



# STATE OF THE SERVICE REPORT 2002-03

STATE OF THE SERVICE SERIES 2002-03



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Diversity is important for the organisational capability of the APS, and for equity in employment. This is reflected in a number of the APS Values:

- the APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit
- the APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves
- the APS provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace
- the APS promotes equity in employment.

The Code of Conduct also requires an APS employee, when acting in the course of APS employment, to treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.

This year, for the first time, the Public Service Commissioner's report on diversity in the APS is included in this report. This approach ensures that workplace diversity is considered in context, and that clear links are made with other organisational performance issues considered in the report.

As Chapter 9 indicates, agencies are putting increased effort into linking their business planning with corporate and workforce planning. Diversity planning is an integral part of developing medium and longer term corporate strategies for attracting and retaining the skills agencies need, particularly in the context of a more competitive and ageing labour market. It involves recognising and valuing the different knowledge, skills and experience that individuals bring to the workplace, and optimising the use of these differences to improve business performance and products.

In particular, a diverse workforce can improve the responsiveness of client services to an increasingly demanding and informed Australian community. As Chapter 5 makes clear, this is an increasing focus of government service delivery. A diverse workforce can make a positive difference where agencies want to ensure that there is effective consultation with different stakeholder groups, or where it is important to tap into differing community agendas, or where effective service delivery mechanisms need to be established on the ground.

Diversity is a broad concept. One aspect of diversity planning involves ensuring that any employment disadvantage for particular groups—women, Indigenous employees, people with a disability and people from a non-English speaking background<sup>1</sup>—is eliminated. Monitoring data on the representation of such groups is one way of assessing progress on this front.

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<sup>1</sup> In the absence of alternative measures, the concept 'NESB', representing people from a non-English speaking background, is used with APSED. This captures information about first language spoken, place of birth and parental heritage. NESB1, the measure used here, includes people born overseas whose first language was not English. NESB2 has previously been reported in addition to NESB1 and includes children of migrants, including those who were born overseas and arrived in Australia before the age of five and did not speak English as a first language, those who were Australian born but did not speak English as a first language and had at least one NESB parent, and those who were Australian born and had neither parent speaking English as a first language. Analysis of APSED data has found that this group does not have a substantial employment disadvantage compared to other workers, and is therefore not reported here.

Other aspects of diversity planning involve ensuring agency systems and approaches cater for a more diverse workforce, including changing demographics and age profiles and work–life balance, including employees’ caring responsibilities.

This chapter draws on APSED and on responses to the agency and employee surveys. With respect to APSED, it is important to note that the reporting of diversity data for individuals is voluntary, and that agency data may therefore under-represent actual numbers of particular diversity groups. In addition, diversity data includes ongoing employees only, as data is not routinely collected for non-ongoing employees.<sup>2</sup>

There are continuing issues in relation to the completeness of APSED data about having a disability, being an Indigenous Australian, or being a person for whom race or ethnicity may give rise to employment–related disadvantage. There appear to be particular weaknesses in the data on ethnicity including inconsistency in self-identification of employees across agencies. Some agencies have implemented strategies, including employee surveys, which are improving the data provided to APSED. All agencies are encouraged to improve diversity data so that APSED can provide a sound basis for policy development and planning.

The employee survey asked respondents to identify certain personal attributes (i.e. whether they are an Indigenous Australian, have an on-going disability or have caring responsibilities). The numbers of respondents who identified themselves as having these attributes are much lower than for other demographics (e.g. age, gender, classification), and results related to these groups of employees should be treated with some caution.<sup>3</sup>

## **LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

The legislative framework applying to the management of diversity includes a number of provisions in addition to those in the APS Values and Code of Conduct. Under s. 18 of the PS Act, agency heads are required to establish a Workplace Diversity Program (WDP) to help give effect to the APS Values. This includes measures to prevent all forms of discrimination and to recognise the positive advantages of, and help make the best use of, the diversity available in the workplace and the Australian community. It also includes measures to ensure that the agency is able to access and use the diverse skills of its employees and to ensure equity in employment. Under clause 3.6 of the Public Service Commissioner’s Directions, all agencies must review their WDP at least once every four years.

Chapter 4 of the Commissioner’s Directions enables agency heads to identify particular employment opportunities as open only to Indigenous Australians and to people with an intellectual disability.

The Commissioner’s Directions further require agency heads to assist APS employees to balance their work, family and other caring responsibilities. These work practices can be found in WDPs, human resource policies and industrial agreements.

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<sup>2</sup> This may result in differences when comparing figures in this section such as gender proportions to others in this report, and in the APS Statistical Bulletin, where total numbers (including non-ongoing employees) are used in some tables. Previously published data may also have been revised, and therefore may not be directly comparable to data cited in previous years.

<sup>3</sup> Survey results for Indigenous Australians, people with a disability and people with caring responsibilities have been reported only where they are statistically valid. Nevertheless, the employee survey results reported for these groups should be treated with some caution as they are likely to have wider confidence intervals. For further information on the employee survey methodology, including in relation to confidence intervals, please see Appendix 2.

Legislation relevant to workplace diversity includes:

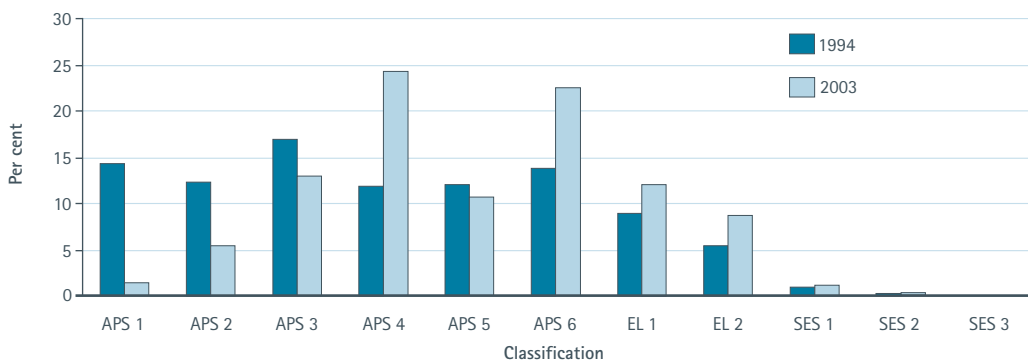
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*
- *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Workplace Relations Act 1996.*

In supporting this framework, the APS Commission assists agency heads to meet their workplace diversity obligations and works with agency diversity coordinators in a number of ways. These include supporting the workplace diversity and disability networks, the Indigenous Employment Group, and the Indigenous APS Employees Network, preparing publications, and hosting the Workplace Diversity Awards. Further information about this assistance is set out in the Public Service Commissioner’s Annual Report 2002–03.

## REPRESENTATION OF EEO GROUPS

Changes in the classification and age profiles of the APS have contributed to changes in the representation of women, Indigenous employees, people with a disability and from a non-English speaking background (EEO groups).<sup>4</sup> As Figure 8.1 shows, employment opportunities have fallen in traditional entry-level administrative roles, where a larger proportion of EEO groups and younger workers have previously been concentrated. This reduction reflects changes in the nature of APS business and its composition over time. In 1975, APS 1–2 employees accounted for half of all ongoing employees. This proportion decreased slowly until the mid-1980s and then more quickly throughout the 1990s before levelling out to 6.5% at June 2003. Now entry-level recruits are far more likely to be employed at the APS 3–4 levels. Conversely, there are now more employees at the managerial level, where EEO groups have historically been under-represented. These structural changes have presented agencies with continuing challenges about the way in which they address workplace diversity.

Figure 8.1 Changes in APS classification profile over time, 1994 and 2003



Source: APSED

<sup>4</sup> The Public Service Commissioner’s Directions require agency heads to put in place measures directed at ensuring that measures are taken to eliminate any employment-related disadvantages on the basis of being an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander; gender; race or ethnicity; or physical or mental disability.

Despite demographic changes, there has been a rise in the absolute numbers of people employed from all EEO groups between June 2002 and June 2003. However, because the increase in actual numbers for all groups except women was not as large as that of the APS overall, the proportion of employees in the other EEO groups decreased during 2002–03. The proportional representation of women, Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, and people from a non-English speaking background as at June of each of the last 10 years is presented in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1:** Representation of EEO groups among ongoing employees

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Women	47.8	47.2	47.7	48.1	48.6	49.0	49.9	51.5	51.9	52.8
Indigenous Australians	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4
People with a disability	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.2	5.0	4.7	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.6
NESB 1	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3

Source: APSED<sup>5</sup>

Trends in representation for each of these groups are discussed in the following sections.

