

THE BUSINESS OF BELONGING™

About That B: Bi+ Inclusion at Work

outandequal.org

Written by **Robyn Ochs** in collaboration with Out & Equal | Additional contributions by Heather Arold, Audrey Lipps, Jean-Marie Navetta, Isabel Porras, and Erin Uritus

An Introduction from Erin Uritus (She/Her) CEO, Out & Equal

In 2002, I attended my first Out & Equal Workplace Summit in Orlando. I had recently co-founded the LGBTQ+* employee resource group (ERG) at Booz Allen and was excited to participate in what, even then, was the largest gathering of LGBTQ+ professionals in the world.

At Summit, I knew I wanted to attend a workshop on bisexual inclusion, but I didn't feel ready to tell my coworkers why. Even as an LGBTQ+ ERG leader, even at Summit, I still wasn't comfortable being fully out at work. Not even in conversation with other members of my resource group.

I initially came out at work after beginning to date women and did not correct coworkers' assumptions that I was a lesbian. So, that day at Summit, I quietly found my way to the only session on Bisexual Inclusion, having told my ERG colleagues that I was attending a different workshop because I was afraid they would not accept me. I also suspected I would find myself alone upon entering the workshop, never having met another bisexual person, but I was wrong. The room was so jam-packed I couldn't find a seat, and I was soon filled with the courage to return to the office, come out as my true self, and start advocating for more inclusion within our ERG and throughout our company.

*Throughout this document, we use the acronym LGBTQ+ to indicate lesbian, gay, bi+, transgender, and queer identities. In places where different versions are used, it is to mirror the language of specific research studies or when directly quoting an individual. More information about terminology is available on page 24.

I know so many of you have a story just like this—a story often ignited by the first time you attended an Out & Equal Summit. A story of finding your bravest self through this work, of feeling less alone when seeing your own story reflected in others, and of leveraging that inspiration to create change within your organization.

Put simply: both individuals and companies lose when inclusion and belonging are not priorities.

This document intends to shine light on bisexuals—the largest and least visible segment of the LGBTQ+ community.



Welcome from Robyn Ochs (She/They) Bi+ Expert, Educator, and Co-Author

My first experience of the Out & Equal Workplace Summit was in 2011, nine years after Erin attended and was transformed and ignited as an LGBTQ+ change agent in her first bi+* session. I was recruited as a presenter by Heidi Green, one of Summit's early attendees and advisors. She encouraged me to share my decades of work with Summit participants, and I enthusiastically accepted. As a bi+ advocate and educator, I was a "professional bisexual."

My story overlaps with Erin's and with the stories of so many others struggling to decide whether to come out at work. I came out to myself as bisexual during my first month at university after developing a major crush on another woman (a powerful clue). Adding this new information to my previous history of attraction to and relationships with men, I quickly concluded that I was bi. But I found myself stuck in the space between knowing and being. I knew I was bi, but I did not know how to operationalize my identity—how to be a bi person in the world. I came out pre-Internet and had no idea where to find other bisexual people, resources, community, or even what to do next. There was a burgeoning gay and lesbian community on my campus, but I sensed that it was welcoming to gay men and lesbians only. I yearned to come out, but didn't know what it would mean for my life. I feared that coming out as bi would cost me family, friends, jobs, and respect. For five very long years, I told no one. I was suffocating in my own silence.

Finally, one day a coworker sat me down and came out to me as bisexual. I blurted out, "So am I!" I am forever grateful to her. I felt lighter, as though a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. After coming out as bi to my colleague, the floodgates opened, and I am proud to say that I haven't been silent since—except at work.

At my first professional job, I didn't mention my girlfriend. I didn't tell anyone I was bi. I was afraid of how my coworkers and supervisor might respond.

At my second professional job, I heard that the boss was uncomfortable that an unmarried heterosexual couple in our department was living together. I concluded it wouldn't be safe or wise to come out as bi, so I told no one and quickly began to look for a new job.

At my third job, I decided I could be silent no longer. I needed to come out. But I waited a whole year before saying anything. Why did I wait? I was afraid people would judge me. I was worried people would see me as less competent, flaky, hypersexual, and less professional. In fact, I was terrified. I felt I needed to gain my supervisor's and colleagues' respect as a professional before taking the enormous risk of revealing who I was.

Then I finally came out. What a relief! I finally felt whole.

I attended a meeting of a new employee group that was forming to address workplace issues facing lesbian and gay people. A few of us made sure that they added "bisexual" to the name. (This was several years before transgender became commonplace in group names.) There was substantial pushback from some, but bisexual was eventually added. Still, many group members continued to say, "lesbian and gay." I sometimes felt erased, ignored, and excluded, but I stuck it out.

"I found myself stuck in the space between knowing and being.

I knew I was bi, but I did not know how to operationalize my identity—how to be a bi person in the world."

* Curious about why bi+? Check out the explanation on page 6.

Welcome from Robyn Ochs (She/They) Bi+ Expert, Educator, and Co-Author



Out of the 40 or so regular members, I was one of only two openly bi+ folks in our group. When someone would say something offensive to bi+ folks, everyone would turn toward the two of us, waiting to see if we would say something. That was not ally behavior. Because they knew those comments caused harm, they should have spoken up. There were a few other folks in the group I knew identified as bi+, but they didn't feel comfortable revealing themselves as bi+. That made me sad. After some time, that group stopped meeting.

A few years later, we started a new LGBTQ+ employee group. A few bi+ folks showed up and stayed. Bi+ folks were visible in our ERG from the start. As a result of our advocacy, our employer made significant policy changes to address the needs of LGBTQ+ people. It was clear that bi+ folks were welcome because we were visible in leadership. One of the first co-chairs identified as bisexual, and I followed her as co-chair. Bisexual people were in the room, and everyone knew we were there.

It's important to show up, to be visible, and to speak out. No one should be forced to come out, but those of us who choose to can make a real difference as educators and as role models.

My many conversations at Summit over the years in sessions and in hallways, as well as feedback from participants in Out & Equal's Bi+ Community Engagement Group, convinces me that even today, despite so much progress, most bi+ people still have a hard time feeling a sense of inclusion and belonging in their workplaces and too often in their ERGs.

We have created this resource to provide you with an array of useful tools so that you can make a difference by creating a culture of inclusion and belonging where you are. Specifically, this resource will enhance your ability to seek out and hear the voices of actual bi+ employees telling their stories, which in turn, creates even more opportunities to incorporate out employees into your strategies, tactics, and content.

Table Of Contents

7	The Intersectionality of Bi+ Identities
8	Bi+ in the U.S.
10	Bi+ Globally
11	Bi+ Experiences at Work
19	The Business Case for Active and Intentional Bi+ Inclusion
20	Taking Action: Changes for Organizations, ERGs, and Individuals
23	Looking Forward
24	Terminology & Definitions
25	Citations

A note on personal stories...

Most of the personal stories that you will read in this resource are from Out & Equal's Bi+ Community Engagement Group members—surveyed and convened in dialogue with the organization and with each other. Others are from a short survey conducted in 2022 and 2023 on social media, asking bi+ people to share positive and negative experiences in their workplaces and ERGs.

Bi+ or Pansexual?

What is the difference between bisexual and pansexual?

We think of these terms as overlapping, but not identical. In fact, some people identify both as bisexual and pansexual. Some pansexual people say that gender, to them, is irrelevant in determining attraction. Others say gender is relevant, but that they are attracted to all genders. Some bisexual people are attracted to two genders, while others are attracted to multiple genders. The exact nuances of these terms are different for different people.

