

# Inclusion @Work Index 2025–2026

Mapping the state of inclusion  
in the Australian workforce

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Diversity Council Australia Limited (DCA).

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## About Diversity Council Australia

Diversity Council Australia is the nation's leading independent peak body for diversity and inclusion. We are a member-based not-for-profit, with a strong network of over 1,300 member organisations, including some of Australia's largest employers. For over 40 years we have been at the forefront of helping shape more equitable workplaces, contributing to a stronger economy and fairer society.

Our evidence-led approach is centred on lived experience, and our research consistently shows that inclusive organisations are more innovative, productive, and resilient in changing environments.

Through groundbreaking research, practical tools, events, advocacy, education and training, we provide expert guidance across a spectrum of diversity dimensions to employees, leaders, policymakers and the broader community. We equip organisations with the tools and insights they need to champion the undeniable benefits of diversity and inclusion.

This work also supports our charitable purpose, which is to promote and advance diversity and inclusion in workplaces for the benefit of individuals, organisations and the community.

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# Australia's workplaces are operating in a period of heightened complexity. Cost-of-living pressures weigh heavily on households, AI is rapidly reshaping how many of us work, and increased polarisation continues to erode trust in institutions.

Amid global uncertainty and ongoing conversations about fairness, belonging and identity, many leaders are reassessing what productive, safe and fair workplaces look like.

Against this backdrop, Diversity Council Australia's 2025–2026 Inclusion@Work Index provides a clear picture of what employees themselves are experiencing. Despite loud voices suggesting organisations are retreating from diversity and inclusion (D&I), workers across Australia are telling a different story. They told us that more organisations are taking steps to build inclusive workplaces, support for this work remains strong, and opposition to D&I appears to be declining. These findings reinforce that employees recognise the benefits of inclusion for individuals and organisations.

At the same time, the Index shows there is still work to be done. Nearly one in five reported that their organisation is not taking action on D&I, a figure that has remained steady across previous reports. Gender remains a key faultline, with men more than twice as likely to oppose inclusion initiatives, highlighting persistent misconceptions about who benefits from D&I and why it matters.

The strength of this research series has always been its focus on workers' voices. The Inclusion@Work Index helps organisations recognise where exclusion persists and where targeted, evidence-based action can have the greatest impact.