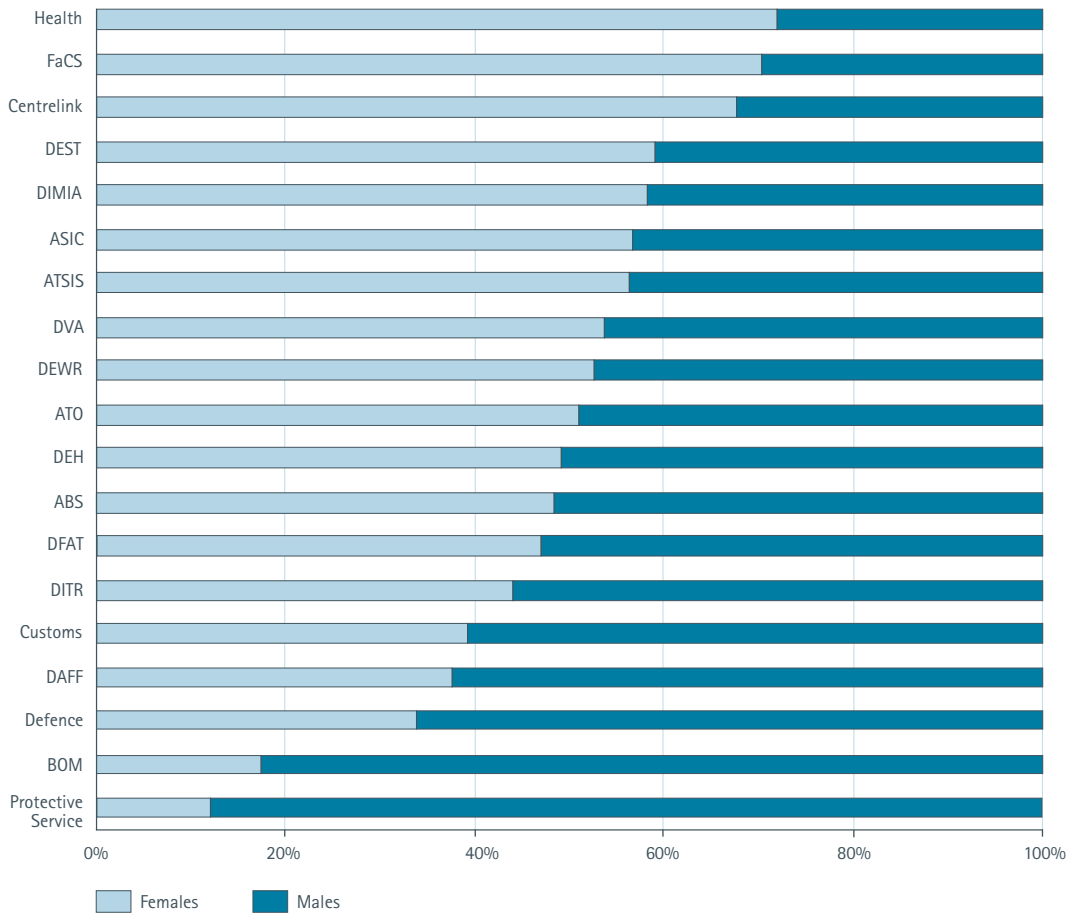
### WOMEN IN THE APS

The representation of women in the APS has increased over the past decade. At 30 June 2003, women represented 52.8% of all ongoing employees in the APS, a slight increase on the previous year. Women also represented 59.4% of engagements in 2002–03, compared to 53.1% of separations, suggesting the trend to increasing representation of women in the APS workforce is likely to continue a little further, but not to the point where serious concerns about male employment in the APS will arise.

The proportional representation of men and women varies from agency to agency. Of agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees, the Protective Service has the highest proportion of men (87.8%) while Health had the highest proportion of women (72.0%).

<sup>5</sup> ABS census data for 2001 shows the following labour market comparisons. NESB 13.8%, people with a disability 11.7%, and Indigenous Australians 1.4%. Note that direct comparisons cannot be made for people with disabilities or NESB data, as the definitions used in APSED and for the census are different.

**Figure 8.2: Representation of women and men in agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees, 2003**



Source: APSED

The employee survey asked respondents for their level of agreement to the following statement: ‘Women in my agency have the same opportunities for development and promotion as men’. The majority of women (76%) agreed with this statement. However, women were less likely to agree than men (76% compared to 83%) and more likely to disagree (12% compared to 6% for men). As Table 8.2 makes clear, women continue to be under-represented at more senior classification levels, although there have been significant gains over time.

**Table 8.2:** Ongoing staff: proportion of women across classification levels

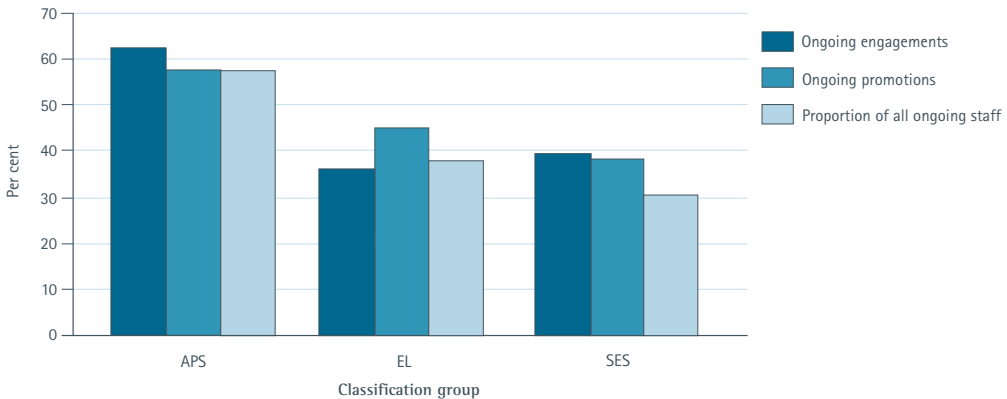
	1994 %	2002 %	2003 %
Trainees and graduate trainees	51.6	56.2	51.1
APS 1–2	54.7	55.5	54.1
APS 3–4	59.0	63.2	64.1
APS 5–6	39.5	48.5	50.1
EL	25.5	36.7	37.8
SES	17.1	28.3	30.4
Total	47.8	51.9	52.8

Source: APSED

Women represented 37.8% of ELs at June 2003 (up from 36.7% in 2002). As Figure 8.3 shows, while women made up only 35.9% of engagements to EL classifications, they also represented 45.0% of promotions and only 31.8% of separations, so further increases in this group can be expected.

At June 2003 women represented 30.4% of the SES (up from 28.3% in 2002). Because 39.0% of engagements and 38.2% of promotions to the SES were women (compared to 22.0% of separations), this increase in representation can be expected to continue for some time. This SES representation rate compares well with those in the Queensland (20%) and Tasmanian (29%) state governments, though it is still somewhat lower than the Victorian state government (33%) and the New Zealand government (36%).

**Figure 8.3:** Ongoing staff: engagement and promotion rates for women, 2002–03



Source: APSED

Women reported slightly higher levels of overall job satisfaction than men (78% with a job satisfaction index of over 5 compared to 74% of men) and were more likely to think that their supervisor was highly effective at managing people (49% compared to 44%). Table 8.3 shows the top five job satisfaction factors for women and men. These factors were similar between men and women, with four out of the five common

to both. The main difference between them was that women rated ‘salary’ in their top five while men included ‘seeing tangible results from my work’. However, ‘salary’ was only just outside the top five for men.

**Table 8.3: Top five job satisfaction factors, by gender**

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	good working relationships	85	good working relationships	86
<b>2</b>	flexible working arrangements	88	opportunities to utilise my skills	72
<b>3</b>	opportunities to utilise my skills	67	flexible working arrangements	83
<b>4</b>	salary	68	interesting work provided	76
<b>5</b>	interesting work provided	71	seeing tangible results from my work	69

Source: Employee survey

Table 8.3 also shows the proportion of men and women that were satisfied with the factors they had identified as one of their top five. The majority of both men and women were satisfied with each top five job satisfaction factor, and average level of satisfaction for the five identified factors was similar for men and women (76% for women compared with 77% for men). Both men and women were relatively less satisfied with opportunities to utilise skills and the provision of interesting work, and with ‘salary’ (for women), and ‘seeing tangible results’ (for men). Women were more likely to be satisfied with ‘flexible working arrangements’ (88% compared to 83% for men) and men were more satisfied in relation to ‘opportunities to utilise my skills’ and ‘interesting work’ (72% and 76% respectively for men, compared to 67% and 71% for women).

Survey findings also indicate that women were slightly more likely than men to identify career development as among their top five job satisfaction factors (34% of women compared to 29% of men). Women who identified career development as an important job satisfaction factor were considerably more likely to report satisfaction with their development opportunities than comparable men (50% compared to 36%). The survey shows no significant difference between men and women in regard to their levels of satisfaction with access to leadership development opportunities.

Women’s satisfaction with work–life balance was very similar to that of men, and is discussed further in the section in this chapter on ‘Life choice options’.

## INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

In 2003, APSED recorded that 2.4% of ongoing APS employees identified themselves as Indigenous Australians. The representation of Indigenous Australians in the APS compares favourably with the broader Australian context, in which 1.9% of all Australians aged 15–64 and 1.4% of the Australian labour force identified themselves as Indigenous Australians.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Australian Census 2001

While actual numbers of Indigenous employees in the APS increased by 80 in 2002–03, the overall APS workforce increased at a greater rate. For this reason, the proportion of Indigenous employees working in the APS decreased slightly from 2.5% in 2002 to 2.4% in 2003.

Representation rates of Indigenous employees vary between agencies. Not surprisingly, agencies that predominantly deliver services to, or work with, Indigenous communities generally had a higher proportion of Indigenous employees. As Table 8.4 shows, the agencies with the highest proportion of Indigenous employees (i.e. more than 10% of total ongoing employees) at 30 June 2003 were AHL, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), ATSIIS, AIATSIS, the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) and DEST.

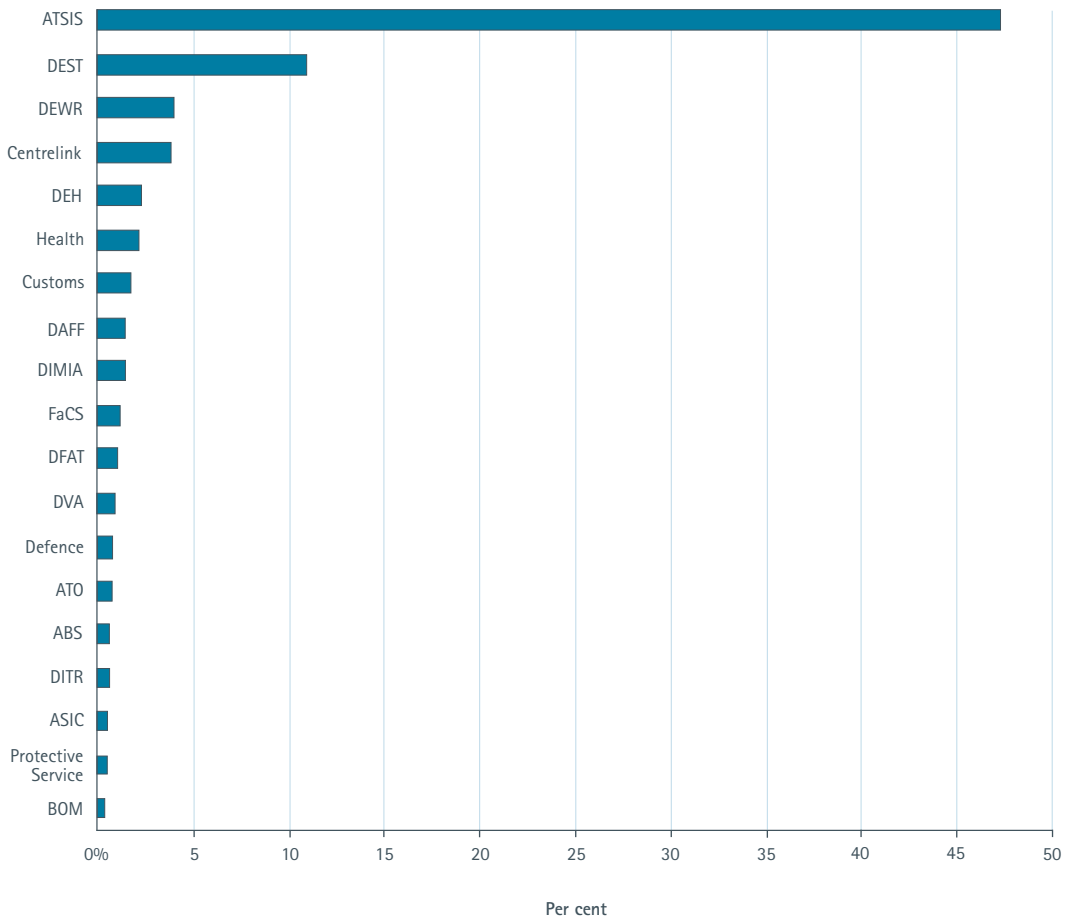
**Table 8.4:** Agencies with the highest proportions of ongoing Indigenous employees, 2003

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Indigenous ongoing</b>	<b>Total ongoing staff</b>	<b>% Indigenous</b>
AHL	278	341	81.5
TSRA	20	30	66.7
ATSIIS	506	1072	47.2
AIATSIS	17	62	27.4
NNTT	31	241	12.9
DEST	160	1464	10.9

Source: APSED

At 30 June 2003, five APS agencies employed 60% of ongoing Indigenous staff. In addition to ATSIIS, those agencies were DEST (10.9%), DEWR and Centrelink (3.8% each) and DEH (2.2%). These five agencies accounted for almost 26% of all ongoing APS employees. Nineteen APS agencies reported that they employed no Indigenous Australians on an ongoing basis. These agencies were small except for two medium agencies (Finance and ComSuper).

