



Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

Employees with disability in the Australian Public Service

Understanding our workforce

People Insights Branch
Research Note 11-23



Key findings

- The proportion of employees with disability in the APS has increased to 5.1%.
- Employees with disability tended to be similar ages to employees without disability.
- Employees with disability most commonly worked between the APS 3 and APS 5 classification levels and worked in all job types across the APS.
- Employees with disability reported lower rates of:
 - Satisfaction with health and wellbeing supports
 - Perceived workplace respect, inclusion, and equal opportunity
- Perceptions of discrimination, harassment and bullying were higher for employees with disability than those without disability.

The proportion of APS employees with disability increased in 2023

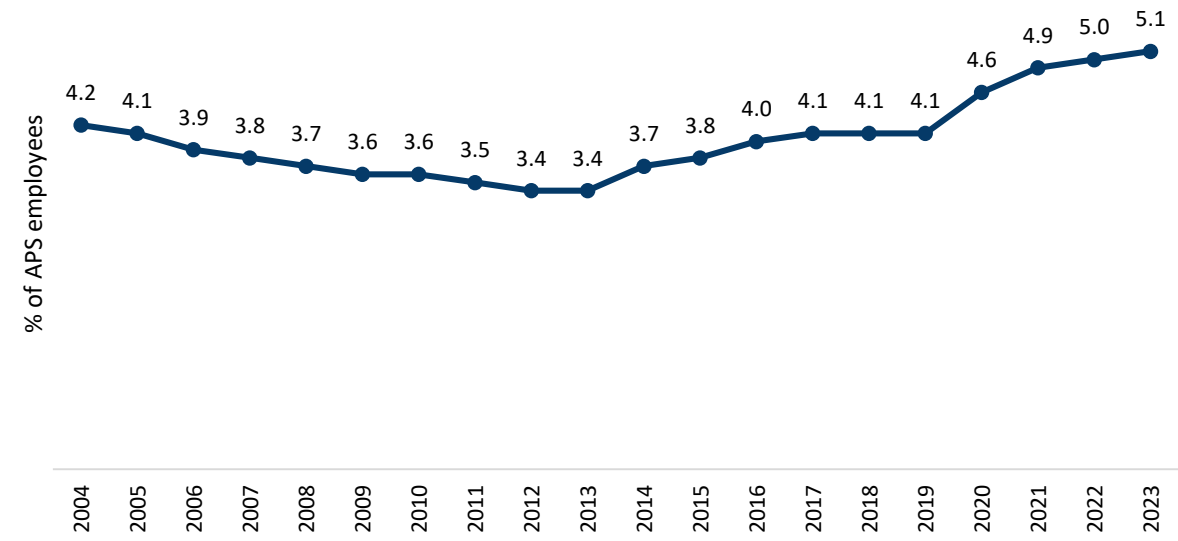
The proportion of APS employees with disability reported in agencies' HR systems as at 30 June 2023 was 5.1%.

In comparison, 10.9% of respondents to the 2023 APS Employee Census identified as having an ongoing disability.

Of these, 30% indicated their disability status was not recorded in their agency's HR system for reasons that included:

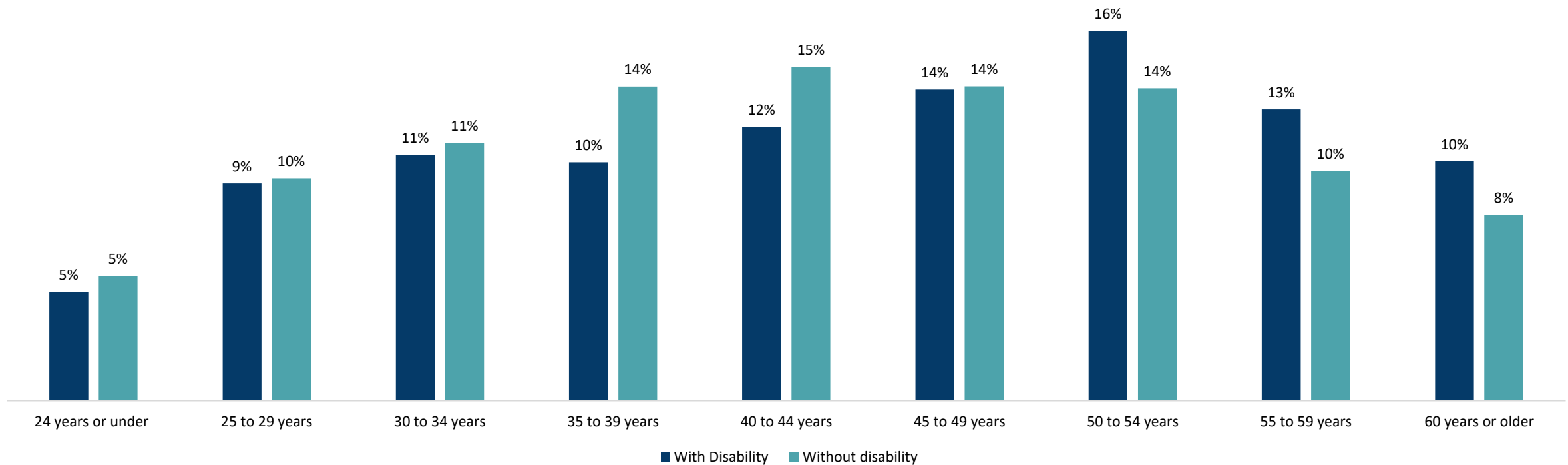
- They did not require any adjustments
- They did not see any reason or benefit in sharing this information
- They were concerned about being discriminated against

