Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2026 Interim Evaluation

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Table of Acronyms

Acronym	Term or phrase
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
APSED	Australian Public Service Employment Database
CAGEN	Cross Agency Gender Equality Network
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
EL	Executive Level
FDV	Family and Domestic Violence
GES	Gender Equality Strategy
IFA	Individual Flexibility Arrangement
SES	Senior Executive Service
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Notes on the use of gender-related terms in this report

Data sources relied on in this report alternatively collect sex and/or gender variables.

For ease of reading, this report uses the terms man/male and woman/female interchangeably.

For non-binary employees, non-binary is an umbrella term describing gender identities that are not exclusively those of man/male or woman/female.[1] Non-binary employee data that is collected in the APS Employment Database (APSED) has been included throughout this report where possible. It has been excluded when counts of these employees were too small to report meaningful findings or may lead to identification. The proportion of employees who identify as non-binary are less than half a percent of the overall Australian Public Service (APS) workforce, based on APSED data as at 31 December 2023.

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[1] See Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Gender', *Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables*, ABS, 2021, accessed 9 August 2024.

Employees who use a different gender term are those who described their gender as a term other than man or male, woman or female, or non-binary.[2] Data for employees who use a different gender term has been included throughout this report where possible, however this data does not exist for some sources (such as the APSED), and has not been reported when counts were too small to report meaningful findings or may lead to identification.

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[2] See ABS, 'Gender', *Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables*.

Introduction

Executive summary

The APS is committed to progressing gender equality. It recognises that gender equality is essential to building a workforce that can inform better business outcomes through diversity of perspectives, skills, and backgrounds.

The diversity of the workforce is strengthened by taking a whole-of-APS approach to gender equality. The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) does this through implementing various diversity strategies and by working closely with agencies to consider agency-specific initiatives.

The APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026 (the Strategy) sets the vision for achieving gender equality in the APS. The Strategy sets out 6 overarching actions and thirty action areas (including minimum standards) for progressing gender equality in any given APS agency. Secretaries and Agency heads are accountable for implementing the Strategy and reporting on progress.

The APS has made significant gains 2 years from the launch of the Strategy, particularly as it relates to the profile of the workforce. As at 31 December 2023:

- 60% of the APS were women
- the APS reached gender parity at the SES Band 2 classification with women comprising 51% of this cohort
- women reached and in most cases exceeded parity with men at every level from APS 1 to SES Band 2
- parity was close to being achieved at the SES Band 3 level, with women comprising 49% of this cohort.

The APS also narrowed its gender pay gap to 4.5% in December 2023, which was a fall from 6.0% in December 2021. This narrowing was particularly positive in comparison to the Australian gender pay gap, which was reported at 12% in February 2024.

Understanding the strategic landscape

APS agencies have faced unprecedented change over the last few years. Since the Strategy was launched, the national approach to gender equality has shifted, resulting in a heightened focus on ending gender-based harassment and violence, improving outcomes for women experiencing perimenopause and menopause, embedding gender responsive budgeting and impact analysis as part of standard government practice, and enabling greater transparency through gender equality reporting. The approach to gender equality in the APS has been influenced in 2024 by the following:

- The Australian Government's *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality* was released on 7 March 2024. It outlines the Australian Government's vision for gender equality – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices, and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender.

- The Australian Government's annual Status of Women Report Card includes the most recent available data on the social and economic equality issues facing women and girls in Australia.

- The Australian Government is committed to gender responsive budgeting and putting gender equality and impacts on women at the centre of budget making decisions. In 2024, the Australian Government released the [APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment](#), established the [APS Gender Analysis Community of Practice](#), and also released supporting [micro-credentials](#) and online awareness [foundations courses](#) through the APS Academy.

- The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 now requires employers, both private and public sector, with 100 or more employees to report annually against 6 gender equality indicators and gender pay gap. From 2025, results from APS agencies will be publicly available.

- Amendments have been made to the National Employment Standards and Fair Work Act which reflect gains in gender equality. This includes improvements in access to paid parental leave, Flexible work arrangements, and update to Family and Domestic Violence leave reporting requirements.

- Changes to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) to include positive duty imposes a legal obligation on organisations, including all APS departments and agencies, to take proactive action to prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful behaviours from occurring in the workplace, or in connection to work. The [Australian Human Rights Commission](#), [Comcare](#) and [Safe Work Australia](#) have released comprehensive information and resources to help organisations fulfil their obligations and create respectful workplaces that are free from harassment. The APSC also released the [APS Model Policy for the Prevention of Workplace Sexual Harassment and related unlawful conduct](#).

- On 6 November 2023, the Senate referred an [Inquiry into Menopause and Perimenopause](#) to the Senate Community Affairs References Community for inquiry and report. The Inquiry resulted in 25 recommendations to improve the national approach towards women's experience of perimenopause and menopause.

- The Australian Government approach to service-wide bargaining for common terms took place in 2023, with agencies commencing implementation throughout 2023-2024. A number of common conditions that impact the progress towards gender equality were introduced, including: flexible work, family and domestic violence support, respect at work, parental leave, lactation and breastfeeding support, higher duties allowance, and the use of gender inclusive language in agency-level agreements.

- The [Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973 Review](#) was reviewed in 2023 for the first time in more than 40 years to provide evidence that the original Act no longer meets the requirements of current employees as they establish families and maintain careers in Commonwealth employment. The Government is considering the Review and its recommendations.

Ongoing work to progress gender equality

The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026 Interim Evaluation (Interim Evaluation) reflects the ongoing commitment to progressing gender equality in the APS. The Interim Evaluation provides an informed, data-based assessment of each of the 6 overarching actions and 30

action areas, taken from document reviews, available administrative data, and a bespoke APS Gender Equality Strategy Survey (GES Survey).

The Interim Evaluation reflects APS progress on Strategy initiatives over approximately 2 years, from the launch of the Strategy on 7 December 2021. It reports areas in which the Strategy has had the greatest impact in the first 2 years, agency challenges in implementing the Strategy, and areas of focus in which to progress gender equality in the years to come. The Interim Evaluation will be used by the APSC to understand opportunities to drive Strategy progress across the APS and assist individual agencies in areas of future focus.

The Interim Evaluation indicates that nearly all agencies were engaged with the Strategy and progress has been made against most of the Strategy's thirty actions, including minimum standards.

The Interim Evaluation also indicates that there is still an opportunity for further work. Agencies have a responsibility to maintain momentum on progressing gender equality. This can be achieved by continuing to implement the Strategy, whilst remaining aware of changes and progress in our operating environment, both on a national scale and internally to the APS.

The flexibility built into the Strategy enables agencies to consider how they approach the actions and their implementation within their unique context. Agencies are able to identify levers that can progress the overall intent of the strategy to achieve gender equality. Agencies are encouraged to use the findings from this report and consider the new and emerging gender equality matters across the strategic landscape, to identify, prioritise and implement those actions that may create a more gender equal organisation over remaining 2 years of the Strategy.

In taking this approach, agencies may also wish to consider matters identified as implementation challenges as part of this report, including: the resources available to delivering diversity and inclusion, support from larger portfolio agencies to smaller agencies particularly where resources are lacking, and efforts to streamline implementation of actions across multiple diversity strategies where possible.

Background

The [Realising the benefit for all - Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#) (the Strategy) is an essential part of the Australian Government's commitment to gender equality. The Strategy builds on *Balancing the Future: APS Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2019 Strategy*, which made significant progress to drive gender equality in our leadership and workforce.

The current Strategy continues to focus on reducing the gender pay gap, and aims to embed inclusive and respectful workplaces, enhance the uptake of flexible work practices, shift gender stereotypes, and progress leadership and accountability of gender equality.

The Strategy has 3 objectives:

1. To see leaders at all levels hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equitable and inclusive behaviour.
2. To shift gender norms, and normalise respectful workplaces and access to flexibility for all.
3. To embed gender equality and inclusion in all that we do.

To achieve these objectives, the Strategy outlines 6 overarching action areas with a combined total of 30 action areas for implementation. These are:

1. Leadership and accountability that progresses gender equality through individual and collective action.
2. Respectful workplaces and empowered people that prioritise our people's safety and wellbeing.
3. Shifting gender stereotypes to support the career and life choices of our people.
4. Flexible ways of working to give our people more choice and enhance their contributions at work.
5. Gender data that ensures our efforts are informed by the evidence base and progress is visible.
6. Leveraging our external influence to champion gender equality in our everyday work.

Purpose and scope

This interim evaluation aims to review and summarise whole of APS progress on Strategy initiatives over approximately 2 years, from the launch of the Strategy on 7 December 2021 up to the latest available data. Many comparisons are made between calendar years 2021 and 2023 throughout the report.

This assessment will also highlight opportunities to drive Strategy progress to 2026. Case studies and agency achievements have been highlighted to provide examples for other agencies to consider.

Methodology

This interim evaluation relied on the following:

- a document review of known initiatives, progress or actions taken by APS departments or agencies to improve gender equality within the APS

- analysis of available administrative and survey data sources including APSED, APS Remuneration Survey, APS Employee Census, and APS Agency Survey

- a bespoke APS Gender Equality Strategy Survey, developed to capture additional information that could not be obtained from any known data sources[3]

- APSC research into the APS gender pay gap.[4]

In terms of limitations, due to insufficient baseline data, some measurements could not be compared to the start of the Strategy to determine if progress had been made. With the additional information collected in the GES Survey, a greater number of comparisons will be possible at the final evaluation.

In addition, 4 of 97 APS agencies with greater than 20 employees did not participate in the GES Survey. Three were extra small agencies (less than 100 employees) and one was a medium agency (251-1,000 employees). The proportion of employees engaged within these agencies equated to 0.3% of the APS.

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[3] Invitations to participate were sent to all APS agencies with at least 20 employees, employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The survey was open from January 2024, and received responses through to April 2024. It had a final response rate of 96%. A combination of quantitative and qualitative information was collected. See the Appendix for a copy of the survey's questions.
[4] Available at Australian Public Service Commission, *Research, analysis and publications,* APSC, 2020, accessed 8 August 2024.

Findings

Overall Strategy impacts and challenges

Positive impacts

The GES Survey asked agencies to outline the top 3 positive changes they had made towards gender equality that were a direct outcome of the Strategy.

Most agencies provided lengthy comments in their responses, suggesting the Strategy has brought around a degree of positive change for gender equality in the APS. The Strategy's greatest impacts were increased leadership action, capability and awareness, greater flexibility and/or leave provisions and improved culture and transparency (Figure 1).

Figure 1 The Strategy's greatest impacts

Impact	% of agencies
Increased leadership action, capability and awareness	27%
Greater flexibility and/or leave provisions	24%
Improved culture and transparency	23%
Increased representation of women across classifications and occupations	20%
Development of strategies, action plans, policies, frameworks, etc	19%
Commitment to reducing the gender pay gap	17%
Strengthening data collection and reporting capabilities	16%
Revision of recruitment processes	14%
Implementation of training	14%

Source: 2024 GES Survey.

GES Survey responses revealed that there are a range of agency actions that has led to these impacts, and these impacts in turn have improved agency work practices and cultures.

Increased leadership action, capability, and awareness was driven by increased discussions and leadership engagement with employees around gender, the establishment of senior-level champions and action on gender representation at all classifications.

Greater flexibility and/or leave provisions led to cultural change around flexible work practices, increased support/policies for caring arrangements for all genders, enhanced parental leave,

increased uptake of flexible work arrangements by all genders and consideration now given to advertising all positions as full-time, part-time and job share. An example of this is highlighted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC):

> The AEC undertook agency-wide engagement to inform the development of a comprehensive flexible working arrangements policy.
>
> We undertook an agency-wide employee survey that explored the various arrangements and which of these staff would find most beneficial to them and their area.
>
> A member of the executive leadership team [also] engaged with AEC employees at all levels across Australia through a 'roadshow' to listen and discuss their feedback about the way we work. This roadshow was an opportunity to promote the newly-drafted Flexible Working Arrangements Policy and ensured that all staff had a genuine opportunity to contribute to its development.

Improved cultures and transparency initiatives have seen shifts to more inclusive workplace cultures, eradicating gender stereotypes, building more respectful workplaces such as through increased education and transparency around sexual harassment prevalence and response.

These impacts coincided with **increased representation of women across classifications,** which agencies reported were supported by efforts to increase representation of women in leadership positions and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) occupations.

Implementation challenges

To understand and help address the barriers of implementing the Strategy, the GES Survey asked agencies to report the challenges they had encountered in Strategy implementation.

58% of responding agencies reported a lack of resources and 17% noted that staff were not tasked to action the deliverables. 31% of agencies reported challenges other than resourcing or staff. In contrast, 19% of responding agencies reported not encountering any challenges.

Agencies' comments indicated that implementation was a greater challenge for smaller agencies, who did not have the resources to undertake initiatives, and had too many competing strategies to focus their efforts on. For example:

> With the proliferation of strategies and APS reforms and a lack of additional resources to implement, resources are stretched and this will impact our ability to meet targets.
>
> These initiatives, although important, place increased stress on already stretched resources of an extra-small agency.

For the remainder of the Strategy's timeframe, the APSC and larger portfolio agencies could consider how they can support smaller agencies with the Strategy's implementation. As the current strategies come to a close, consideration should be given to consolidate different strategies. An overall APS Diversity and Inclusion Strategy or Framework would streamline implementation of actions and reduce reporting burden.

Strategy impacts on Action Area 1: Leadership and accountability

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Leaders are visible role models at any level and show their commitment to gender equality through their actions and words. Senior leaders should consider how to support gender equality leadership in their organisation.	**Progress made**	• 60% of agencies reported their leaders had spoken about gender equality at public engagements. • Most agencies were able to demonstrate examples of leader commitment to gender equality through actions and/or words.

(Minimum standard) Agencies publish (on the internet) targeted plans for gender equality informed by data and aligned to agency priorities.	**Progress made**	• 74% of agencies had a gender equality policy, strategy, action plan, or other initiative (such as training or information and resources) in place in 2023. This was an increase from 55% in 2021.
		     o Of these activities, 57% of agencies had an agency-tailored gender equality strategy and/or action plan in place in 2023.
		     o 74% of these plans were promoted publicly.
		 • Agencies that had a gender equality policy, strategy, action plan, or other initiative in place tended to be larger in size.

(Minimum standard) Dedicated resources and governance arrangements are in place to support the work. • Gender Champions and employee led gender networks are involved. • Regular tracking of progress and impact is transparent to employees.	**Progress made**	• 91% of agencies had dedicated resources in place to support the implementation of their agency gender equality strategy and/or action plan. • 94% of agencies had governance to support the implementation of their agency gender equality strategy and/or action plan.

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Agencies include their commitment to gender equality and inclusion in induction and recruitment materials, including roles and expectations of all employees.	**Progress made**	• 75% of agencies provided details of their commitment to gender equality and inclusion in their recruitment materials, while 60% provided these details in their induction materials.

1A Secretaries and Agency Heads will be accountable for implementing the Strategy and will consider options to demonstrate their commitment.	**Progress made**	• Secretaries and Agency Heads are accountable for implementing the Strategy. In regards to progress towards implementation:
		   o 81% of agencies reported being at the 'establishing' level or above in 2023. This means that they reported being on track to meet some Strategy deliverables by 2026.
		   o Smaller agencies were most likely to reported difficulties meeting deliverables.
		   o 18% of agencies reported a likelihood of meeting 10 or more deliverables in 2023, up from 6% in 2022.
		   o Overall, there was room for improvement in the number of deliverables implemented by agencies.

1B Leaders, at all levels, will engage with employees about the Strategy and discuss ways everyone will contribute to ensure there is both individual and collective accountability. A focus on inclusive behaviours is important to promote gender equality and will lead to a positive workplace culture for all genders.	**Progress made**	• 60% of agencies reported their leaders had spoken about gender equality at public engagements. • Most agencies were able to demonstrate examples of leader commitment to gender equality through actions and/or words, however it was difficult to determine if this was occurring across all the leadership of an agency.
1C Informed by data and the diverse experience of employees, agencies will seek to understand the gender imbalances (across all levels), the drivers that underpin them and will consider whether	**Progress made**	• Since the launch of the Strategy, 60% of agencies reported that they have increased their capability to collect and analyse high-level gender data. • Most agencies tracked gender imbalances across classifications (92%), while many

Action	Status	Key points
specific targets are an appropriate method to drive action and provide incentive for change.		tracked this across geographical locations (72%) and job types (62%). • (See Action 5A for more details.)

Agency commitment to the Strategy

Self-rated level of commitment

Agencies were asked to self-rate their maturity in implementing the Strategy through the 2023 APS Agency Survey. The following scale was used:

- **Entry Level:** agency is currently trying to comprehend the Strategy and specific actions that relate to it.

- **Emerging:** agency can demonstrate compliance with Strategy deliverable requirements, but may experience implementation setbacks they need assistance with.

