

# **BI+ VISIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE:**

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR  
BISEXUAL AWARENESS WEEK AND BEYOND**


OUT & EQUAL  
WORKPLACE ADVOCATES



## **I CALL MYSELF BISEXUAL**

**because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted romantically and/or sexually to people of more than one gender. Not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree. For me, the Bi in #Bisexual refers to the potential for attraction to people with genders similar to and different from my own.”**

**—ROBYN OCHS, SPEAKER, ADVOCATE, WRITER  
AND LONG-TIME O&E SUMMIT PRESENTER**



**September 16th marks the beginning of Bisexual Awareness Week, a week providing vital opportunities to elevate bisexual, pansexual, and queer voices, as well as raise awareness of the unique issues facing the Bi+ community. Bisexual Awareness Week ends with a celebration of Bisexual Visibility Day on September 23rd. There is still much work to be done to ensure Bi+ employees feel a sense of belonging and are able to bring their full, authentic selves into the workplace. Here's what you need to know about Bi+ identities in the workplace and ways you can be an ally to the community during Bisexual Awareness Week and year-round.**

### **Did you know...more than half of the LGBTQ+ community identifies as Bi+?**

More than half of LGBTQ adults (54.6 percent) identify as bisexual. In fact, research estimates that there are more people who identify as Bi+ than lesbian and gay people combined. Additionally, about half of millennials, who now make up over a third of the current workforce, that identify within the LGBTQ+ community are bisexual.

When looking at the next generation of our American workforce, bisexual, pansexual, and queer people will quite possibly be a majority. In a recent study, 1 in 6 Gen Z people identify as LGBTQ+, with around 72 percent of these LGBTQ+ people identifying as bisexual, pansexual, or queer. This means that nearly 12 percent of all Gen Z adults identify as Bi+, and about 2 percent each identify as gay, lesbian or transgender. Additionally, 40% of LGBTQ people of color in the US identify as bisexual, underlining the importance of discussing and navigating Bi+ identities in the workplace with an intersectional approach.

## However, despite their considerable population, Bi+ people are less likely to be out in the workplace and their needs less likely to be met...

Although the Bi+ community makes up a majority of the current LGBTQ+ workforce, and rapidly growing, Bi+ people struggle with visibility in the workplace. A recent study shows that 38 percent of bisexual people are not out to anyone at work—compared to 18 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people not being out overall. Bi+ people are less likely to self-report their sexual orientation in an anonymous, confidential human resource survey than their gay and lesbian peers—59 percent versus 79 percent of gay men and 77 percent of lesbians. Bisexuals are also less likely to have someone at work acknowledge their orientation in a positive way. Only 7 percent says this happens frequently, compared to 27 percent of gay men and 31 percent of lesbians.

Bi+ people in the workplace with different-gender partners are often just assumed to be straight and therefore their Bi+ identity is completely erased, which can also deter people from coming out. For this reason, traditional LGBTQ+ safe spaces in workplaces, such as the LGBTQ+ ERG, may not be completely inclusive or welcoming for Bi+ people, especially those in different-gender relationships.

The lack of out Bi+ people in the workplace drastically affects representation in leadership positions and contributes to the stigma around coming out at work as Bi+. Bi+ erasure leads to less resources, opportunities, allies, and support that the community needs in the workplace.



## When Bi+ people do come out, they regularly face stigma, stereotypes, and harassment in the workplace.

Many workplaces continue to struggle in creating cultures of belonging and inclusion for Bi+ employees. When Bi+ people do choose to come out in the workplace, they are often targets of pervasive biphobia that emerges in many forms: jokes, stereotypes, and even harassment—[43 percent of LGBTQ employees report hearing jokes specifically aimed at bisexuality](#).

Members of the Bi+ community are often stereotyped in the workplace as promiscuous, hypersexual, or even confused. Bi+ identities are frequently delegitimized by both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people. In the LGBTQ+ community, Bi+ people fight the stigma that bisexuality is just a phase or that Bi+ people are too scared or indecisive to fully come out of the closet as gay or lesbian. This Bi+ erasure from within the LGBTQ+ community is often referred to as [“identity invalidation” —the idea that someone’s identity is invalid and should be ignored or erased](#).

This level of stereotyping and biphobia creates workplace cultures that are unfriendly and harmful to Bi+ people, which can negatively affect the community’s rates of retention, performance, and wellbeing at a company.