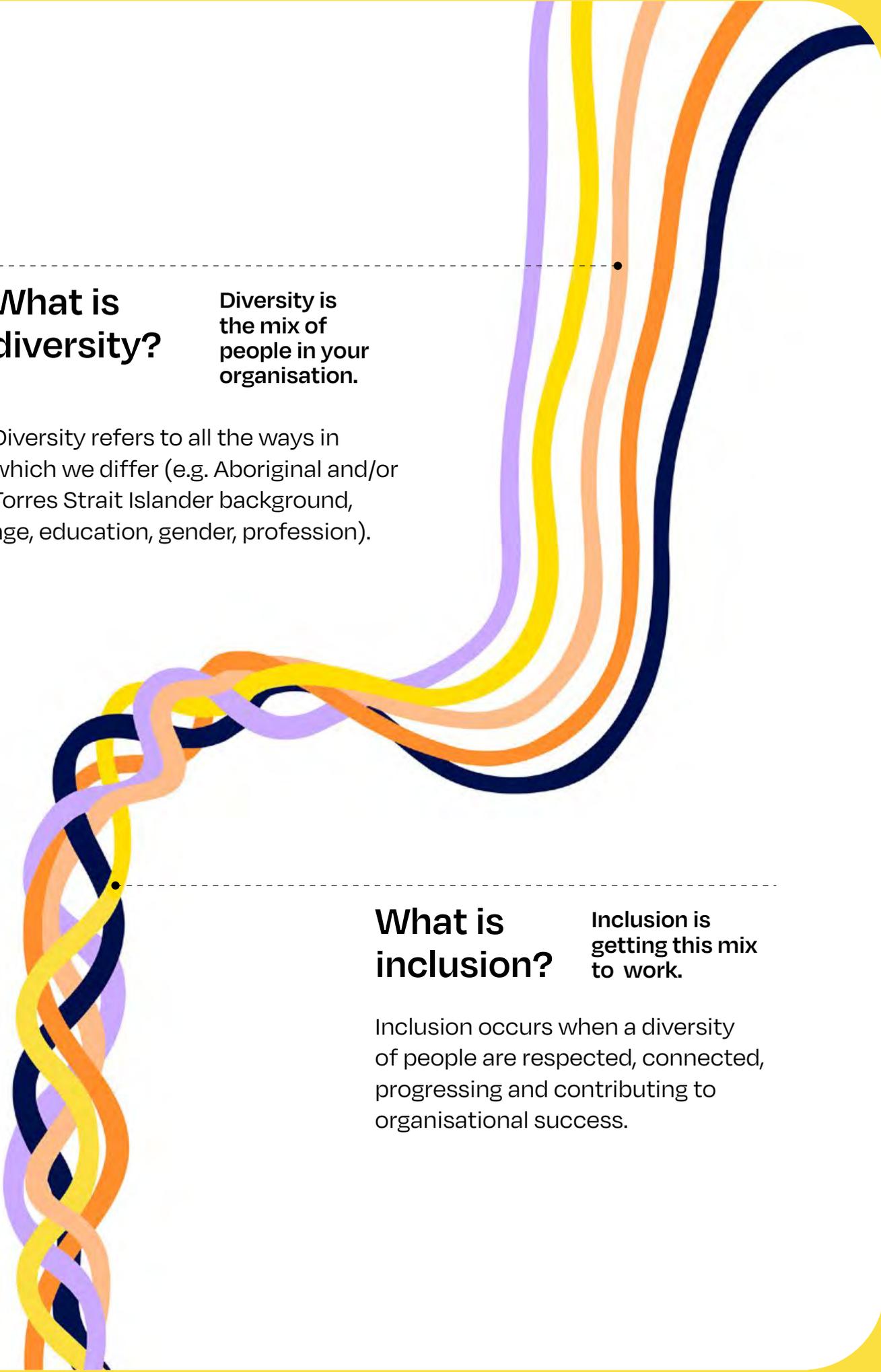
At a time when anti-D&I narratives are being amplified, challenging the assumption that inclusion efforts benefit the minority at the expense of the majority is more important than ever.

Inclusion is not a 'nice to have'. It is central to employee and stakeholder trust, risk management and productivity. At DCA, we are proud to support our members to translate this evidence into meaningful change, helping create workplaces where everyone feels valued, safe and able to thrive.

**Catherine Hunter** (she/her)

**Chief Executive Officer,  
Diversity Council Australia**





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## What is diversity?

Diversity is the mix of people in your organisation.

Diversity refers to all the ways in which we differ (e.g. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, education, gender, profession).

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## What is inclusion?

Inclusion is getting this mix to work.

Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people are respected, connected, progressing and contributing to organisational success.



## What does inclusion at work look like?

We can experience inclusion at work from our team, our manager and our organisation.

### What is an inclusive team?

An inclusive team is one where a diversity of people feel that they:



are respected and valued team members



are connected to their team



can contribute and progress at work.

### What is an inclusive manager?

An inclusive manager is someone who creates an inclusive team environment.

In our research, we define an inclusive manager as someone who:



values differences



seeks out and uses a diversity of ideas



treats everyone equitably



deals with inappropriate behaviour.

### What is an inclusive organisation?

DCA defines an inclusive organisation as one in which employees:



trust they will be treated fairly



feel diversity is valued and respected



report that top leaders demonstrate a genuine, visible commitment to diversity and inclusion.



# What is the Inclusion@Work Index?

DCA developed the first Inclusion@Work Index survey in 2017 to map the state of inclusion in the Australian workforce. Since then, we have repeated the survey every 2 years to track workplace inclusion over time. Now in its fifth iteration, DCA set out to investigate 2 questions:

**1** How **inclusive** is the Australian workforce for a diversity of employees, and how has this changed over time?

**2** How **exclusive** is the Australian workforce for a diversity of employees, and how has this changed over time?



**3,000  
workers**

To do this, DCA surveyed a **nationally representative sample of 3,000 workers in Australia.**

Our aspiration with the Inclusion@Work Index series is to:

- encourage Australian organisations to **achieve inclusion** in their workplaces – it is better for workers and business
- **track Australia's progress** (or lack of progress) in creating inclusion at work
- **promote workplace inclusion for a broad set of workers** – beyond “men and women” (most commonly considered by employers) – by considering diversity dimensions such as age, cultural background, caring responsibilities, disability status, First Nations identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more.