- **Establishing:** agency has a clear understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion, and are developing systems/policies/practices to meet Strategy deliverables.

- **Embedding:** agency is able to challenge existing systems and can demonstrate they can improve systems/policies/practices to meet or exceed Strategy deliverables.

- **Educator:** agency can meet or exceed Strategy deliverables, is able to identify and share their lessons, engage with other agencies, and provide them with guidance on diversity and inclusion programs, activities and outcomes.

Results showed that in 2023, 81% reported being at the 'establishing' level or above and are on track to meet Strategy deliverables by 2026. This had improved considerably since the Strategy's first year with 53% recording the same level of maturity in 2021 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Agency self-rating of implementation of the Strategy
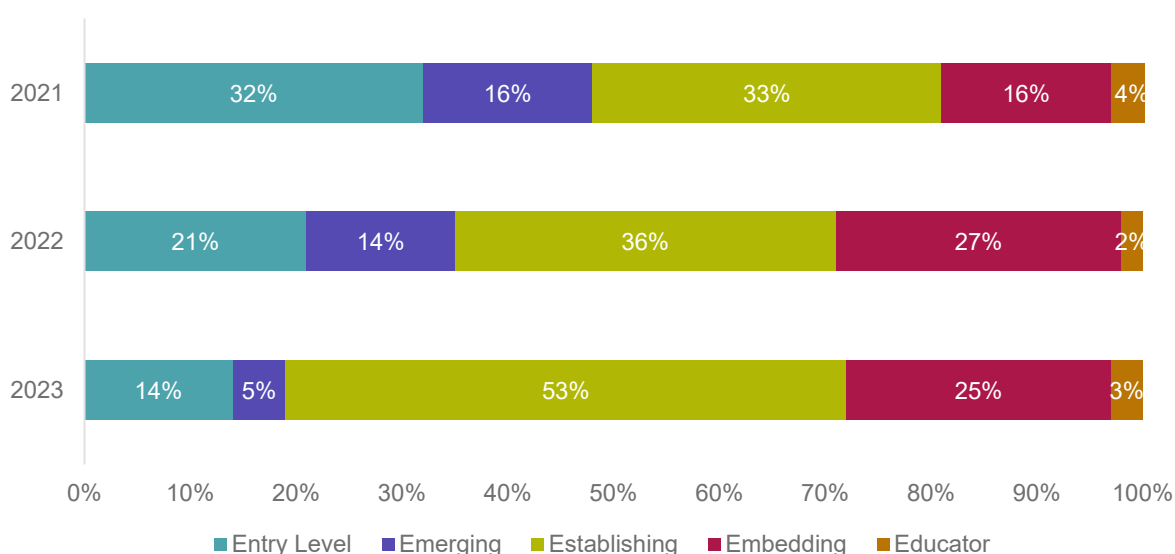
Source: 2021 APS Agency Survey, 2022 APS Agency Survey, and 2023 APS Agency Survey.

Extra-small and small agencies with 250 employees or less, were more likely to report lower self-ratings at entry or emerging levels (32%) compared to larger agencies (9%). Nonetheless, small agency ratings had also improved significantly since 2021 with double the share of agencies reporting the lower ratings at that time.

There are 30 actions within the Strategy including minimum standards. The Agency Survey asked agencies about the number of Strategy deliverables they were likely to meet. In 2023, 85% reported a likelihood of addressing 3 or more actions, increasing from 60% in the previous year (Figure 3). 18% of responding agencies reported a likelihood of delivering 10 or more actions, which had tripled since the year before. These results show that the majority of agencies are engaging with the Strategy to some degree and their level of engagement is growing over time. However, there is opportunity for agencies to continue increasing the number of deliverables they are implementing.

Figure 3 Self-reported number of Strategy deliverables agencies were likely to meet[5]
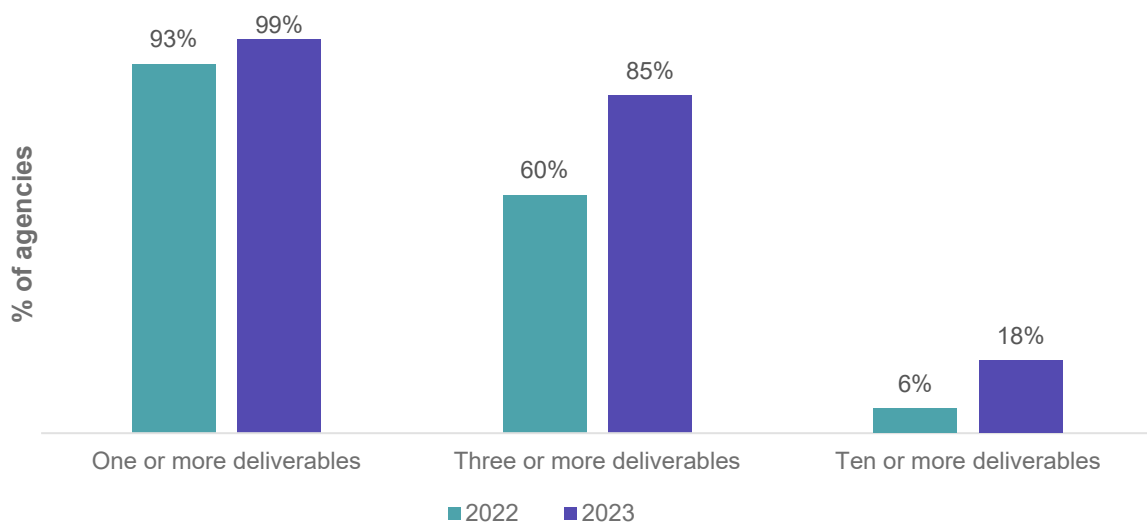
Source: 2022 APS Agency Survey and 2023 APS Agency Survey.

Smaller agencies were less likely to report meeting a higher number of deliverables (Table 1). Larger agencies could collaborate with and provide support to smaller agencies within their respective portfolios to achieve a greater number of deliverables.

Table 1 Self-reported number of Strategy deliverables agencies were likely to meet

	Three or more deliverables	Ten or more deliverables
Extra small / Small agencies (20-250 employees)	75%	14%
Medium-Extra Large agencies (Over 250 employees)	93%	22%

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[5] No data is available for 2021.

Agency communication efforts

The majority of agencies provided details of their commitment to gender equality and inclusion in their recruitment materials (75%) and induction materials (60%). 34% of agencies also provide details through other materials such as annual reports and public-facing websites.

Strategy implementation efforts

Agency-specific gender equality policies, strategies, action plans, and other activities

A measure of commitment to gender equality is agency development of formal initiatives to implement the Strategy. The GES Survey found that 74% of responding agencies had a gender equality policy, strategy, action plan or other gender equality initiative (such as training or information and resources) in place. This demonstrated increased efforts towards gender equality since 2021. At that time, the Agency Survey asked a similar question and 55% of responding agencies reported they had a gender equality implementation activity in place.

Of these activities, 57% of responding agencies had an agency-tailored gender equality strategy and/or action plan in place in 2023. Generally, these plans appeared to be progressed by agencies.

- 91% of agencies had dedicated resources in place to support the implementation of their agency gender equality strategy and/or action plan.
- 94% of agencies had governance to support the implementation of their agency gender equality strategy and/or action plan.
- Furthermore, 81% communicated the implementation progress to all employees and 74% advertised this publicly.

Agencies that had a gender equality policy, strategy, action plan, or other initiative in place tended to be larger in size. Of those that did not, 5 were extra small, 10 were small, 8 were medium sized, and one was large.

Means of implementing gender equality in agencies

Another measure of commitment is whether agencies had put in place resources to implement the Strategy. The GES Survey asked agencies what they used to implement the Strategy within their organisations. 91% of responding agencies had some means of implementing the Strategy in place. These included through leadership (71%), gender networks and champions (59%), staff tasked to action the deliverables (53%) or other means (40%). Other methods included implementing the Strategy through other networks such as Diversity and Inclusion networks or officers (15%), by celebrating days of recognition such as International Women's Day, and International Day of Women and Girls in Sciences (5%) and promoting gender equality through internal communications (5%). Some noteworthy examples provided in the free-text are below:

> The Commission is celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) by spotlighting 2 of our own Women Leaders for a virtual "Fireside" chat. Two of our female deputy Commissioners will speak at the event from a

personal perspective, covering hot topics such as work/life balance; the gender pay gap and why we need more women in senior roles in the APS.

Hosting Gender Equality Five plus Five forums annually for 5 SES to hear from 5 staff experiences in the workplace around Gender Equality matters – both positive and negative.

Using pronouns in signature blocks and installing 'all gender' toilets.

Leader visibility on gender equality

Visible leadership support for gender equality is another dimension of agencies' implementation of the Strategy. The GES Survey showed that 60% of responding agencies reported that their leaders had spoken about gender equality at public engagements. When agencies were asked in what ways leaders engaged with employees about gender equality, the majority were able to list a variety of methods employed and only 6% of agencies did not express any engagement by their leaders.

Some commonly reported methods included:

- actively supporting employee participation in gender network activities and events (51%)
- regularly communicating about gender equality (such as on days of significance, all staff presentations, emails, newsletters and intranet articles and at meetings) (32%)
- becoming gender equality champions or actively engaging with gender equality/diversity network champions (31%)
- speaking at public forums or in panel discussions to share their personal career experiences (25%).

Some examples include:

Our leaders play key roles in Diversity and Inclusion events (such as International Women's Day, IDAHOBIT and Wear it Purple Day) including being members in panel discussions and providing speeches. Our senior leaders regularly include gender issues in their regular communications with the department, including our Secretary's weekly message. The department has 2 SES Gender Equity Network Champions that are senior leaders who work closely with the Network Co-Chairs and members to deliver a range of initiatives to increase gender inclusion across the department.

Our Executive Diversity Champion plays a pivotal role in leading engagement relating to a range of diversity and inclusion initiatives including gender equality. Our leaders are visible allies and supporters of gender equality and have shared their personal stories and lived experience. They also participate in internal diversity and inclusion events and role model our gender equality policies and actions.

Speaking explicitly about the need to work towards a 50/50 workforce by attracting and retaining more men to the Library; ensuring male candidates are interviewed for advertised roles; explicitly requesting

investigation and analysis of 'clustering' of women in lower level roles at the Library to understand whether women in lower level roles are less likely to seek promotion than men, what the reasons might be, and implementing any required change programs.' (The National Library of Australia)

APSC Strategy implementation efforts across its networks

As the Strategy's owners, the APSC has used its networks to raise awareness of the Strategy and its gender equality initiatives. The APSC liaises closely with the APS HR Professional Stream to share and advertise gender information across the HR network. The APSC is also an active contributor to the Cross Agency Gender Equity Network (CAGEN), which seeks to drive change towards gender equality across the APS:

- In 2024, the APSC presented to the CAGEN about the Strategy and Action Area 5 (Gender Data), and the work of the APSC on the APS gender pay gap and gender data. The APSC will continue to educate APS agencies about Action Area 5 of the Strategy as well as any related work of the APSC on these topics. This work contributes to ensuring that APS agencies are aware of their agency-level gender pay gap and are also tracking data on their gender composition across all classification levels, geographical locations and key job types.

- The APSC is also a member of the CAGEN Working Group and has contributed to the 2023-24 Working Group Project on remote and isolated work policies across the APS. The Working Group, led by the current CAGEN co-chairs and secretariat from the APS Department of Industry, Science and Resources, have developed the *Remote work and travel policies across the APS: Better Practice Guide,* which is due to be finalised by July 2024. The CAGEN Working Group's Better Practice Guide references the Strategy, and the project contributes to APS-wide work towards Action Area 2 of the Strategy.

Strategy impacts on Action Area 2: Respectful workplaces and empowered people

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Preventing gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault and bullying. • Leaders reinforce standards of behaviour. • Policies outline strategies for prevention, formal reporting and review processes and consequences.	**Progress made**	• Perceived harassment and bullying decreased from 11.7% in 2021 to 10.4% in 2023. • Perceived gender-based discrimination decreased from 3.6% in 2021 to 3.0% in 2023. • Respect@Work new positive duty legislated to eliminate sexual harassment.
(Minimum standard) Supporting employees experiencing family and domestic violence (FDV). • Agency FDV policy is well-communicated and sets out supports available. • Manager training is provided and includes an emphasis on an individual-led approach to support, noting that access to a secure workplace, phone and computer can be incredibly important.	**Progress made**	• 84% of agencies had a family and gender based violence policy, strategy, action plan, and/or other activity in place or undertaken in 2024, a slight increase on the 72% of agencies in 2021. • 76% of agencies reviewed their policies, support or processes for the management and/or reporting of FDV in the first 2 years of the Strategy. • 57% of agencies offered training, information sessions or other forms of education on FDV in the first 2 years of the Strategy. • Of those agencies that did not have a family and gender based violence policy in place, the majority of them were extra small and small agencies.
2A Agencies will strengthen approaches to preventing and responding to bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace.	**Progress made**	• In the first 2 years of the Strategy, the majority of agencies reviewed their policies, support or processes for the management and/or reporting of: - bullying (75%) - sexual harassment (74%) - discrimination (73%). • In the first 2 years of the Strategy, most agencies offered training, information sessions or other forms of education on: - bullying (90%) - discrimination (90%) - sexual harassment (86%).

Action	Status	Key points

		• Agencies reported strengthening their approaches to educating on and responding to bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment by:
		  - providing education materials (i.e. dedicated intranet page or suite of resources, training sessions, coaching) (84%)
		  - implementing or reviewing workplace policies, procedures or action plans (51%)
		  - implementing or progressing frameworks such as Respect@Work (22%).

2B Agencies will review internal and outward facing communication for gender inclusive language and images. This will include agency intranet, internet, internal policy documents and recruitment ads.	**Progress made**	• As part of implementing the Strategy, the majority of agencies reviewed the following communication methods for gender inclusive language and images:
		  - recruitment ads (77%)
		  - internal policy docs (75%)
		  - agency intranet (71%)
		  - agency website (63%).

2C Agencies will provide ongoing access to superannuation resources and awareness sessions to all employees with a particular focus on annual entry level and graduate intakes (e.g. agency induction).	**Improvement needed**	• In the Strategy's first 2 years, 51% of agencies provided employee superannuation awareness or educational sessions. • In addition to standard superannuation application forms, 44% of agencies offered superannuation information or resources to new recruits as part of induction.

Prevalence of harassment, bullying, and discrimination

Harassment and bullying

The APS Employee Census measures employee perceptions of harassment and bullying.[6] The 2023 APS Employee Census results indicated that 10.4% of responding employees perceived harassment and bullying in the 12 months preceding the survey period. There are gender differences behind this figure, with 20.5% of those who choose to use a different term reporting harassment and bullying, followed by 19.8% of non-binary employees, 11.1% of female employees, and 8.1% of male employees.

Over time the APS has seen an overall decline in the reported rates of perceived harassment and bullying (Figure 4). Since the start of the Strategy, reported rates have reduced from 11.7% in 2021 to 10.4% in 2023. This has followed a consistent trend over recent years.

Figure 4 Perceived harassment and bullying[7]
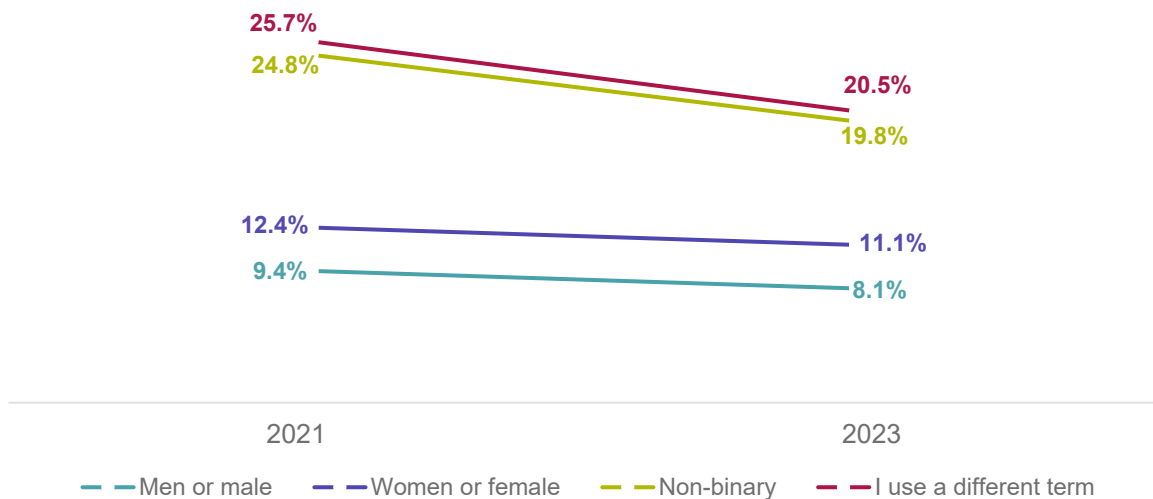
Source: APS Employee Census 2021 and APS Employee Census 2023.