**Figure 8.4:** Representation of Indigenous employees in agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees,<sup>7</sup> 2003



Source: APSED

As Table 8.5 shows, during 2002–03 the actual numbers of Indigenous employees increased in most classification levels, though generally not at the same rate as the overall APS workforce. For this reason, representation of Indigenous Australians as a proportion of all ongoing APS employees decreased slightly. However, both numbers and proportional representation of Indigenous employees increased at the EL and non-graduate trainee classification levels.

<sup>7</sup> The ‘no data’ component of responses to Indigenous status was particularly high in Protective Service (64.8%) and Defence (61.3%).

**Table 8.5: Ongoing representation of Indigenous employees by classification**

Classification	1994		2002		2003	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
APS 1–2	1303	3.5	337	4.2	331	4.2
APS 3–4	1123	2.8	1319	3.1	1331	3.0
APS 5–6	561	1.5	843	2.3	873	2.2
EL	132	0.6	209	0.9	242	1.0
SES	13	0.7	30	1.7	26	1.4
Trainee	19	16.5	40	10.3	49	13.5
Graduate trainee	26	3.6	21	3.8	27	3.0
Other	36		0		0	
Total	3213	2.3	2799	2.5	2879	2.4

Source: APSED

The main factor constraining growth in Indigenous employment is the reduction in the entry-level opportunities at the APS 1–2 levels considered earlier. While the proportional representation of Indigenous employees at these levels is now somewhat higher than it was 10 years ago, absolute numbers have fallen significantly. Despite these structural changes, engagements of Indigenous employees increased in absolute numbers between 1996–97 and 2001–02 before declining slightly in 2002–03. As a proportion of all ongoing engagements, Indigenous representation has halved over the past decade, falling from 5.0% in 1993–94 to 2.4% in 2002–03. Indigenous separations have risen over the same period, from 2.4% in 1993–94 to 4.0% in 2002–03. These trends are shown in Table 8.6.

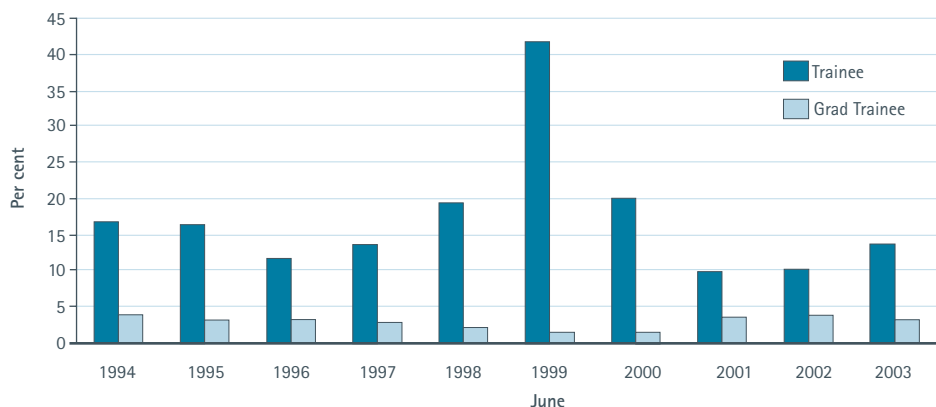
**Table 8.6: Ongoing Indigenous employees' engagement and separation rates, 1993–94 to 2002–03**

	1993 –94	1994 –95	1995 –96	1996 –97	1997 –98	1998 –99	1999 –00	2000 –01	2001 –02	2002 –03
Engagements	5.0	4.8	4.3	4.4	4.2	3.2	2.2	2.6	3.1	2.4
Separations	2.4	2.5	3.3	2.9	2.5	3.0	4.1	3.1	3.1	4.0

Source: APSED

In percentage terms, trainee programs represent a more important source of engagements for Indigenous employees than for non-Indigenous employees, as shown in Figure 8.5. The use of traineeships and graduate trainee programs to recruit Indigenous Australians varies over time, though Indigenous employees remain more highly represented in traineeships than graduate trainee programs (13.5% of all trainees at June 2003 were Indigenous, compared to 3.0% of graduate trainees). In actual numbers, the representation for the two groups is much closer, with 49 Indigenous trainees and 27 Indigenous graduate trainees at June 2003.

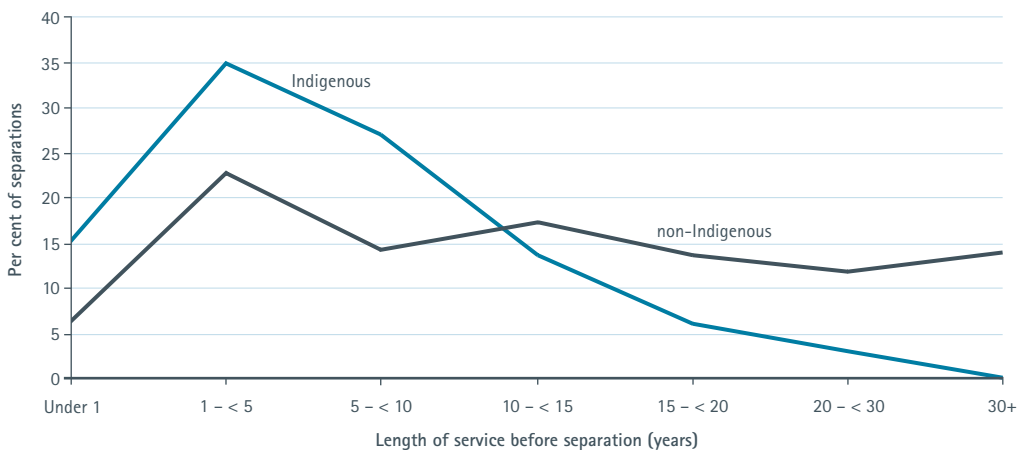
**Figure 8.5** Representation of ongoing Indigenous employees in trainee classifications, 1994 to 2003



Source: APSED

Figure 8.6 compares the length of service in the APS by Indigenous status, for those staff who separated from the APS during 2002–03. It shows the proportion of total separations that occurred at different lengths of service for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees. Indigenous employees do not remain as long in the APS as non-Indigenous employees. Indeed, during 2002–03, 50% of Indigenous employees who left the APS had worked in the service for less than five years, compared to 29.1% of non-Indigenous employees who left the APS.

**Figure 8.6:** Ongoing staff: distribution of total separations by Indigenous status and length of service, 2002–03



Source: APSED

While the total number of Indigenous Australians employed in the APS is increasing, it is concerning that the rate of increase remains lower than that of non-Indigenous employees and that separation rates are higher. Representation overall has now clearly stalled since the peak in 1998–99. A number of agencies are making efforts to address this concern.

In the agency survey, 57% of agencies (51 agencies) reported employing or developing targeted strategies to recruit Indigenous Australians (46% had strategies in place, and 11% were developing strategies), including the use of special measures<sup>8</sup> and identified positions.<sup>9</sup>

For those agencies that reported using or developing specific recruitment strategies during 2002–03, the most common measure reported was advertising employment opportunities in Indigenous media (29 agencies; four agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 14 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 42 agencies did not respond to this question). Other measures were:

- the agency's own recruitment strategy (24 agencies; eight agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 12 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 45 agencies did not respond to this question)
- participation in the National Indigenous Cadetship Program run by DEWR (22 agencies; three agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 22 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 42 agencies did not respond to this question)
- the use of identified positions (17 agencies; two agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 27 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 43 agencies did not respond to this question)
- the use of special measures provisions limiting employment opportunities only to Indigenous applicants (14 agencies; two agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 31 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 42 agencies did not respond to this question).

Thirty-three per cent of agencies reported using strategies to retain Indigenous employees and an additional 15% were developing such strategies. The most common measure used by these agencies was encouraging participation in the Indigenous APS Employees Network (reported by 27 agencies). Other measures were:

- supporting another Indigenous network such as an internal support network (23 agencies)
- providing Indigenous cultural awareness training for all employees (15 agencies)
- providing study awards (13 agencies)
- providing culturally specific training programs (11 agencies).

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DAFF has an established Indigenous Strategy Steering Committee, which oversees Indigenous access to DAFF programs. One of the areas targeted by this Committee is the awareness of DAFF staff of issues relevant to Indigenous people. It also aims to increase the number of Indigenous people employed within DAFF. The Committee has developed a guide for staff, which aims to raise awareness of the cultural values of Indigenous Australians.

*Yarrangi 2003–05* is DEST's Indigenous Australian recruitment and career development strategy. One objective under this plan is to attract Indigenous Australians to employment opportunities in DEST. An example of a strategy currently under way to help meet this objective is a targeted increase in recruitment through DEST's entry level programmes, with Indigenous-specific places

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter 4 of the Public Service Commissioner's Directions allows agency heads to use special measures by identifying specific employment opportunities as available only to Indigenous applicants.