Not sure what term you should use? Typically, bi+ is considered to be inclusive of all non-monosexual identities. In conversations with individuals, you should always use the language that they use to describe themselves.

A Note on Language in This Document

Labels used—and even whether labels are used widely or at all—vary across the globe and even within different social communities within a locality.

There are numerous words for identities between and beyond the binaries of gay and straight, and some of these identities have overlapping meanings. Furthermore, many people identify with multiple labels (e.g., bisexual and queer). The choice of label(s) is personal and nuanced.

In this resource, we use the term bi+ when speaking in general terms. When other language is used (e.g., bisexual vs. bi+), it reflects the terms used in specific research studies.

The Intersectionality of Bi+ Identities

There is no singular bi+ experience. Every person who is bi+ has numerous other identities in addition to their sexual orientation. These include things like gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, dis/abilities, and relationship status. Additionally, people who are bi+ span the spectrum of differences in factors like age, political and spiritual beliefs, and geographic location.

Remembering that many bisexual people hold multiple identities that carry stigma (on many fronts) and are impacted by various systems of oppression helps with understanding individual behaviors, experiences, and responses. How can this show up?

A bi+ person with a disability may, for example, find that their LGBTQ+ coworkers are not thinking about accessibility or accommodations. A pansexual BIPOC person may experience racism as well as erasure amongst white LGBTQ+ coworkers, and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment amongst BIPOC coworkers. For those experiencing marginalization across multiple fronts, finding a place where they can bring their whole selves to the table and feel completely welcome may feel like an elusive goal. It takes energy to navigate being different at work, and even more energy to navigate multiple differences.

“I am a Black, bi woman, and the head of DEI at my worksite. I’m out—for obvious reasons—as Black, but I just can’t see my way to being out as bi/queer at work. Being Black at this company and in this role is exhausting enough.”

In other words, to truly demonstrate allyship to people who are bi+, considering the totality of their experiences—using the lens of intersectionality—is necessary.

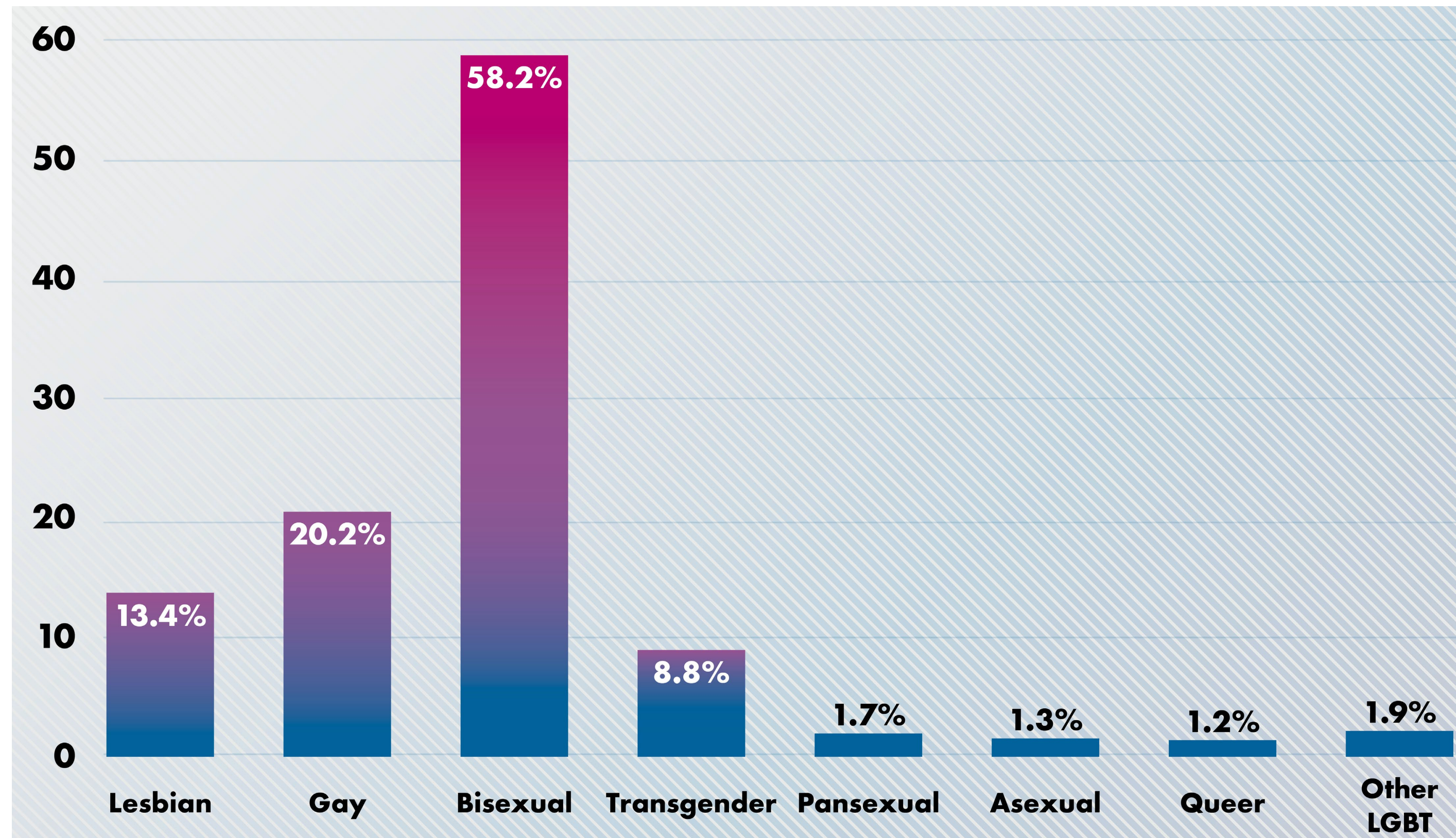
However, even with this lens in place, unfavorable experiences tend to be shared by many bi+ people in the workplace.

The term *intersectionality* was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe a framework for understanding how interlocking systems of power—such as racism and sexism—affect those who are most marginalized in society.

Crenshaw wrote of this framework, “Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there.”

Bi+ in the US

While they face tremendous challenges around visibility and discrimination, the bi+ population in the US is much larger than most people think. Overall, 4.2% of the US population self-identifies as bisexual, making this—at 58.2%—the largest single-identity group within the LGBTQ+ community.



