

2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot

Voluntary reporting results

July 2023



Additional info

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Background

Recommendation 43 of the landmark Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report, released by the Australian Human Rights Commission in March 2020, proposed that the Government should lead by example on gender equality by requiring public sector organisations to report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) on the six gender equality indicators.

The *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022* requires that for the first time, this year, all Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees will report to WGEA.

To prepare for mandatory public sector reporting, WGEA rolled out a series of voluntary reporting programs.

In 2021, WGEA worked with five Commonwealth and three State and Territory agencies who expressed keen interest in reporting. We replicated the processes and data collection tools from the annual private sector gender equality Employer Census and provided intensive support to the reporting employers.

We used the findings from the 2021 pilot to update the data collection tools, processes, educational materials and data outputs to better meet the needs of public sector agencies, before rolling out a comprehensive voluntary reporting program in 2022.

WGEA invited relevant Commonwealth public sector employers to participate in the voluntary reporting program and we were thrilled with the response: close to half the Commonwealth public sector volunteered their data.

In collaboration with the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), we worked to bulk upload, match, process and transform APSC data to ease the burden of reporting for participants where possible. Efforts of this partnership, which aimed to prevent participants reporting their data to both organisations, were well received by APS employers.

The tests, lessons and insights from the 2022 voluntary public sector reporting program will inform and enhance mandatory Commonwealth public sector reporting in 2023.



CEO's message



I am delighted to present this Snapshot of the results of the Commonwealth public sector voluntary reporting program. This is a national first. Australia has not previously had any insight into the Commonwealth public sector's performance against WGEA's gender equality indicators.

We have named this document a "Snapshot" because it represents nearly half of the employers that will be required to report to WGEA under mandatory public sector reporting (52 of 112 employers). It cannot therefore be seen as a complete analysis of gender equality in the public sector, and some findings in this report may differ from next year's results.

What we can see, however, are overall trends that are likely to shape future reporting on the public sector. In this way, the Snapshot serves as a first glimpse for policy makers, employers and the broader public to understand gender equality in the Commonwealth public sector.

For Commonwealth public sector employers, this Snapshot is an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the key datapoints that will be analysed in future scorecards, and to understand how each datapoint contributes to a larger effort to capture the state of gender equality in the public sector. This report should highlight areas for improvement.

The voluntary reporting program demonstrated the public sector is ready to engage in the WGEA reporting process. Agencies are proud of the work they have done to prioritise workplace gender equality and excited about how they can further improve their workplaces for all employees.

We look forward to all Commonwealth public sector agencies reporting later this year. We are also working closely with State and Territory governments, who made an in-principle agreement at National Cabinet in December 2021 to share their public sector workforce data with WGEA.

I want to conclude by thanking the APSC for their partnership in this process, and the 52 public sector agencies who volunteered to report. This was an invaluable exercise to ensure that the mandatory reporting process can run as smoothly and successfully as possible.

This is an exciting time to be working in the public sector. I am grateful for my colleagues across the Service who are committed to ensuring all people are fairly represented and equally valued in our workplaces.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Wooldredge".

CEO

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Introduction

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.

Under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act (Cth) 2012*, non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees must report to WGEA annually on six gender equality indicators.

Passage of the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022*, requires Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees to report their gender equality data to WGEA from 2023.

In preparation for these changes, WGEA undertook a voluntary reporting program with the Commonwealth public sector in 2022. We invited employers with 100 or more employees from the Australian Public Service (APS), Corporate Commonwealth Entities and Businesses to participate in this program. In total, 52 employers reported as a part of the voluntary program.

This voluntary public sector reporting program was the first time WGEA collected data from the Commonwealth public sector on its six gender equality indicators. These are:

1. Gender composition of the workforce
2. Gender composition of governing bodies
3. Equal remuneration between men and women
4. Availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities
5. Consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace
6. Sex-based harassment and discrimination.

This Snapshot sets out the results of this reporting.

How to use this data

The 2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot provides an overview of the gender equality outcomes reported by 52 Commonwealth public sector employers. The data reflects the calendar year 1 January to 31 December 2021. It was reported to WGEA between July and November 2022.

All statements made in this document refer to this sample dataset of 52 employers only. Given the sample of voluntary reporting employers reflects less than half of the Commonwealth public sector employers required to report to WGEA from 2023, readers should not extrapolate that any statement regarding the dataset applies to the Commonwealth public sector as a whole. Where possible, we have contextualised the data and provided comparisons with data from the APSC, which collects workforce data from across the entire APS, but not Corporate Commonwealth Entities and Businesses.

Given these parameters, the findings of this report should not be used for in-depth analysis of gender equality in the public sector or as a benchmark against the private sector in Australia. It also cannot be considered as a baseline for future data releases.

Instead, these results should be appreciated as a snapshot of how voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers performed against the WGEA gender equality indicators in 2022. They can be used to identify areas of differentiation for the public sector and the private sector, and they can be used by public sector employers to begin to identify areas for action.

Finally, it is important to note not all data points collected by WGEA are reported within this first public sector snapshot. As with private sector reporting, WGEA will produce an annual Scorecard setting out the results of Commonwealth public sector reporting, identifying trends and highlighting areas for action. The aim of these Scorecards is to ensure employers, policy makers and the broader public have access to key information about the policies and practices shaping gender equality in Australian workplaces, and how gender equality indicators shift over time.

Executive summary

The 2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot is the first analysis of the performance of Australia's Commonwealth public sector against WGEA's six gender equality indicators. While it is a voluntary sample of Commonwealth employers, it is nevertheless our first look at gender equality in the public sector – from the composition of the workforce to the policies in place to support gender equality.

This Snapshot represents 132,551 employees from the APS and Corporate Commonwealth Entities and Businesses. Participating employers included 40 agencies who employ staff under the Public Service Act (APS agencies) and 12 non-APS agencies¹ (see Appendix).

This initial look shows us the public sector is more gender equal than the private sector on many key indicators. Most notably, the public sector has a significantly lower total remuneration gender pay gap. But there are key areas where the public sector needs improvement, which are similar to the private sector, most notably women in leadership and men's uptake of parental leave.