<sup>9</sup> Identified positions are jobs that require an understanding of the culture and issues faced by Indigenous Australians and an ability to deal with them sensitively. While it is likely that these positions would be occupied by Indigenous Australians, recruitment is on the basis of merit and not restricted to Indigenous applicants.

in the graduate and apprentice intakes. In addition to recruitment, another objective of Yarrangi is retention. Current strategies under way to meet this objective include maintaining an Indigenous Australian employee support network in DEST; ensuring induction arrangements meet the needs of Indigenous Australian employees; promoting career opportunities through mobility; and providing input into learning and development strategies and initiatives. For example, this year DEST introduced the policy of automatic entry for its Indigenous cadets into the graduate program on successful completion of their cadetship. This strategy directly addresses DEST's previously low cadet retention rate by providing a supported transition from study to work.

Four Centrelink areas employ an Indigenous HR consultant who has been able to develop strategies to specifically address the needs of Indigenous employees and ensure that employment practices are culturally sensitive. One area has found that the completion of the Certificate IV in Community Management has assisted some Indigenous employees in gaining temporary performance at a higher level or a promotion.

When asked about Indigenous employees' employment opportunities in the employee survey, almost 60% of employees believed that Indigenous employees had no fewer opportunities for employment, development and promotion than others, with only 7% disagreeing. However, a lower proportion of Indigenous employees (52%) agreed with the statement, with 26% disagreeing.

The employee survey also asked about job satisfaction factors, with three out of the top five factors being common to Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees (see Table 8.7). The main differences were that Indigenous employees put more weight on 'duties/expectations being made clear', and 'regular feedback and recognition' than did non-Indigenous employees.

**Table 8.7:** Top five job satisfaction factors, by Indigenous status

	<b>Indigenous</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	flexible working arrangements	92	good working relationships	85
<b>2</b>	good working relationships	72	flexible working arrangements	86
<b>3</b>	duties/expectations made clear	65	opportunities to utilise skills	69
<b>4</b>	regular feedback and recognition for effort	66	interesting work provided	74
<b>5</b>	salary	55	salary	62

Source: Employee survey

Table 8.7 also shows the proportion of each group satisfied with the factors they had identified as important. The majority of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees were satisfied with each top five job satisfaction factor. However, the average level of satisfaction for the five factors for Indigenous employees (70%) was lower than that of non-Indigenous employees (75%) and there was more variation in Indigenous responses (between 55% and 92% rating themselves as satisfied against each factor, compared to between 62% and 86% of non-Indigenous employees). Indigenous employees were more likely to be satisfied with

'flexible working arrangements' (92% compared with 86% for non-Indigenous employees), and less likely to be satisfied with 'good working relationships' (72% compared with 85% for non-Indigenous employees) and 'salary' (55% compared with 62%).

Indigenous employees were more polarised than other employees in their views about leadership development opportunities. Forty per cent of Indigenous employees were satisfied with their own access to leadership development opportunities in their organisation compared to 27% of non-Indigenous employees, but 44% of Indigenous employees were dissatisfied compared to 34% of non-Indigenous employees. Indigenous employees were more likely to rank 'opportunities for career development' in their top five factors impacting on job satisfaction (43%) compared with non-Indigenous employees (31%). However, their satisfaction level with this factor was slightly lower (37% compared with 43% for non-Indigenous employees).

Indigenous employees had significantly greater caring responsibilities than non-Indigenous employees, but were slightly more satisfied than non-Indigenous employees with their access to flexible work practices. This issue is discussed further below in 'Life choice options'.

The APS Commission has identified Indigenous employment as a strategic priority for 2003–04 in cooperation with agencies. Its focus is on the key obstacles to improving Indigenous employment, which analysis suggests are:

- recruitment problems, particularly with more limited career pathways into the APS
- retention problems, particularly inadequate career planning and learning and development arrangements
- lack of personal support, particularly in agencies with a small number of Indigenous employees.

The primary strategies being developed are identification and implementation of strategic partnerships to open up more career pathways, to trial innovative solutions to aspects of Indigenous employment and to promote better practice approaches. The project has involved extensive consultation with Indigenous APS employees, line managers, agency HR practitioners and senior executives. The project is overseen by a multi-agency senior executive steering committee.

In addition, the APS Commission facilitates the Indigenous Employment Group that meets quarterly and provides a networking opportunity for HR practitioners involved in Indigenous employment. Regional offices also promote Indigenous recruitment and retention in their diversity networks. The APS Commission supports the national Indigenous APS Employees Network, which facilitates communication between Indigenous employees about APS workforce issues.

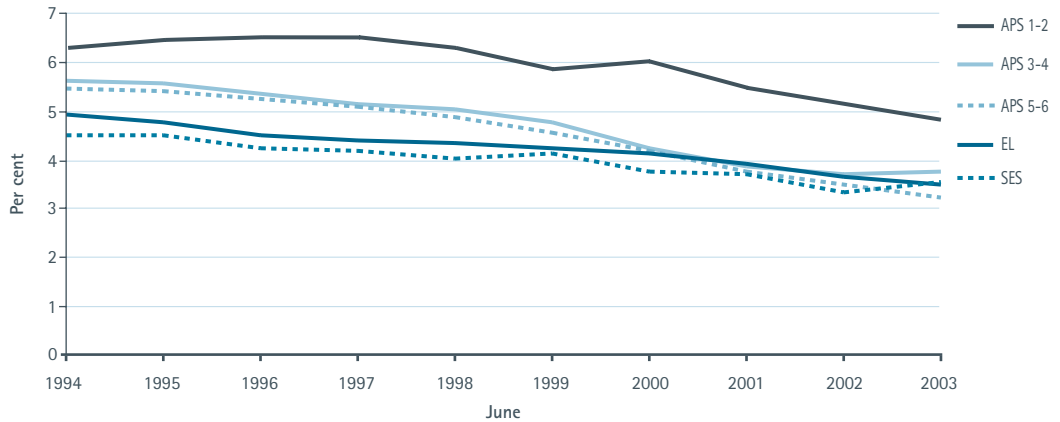
## PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

In considering data relating to people with a disability it is important to note that there is no consistent definition across the APS of what constitutes an employment-related disability. Some agencies use a specific definition, while others leave it to individuals to decide whether to disclose a disability for the purpose of EEO data. In any case, reporting of this data is voluntary.

Over the past decade, the data show a consistent decline in the employment of people reporting a disability as a proportion of APS employees. In absolute terms, the number fell each year until 2001–02, before

recovering slightly in 2002–03. Currently, people with a disability represent 3.6% of APS employees, down from 5.5% a decade ago. While the decline in absolute numbers can be partly explained by a reduction in the number of APS 1–2 positions, where the employment of people with a disability has historically been concentrated, in fact there has been a decline at all classifications, as Figure 8.7 indicates.

**Figure 8.7:** Ongoing staff: representation of people with a disability by classification, 1994 to 2003

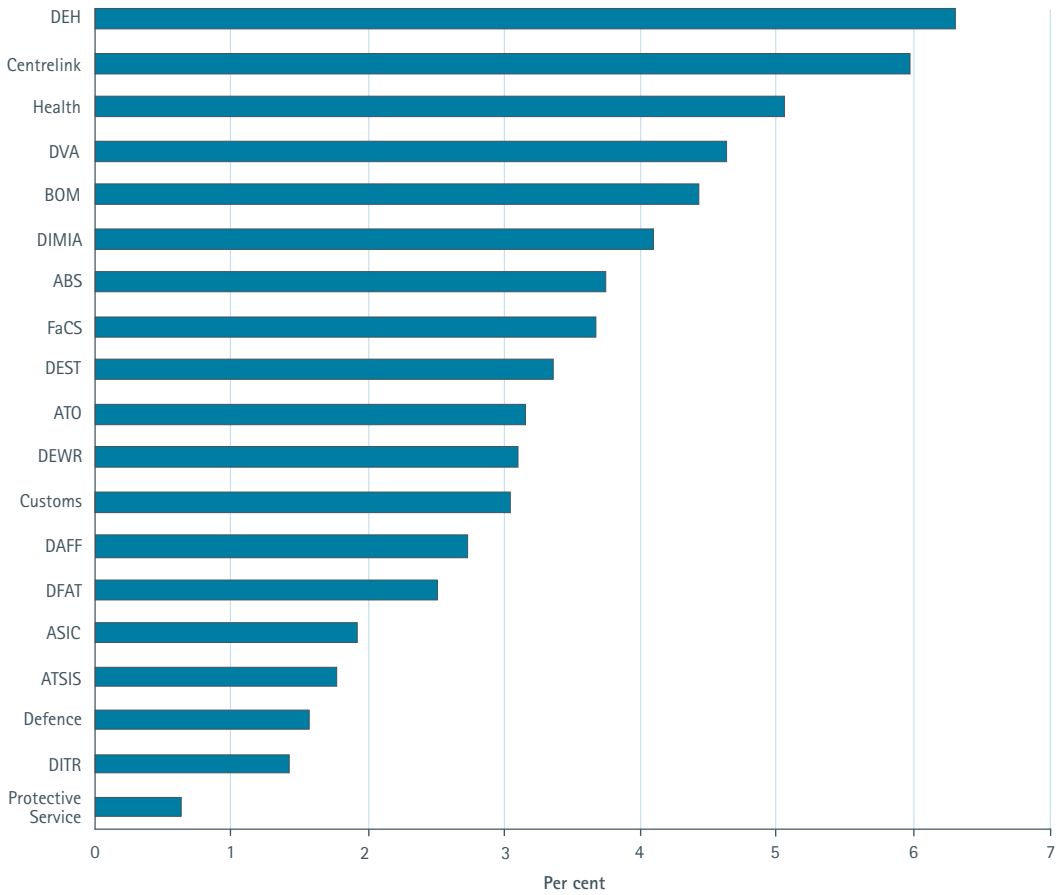


Source: APSED

Engagement and separation rates for people with a disability have changed little over the 10 years to June 2003. Between 1993–94 and 2001–02 there has been a consistent trend of separations outnumbering engagements. However, this trend reversed in 2002–03, with the number of engagements for people with a disability (403) being greater than the number of separations (310). The net percentage increase was nonetheless less than the percentage increase in employment of people without disabilities, so that there was still another small decline in the representation of people with disabilities in the APS in 2002–03.

Agencies with high representation rates of people reporting a disability are the Family Court (8.7%), the Australian Industrial Registrar (AIR) (7.6%) and AIATSIS (8.1%). None of these agencies is large, and so the actual numbers of people with a disability they employ is relatively small. Nine APS agencies reported that they employed no people with a disability on an ongoing basis. These agencies were small except for one medium-sized agency (AEC). Figure 8.8 below shows the proportion of people reporting a disability in agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees.