## Where does the 2025–2026 Index sit ?

The 2025–2026 Index is the fifth iteration of DCA's Inclusion@Work Index since 2017:





# Why does Inclusion@Work matter?

DCA's Inclusion@Work Index consistently shows a strong link between inclusion at work, wellbeing, performance, and reduced risk.



## Inclusion is good for wellbeing

Workers in inclusive teams are:

**x9**   
 9 times more likely to be **very satisfied** than workers in non-inclusive teams

**x6**   
 6 times more likely to feel work has a **positive impact on their mental health**

**x4**   
 4 times less likely to **leave their organisation**

**x3**   
 3 times more likely to have received **feedback they found useful**

## Inclusion is good for performance and productivity

Workers in inclusive teams are:

**x8**   
 8 times more likely to **work effectively together** than workers in non-inclusive teams

**x7**   
 7 times more likely to be **innovative**

**x4**   
 4 times more likely to provide **excellent customer service**

**x3**   
 3 times more likely to be **willing to work extra hard** to help their team succeed

## Inclusion minimises risk

Workers in inclusive teams are:

**x4**   
 4 times less likely to experience **discrimination and harassment** at work compared to those in non-inclusive teams

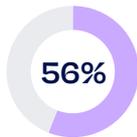
### Want to know more about the benefits of inclusion?

Check out [The Case for Inclusion@Work](#) for more information on the benefits of workplace inclusion, including the link between wellbeing, performance, and inclusive managers and organisations.



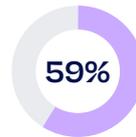
# What is the state of Inclusion@Work in 2025–2026?

Inclusion is most often experienced through teams and the overall organisational climate, and far less through managers in 2025–2026.



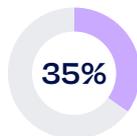
## Over 1 in 2 workers are in inclusive teams

Most workers reported inclusive teams in 2025, with 56% reported their **team is inclusive**, 34% reported their team is somewhat inclusive, and 10% reported their team is non-inclusive.



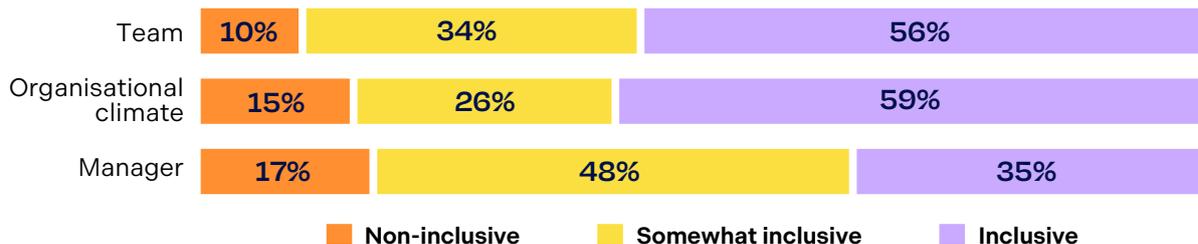
## Most workers report their organisation is inclusive

Over 1 in 2 (59%) workers reported their **organisation was inclusive** in 2025. A further 26% of workers reported their team was somewhat inclusive, while 15% reported being in non-inclusive organisations.



## Inclusive managers are less common

Only 35% of workers reported their **manager was inclusive** in 2025, with most workers (48%) reporting their manager was only somewhat inclusive. A further 17% of workers reported their manager was non-inclusive.





# Has inclusion changed since the last index?

We examined how inclusive and exclusive Australian workplaces are in 2025–2026, and if this has changed since the last Index in 2023.

