



Our Differences make us stronger

Diversity—of background and life experience as well as in expertise and view points—creates challenge, provokes thought and encourages change. It provides different insights, which are especially valuable in tackling the complex and ambiguous problems faced by government each day.

Diversity & Inclusion in the APS: Embrace it, share it, and celebrate it!

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Public Service Commission acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples today.

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The document must be attributed as: *Our differences make us stronger*.



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Data used in this report.....	2
Icons used in this report.....	3
Our diverse workforce.....	4
Attraction, recruitment and retention	5
Affirmative recruitment measures	5
Intention to leave.....	7
Employee representation	8
Case Study—Indigenous Employee Value Proposition	9
Strengthen employment outcomes	10
Career pathways	10
Access to learning and development.....	12
Gender pay gap	13
Workforce planning	14
Case study—Job Sharing Susan Fitzgerald and Megan Leahy.....	16
Confident and capable leaders	17
Perceptions of inclusive leadership.....	18
Diverse senior leadership.....	19
Case Study—The role of a diversity champion	22
Case Study—Building Mental Health Capability	23
Inclusive workplaces	24
Planning for inclusion.....	24
Consideration of intersectionality	25
Bullying and Harassment in the workplace.....	26
Employee Networks	27
Flexible Work in the APS.....	27
Case Study—Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation	29
Case study—Auslan Interpreters with security clearance.....	30
Next steps/Conclusion.....	31
Resources	32
Diversity & inclusion Newsletter.....	32
References.....	33

Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural annual APS diversity and inclusion report.

'We have a responsibility to create a workforce that represents and best serves the Australian community'

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Commissioner, Australian Public Service Commission²

Striving for diversity, inclusion and a sense of belonging in the Australian Public Service (APS) is important for our people, the values we role model, and outcomes for the Australian public and Government.

Change continues to impact the way we deliver for the government, citizens and communities. The unprecedented pace of change and disruption globally, and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, has heightened expectations of the public service and there is an imperative to embed diversity and inclusion so that we deliver effective outcomes for the government and Australian community. (APS Workforce Strategy 2025; OECD 2011³). Quite simply if we are to serve entirely the Australian community, we need to reflect that community.

The research is clear: diversity and inclusion is a powerful enabler of performance, and APS agencies that leverage diversity and inclusion will be better positioned to adapt to future challenges and increase productivity (Hunt et al 2020⁴ Bourke & Dillion 2018⁵). The APS needs diversity in the workforce to deliver innovative policy and services and to maintain the high regard for our integrity and citizen-centric focus.

When diversity is missing, important ideas are missed. Issues arise in implementing policies and delivering products and services because those creating them are working from a single perspective. Diverse and inclusive leaders, teams, and workforces are better positioned to create new ideas that improve outcomes for our community.



'Workplace environments that demonstrate cultural integrity drive better policy development and service delivery outcomes, to better meet the needs to the Australian community'

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Commissioner, Australian Public Service Commission

This report is intended to assist D&I and HR practitioners and others that are working in the diversity and inclusion space and those who are interested in diversity and inclusion issues. The report provides an overview of the current state of diversity and inclusion in the APS. We feature insights, opportunities for improvement and present case studies of current practice.

That said, responsibility for diversity and inclusion strategy actions sits with individual agencies. The Australian Public Service Commission sets the strategic direction and has a responsibility to tell the overarching story of change across the APS. This report begins to tell the story of the APS as a whole and where there may be opportunities for change, complemented by examples of diversity and inclusion actions taken by individual agencies. This report will allow agencies to benchmark their individual achievements against the broader APS. Our diverse workforce provides a snapshot of the current state of diversity in the APS. The rest of the report dives deeper, exploring the stories behind these figures, and charting the journey of the APS as we strive for diversity, inclusion and a sense of belonging for all employees.

The APS Employee Census is an annual survey which collects APS employee opinions and perspectives on important issues in the workplace. Unless otherwise stated, Census data in this report is from the 2021 APS Employee Census.

The APS Employment Database (APSED) stores the employment data of all current and former APS employees including diversity status and education levels. Unless otherwise stated, APSED data in this report is from the 30 June 2021 APSED release.

The APS Agency Survey is an annual survey of APS agencies with at least 20 employees employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Unless otherwise stated, this report uses data from the 2021 APS Agency Survey.

Agency Health Checks are targeted diversity and inclusion data collections conducted by the Australian Public Service Commission. All Commonwealth agencies are invited to provide information, but participation is not compulsory.

The APSJobs website is the primary platform for government agencies to advertise vacant positions. Metadata from advertised positions is used to monitor the use of diversity and inclusion recruitment measures.

DATA used for this report

Notes on this data

In 2021 the question asking if people identified as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community was expanded from previous years to include a wider range of individuals. Specific references were made to queer, questioning, intersex and asexual that were not mentioned in previous years. This should be considered when making comparisons between years.

It should be noted that most of the data used in this report was collected during the 2021 period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Working from home was still a frequent event, with lockdowns happening across Australia at various times. These dynamics are likely to have impacted on individual mental health and team dynamics for employees across the APS. Although COVID-19 was not specifically asked about in the data collections, the collected data exist within this context and the influence the pandemic has had should be considered when interpreting trends over time.

Icons used in this report



Discussion points

Information prefaced by this symbol indicates a point of interest that warrants discussion in the agency.



Opportunity

Information prefaced by this symbol indicates an opportunity area for agencies and/or the APS as a whole.

Our diverse workforce



APS employees:

60.2%
Women

7.0%
LGBTIQA+*

3.5%
First Nations people

4.1% to 9.3%*
Employees with a disability

40%
having caring responsibilities*

62%
Work outside the ACT

22.3%
Employees born overseas

14.7%
Employees born in a non-English speaking country

19.3%
Employees who speak a language other than English at home*

0.5%
Gender-non binary or uses a different term*

47.2%
Mature age

*Derived from the 2021 APS Employee Census

Classification	Women %	Men %	First Nations people %	Employees with a disability %
Trainee	54.5	44.6	31.7	2.5
Graduate	49.8	49.8	3.5	4.5
APS 1	66.6	33.1	4.7	6.1
APS 2	61.6	38.3	7.5	3.8
APS 3	65.3	34.4	5.1	4.0
APS 4	68.5	31.4	6.3	5.4
APS 5	62.3	37.6	3.6	4.6
APS 6	58.6	41.4	2.1	4.1
EL 1	54.6	45.3	1.5	3.3
EL 2	50.1	49.9	1.4	2.7
SES 1	51.9	48.0	1.5	.38
SES 2-3	44.6	55.4	0.9	3.4
Overall	60.2	39.7	3.5	4.1

Caring responsibilities*

33% care for children
10% care for parents
3% care for their partner

Patterns of work

80.6 % Full time
13.9 % Part time
5.5 % Casual

Location

61% work outside the ACT
0.8% overseas

Attraction, recruitment and retention

The attraction, recruitment, and retention of employees from diversity groups plays a key role in building a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

Affirmative recruitment measures

Inclusive processes allow candidates to best demonstrate their capability, removing barriers so all applicants can be assessed and compared fairly on merit. Affirmative measures is one method designed to remove barriers for First Nations people or people with disability (or a specific form of disability) thereby increasing their representation in the APS.

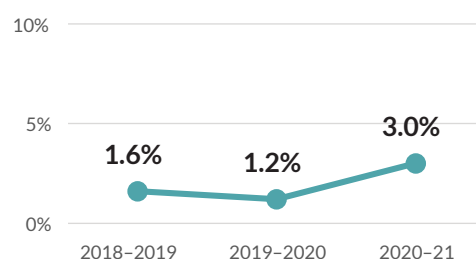
Affirmative measures are set out in the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2022 and monitored through the positions advertised on APSJobs. It has become common in recent years for these to be used with graduate, entry level programs and large intakes of staff. This has resulted in strengthened diversity numbers at the graduate and entry levels. Affirmative measures can be used with all advertised positions.

The RecruitAbility scheme is also an Affirmative measure and can be applied to any position. It is designed to give people with disability, who are found suitable at the first stage of recruitment, a chance to progress to the second phase, whether that be an interview or other form of recruitment activity.

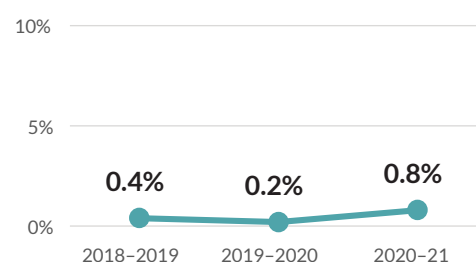
RecruitAbility is the most commonly used affirmative measure.

The use of Affirmative measure—Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander employment increased from 1.2% to 3% between 2019–20 and 2020–21 financial years.

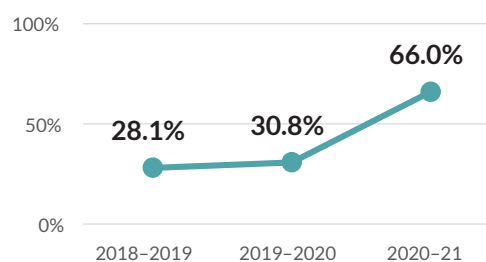
Affirmative Measures: First Nations people



Affirmative Measures: Disability



Affirmative Measures: RecruitAbility



Ongoing work regarding Affirmative measures has found areas that could be improved. A recent APSC survey looked at the issues around Affirmative measures from both a candidate's, HR manager and selection panel's perspective. To gain a wide range of views, multiple distribution methods were used to attract participants (articles in the Diversity & Inclusion newsletter, internal agency distribution by steering committee members, etc.). The survey targeted people with experience in Affirmative Measure recruitment processes, as HR practitioners, candidates, hiring managers, panel members or any related role.

39% of the 107 candidate respondents reported having a negative experience in a previous Affirmative measure—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment recruitment process.

The use of Affirmative measure—Disability employment increased from 0.2% to 0.8% between 2019–20 and 2020–21 financial years.

The use of Affirmative measure—RecruitAbility increased from 30.8% to 66% between 2019–20 and 2020–21 financial years.

Improvements suggested by applicants:

More assistance and information on the evidence required.

More information upfront for candidates to understand what is required of them.

Remove the hiring basis of "has done this task before" to allow for upskilling on-the-job.

Greater transparency i.e. how many roles will be available.

Improvements suggested by panel members:

Remove the need for evidence.

Place targets on departments to use Affirmative measure recruitment.