WGEA reporting shows the public sector is a gender-balanced workforce with 57.2% women and 42.7% men. This is similar to findings by the APSC.²

However, despite a relative balance in gender composition of the workforce, widespread use of enterprise bargaining agreements and transparent salary levels for employees, no employer had a total remuneration gender pay gap in favour of women. The data shows that Australia's Commonwealth public sector – like the private sector – has a way to go in creating gender-equal workplaces.

Men are paid, on average, 11.6% more than women.

Historically, the APSC has also calculated a gender pay gap from data provided to it by Public Service Act employers on the base salaries of their employees. The APSC dataset shows a base salary gender pay gap of 6%. Comparatively, this Snapshot finds a higher base salary gender pay gap of 10.1%.

WGEA and the APSC use the same methodology to calculate the two gender pay gaps. The main difference between the APSC and WGEA gender pay gaps is the cohort of employers.

When only APS agencies that voluntarily reported to WGEA are counted, the base salary gender pay gap is a comparable 6.2% and the total remuneration gender pay gap is 7.2%.

This means the non-APS agencies are driving the higher gender pay gap for this cohort of voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers.

The higher the position, the fewer women.

We know employers with more women in senior leadership positions have better results, improved productivity and higher performance overall.³ However, as with the private sector, the proportion of women in leadership positions in the public sector declines with seniority.

In this sample, WGEA was unable to collect to display data that showed the breakdown of management positions by full-time and part-time roles. Flexibility at management level promotes women's participation in leadership and decision making. When leadership positions are only offered as full-time roles, this can result in fewer women taking on more senior positions. The addition of this breakdown will be a valuable insight in the years to come.

While half of employers are conducting gender pay gap audits, more employers could be doing so.

A pay gap analysis is a vital first step in addressing gender pay equity. Voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers that conduct a gender pay gap analysis and take action on these findings achieve a reduction in their gender pay gap over time.⁴ This Snapshot shows 56% of Commonwealth employers are conducting gender pay gap audits, which is similar to the private sector (54%). However, while many employers are taking action, almost half are yet to take the first step in addressing gender pay equity in the workplace.

Of the employers who conducted a gender pay gap analysis, two thirds reported taking action afterwards.

1 Participants were 43 non-corporate Commonwealth entities, eight corporate Commonwealth entities and one Commonwealth company.

2 Australian Public Service Commission (2023), "[Gender equality in State of the Service Report 2021-22](#)."

3 [BCEC | WGEA Gender Equity Insights \(2020\)](#).

4 [BCEC | WGEA Gender Equity Insights \(2018\)](#).

Employers are setting targets to address gender equality, with a focus on women.

Voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers are setting targets, but there's a narrow focus on actions for women in the workplace, such as increasing the number of women in leadership positions or in male-dominated roles. Actions that promote men's uptake of parental leave and workplace flexibility are limited. So too are actions that seek to address the gender balance in female-dominated roles.

APSC research found drivers of the gender pay gap in the APS are the higher representation of women at lower employment classifications and the type of work women undertake.⁵ It is not enough to only focus on promoting women into higher roles or encourage flexibility for women – employers also need to look at opportunities to increase the number of men in female-dominated roles and encourage men to use flexible working arrangements.

Women account for the majority of employees taking parental leave.

Unlike the private sector, statutory requirements entitle every pregnant public sector employee to 12 weeks paid leave.⁶ Almost all the employers in the dataset expand the entitlement to paid parental leave (PPL) to men. Despite this long-enshrined approach, the proportion of parental leave taken by men is low and even below the proportions in the private sector for both managers and non-managers. However, with significantly more managers in the public sector, and a higher take up rate for managers, overall the utilisation of PPL by men is roughly the same as in the private sector (13.5% in the public sector, compared to 13% in the private sector).

APSC research on the drivers of the gender pay gap in the APS found taking time off work for parental leave and caring responsibilities inhibit women's career progression through the indirect impact on promotions on the year leave is taken.⁷

Best practice, which is being adopted in the private sector and by a range of state and territory public sectors, is to ensure equal parental leave provisions to both parents regardless of gender or carer status. The recently published *APSC Maternity Leave Act Review Report* includes a number of recommendations that present an opportunity to modernise the public sector approach.

Furthermore, the support policies for parents and carers represented in the dataset show significant room for improvement. Beyond breastfeeding facilities and referral services to support employees with family and/or caring responsibilities, it appears little else is offered in terms of ongoing support that would help parents return to work and increase women in leadership roles. In particular, only 4%

of employers offered support in securing school holiday care and only 2% offered employer-subsidised childcare.

All employers have a flexible work policy and/or strategy.

More than 70% of employers saw an increase in the approval of flexible work arrangements for both women and men in 2021. Compared to the private sector, public sector employers have established policies and practices at a higher rate to encourage the uptake and promotion of flexible working arrangements. All public sector employers have policies in place to support flexible working and almost all (96%) promote flexible working within their workplace, with these numbers lower in the private sector (82% and 74% respectively).

While it has been common across workplaces to see flexible workplace policies increase over the last three years, the key benefits of flexibility are only realised if policies are adopted evenly and don't reward presenteeism. The dataset showed encouraging signs that public sector employers are adapting to equal and fair flexible workplaces, with 73% of employers measuring employee performance by outcomes not presenteeism, and 50% adopting policies such as holding all team meetings online. However, there is also opportunity for further initiatives such as training for both managers and non-managers on how to work with flexible and remote/hybrid teams.

Employers are consulting with staff about issues of gender equality in the workplace.

A key differentiator for the public sector is the high uptake of consultation with employees on gender equality issues. More than 80% of employers reported consulting with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace, compared with about half of private sector employers.⁸

Even in the absence of formal gender equality consultation policies, public sector employers are actively engaging staff on this issue. Consulting with employees and including them in decision-making processes has been identified as good practice and can result in improved outcomes for staff retention and productivity.⁹

To conclude, the results of the 2022 Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Snapshot show the nuances of promoting gender equality in public sector workplaces. In some regards, the results suggest the public sector is ahead, with a lower gender pay gap than the private sector. Yet, it also shows that – just like the private sector – the public sector has a way to go in actualising workplace gender equality.

5 APSC (2023), [Drivers of the 2021 APS Gender Pay Gap](#), Research Note 03–23.

6 Commonwealth of Australia (1973), [Maternity Leave \(Commonwealth Employees\) Act 1973](#), Federal Register of Legislation.