## Inclusive teams and organisations are up since our last Index

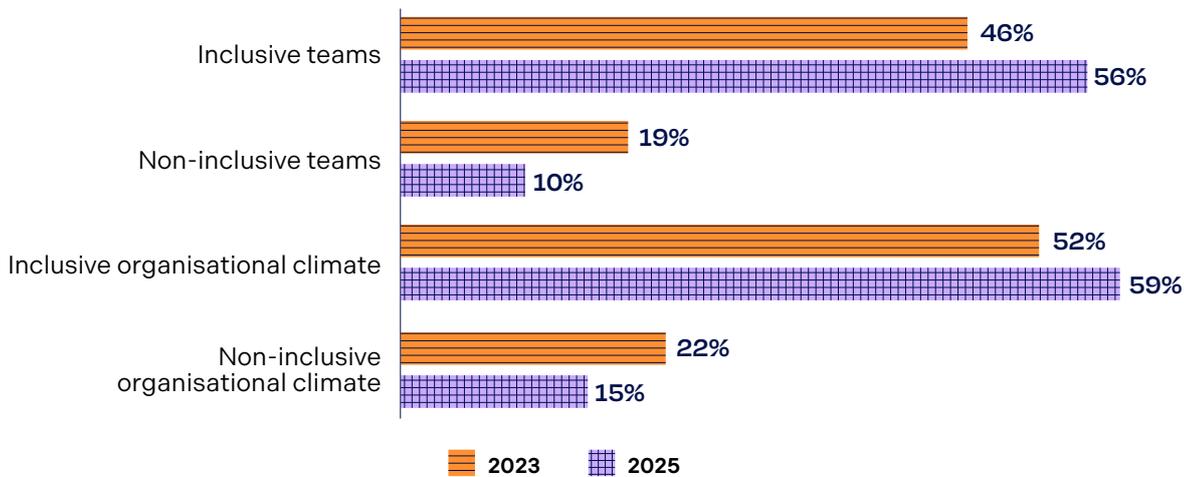
We found all components of team and organisational inclusion measured had increased between 2023 and 2025. This has led to:

### 10% ↑

a 10 percentage point **increase in inclusive teams** between 2023 and 2025 (56% of workers reported their team was inclusive in 2025, compared to 46% in 2023)

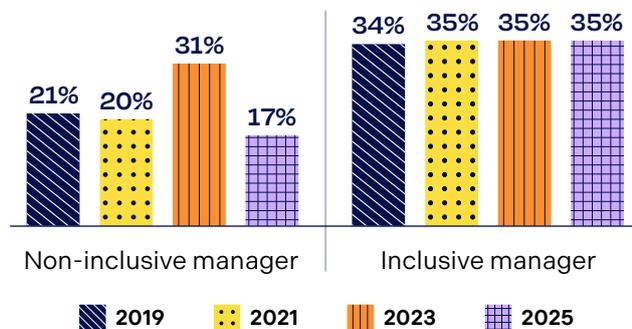
### 7% ↑

a 7 percentage point **increase in inclusive organisational climates** (59% of workers reported working in an inclusive organisation in 2025, compared to 52% in 2023).



## But there has been little progress when it comes to inclusive managers

While non-inclusive managers have dropped to 17% in 2025 (down 14 percentage points since 2023), inclusive managers have remained the same since 2019, hovering between 34–35% for the last 4 indexes.



# What is the state of exclusion in 2025–2026?

Discrimination, harassment, and everyday exclusion remain widespread in Australian workplaces in 2025–2026, particularly for employees from marginalised backgrounds.