In-agency support after the recruitment process



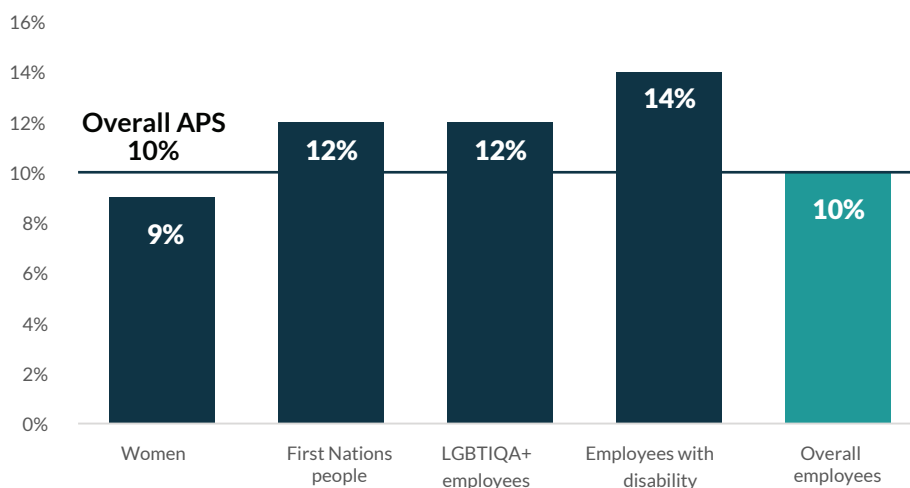
Increase uptake of affirmative recruitment measures by improving employee familiarity and confidence with using these recruitment programs.

Intention to leave

One in ten employees indicated they wanted to leave their current positions as soon as possible. Employees from some diversity groups are more likely to report an intention to leave.

Employees with disability report wanting to leave their agency as soon as possible at a higher rate than any other diversity group. This trend is also reflected in workforce separations recorded in the APS Employee Database, with employees with disability separating from their agency at a much higher rate than employees without disability.

In the financial year 2020-2021, 5.5% of the workforce separated from their role. Both First Nations employees (7.3%) and employees with disability (7.8%) had separated at higher rates than other employees.



The reasons employees from diversity groups report higher intention to leave their agency or increase rates of separation are not well understood. Improving retention of employees from diversity groups will require developing a better understanding of why they are choosing to leave.

Exit interviews are an easy way to ask staff why they have chosen to leave the agency. This will provide potential information on avenues for change that, once made, may increase the likelihood of retention. However, in order to be useful the data needs to be consistently collected and analysed.



Employee representation

2021 Performance against existing targets

	As at June 2021	Target	Strategy
First Nations APS 4–6	3.9%*	5% by 2022	Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24
First Nations EL 1–2	1.5%*	3% by 2024	
First Nations SES	1.4%*	3% by 2024	
Disability	4.1%* 9.3%+	7% by 2025	Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25

Factors that influence employee representation statistics

Recruitment

Representation can be increased by recruiting more people who identify with diversity groups. Provisions such as affirmative measures, identified positions, and RecruitAbility support recruitment of a more diverse workforce.

Workforce fluctuations

Changes in the overall number of employees can increase or decrease proportional representation, even though the number of employees who identify with diversity groups remains the same.

Sharing diversity identification

Employees can choose with who, when and where they share their identification with a diversity group. Changes in the number of employees choosing to share this information in human resource systems affects how proportional representation is measured.

Separations

Representation is decreased when employees leave. Proportional representation is particularly affected when employees from diversity groups leave at a higher rate than other employees.

Barriers reported by agencies[^]

'It can be challenging for small agencies to resource diversity initiatives'.

'There's competition for a limited pool of qualified candidates for specialist roles'.

'It can be difficult to attract candidates from diversity groups'.

'The limits placed on hiring by the ASL cap limit recruitment activities'.

'Location can affect workforce diversity or access to APS diversity initiatives'.

'The targets are ambitious'.

Diversity and inclusion strategies, policies, and action plans are used to drive increases in employee representation.

98% of agencies reported that they would action at least one strategy deliverable for the APS-wide diversity and inclusion strategies[^].

CASE STUDY

Indigenous Employee Value Proposition

Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24

Deliverable: In collaboration with Agency representatives, develop a public sector Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Value Proposition, which aligns to the WOAG (Whole of Australian Government) Employee Value Proposition identified in the APS Review.

Agency with responsibility: Australian Public Service Commission (APSC).

When considering the development of a public sector Indigenous Employee Value Proposition (IEVP) the Inclusion Group APSC, decided that a one-size-fits-all approach was not feasible due to the complexity of the Commonwealth and the diversity of First Nations peoples. The concept of a customisable IEVP tool seemed a more useful idea; assisting recruitment specialists and hiring managers to create compelling campaigns relevant to their agency, targeted for Affirmative measures (AM)—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Human Centred Design principles were applied to the development of the tool concept and the initial consultation phase, which involved detailed conversations with seventeen Commonwealth agencies. We heard that the tool would only be as useful as the content sitting behind it and that the content would need to be robust and tested. Other outcomes of the conversations gave us a wealth of data about the barriers and enablers of AM recruitment activities.

Peak Corporate Solutions was engaged to work with us to develop the content which is to sit 'behind' the tool. Considerations of role location, classification and work type were explored to shape the content. A small project

team was established including an advisor from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), who is our partner agency in the implementation of the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24.

Content has been developed after 44 individual and small-group interviews were conducted across 20 Commonwealth agencies, academics, scholars and non-Government organisations. Also informing this development phase was extensive research involving talent competitors, State Governments, academic publications, non-government organisations and the recruitment documentation of several Commonwealth agencies.

As a result, an Indigenous Employee Value Proposition Tool for Hiring Managers has been developed which contains content templates, themes and suggested wording for use by recruitment teams, along with hints and checklists.

The IEVP Tool has been incorporated as one of the core resources within the APSC's AM Indigenous recruitment project. For access to the Affirmative measures recruitment hub on Govteams, please email diversity@apsc.gov.au

Ultimately we would like to develop the tool into an interactive digital resource to assist in the creation of agency and role-specific EVPs to attract First Nations people to the Commonwealth.

Strengthen employment outcomes

To be fit for purpose for the coming decades, the APS must ensure a diverse and inclusive environment that accepts individuals' differences, embraces their strengths and provides opportunities for all employees to achieve their potential.

Our Public Service, Our Future. Independent Review of the Australian Public Service.

Diversity and inclusion initiatives play an important role in strengthening employment outcomes across the APS. Diversity and inclusion is a powerful enabler of performance, and APS agencies that leverage diversity and inclusion will be better positioned to adapt to future challenges and increase productivity. Improving employment outcomes for employees from diversity groups will play an important role in shaping a more diverse and inclusive APS. This will set us apart from other sectors as an employer of choice, significantly strengthening the APS employee value proposition and contribute to building a world-class public service into the future.

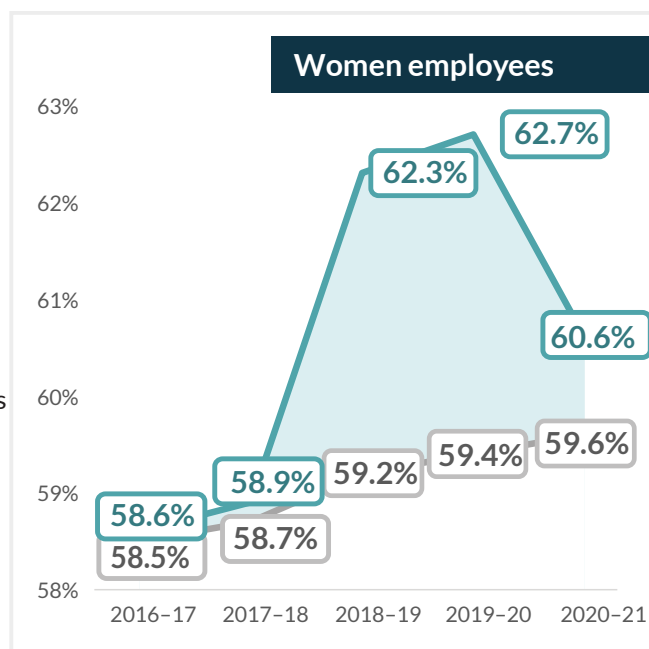
Career pathways

The following three graphs show the difference between **proportion of all promotions** and **proportion of overall workforce by financial year**.

Internal promotions are an important career pathway in the APS. There has been a general upwards trend in the proportion of promotions of employees in diversity groups over the past five years.

Women were over-represented in 2018–19 and 2019–20, but returned to equivalence in 2020–21.

The “level to” of promotions of women is consistent with those of all APS employees.





The retention and development of First Nations employees will be a critical part of developing the talent pipeline for senior levels.