**Figure 8.8:** Representation of people with a disability in agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees, 2003



Note: The 'no data' component of responses to disability status was particularly high in Protective Service (65.0%) and Defence (58.3%).

Source: APSED

The employee survey asked respondents for their level of agreement to the following statement: 'My agency actively supports the employment of people with a disability'. People with a disability (36%) were less likely to agree to this statement than people without a disability (57%) and more likely to disagree (18% compared to 8%).

The agency survey asked agencies about the use of specific strategies to facilitate the recruitment of people with a disability during 2002–03. In their responses:

- 81 agencies reported ensuring that selection criteria were not systemically discriminatory (two agencies reported that they are developing this measure; six agencies did not respond to the question)
- 61 agencies reported providing information on reasonable adjustment measures in the workplace (17 agencies reported that they do not have this measure in place; four agencies reported that they are developing this measure; seven agencies did not respond to the question)

- 58 agencies stated they provided assistance during the application process (22 agencies reported that they do not have this measure in place; three agencies reported that they are developing this measure; six agencies did not respond to the question)
- 52 agencies made accommodations to any testing situations (30 agencies reported that they do not have this measure in place; one agency reported that it is developing this measure; six agencies did not respond to the question)
- 13 agencies reported having worked with organisations that specialise in placing people with a disability in employment (60 agencies reported that they do not have this measure in place; eight agencies reported that they are developing this measure; eight agencies did not respond to the question)
- 11 agencies provided training for selection panels on appropriate interviewing techniques for people with disabilities (55 agencies reported that they do not have this measure in place; 16 agencies reported that they are developing this measure; seven agencies did not respond to the question).

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Centrelink has established a disability coalition to inform the establishment of best practice in the employment of people with a disability and to ensure the Disability Action Plan is appropriately implemented. Strategies used include briefing recruitment agencies on Centrelink's diversity requirements, and the disability HR consultant providing information on employment opportunities to disability networks.

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An increasing number of APS agencies are using contracted services provided by employment services such as Koomari and Job Match, to support people with an intellectual disability.

When asked if they used strategies to retain people with a disability, 65% of agencies (58 agencies) reported that they did. Twenty-six agencies reported that they did not use such strategies (one agency did not respond). Approaches taken by agencies included:

- providing access to contact officers who assist with issues such as discrimination (57 agencies; two agencies reported that they are developing this measure; three reported that they do not have the measure in place; 27 agencies did not respond to this question)
- providing access to adaptive technology or other practical support (56 agencies; two agencies reported that they are developing this measure; four reported that they do not have this measure in place; 27 agencies did not respond to the question)
- encouraging participation in a network for people with a disability (17 agencies; six agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 38 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 28 agencies did not respond to this question)
- disability awareness training programme for employees generally (15 agencies; seven agencies reported that they are developing this measure; 39 reported that they do not have this measure in place; 28 agencies did not respond to this question).

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The Defence-sponsored Technical Equipment for Disabled Commonwealth Employees Program exists to ensure that Defence APS staff with disabilities are provided with the technical equipment that would assist them in the performance of their current duties, or facilitate advancement of their careers as opportunities occur. Defence Disability Staff Networks (DDSN)

has been established in all States and Territories to cater for the interests of staff with disabilities in Defence. The DDSN provides a forum for raising, discussing and resolving issues, including removing barriers, to enhance the participation of staff with disabilities in the workplace. The DDSN in NSW has been particularly successful in assisting staff with disabilities in their Defence careers.

Once a year, as part of its staff poll, Centrelink surveys its employees with a disability to identify issues of concern. In addition, some Centrelink areas use the following strategies: a disability HR adviser who has a role to support employees with a disability; the conduct of disability forums; cooperation between the OH&S coordinator and rehabilitation provider to ensure reasonable adjustment takes place.

In October 2003, Centrelink won a Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award for its strong and innovative commitment towards employing people with disabilities.

The agency survey results indicate that some agencies clearly have a long way to go in the development and implementation of strategies to recruit and retain employees with a disability. The results of the employee survey add weight to the urgency of the issue, with employees with a disability emerging as a relatively dissatisfied group of employees.

People with a disability were significantly more dissatisfied with their job than people without a disability. Only 49% of people with a disability had a job satisfaction index of over five compared to 77% of people without a disability.

People with and without a disability had similar ratings for the importance of job satisfaction factors, with four out of the top five factors being common to each group. However, people with a disability put more emphasis on 'regular feedback and recognition for effort', and slightly more emphasis on 'opportunities to utilise my skills'. The top five job satisfaction factors for people with and without a disability are at Table 8.8. People with a disability were somewhat more likely to nominate career development opportunities among their top five job satisfaction factors than people without a disability (39% compared to 31%), but of those who nominated career development as a job satisfaction factor, only 10% were satisfied with their opportunities for development, compared to 45% of people without a disability.

**Table 8.8:** Top five job satisfaction factors, by disability status

	<b>People with a disability</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>People without a disability</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	opportunities to utilise my skills	46	good working relationships	86
<b>2</b>	flexible working arrangements	69	flexible working arrangements	87
<b>3</b>	good working relationships	67	opportunities to utilise my skills	71
<b>4</b>	regular feedback/recognition for effort	34	interesting work provided	75
<b>5</b>	interesting work provided	35	salary	63

Source: Employee survey

Table 8.8 also shows the proportion of each group satisfied with the factors they had identified as important. Satisfaction ratings for people with and without a disability were very different. While the majority of people without a disability were satisfied with each factor identified as important, the majority of people with a disability were only satisfied with two factors ('flexible working arrangements' and 'good working relationships'). The average satisfaction rating for people with a disability was 50%, compared to 76% for other employees. Lowest ratings were for 'regular feedback/recognition for effort' and 'interesting work provided', where the percentage of people with a disability satisfied were 20 and 40 percentage points lower than other employees. The small numbers of people with a disability responding to the survey means that further analysis of significant correlations (such as by classification) within these results is not possible.

People with a disability were much less likely to rate their supervisors highly as people managers (26% compared to 48% of people without a disability), and more likely to give their supervisors a low rating in this area (39% compared to 16%). People with a disability were also much less likely than other employees to be satisfied with their own access to leadership development opportunities (9% compared to 28%) and more likely to be dissatisfied (65% compared to 33%).

People with a disability have similar levels of caring responsibilities to other employees and similar levels of satisfaction with access to flexible working practices, but they have different types of caring responsibilities. This issue is discussed further below in 'Life choice options'.

Overall, the picture is not positive. Despite the strategies agencies report having in place, the representation of people with a disability is continuing to decline. Significant numbers of employees with a disability disagree their agency is providing support and they are more dissatisfied in their jobs. Further analysis is needed in this area to identify possible causes. Agencies also need to consider more carefully, including in consultation with their employees with a disability, the effectiveness of their strategies.

## **NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND**

In the absence of an alternative, the concept 'NESB', representing people from a non-English speaking background, is used in APSED. The measure used to analyse data for this purpose is NESB1, which includes people born overseas whose first language was not English. NESB2 data, which includes children of certain migrants, has not been included as there is little evidence of employment disadvantage. The representation of NESB2 employees in the APS has been relatively stable over the past 10 years, changing from 6.3% of total ongoing employees in 1994 to 6.1% in 2003. In addition, their classification profile in 2003 is very similar to that of the overall APS workforce.

The 20 most common countries of origin for APS employees born overseas, starting with the most common, were:

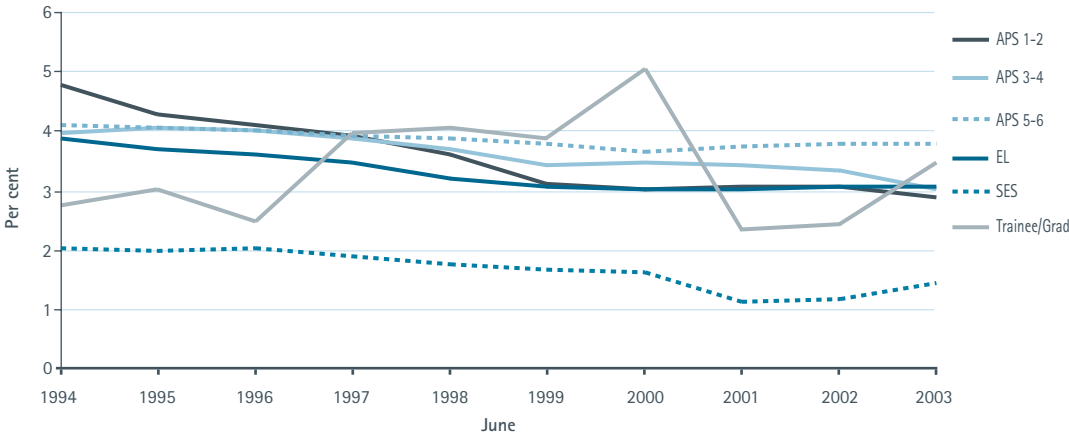
England, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam, Scotland, Philippines, Hong Kong, Germany, China, USA, Italy, Poland, Fiji, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Canada, Singapore.

The most common first languages, other than English, spoken by APS employees were:

Italian, Greek, German, Polish, Vietnamese, Spanish, Cantonese, Croatian, Dutch, Arabic, Serbian, Aboriginal languages, Macedonian, Mandarin, Turkish, Slovenian.

The proportion of people in the APS who identified themselves as being from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB1) decreased from 3.4% in 2002 to 3.3% in 2003. This continues a consistent slow downward trend over the past decade, from 4.2% in 1994 to 3.3% in 2003. Figure 8.9 shows the representation of NESB1 employees by classification from 1994 to 2003. The trainee and graduate trainee classifications were the only ones to show an overall increase in the proportion of NESB1 employees between 1994 and 2003 (from 2.8% to 3.5%), although, despite a rise over the last two years, their representation in 2003 was below the high point of 2000 (5.1%). The increasing number of NESB trainees and graduate trainees is an encouraging sign that traineeships offer one strategy for improving NESB representation in the APS. NESB1 representation at APS 1–2 classifications fell from 4.8% to 2.9% over the 10 years to 2003 and, as highlighted earlier, APS 1–2 classifications are a declining source of recruits into the APS. For all other classification groups, the decline has been more gradual.

