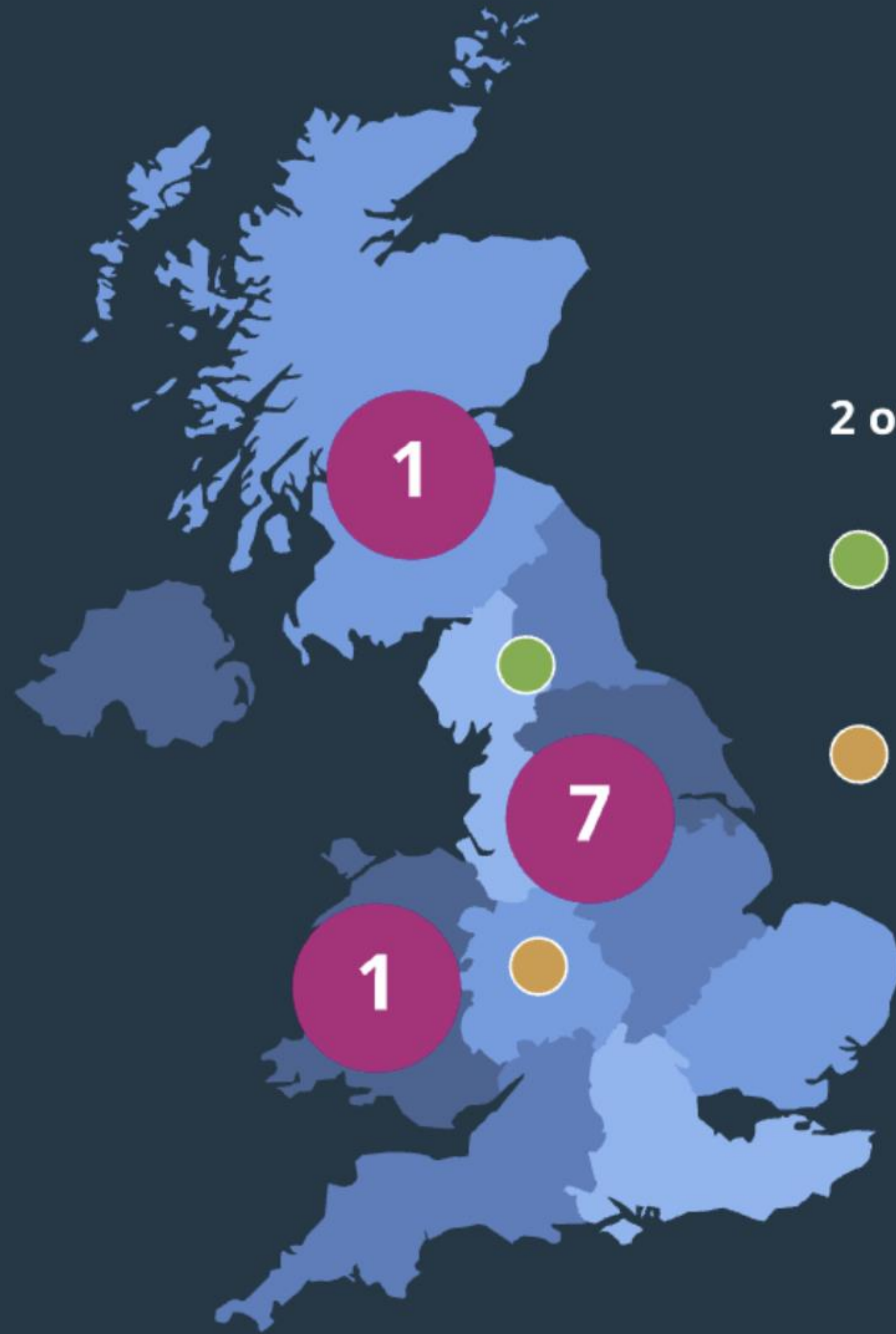# The role and impact of LGBTQ+ networks within the NHS