Proportion of employees with disability



Source: APS Employment Database 30 June 2023, 2023 APS Employee Census

Employees with disability tended to be similar ages to employees without disability



Overall, employees with disability tended to be the same age as those without disability, with slighter larger representation in age groups older than 49 years.

Employees with disability commonly identified with other diversity groups



Female

59% of employees with disability were female



LGBTIQA+

18% of employees with disability indicated they identified as LGBTIQA+



First Nations

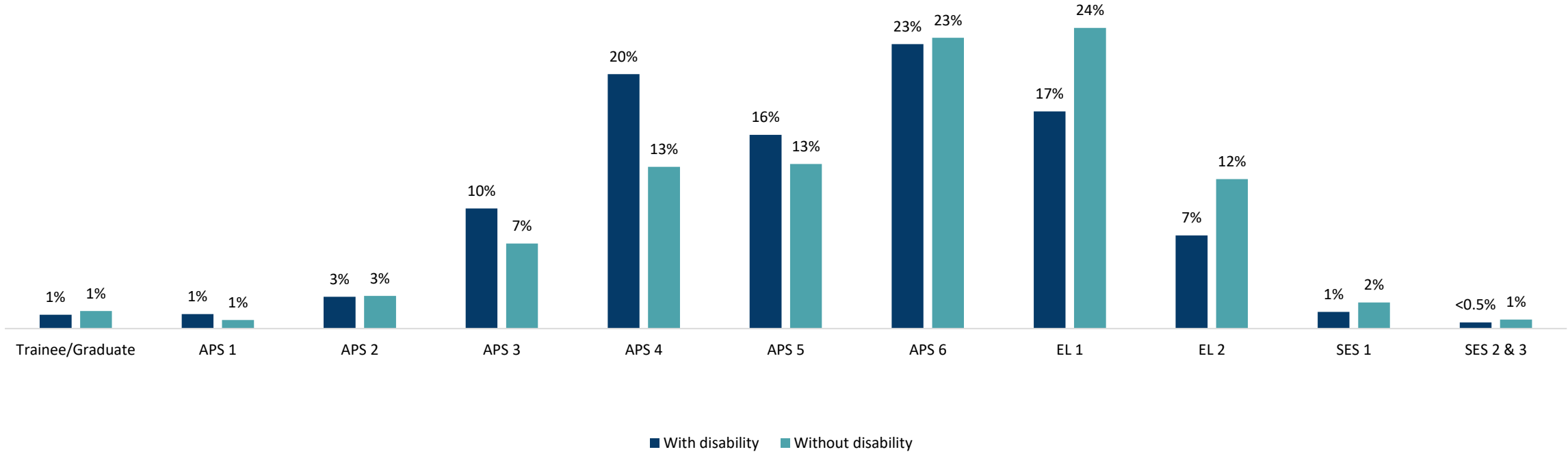
5% of employees with disability identified as First Nations