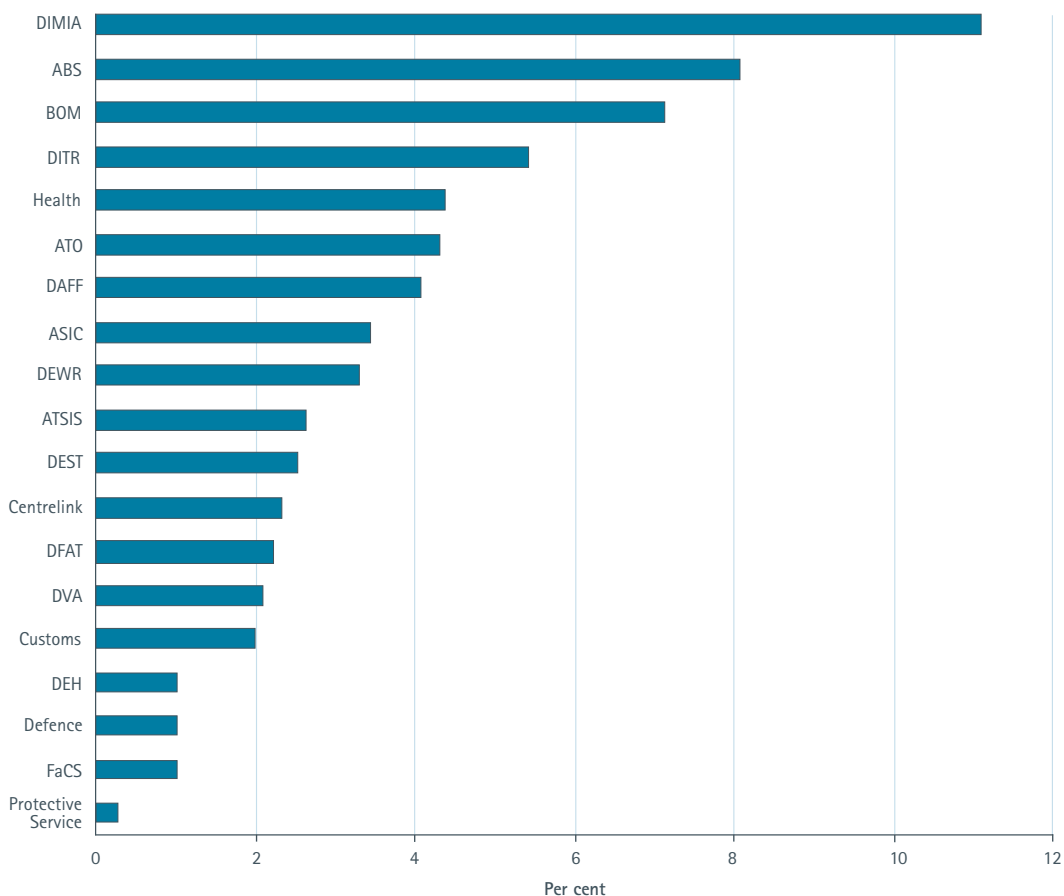
**Figure 8.9: Ongoing staff: Representation of NESB1 employees by classification, 1994 to 2003**



Source: APSED

Representation of NESB1 employees varies between agencies, with the National Library of Australia having the highest representation of NESB1 employees (14.0%), followed by DIMIA (11.1%), ComSuper (9.2%), NOHSC (9.0%) and CrimTrac (8.8%). These higher rates of representation may in part reflect the diversity of some of the agencies’ clients. Figure 8.10 reports on those agencies with over 1000 employees.

**Figure 8.10:** Representation of NESB1 employees in agencies with more than 1000 ongoing employees, 2003



Source: APSED

In the employee survey, 75% of all respondents agreed that people from all cultural backgrounds have the same opportunities as others. The employee survey did not ask respondents to identify themselves as NESB. It is not therefore possible to examine employee survey responses on a NESB/non-NESB basis.

While this year’s agency survey did not ask about the recruitment and retention of NESB1 employees, some agencies are using specific strategies to attract employees from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For instance, Centrelink has specifically targeted local cultural communities as part of its overall recruitment strategy. Where there is a high customer base from a different cultural or language background, local Centrelink offices have promoted vacancies through community radio or sent information to various multicultural groups. This is generally facilitated through multicultural services officers. Job advertisements have also been placed in the ethnic press for particular communities to attract applicants from specific backgrounds.

The long-term decline in the representation rate of people from a non-English speaking background in the APS has not been as severe as that for people with a disability. In addition, the representation of NESB2 employees (including the children of migrants) has been largely stable over the last decade. Nevertheless, further analysis is needed to identify the likely causes of the fall in representation of NESB1 employees.

These may include changes in the external environment (such as the representation of NESB1 in the community which has fallen slightly<sup>10</sup>) as well as internal changes. In the meantime, agencies should review their relevant strategies.

## **BROADER DIVERSITY ISSUES**

As noted previously, the concept of diversity is a broad one, going beyond a concentration on the representation of traditional EEO groups, and encompassing the skills, knowledge and background that agencies need to meet the needs of their diverse client groups. While the recruitment, development and retention of people in the traditional EEO groups is important to diversity management in the APS, there is a growing acknowledgment among agencies of the need to address issues of demographic change, work–life balance and workplace harassment and bullying, to ensure that agencies are able to attract and retain skilled employees, and meet their capability needs both now and in the future.

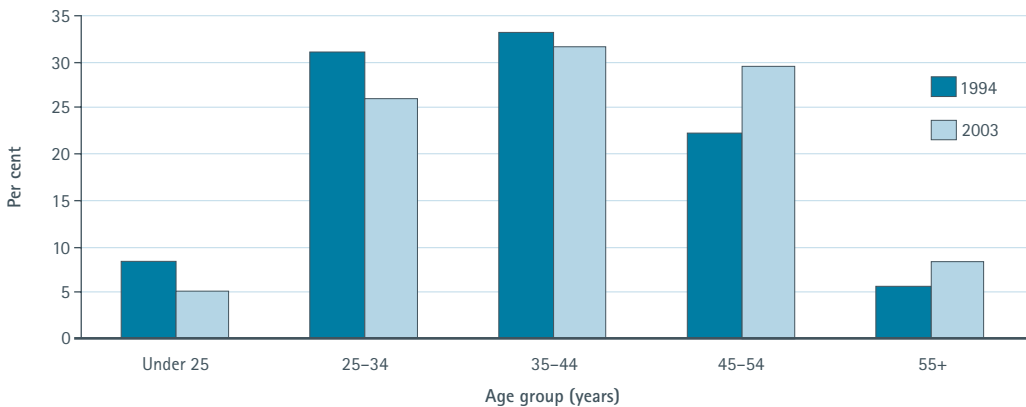
### **AGE PROFILE CHALLENGES**

The MAC’s report *Organisational Renewal* is discussed in Chapter 9 in the context of longer-term workforce planning. The report sets out the challenges APS agencies face to maintain and enhance their ongoing capability in a changing environment.<sup>11</sup> Broadly, it identifies a future contraction of the labour market, the implications of the ageing profile of the APS, and the career intentions of new graduates as critical factors for agencies to consider in their workforce planning processes.

The statistical snapshot of the APS in Chapter 2 highlighted the ageing of the APS over the last decade, and the implications of demographic changes for workplace planning are discussed in detail in Chapter 9. These chapters highlight the growing reliance on mature-aged workers in the APS, and the importance of providing a work environment and work practices that are conducive to their optimal participation.

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of workers aged 45–54 over the last decade, from 22.1% in 1994 to 29.3% in 2003, while the proportion of younger workers has declined. The changed age profile of the APS is shown in Figure 8.11.

**Figure 8.11: Ongoing staff: Age profile, 1994 and 2003**



Source: APSED

<sup>10</sup> ABS data shows that the proportion of the Australian population who were born in non-English speaking countries fell slightly from 15.8% in 1996 to 15.5% in 2001. Note, however, that the definition is not directly comparable.

<sup>11</sup> Management Advisory Committee Report 3, *Organisational Renewal*, 2003

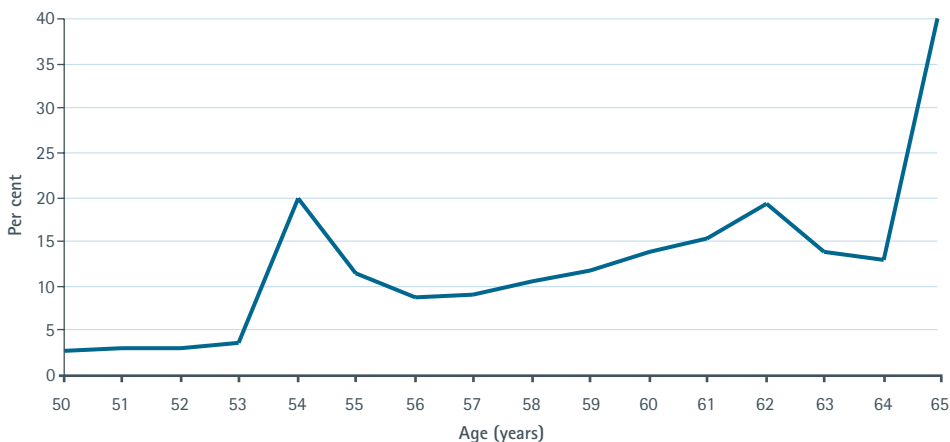
## Mature-aged employees

Consistent with its ageing profile, the APS is increasingly reliant on mature-aged employees (45 and over) who now represent 37.6% of its workforce, although there is significant variation across agencies (see Chapter 2).

While 21.9% of the APS workforce could, if they wished, retire with superannuation benefits within five years (including 26.6% of ELs and 42.5% of SES), there are some indications that employees in this group may remain in the workforce longer than previous cohorts. The employee survey found that mature-aged employees had higher rates of job satisfaction than other employees. Results of employee surveys conducted for the MAC report also indicate that a high proportion of employees intend to work beyond 55.

Figure 8.12 shows the separation trends for APS employees in the 50–65 age group in 2002–03. Despite the continuing peak in departures between the ages of 53 and 55, the proportion of ongoing APS employees over 55 increased from 7.6% in 2002 to 8.3% in 2003 (rising from 5.6% in 1994).

**Figure 8.12:** Separation rates for ongoing employees aged 50 to 65, 2002–03



Source: APSED

There are a number of factors at play here, including the earning rates of the superannuation funds which affects the benefits available for those who resign before age 55. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a willingness on the part of mature-aged employees to remain in the workforce for longer periods of time, particularly if agencies are able to provide them with additional flexibility.