The most common types of harassment and bullying experienced are shown in Figure 5. The most frequent forms were verbal abuse (41%) and interference with work tasks (41%). The perpetrator was

[6] Harassment is offensive, belittling, or threatening behaviour directed at an individual or group. The behaviour is unwelcome, unsolicited, usually unreciprocated and usually, but not always, repeated. Bullying is when an individual or group of individuals repeatedly behave unreasonably towards a worker, or group of workers of which the worker is a member, and that behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. Note that reasonable management actions carried out in a reasonable way do not constitute harassment nor bullying.
[7] Rates of perceived harassment and bullying experienced in the 12 months preceding the specified collection year (usually collected mid-year).

often a co-worker (38%), someone more senior that was not a supervisor (30%), a previous supervisor (27%), or a current supervisor (18%).

Figure 5 Types of harassment and bullying experienced
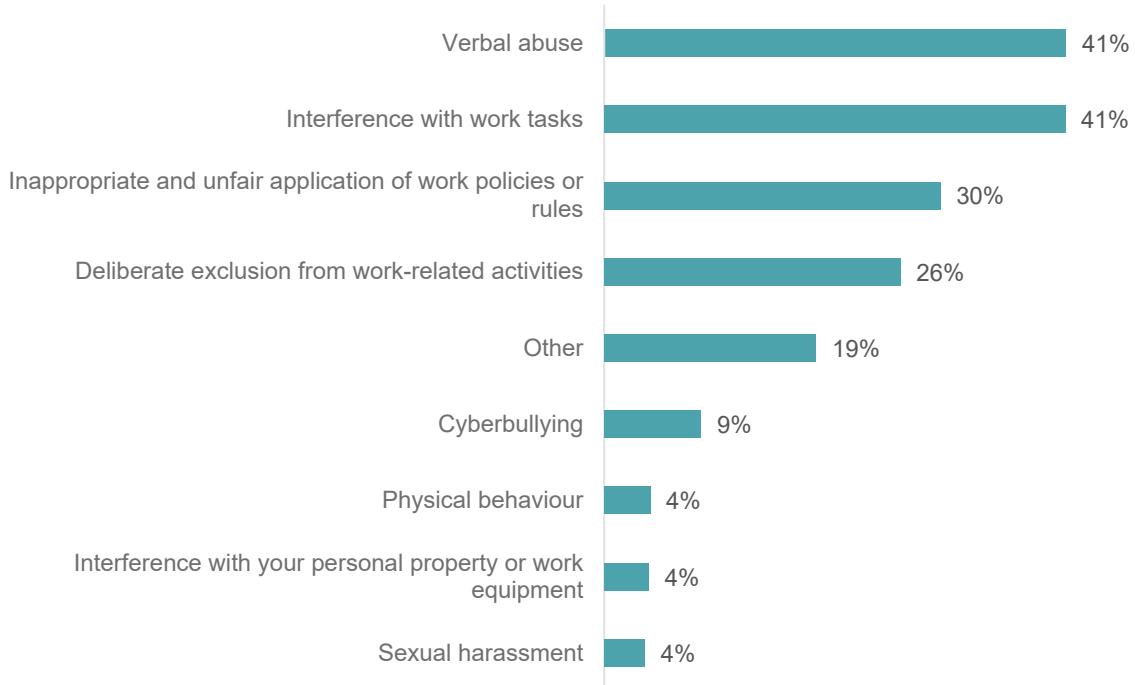
Source: APS Employee Census 2023.

Note: respondents were able to select multiple types of harassment or bullying.

Sexual harassment was perceived by 3.6% of respondents (453 employees) who perceived harassment and bullying in the 2023 APS Employee Census. Overall, this equated to 0.4% of all Census respondents to this question. While the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) found that 23% of women and 16% of men had experienced sexual harassment at work in the last 12 months in 2018, zero tolerance in the APS and efforts to prevent this from occurring need to continue.[8]

Discrimination

There were 10.4% of respondents who perceived discrimination in the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census.[9] This had fallen by 1.1 percentage points since the start of the Strategy in 2021. 28.0% of employees who use a different gender term had perceived discrimination, followed by 27.0% of non-binary employees, 10.9% of women, and 8.5% of men.

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[8] Safe Work Australia, *Psychosocial health and safety and bullying in Australian workplaces (6th edition)*, Safe Work Australia, 2021, accessed 8 August 2024.
[9] Discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, are treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics. It is also discrimination when an unreasonable rule or policy applies to everyone but has the effect of disadvantaging some people because of a personal characteristic they share.

The most common basis of discrimination was gender (29%), followed by carers (20%), with more women (25%) than men (11%) reporting this form (Figure 6).

Overall, this equated to 3.0% of all APS employees experiencing discrimination on the basis on gender and 2.0% on the basis of caring, both of which had decreased by 0.6 percentage points since the start of the Strategy.

Figure 6 Basis of experienced discrimination

Gender	29%
Age	26%
Race	22%
Other	20%
Caring responsibilities	20%
Disability	15%
LGBTIQA+	5%
Religion	5%
Identification as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person	4%
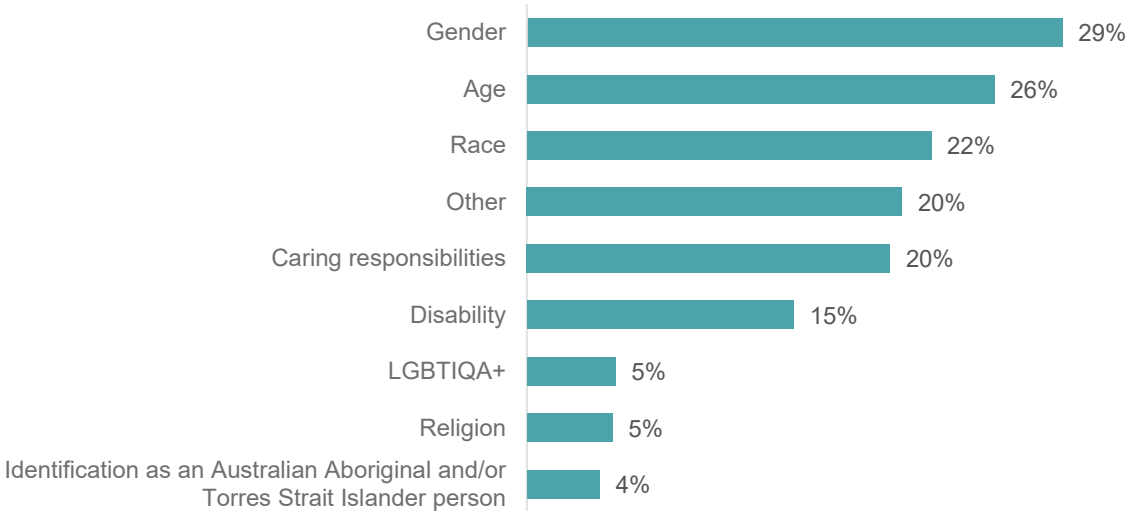
Source: APS Employee Census 2023.

Non-binary employees and employees who use a different gender term reported higher discrimination based on gender, 49.3% and 41.8% respectively.

Reporting of bullying and harassment

The 2023 APS Employee Census indicated that 57% of those who perceived harassment and bullying did not report these incidents. This had decreased by 1.8 percentage points since the start of the Strategy. Some of the common reasons behind not reporting harassment and bullying presented in Figure 7 indicate areas for improvement. Almost half (47%) of respondents did not think any action would be taken and 31% of respondents agreed that managers accepted the behaviour. Other sentiments suggest a need for better protections as 46% feared possible retaliation or reprisals and 37% believed that it could affect their career.

Figure 7 Reasons for not reporting harassment and bullying

Reason	%
I did not think action would be taken	47%
I feared possible retaliation or reprisals	46%
I did not want to upset relationships in the workplace	39%
It could affect my career	37%
I did not think it was worth the hassle of going through the reporting process	34%
Managers accepted the behaviour	31%
I did not think the harassment or bullying was serious enough	17%
I did not have enough evidence	15%
Other	9%
The matter was resolved informally	8%
I did not know how to report it	5%

Source: APS Employee Census 2023.

Prevention of bullying, harassment and discrimination

Agency policies, strategies and action plans

The GES Survey found that almost all responding agencies had a policy relating to discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment in place (Figure 8). Less than 20% of agencies had a strategy or action plan relating specifically to these topics.

Figure 8 Agencies that had a policy, strategy, action plan or other in place

	Discrimination	Bullying	Sexual Harrassment
Policy	92%	98%	94%
Strategy	13%	13%	16%
Action Plan	10%	11%	12%
Other	35%	34%	39%

% of agencies

■ Discrimination ■ Bullying ■ Sexual Harrassment
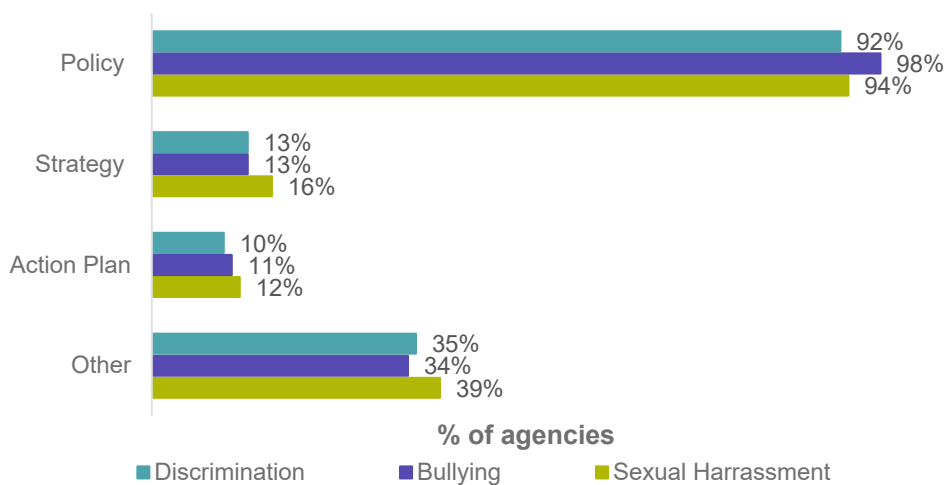
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

The GES Survey also collected information regarding agency review of policies, support or processes for the prevention, management and/or reporting of gender-based unacceptable behaviours in the 2 years prior to the survey period. It found that 75% of agencies had reviewed their bullying-related documents, 74% had reviewed their sexual harassment-related documents, and 73% had reviewed their discrimination-related documents. 13% of responding agencies reported they had not reviewed their policies, supports, or processes related to gender-based unacceptable behaviours since the Strategy was published.

Of the agencies that did review, the following reflections were reported:

- when developing new policies and processes, consulting with staff and considering all feedback is vital to understand perspectives and increase staff engagement and buy-in (10%)
- it is important to notify staff (particularly managers) of new policies, processes and procedures coming into effect, as well as communicate any changes to existing policies (9%)
- it is imperative to define clear roles and responsibilities in keeping the workplace safe, and ensure adequate training for staff that hold roles in the prevention and management of unacceptable behaviours (e.g. complaints review unit, Workplace Harassment Contact Officer) (9%)
- policies and processes should be reviewed intermittently to ensure they meet current best practice (7%)
- it is beneficial to have a variety of reporting mechanisms and to implement dedicated standalone resources (i.e. a standalone team for safe and respectful workplaces or a dedicated Sexual Harassment Policy) for the management of unacceptable workplace behaviours (6%)
- the review, promotion and support of Workplace Harassment Contact Officer and Mental Health First Aid networks is beneficial (5%).

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA's) *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* also reported other prevention measures utilised by Commonwealth entities.[10] 94% of participating entities had sex-based harassment grievance process, 90% provided sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention training for all employees, and 78% provided prevention training to managers.

Agencies strengthening approaches

The GES Survey indicated that since the Strategy publication, agencies have implemented a range of initiatives that have strengthened their approaches to preventing and responding to gender-based unacceptable behaviours (Figure 9). The most common was providing educational materials (84%), such as a dedicated intranet page or suite of resources, training sessions, or coaching.

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[10] WGEA (Workforce Gender Equality Agency), *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot*, WGEA, Australian Government, 2023, accessed 31 May 2024. The Snapshot represents 132,551 employees from 40 APS agencies (agencies who employee staff under the Public Service Act) and 12 non-APS agencies.

Figure 9 Initiatives implemented to strengthen prevention of and/or respond to gender-based unacceptable behaviours
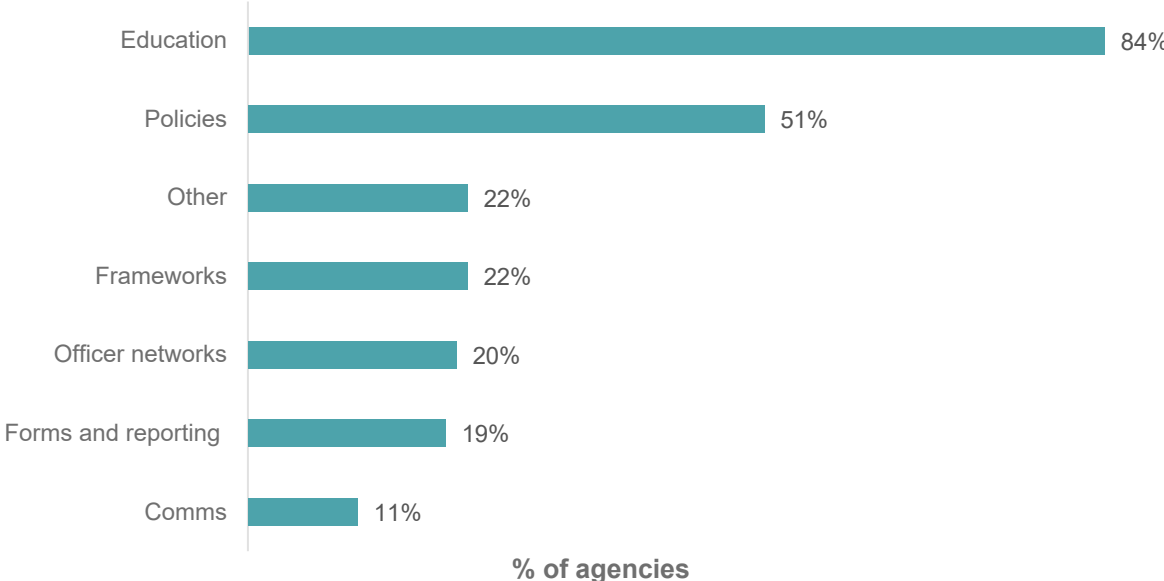
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

Some agencies shared the lessons learned from strengthening their approaches to preventing and/or responding to unacceptable workplace behaviours:

- education and awareness of policy changes and individual responsibilities and obligations in preventing unacceptable behaviours is key for all staff and senior leaders (17%)
- the importance of establishing a variety of avenues for employees to raise concerns, including anonymous reporting methods (14%)
- regular review of policies and processes to ensure documents capture contemporary best practice is an important part of the prevention and management process (5%).

Other lessons included capturing de-identified data to provide insights into trends which can assist the development of preventative and support measures, having adequate recordkeeping processes, and establishing a standalone team focused on preventing harassment and bullying.

Educational resources available to agencies

The GES Survey found that in the 2 years prior to the survey period, 90% of agencies offered some form of education (i.e. training, information session) on workplace bullying, 90% offered education for workplace discrimination, and 86% offered education on workplace sexual harassment.

Agencies were asked to share where they sourced their educational material from:

- educational material was from another APS source (23%): Respect@Work, APS Academy, Comcare Training and Learning, Fair Work Commission Online Learning Portal
- training courses were delivered by an external provider (16%)
- educational materials were developed internally (16%) i.e. e-learning module, PowerPoint presentation or recorded webinar
- educational materials bespoke to agency-specific needs not suitable for sharing (13%),

- training courses were sourced from Learnhub via subscription (9%).

APS Academy resources

APS Academy has created a Cross Agency Training Hub to provide a list of APS agencies that deliver essential information and training content for APS employees. This includes resources to support capability uplift on preventing sexual harassment from Respect@Work, Comcare, AHRC, and Fair Work Commission.

> The Academy's APS Induction Pathway sets out core training programs and resources available for new and returning employees. Completion of the Integrity in the APS module is mandatory for all new APS employees. This module was updated to include respectful behaviour in the workplace and include Respect@Work resources. The APS Companion is a digital magazine and complementary resource to the Induction Pathway. The magazine has been updated to include sexual harassment context and resources.

Prevention of sexual harassment

Respect@Work positive duty to eliminate sexual harassment

The Respect@Work National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces made a key recommendation that all workplaces will need to proactively take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sexual harassment. A new positive duty came into effect on 13 December 2022 under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*, to eliminate as far as possible:

1. discrimination on the grounds of sex in a work context
2. sexual harassment in connection with work
3. sex-based harassment in the work context
4. conduct creating a workplace environment that is hostile on the grounds of sex
5. related acts of victimisation.