7 Ibid.

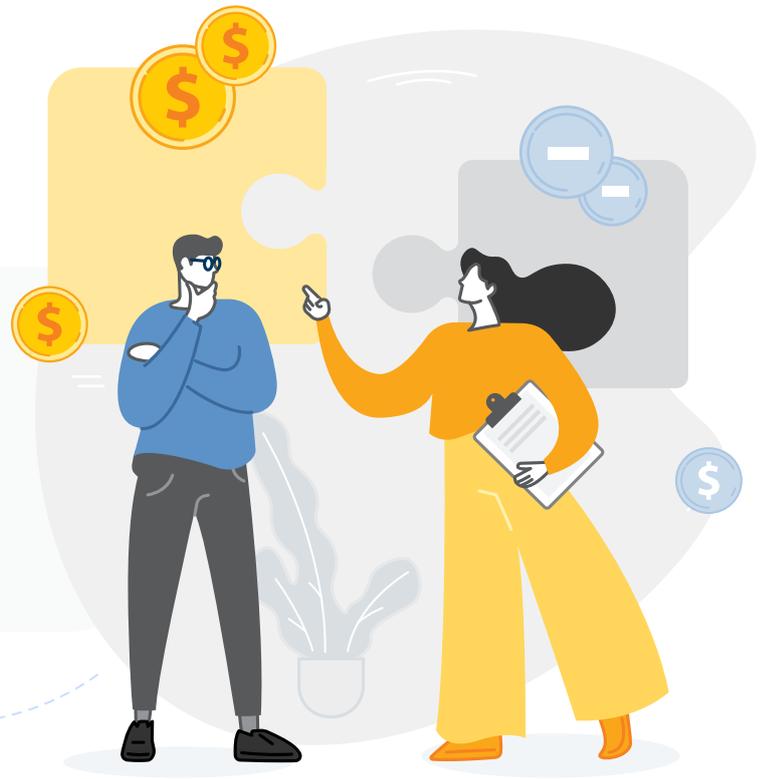
8 [Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard Key results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer Census 2022](#).

9 Fair Work Ombudsman. (2014). [Best Practice Guide: Consultation & cooperation in the workplace](#).

Key findings at a glance

A snapshot of workplace gender equality in 52 Commonwealth public sector employers.

Men earn, on average, **11.6%** more than women
6/10 employers have a gender pay gap in favour of men*



1/3 men are in the top income bracket, but only

1/5 women

When the gender pay gap is calculated on base salary, men earn, on average, **10.1%** more than women

5/10 employers have a pay gap in favour of men*

Women make up **57%** of the workforce

but only

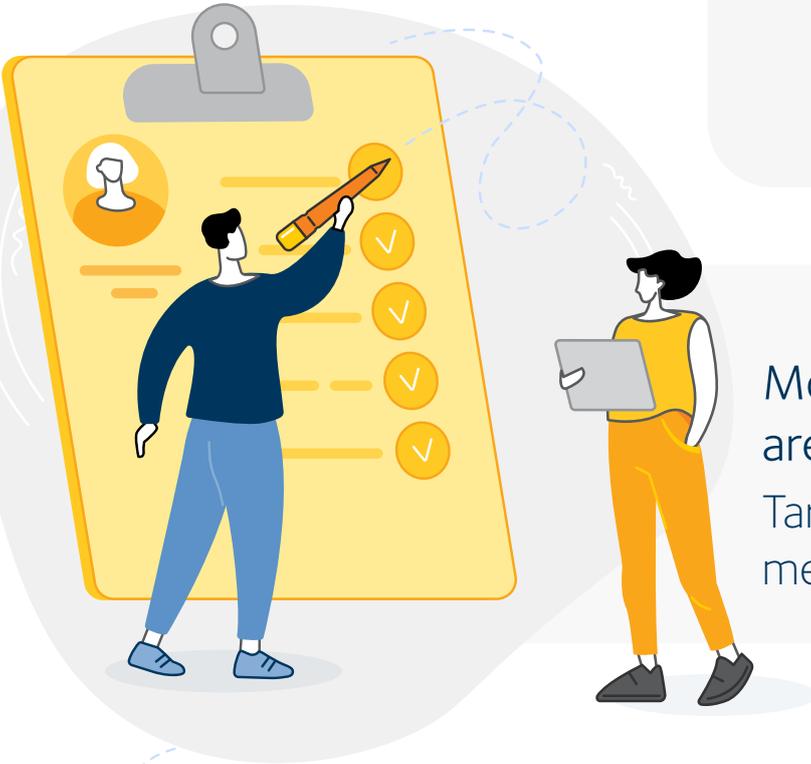
48% of leadership positions

at the senior executive service level



* The gender pay gap is defined in favour of men when it is >5%.

Key findings at a glance cont...



Employers widely offer generous paid parental leave policies, but only **13.5%** of paid parental leave is taken by men



More than **40%** of workplaces are female dominated
Targets are rarely set to increase men in female-dominated roles

Only **56%** of employers conducted pay gap audits

2/3 reported taking action as a result



Consultation on gender equality occurs widely

even in the absence of policies to do so



Chapter 1: Workforce composition

Overall workforce composition

More women are employed than men.

Women represent 57.2% of the workforce compared to 42.7% men. This broadly aligns with data from the APSC, which shows that 60.4% of the APS workforce are women.¹⁰

Approximately half of the voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers (51.9%) have gender-balanced workforces (at least 40% women and 40% men). A further 42.3% are female dominant and only 5.8% of employers are male dominant.

Employers could submit voluntary data on non-binary employees. In this Snapshot, non-binary employees make up less than 0.2% of all employee data collected. Due to the current sample size, non-binary employees cannot be statistically analysed for the purposes of this Snapshot.