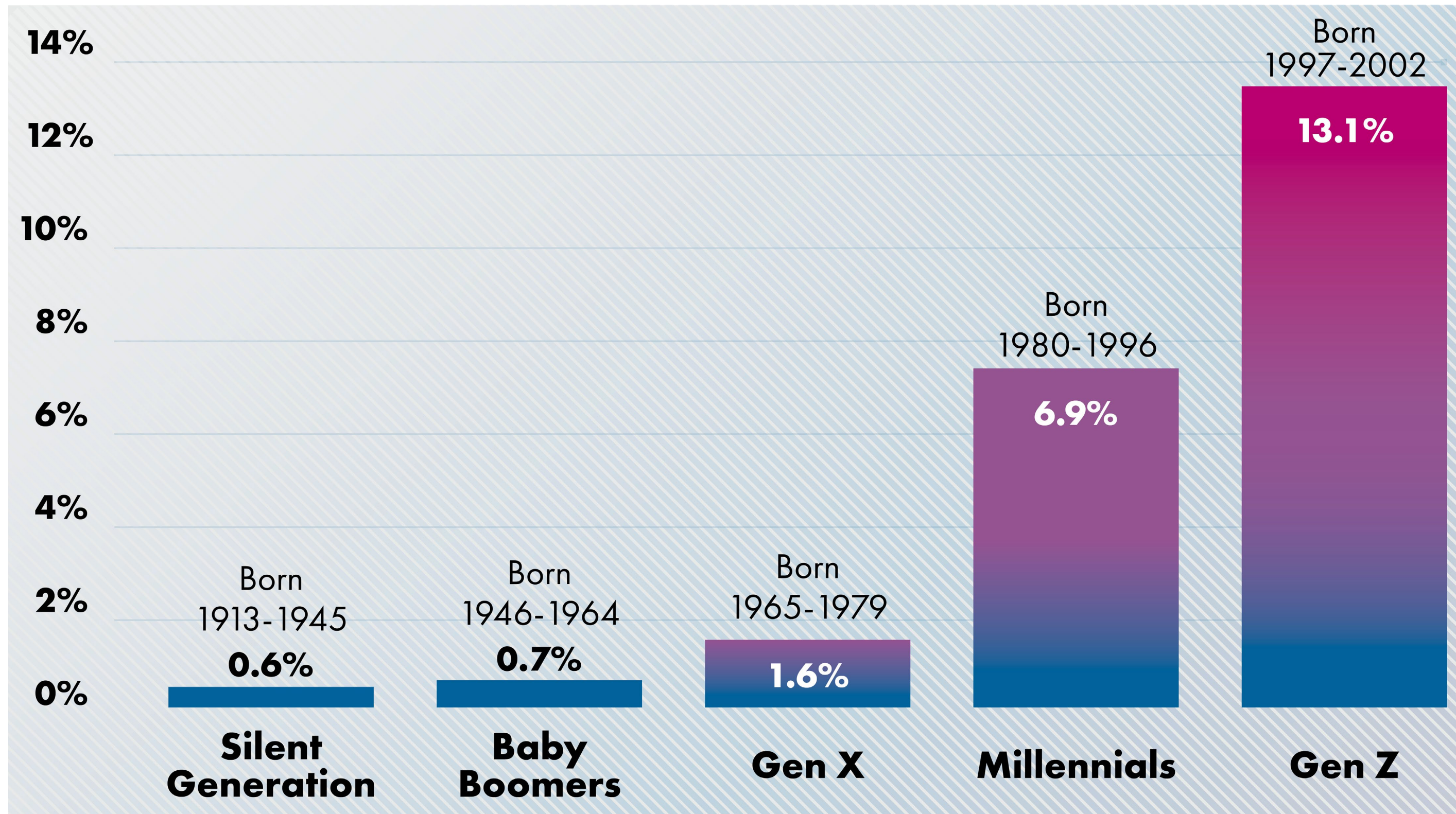
Bi+ Identities and Generation

Data published in 2022 by Gallup found that self-identification varies dramatically with age. With each successive generation, the percentage of people who identify as LGBTQ+ increases. This increase may be explained by the presence of a more accepting culture, which has resulted in increased access to information, media representation, and open role models. Also, the shift in laws (e.g., decriminalization of LGBTQ+ identities) can make people more willing to be honest about their identities in surveys.

This percentage increase is driven, in part, by the dramatic generational increase in those who identify as bi+.

Data source: Gallup, 2022. Based on 2022 Gallup telephone surveys, encompassing interviews with over 10,000 US adults.

What Percentage of People in the US Identify as Bisexual, by Age



Data source: Gallup, 2022. Based on 2022 Gallup telephone surveys, encompassing interviews with over 10,000 US adults.

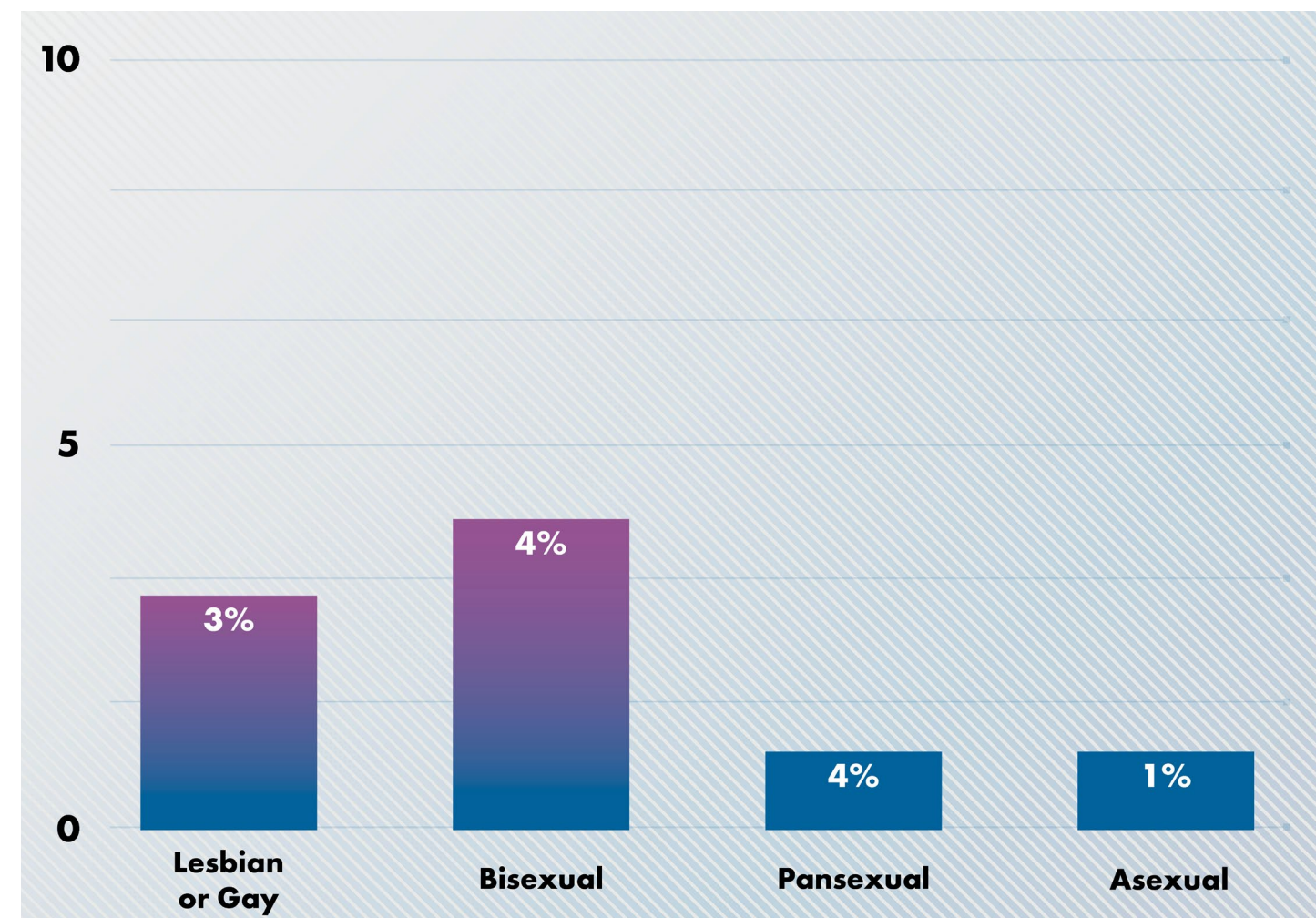
There are some differences seen in data as to how bi+ people self-identify by race. A 2020 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), the nation's largest state health survey, found the highest rates of bisexual identity among respondents who identified as "Two or More Races, non-Latino": 7.5%, and lowest rates of bisexual identity among respondents who identified as "Asian non-Latino": 2.4%. A similar pattern was found among those identifying as gay and lesbian: 4.7% and 1.9%, respectively.