The positive duty imposes a legal obligation on employers to take proactive action to prevent such behaviours from occurring in the workplace. This requires employers to focus on prevention and not only their response after the behaviours occur. The AHRC will monitor agency performance and has powers to investigate and enforce compliance with the positive duty. The APSC, AHRC, and Comcare have promoted awareness of the new provisions, including producing a video message from the current Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Anna Cody.

The APSC has additionally developed a webpage featuring extensive information products on preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the APS – developed by the AHRC, the Respect@Work Council, Comcare, and more. These resources can be used by agencies to apply these frameworks and guidance to their particular circumstances, and may be useful in generating ideas on the prevention of the other unacceptable behaviours needing to be addressed under the Strategy.

This year the APSC released the following resources designed for use by APS Human Resources, Work Health & Safety, and Diversity and Inclusion practitioners:

- *APS Model Policy for the Prevention of Workplace Sexual Harassment and related unlawful conduct*
- fact sheet on APS risk assessments for preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment, sex discrimination, victimisation and related unlawful behaviours
- APS Example Risk Register on preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment, sex discrimination, victimisation and related unlawful behaviours.

These resources are available on the APSC's GovTEAMS Diversity and Inclusion Discussion Forum; access can be requested via email to the APSC's Inclusion Policy team at diversity@apsc.gov.au.

In March 2024 the Commission also launched *ADDRESS: An APS model for responding to psychosocial hazards*, a first-of-its-kind model to support APS agencies by providing tools to identify and respond to psychosocial hazards in the workplace. ADDRESS supports the APS' commitment to risk mitigation and the recently released *SafeWork Australia Model Code of Practice: Sexual and gender-based harassment*.

> Comcare continues to update their webpage 'Harassment including sexual harassment' as new products are available. This includes a practical guide to help employers navigate the multiple referral pathways and to assist them to manage incidents of workplace sexual harassment - 'Referral pathways for sexual harassment in the workplace'.

Legislative support for preventing sexual harassment

Support for family and domestic violence (FDV)

FDV can affect any individual, but is most often experienced by women. A step towards addressing this action is the inclusion of a clause in the Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023, which has specified that:

> Workplace arrangements are to incorporate family and domestic violence support. Agencies are encouraged to provide the maximum support available for employees affected by family and domestic violence, noting the privacy and safety of impacted employees is paramount.

To complement the policy, the APSC Family and Domestic Violence Policy Framework and FDV support webpage assists agencies to develop their own policies on FDV. This also advises how agencies can provide maximum support to victims and refers training to managers.

Agency APS-wide bargaining has also implemented a common approach to employees facing FDV that considers the needs and individual circumstances of the employee. This is a new entitlement for 85 agencies.

The GES Survey found that 84% of agencies had a family and gender based violence policy, strategy, action plan, and/or other activity in place or undertaken in 2024. This was an improvement on 2021 where the APS Agency Survey showed a total of 72% of agencies reported having a family and gender based violence policy, strategy, or other. In contrast, 16% of agencies did not have any guidance in place in 2023, with the majority of these being extra small and small agencies. It is

recommended that these agencies work with the APSC or other similar agencies, such as those within their portfolio, to develop their own policy documentation on family and gender based violence.

In the 2 years prior to the GES Survey, 57% of agencies offered training, information sessions or some other form of education on FDV. This is much lower than the proportion of agencies that offered educational resources on workplace discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment. It is recommended that agencies work with the APSC or other similar agencies, such as those within their portfolio, to introduce educational offerings (examples are mentioned in *Educational resources available to agencies* above).

Gender inclusive communications

The GES Survey measured agency commitment on using gender inclusive language and images on communications and found that the majority of agencies had implemented these actions. The majority of agencies had reviewed gender inclusive language and images in their recruitment ads (77%), internal policy documents (75%), agency intranet (71%), and agency website (63%).

Superannuation awareness

The Strategy reported that in 2020, there was a 20% superannuation balance gap at retirement between male and female public sector superannuation balances as measured by Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation data.[11] The gap remained 20% in 2024.[12]

Findings from the 2019 Community and Public Sector Union's *What Women Want Survey* indicated that:

- one-third of women did not know what type of superannuation scheme they belonged to
- one-in-ten women do not know how much money they have in super
- over half of women had never been to any superannuation information sessions.[13]

The Strategy outlined the need for all employees to have a basic level of superannuation knowledge and noted the importance of agencies providing ongoing access to superannuation resources and awareness sessions, with a particular focus on employees early on in their career (entry level and graduate intakes).

GES Survey results show that since the Strategy was released, 51% of responding agencies provided employee superannuation awareness or educational sessions. 44% of responding agencies had offered superannuation information or resources to new recruits in addition to the standard superannuation application form as part of their induction. This indicates that more agencies need to work on promoting superannuation awareness.

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[11] Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation data, cited in APSC (Australian Public Service Commission), *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26,* APSC, Australian Government, 2021, p 16.
[12] Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation data.
[13] CPSU What Women Want Report 2019–20, cited in APSC (Australian Public Service Commission), *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26,* APSC, Australian Government, 2021, p 16.

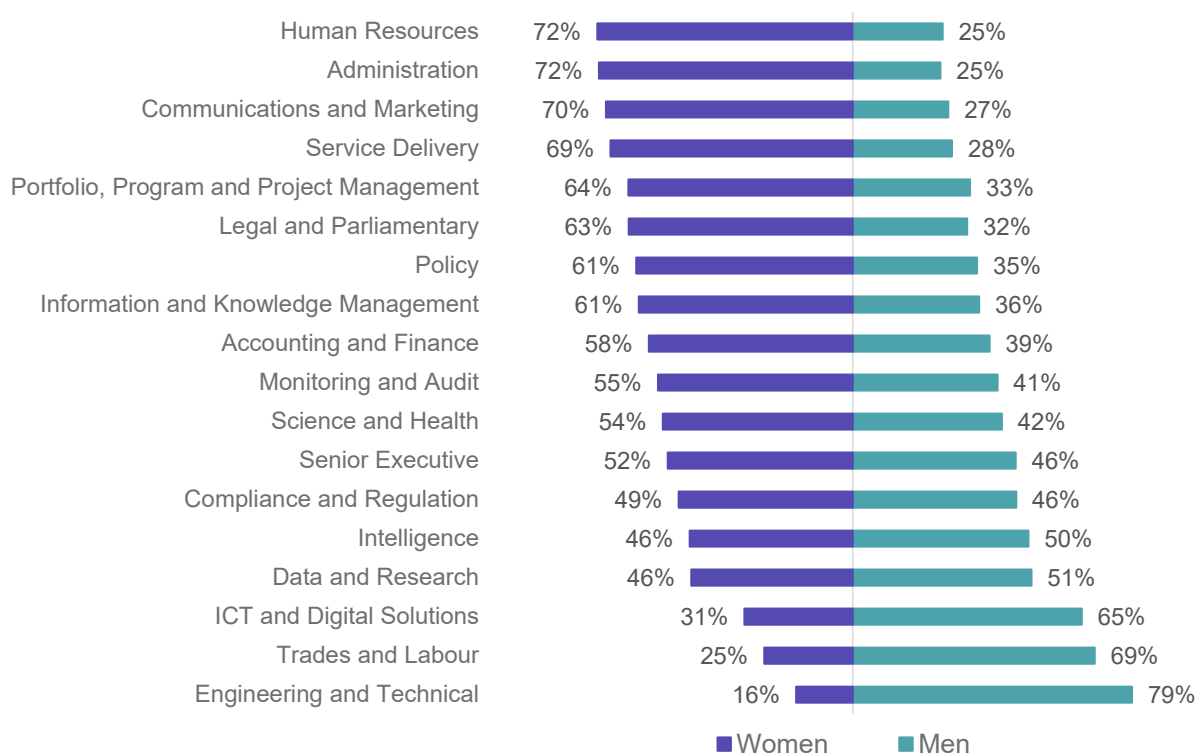# Strategy impacts on Action Area 3: Shifting gender stereotypes

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Ensuring gender diversity in selection processes, including internal processes and EOIs. Selection panels are gender-balanced and are equipped to call-out any potential bias during the process.	**Progress made**	• 97% of responding agencies were able to demonstrate ways in which they ensured gender balance on selection panels. • 90% of responding agencies demonstrated ways that potential biases could be called out or ways in which bias in selection panels is mitigated. • 58% of agencies stated that they provided training, information, and guidance to recruiters including unconscious bias training.
3A Agencies will create opportunities to strengthen gender representation in select occupations (e.g. STEM and Service Delivery) and talent pipelines, in a targeted way, taking into account the broader labour market.	**Improvement needed**	• The APS has seen almost no change in the representation of women and men across job families between 2021 and 2023. • Agencies said that they created opportunities to strengthen gender representation, however 16% noted they did not create any opportunities. • 32% noted recruitment processes, such as gender-balanced selection panels, inclusive language in job advertisements, and marketing content that reflects the diversity of staff. • 23% noted targeted recruitment of graduates, interns, and cadets in select occupations.
3B The APSC, in consultation with agencies, will review APS-wide parental leave provisions, with a view to creating more flexible parental leave entitlements to enable a greater choice for parents. This seeks to enable more equitable sharing of caring responsibilities.	**Achieved**	• APS-wide parental leave provisions have been changed since the Strategy commenced, offering more flexible parental leave entitlements. • All secondary carers have been offered 8 weeks parental leave, progressively increasing to be in line with the 18 weeks offered to women by February 2027. • Both primary- and secondary-carers will also be given the flexibility of 24 months following the birth of a child to utilise the entitlements.

Action	Status	Key points
3C Agencies will be proactive in offering parental leave and flexible work arrangements to all employees including those with caring responsibilities. Managers will favourably consider requests for flexibility for all supporting partners who are welcoming a child reflecting a strong commitment and support for flexible ways of working.	**Improvement needed**	• The GES Survey found that only 10% of responding agencies promoted and raised awareness of leave entitlements for secondary carers.

Gender representation across job families

From 2021 to 2023, there was minimal change in the representation of women compared to men across job families. The job families that had the lowest proportion of women were Engineering and Technical (16%), Trades and Labour (25%), and ICT and Digital Solutions (31%), while the occupations that had the lowest proportion of men were Human Resources (25%), Administration (25%), and Communications and Marketing (27%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Gender composition of APS job families

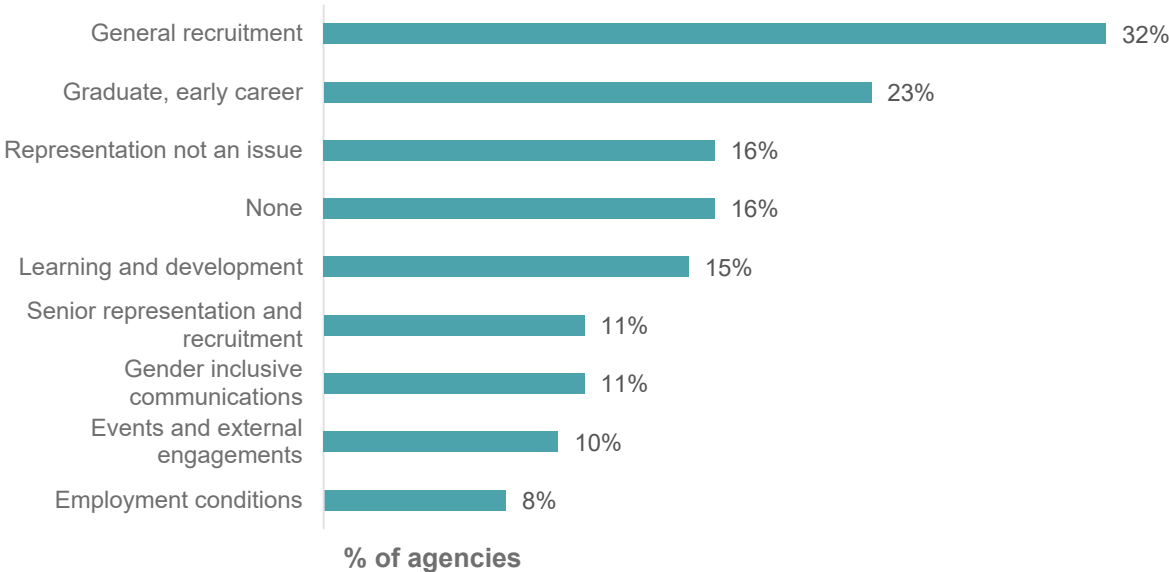| Job family	Women	Men
Human Resources	72%	25%
Administration	72%	25%
Communications and Marketing	70%	27%
Service Delivery	69%	28%
Portfolio, Program and Project Management	64%	33%
Legal and Parliamentary	63%	32%
Policy	61%	35%
Information and Knowledge Management	61%	36%
Accounting and Finance	58%	39%
Monitoring and Audit	55%	41%
Science and Health	54%	42%
Senior Executive	52%	46%
Compliance and Regulation	49%	46%
Intelligence	46%	50%
Data and Research	46%	51%
ICT and Digital Solutions	31%	65%
Trades and Labour	25%	69%
Engineering and Technical	16%	79%

Source: APS Employee Census 2023.

Agency efforts to strengthen gender representation in select occupations

The GES Survey asked agencies how they had created opportunities in the last 2 years to strengthen gender representation in select occupations such as STEM and Service Delivery (Figure 11). The most common response was creating opportunities through general recruitment and recruitment processes (32%), which included gender-balanced selection panels, using inclusive language in job advertisements and marketing content that reflects the diversity of staff. 23% of responding agencies targeted entry-level recruitment of graduates, trainees, interns and cadets in select occupations. Fewer (16%) stated that gender representation was not an issue across their agencies or that they had not created any opportunities in the last 2 years.

Figure 11 Ways agencies created opportunities to strengthen gender representation in occupations

Category	% of agencies
General recruitment	32%
Graduate, early career	23%
Representation not an issue	16%
None	16%
Learning and development	15%
Senior representation and recruitment	11%
Gender inclusive communications	11%
Events and external engagements	10%
Employment conditions	8%

**% of agencies**

Source: 2024 GES Survey.

Relevant agencies provided their reasons for not strengthening gender representation opportunities, with some indicating a focus on the under representation of women and not men in select occupations. WGEA's *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* has also indicated that Commonwealth entities rarely set targets to increase men's representation in roles dominated by women.[14] 10% of agencies reported already meeting targets for gender representation at senior leadership levels or having an over-representation of women in select occupations. Fewer (6%) agencies did not target gender representation in select occupations as they were satisfied that they had appropriate levels of gender representation within their agencies.

The GES Survey asked agencies to report the key initiatives implemented to strengthen gender representation in select occupations such as STEM and Service Delivery, specifically in a recruitment context (Figure 12). 17% applied a conscious and focused effort to maintain and monitor equal gender

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[14] WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022.*

representation in these select occupations, especially in senior leadership roles. 12% reported creating a talent pipelines, and specifically recruiting employees through specialist streams of graduate and entry level programs as a mechanism for further supporting these talent pipelines. 9% reported having gender-balanced selection panels and 8% reported undertaking workforce succession planning.

Figure 12 Most prominent opportunities implemented to strengthen gender representation in select occupations
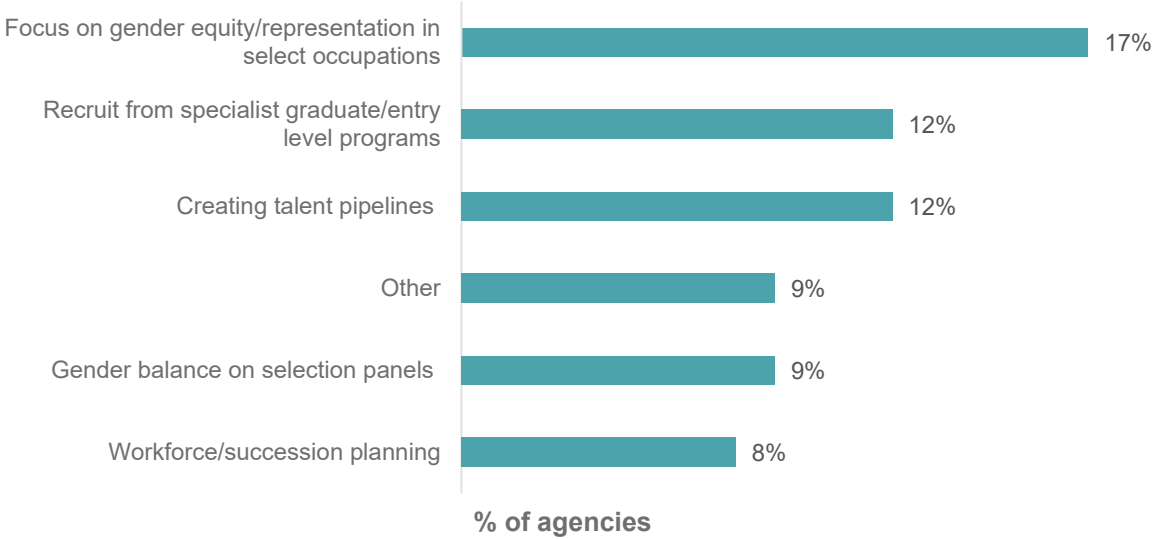
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

The Department of Defence for example has created a special program targeting high calibre mid-career STEM researchers:

> The NAVIGATE program is a dedicated science and technology pathway designed to enable high performing STEM specialists to transition into the complex area of Defence science and technology or continue to build on their career in Defence.