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LGBT+ Networks

UKRI — Economic and Social Research Council

UNIVERSITY of York

NHS Employers — Part of the NHS Confederation
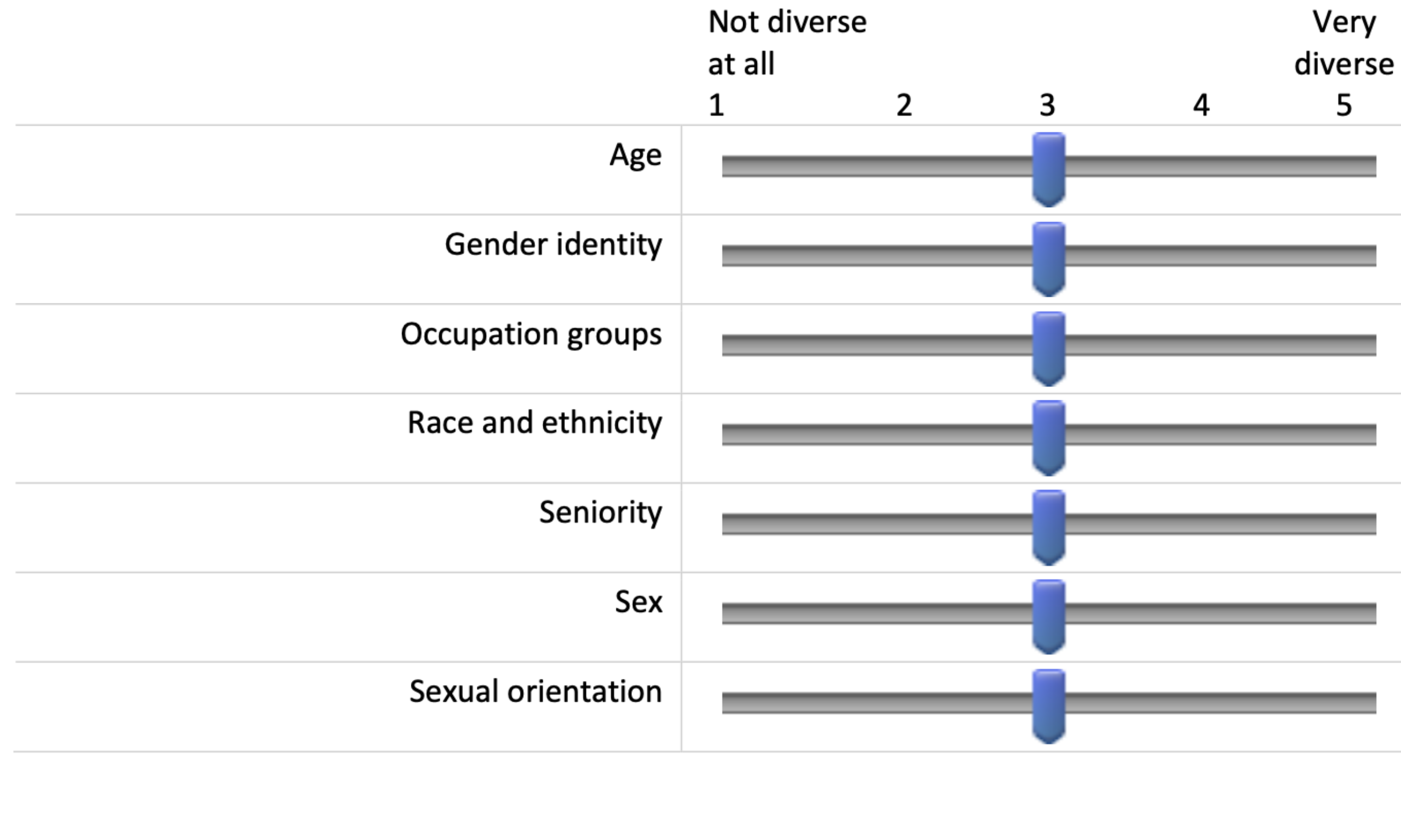
9 case study organisations