Table 8.9 shows the top five job satisfaction factors for workers 45 years and over (mature-aged employees), and employees aged under 45 years. These factors were similar between mature and non-mature-aged employees, with three out of the five common to both. The main difference between them was that mature-aged workers rated ‘seeing tangible results from my work’ and ‘opportunities to utilise my skills’ among their top five job satisfaction factors, while younger workers included ‘salary’ and ‘opportunities to develop my skills’.

**Table 8.9:** Top five job satisfaction factors, for employees aged over 45 and under 45

	<b>Mature-aged employees (45 years and over)</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>Non-mature-aged employees (under 45)</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	good working relationships	84	good working relationships	85
<b>2</b>	opportunities to utilise my skills	79	flexible working arrangements	83
<b>3</b>	flexible working arrangements	85	opportunities to develop my skills	68
<b>4</b>	interesting work provided	84	interesting work provided	74
<b>5</b>	seeing tangible results from my work	81	salary	60

Source: Employee survey

The majority of both mature-aged and non-mature-aged employees were satisfied with each of the job satisfaction factors that they identified as important. However, mature-aged workers were generally more likely to be satisfied (with an average rating for the five factors of 83%) than other workers (an average rating of 74%). For the factors common to both groups, the only major difference was for ‘interesting work provided’, where mature-aged workers were more likely to be satisfied (84% compared to 74%).

There were also some interesting differences in the top five job satisfaction factors within the mature-aged cohort when they were separated into the 45–54 year age group and the 55 years and over age group, see Table 8.10.

**Table 8.10:** Top five job satisfaction factors, for employees aged 45–54 years and 55 years and over

	<b>Employees aged 45–54 years</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>Employees aged 55 years and over</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	good working relationships	81	good working relationships	93
<b>2</b>	opportunities to utilise my skills	71	opportunities to utilise my skills	70
<b>3</b>	flexible working arrangements	89	chance to make a useful contribution to society	87
<b>4</b>	interesting work provided	78	flexible working arrangements	89
<b>5</b>	salary	60	seeing tangible results from my work	83

Source: Employee survey

While three out of the five top job satisfaction factors are common for both groups, 45–54 year olds placed more importance on interesting work and on salary, and those 55 years and over placed more importance on the chance to make a useful contribution to society, and seeing tangible results from their work. While the majority of both groups of employees were satisfied with the top five job satisfaction factors, those 55 years and over were more likely to be satisfied than those aged from 45–54 years, with an average satisfaction rating of 84% for their top five factors, compared to 76% (although the 45–54 year old figure is affected by the relatively greater dissatisfaction with salary). In particular, those 55 years and over were considerably more satisfied with their working relationships (93% compared with 81%).

In the survey of mature-aged workers conducted for the MAC project, mature-aged APS employees indicated that they would stay longer than intended if they had more flexible work arrangements. Of those current and former ELs and SES who had rejoined or would consider rejoining the APS, 90% of current employees and 82% of former employees said that they would prefer to work on a more flexible basis.

Given the ageing profile of the APS, agencies need to consider the scope for flexible work arrangements and management practices that optimise the participation and retention of their valued mature-aged workers. In addition to part-time work, such arrangements could include part-year or project-based work, mentoring, shedding management responsibilities and working at a reduced classification level, or leaving the APS and returning on alternative arrangements.

Agencies need to adopt a strategic approach to identifying and implementing flexibility and other initiatives. FaCS, for example, has established a strong commitment to the employment of mature-aged workers and followed this up with a survey and a series of initiatives addressing the interests of mature-aged workers that should add considerably to agency retention rates over time. The FaCS strategy, to be launched in late 2003, includes the integration of age retirement and succession planning issues into the performance management system and the application of broader workplace policies such as flexible working arrangements to encourage the retention of mature-aged employees.

The APS Commission is about to release a package of materials aimed at HR areas in agencies with an interest in developing a strategic approach to the retention of their mature-aged employees.

### Younger workers

The past several years have seen a turn around in the number of younger employees working in the APS. The number of people aged less than 25 years employed as ongoing employees dropped continuously from 11,846 to 4919 staff (a drop of 58.5%) between June 1994 and June 1998. Since then, the number has risen each year, to 5200 at June 2002 and 5943 at June 2003 (an increase of 14.3% during the year).

Much of the growth during 2002–03 was in the 20–24 age group. Within the under 25 age group, the number of those aged under 20 increased by only 11 (6.3%), while the number of 20–24 year olds increased by 732 (14.6%). This increase in the proportion of 20–24 year olds, as opposed to the under 20 year olds, mainly reflects the reduction in employment opportunities at the APS 1–2 level as the nature of work being undertaken continues to demand higher standards of education, skills and experience. While other labour market factors and high school retention rates mean the trend away from APS employees in the 15–19 age group may continue, agencies should also consider other strategies to attract promising young people, such as traineeships, as the employment market tightens. This might also help to redress some of the problems concerning employment of a wider range of people, including Indigenous Australians and people with a disability.

As indicated previously, younger employees were less likely than older employees to score above five on the job satisfaction index (66%, compared with 76% for all APS employees). Table 8.11 shows differences in the ranking of the top five job satisfaction factors for employees aged under 25, compared to those aged 25 years and over.

**Table 8.11** Top five job satisfaction factors, for under 25 years and 25 years and over

	<b>Employees aged under 25 years</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>	<b>Employees aged 25 years and over</b>	<b>Employees satisfied %</b>
<b>1</b>	good working relationships	86	good working relationships	85
<b>2</b>	opportunities for career development	61	flexible working arrangements	87
<b>3</b>	salary	72	opportunities to utilise my skills	70
<b>4</b>	opportunities to develop my skills	63	interesting work provided	74
<b>5</b>	regular feedback/recognition for effort	45	salary	61

Source: Employee survey

Job satisfaction factors important to under 25 year olds were considerably different to those important to other employees, with only two out of the top five factors common to both groups (good working relationships and salary). Young employees put less weight on ‘flexible working arrangements’, ‘opportunities to utilise my skills’ and ‘interesting work provided’, and more emphasis on ‘opportunities for career development’, ‘opportunities to develop my skills’, and on ‘regular feedback/recognition for effort’.

Overall, young people were less satisfied with their most important job satisfaction factors than other employees, with an average of 65% reporting satisfaction, compared with 75% for other employees. They had particularly low rates of satisfaction with ‘regular feedback/recognition for effort (45%)’. However, they were more likely to report that they were satisfied with their salary than older employees (72% compared to 61%).

Agencies wishing to attract and retain younger workers need to consider the workplace factors important to them. According to surveys of graduates undertaken for MAC’s *Organisational Renewal*, access to favourable employment conditions (such as study leave) is by far the most important factor encouraging graduates to remain in the APS. The State of the Service employee survey shows that young people are also interested in good working relationships, opportunities for career and skill development, and feedback and recognition. Analysis of those ongoing employees at APS 3–4 and graduate trainee classifications engaged during 1997–98, shows a broadly similar pattern in retention rates between these groups, with 66.9% of the APS 3–4 employees and 60.9% of graduate trainees still employed in the APS at June 2003.

Other important factors identified through the MAC survey as encouraging graduates to stay are the same as those attracting them to the APS in the first place—job security and interesting work.

**PRIVATE SECTOR AND PUBLIC SECTOR MOBILITY**

In 2002–03, over 45% of all employees engaged had been working in the private sector prior to entering the APS. This is not surprising given the increase in the median age of employees on engagement, which is now 31 years. The growing number of employees join the APS at higher classifications, rather than at base grade levels, a further indicator that employees are joining with work experience outside the APS. These

employees come from a variety of workplace cultures; many will have experienced a range of managerial styles and workplace values. They have much to offer the APS in terms of broadening organisational capability, increasing agility and providing greater capacity to innovate. To maximise their potential, agencies will need to respond more flexibly to the ways in which employees' knowledge, skills and attributes are acquired, adapting their learning and development strategies to respond to lateral as well as entry level recruitment.

## LIFE CHOICE OPTIONS

People at different life and career stages are looking for more flexible ways of working. Flexible work initiatives need to be inclusive, not limited to families with young children or other caring responsibilities, but catering for a wide range of life choice decisions. This may include options for all employees to adjust their working arrangements to balance their life with their work, including study leave, purchased leave, leave without pay, part-time work, and flexible working hours.

This year, the sixth annual benchmarking study of work–life balance initiatives by Australian company, *Managing Work/Life Balance*, reported that following the implementation of work–life balance strategies, federal government respondents reported a 14% reduction in turnover.<sup>12</sup> Additional benefits reported included reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and higher rates of return from parental leave.

A broader analysis of work–life balance in the APS is discussed in Chapter 6. This section looks at particular work–life issues for some of the EEO groups.

A key issue for employees in reaching an effective work–life balance is access to flexible working conditions, particularly for employees with significant caring responsibilities. MAC has also identified flexible working conditions as a central issue for mature-aged workers and for graduate trainees.<sup>13</sup>

The APS has been a leader in providing family friendly work practices. It utilises a range of flexible approaches, including paid maternity leave, part-time work, flexible working hours, home based work, and purchased leave. This emphasis needs to continue in the future through flexible conditions and supportive management approaches as part of agencies' broader attraction and retention strategies.

From the perspective of an employer, maternity leave is a particularly important element of an overall package of employment conditions that attracts and retains women, and supports the diversity objectives of the PS Act. There are significant costs involved, and while holding positions for women on maternity leave and temporary filling arrangements can be disruptive to small agencies and specialised work areas, these factors are generally outweighed by the benefit to the APS of retaining highly skilled and increasingly qualified women.

There has been a slight decrease in the total number of women completing a period of maternity leave, from 1777 in 2001–02 to 1642 in 2002–03. Most women combine their paid maternity leave with other forms of leave, including recreation leave and long service leave, to extend the period before returning to work. The

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<sup>12</sup> *Managing Work/Life Balance Work/Life Initiatives: The way ahead report on the year 2003 survey*, 2003. Results can be found at [www.worklifebalance.com.au](http://www.worklifebalance.com.au)

<sup>13</sup> *op cit.*

proportion of women returning to work after being on maternity leave is quite high; of the 1777 women who took maternity leave during 2001–02, only 186 (10.5%) had separated from the APS by 30 June 2003.

The employee survey results found that women were only slightly more likely to report caring responsibilities than men (37% compared to 35%). They were also slightly more satisfied than men that their supervisors would support their use of flexible work practices (85% compared to 81%).

However, there were substantial differences in work–life balance for other EEO groups.