Neurodivergent

28% of employees with disability considered themselves to be neurodivergent

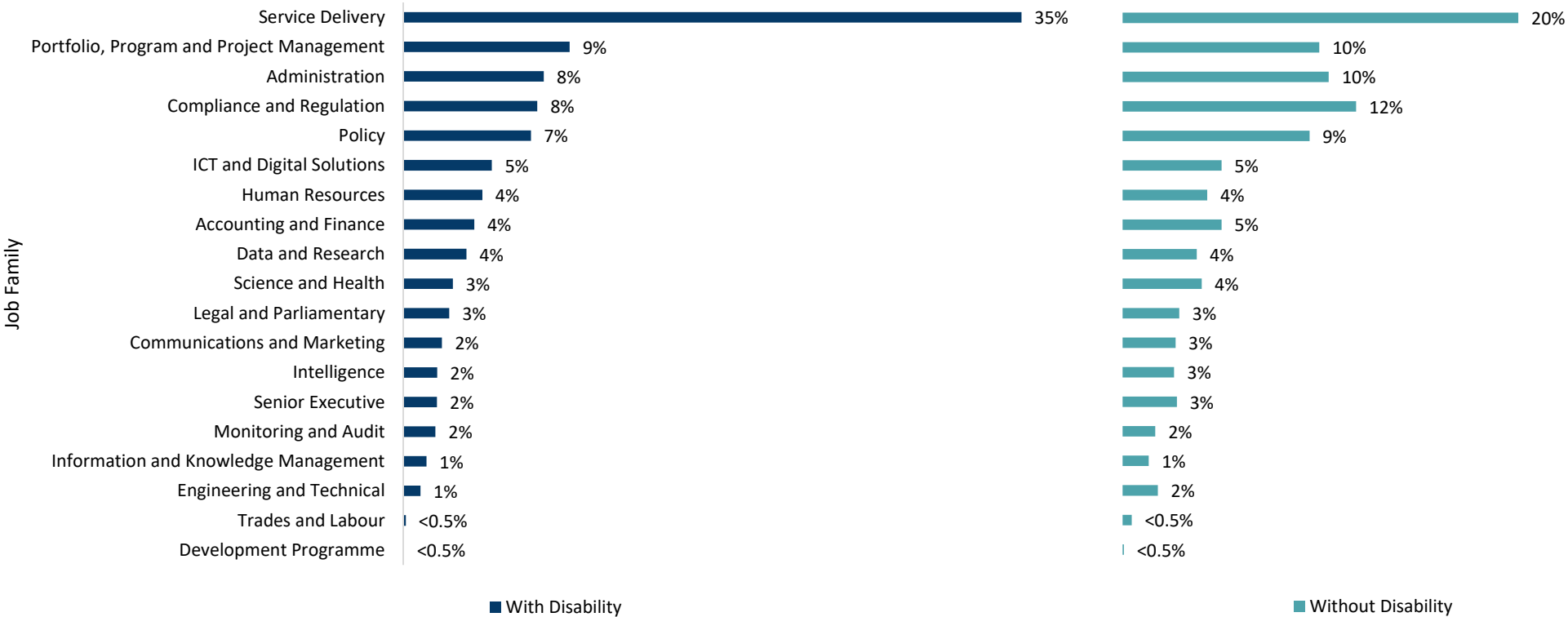
Employees with disability work across all APS classification levels



When compared to employees without disability, larger proportions of those with disability were working at APS 3, APS 4, and APS 5 classifications, while smaller proportions were in Executive and Senior Executive level roles.

Source: APS Employment Database 30 June 2023

Employees with disability worked in all job types across the APS



Overall, similar proportions of employees with and without disability worked in roles in each broad type of work. However, a higher proportion of employees with disability worked in service delivery roles (35%).

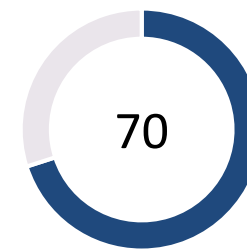
Source: APS Employment Database 30 June 2023

Employees with disability reported lower rates of employee engagement

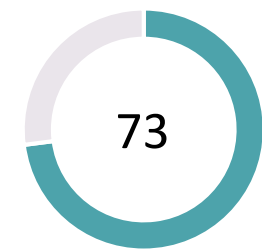
Employee engagement is more than simply job satisfaction or commitment to an organisation. It is the extent to which employees are motivated, inspired and enabled to improve an organisation's outcomes. Employee engagement is a two-way relationship that exists between an employee and their organisation.

In 2023, APS Employee Census respondents with disability reported a lower employee engagement index score than those without disability.

Employee engagement index



With disability



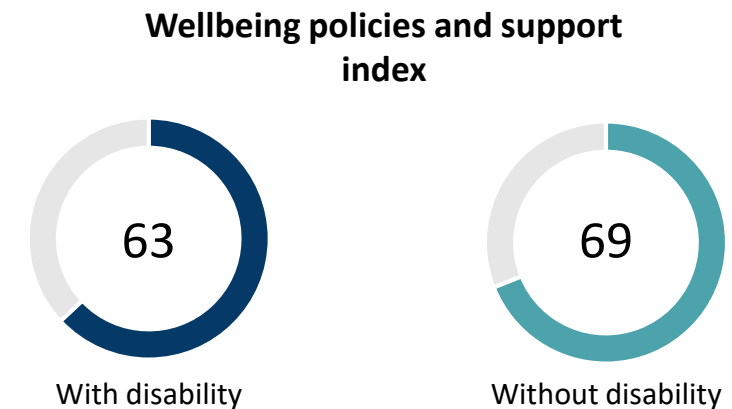
Without disability

A smaller proportion of employees with disability felt their health and wellbeing was supported

The APS Employee Census wellbeing policies and support index measures employees' awareness of the support offered by their agency in areas known to assist a healthy and sustainable working environment.