> Defence has committed to the NAVIGATE Program to improve access to high calibre mid-career STEM researchers, bolstering female representation at the mid-to-senior levels of the organisation by having a 50% female target, and increasing diversity to allow greater innovation to solve the future challenges for Defence.

Other efforts to strengthen gender representation in select occupations

To strengthen gender representation in the ICT and Digital Solutions job family, the APSC is developing an APS Data and Digital Workforce Plan in partnership with the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA). This is currently in the consultation phase and is intended to be launched in 2025, with plans for continuous improvement and maturation following its release. The workforce plan will include targeted and innovative initiatives designed to increase the diversity of the digital workforce across the APS.

Furthermore, to increase the pipeline of job-seeking graduates into STEM, digital, data, HR and other high demand occupations, the APS offers specialised graduate development programs across many government departments, such as the STEM stream. The marketing in these advertisements, such as the photos used and graduate reviews, has been tailored to help attract the underrepresented gender in the occupation. The multiple graduate streams were announced in 2020 with the first intake of graduates in 2021.

Gender diversity in selection processes

The GES Survey found that almost all (97%) agencies demonstrated ways in which they ensured gender balance on selection panels, with these methods shown in Figure 13. The most common method, used by half of the agencies, was through ensuring their agencies' recruitment policies and guidelines were followed. The second most common method was by maintaining gender balance, or having at least one man and one women present on selection panels (33%). Training and high-level approvals of panels were other methods commonly employed.

Figure 13 Ways agencies ensured gender balance on selection panels

Horizontal bar chart showing % of agencies:
- Abide by agency recruitment policies and guidelines: 49%
- Maintain gender balance on panels: 33%
- Provide education/training on importance of panel gender diversity: 23%
- Approval of selection panel prior to the recruitment process: 20%
- HR/recruitment can provide members to preserve gender balance on panels: 6%
- Other: 5%
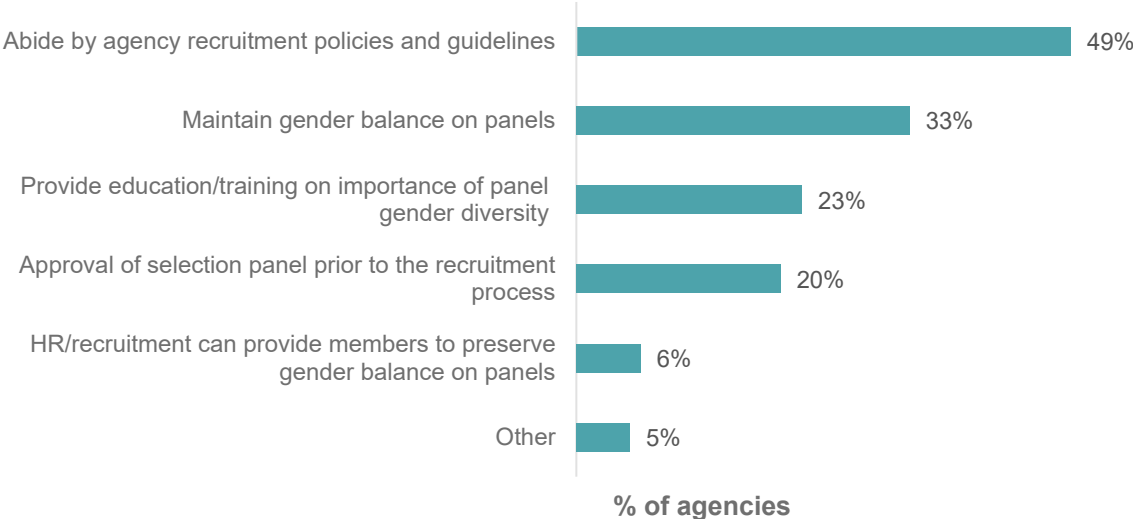
% of agencies

Source: 2024 GES Survey.

One in 10 agencies noted that achieving gender balance on selection panels was not always possible because:

- most panels have 3 members, making it impossible to achieve gender balance with an uneven number of panel members (highlighting a different interpretation of the gender balance requirements in these agencies)
- of a lack of available subject matter expert panellists of a particular gender in a gender-dominated industry
- of the availability of employees in small agencies.

Almost all agencies (90%) provided ways that selection panels are equipped to call out any potential biases during selection processes (Figure 14). The most common method was providing training or

guidance to selection panels such as through training in unconscious bias during recruitment and training on how to mitigate bias.

Figure 14 Ways that selection panels are equipped to call-out potential bias during selection processes
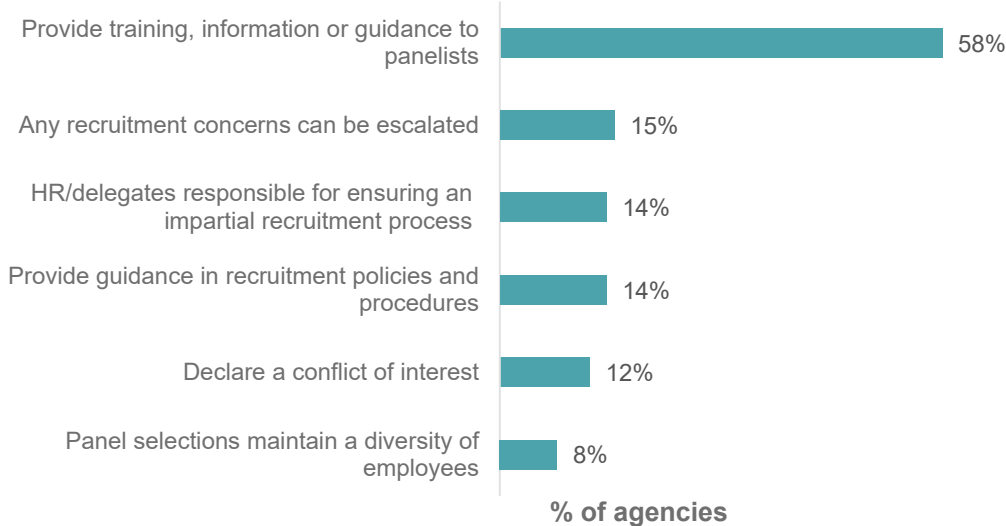
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

Parental leave and carers

The provision of equal leave options for all parents may assist in changing gender-based stereotypes around parental leave. Research by WGEA showed that in 2022 only 13.5% of paid parental leave was taken by men working in Commonwealth agencies.[15] Of the 67% of agencies with targets to address gender equality, only 10% had targets to increase the number of men taking parental leave.

The GES Survey also found little in the way of active encouragement of secondary carers to claim leave entitlements. When agencies were asked about initiatives or support they provide to encourage secondary carers to take parental or carers leave (in addition to the increased leave entitlements from APS bargaining), the majority of agencies only referred to other employment conditions in place. 46% reported that they already offer flexible work arrangements such as part-time, job sharing, compressed hours, flexible start and finish times and hybrid or fully remote work. 42% mentioned that their enterprise agreement or leave policy entitlements included provisions for secondary carers. In contrast, 10% reported that they promote and raise awareness of employee leave entitlements to encourage secondary carers to pursue these options.

Historically, most agencies have offered a shorter period of parental leave to secondary carers, compared to primary carers. In June 2023, the APSC published its Maternity Leave Act Review Report which recommended that parents should have access to a separate and equal entitlement to parental leave; paid parental leave should be extended to 18 weeks; and the 12 month service requirement

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[15] WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022.*

should be removed. The 2023 APS-wide bargaining process took steps to implement these recommendations. All agencies have now signed new Enterprise Agreements, offering secondary carers 8 weeks of parental leave. This will progressively increase and by February 2027 it will be in line with the 18 weeks offered to primary carers. Both carers will also be given the flexibility of 24 months following the birth or adoption of a child to utilise the entitlements. Furthermore, all qualifying periods to access the paid parental leave have been removed.

The increased entitlements offered under the APS common conditions are a positive step towards creating change and offering greater incentive for men to claim parental leave. The GES Survey received feedback from one of the first agencies to adopt the enhanced parental leave entitlements for secondary carers and they observed a strong interest in the entitlements with increased enquiries through their HR mailbox and enquiry line. Increased communications around the enhanced conditions is encouraged, with the following examples highlighting agencies' efforts on this topic:

> *Our Leaders Have Many Faces exhibition*, designed and implemented by AGD's Employee Networks, includes profiles of men on parental leave. (Attorney-General's Department)

> ARPANSA will be working with managers to ensure pro-active conversations are being held with secondary caregivers once they announce a pregnancy or placement (e.g. "what leave would you like to take and what working arrangements would suit you?" instead of "are you taking parental leave or asking for different working arrangements?"). (Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency)

> Promotion through emails, intranet articles and awareness campaigns, i.e., training, education, workshops, etc. on what is available to staff.

> Regularly providing information through internal communications supporting Flexible Working Arrangements for all staff including secondary caregivers, and Parental leave entitlements.

> A Parental and Maternity Leave *'Better Practice Guide' (BPG)* has been released.

Strategy impacts on Action Area 4: Flexible ways of working

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Access to flexible work. • Gender-neutral, flexible work policies are in place for all employees. • Leaders and managers at all levels are able to role model flexible work where it is appropriate for the individual and the organisation.	**Progress made**	• 74% of APS employees accessed flexible work practices, increasing by 8 percentage points since 2021. • The main improvement in flexible work practices was due to increased access to work from home arrangements. • 97% of agencies had flexible work policies in place. • 5% of male employees utilised part-time work; this was significantly less than 11% of non-binary employees, 14% of employees who use a different gender term, and 19% of female employees. • 60% of SES officers accessed flexible work practices. Their use of part-time and flexible hours of work were significantly lower than the APS average, while their working from home use was similar.
(Minimum standard) Valuing and supporting all types of caring responsibilities. • Managers are equipped to support all genders manage their family and caring responsibilities, including elder and disability care, such as through flexible ways of working.	**Progress made**	• 80% of carers accessed flexible work practices, especially those with small children. • Consistent with all employees, 11% of carers were not confident that if they requested a flexible work arrangement it would be given reasonable consideration. • Improved APS conditions for carers, including 18 days carers leave available across all agencies and only one medical certificate required annually for some carers, should improve the ability of carers to manage family and caring responsibilities.

| Action	Status	Key points
4A Agencies will review flexible work policies and practices to ensure they provide for a variety of contexts and settings.	**Achieved**	• Flexible work policies have been reviewed as part of APS bargaining. An APS statement of common conditions and APS principles of flexible work was released in 2023.
4B Agencies will provide new parents a flexible, supportive and enabling environment in line with the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond, which could include seeking accreditation as a 'Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace'.	**Progress made**	• 96% of agencies offered on-site breast feeding facilities. • APS-wide condition introduced that ensures parents are offered a break to breastfeed and express milk for their baby. • In December 2023, 21 agencies were breastfeeding accredited and another 4 were in the process of becoming accredited. This had increased slightly since the start of the Strategy.
4C Agencies will enhance manager capability, including people management, and equip middle managers to lead flexible teams	**Progress made**	• 54% of agencies had measures to offer training for all employees to work with flexible teams. • The APS Academy offered courses that enhance manager capability in leading flexible teams.
4D Agencies will consider advertising all APS positions as full time, part-time and job share	**Progress made**	• 29% of agencies considered advertising all positions full-time, part-time, and as a job share. • Of those agencies that did not advertise all positions full-time, part-time, and as a job share, only 9% reported that they were too small to either offer these options or look into this matter, and 8% reported that they had not yet considered offering all positions with these options. The remaining agencies could not design their positions to meet all 3 criteria.

Access of flexible work arrangements

Overview of access

Flexible work arrangements was commonplace among APS employees, with 74% of employees indicating that they had utilised at least one flexible work practice in the 2023 APS Employee Census (Figure 15). This has improved since the start of the Strategy in 2021, with an increase of 8

percentage points due to the increased uptake of working from home. 57% of employees accessed working away from the office / working from home at least part of the time. Not commonly used were a compressed work week and job sharing, with 3% and 0.3% of employees reporting using these respectively.

Figure 15 Types of flexible working utilised 2021-2023
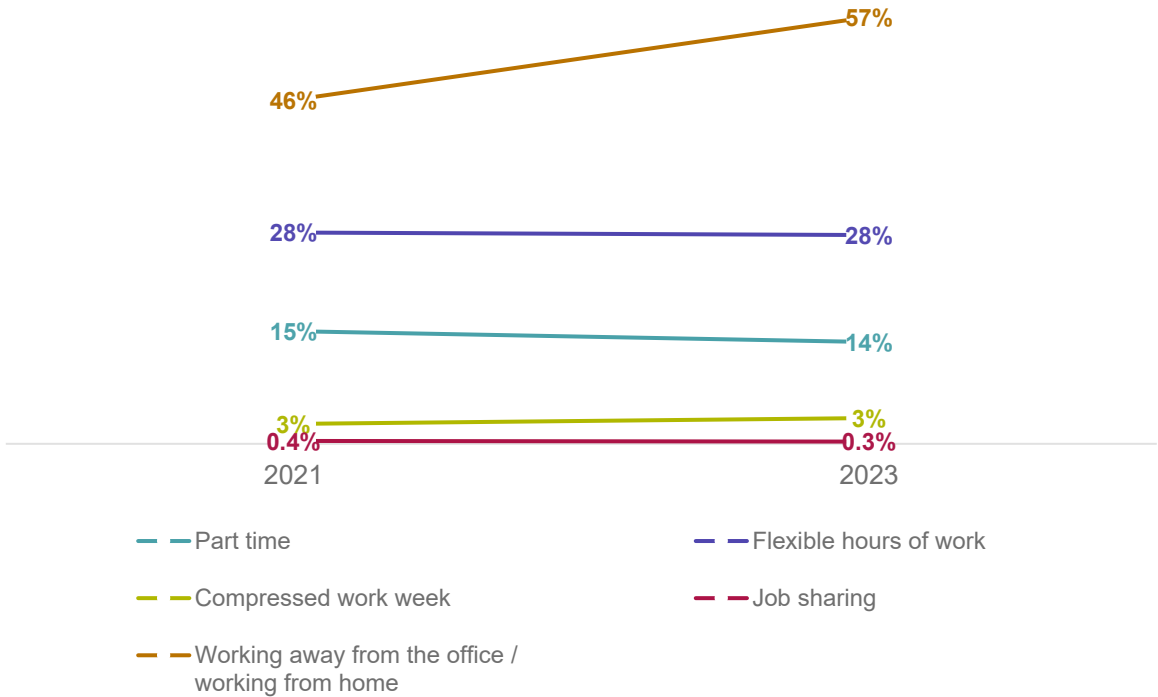
Source: APS Employee Census 2021 and APS Employee Census 2023.

Despite the increases reported above, some employees experienced difficulties in accessing flexible work arrangements. The 2023 APS Employee Census showed that 11% of responding employees were not confident that if they requested a flexible work arrangement it would be given reasonable consideration and 13% were not satisfied with their non-monetary employment conditions (e.g. leave, flexible work arrangements, or other benefits).

