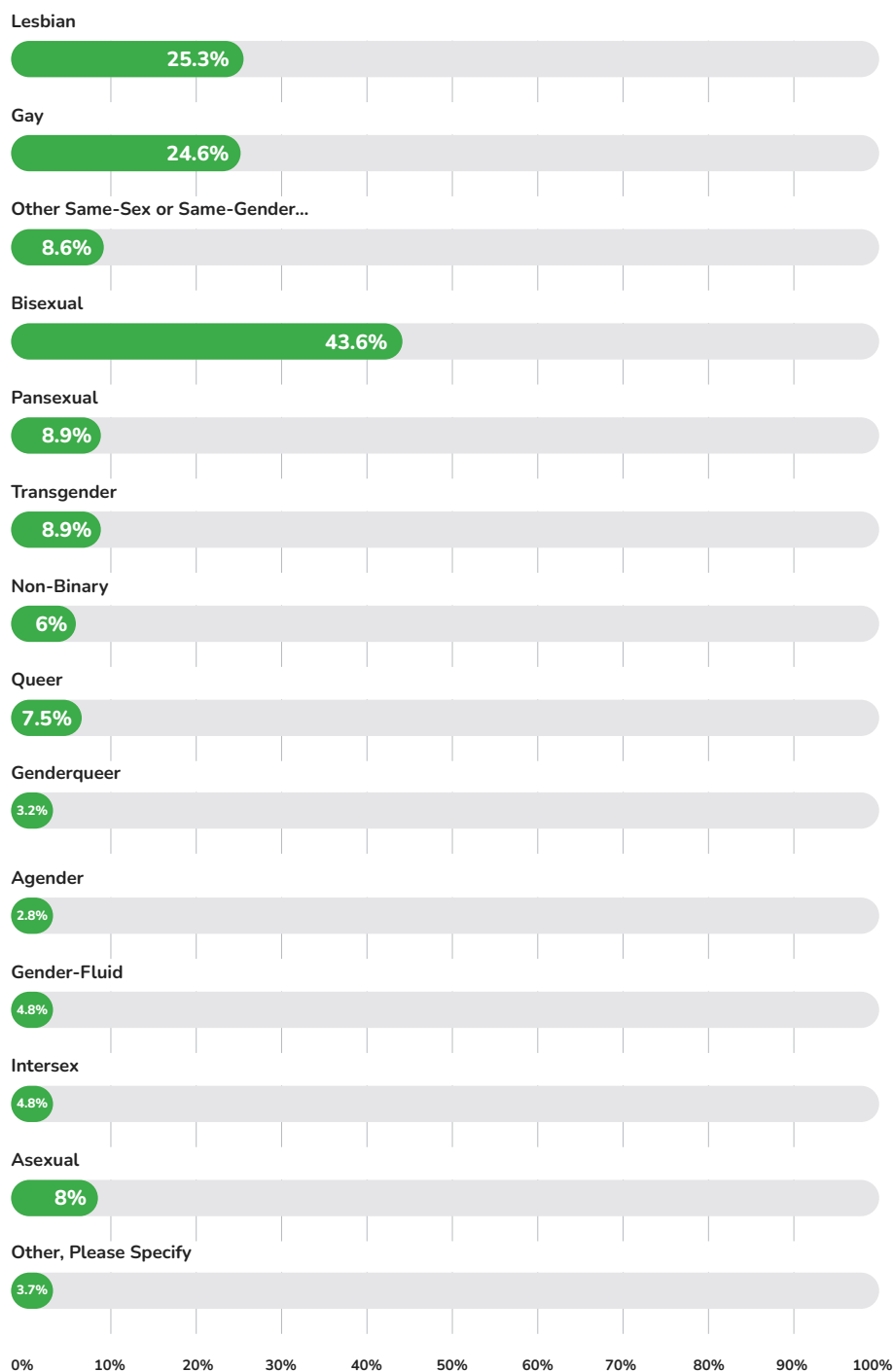
(no. of respondents = 2,207)

Race & Ethnicity | Aggregate, All Markets



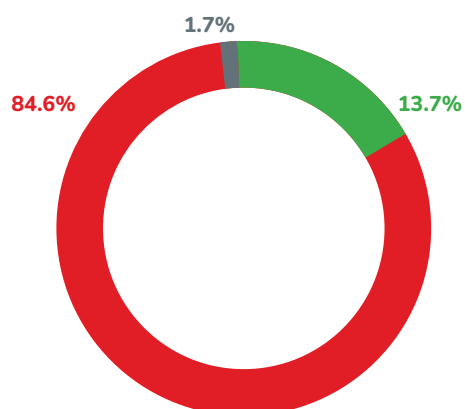
(no. of respondents = 2,207)

LGBTQ+Identity | Aggregate, All Markets



(no. of respondents = 537)

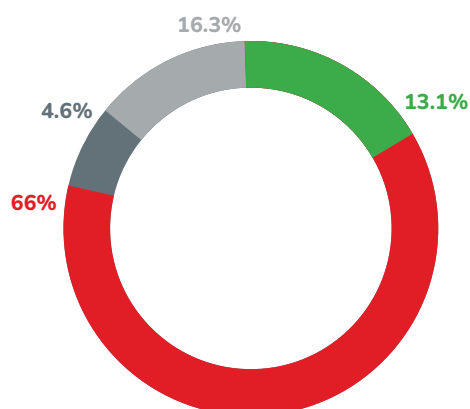
Disability | Aggregate, All Markets



Yes No Prefer Not to Say

(no. of respondents = 2,207)