2 online surveys:

● The Human Resources & Equality and Diversity Survey (163 responses from 126 different trusts)

● The NHS Employee Engagement Survey (total response 4,237, 516 identify as LGBT+)

Intersectionality

26. How diverse do you think your network is in terms of representing people across the following categories?

	Not diverse at all		Very diverse
	1	2	3	4	5
Age			●		
Gender identity			●		
Occupation groups			●		
Race and ethnicity			●		
Seniority			●		
Sex			●		
Sexual orientation			●		

Sexual orientation Diverse (67%)

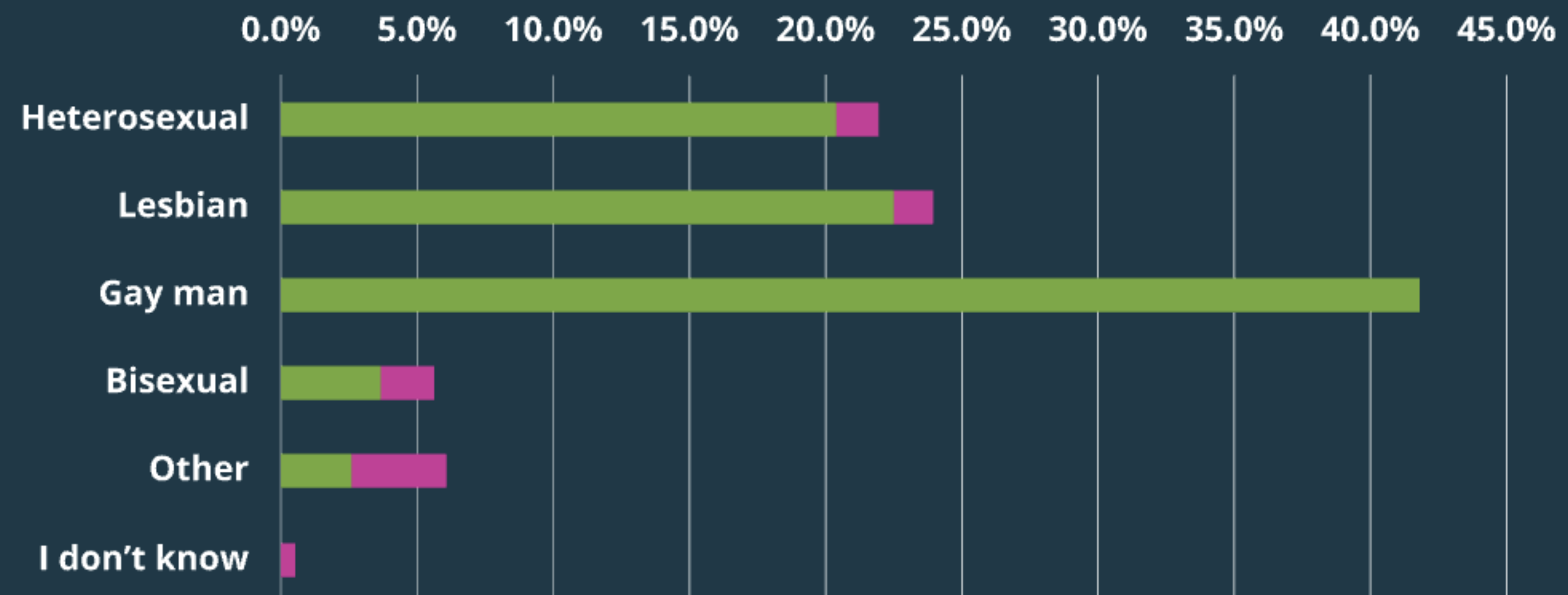**Age Diverse (67%)**

Race and Ethnicity Not diverse (75%)

Gender Identity Not diverse (67%)

Reports of outreach programmes to improve diversity of networks are rare (14%)

What we observed…

- Some diversity, but limited discussions about it

- More men than women appear to be involved in the networks

- Men also more likely to chair networks

- Those who identify as bisexual or trans seemed under-represented

- Ethnic minority staff also seemed under-represented

- Less outward concerns about lack of representation of bi, trans and ethnic minority staff within the networks

Sexual and gender identity composition of LGBT+ networks

Influence (who and how?)