Bi+ Identities and Gender Identity

While sexual orientation and gender identity are two distinct aspects of who people are, some data shows differences between cisgender and transgender people regarding bi+ identity. The 2015 US Transgender Survey, conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality, found that 32% of its respondents identified as bisexual or pansexual.

Globally, the number of people identifying as bi+ is increasing in ways similar to what we've seen in US-based data. In many respects, this corresponds with the idea that as people see more acceptance and visibility, they are more likely to self-identify when asked about their sexual orientation.

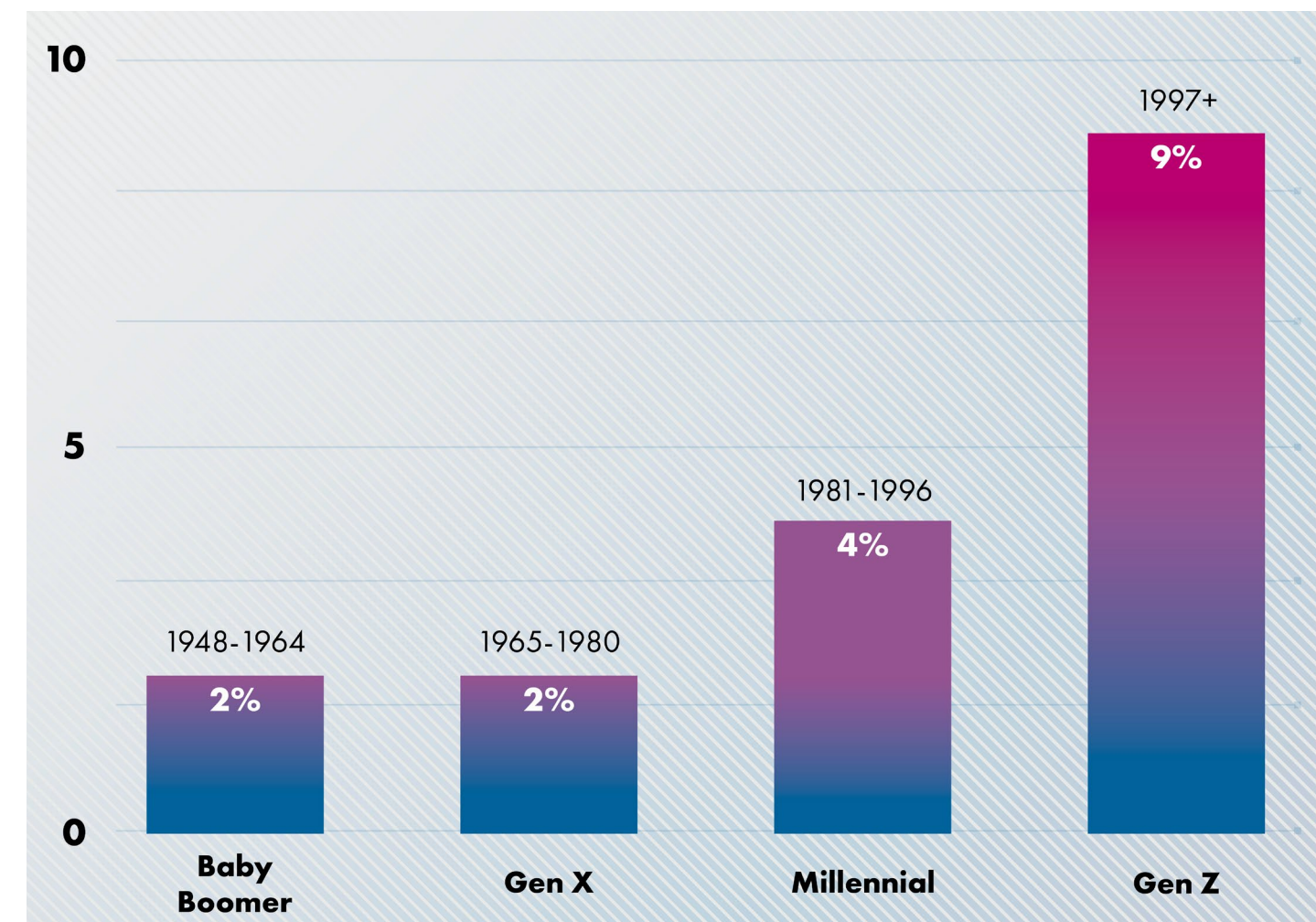
In 2023, Ipsos, a global market research organization, conducted a 30-country study that revealed the diversity within the LGBTQ+ population. As seen in US polling, the largest group in this space were people identifying as bisexual. This was true in every age group polled.



Source: Ipsos, 2023. Based on 22,514 online adults aged 16-74 across 30 countries.

Bi+ Identities and Generation

Also similar to US data was a dramatic difference in the volume of people identifying as bisexual when the data was segmented by generation. For example, while only about 2% of Baby Boomers identified as bisexual, 9% of Gen Z embraced that identity.



Geography

There were, interestingly, differences in the number of self-identified bi+ people based on where they lived. The incidence of self-identified bisexual and pansexual people of all ages ranged from 8% in Brazil and the Netherlands, compared to 2% in Japan and Peru. While exact percentages vary from country to country, there are common trends: younger generations self-report as LGBTQ+ in far greater proportions than do their elders, with each subsequent generation showing a dramatic increase compared to prior generations. To that point, the number of people self-reporting as bi+ is the fastest-growing cohort.

Bi+ Identities and Gender Identity

Globally, the number of transgender, nonbinary, or other non-cisgender adults identifying as bi+ is comparable but not identical to US numbers. Ipsos's 2021 survey found that 9% of transgender, nonbinary, and genderfluid adults identified as bi, 17% identified as pan or omnisexual, and 7% identified as other. However, their survey size was only 223 for global representation and did not account for overlapping identities (such as identifying as both bi+ and asexual).