Chart 1: Workforce composition by gender. (%)

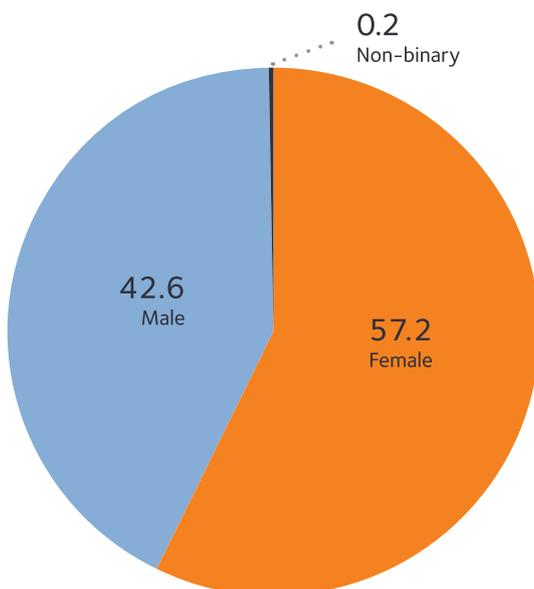
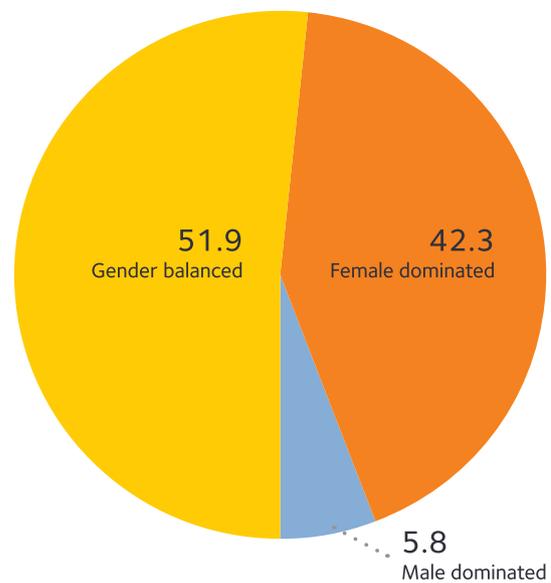


Chart 2: Proportion of employers that are gender balanced or dominated.* (%)

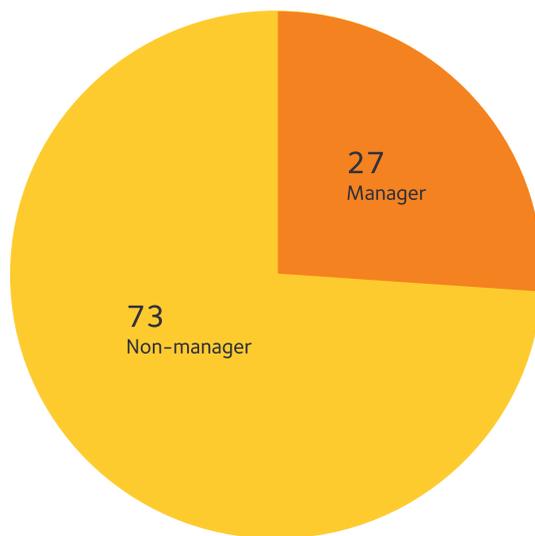


* Male dominant: 60% or more employees are male.
Female dominant: 60% or more employees are female.
Gender balanced: 41-59% employees are either female or male.

10 Australian Public Service Commission (2023), ["Gender equality" in State of the Service Report 2021-22.](#)

More employees hold managerial positions in the public sector workforce than the private sector.¹¹ 1 in 4 employees are classified as managers (27%), which is considerably higher than the number of managers in the private sector (11%).

Chart 3: Proportion of managers to non-managers. (%)



Women in leadership

Women's representation declines with seniority.

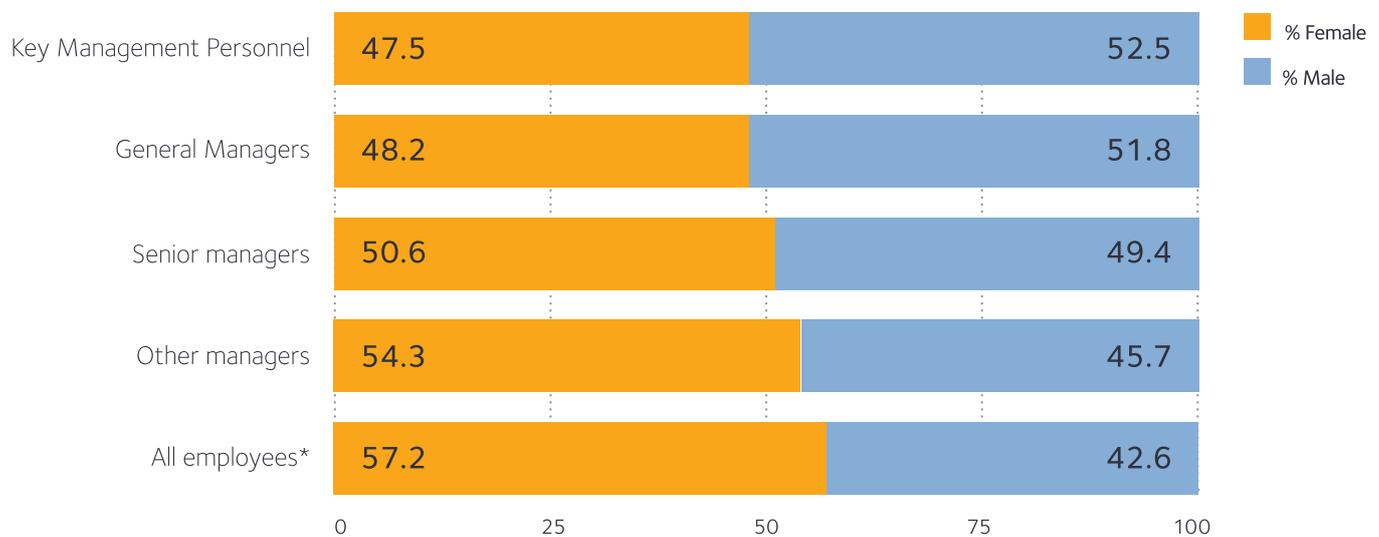
Across all voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers, more women (52.9%) hold leadership positions than men (47.1%). However, men are more likely than women to hold senior leadership positions. More men are represented in key management personnel (52.5%) and general manager positions (51.8%), which equate to senior executive service positions in the public sector.

Women are more proportionately represented in non-senior executive service management levels, with 50.6% women in senior manager (EL2) positions and 54.3% in other manager positions (EL1).¹² Consistently, women are not proportionately represented in senior leadership positions in the public sector.