- Trying to influence senior management, less emphasis on other colleagues and/or service users

- Friendly communication channels between minority staff and senior management

- Buy-in from managers to attend meetings/events

- More members = Greater influence

- Positional power helps

©sky bound coaching and Training

©Zurb design for influence

So if it's an ally - for example, if it's an exec director, they're going to have much more positional power to maybe challenge some of the systemic barriers, whereas a peer that's an ally who's there more to support their colleague and champion things in the teams maybe.

–Rhea EDI lead

Influence (and decision making)

- 84% of LGBT+ network members agree that staff networks offer advice to management on matters concerning LGBT+ staff and patients/service-users in their trust

- 82% agree that their LGBT+ network is consulted on policy and practice on issues regarding sexual minorities

- Over half of employees in staff networks agree that staff networks contribute to the managerial decision-making process

- Network members in general consider staff networks as an integral part of equality and diversity management (86%), although fewer LGBT+ network members agree (75%)

Indicators of success

- Growing membership

- Involvement of allies

- Recognition by senior management

- Network better known in the organisation

- Increased visibility of LGBT+ employees in the trust

I've seen some net-, networks in the past that for whatever reason, whether they've become too political, too dogmatic or whatever, just actually don't, don't succeed. Um, because ultimately, it's about people coming together feeling confident, and also feeling confident and being able to produce changes that mean their community feels more empowered, you know, to work, and, and, and deliver ser-, um, services. If you haven't got that then that becomes a problem.

–Richard CEO

Resources (Trust level responses)

- Most trusts provide support to their staff networks (N=109) of some forms.

- Material support such as providing rooms for meetings, workshops and training (98.2%), followed by intranet support for mailing, webpages and forum (84.4%).

- Almost four in five trusts said that staff can be released from work to attend staff network activities.

- Slightly more than half of the trusts provide funding for materials such as lanyards, posters and banners and 45.9% provide funds to attend external training events and conferences.

- Only 27.5% of the trusts provide other financial support.

Naturally you think up the line and our chief exec, obviously we have to influence the chief exec to get the money. They're all, they're all talk until you ask for something. Like, 'Oh, I really totally support you, this is right on, great. Yeah I'll do a photo for you with LGBT Pride', but then you say, 'Can you give us 100 quid?' 'No.' You know, sometimes I feel it can be a tick-box exercise, investors and people. Do know a wee bit, like, oh, we're all in for this, but then when you like say, 'Right, can, can we maybe get some money to promote this?', you know, you get a bit of brick wall.