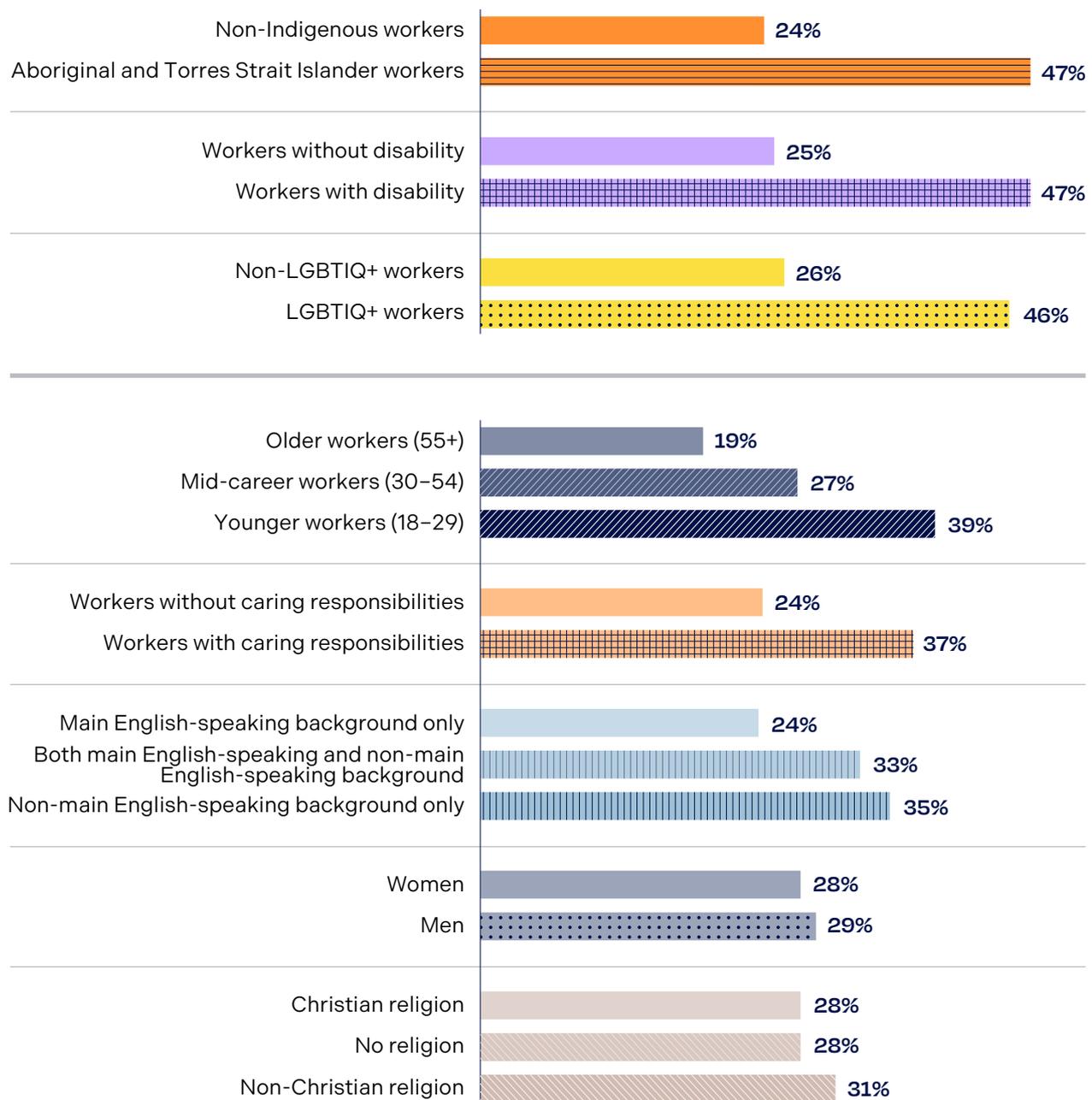
## Workplace discrimination and harassment are common

Discrimination and harassment remain common in Australian workplaces. Almost **1 in 4 (25%)** of workers reported experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at work in 2025.



### Marginalised workers report even higher levels

Almost 1 in 2 First Nations workers (47%), workers with disability (47%) and LGBTIQ+ workers (46%) reported experiencing workplace discrimination and harassment in 2025. This was significantly lower compared to the 24% of non-Indigenous workers, 25% of workers without disability, and 26% of non-LGBTIQ+ workers reporting the same.





**Workplace exclusion remains common in Australian workplaces, especially for marginalised workers.**

## 1 in 4 workers report everyday exclusion

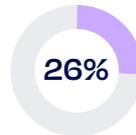
Everyday exclusion was common in Australian workplaces in 2025, with 1 in 4 workers experiencing behaviours like:




**being ignored or treated as if you do not exist** (28% of workers sometimes + often + always did).




having people make **assumptions about your abilities based on your identity** (30% of workers sometimes + often + always experienced this).

**being left out of work social gatherings** (26% of workers sometimes + often + always did).

## Marginalised workers also report higher levels of everyday exclusion

Marginalised workers were more likely to report experiencing everyday exclusion.




50% of **workers with disability** reported sometimes, often or always being ignored at work, compared with 29% of workers without disability.




52% of **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers** reported sometimes, often or always having others make assumptions about their abilities, compared with 31% of non-Indigenous workers.




39% of **LGBTIQ+ workers** reported sometimes, often or always being left out of work social gatherings, compared with 29% of non-LGBTIQ+ workers.