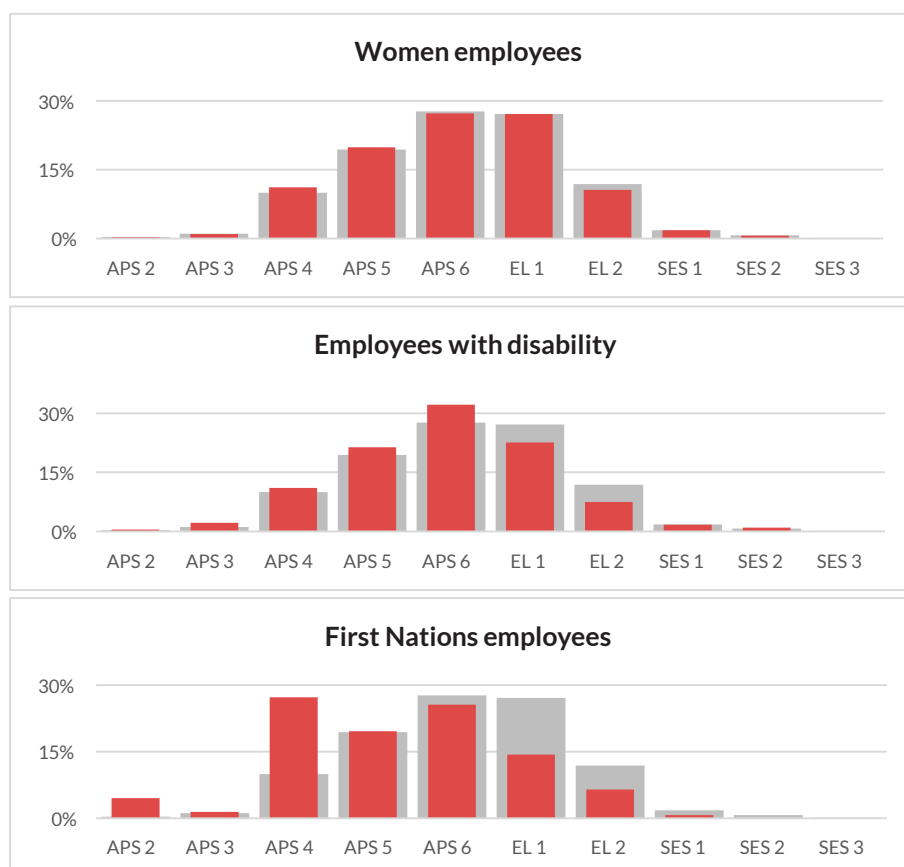
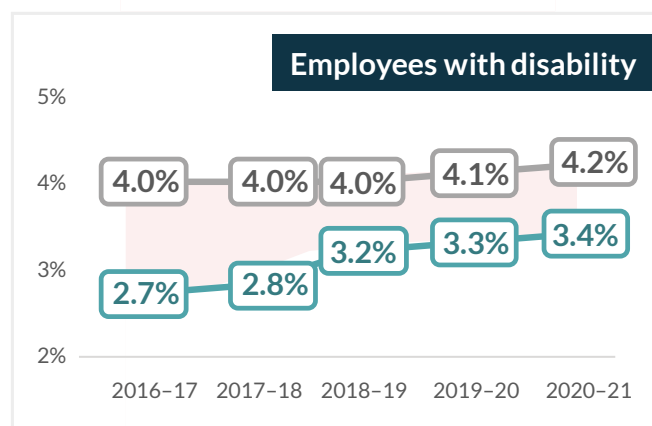
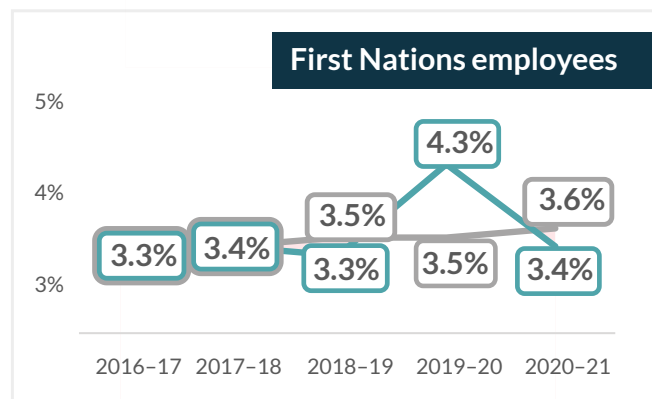
Promotion of **First Nations employees** is generally in line with their workforce representation, but dipped in 2018–19 and spiked in 2019–20.

Employees with disability are consistently under-represented, although the gap has narrowed since 2016–17.

The “level to” of promotions of employees with disability is generally consistent with overall promotions, but they were slightly under-represented at more senior levels.

The “level to” of promotions of First Nations employees is not consistent with overall promotions. Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander employees promotions are higher at lower levels and significantly under-represented at EL1 and above.

The three graphs below show: Promotions to level of **employees from diversity groups** compared with **overall promotions in the 2020–21 financial year**.



Identify opportunities to better support First Nations employees to progress to higher levels. This could be done through dedicated mentoring programs, development of career pathways, or targeted leadership training opportunities. Consider opportunities to partner with other agencies.

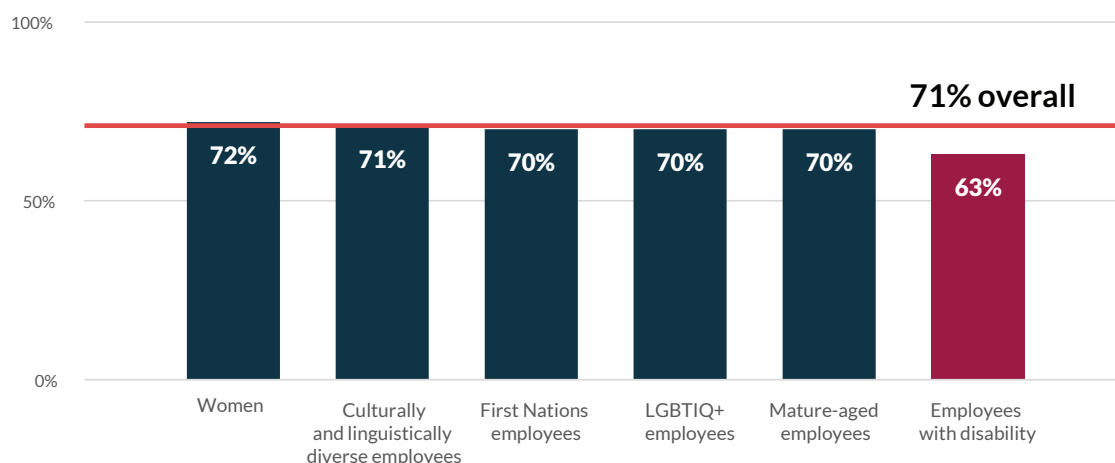
Improving the cultural capability of supervisors and recruitment panels and assessors will help to ensure equitable outcomes in recruitment processes.



84% of all **First Nations** employees are employed at APS classification levels compared to 70% of the overall workforce. When promotion opportunities occur, there are simply not as many First Nations staff at higher levels to compete for these higher level positions. Additionally, many First Nations employees work in regional or remote locations where higher classification roles are not available; or in job families and roles with limited career pathways to senior positions. Unless priority or focused action is taken for career progression and recruiting First Nations people into leadership positions, it will be difficult for agencies to increase representation at senior levels.

Access to learning and development

When asked about their access to learning and development, most employees (71%) agreed they have access to formal and informal learning and development opportunities. This was consistent across most diversity areas, however, employees with disability were less likely to say they had access.



Supporting employees to access learning and development opportunities is a way for agencies to engage their workforce, increase employee knowledge and improve retention rates.



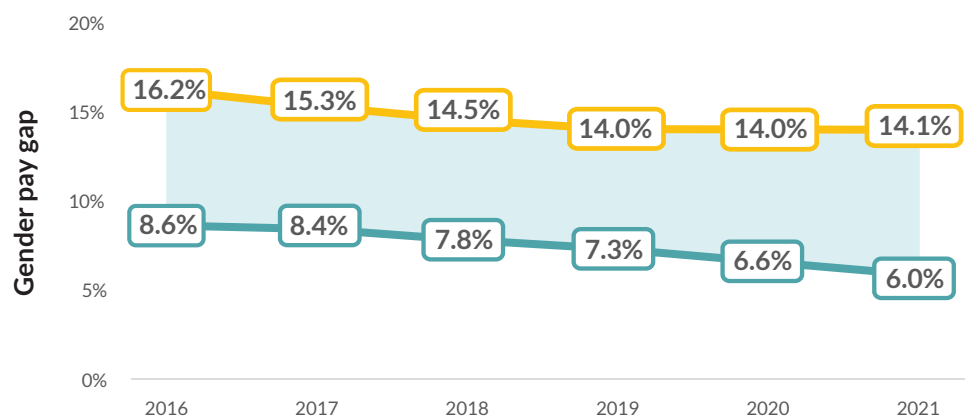
Ensure employees with disability have access to learning and development opportunities by making the activities accessible. For example, consider whether online courses can be read by an e-reader, or how accessible venues are for people with different mobility considerations.

Gender pay gap

The average gender pay gap in the APS has continued to trend down over the last six years, which is likely to have been driven by the increasing representation of women at higher classification levels.

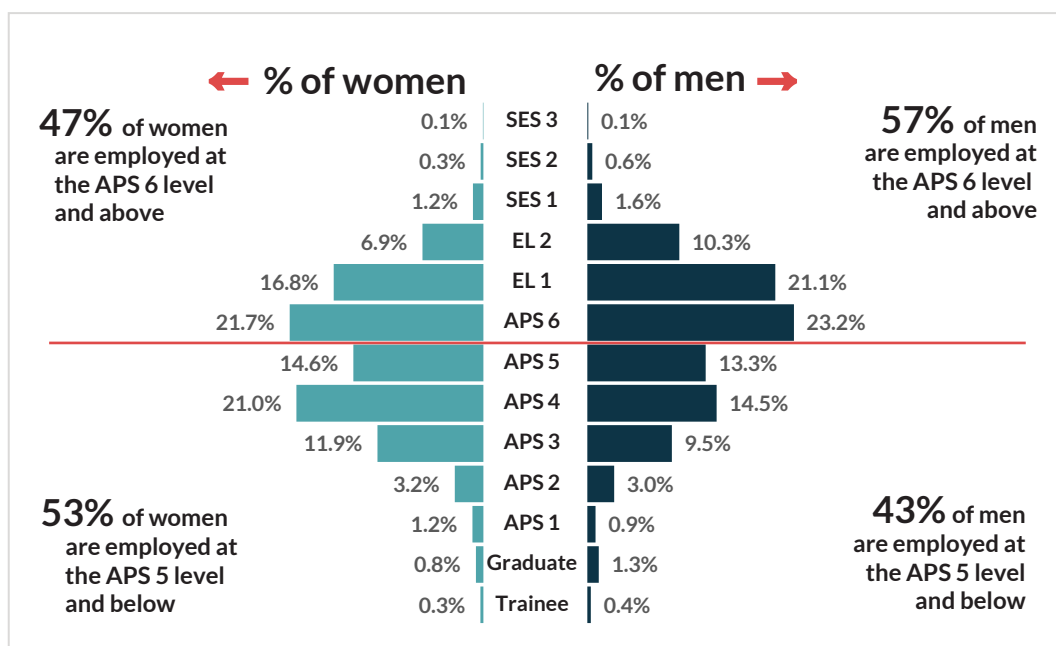
In 2021, the APS average gender pay gap was 6.0%. The APS has one of the lowest gender pay gaps in Australia, significantly lower than the national gender pay gap of 14.1% in 2021 reported by the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency⁸.

Over the last five years, the **APS gender pay gap** has consistently been around 7 percentage points lower than the national gender pay gap in 2021, this gap between the APS and the national level increased to 8.1%.



The majority of women employed in the APS are employed at the APS 5 classification or below; while the majority of men are employed at the APS 6 level and above. Overall, the representational differences between the classification levels are not significant and may only have a small influence on the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap calculation methodology takes into account the difference in part-time and full-time work.