Higher scores indicate that respondents feel their health and wellbeing is supported.

In 2023, respondents with disability reported substantially lower wellbeing policies and support scores than employees without disability.



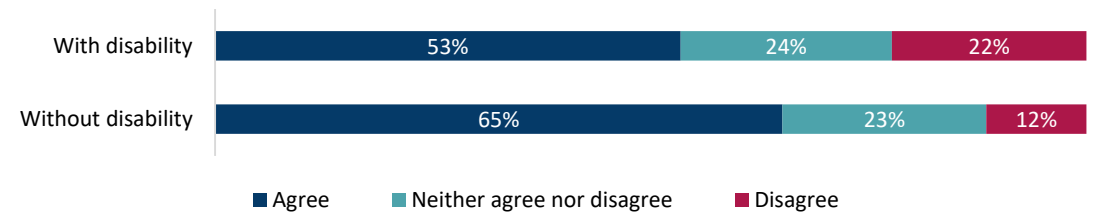
Employees with disability were less satisfied with health and wellbeing support and more commonly found work stressful

Around half of respondents (53%) with disability agreed they were satisfied with the policies/practices in place to help them manage their health and wellbeing.

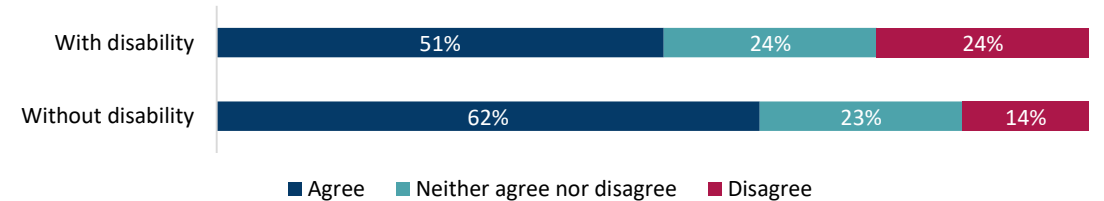
A similar proportion agreed their agency cared about their health and wellbeing (51%), 11 percentage points less than respondents without disability (62%).

Forty per cent of respondents with disability indicated they often or always found their work stressful as compared to 30% of respondents without disability.

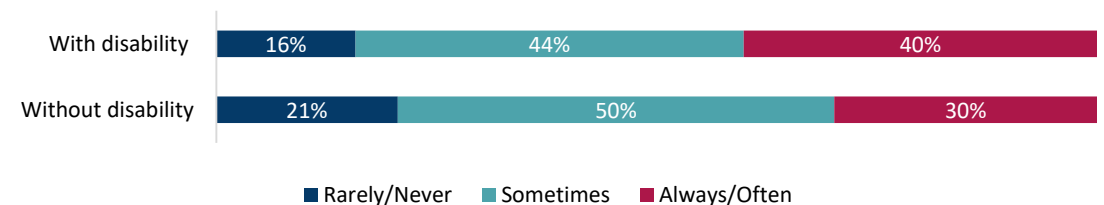
I am satisfied with the policies/practices in place to help me manage my health and wellbeing



I think my agency cares about my health and wellbeing



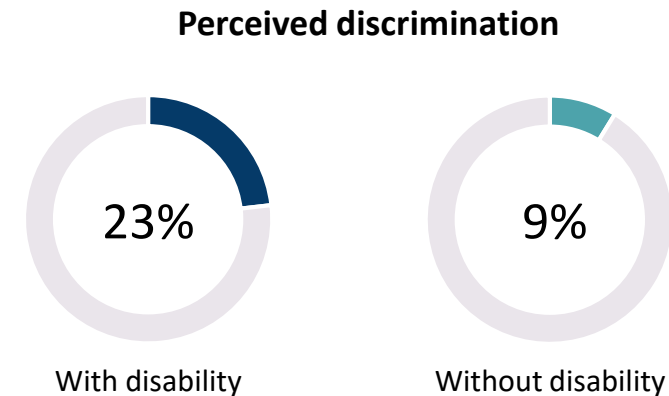
How often do you find your work stressful?