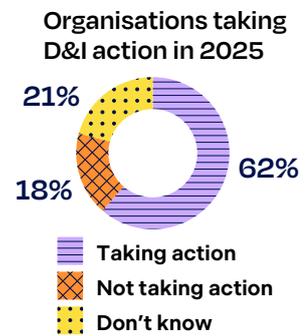
# What is the state of D&I action in 2025–2026?

3 in 4 workers support their organisation taking D&I action.

## How D&I active are Australian workplaces?

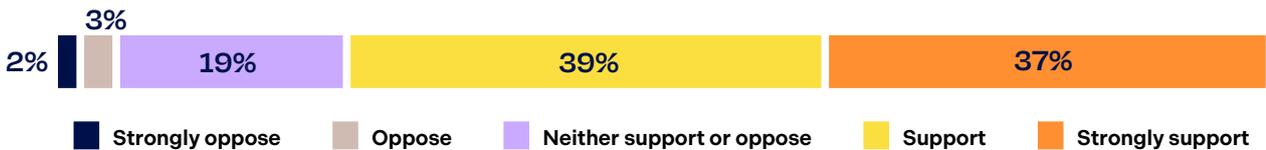
The good news is over 1 in 2 (62%) workers reported their organisation is taking action to create a diverse and inclusive workplace in 2025.

However, 18% of workers in 2025 reported their organisation is not taking D&I action, and a further 21% reported that they do not know if their organisation is.



## Workers want D&I action

There is high support for D&I action in Australian workplaces, with 3 in 4 (76%) workers supporting or strongly supporting their organisation taking action to create a workplace that is diverse and inclusive. Only 5% of workers in Australia opposed (3%) or strongly opposed (2%) their organisation taking this action.



## D&I action makes a difference

Employees in organisations that take action to become more diverse and inclusive are:



3 times more likely to be in **inclusive teams**



3 times more likely to report having an **inclusive manager**



3 times more likely to report an **inclusive organisation climate**



2 times less likely to experience **discrimination and harassment**

# Method

## Survey Sample

DCA commissioned Polity Research & Consulting to conduct a nationally representative online survey of 3,000 Australian workers, administered through a research-only survey panel. The research did not use a probability sample – as with all internet surveying in Australia, the sample was drawn from nonprobability opt-in panels of survey volunteers maintained by the commercial provider.

## Fieldwork

The research was conducted online between the 5th to the 18th of May 2025. Participants were recruited from a professional market and social research panel and received a small incentive for their participation.

## Weighting

Weighting of the survey data occurred to ensure the achieved respondent profile aligned with Australian Bureau of Statistics demographic indicators. These include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity, age, cultural background, disability status, gender, degree qualification, gender identity, and location (state [research@dca.org.au](mailto:research@dca.org.au) and urban/regional splits).

Target proportions were taken from the 2021 ABS Census (the most recent available data at time of fieldwork) using the ABS Census TableBuilder. People with disability and LGBTIQ+ groups have been weighted using the ABS Survey of Disability and Ageing and Caring<sup>1</sup>, and the Australian Human Rights Commission<sup>2</sup> respectively.

## Analysis

Analyses conducted on the overall sample (e.g. percentage of Australian workers in inclusive, somewhat inclusive and non-inclusive teams) were run on the weighted sample to ensure these findings were representative of the Australian workforce. Crosstab analyses were run on the unweighted sample to compare the inclusion and exclusion experiences of different demographic groups.

Use of SPSS software to run a series of crosstabs (contingency tables) to identify possible differences in responses. For each contingency table, a chi-squared statistic was calculated to determine whether there was an association between the 2 variables at the 95% confidence level. For contingency tables considered statistically significant, adjusted standardised residuals greater (in absolute size) than +/- 1.96 were examined to determine what was driving the association.

## Find out more

DCA members can access the full report and other infographics from this report, by logging into the Member Only area of the [DCA website](#). The full report and infographics include detailed information on the state of:

- inclusion in 2025–2026
- discrimination and harassment in 2025–2026
- everyday exclusion in 2025–2026
- D&I action and support for action
- research method.

**Access our Insights into Actions Snapshots to find out how to build Inclusion@Work in your organisation.**

## Endnotes

1. Calculated using the ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers 2018 Survey data set. Available here: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>
2. Department of Health, Australian Government, National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy, 2012, p 4.



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