Classification distribution of employees by gender:

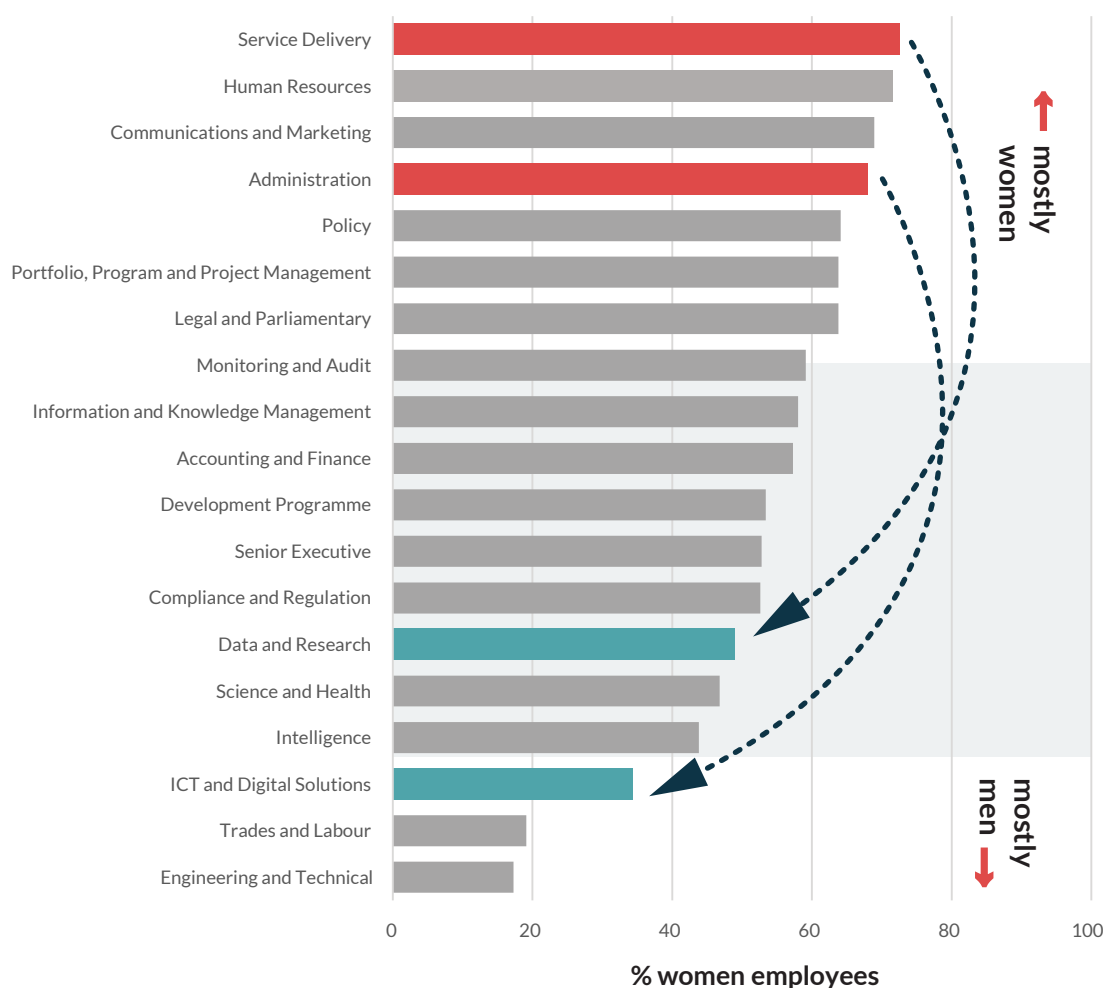


Workforce planning

Diversity and inclusion should be a focus area for an agency's workforce plan considering it is a key step to help agencies to more effectively drive workforce transformation and improve business outcomes. Workforce planning is an essential mechanism to manage the increasingly multifaceted and complex business of public administration in an uncertain world, by ensuring the workforce needed to deliver is being considered and actively planned for by public sector entities.

Strategic workforce planning can help agencies identify and address issues that will disproportionately affect employees from diversity groups. The APS Centre of Excellence for Workforce Planning predicts that, over the next 10-15 years, automation will decrease the number of administration and service delivery roles required in the APS. This will have a disproportionate impact on women, First Nations employees, and employees with disability, who are over-represented in these job families.

Strategic workforce planning is required to create transition pathways to support employees in occupations what will be most **impacted by automation** to **reskill and transition into roles in high-growth occupations with skills shortages**.





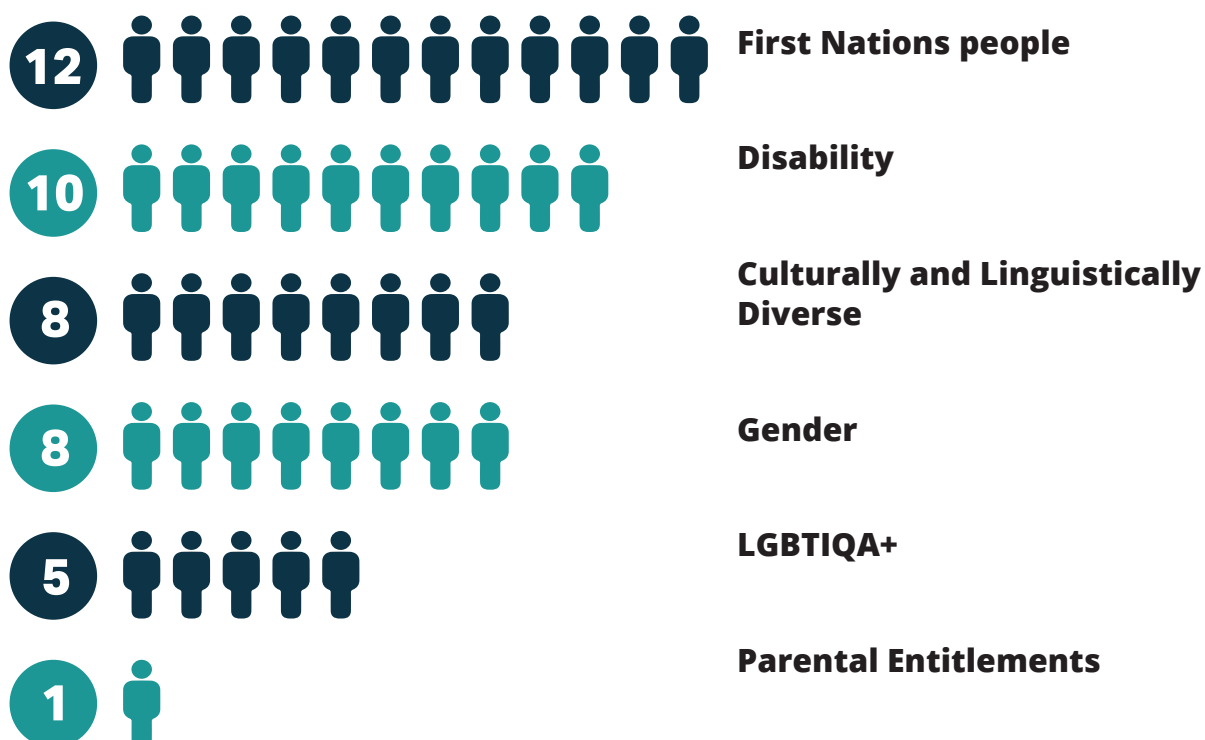
Prioritise increased representation of women at senior leadership levels and explore greater gender diversity in specific occupations and job families.



A strategic workforce planning approach will be required to transition APS staff working in roles projected to decline into other high demand areas.

In 2021 the APS Centre of Excellence for Workforce Planning conducted a review of agency workforce plans collected through the annual agency survey. 28 workforce plans were submitted (spanning 2016 to 2023+) and analysed to identify the extent to which agencies recognise and reference diversity and inclusion when managing their workforce.

89% of the submitted workforce plans identified implementation of diversity and inclusion actions. The diversity cohorts considered in the plans were:



CASE STUDY

Job Sharing Susan Fitzgerald and Megan Leahy, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)

Our SES Band 1 job share arrangement has offered us significant flexibility and an ability to (mostly) 'switch off' on our non-work days.

In late 2020, when we were each returning to work from extended maternity and carers leave, we presented a job-sharing proposal to our senior SES. While the arrangement came about organically and was initiated by us, it was whole-heartedly supported by PM&C, where the Flexible Work Policy has a starting position of 'how can we make this work?' on many different kinds of flexible work arrangements. Our direct bosses, in particular, have really gone in to bat for us. The combination of corporate and local support has been invaluable.

Key to our day to day success has been putting the right systems in place, flexibility, and good communication.

Early on, we met with a coach to establish processes and unpack our personal motivations and work styles. We do a strong handover, know which decisions we need to consult each other on, and have regular review points.

Our working styles are different, but complementary—staff have commented on how the different perspectives and experiences we both bring to the role means we approach an issue from all sides and augment one another's contributions. Having a very similar work ethic has been so important to building mutual trust and ensuring the experience is seamless for our stakeholders and staff.

We put a lot of effort into outwards communication, so our Branch, colleagues and Band 2 know who to go to on what days. Our Executive and the Prime Minister's Office can contact either of us on any day and know their requests will be actioned.

The greatest challenge is the time it takes to catch up on the days we're not in the office and to do handover. We each work 3 days a week, with an overlap day. Because of the reactive and fast moving nature of PM&C, we do the same job on different days, rather than each of us leading separate pieces of work. This means we are both across much more than 3 days a week worth of content.



Our job share has meant we can spend more uninterrupted time with our families without losing momentum in our careers.

And PM&C gets 2 sets of skills, experience and perspectives in one role, which we think is a pretty good deal!

Confident and capable leaders

'Inclusive leadership refers to the capabilities (i.e. mindset, knowledge, skills and behaviours) which ensure that a diversity of employee perspectives shape and improve an organisation's strategy, work, systems, values and norms for success'. Diversity Council Australia

Inclusive leadership will be integral to achieving diversity and inclusion outcomes across the APS. Confident and capable leaders are required to drive the adoption of the inclusive practices and attitudes needed to support a diverse APS workforce.

A leader who is confident and capable in the diversity and inclusion space, will unconsciously lead by example. If employees feel safe in the workplace, they are more likely to show their 'authentic self', be happier and more productive.

Having easily accessible diversity and inclusion resources or training programs for current and future leaders to access will assist in building individual confidence and capability.