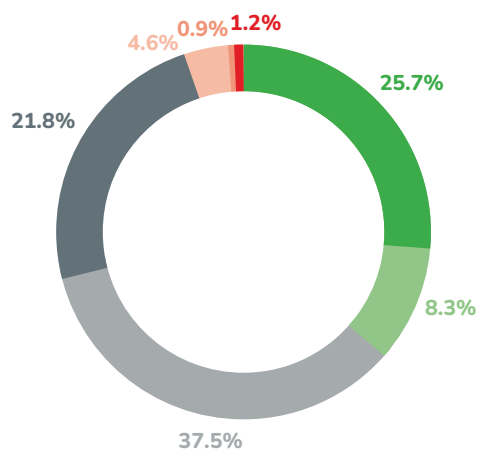
Neurodiversity | Aggregate, All Markets



Yes No Prefer Not to Say Unsure

(no. of respondents = 2,207)

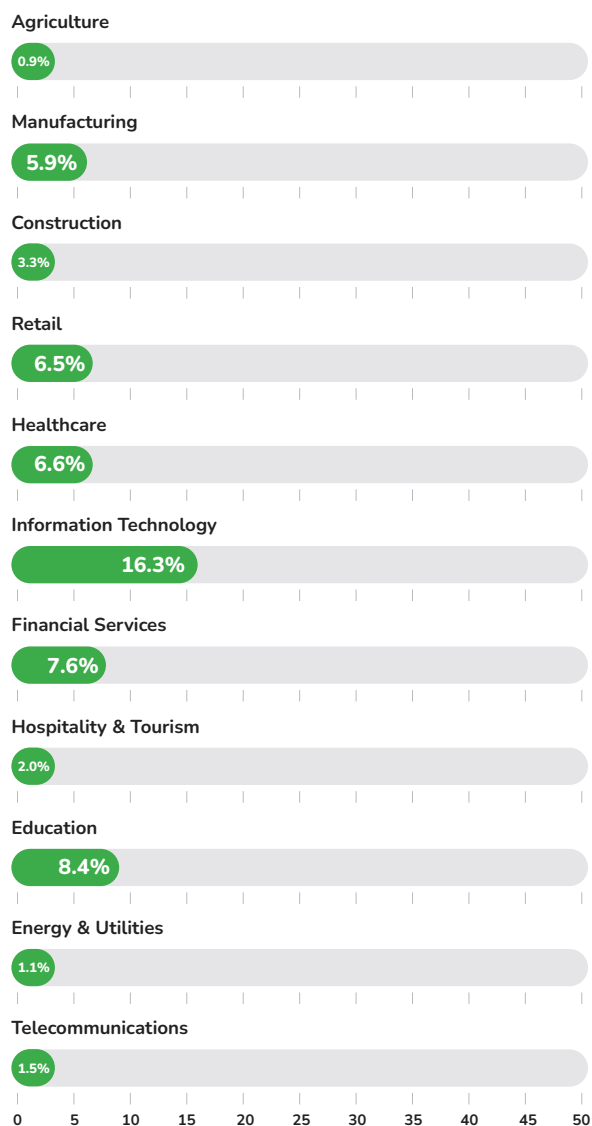
Education | Aggregate, All Markets



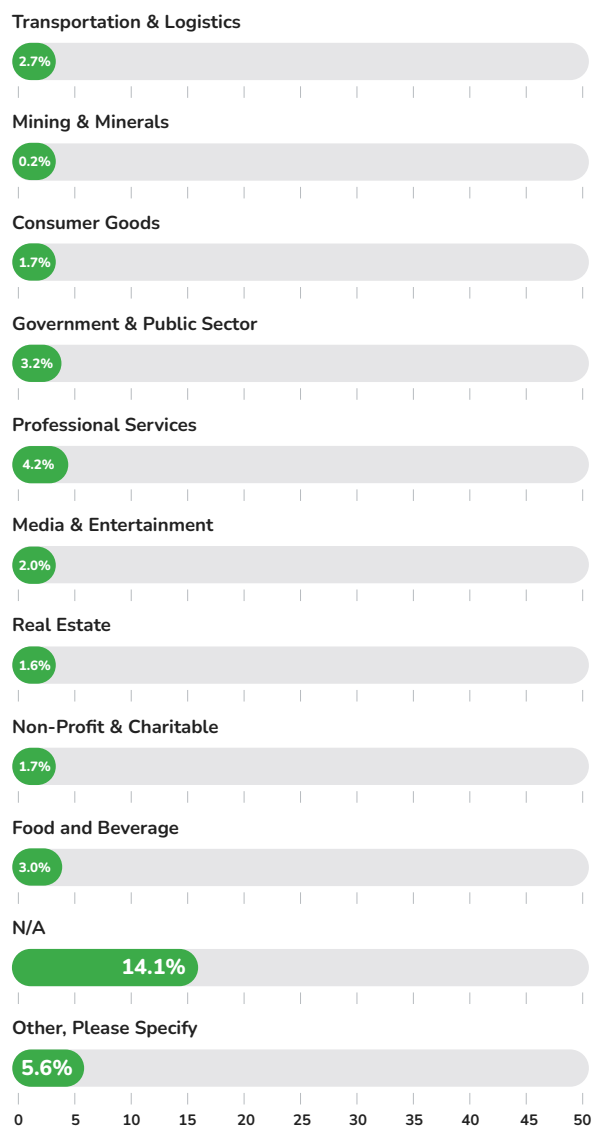
- High School/College Graduate, Diploma or equivalent
- Trade/Technical/Vocational Training
- Bachelor's Degree (BA, BSc etc.)
- Master's Degree (MA, MBA etc.)
- Doctorate Degree (PhD, MD etc.)
- Prefer Not to Say
- Other, Please Specify

(no. of respondents = 2,207)

Industry | Aggregate, All Markets



(no. of respondents = 2,207)



(no. of respondents = 2,207)

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