¹¹ Managers in the public sector are classified as Executive Level 1 (EL1) and above.

¹² WGEA was not able to collect CEO data in the 2022 voluntary public sector reporting program.

Chart 4: Proportion of women in management positions. (%)



Promotions and resignations

Women are more likely to change job roles than men.

Proportionally, women are receiving slightly more appointments (61.5%) and promotions (60%) than their representation in the workforce. This is also the case for the proportion of resignations (61.8%) within voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers.

Table 1: Proportion of employees who have been appointed, promoted or resigned by gender.

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Appointments	61.5	38.5
Promotions	60.0	40.0
Resignations	61.8	38.2
All public sector employees*	57.2	42.6

* In this Snapshot, non-binary employees make up less than 0.2% of all employee data collected. Due to the current sample size, non-binary employees cannot be statistically analysed for the purposes of this Snapshot.

Chapter 2: The gender pay gap

Gender pay gap

Men are paid 11.6% more than women in voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers.

Six in 10 employers have a total remuneration gender pay gap in favour of men. There are no employers with a total remuneration gender pay gap in favour of women (defined as < -5% gender pay gap).

The total remuneration gender pay gap for these voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers is 11.6%, and the base salary gender pay gap is 10.1%.

The APSC calculates a base salary gender pay gap for APS agencies, which, as at December 2021, is equal to 6%. Using only APS agencies who voluntarily reported to WGEA, their base salary gender pay gap was 6.2% and total remuneration gender pay gap is 7.2%. Importantly, both the APSC and WGEA found that despite the public sector employing more women than men, there is still a gender pay gap in favour of men.

When the gender pay gap is calculated on base salary, fewer employers have a gender pay gap in favour of men (54%) and more employers have a gender pay gap that neither favours men or women (44%). In addition, one employer, WGEA, has a base salary gender pay gap in favour of women.

What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap is the difference between the average pay for men and women, expressed as a percentage of men's pay. It shows how we value the contribution of men and women in the workforce.

$$\text{Gender Pay Gap} = \left(\frac{\text{Average male remuneration} - \text{Average female remuneration}}{\text{Average male remuneration}} \right) \times 100$$

Table 2: Proportion (%) of employers with gender pay gaps in favour of men and women.

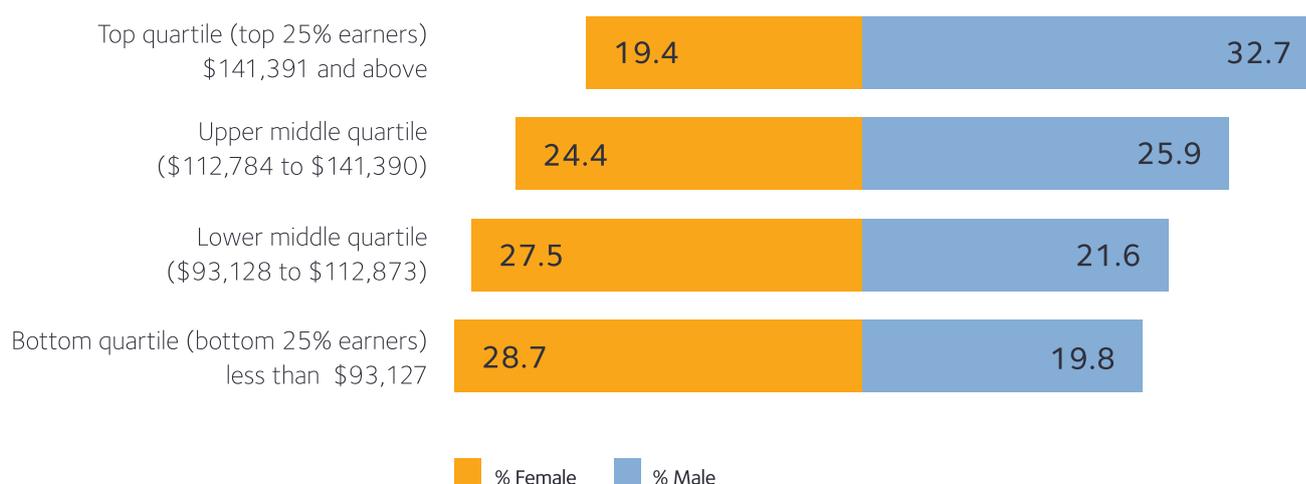
	% of employers (Total remuneration gender pay gap)	% of employers (Base salary gender pay gap)
In favour of women < -5% gender pay gap	0	2
Parity -5 to +5% gender pay gap	35	44
In favour of men > 5% gender pay gap	65	54

Men are more likely to be highly paid than women.

The quartile analysis divides the full-time equivalent earnings of all employees into four equal portions, with the top quartile being the highest earning group. The voluntary reporting Commonwealth employer data shows almost one in three men (32.7%) are in the top earnings quartile, earning above \$141,000, compared to almost one in five women (19.4%).

This trend is reversed in the lowest earning quartile, with nearly one in three (28.7%) women earning below \$94,000, compared to almost one in five (19.8%) men.

Chart 5: Employee remuneration quartiles by gender. (%)



Employer action to reduce the gender pay gap

More than 55% of employers have conducted pay gap audits.

Employer action is critical to accelerate the rate of change for workplace gender equality. A recent study of private sector organisations found employers that conducted a gender pay gap analysis and took action as a result were more likely to see a decrease in their gender pay gap over time.¹³

Of the voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers, just over half (56%) conducted a payroll analysis to determine if there are remuneration gaps between women and men.

Two thirds (68%) of employers that conducted a pay gap audit, reported taking action afterwards.

The most common actions taken are:

- reporting pay equity metrics to the executive (84%)
- identifying the causes of the gaps (58%)
- reviewing remuneration decision-making processes (37%)
- reporting pay equity metrics (including gender pay gaps) to the governing body (37%).

¹³ [BCEC | WGEA Gender Equity Insights 2018: Inside Australia's Gender Pay Gap](#)

In contrast, the least common actions taken by employers who have undertaken a gender pay analysis are:

- reporting pay equity metrics (including gender pay gaps) to all employees (21%)
- setting targets to reduce the organisation-wide gap (21%).