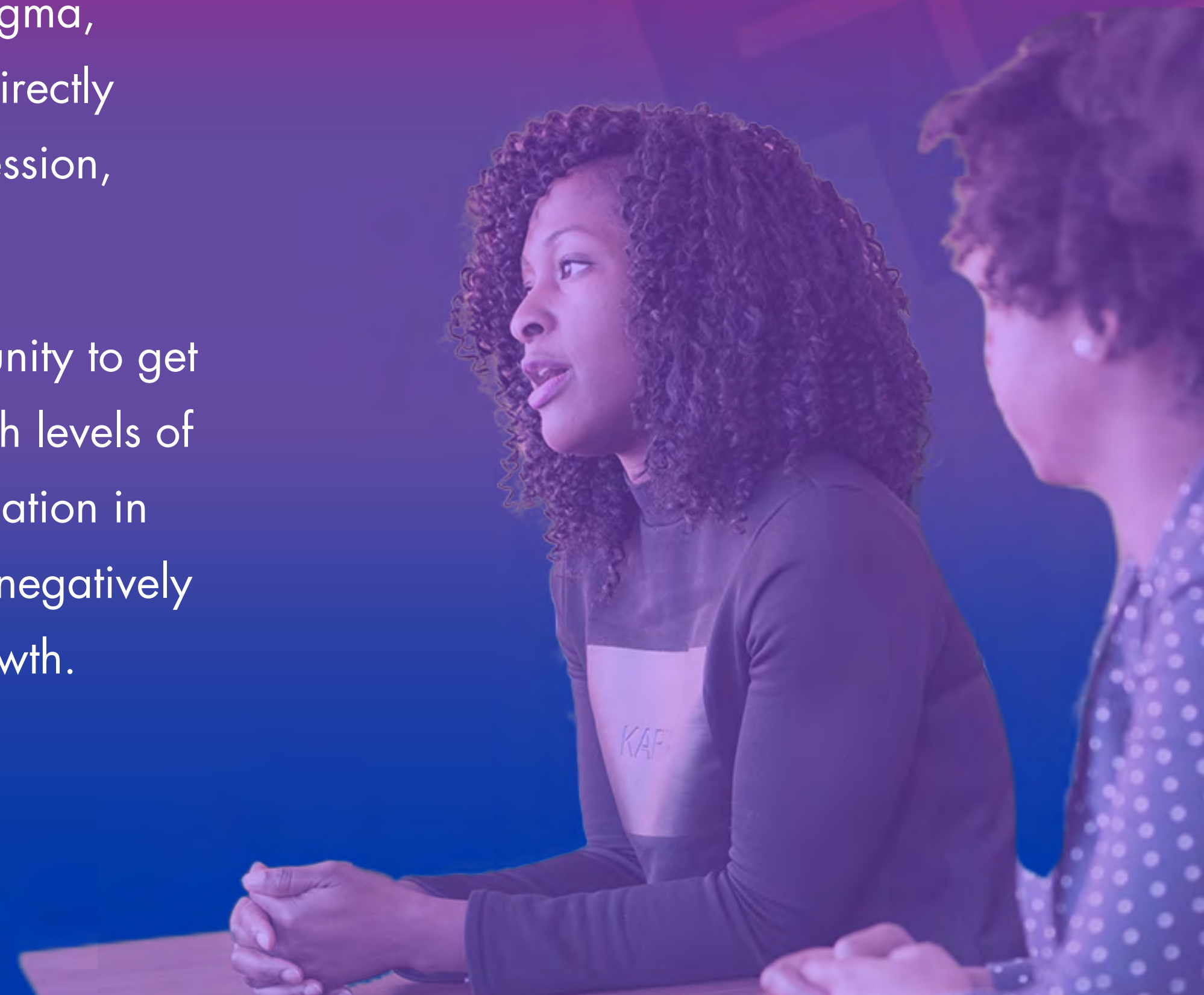




## Unfortunately, workplaces with cultures of biphobia can lead to poor mental health within the community.

Recent studies show that Bi+ adults have nearly double the rates of depression and anxiety when compared to heterosexual, gay, and lesbian adults. Pervasive stigma, discrimination, and stereotyping, especially from other LGBTQ+ people, can directly impact Bi+ people's mental health, including stress, loneliness, isolation, depression, and anxiety.

Workplaces with cultures of biphobia do not afford Bi+ employees the opportunity to get the support they need when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing. High levels of stress around coming out of the closet, dealing with Bi+ erasure, and discrimination in the workplace is a psychologically taxing process for Bi+ employees and can negatively impact overall work performance, productivity, and limits opportunities for growth.



## What can I do? What can my company do?

Clearly, there is much to be done to ensure Bi+ employees feel a sense of belonging in the workplace. Here are just a few recommendations for creating more inclusive spaces for Bi+ employees:

**AS AN EMPLOYER,** offer LGBTQ+ educational resources and trainings to employees and management that are inclusive of Bi+ identities. When creating LGBTQ+ safe spaces, like LGBTQ+ ERGs, ensure these spaces are inclusive of Bi+ people and programming and that Bi+ people are afforded leadership roles. Check in on company benefits, policies, and practices to confirm that the company is fully inclusive of Bi+ employees, including those in different-gender relationships. Celebrate Bisexual Awareness Week within your ERG, on your company's social media platform, and through programming to elevate Bi+ voices. The goal is to create cultures of belonging where every employee knows they can bring their authentic self into the workplace, are valued for who they are, and are able to thrive.

**AS AN INDIVIDUAL,** create the habit of using inclusive language in your everyday interactions with your colleagues. For example, "Do you have a husband?", turns into "Do you have a partner?" It's important to remember that not everyone in a different-gender relationship identifies as straight, and not everyone in a same-gender relationship identifies as gay or lesbian. Furthermore, remind yourself that an individual's relationship does not determine their sexual orientation. Continue to educate yourself, advocate for your Bi+ colleagues, and practice active allyship for the Bi+ community.

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