Furthermore, 12% of employees indicated the most important positive initiative they would like to see in their working environment was increased flexibility in work practices. This was higher than the 10% recorded in 2021 at the start of the Strategy. The 2021 APS Agency Survey showed that some of the most common barriers employees may face in accessing flexible work were that critical functions required being on-site (53%), access to classified materials (24%), and availability of IT assets (21%).
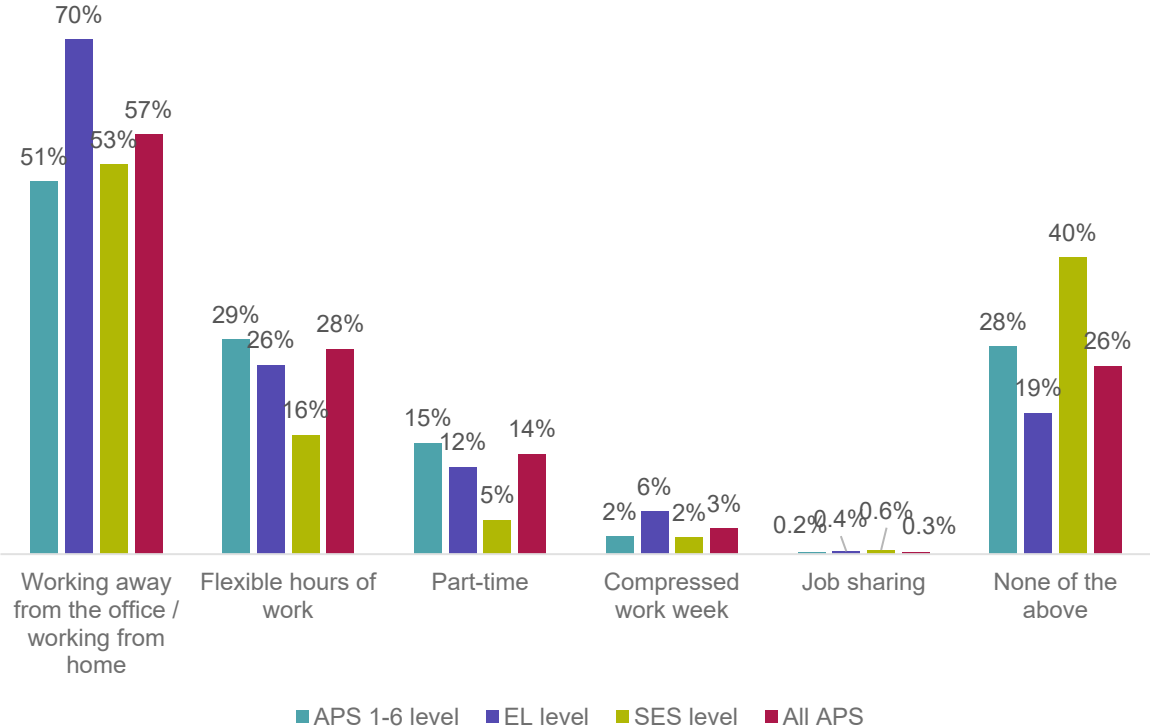
SES use of flexible work arrangements

60% of SES officers accessed flexible working arrangements but this was 15 percentage points lower than the APS overall.[16] Figure 16 shows that 53% of SES utilised working from home arrangements,

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[16] Not 14 percentage points, as suggested in Figure 16, due to rounding.

though they were far less likely to work part-time or have flexible hours of work than other classifications. The proportion of part-time employees reduced as seniority increased.

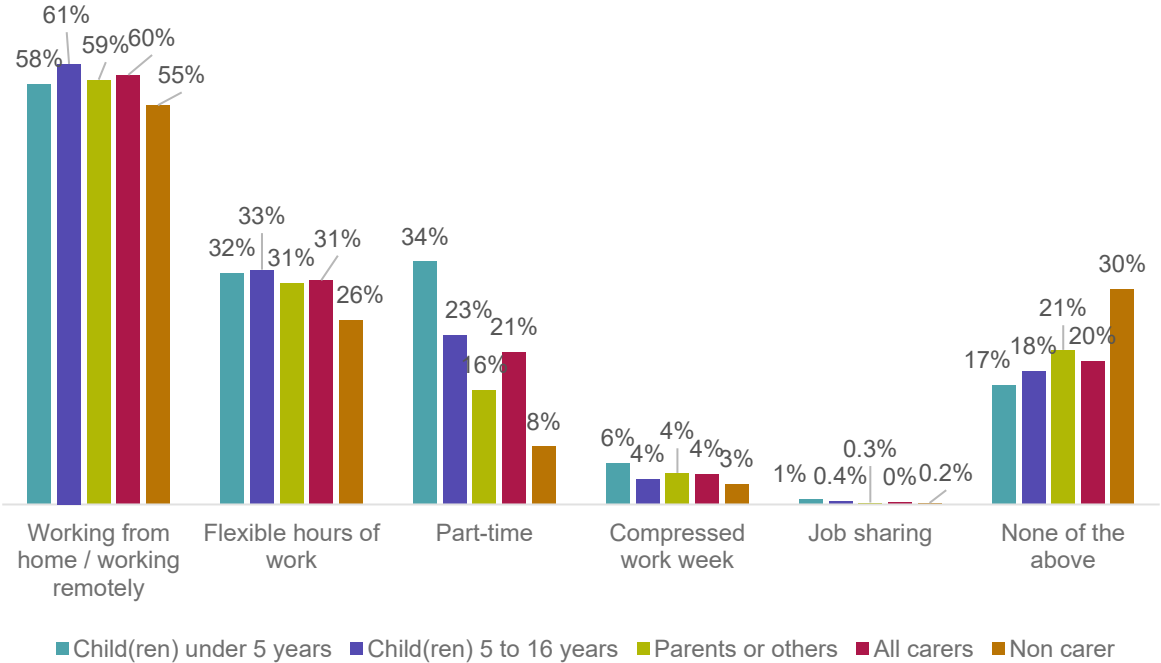**Figure 16 Use of flexible working arrangements by classification level**

Source: 2023 APS Employee Census.

Carers use of flexible working arrangements

One of the Strategy's areas of focus is ensuring all carers (carers of children, elderly and people with disability) are supported through flexible ways of working. Results showed that 80% of carers were utilising flexible work practices in 2023 and this had improved since 2021, rising 6 percentage points. In particular, those with small children used a range flexible work practices and were much more likely to work part-time (34%) than non-carers (8%) (Figure 17). However, consistent with all employees, 11% of carers were not confident that if they requested a flexible work arrangement it would be given reasonable consideration.

**Figure 17 Use of flexible working arrangements by types of carers**

Source: 2023 APS Employee Census.

Gender differences in the usage of flexible work

The APS Employee Census showed that all genders accessed flexible working arrangements at largely similar rates, except for part-time work. 5% of male employees utilised part-time work; this was significantly less than 19% of female employees, 14% of employees who use a different gender term and 11% of non-binary employees. The proportion of male employees accessing part-time work has remained stable over the past few years, while the proportion of women and non-binary employees has declined (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Per cent of employees working part-time by gender
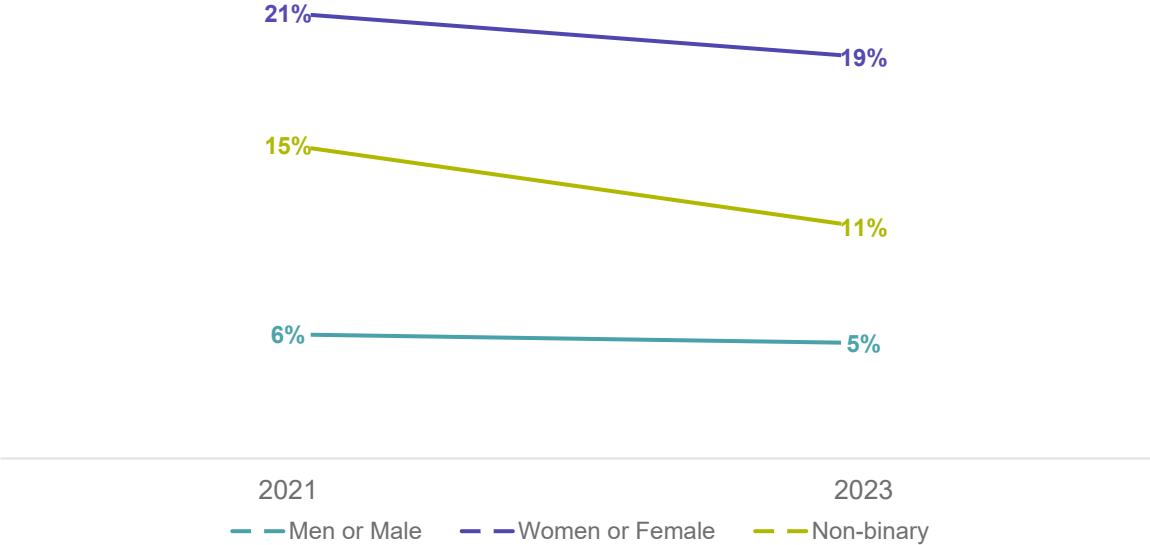
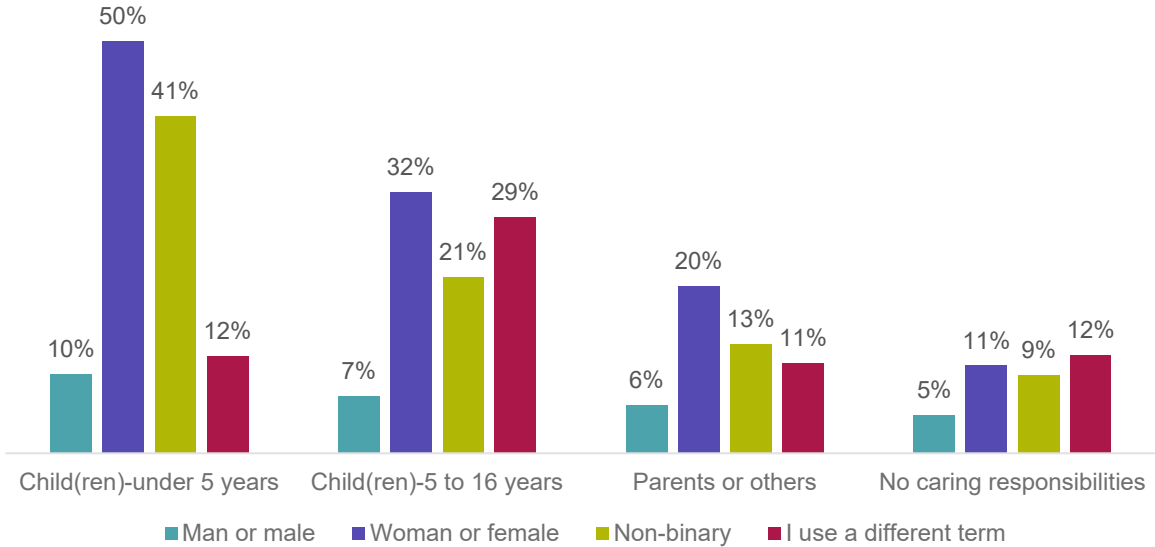Source: APS Employee Census 2021 and APS Employee Census 2023.

Note: Note employees that used a different term were not included in this table due to a small number of responses.

Findings from the Diversity Council Australia's *Inclusion@Work Index 2023-24* revealed a larger flexible work utilisation gap of 15% between men and women in the Australian workforce.[17] Their research indicated that this gap was driven by the negative treatment of men who accessed flexible work options, especially those who accessed arrangements that were traditionally associated with care work, such as reduced hours.

There were greater gender differences in the uptake of part-time work for carers (Figure 19). Male carers consistently used the least amount of part-time work proportionally as a cohort compared to other genders. Female carers used the most.

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[17] Diversity Council of Australia, *Inclusion@Work Index 2023–2024: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce Synopsis Report*, DCA, 2024, accessed 22 May 2024.

Figure 19 Uptake of part-time work for different carers by gender

Legend: Man or male, Woman or female, Non-binary, I use a different term

Category	Man or male	Woman or female	Non-binary	I use a different term
Child(ren)-under 5 years	10%	50%	41%	12%
Child(ren)-5 to 16 years	7%	32%	21%	29%
Parents or others	6%	20%	13%	11%
No caring responsibilities	5%	11%	9%	12%

Source: 2023 APS Employee Census.

Future incremental improvements to paid parental leave provisions for secondary carers, initiated as a result of APS-wide bargaining, may encourage men to take up more caring responsibilities and help to change cultural norms. There may be an opportunity for agencies to further promote these increased conditions within their communications.

Improving access to flexible work practices

Flexible work policies

Since the implementation of the Strategy, the Principles of flexible work in the APS were endorsed by the Secretaries Board on 28 March 2023 and are as follows:

1. Flexibility applies to all roles, with different types of flexibility being suitable for different roles.
2. Flexibility needs to be mutually beneficial.
3. Organisational and team needs frame conversations about individual flexibility arrangements.
4. Flexible work arrangements value meaningful and regular face-to-face contact.
5. Flexibility is embedded, modelled and refined.

These principles were a key input into APS bargaining which resulted in a common clause on flexible working arrangements, and which now appears in all APS enterprise agreements.

Furthermore, the GES Survey found that 97% of responding agencies had a flexible work policy in place. 86% also had work from home / remote working policies, and 70% had carer responsibility policies.

Working from home

APS-wide bargaining has locked in consistent flexible working rights across the service, including no caps on the number of days employees can request to work from home. As part of new agency enterprise agreements, all requests are to be considered on their merit and business requirements. This encourages conversations between managers and employees about what is best for both employees and the workplace, rather than blanket requirements that may prevent these discussions.

Support for carers

APS-wide bargaining has implemented a range of changes to flexibility to support carers. Bargaining has ensured employees at all agencies have at least 18 days personal/carers' paid leave. This has resulted in an increase of days for 10 agencies. Additionally, carers of someone with a chronic illness or disability are now able to provide one medical certificate to cover up to a 12 month period.

Manager training on flexible work

WGEA's *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* showed that 54% of Commonwealth entities had measures in their flexible work arrangement strategies or policies to offer training for all employees on how to work in flexible and remote teams.[18]

The APS Academy has introduced 2 courses to support managers across the service to build capability on flexible ways of working:

1. The Leading Hybrid Teams course, offered to EL1 employees and above, is designed to equip APS leaders with knowledge and frameworks to overcome the challenges and make the most of the opportunities associated with leading hybrid teams in an APS context. It supports leaders to make flexible working decisions in line with the intent of the APS Flexible Work Principles.
2. The APS Leadership Edge course, offered to EL2 employees, develops leadership and management skills through a range of course activities, including a focus on new ways of working.

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

A breastfeeding friendly environment supports women who are balancing the challenges of parenthood and returning to work. The Australian National Breastfeeding strategy has placed more emphasis on accreditation by including a priority action for all agencies to seek Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace accreditation. Becoming accredited as a breastfeeding friendly workplace with the Australian Breastfeeding Association involves an application process that includes developing a breastfeeding policy, setting up a breastfeeding space, and implementing a supportive culture. In December 2023, 21 agencies were formally breastfeeding accredited and another 4 were in the process of becoming accredited, according to the Australian Breastfeeding Association (personal communication, December 2023). This is an increase of 8 agencies since the start of the Strategy.

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[18] WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.

WGEA's *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* revealed that 96% of Commonwealth entities offered breastfeeding facilities on site.[19] APS-wide bargaining has formally offered parents a break to breastfeed and express milk for their baby, which is a new entitlement for 85 agencies.

Advertising APS positions, full-time, part-time, and as job share

The GES Survey found that 29% of responding agencies had considered advertising all positions as full-time, part-time, and job share. 5% managed to do so all of the time (Figure 20), with 24% doing so at least some of the time. 49% advertised some roles as full-time and part-time.

Figure 20 Share of agencies that advertised positions as full-time, part-time, or job share
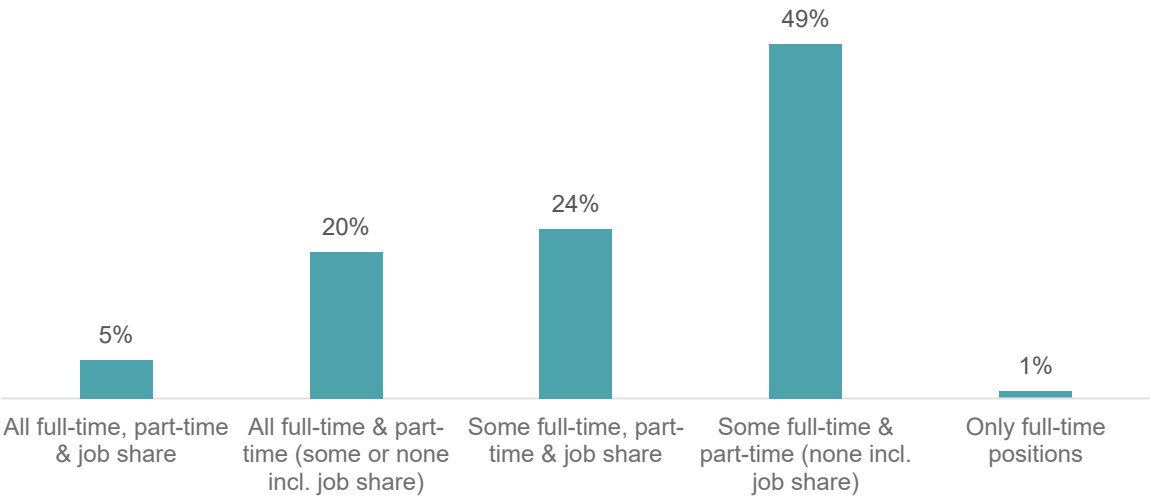
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

71% of responding agencies had not considered advertising all positions as full-time, part-time, and job share. Of these agencies, 9% reported that they were too small to either offer these options or look into this matter, and 8% reported that they had not yet considered offering all positions with these options. The rest could not design their positions to meet all 3 criteria:

- 79% reported that not all their positions could be designed for job sharing
- 59% reported that not all their positions could be offered as part-time
- 6% reported that not all their positions could be advertised this way due to the nature of the work in those positions.