Bi+ Experiences at Work

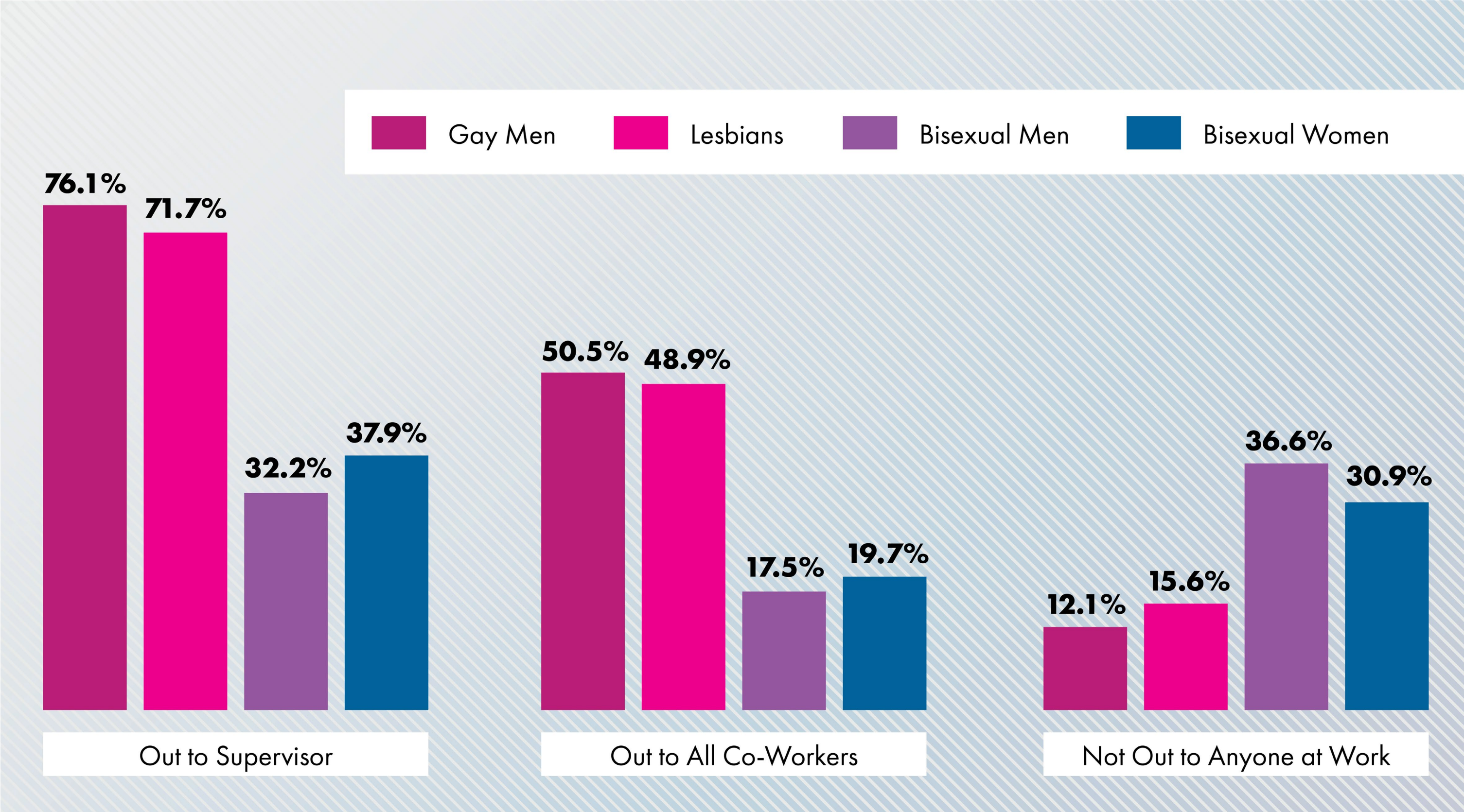
The experiences of people who are bi+ are as diverse as the population itself. And while there are some similarities in experiences to those of the whole LGBTQ+ community, there are notable differences that offer opportunities for deeper understanding and more effective change strategies.

Rate of Being Out at Work

Being out at work remains a challenge for too many people in the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, with current statistics placing the rate of people in the closet to some extent at work between 46-50% overall in the US. However, when focusing on the experiences of bi+ people at work and identity disclosure, some stark differences emerge.

In 2020, Stonewall (UK) reported that 57% of gay and lesbian staff are out to everyone at work compared to only 22% of bisexual staff.

Openness About Being LGB at Work Among Cisgender LGB Employees



Data source: The Williams Institute, 2023. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Bisexual-Workplace-Discrimination-Sep-2022.pdf>

Bi+ Experiences at Work

These results were reflected in US-based polling by the Williams Institute in 2022. They found that cisgender bisexual people were much less likely to be out at work than cisgender lesbian or gay men. While 76% of gay men and 71.6% of lesbians are out to their supervisors, these numbers plummet to 32.2% for bisexual men and 37.9% of bisexual women.

Meanwhile, the report also found that 50.5% of gay men and 48% of lesbians are out to all their coworkers, compared to just 17.5% of bisexual men and 19.7% of bisexual women.

When it came to being completely closeted at work, the numbers told more of the story. While being fully closeted in the workplace was true for 10.8% of gay men and lesbians, for people who are bisexual, this number was 30.8%.

“I’ve never explicitly come out to most of my coworkers. I’m not trying to hide it either. I’m in the company pride group and I wear clothes with bi pride colors sometimes and generally dress and style my hair in a way that may not read as straight. But I’m also a man who’s married to a woman so I’m guessing the majority of my coworkers still just assume that I’m straight, and I don’t correct them.”

The low percentage 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+ invisibility leads to fewer resources, opportunities, allies, and support that the bi+ community needs in the workplace.

Other Differences

The question—and differences—in disclosure rates for people who are bi+ only tells the beginning of the workplace story.

In a 2021 report, the Williams Institute found that among those LGBTQ+ workers who are out at work, bi+ people were more likely to experience discrimination and its impact than gay and lesbian employees.

In fact, 46.4% of bisexual men and 27.2% of bisexual women reported employment discrimination at some point in their careers because of their sexual orientation, compared to 42.7% of gay men and 25% of lesbians.

Meanwhile, 57.5% of bisexual men said they'd left a job because of how they were treated based on sexual orientation compared to 50% of gay men. These numbers differed among women, with 34.8% of lesbians (vs. 29% of bisexual women) having this experience. (See *"Why Is This Happening?"* on page 18 for more discussion on reasons for these results.)

In too many cases, bi+ employees don't just disproportionately find themselves the victims of discrimination, they're also less likely to report these experiences. Stonewall UK's 2020 report found that only 28% of bisexual staff said they felt confident reporting that they were victims of bullying and harassment as compared to a significant 41% of lesbian and gay staff.

"I reported sexual harassment I was experiencing from another woman. It wasn't taken seriously because I'm bisexual."

The tropes and myths about bi+ people can run the gamut from incorrect assumptions to wildly damaging assertions. In conversations with participants in Out & Equal's Bi+ Community Engagement Group, similar themes consistently arise:

Bi+ people are assumed to be attracted to everyone around them.

"There's this weird expectation by a lot of straight people that if you share that you're LGBTQ+, somehow that means you must be attracted to them. And that's awkward, no matter how you cut it. And as someone who is bi, it feels even more intense."

Other Differences

Bi+ people worry that sharing their identity will lead to them being accused of hypersexualizing the workplace.

“I feel like a fraud not being my true self. This is internal for sure, but it is negative, and I just want to voice that I feel like I should be able to do so with no worries of consequences because there should be none. However, I’m afraid I will be accused of ‘bringing sex into the workplace’.”

Bi+ people are assumed to be sexually promiscuous.

“Someone said to me, ‘So, you’re bi? How does your partner feel about sharing you with other people?’ This was after I told them that I was bisexual. I never said anything about an open relationship. That’s a totally different subject.”

Bi+ people worry that misunderstandings about their identity will have a negative impact on how they’re perceived at work and hamper their success.

“I was afraid that if I came out as bi, the information about my sexuality would distract people from my competence. I was afraid people would judge me and see me as less professional.”