Indigenous employees were much more likely to report having carer responsibilities (62% compared to 35% for non-Indigenous employees). They were more likely than non-Indigenous employees to care for children from 5–16 years old (75% of Indigenous employees with caring responsibilities compared to 65% of non-Indigenous employees), and slightly more likely to care for aged parents (19% compared to 15%). However, despite their extra responsibilities, Indigenous employees were more likely to be satisfied than other employees that their supervisor would support their use of flexible work practices (89% compared with 83% for non-Indigenous employees).

People with a disability had a similar rate of caring responsibilities (38%) to other employees (36%). However, there were considerable differences in the make-up of their caring responsibilities. People with a disability were much less likely to care for children under five (six per cent of carers with a disability compared to 28% for people without a disability) and much more likely to care for aged parents (34% compared to 14%) or have other caring responsibilities (19% compared to 8%). They reported similar levels of satisfaction about supervisor support of the use of flexible work practices as other employees (81% compared with 83% for other employees).

Overall, the satisfaction of employees that their supervisor would support their use of flexible work practices was very high, and there was little difference between the satisfaction of employees with and without caring responsibilities (82% compared to 84% respectively). However, one group of carers, those who care for aged parents, stands out as being relatively less satisfied, with 71% of this group expressing satisfaction that their supervisor would support the use of flexible work practices and 17% expressing dissatisfaction, compared to 83% and seven per cent respectively for all employees.

Given the ageing profile of the APS, it is likely that elder care responsibilities will increasingly concern employees. Some agencies have introduced initiatives to help their employees meet the needs of their ageing parents. For example, FaCS has contracted Carelink Referral Service, a freecall service that gives employees practical help with child and elder care issues.

Consideration could also be given by agencies to providing greater flexibility with long service leave, including to meet elder care responsibilities. An employee may elect to take long service leave on half pay, which will enable them to extend the period of leave. In addition, while long service leave has traditionally been accessed in periods of not less than 15 calendar days, a number of agencies now allow staff to access leave in minimum blocks of seven calendar days.

## BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

A productive workplace depends on positive working relationships, which are essential for effective communication, cooperation and teamwork. Such positive relationships in the workplace depend on individuals treating each other with respect and courtesy, and without harassment. This means respecting not just obvious differences among employees such as gender, cultural background or expertise, but also less obvious aspects of diversity like work styles and thinking patterns.

Behaviour that intimidates, devalues or humiliates an employee, whether characterised as bullying, harassment or discrimination or not, destroys productive working relationships. It may cause physical and psychological harm to individuals, undermine teamwork and prevent the workplace operating in an optimal way.

In their responses to the employee survey, 18% of all employees reported experiencing what they considered to be bullying,<sup>14</sup> harassment<sup>15</sup> or discrimination<sup>16</sup> during 2002–03. While this figure is high, and is cause for concern, it does appear to be lower than the results of other surveys similar to the State of the Service employee survey.

For example, 21% of New Zealand public servants who responded to a 2000 survey conducted by the New Zealand State Services Commission reported having been discriminated against, and 34% reported having been harassed or bullied.<sup>17</sup> The New Zealand survey also found that while awareness of formal complaints procedures was high, confidence in them was low. A 2002 Canadian survey of public servants, commissioned by the Treasury Board of Canada, found that in the two years prior to the survey, 21% of employees considered they were the victims of harassment, and 17% of employees reported being discriminated against.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, differences in the questions asked in the three surveys as well as the variation in definitions of ‘harassment’, ‘discrimination’ and ‘bullying’ require that any comparison be treated with considerable caution. Nevertheless, the results do provide a useful context for the State of the Service employee survey results.

The State of the Service employee survey results show marked differences in employee responses when broken down by classification. Table 8.12 shows that lower level employees were more likely to report having been subjected to bullying, harassment or discrimination compared to SES employees.

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<sup>14</sup> For the purpose of the employee survey, ‘bullying’ was defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, that may be direct or indirect, verbal or physical, or some form of negative interaction. It can reasonably be regarded as undermining the victim’s right to dignity.

<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of the employee survey, ‘harassment’ was defined as any unwelcome, unsolicited, offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening behaviour directed at an individual or group because of some real or perceived attribute such as a person’s sex, sexuality, ethnicity, or disability. A reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect the person harassed to be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of the employee survey, ‘discrimination’ was defined as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or other attributes that removes equality of opportunity or treatment in employment.

<sup>17</sup> NZ State Services Commission *NZ Public Service Career Progression and Development Survey*, 2000. The question in the NZ survey on discrimination was ‘...was there any situation or event in which you felt you were treated less favourably than others in the same or similar situation because of a personal attribute such as gender, ethnicity or disability?’ The question on harassment and bullying in the NZ survey was ‘...have you experienced any unwelcome behaviour, which served to humiliate, intimidate or offend you?’

<sup>18</sup> Public Service of Canada 2002, *2002 Public Service Employee Survey*. Results can be found at [www.surveym-sondage.gc.ca/2002/results-resultats/00/result-e.htm](http://www.surveym-sondage.gc.ca/2002/results-resultats/00/result-e.htm) The Canadian survey defined ‘harassment’ as ‘any objectionable act, comment or display that demeans, belittles or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat.’ ‘Discrimination’ was defined as ‘...treat[ing] someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction which, whether intentional or not, has an effect which imposes disadvantages not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to other members of society.’

**Table 8.12:** Employees who reported experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination, by classification

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)
APS 1–6	20	78	3
EL	13	86	1
SES	5	95	0

Source: Employee survey

The employee survey did not ask respondents about who they perceived as having bullied, harassed or discriminated against them, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the significant difference between the results for SES and non-SES employees. However, it is likely that the results reflect the relative variations in authority.

In terms of EEO groups:

- women (21%) were more likely to consider that they had been subjected to bullying, harassment or discrimination than men (15%)
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees reported reasonably similar results (21% compared with 18%)
- people with a disability (39%) were much more likely to consider that they had been subjected to bullying, harassment or discrimination than employees without a disability (17%).

Of the employees who reported experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination in 2002–03, the majority reported that the ground for that perceived behaviour was non-specific (51%), followed by ‘other’ (41%) and gender (13%). Explanations offered by respondents of why they chose the ‘other’ category included age and sexual orientation. ‘Other’ respondents commonly referred to situations suggesting a breakdown in the management of relationships in the workplace:

*It's borderline whether you consider this discrimination or 'performance management'—senior management in my agency regard it as performance management; I consider it as discrimination.*

*I fear that if I complain I'll only make things worse for myself.*

*I have seen two employees engage in what I regard as bullying behaviour with their supervisors in response to performance feedback sessions. It is difficult to know how to provide support to the supervisors who have the responsibility to counsel and provide performance feedback to such persons, trying to keep the sessions professional and impartial, when they know in advance that these individuals will respond with personal attacks.*

*The bullying I received was from a superior. Although I was satisfied with how this issue was handled, the same officer still displays the same behaviour (or worse) to other managers and staff.*

*Being the victim of a bully is the worst thing that can happen to anyone. In my previous position I was constantly harassed and picked on for non-work related issues.*

*Sometimes non-assertive people in lower classification levels are harassed, discriminated against and bullied. They have difficulty pursuing the matter. Supervisors should be made aware of this type of behaviour so they can identify it.*

To address allegations of workplace bullying, discrimination and harassment, agencies may need to assist managers to develop their capabilities to build relationships and communicate effectively with employees. These capabilities are particularly important for managers when they are required to deal with complex issues relating to performance management and underperformance (see related discussion in Chapter 9 on underperformance).

The results of the employee survey indicate that the majority of APS employees (68%) were confident about using support structures in their agencies should they be subjected to harassment, discrimination or bullying. Sixteen per cent reported that they would not be confident using support structures. Confidence varied by age, with employees under 25 most likely to be confident (85%) and employees aged 25–34 least likely to be confident (66%).

Of the employees who reported experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination, women (62%) were more likely to raise it through the support structures in their agency compared with men (34%), as were people with a disability (60%) compared with people without a disability (49%). The results for Indigenous employees are not statistically valid, and are therefore not reported.

Of the employees who had experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination and had raised it in their agency, 70% reported being dissatisfied with the way the issue was dealt with. Nineteen per cent were satisfied and 11% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is clearly of concern, indicating the need for agencies to examine the quality and effectiveness of their review systems for addressing complaints and resolving issues of bullying, harassment and discrimination. When the results are examined by available EEO group, it was found that:

- women were more likely to be satisfied with how the issue was dealt with compared with men (20% compared with 16%) and less likely to be dissatisfied (66% compared with 79%)
- people with a disability were much more likely to be satisfied with how the issue was dealt with compared with people without a disability (39% compared with 16%) and much less likely to be dissatisfied (58% compared with 71%).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Diversity planning is an important contributor to broader workforce planning for business outcomes.

Trends in representation of different EEO groups have varied over the last decade. While total APS employment has declined by 15.2% since 1994, the employment of people with a disability has declined by 45.3%. The representation of NESB1 employees has also declined disproportionately, but not as dramatically as for people with a disability, with NESB1 numbers falling by 33.4% since 1994. Trends in representation of NESB2 employees have been more stable, with this group's numbers falling by 17.9%, close to the fall in total APS employment. In contrast, numbers of Indigenous employees have fallen by only 10.4%. Between 1994 and 1998 there was a gradual increase in the representation of Indigenous employees in the APS from 2.3% to 2.7%. However, since 1999 growth in representation has clearly stalled.

The large fall in the representation of people with a disability is a particular concern, as is the fall in the representation of NESB 1 employees, and the stalling of improvements in the representation of Indigenous employment. Agency assurances about measures to address employment disadvantage, particularly for

people with a disability, are not reflected in outcomes, or in the experiences and opinions of employees as recorded in the employee survey.

Consistent with *Organisational Renewal*,<sup>19</sup> agencies need to engage in more systematic workforce planning and to understand their own workforce demographics, paying particular attention to factors such as age. There are structural issues that agencies need to examine further, particularly in relation to the attraction, career development and retention of valued mature-aged employees. Flexible working provisions are one way of addressing the needs of employees and providing a competitive advantage.

The employee survey results on the proportion of employees who have experienced discrimination, bullying or harassment are worrying. More attention may need to be given to the development of managers' skills in such areas as performance appraisal and feedback, to the efficacy of review mechanisms, and more generally to cultivating and sustaining good working relationships.

With the exception of women, the provision of data for EEO groups remains less systematic than could be wished. All agencies need to make sure that they have systems in place to provide quality data to APSED to ensure a sound basis for analysis, and to ensure that they have the data that they need for their own workforce planning purposes.

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<sup>19</sup> Management Advisory Committee Report 3, *Organisational Renewal*, 2003