When compared to others, much larger proportions of employees with disability had perceived discrimination

Almost one in four respondents with disability (23%) perceived discrimination on the basis of their background or a personal characteristic in the course of their employment over the previous 12 months.

The most common form of perceived discrimination for respondents with disability was on the basis of disability (51%).

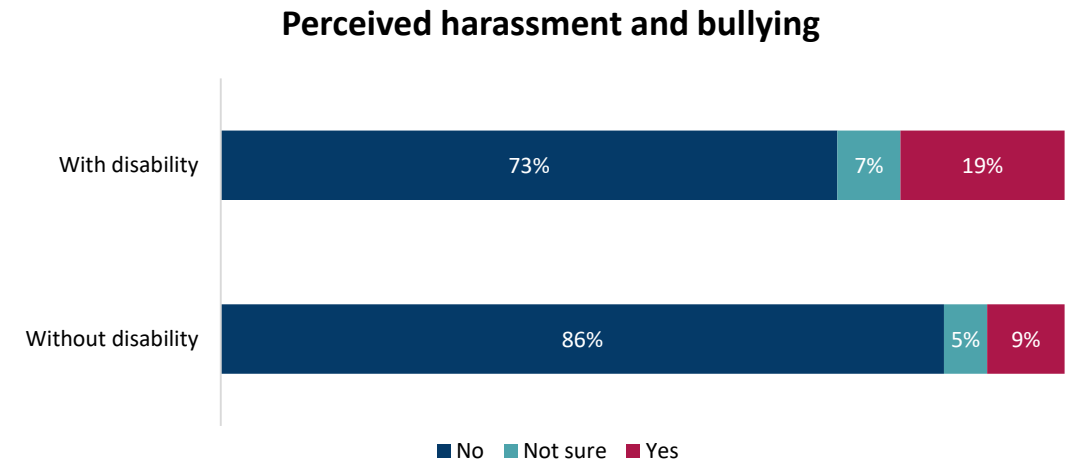


A larger proportion of employees with disability perceived harassment or bullying

The APS Employee Census asks respondents if they had been subjected to harassment or bullying in their current workplace during the last 12 months.

Perceptions of harassment and bullying were 10 percentage points higher for respondents with a disability (19%) than respondents without disability (9%).

The most common type of harassment or bullying for respondents with disability was interference with work tasks (44%).



Employees with disability experience work differently to employees without disability

The proportion of APS employees with disability has continued to increase in 2023.

Higher proportions of employees with disability work in APS 3, 4 and 5 roles but tend to be similar ages to those without disability. These results highlight the importance of ongoing career initiatives that attract, recruit and retain more people with disability and increase representation of people with disability across the APS, in a broad variety of roles.

Employees with disability reported more negative experiences across numerous APS Employee Census measures and higher perceptions of unacceptable behaviours. Given this, ongoing efforts are vital to improve and ingrain understanding of disability in APS workplaces to support the development of more inclusive workplace cultures and environments.

The APSC has developed the APS Disability Employment Strategy to create a culture that benefits and supports people with disability

The [APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25](#) (Strategy) provides a foundation for building an inclusive and diverse APS.

The Strategy has 2 focus areas:

- Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability
- Accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments.



Australian Public Service
Disability Employment
Strategy 2020–25



The APS has delivered a range of initiatives in support of people with disability

- Since the launch of the APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25, a number of agencies have introduced targeted recruitment programs. An example is the Ability Apprenticeship program led by Social Services which provides an alternative entry pathway, on-the-job and formal training, and support from a disability employment provider.
- Disability Champions promote and drive implementation of the Strategy within APS agencies. The Disability Champions Network meets quarterly to share agency work and discuss specific issues facing employees with disability.
- The SES Disability Network brings together senior leaders who have disability to network, advise on and promote strategy actions.

Other initiatives supporting people with disability in the APS

The Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is working to understand and reduce barriers to APS employees sharing diversity information in human resource systems.

The project aims to close the gap between disability figures obtained through Australian Public Service Employment Data and disability figures obtained through the APS Employee Census. Work will be completed towards the end of 2023.

Project outcomes will help agencies improve their diversity data collection policies and practices and assist the Australian Public Service Commission's diversity and inclusion activities.



Affirmative Measure Disability Recruitment Hub

The APSC developed and launched the Affirmative Measures – Disability Recruitment Hub (AMDHub) in 2022–23, offering agencies guidance, tools and resources to improve how they attract and recruit people with disability.

The AMDHub was co-designed with people with disability, recruitment specialists and diversity and inclusion practitioners. It helps agencies shift their perceptions of the way recruitment can be done and build an inclusive recruitment culture.



For further information please contact:

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