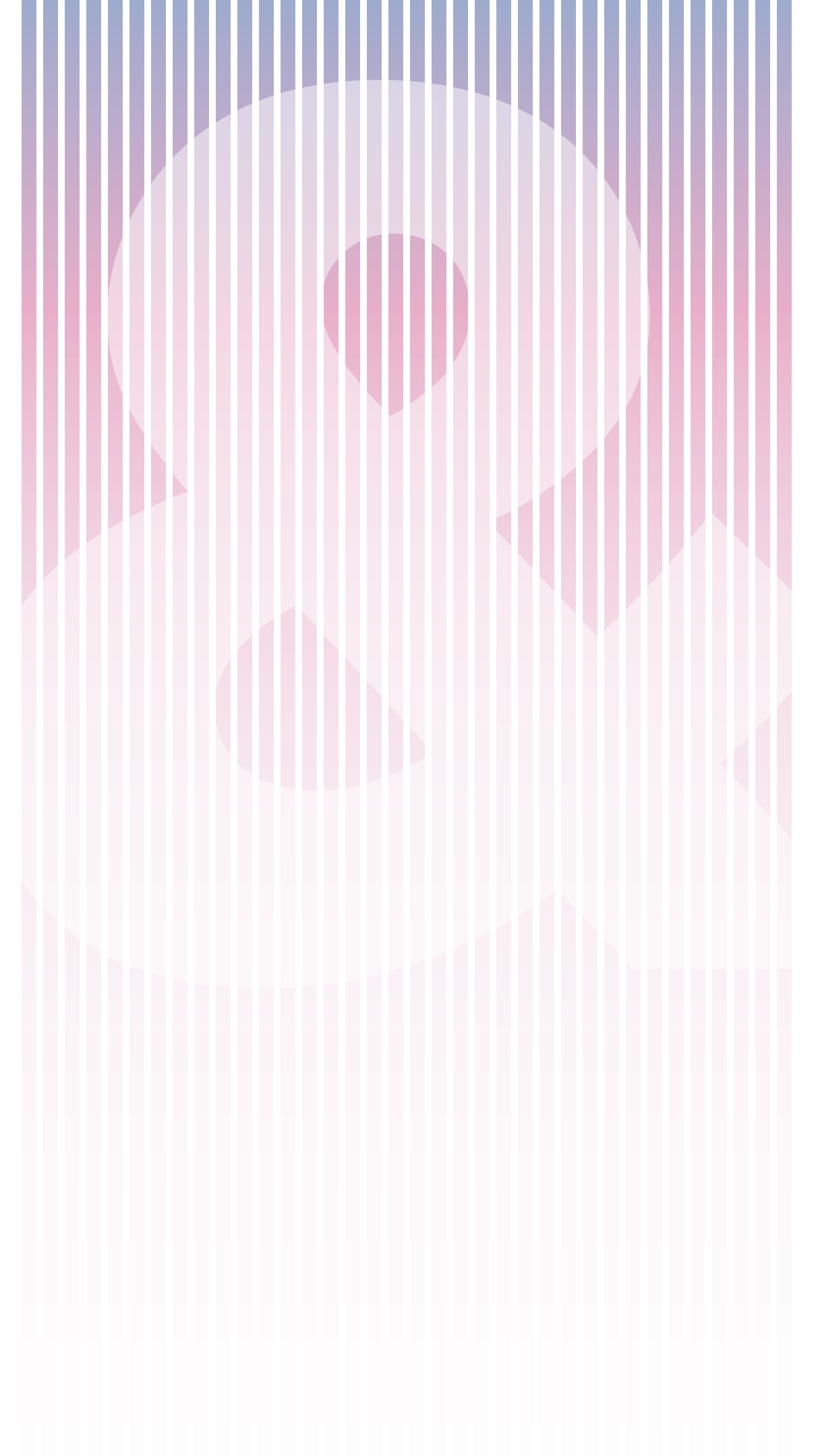
Other Differences

Unfortunately, workplaces with cultures of biphobia and bi+ erasure often lead to poor mental health within the community. Pervasive stigma, discrimination, and stereotyping, especially from lesbians and gay men, can directly impact bi+ people's mental health, resulting in stress, loneliness, isolation, depression, and anxiety.

One study revealed that bisexual women are more likely to experience mood (58.7%) and anxiety disorders (57.8%) than lesbian women (44.4% and 40.8%, respectively). This result was similar when comparing bisexual men and gay men. 36.9% of bisexual men reported having a mood disorder, and 38.7% reported anxiety disorders as compared with gay men (19.8% and 18.6%, respectively.)

Workplaces with cultures of biphobia do not afford bi+ employees the opportunity to get the support they need for their mental health and well-being. High levels of stress around coming out of the closet, dealing with bi+ erasure, and discrimination in the workplace are psychologically taxing for bi+ employees. This creates a level of anxiety that can negatively impact overall work performance, productivity, and retention, resulting in limited opportunities for career growth.

“I tell some people and not others. It's usually a generational divide where I assume my younger coworkers will be more understanding. But it's exhausting remembering who I have told, who I feel comfortable with, and having to start the process all over again at each new position. I am in a straight-facing relationship, so it's easier just not to say anything, but then I feel like a fraud.”



Bi+ People's Experiences Within Their ERGs

One of the most troubling challenges for bi+ people is the frequent lack of acceptance and inclusion inside LGBTQ+ ERGs in their workplaces. While these are spaces typically known for fostering a sense of belonging, biphobia in the LGBTQ+ community too often creates a sense of exclusion and isolation.

Green, et al., found:

Bi+ people in same-sex relationships are made invisible in their ERGs.

"I've gotten pushback from my pride network to just say I'm gay to not 'confuse the issue'."

Bi+ people in different-sex relationships are treated as allies by ERGs (at best).

"Because I am a woman married to a man, it doesn't feel like my participation in the ERG as a bisexual in the ERG counts, and I am more often treated as an ally who doesn't 'really understand' our issues. And I often don't raise my past same-sex relationships because it feels awkward or like I'm trying so hard to be accepted and prove myself, so I just let it go."

Bi+ people feel alienated from the larger LGBTQ+ community.

"I was not invited to join a newly formed LGBTQIA+ and Allies Committee at my workplace. I am a bisexual woman in a straight-presenting relationship and found out about the committee by coincidence in conversation after it had already convened once. There was no advance notice about the committee forming. It felt invalidating to be excluded and has felt like an uphill battle since to advocate for myself in the workplace."

Bi+ People's Experiences Within Their ERGs

Some bi+ people choose not to get involved in their company's LGBTQ+ ERG because they feel that they don't belong in this space. This may be because they are uncertain whether they will be met with distrust or disbelief. Bi+ people—especially those in long-term opposite-gender relationships—may also experience “bisexual imposter syndrome,” fearing that being in a long-term relationship renders them “not queer enough.”

“I feel like I shouldn't take up space reserved for others in the community.”

They may also fear they will encounter misunderstanding or hostility from other members of the LGBTQ+ community.

“It is always the same thing that we hear: What do bisexuals have to complain about? They get to have their cake and eat it, too.”

While these numbers are troubling and the sentiments that illustrate them heartbreaking, there is reason for hope, and improvements are happening. With efforts—like those of Out & Equal's Bi+ Community Engagement Group and organizations that have created bi+-specific subgroups and workstreams—work to address these challenges inside of ERGs is happening. Increased education, support, and programming on bi+ identities in LGBTQ+ ERGs are becoming the norm, elevating the conversation, educating allies, and changing the experiences of bi+ people at work. And the younger generations are expanding the conversation to reflect less focus on labels and more acceptance of sexual orientation and gender fluidity—a shift in attitudes that may support and accelerate these efforts towards more bi+ inclusion.

Why Is This Happening?

This data begs the question: If acceptance for LGBTQ+ people has generally been on the rise, and bi+ people comprise the largest part of the community, why do these disparities exist? And why are many of these disparities showing up in LGBTQ+ spaces at such high rates?