The remaining employers were asked why they did not conduct a gender pay gap analysis (Table 3). While a few employers reported this was currently under development (17%), some employers reported they were not aware of the need (17%) or did not think it was a priority (4%). Of the employers who reported 'other' reasons (48%) for not conducting a gender pay gap analysis:

- five employers reported that a gender pay gap analysis hadn't been undertaken because salaries are set by the Industrial Agreement/Enterprise Agreement
- two employers reported they will commence a gender pay gap analysis in the following 12 months.

Table 3: Employer's reasons for not conducting a gender pay gap analysis.

Responses	% Yes
Other	48
Not aware of need	17
Currently under development	17
Insufficient resources/expertise	13
No reason provided	9
Not a priority	4

Chapter 3: Terms, conditions, strategies, and actions

General gender equality policies

8 in 10 employers have a formal policy and/or strategy that supports gender equality.

This finding follows the APS gender equality strategy that governs how APS employers' practice and promote flexible work, gender equal recruitment and leadership in the public service.¹⁴

Voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers responded to having formal policies or strategies that promote gender equality in specific work areas. The most common is a recruitment strategy/policy (77%), while fewer employers have a specific policy for succession planning (39%) or key performance indicators for managers relating to gender equality (39%).

Of the employers who do not have a formal policy that supports gender equality overall, the most common reason is that a formal policy to support gender equality is currently under development (40%).

Table 4: Employers with formal policies and/or strategies that promote gender equality in specific areas

Policies/strategy areas that promote gender equality	% Yes
Recruitment	77
Performance management processes	67
Training and development	65
Promotions	64
Retention	50
Talent identification/identification of high potentials	40
Key performance indicators for managers relating to gender equality	39
Succession planning	39

¹⁴ Australian Public Service Commission (2022), [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26](#).

Table 5: Reasons why employers do not have a formal policy and/or strategy to support gender equality.

Responses	%
Currently under development	77
Other	67
Not aware of need	65
Not a priority	64
Insufficient resources/expertise	50

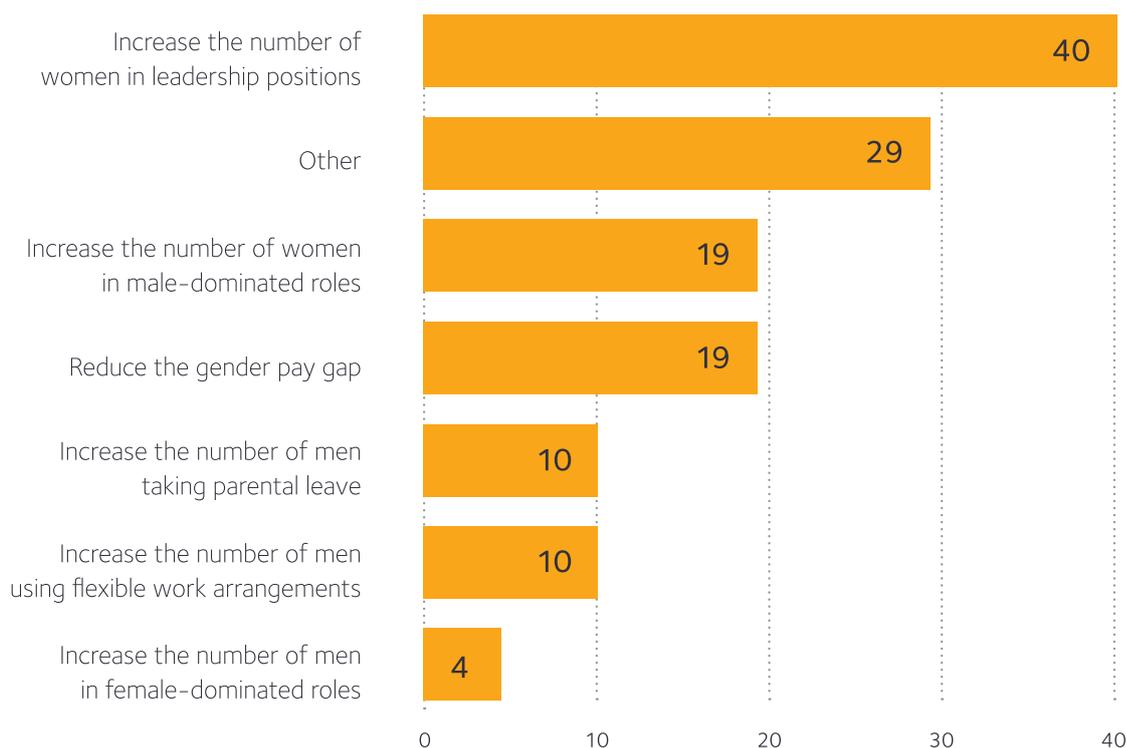
Target setting

67% of employers are setting targets to address gender equality.

The most common target is to increase the number of women in leadership positions (40% of employers who have set targets). Employers also set targets to increase the number of women in male-dominated roles and to reduce the gender pay gap (both targets set by 19% of employers).

Notably, far fewer employers are setting targets that focus on men. This was especially evident for targets to increase the number of men in female-dominated roles (only 4% of employers who have set targets).

Chart 6: Targets to address gender equality for employers who have set targets. (%)



Flexible work

All employers have a flexible work policy and/or strategy.

A flexible work arrangement is an agreement between a workplace and an employee to change the standard working arrangement to better accommodate an employee's commitments outside of work. Flexible working arrangements usually encompass changes to the hours, pattern and location of work.

More than 70% of employers saw an increase in the approval of flexible work arrangements for both women and men in 2021. More than 70% of employers reported that employee performance was based on outcomes and not presenteeism, and 50% of employers held all team meetings online.

While most employers adopt policies that support flexible hours of work (100%) and promote flexible working throughout the organisation (96%), fewer employers set targets for engagement in flexible work for all staff (4%) or for men's engagement in flexible work (4%).

Table 6: Measures to ensure the fair treatment of all employees regardless of work location.

Responses	%
Employee performance is measured by performance and not presenteeism	73
Training for all employees on how to work with flexible and remote/hybrid teams	54
All team meetings are held online	50
Training for managers on how to work with flexible and remote/hybrid teams	44
Training for non-managers on how to work with flexible and remote/hybrid teams	39

Support for carers

Paid maternity leave is required under relevant legislation.