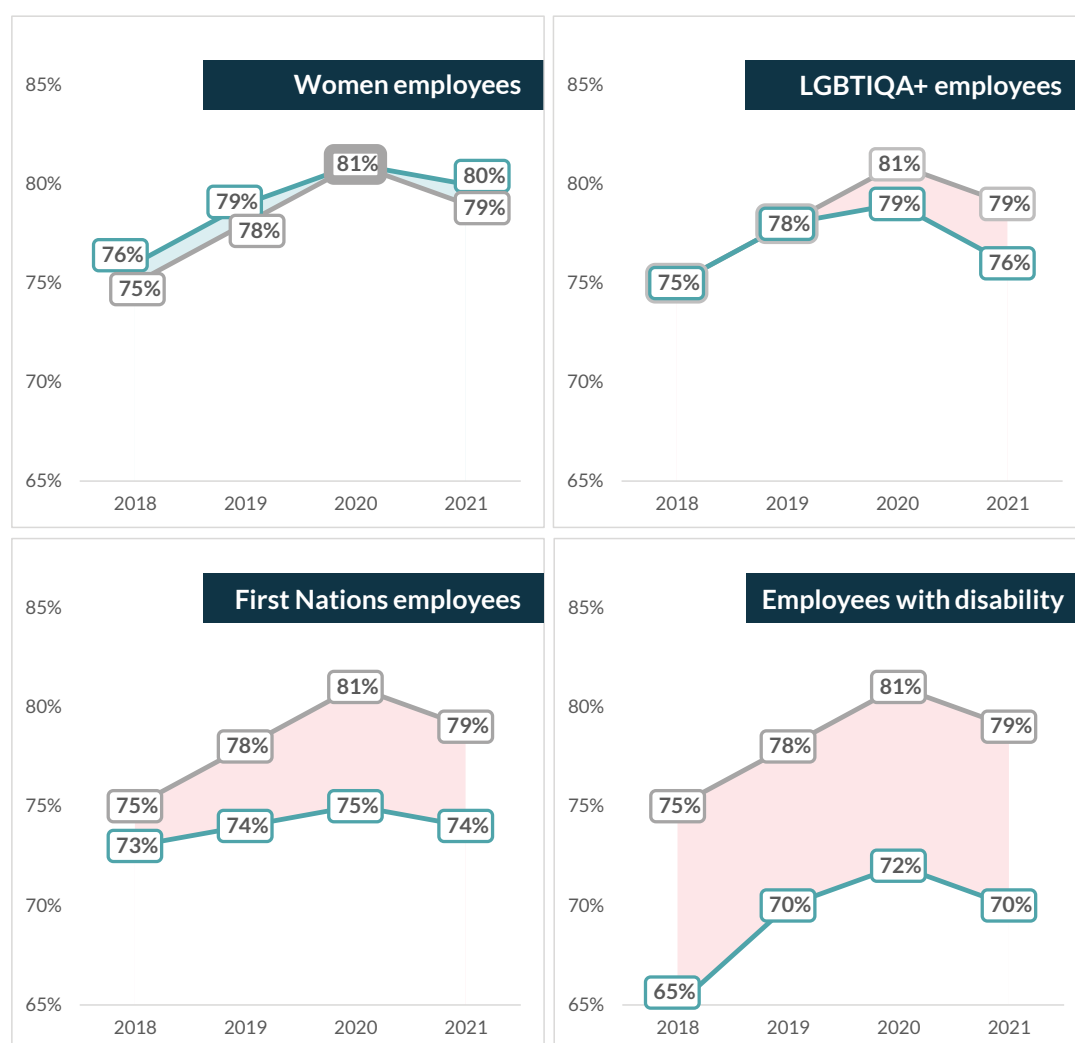


Perceptions of inclusive leadership

Most APS employees agree that their agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workforce culture (79% in 2021). The proportion of employees who agreed had been trending up since the question was introduced in the 2018 APS Employee census, but has slightly dipped in 2021. The potential for improvement is present in these results.

With the exception of women, **employees who identify with diversity groups** are generally less likely to agree their agency supports an inclusive workplace culture than employees overall are.

Percentage of employees that agree or strongly agree that their agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture.

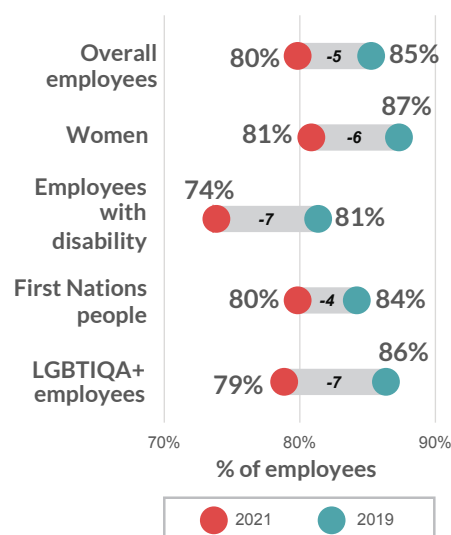


Most employees (80%) also agree that their immediate supervisor actively supports people from diverse backgrounds. The proportion of employees who agree with this statement has also dropped between 2019 and 2021, trending consistently down across diversity groups and the APS as a whole.

The downward trend in employee perception of inclusive leadership may be related to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership has changed significantly since 2020, with leaders having to manage remote teams, shifting priorities and new measures of success during the pandemic. Inclusive leadership is important during this transition to enable all employees to work at their best.

Employees with disability have been consistently less likely to agree that their agency supports and actively promotes and inclusive workforce culture or that their immediate supervisor actively supports people from diverse backgrounds.

Percentage of employees that agree or strongly agree that their immediate supervisor actively supports people from a diverse background.



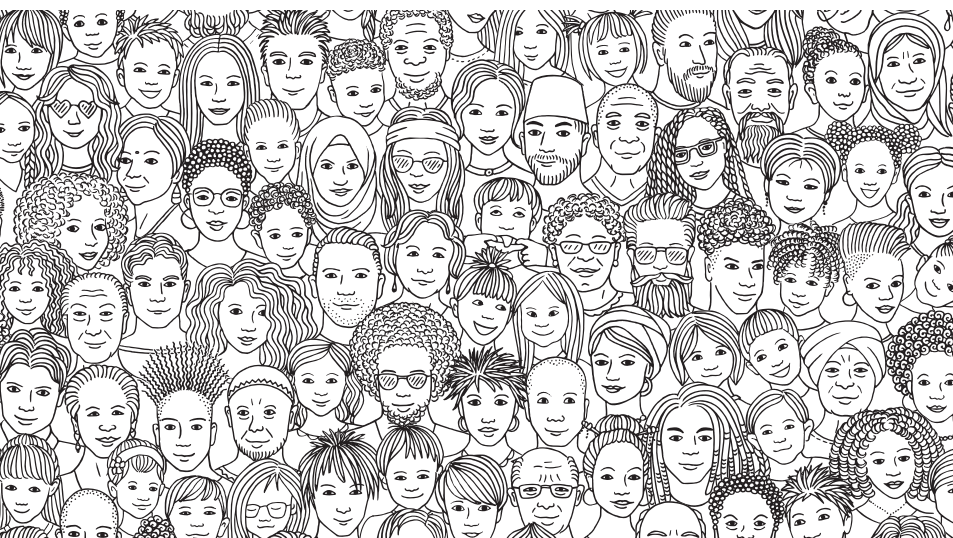
Diverse senior leadership

Improving representation of diversity groups at senior levels in the APS will help us to shape an APS workforce where diversity of thought, perspectives and skills are valued and employees feel a sense of belonging and engagement with their work. The representation of diversity groups in senior leadership has been slowly but steadily growing.



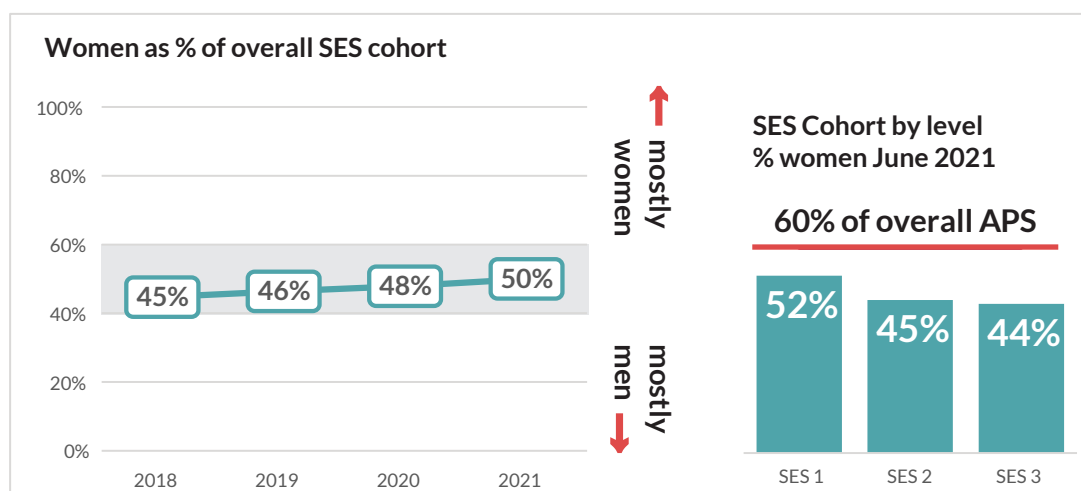
Conduct research to improve the understanding of the experiences of employees with disability.

With remote and flexible working becoming more commonplace across the APS, there are higher expectations on leaders to be able to effectively manage diverse and flexible teams. These skills cannot be built in isolation from workplace policies, practices or position.



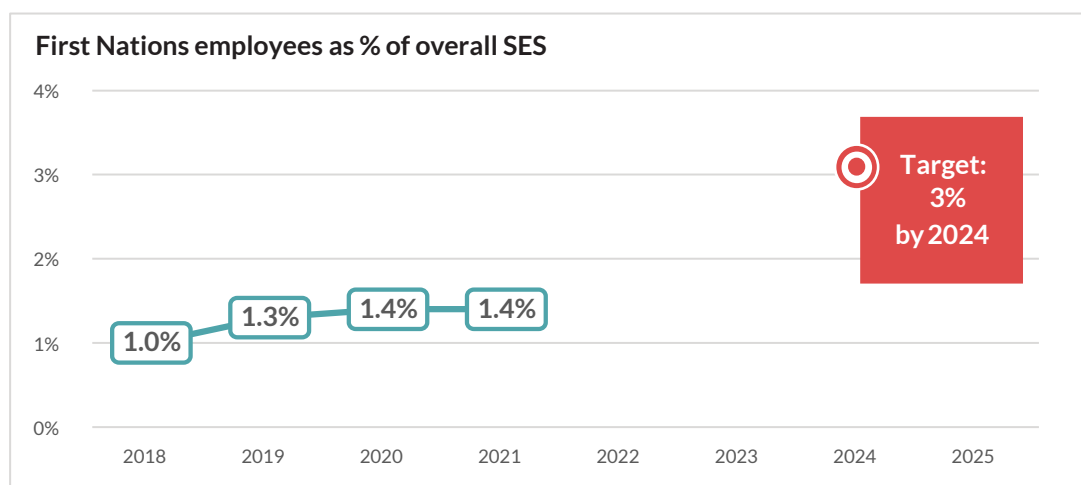
Women

In June 2021, women made up half of the SES cohort for the first time. The gap between the overall representation of women in the APS and their representation at the SES level has been steadily narrowing. Although women reached gender parity (50%) in the overall SES cohort in 2021, this has not been achieved at the SES 2 and SES 3 levels.