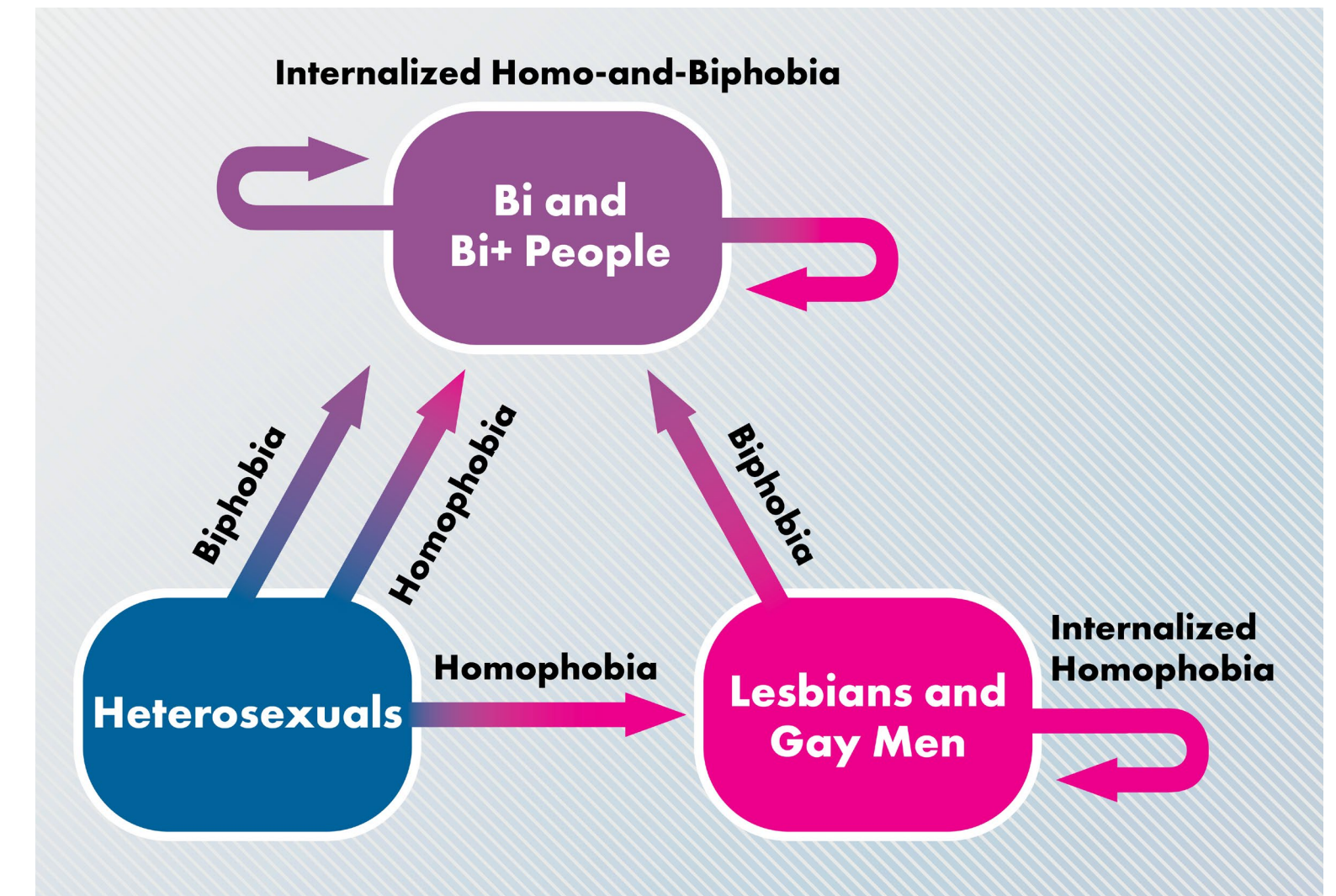
“When I first started at my job, a gay coworker told me how much she hates bi people ‘because they’re fence-sitting. They’re either gay or straight and they shouldn’t lead gay people on.’”

Acknowledging that harmful misperceptions and a significant amount of misinformation about bi+ people remain is a critical first step.

Too often, bisexuality is seen as a point of indecision about sexual orientation, rather than accepting it for what it is: a permanent identity. Some research points to perceptions among gay and lesbian people that bi+ women are more attracted to men than women, which explains why bi+ bias in lesbian spaces often happens more so than among the gay male population. In some cases, gay and lesbian individuals use a negative experience dating someone who is bi+ (often, “they left me for someone of the opposite sex”) as the lens they use to form their opinions about the whole bi+ community.

Additionally, media portrayals of bi+ people often frame them as hypersexualized and promiscuous—without any evidence to support the characteristic.

Finally, sexism plays a role in the issue. While bi+ women are often sexualized and therefore often seen as desirable (and therefore accepted) by partners who are men, bisexual men are characterized as deceptive and dangerous to women partners. And exposure to these damaging characterizations isn’t just for those outside the LGBTQ+ community. People inside these spaces often absorb these messages and behave in exclusionary ways.



Source: Robyn Ochs

The impact of this multidirectional exclusion and discrimination can be profound. A UK Stonewall survey found that 43% of bisexual respondents reported that they had never participated in LGBTQ+ spaces.

The Business Case for Active and Intentional Bi+ Inclusion

The fact that inclusive environments and policies/programs contribute to better talent attraction, performance, and retention isn't a new story. And in the LGBTQ+ space, an increasingly large body of data proves this point.

A 2022 LinkedIn/YouGov report emphasized this point: 49% of LGBTQ+ professionals won't work for a company that doesn't have LGBTQ+ benefits. Furthermore, a majority of this same group—a staggering 75%—said it is important for them to work for an organization where they feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work.

And as it turns out, inclusive practices also matter when it comes to retention. A 2021 report from the Williams Institute revealed that one-third (34.2%) of LGBTQ+ employees say they left a job because of how their employer treated them based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

All of these points are true, but so is the significance of the demographic data. With more than 58% of the LGBTQ+ community identifying as bisexual (with an increasing number of individuals in the talent pipeline embracing this identity at higher levels than ever before), developing specific programs and practices to ensure their inclusion is non-negotiable.

“There are more of us (who are bi+) than in any other part of the LGBTQ+ community. And still, there's less acceptance, less understanding, and even less focus on inclusion in my ERG. It is frustrating, but I've decided that I'm going to keep pushing the issue until people start listening.”

However, wanting change and actually creating change are two very different things. The most effective strategies require action from organizations, ERGs, and individuals. In the next section, we'll offer some accessible and effective starting points.

Taking Action: Change for Organizations, ERGs, and Individuals

As an Employer

- Ensure that LGBTQ+ educational resources and trainings offered to employees and management are fully inclusive of bi+ identities.
- Provide LGBTQ+ ERGs with the resources and visibility they need to do programming and education across all identities in the community.
- Encourage Human Resources to consult and collaborate with the ERG to ensure that benefits, policies, and practices are inclusive of bi+ employees, including those in different-gender relationships. Ensure that HR professionals don't default to assuming that an employee is straight simply because they are partnered with someone of a different gender.

“When marriage equality became a reality, we worked with our HR team to make sure they knew to talk about it as just that—marriage equality and not gay marriage, because it was always about more than just gay and lesbian people.”

- If your company makes grants to nonprofits, add bi+ organizations to your list of those who receive your philanthropy.
- Celebrate Bisexual Visibility Day on September 23, Bi+ Health Month in March, Pansexual Visibility Day on May 24, and National Pansexual Pride Day on December 8 within your ERG, on your company's social media platforms, and through programming to elevate bi+ voices.

As an ERG

- Make it very clear in your communications that your bi+ colleagues are welcome. Include stories from out bi+ employees when offering personal narratives.
- Ensure that there is bi+ representation on your ERG's leadership team.
- Educate ERG members not to make assumptions that someone with a same-gender partner identifies as gay or lesbian or that someone with a different-gender partner is a straight ally.