# Strategy impacts on Action Area 5: Gender data

Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Understanding the pay gap. • Agency-level gender pay gap is known and tracked (at both whole of agency and classification level).	**Achieved**	• The APSC has sent all agencies an annual Remuneration Report providing gender pay gap figures at both agency and classification levels since 2018. • 52% of agencies had analysed drivers of their gender pay gap or this was underway, 20% were planning to, and 28% had no analysis planned. • The APS Gender Pay Gap had continued to decline from 6.0% in 2021 to 4.5% in 2023.
(Minimum standard) Tracking data on gender composition. • Gender disaggregated data across all classifications, geographical locations and key job types is tracked.	**Progress made**	• 92% of agencies reported that they track gender disaggregated data across classifications. • 72% track across geographical locations. • 62% track across job types.

5A Agencies will progressively build their capacity and capability to collect, analyse and publish (internally) gender disaggregated data across all people-metrics. Agencies will collect and publish (internally) data disaggregated by other diversity and inclusion variables. This information will support agencies to better target their gender equality initiatives.	**Progress made**	• Since the launch of the Strategy, 60% of agencies indicated that they have increased their capability to collect and analyse high-level gender data.
		• Agencies reported they collect and internally publish gender disaggregated data by:
		  o First Nations (94% collect, 60% publish)
		  o Disability status (92% collect, 58% publish)
		  o Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) status (90% collect, 58% publish).
		  o Other diversity and inclusion metrics (51% collect, 39% publish).

Action	Status	Key points
5B Agencies will review their policies and processes for entering into an Individual Flexibility Arrangement (IFA) with an employee to ensure there is equality of opportunity (a level playing field) for all genders. This will include reviewing the number of current IFAs by gender. Agencies will implement any necessary changes to the process and monitor impact. The IFA review will focus on the process to develop IFAs, rather than the specifics of an IFA. The APSC will look to include an agency breakdown on IFAs in agency annual remuneration reports.	**Improvement needed**	• The total number of IFAs in place was 4,850 in 2023, an increase of 53% compared to 2021. • In 2023, 3.7% of male employees, 2.4% of female employees, and 0.7% of non-binary employees had an IFA. • The APSC has included IFA information disaggregated by gender as part of the Individual Agency Remuneration Reports for 2023. • Future analysis will investigate whether IFA usage differences are caused by occupational factors, such as male employees being more prevalent within in-demand occupations.
5C The APSC, in collaboration with APS agencies, will develop a strategic research plan to better understand gender dynamics in the APS workforce. Priority research projects identified in the research plan should leverage the socio-demographic data and workforce information held by the APSC, including through research partnerships with the academic community.	**Progress made**	• The APSC has pursued research projects that utilise APSC workforce databases. • The APSC has published a drivers of the APS gender pay gap report and a follow up report to provide insight into what is driving the pay gap between women and men in the APS, with future analysis to include non-binary employee remuneration. • The APSC has published gender analyses within the SOSR publications. • The APSC has also collaborated with WGEA on their *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot*, with WGEA's research focused on better understanding gender dynamics in the APS workforce.

APS Gender Pay Gap

The APS Remuneration Survey collects remuneration data on women, men, and non-binary employees.[20] Analysis indicates that the APS gender pay gap between women and men has fallen over time to 4.5% in 2023 (Figure 21), which was less than half the national pay gap (12.0%).[21] Since the development of the Strategy, the gender pay gap between women and men has continued to drop, falling from 6.0% in 2021.

Figure 21 APS Gender pay gap over time
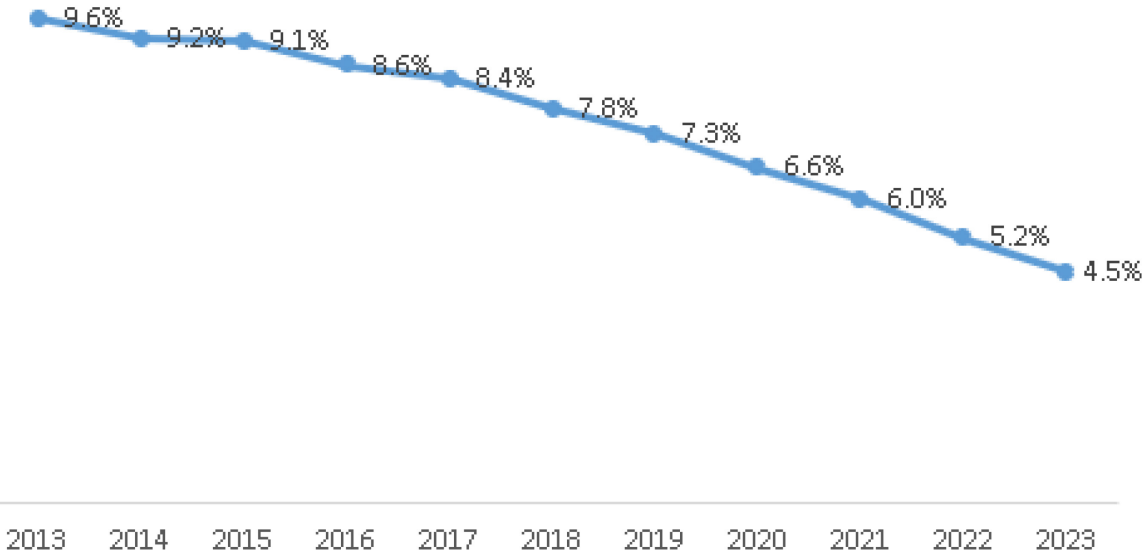
Source: APS Remuneration Survey 2013-2023.

The APSC has analysed the drivers of the APS gender pay gap. Findings showed it was mainly driven by more women at the APS3 to APS5 levels compared to men. A follow up report outlined how, on average, more women at higher levels, combined with a steady proportion of women at lower levels, had seen improvements in the APS gender pay gap. More women at higher levels was in turn driven by both more engagements and promotions of women into those levels. WGEA's *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* showed that some Commonwealth entities have tried to increase the number of women in leadership positions by setting targets.[22] 67% of agencies set gender equality targets, and 40% of these agencies set a target to increase women's representation in leadership positions.[23]

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[20] Remuneration data on employees who use a different gender term is not collected.
[21] WGEA, *The ABS data gender pay gap*, WGEA website, n.d., accessed 31 May 2024.
[22] WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.
[23] WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.

Agencies understanding their gender pay gap

All agencies benefit from understanding their gender pay gap and gender composition across occupations at all levels. They can use this information to better target their gender equality initiatives. WGEA's *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot* found that 56% of Commonwealth entities had conducted a pay gap audit, with 68% of those who had undertaken an audit taking action afterwards.[24] Common actions taken include 84% of agencies reporting pay equity metrics to their executive, and 58% identifying the causes of pay gaps.[25] Some common reasons for not conducting a gender pay gap analysis included 17% of agencies not being aware of the need to, another 17% reporting that the analysis was currently under development, and 13% reporting insufficient resources or expertise to undertake such analysis.[26]

In an effort to bring greater awareness to gender pay differences within agencies and encourage targeted strategies to improve them, the Strategy has a minimum standard for agencies to track their gender pay gap by whole of agency and classification level. To support agencies with this task, the APSC has sent all agencies an annual Remuneration Report providing gender pay gap figures at both agency and classification levels since 2018. All agencies have since been required to brief their Minister on these results, encouraging accountability and greater visibility of the figures. This accountability and transparency will increase in early 2025 when WGEA will start to publish the gender pay gap for any agency with 100 or more employees, following changes to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*.

According to GES Survey results, 52% of agencies indicated that analysis to identify the drivers of the gender pay gap had been conducted or was underway, while 20% of agencies reported that they had not yet undertaken analysis but were planning to do so. Finally, 28% of agencies indicated that there was no analysis planned. WGEA has published guidance around how to conduct gender pay gap analysis, including how to compare agency data with common drivers of the gender pay gap.

Agency gender and diversity data collection and analysis

Since the launch of the Strategy, 60% of agencies reported that they increased their capability to collect and analyse high-level gender data, and many have stated that they track gender data across classifications (92%), geographical locations (72%), and job types (62%).

Agencies also reported they collect and internally publish gender data disaggregated by employees with disability, and First Nations, and CALD representations (Figure 22).

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24 WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.
25 WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.
26 WGEA, *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot 2022*.

Figure 22 Collected and published gender data by diversity groups
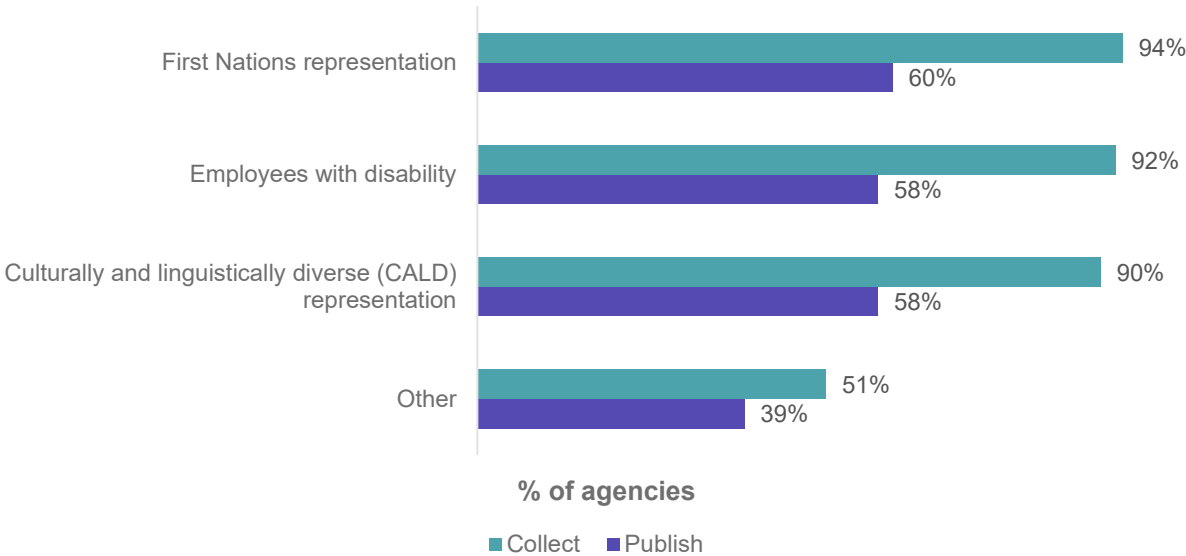
Source: 2024 GES Survey.

The other metrics that agencies collected and/or published varied widely and included LGBTQIA+ status (19%), gender identity (14%), age (9%), carer responsibilities (8%), non-English speaking background (4%), neurodiversity (3%), and place of birth (3%).
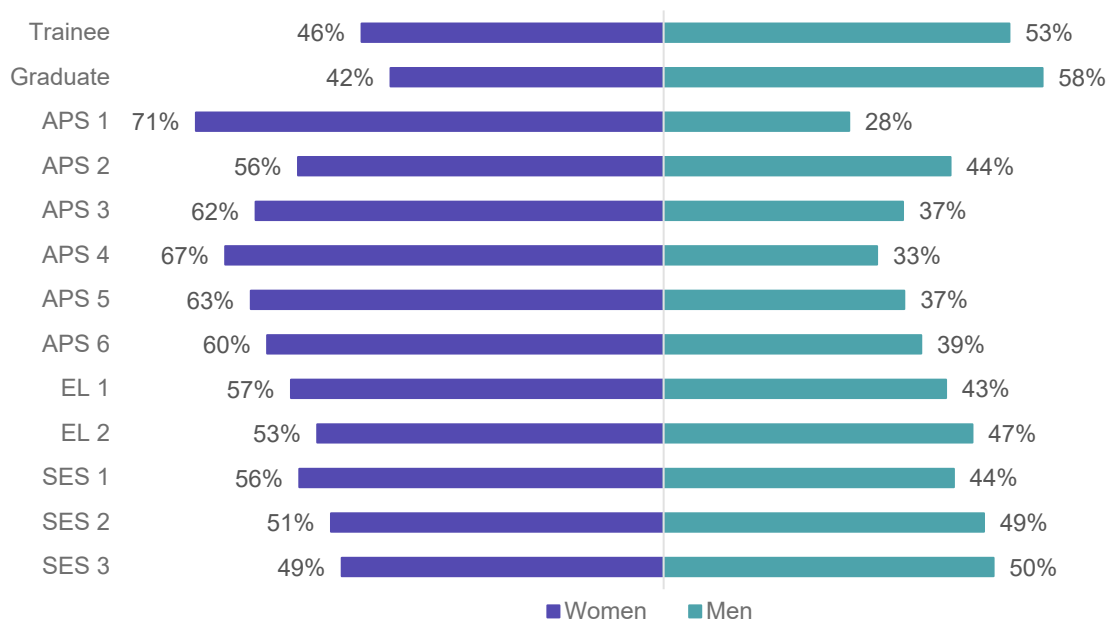
Gender representation across APS classification levels

Women made up over 60% of the APS workforce in 2023, while men were 39%, and non-binary employees were 0.4%, based on APSED December 2023 data. Women now comprise 54% of the total SES cohort, which is a rise of 3 percentage points since 2021. The APS has achieved gender balance between men and women for the first time at every senior leadership level except for SES Band 3, where women are close to parity (see Figure 23).[27] The continued increase in women at leadership levels is expected to create a positive flow-on effect.[28]

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[27] Equal gender representation for non-binary employees is difficult to present in this figure because they comprise less than half a percent of the total APS workforce. Nonetheless, 87% of non-binary employees are at the APS1–6 levels, 10% are at the EL and SES levels, and 3% are at the Trainee and Graduate levels, based on APSED December 2023 data.
[28] APSC, '2.3 Gender equality', *State of the Service Report 2021-22,* APSC, Australian Government, 2022, accessed 7 August 2024.

Figure 23 Proportion of men and women at each APS classification level 2023

Level	Women	Men
Trainee	46%	53%
Graduate	42%	58%
APS 1	71%	28%
APS 2	56%	44%
APS 3	62%	37%
APS 4	67%	33%
APS 5	63%	37%
APS 6	60%	39%
EL 1	57%	43%
EL 2	53%	47%
SES 1	56%	44%
SES 2	51%	49%
SES 3	49%	50%

■ Women   ■ Men

Source: December 2023 APS Employment Database.

The increase of women at senior levels has been noted by individual agencies in the GES Survey as a positive change since the Strategy was published in 2021. For example:

> The FWO has achieved 50% or greater representation of women in senior leadership positions, gender parity at all levels, and a gender pay gap of 2.5%, less than half the APS average of 5.2%. (Fair Work Ombudsman)

At the individual classification level, the proportion of women has decreased at the APS2 to APS4 levels between the years 2021 and 2023. Research conducted by Breunig, Hansell, and Win (2023) showed that promotion prospects for women employees in the APS has improved substantially over time at all levels.[29] By 2020, women were as likely as men to be promoted at junior levels and more likely than men to be promoted at senior levels, controlling for a range of skills and experience. They argue that there is suggestive evidence that gender equity strategies set by agencies have been effective in balancing gender diversity in senior positions between women and men.

Individual Flexibility Arrangement (IFAs) by gender

The APSC publishes IFA data each year in the APS Remuneration Report. An IFA can be used to vary the effect of an enterprise agreement or award where agreed between the employer and

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[29] R Breunig, D Hansell, and N N Win, 'Promotion in the Australian Public Service: Improvements for women and stagnation for cultural and linguistic minorities', *Tax and Transfer Policy Institute Working Paper 1/2024*, January 2024, accessed 8 August 2024.

employee, as long as the employee is better off overall.[30] An IFA can alter a range of conditions such as pay and allowances, leave, income maintenance, flexible working arrangements, superannuation, and subscriptions or memberships.

The total number of IFAs held by APS employees in 2023 was 4,847, an increase of 52% compared to 2021. In 2023, 3.7% of male employees, 2.4% of female employees, and 0.7% of non-binary employees entered into an IFA. While the number of IFAs has increased since 2021, the difference between employees of different genders remained unchanged. Future analysis will investigate whether these differences are caused by occupational factors, such as male employees being more prevalent within in-demand occupations.