All Commonwealth entities offer, at a minimum, paid maternity leave entitlements in line with the *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973*. Under this legislation, a pregnant employee is entitled to 12 weeks paid parental leave. Many agencies include additional entitlements within Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, which may:

- provide additional weeks of paid leave to the Maternity Leave Act entitlements
- include provisions for employees not included in the Maternity Leave Act, for example:
 - to extend parental leave entitlements to the adoption or long-term fostering of a child
 - to extend the same maternity leave entitlements to men who choose to be the primary carer
 - to offer secondary or supporting partner leave.

All reporting employers therefore offer paid parental leave in addition to government-funded parental leave. Almost all employers pay parental leave entitlements as the employees' full salary.

85% of employers offer paid parental leave using a primary/secondary carer's definition and 15% offer paid parental leave that has removed the primary/secondary distinction.

4 employers offer primary carer's leave to women only.

The average length of primary carer's leave is 15.4 weeks, signifying that most employers are providing more leave than the minimum entitlements set out in the Maternity Leave Act. The average length of secondary carer's leave is 4.9 weeks.

Chart 7: Average number of weeks of primary and secondary carer's leave.



Notably, 98% of employers pay superannuation for parents taking parental leave. The majority provide superannuation on employer-funded parental leave (96%). Approximately two in five employers pay superannuation on government funded parental leave (39%) and periods of unpaid parental leave for primary carer's (39%).

Eligibility periods for parental leave remain in the public sector, with 87% of employers reporting qualifying periods to access employer-funded parental leave. For the majority of employers, employees must work at least 12 months to access primary carer's leave.

It is important to note that the APSC published its Maternity Leave Act Review Report on 20 June 2023. The Review recommended a number of key changes to the Act, including 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 removal of the 12 month service requirement.¹⁵

Uptake of parental leave

Women account for the majority of employees taking primary carer's leave (86.5%).

The proportion of primary carer's leave taken by men is 13.5%, however, when looking at those within management who take primary carer's leave, men account for 19.6% of leave taken.

Table 7: Proportion of primary carer's leave taken by men and women.

Description	Manager category	% Female	% Male
Primary carer's leave	Non-managers	89.4	10.6
	Managers	80.4	19.6
All staff		86.5	13.5

¹⁵ Australian Public Service Commission (2023), [Maternity Leave Act review report](#).

Support for parents and carers

Providing support for parents and carers is an acknowledgement of the additional responsibilities employees have outside of paid employment. By providing support to parents and carers, employees can remain engaged in the workforce as well as in their caring responsibilities.

81% of employers indicated they have a formal policy or strategy to support employees with family or caring responsibilities. The most common forms of support provided are breastfeeding facilities (98%), referral services to support employees with family or caring responsibilities (67%) and targeted communications on an employer intranet or forum (48%).

However, far less common are initiatives that support parents on their return to work and with access to childcare. Employers are very unlikely to offer employer subsidised childcare (2%), support in securing school holiday care (4%) or childcare referral services (6%).

Table 8: Other forms of employer-funded support for parents.

Support offered	% Yes
Breastfeeding facilities	96
Referral services to support employees with family and/or caring responsibilities	67
Targeted communication mechanisms (e.g. intranet/forums)	48
Coaching for employees on returning to work from parental leave	31
Internal support networks for parents	29
Information packs for new parents and/or those with elder care responsibilities	23
On-site childcare	19
Parenting workshops targeting fathers	8
Parenting workshops targeting mothers	8
Other	6
Childcare referral services	6
Support in securing school holiday care	4
Employer-subsidised childcare	2

Domestic and family violence

More than 80% of employers have a formal policy and/or strategy to support employees who are experiencing family or domestic violence.

While family and domestic violence can affect any individual, women experience higher rates of domestic and family violence than men.

Employers offer various support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence. All employers offer an employee assistance program for their employees, and almost half of employers offer access to paid domestic violence leave as part of their workplace agreements.

Table 9: Supports available for employees experiencing domestic and family violence.

Support type	% Yes
Employee assistance program (including access to psychologist, chaplain or counsellor)	100
Flexible working arrangement	100
Confidentiality of matters disclosed	98
Protection from any adverse action or discrimination based on the disclosure of domestic violence	89
Formal policy and/or strategy to support employees who are experiencing family or domestic violence	83
Referral of employees to appropriate domestic violence support services for expert advice	81
Offer change of office location	73
Access to unpaid leave	69
Workplace safety planning	67
A domestic violence clause is in an enterprise agreement or workplace agreement	62
Training of key personnel	50
Access to unpaid domestic violence leave (contained in an enterprise/workplace agreement)	50
Access to paid domestic violence leave (contained in an enterprise/workplace agreement)	48
Provision of financial support (e.g., advance bonus payment or advanced pay)	37
Access to medical services (e.g., doctor or nurse)	26
Emergency accommodation assistance	17

Chapter 4: Consultation with employees

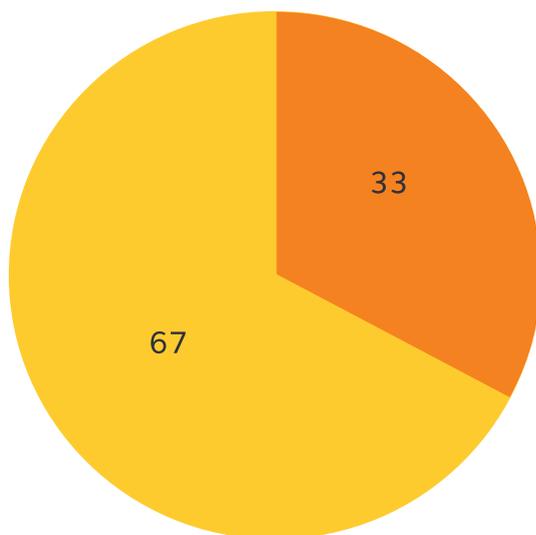
Consultation policies and strategies

8 in 10 employers are consulting with staff on gender equality issues.

Most employers (67%) do not have a formal policy and/or strategy in place on consulting employees about gender equality, however, over 80% of employers consult with employees on issues concerning gender equality in their workplace.