–Rachel Network Chair
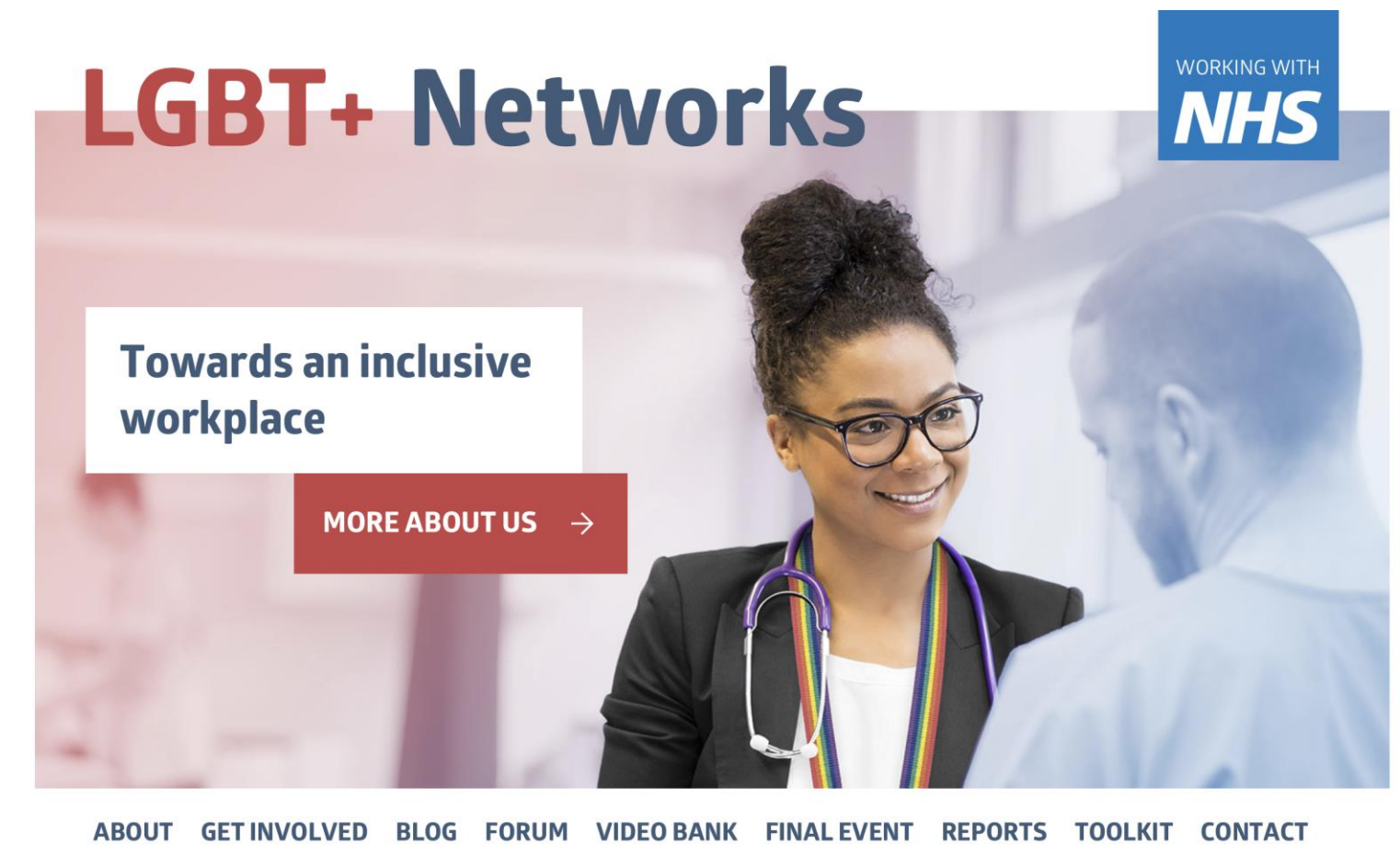
Resources (network chairs)

- Half of all network chairs/co-chairs do not get a formal time allocation for network activities

- 48.3% complete all network-related work on top of their normal job

- 10.7% are supported by a mentor

- 16% receive leadership training

In theory, it was suggested that the LGBT network chairs could probably have one day a month to participate in anything that's LGBT. But by the time you've had your network meetings [and other meetings associated with the network chair role], it's, it's, it's almost gone really. And then you've got your, your special events throughout the year. And, and then you get asked to comment on policies that's sent to you, to make sure that they're inclusive. And just general stuff really. So, you haven't got the capacity to develop the group or whatever you're doing really within it, promote as much as you could.

–Robert Network Chair

Key points

- Differences between perceived, observed and actual diversity in LGBT+ networks

- Influencing generally seen as one way process

- Markers of success seem limited to size of network, inclusion of allies and visibility

- (In)sufficient resources

https://lgbtnetworks.org.uk