“In the first meeting I ever went to with my ERG, one of the members introduced themselves, mentioned their identity, and actually said, ‘I heard you mention your husband, but I know that doesn’t tell me how you identify. Would you be willing to share?’ I was floored. It was the first time someone did that, and it made me want to get more engaged.”

- Use the opportunity to Celebrate Bisexual Visibility Day on September 23, Bi+ Health Month in March, Pansexual Visibility Day on May 24, and National Pansexual Pride Day on December 8 to share information and resources.
- Ensure that programming throughout the year is fully inclusive of bi+ identities. Even better? Focus on developing programming for ERG members and the organization that specifically centers bi+ voices.
- Build allyship and accountability inside the ERG. Encourage (and teach) members to identify and respectfully discuss incidents of bi+ erasure and biphobia.

As an Individual

- Keep your assumptions in check. An individual's relationship does not determine their sexual orientation. Not everyone in a different-gender relationship identifies as straight, and not everyone in a same-gender relationship identifies as lesbian or gay.
- Use inclusive language in your everyday interactions with colleagues. For example, use "partner" or "spouse" instead of husband or wife until someone specifies the language they want you to use. Talk about marriage as "marriage equality" and not "gay marriage."
- Educate yourself about the specific challenges faced by people who are bi+. (Following bi+ organizations on social media can be a great start!)
- Interrupt and correct biphobic comments and remarks that erase bi+ people when you hear them. Use the ouch and educate model. Pause the conversation, highlight the comment, explain why it is problematic, suggest a better way to communicate, and move on. If it is not possible to speak up at the time, determine an appropriate time, then reach out privately to the person who made the comment.

- Advocate for funding to collect more data on the bi+ community's experiences, their unique challenges, and strategies to help them thrive.
- Demonstrate your bi+ allyship. This means using your platform and privilege to elevate issues that may not be getting addressed, creating opportunities for bi+ people to lead and share, and intervening when exclusion happens.

"I'm a queer woman who didn't think much about the experiences of bi+ people. But when a bi+ colleague educated me, I became more aware. I found myself starting to ask questions when we were planning programs about how we can ensure that bi+ voices and stories are represented and included."

- If you identify as bi+, come out if you can. Know that your visible presence can make you a role model and a beacon of hope to others.

"I did a soft coming out at work by wearing a shirt with a bi-flag design. One coworker clocked it and came up to me to ask subtly if I was repping me or allyship. I confirmed it was me, and he used it as a springboard to come out to me. And then, I got invited to a local queer monthly art collective. It was very positive!"

Looking Forward

While tremendous challenges still need to be addressed and overcome for employees who are bi+ in the workplace—and in society as a whole—there are real signs of hope.

The number of people who identify as bi+ is on the increase, and this speaks to the work that's already been done to create a sense of inclusion in the larger LGBTQ+ community and to the impact of the many out bi+ leaders whose stories have provided hope and possibility.

Similarly, in organizations, as the workforce changes and more out bi+ people are drawn to LGBTQ+ ERGs, they are shifting expectations and behaviors. Bi+ programming is no longer an afterthought or add-on for many companies, but a dedicated workstream. Bi+ leadership in ERGs attracts more people from the community and starts to build the capacity necessary for systemic change.

But this is an effort that still needs focused and consistent attention: The challenges faced appear in a variety of ways, both inside and outside of LGBTQ+ spaces, and overcoming them will take intentional and sustained efforts. As we learn more about what works, we'll have the ability to elevate these stories and practices and move forward together.

Recognizing, acknowledging, and actively welcoming the large numbers of individuals who embody the broad spectrum of identities between and beyond the binary categories of straight, lesbian, and gay takes us all one step closer in the journey from diversity to inclusion, to equity, to our ultimate goal: belonging. Let us work 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 fully able to thrive.

Terminology & Definitions

Ally: A term generally relating to individuals who support marginalized groups.

Bisexual: According to advocate and educator Robyn Ochs, this is a person who acknowledges in themselves the potential to be attracted—romantically and/or sexually—to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree. With this definition, the “bi” in bisexual refers to genders like and different from their own gender.

Bi+: An umbrella term used to encompass sexual and romantic identities between and beyond the gay-straight binary. The term bi+ can include people identifying as bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, multisexual, non-monosexual, multi-spectrum attracted, and with a range of other labels that designate nonbinary sexualities. This term is used in this resource to also be inclusive of people who don't necessarily identify as strictly bisexual, but who have shared experiences based on their multi-gender attraction.

BIPOC: BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This is a term typically specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity amongst communities of color.

Cisgender: A term used to refer to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gender Expression: The manner in which a person expresses a gender identity, typically through their appearance, dress, and behavior.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply held core sense of self in relation to gender. Gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex.

Monosexual: People who only experience attraction to one gender (e.g., gay or straight).

Multisexual: A person who feels an attraction to more than one gender.

Omnisexual: A person romantically, emotionally, or sexually attracted to persons of all genders and orientations.

Nonbinary: Refers to people who do not subscribe to or identify on the gender binary. They might exist between or beyond the man-woman binary.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to people regardless of gender or to all or many genders of people.

Queer: A term used by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use—and valued by many for its defiance—some consider the term to be inclusive of the entire community, and others find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities.

Transgender: A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth.

Citations

The California Health Interview Survey. *CHIS 2020 Adult Public Use Files*. (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research) 2020. <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/chis>

Brad Sears, et al, Williams Institute, *LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment*. Sept 2021. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-workplace-discrimination/>

Jones, Jeffery M., *US LGBT Identification Steady at 7.2%*. (Gallup) February 22, 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/470708/lgbt-identification-steady.aspx>

Sophie Melville, Eloise Stongorough, Becca Gooch, *LGBT in Britain Bi Report*. (Stonewall UK) Sept 2020. www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_bi.pdf

Open for Business, *New global champions: Why fast-growing companies from emerging markets are embracing LGBT+ inclusion*. 2019. <https://open-for-business.org/s/New-Global-Champions-why-fast-growing-companies-from-emerging-markets-are-embracing-LGBT-inclusion-f.pdf>

M.V. Lee Badgett et al., *The Business Impact of LGBT-Supportive Workplace Policies*. (The Williams Institute) 2013. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Impact-LGBT-Support-Workplace-May-2013.pdf>

Boyon Nicolas, *LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey*. (IPSOS) 2021. <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-06/node-790166-791191.zip>

Fidas, Deena and Cooper, Liz, *A Workplace Divided: Understanding the Climate for LGBTQ Workers Nationwide*. (HRC) 2018.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/a-workplace-divided-understanding-the-climate-for-lgbtq-workers-nationwide>

Green, Heidi Bruins, et al. "Working Bi: Preliminary findings from a survey on workplace experiences of bisexual people." *Journal of Bisexuality*, vol. 11, no. 2–3, 2011, pp. 300–316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.572007>

Bettinsoli, Maria Laura, et al. "Predictors of attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women in 23 countries." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, vol. 11, no. 5, 2019, pp. 697–708, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550619887785>

Feinstein, Brian A., and Christina Dyar. "Bisexuality, minority stress, and health." *Current Sexual Health Reports*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2017, pp. 42–49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-017-0096-3>

Ross, Lori E., et al. "Mental health and substance use among bisexual youth and Non-Youth in Ontario, Canada." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 9, no. 8, 2014 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0101604>

Matsick, Jes L., and Jennifer D. Rubin. "Bisexual prejudice among lesbian and gay people: Examining the roles of gender and perceived sexual orientation." *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 143–155, <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000283>