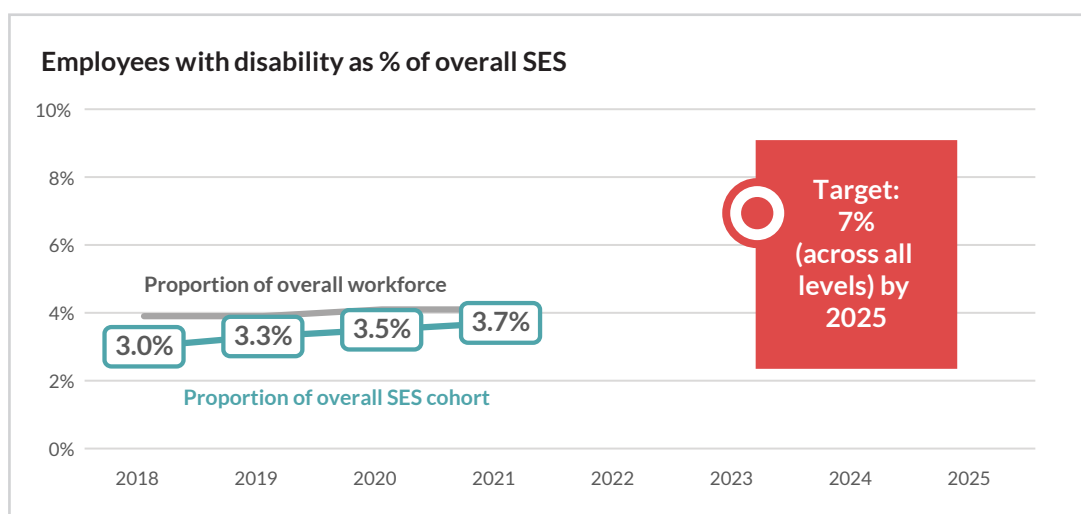
First Nations employees

The APS is not on track to achieve the target of 3% representation of First Nations employees at the SES levels by 2024. Although the representation of First Nations employees in senior leadership has grown in recent years, the rate of growth remains low. The APS needs to more than double the representation of First Nations SES employees in order to achieve the target of 3% representation at the SES levels by 2024.



Employees with Disability

Representation of employees with disability in the SES cohort lags behind overall representation in the APS, although the gap has approximately halved since 2018. The *Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25* sets an employment target for people with disability in the APS of 7% by 2025. Although this is a whole of APS target and there are not specific targets for SES levels, it's notable that the APS would need to nearly double the proportion of employees with disability in senior leadership to reach this level of representation, as reflected in the APSED data.



Agency actions

In the 2021 Agency survey, agencies were asked what they had done to improve diversity in leadership roles. When asked what they had done in the last 12 months to improve diversity in leadership roles, agencies provided a wide range of answers.

External recruitment	Internal development
Affirmative Measures	Diversity Champions
RecruitAbility	Training leaders in diversity issues (CALD, cultural capability)
Diverse selection panel	Training those from diversity groups in leadership skills
Diversity statements with ads encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to apply	
Train selection panel in unconscious bias/cultural capability	

'Advertised all leadership roles as flexible and/or part-time'

'Conversations with People Leaders in relation to improving diversity in leadership roles occurs as part of the annual workforce planning process and securing commitment for priority to a diverse and inclusive workforce.'

'Providing training and development opportunities to build leadership capabilities in soft skills (including diversity re' and mentoring).'



CASE STUDY



The role of a diversity champion, Rebecca Lee Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

‘Some of the ways I have been treated in the past have impacted me deeply and has meant I have hidden my disability for more than 10 years. As I have matured, I have realised the importance of being open and modelling life with a disability because if people can’t see it, how do they know what’s possible.’

I was diagnosed with brain cancer at 30, the resulting surgery and treatment left me with what is called an acquired brain injury. This ‘invisible disability’, as they can be known, manifests itself through Aphasia, peripheral neuropathy, epilepsy, and Tourette’s syndrome. As you can imagine (and Google), this affects my speech and my ability to find the right word. I can get numbness, weakness, and pain with the nerves in my feet and hands. I also live with the possibility of a seizure every day, and I have tics through my hands, arms, neck, and head that I can hide, but it is exhausting and usually only a delaying tactic.

As Chief Information Officer at the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, I manage these as best I can to perform in my role and for my division of 400+ staff. I nominated to be a Disability and Inclusion Champion in the department as I wanted to set an example as a leader in the department for others to follow or be inspired by. It’s not enough to tell someone that they belong, we must create an environment where that person can thrive and achieve because of their unique life experience and perspective.

To create that supportive environment I have supported the following initiatives within my sphere of influence:

- The inaugural IT Accessibility Roadmap which has already seen a new focus on Accessibility across all our many initiatives.

- Prioritised Disability Awareness training for all IT employees.
- Developing and publishing guides on Digital Accessibility for all staff to utilise as they create content and documents.
- Facilitating a 10+10 forum for the Secretary and Executives to hear first-hand from employees with disability.

At the beginning of 2020, I shared my story as someone with a disability with the whole department (4000+ staff) at the launch of the department’s Inclusion Strategy – this is where the quote at the top is from. What I didn’t know at the time, but do now, is that by no longer hiding my disability I have a freedom that I didn’t think would be possible. I no longer have to use techniques to cover up my deficits and instead just openly say that I am struggling today. More importantly it has changed me as a leader. I am a better leader. I have more compassion and I am more empathetic. I seek diversity and inclusion everywhere I am. This supports us breaking the bias.

I know I am not alone in the silent struggle that so many are enduring with seen and unseen disabilities. The pandemic has highlighted and inflamed this struggle, and if I am not willing to share my story, how can I expect others to feel safe to do so. By sharing my own story, I hope to continue to foster a safer environment for staff to share their lived experiences, ask for the support that they need, and eventually thrive in an environment that is aware of their value. This all starts with a culture of support, openness, compassion and creating a society that makes this journey easier for the next generation to follow in our footsteps.

CASE STUDY

Building Mental Health Capability

In its inaugural year the APS Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Unit (the Unit) has achieved significant influence in relation to its prime aims of delivering whole-of-APS approaches to building workforce mental health and suicide prevention capability and promoting evidence-based mental health and wellbeing initiatives across the service.

The APS Mental Health Capability Framework

One of the Unit's primary functions is to support APS agencies to align their practice with the APS Mental Health Capability Framework (the framework). The framework is a systems-based approach to building mental health capability, designed specifically for the APS operating context. It was endorsed by the Secretaries Board in August 2021. The framework provides APS agencies with the overarching architecture to build their mental health capability, while being flexible and adaptable to agency-specific needs. The framework is underpinned by six evidence-informed domains.

Domain 1: Prevent Harm

Domain 2: Promote Mental Health

Domain 3: Support Recovery Pathways

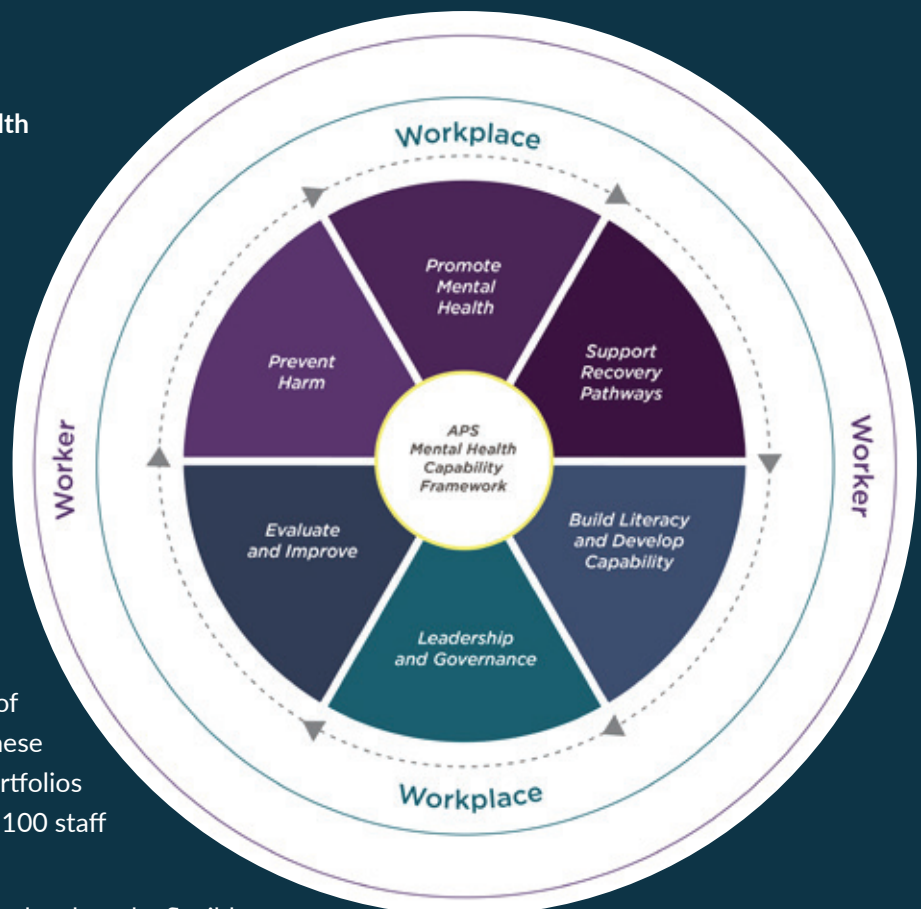
Domain 4: Build Literacy and Develop Capability

Domain 5: Leadership and Governance

Domain 6: Evaluate and Improve

The Unit is engaged with over 30 agencies in relation to the framework, with more than 20 agencies actively in the process of implementing the framework. These agencies represent a range of portfolios and vary in size from fewer than 100 staff to over 10,000 staff.

To support agencies, the Unit has developed a flexible six-phase implementation approach which includes supporting agencies to visually articulate their own mental health and wellbeing systems and to evaluate these against the best practice model for the APS, represented by the framework.