Gender dynamics in the APS workforce

The APSC has pursued individual research projects utilising APSC workforce data. For example, the APSC has published a drivers of the APS gender pay gap report and a follow up report to provide insight into what is driving the pay gap between women and men in the APS, with future analysis to include non-binary employee remuneration. The APSC has also released several gender analyses as part of various State of the Service Reports.[31]

The APSC has also collaborated with WGEA on their *2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot*, with WGEA's research focused on better understanding gender dynamics in the APS workforce. Australian National University researchers have modelled APS careers utilising APSED data to investigate, among other things, the promotion prospects of women compared to men in the APS.[32]

[30] APSC, *Australian Public Service Report Remuneration Report 2021,* APSC, Australian Government, 2022, accessed 8 August 2024.
[31] See APSC, 'Chapter 3: Your APS', *State of the Service Report 2020-21*, APSC, Australian Government, 2021, accessed 7 August 2024; APSC, '2.3 Gender equality', *State of the Service Report 2021-22*; APSC, 'Gender equality in the APS', *State of the Service Report 2022-23,* APSC, Australian Government, 2023, accessed 7 August 2024.
[32] Breunig et al., 'Promotion in the Australian Public Service: Improvements for women and stagnation for cultural and linguistic minorities'.

Strategy impacts on Action Area 6: Leveraging our external influence

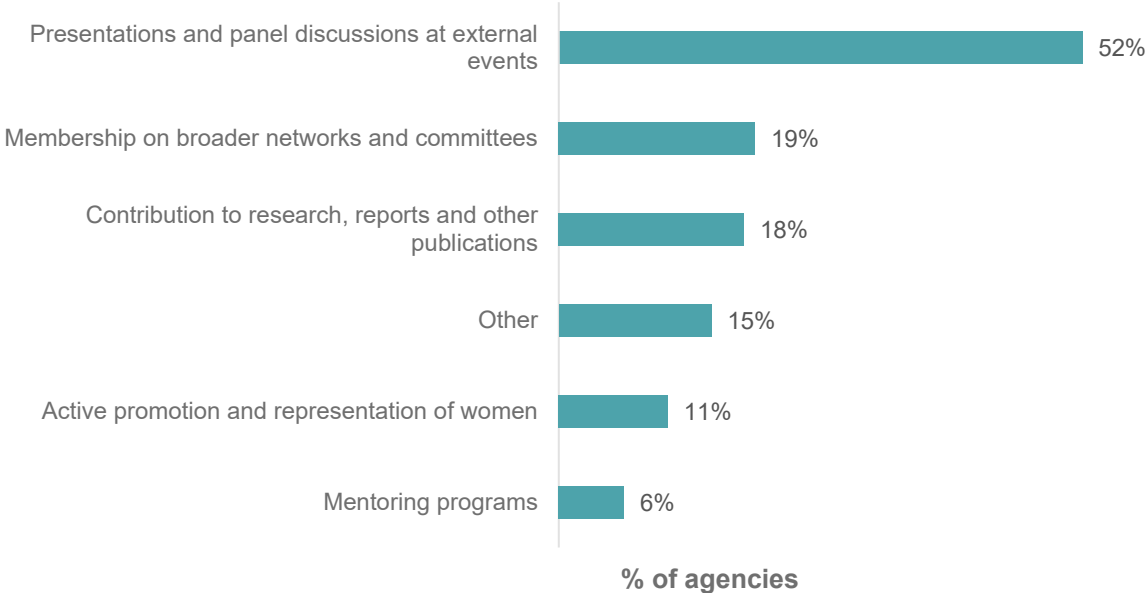| Action	Status	Key points
(Minimum standard) Agencies will drive change beyond the workplace through: • Agency heads and senior leaders speaking about gender equality at public engagements • Using all avenues to continue to promote gender equality, including through suppliers.	**Progress made**	• 60% of agencies that responded to the GES Survey reported their leaders had spoken about gender equality at public engagements. • Certain Request for Tenders responses must demonstrate compliance with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* by supplying a letter of compliance either with their submission or before entering a contract.
6A Agencies will continue to progressively embed or strengthen gender equality outcomes in the course of their everyday work. This includes considering how policy development and service delivery design may impact genders differently.	**Progress made**	• From the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, gender responsive budgeting was applied across the budget process, embedding gender analysis in all budget decision making. • All agencies are to undertake gender analysis on new policy proposals, and some will provide gender impact assessments.
6B Agencies will demonstrate leadership on gender equality beyond their workplace in their relationships with industry and communities.	**Progress made**	• 67% of responding agencies reported ways in which they demonstrated leadership on gender equality with industry and communities.

Agencies demonstrating leadership on gender equality externally

A considerable proportion of agencies are actively driving gender equality beyond their workplaces. 60% of agencies reported through the GES Survey that their leaders had spoken about gender equality at public engagements.

67% of responding agencies reported ways in which they demonstrated leadership on gender equality with industry and communities. These actions are shown in Figure 24 below. Around half (52%) of the agencies reported demonstrating leadership by supporting or participating in presentations and panel discussions at external engagements and events, including internationally. 19% mentioned they were active participants on broader networks and committees and had formed partnerships with other agencies to advance gender equality, while 18% of agencies had contributed to research, reports, and other publications regarding leadership on gender quality. 11% had mentioned actively promoting

women in roles traditionally dominated by men and seeking representation of women on committees and panels as a way of demonstrating leadership on gender equality.

Figure 24 Ways agencies had demonstrated leadership on gender equality beyond the workplace

Category	% of agencies
Presentations and panel discussions at external events	52%
Membership on broader networks and committees	19%
Contribution to research, reports and other publications	18%
Other	15%
Active promotion and representation of women	11%
Mentoring programs	6%

% of agencies

Source: 2024 GES Survey.

The Australian Electoral Commission's PIANZEA Network outlined below, is a case study for how agencies can demonstrate leadership on gender equality externally:

The Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network (PIANZEA), coordinated by the AEC, has contributed to electoral assistance and gender equality for its members for over 25 years and in 2019, PIANZEA made gender equality a key focus for the network.

The AEC has hosted the PIANZEA Secretariat and supported initiatives such as the *Women in Election Management (WEM) Virtual Mentoring Program*, launched in 2021. This program connected female electoral officials from the Pacific with senior female staff from the AEC and New Zealand Electoral Commission, focusing on improving leadership, confidence, and technical skills through virtual mentoring.

Initially piloted with 6 mentor/mentee pairs, the program expanded in 2022 and continued to build strong professional relationships and enhance technical and leadership capacities among participants, with many indicating that their mentoring relationship will continue beyond the end of the formal program. Success stories include participants who advanced to significant leadership roles within their electoral management bodies, exemplifying the program's impact.

Looking ahead, the AEC plans to develop a WEM Community of Practice to foster ongoing support and collaboration among women in electoral roles across the PIANZEA Network.

Promoting gender equality through suppliers

To be considered for Australian Government procurement contracts valued at or above the relevant procurement thresholds, certain suppliers (employers with 100 or more employees in Australia) who respond to requests for tender must be able to demonstrate they are compliant with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012,* by supplying a letter of compliance either with their submission to an approach to market or before entering into a contract.[33]

Gender impact assessments in budget proposals

From the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Australian Government has applied gender responsive budgeting across the budget process, embedding gender analysis in all budget decision making. All agencies are to undertake gender analysis on new policy proposals and provide gender impact assessments where new policy proposals meet one or more criteria. The criteria for conducting a gender impact assessment are if the proposal:

- has a significant positive or negative impact on gender equality
- targets cohorts of people who can typically be disadvantaged
- relates to a gender segregated industry
- establishes a National Partnership Agreement (or like agreement), or
- if the total value of the proposal is $250 million or more over the forward estimates.

The Office for Women (OFW) have produced a guide, *Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment*, which provides information to assist policy makers in conducting gender analysis as part of developing a new policy proposal. This guide was published on the PM&C website on 11 August 2023 and has been distributed to APS agencies.

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[33] For more information see WGEA, *Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles,* WGEA website, n.d., accessed 8 August 2024.

Appendix: APS Gender Equality Strategy Survey questions

Agency policies, strategies, action plans, and other activities

The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26 has minimum standards for agencies to meet as a starting point or in refreshing current action plans on gender equality. This section focuses on policies, strategies, action plans, and other activities that address gender equality and topics associated with gender equality.

1. Please tell us whether your agency has a policy, strategy, action plan or other activity in place that relates to the following topics?

    Where your agency has a policy, strategy, action plan, or other item that covers off multiple topics, please answer yes for each topic covered. For example, if your agency has a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that addresses gender equality, carer responsibilities, bullying, and discrimination, please answer 'Yes' for each of those four topics under the Strategy heading.

    For small agencies, please answer yes for any policies, strategies, action plans, or other activities that your agency is required to adhere to, even if it was developed by the lead agency in your portfolio.

    [Select an option for each topic]

Topic	**Policy** (such as a formal policy published on your agency's intranet, including governing guidelines, rules and procedures)	**Strategy** (such as a formal agency strategy document to address the specific topics)	**Action Plan** (such as a separate list of actions that your agency has committed to, that is in addition to a published policy or strategy)	**Other** (such as targets or specific training modules)	My agency **does not** have a gender equality policy, strategy, or action plan covering this topic in place
Gender equality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family and gender based violence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexible working arrangements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Remote working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Carer responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sexual harassment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bullying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discrimination	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. If you answered 'other' to any of the answers in question 1, please specify your answer below:
    _____
    _____

3. Does your agency dedicate resources to support the implementation of your agency's gender equality strategy or action plan (*Action area #1 minimum standards: Leadership and accountability*)?

    - Yes
    - No

4. Does your agency have governance to support the implementation of your agency's gender equality strategy or action plan (*Action area #1 minimum standards: Leadership and accountability*)?

    - Yes
    - No

5. Is your agency's progress in implementing the gender equality strategy or action plan communicated or accessible to all employees (*Action area #1 minimum standards: Leadership and accountability*)?

    - Yes
    - No

6. Is your agency's strategy or action plan available publicly on the internet, such as via your agency's website (*Action area #1 minimum standards: Leadership and accountability*)?

    - Yes
    - No

Gender Equality Strategy implementation

This section asks questions about the implementation of the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26 in your agency.

7. Which of the following has your agency used to implement the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026?

    [Please select all that apply]

    - Gender networks / gender champions
    - Staff tasked to action the deliverables
    - Agency leadership
    - Other [Please specify]
    - None of the above

8. Has your agency encountered any of the following challenges in implementing the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026?

    [Question 8 will not be displayed if 'my agency does not have a gender equality policy, strategy, or action plan covering this topic in place' is selected for all topics in Q1]

    [Please select all that apply]

    - A lack of resources
    - Staff not tasked to action the deliverables
    - Other [Please specify]
    - Our agency has not encountered challenges.

9. In what ways, if any, has your agency created opportunities in the last 2 years to strengthen gender representation in select occupations such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Service Delivery occupations (*Action area 3A*)?
    _____
    _____

10. What were the most prominent opportunities to strengthen gender representation in select occupations that your agency has implemented (*Action area 3A*)? Did this include creating talent pipelines?
    _____
    _____

11. Does your agency provide details of their commitment to gender equality and inclusion in their (*Action area #3 minimum standards: Shifting gender stereotypes*):

    [Please select all that apply]

    - Recruitment materials
    - Induction materials
    - Other [please specify]
    - None of the above

12. Please tell us the communication methods your agency has reviewed for gender inclusive language and images as part of your implementation of the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026 (*Action area 2B*)?

    [Please select all that apply]

    - Agency intranet
    - Agency website
    - Internal policy documents
    - Recruitment ads
    - Other [please specify]
    - None of the above

13. Are there any other comments you would like to make in relation to your agency's commitment to gender equality?
    _____
    _____
    _____

Leadership

The [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#) *Action area #1* relates to leadership and accountability.

14. In what ways, if any, do leaders in your agency engage with employees in relation to gender equality (*Action area 1B*)?

_____
_____

15. Have leaders in your agency spoken about gender equality at public engagements (*Action area #6 minimum standards: Leveraging our external influences*)?

- Yes
- No

16. In what ways, if any, has your agency demonstrated leadership on gender equality beyond the workplace in its relationships with industry and communities (*Action area 6B*)?

_____
_____

17. Would your agency like to provide a case study of how leaders in your agency have demonstrated exemplary commitment to gender equality through actions, words or engagements? If yes, please provide details.

_____
_____

Preventing gender-based unacceptable behaviours and unlawful conduct

This section asks questions relevant to Action Area #2: Respectful Workplaces & Empowered People of the [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#).

18. In the last 2 years, has your agency offered training, information sessions, or other forms of education on:

[Please select one option for each topic]

	Yes	No
Family domestic violence	☐	☐
Bullying	☐	☐
Discrimination	☐	☐
Sexual harassment	☐	☐

[Move to question 20 if 'my agency has not offered training, information sessions, or other forms of education on this topic' is selected for each topic]

19. Could any of these educational activities be provided to the APSC, in order to provide them to other APS agencies? If so, please provide details.

_____

_____

20. In the last 2 years, has your agency reviewed its policies, support or processes for the prevention, management, and/or reporting of any of the below (*Action area #2 minimum standards: Respectful workplaces and empowered people*):

[Please select all that apply]

- Family Domestic Violence
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Sexual harassment
- None of the above [Please move to question 22]

21. Has your agency had any beneficial lessons learned from reviewing its policies, support or processes for the prevention, management and/or reporting of unacceptable behaviours that could be shared with other agencies?

_____

_____

22. In the last 2 years, in what ways has your agency strengthened approaches to preventing and/or responding to bullying, sexual harassment, and/or sexual assault in the workplace, if they have done so (*Action area 2A*)?

_____

_____

23. Were there any lessons learnt from strengthening the approaches to preventing and/or responding to bullying, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in the workplace that would be beneficial to share with other agencies?

_____

_____

Superannuation information

Action area 2C of the [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#) asked agencies to "provide ongoing access to superannuation resources and awareness sessions to all employees with a particular focus on annual entry level and graduate intakes (e.g. agency induction). This is to empower employees early on in their career to understand their superannuation and impacts of career and life events (e.g. consideration of career moves, taking parental leave including leave without pay, changing agencies or retiring). This will not include individual financial advice."

24. In the last 2 years, has your agency provided employee superannuation awareness or educational sessions (*Action area 2C*)?

- Yes
- No

25. Does your agency offer superannuation information or resources to new recruits as part of their induction, in addition to the standard superannuation application forms (*Action area 2B*)?

- Yes
- No

Selection panels

Action Area #3 of the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26 asked agencies to: "*Ensure gender diversity in selection processes, including internal processes and EOIs. Selection panels are gender-balanced and are equipped to call-out any potential bias during the process.*"

26. In what ways, if any, does your agency ensure gender balance on selection panels (*Action area #3 minimum standards: Shifting gender stereotypes*)?

_____
_____

27. In what ways, if any, are selection panels in your agency equipped to call-out any potential bias during selection processes (*Action area #3 minimum standards: Shifting gender stereotypes*)?

_____
_____

Flexible work

The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26 *Action area #4* relates to flexible ways of working.

28. Does your agency advertise any positions as full-time, part-time, and job share (*Action area 4D*)?

- Yes - all positions are advertised as full-time, part-time and job share [Go to question 31]
- Yes - all positions are advertised as full-time and part-time (some or none include job share)
- Yes - some positions are advertised as full-time, part-time and job share
- Yes - some positions are advertised as full-time and part-time (none include job share)
- No - we only advertise full-time positions

29. Has your agency considered advertising <u>all</u> positions as full-time, part-time and job share (*Action area 4D*)?
- Yes [Go to question 31]
- No

30. What are the reasons your agency has not considered advertising <u>all</u> positions as full-time, part-time, and job share (*Action area 4D*)?
[Please select all that apply]

- Not all positions can be offered as part-time
- Not all positions can be designed for job sharing
- Other [Please specify]

31. APS bargaining is working to increase the amount of parental leave available to secondary caregivers. Does your agency have any other initiatives or support in place to encourage secondary caregivers to take parental or carers leave, if any (*Action area #4 minimum standards: Flexible ways of working*)?

_____
_____

Gender data

The [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#) *Action area #5* relates to gender data.

32. Does your agency track gender data across (*Action area #5 minimum standards: Gender data*):
    [Please select all that apply]

    - Classifications
    - Geographical locations
    - Job types
    - None of the above

33. Over the last two years, has your agency increased its capability to collect and analyse high level gender data (*Action area 5A*)?

    - Yes
    - No

34. Does your agency collect and internally publish data disaggregated by diversity and inclusion groups on the following (*Action area 5A)*? For example, publishing internally can include your agency publishing this data on an internal intranet or dashboard, or creating reports on this data for agency senior executives.
    [Please select all that apply]

	Collect	Publish internally
Employees with disability	☐	☐
First Nations representation	☐	☐
CALD representation	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐
None of the above	☐	☐

35. Has analysis been conducted to identify the drivers of the gender pay gap in your agency *(Action area #5 minimum standards: Gender data*)?
    - Yes, analysis is underway or has been completed
    - Not yet, but analysis is planned to be undertaken
    - No, analysis is not planned

Final comments

36. What do you believe are the top three positive changes towards gender equality your agency has made, that are a direct outcome of the Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26?
    _____
    _____

37. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about any of your responses to this survey?
    _____
    _____
    _____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey. Please email evaluation@apsc.gov.au if you have any further questions regarding this survey.