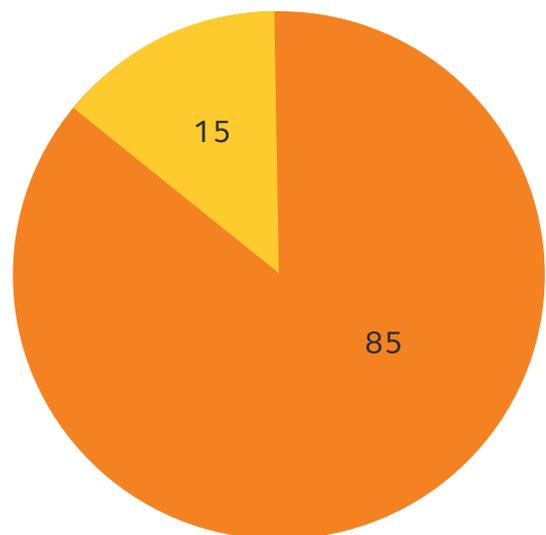
Of the employers who do consult staff, the most common methods of consultation are a consultative committee/group (73%) or survey (61%). Most employers consult all staff on gender equality issues (71%).

Chart 8: Employers with a formal policy and/or strategy for consulting employees about gender equality. (%)



Yes
No

Chart 9: Employers consulting with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace. (%)



Yes
No

Chart 10: Methods of employee consultation. (%)

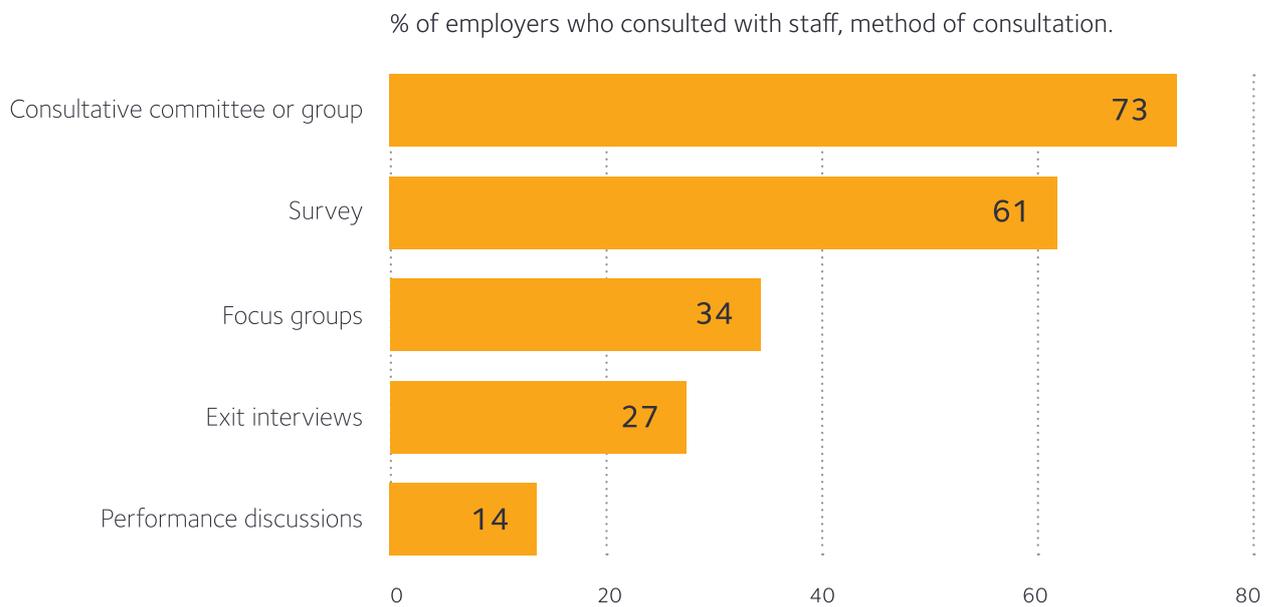


Table 10: Who employers consulted about gender equality issues.

Who did you consult?	%
All staff	71
Employee representative group(s)	52
Diversity committee or equivalent	36
Human resources managers	27
Management	27
Other	11
Women only	9
Men only	5

Chapter 5: Sex-based harassment and discrimination

100 per cent of employers have a formal policy and/or strategy to prevent sex-based harassment and discrimination.

Sex-based harassment and discrimination in the workplace disproportionately impacts women and their participation in the workforce.

Voluntary reporting Commonwealth employers are taking action to prevent sex-based harassment and discrimination through policies and strategies. For example, all employers report having a formal policy and/or strategy on sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention.

94% of employers reported having a grievance process within the sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention policy or strategy.

9 in 10 employers provide training on sex-based harassment and discrimination for all employees.

Table 11: Employers' sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention measures.

Elements included in employers' sex-based harassment and discrimination strategies	% Yes	% No
Formal policy or strategy on sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention	100	0
Sex-based harassment and discrimination grievance process	94	6
Sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention training for all employees	90	10
Sex-based harassment and discrimination prevention training for managers	89	11

Appendix

WGEA would like to acknowledge and extend gratitude to the following 52 employers that reported in the 2022 voluntary public sector reporting program:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
Airservices Australia
Attorney-General's Department
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Australian Building and Construction Commission
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Communications and Media Authority
Australian Electoral Commission
Australian Federal Police
Australian Financial Security Authority
Australian Human Rights Commission
Australian Institute of Family Studies
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
Australian Public Service Commission
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
Australian Skills and Quality Authority
Australian Sports Commission
Australian Taxation Office
Australian Trade and Investment Commission
Australian War Memorial
Bureau of Meteorology
Clean Energy Finance Corporation
Comcare Australia
CSIRO
Defence Housing Australia
Department of Finance
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Health and Aged Care
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Infrastructure
Department of Social Services
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Department of the Senate
Department of the Treasury
Department of Veterans' Affairs
Digital Transformation Agency
Fair Work Ombudsman
Federal Court of Australia
Geoscience Australia
Indigenous Business Australia
IP Australia
Murray-Darling Basin Authority
National Disability Insurance Agency
National Indigenous Australians Agency
NBN Co Limited
Reserve Bank of Australia
Services Australia
Special Broadcasting Service Corporation
Sport Integrity Australia
Workplace Gender Equality Agency*

* To more deeply understand the reporting experience, WGEA participated in the 2022 voluntary reporting program despite having less than 100 employees.



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