Inclusive workplaces



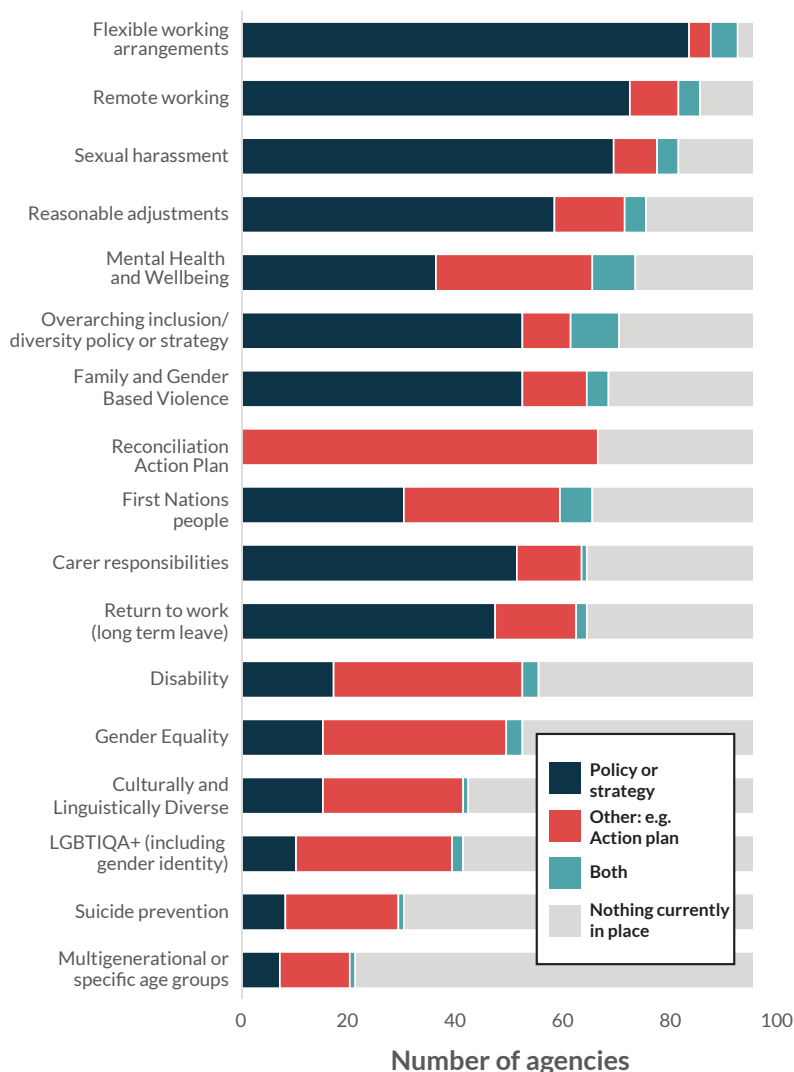
The APS is striving to foster an APS-wide culture which integrates diversity and inclusion into how we work, and values the unique contributions and needs of every employee. Inclusive workplace culture is deeply-rooted in respect for all people and their human rights regardless of gender, age, heritage and cultural background, skills, experience, work styles and ideas.

Over 70% of employees from every measured diversity group agreed that their agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture. This result still gives more room for improvement that agencies can strive for in the future. As discussed in Perceptions of inclusive leadership, agencies have been on an upwards trend since 2018 with the exception of 2021.

Planning for inclusion

Strengthening inclusive workplaces requires the right systems to be in place to provide support, outline acceptable behaviours and strategically plan how to improve workplace diversity and inclusion outcomes.

In the 2021 Agency survey, agencies were asked which policies, strategies, or action plans were in place within their agency. For issues that have been an APS focus for a long time (such as Reconciliation action plans, or flexible working arrangements), most agencies have policies or strategies in place that focus on these areas. For newer focus areas, such as suicide prevention, not as many agencies have plans or policies in place.



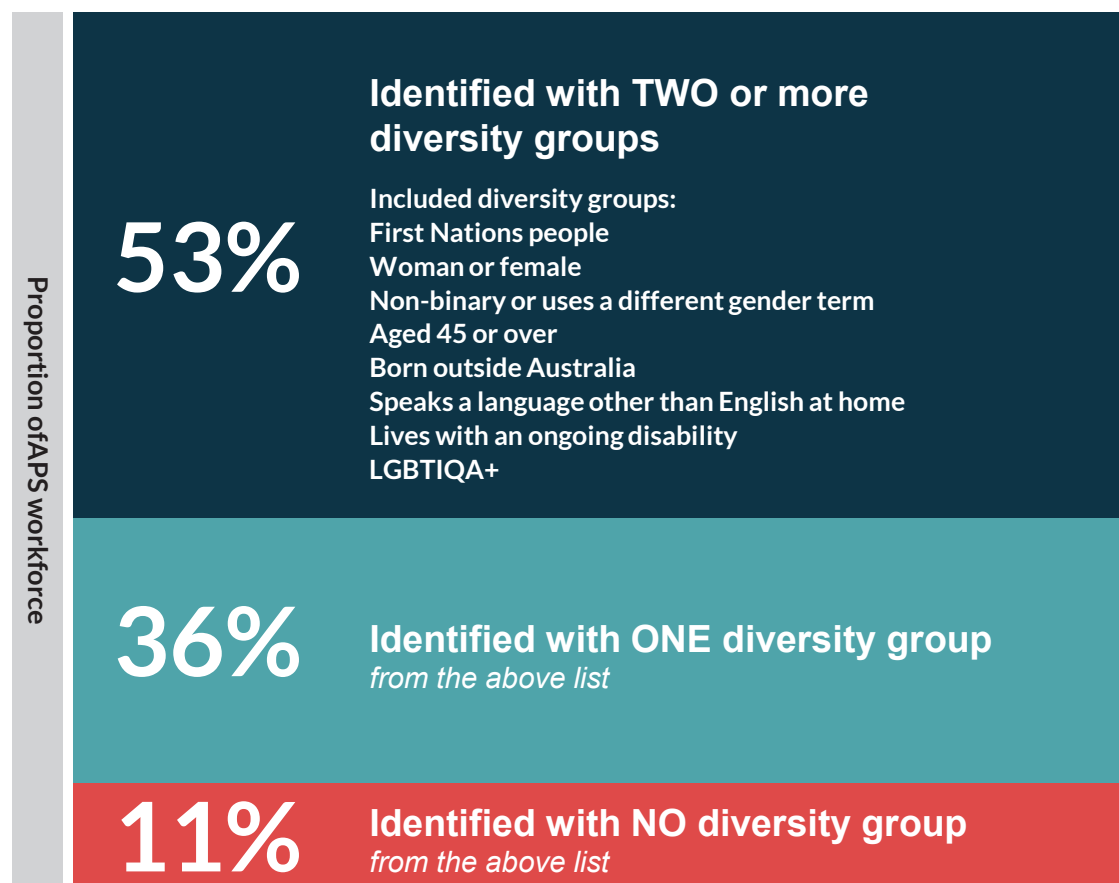
Consideration of intersectionality

'The intersectional approach, however, recognises that there are particular consequences when two or more forms of discrimination interact. Conceptualising discrimination on the basis of a single attribute in isolation hinders our ability to respond effectively.'

Australian Human Rights Commission

In building an inclusive culture, consideration must be given to multiple identity dimensions of APS employees, such as First Nations heritage, age, cultural and linguistic background, disability, sexuality and gender. Acknowledging the complex layers of identity we all bring to the workplace will provide a stronger foundation for reducing the impact of compounding disadvantage. This concept is referred to as intersectionality.

A snapshot of intersectionality in the APS as shown in the 2021 APS Employee Census:



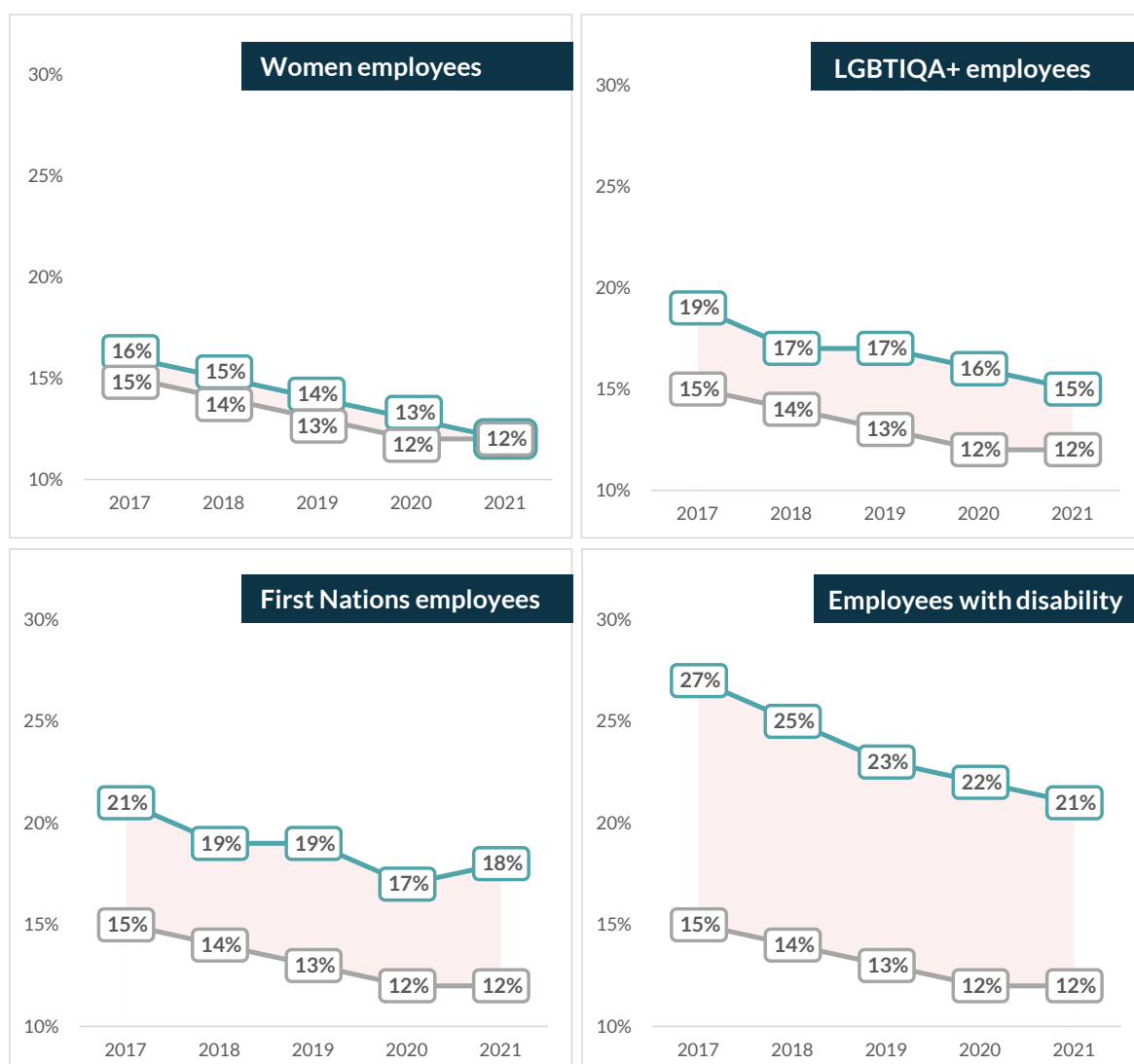
Bullying and Harassment in the workplace

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviours in the workplace, causing harm to individuals and undermining inclusive culture.

While the reported rates of bullying and harassment in the APS Employee Census have been trending down over the last five years, more than 1 in 10 respondents are still reporting experiences of perceived bullying and/or harassment in the preceding 12 months. While this downwards trend is also consistent across diversity groups, employees with disability remain more likely to report experiencing perceived bullying and/or harassment. Employees with disability consistently report higher rates of bullying and/or harassment, and in 2021 the reported rate was 9 percentage points higher than employees overall.

The APS is reporting lower rates than Australian State and Territory Governments where comparison data is available (range 13.9% - 28%).

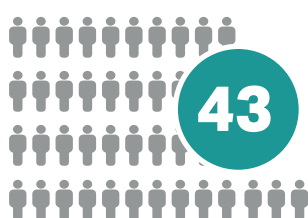
59% of respondents that had experienced perceived bullying or harassment in the last 12 months did not report the behaviour or have it reported by someone else. This figure was higher for men (64%) than women (56%). Of the people who did not report the behaviour, more than half identified that this was because they did not think any action would be taken.



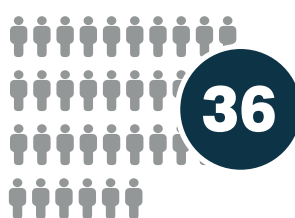
Employee Networks

Employee networks are a way for agencies to bring people with similar experiences together. Having an employee network provides a way for agencies to engage with employees on various issues and is a visible mechanism to show that a particular group is important and valued in the organisation. Diversity networks are an effective way for agencies to engage with employees who identify with particular diversity groups. Agencies can gain insight into lived experience, emerging issues, gain feedback on proposed policies/strategies and action plans, and interact in a partnership on issues that affect those employees. 84% of agencies reported that they have at least one diversity network within their agency. Another 5% who do not have internal networks indicated that their staff are members of the diversity networks within their portfolio department.

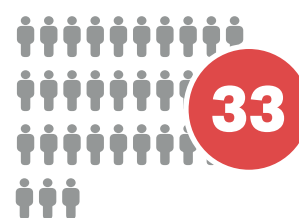
Number of agencies reporting an employee network for specific area.



First Nations people



LGBTIQ+



Gender



Employees
with Disability



Cultural and
Linguistically
diverse



Overarching D&I
network

Flexible Work in the APS

The benefits of working flexibly include adapting work to individual needs. It allows employees to shape their way of working to suit them. Flexible working is a powerful tool to enable inclusion to flourish. It can provide benefit to a broad group of people, including people who care for children, people with a disability, people transitioning to retirement or just those seeking a personal work-life balance. For this reason, flexible work features in all three of the current diversity strategies.

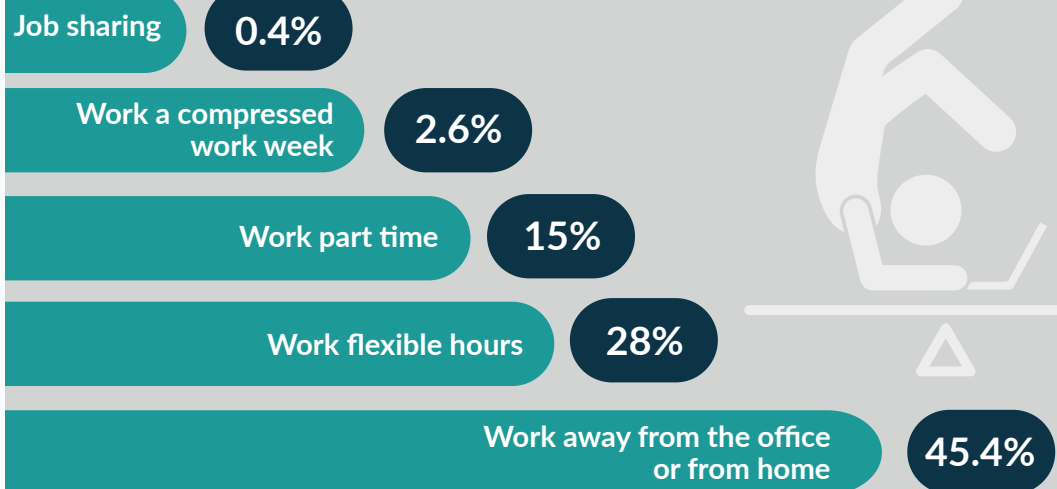


Build inter-agency connections to support employees in agencies without diversity networks to access the networks of other agencies.

Flexible work in the APS

What does flexible work look like in the APS?

Two thirds of the APS workforce reported accessing flexible working arrangements in the 2021 APS Census



Why do people seek flexible working arrangements?

There are many reasons employees may request flexibility in where, when, or how they work:



Benefits to the APS

Flexible ways of working delivers broader organisational benefits:



Challenges

64% of agencies reporting facing some barriers in providing access to flexible working arrangements. The top three barriers were:



11.5% of APS employees consider a lack of support for flexible work practices to be a great or very great barrier to their ability to perform at their best.

9.7% of APS employees consider increased flexible work practices to be the most important initiative they would like to see in their working environment.

Women are **4 x more likely** to work part-time than men. 20% of women work part-time compared to 5% of men.

CASE STUDY

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Following Machinery of Government changes in early 2020, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) inherited accreditation as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA). With this accreditation soon to expire, the new department recognised our people as critical elements of our purpose, and was committed from the outset to building an inclusive workplace culture.

One of the ways in which this commitment was supported was through seeking re-accreditation as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace. In a department in which women are more than 60 percent of employees, seeking re-accreditation was an easily achievable way to start building an inclusive workplace culture early on while assisting employees to balance their work and personal commitments.

By seeking re-accreditation and creating a supportive environment for breastfeeding employees, we ensured the workplace did not represent a barrier to breastfeeding. On a practical level, this has meant employees are provided private and comfortable facilities to breastfeed or express, time during the working day that is considered on duty to breastfeed or express, and comprehensive and inclusive policies and procedures providing guidance to employees, managers and colleagues.

A Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace does not just benefit breastfeeding employees—it builds upon and embeds DESE's inclusive workplace culture. By supporting employees to successfully combine breastfeeding and paid work, we broaden the pool of potential talent, strengthen our reputation as a family-friendly employer, improve retention and support earlier return to work. This allows DESE to reflect the community we serve and support all employees to be their best.



There have, however, been some challenges along the way. As a multi-site department, DESE has sought to ensure employees in regional and shared locations are able to access the benefits of accreditation. While inclusive policies and procedures support all employees regardless of their location, ensuring access to facilities that meet the accreditation standard can be challenging. With eight accredited breastfeeding facilities outside of Canberra, DESE's ongoing journey as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace has relied upon an informal network of employees across locations to ensure our facilities are welcoming and comfortable.

Recognising the crucial role that colleagues play in providing a supportive workplace for breastfeeding employees, central to DESE's continued Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace accreditation has been the collaborative relationship between HR and Internal Communications. This collaboration has allowed the roll out of wide-reaching, regular awareness campaigns across a variety of channels to highlight to all employees the benefits and support offered as part of being a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace. DESE has been reaccruited for the next two years and now meets best practice for current standards. This means DESE is now one of the ABA's most dedicated accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces.

CASE STUDY

Auslan Interpreters with security clearance

Security cleared Auslan interpreters required in the workplace

The Department of Home Affairs, in conjunction with other agencies, have commenced workshops regarding the need for a panel of Auslan service providers who hold relevant Australian Government Security Vetting Agency (AGSVA) security clearances. This initiative has been escalated to the APSC as a high priority inclusion project and, with support from the APSC, we hope to see this initiative implemented and being utilised by staff across the APS in the near future.

Annabel Bishop, from the Australian Border Force (ABF), who is profoundly deaf since birth, has outlined how this panel would positively impact her experiences in the workplace. Currently, access to interpreters with the necessary security clearances is limiting, and impacts Annabel's ability to fully participate in ABF workplace forums, including team meetings and training. Annabel works in an operational role within the ABF, which sees her regularly accessing information that is subject to security clearance. This proves difficult for Annabel to engage in meetings with clients and colleagues, when she is unable to access interpreters who are suitably cleared to provide the services required.

The Department of Home Affairs recognises the importance of addressing this issue, and is suggesting a whole-of-government approach to creating a procurement panel for providers who have Auslan interpreters and live transcribing services with the relevant AGSVA security clearances. This will ensure that staff with accessibility requirements, like Annabel Bishop, can participate fully in the workplace without any barriers.

* Auslan = Australian Sign Language



Next steps/ Conclusion

The APS is striving to be a more diverse public service, with employees from a multiplicity of backgrounds and identities, better reflecting and representing the community we serve. The APS is striving to be a more inclusive public service, where all employees feel valued, respected, are able to contribute their perspectives; and have equality of access to opportunities and resources within the workplace.

Increasing diversity and inclusion in the APS is about much more than meeting employee representation targets. Striving towards a more diverse and inclusive APS is about understanding and valuing the experiences of APS employees. We must recognise and acknowledge the discrepancies that exist in the APS for employees who identify with different diversity groups, and set actions in place to address these issues.

The APSC sets the strategic direction for diversity and inclusion across the APS, and provides subject matter expertise and guidance to support agencies to prioritise and implement actions to increase their diversity and inclusivity. We also undertake targeted diversity and inclusion projects, working to build diversity and inclusion capability and embed inclusive practice across the APS. The APSC is responsible for collecting diversity and inclusion data, and monitoring and reporting on APS diversity and inclusion progress.

This inaugural Diversity and Inclusion report draws together qualitative and quantitative perspectives on APS diversity and inclusion, to support HR and workforce planning practitioners, those working in the diversity and inclusion space and those who are interested in Diversity and Inclusion issues to understand the current state of diversity and inclusion in the APS. Future diversity and inclusion reports will continue to tell the story of change, as the APS works towards the vision of an inclusive and safe Australian Public Service that understands and reflects the diversity of the Australian community it serves.

Resources

APS Strategies

APS Workforce Strategy 2025

Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020-2024

Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25

Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026

Other APSC resources

State of the Service Report 2020-2021

Australian Public Service Remuneration report 2020 | Australian Public Service Commission (apsc.gov.au)

External resources

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Australian Human Rights Commission

Productivity Commission Research page

Reconciliation Australia

Closing the Gap

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

Diversity & inclusion Newsletter

The newsletter is an opportunity for you to share good news stories, showcase your work and seek support. If you would like to contribute an article, please send through to diversity@apsc.gov.au by the 15th of every month.

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- 11 Information obtained from 2021 Agency Survey
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- 13 Figures gathered from publicly available State and Territory public service reports.

