Public Service Commission

Age

Chapter 7

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Non-casual median age in 2019

44 (same as 2018)

Non-casual employees under 35 in 2019

26.9% in 2019 +3.4pp vs 2010

Non-casual employees 55 or over in 2019

23.8% in 2019 +3.0pp vs 2010

Non-casual average retirement age

63.9 in 2019 vs 61.5 in 2010

The median age of NSW public sector non-casual employees in 2019 was 44 years, which was unchanged from 2018, with only a minor difference between genders (45 years for men and 44 years for women). The median age of the NSW public sector non-casual workforce remained higher than the median age of the NSW working population, which was 40 in 2016.[1]

Figure 7.1 shows that a higher proportion of NSW public sector employees were aged between 35 and 64 (69%), compared with the number in this age bracket across the entire NSW workforce (55.9%) in 2019. Additionally, proportionally fewer employees were aged under 35 or over 65 in 2019. Those aged under 35 accounted for 26.9% of public sector employees, compared to 39.3% of the total NSW workforce. Those in the 65 and over age bracket accounted for 4.0% of public sector employees and 4.8% of the total NSW workforce.

A comparison of 2018 figures for the NSW public sector and the Victorian public sector[2] reveals a similar age distribution. The greatest difference between the two jurisdictions was in the 25–34 age range, with 22.4% in NSW and 25.5% in Victoria. Workers aged up to 34 accounted for 26.2% of NSW public sector employees and 30.5% of employees in the Victorian public sector.

Service	Median age	Employees aged >44 years (%)
Public Service	44	49.9
NSW Health Service	43	46.3
NSW Police Force	40	36.4
Teaching Service	42	44.5
Transport Service	47	55.5
Other Crown services	49	64.8
Total government sector	**44**	**48.7**
State owned corporations	45	50.8
External to government sector	51	62.6
Total public sector	**44**	**48.8**

Table 7.1: Median age and proportion of non–casual employees aged over 44 by service, at census date, 2019

Table 7.1 shows that median ages across NSW Government services ranged from 40 to 49.

In 2019, the NSW Police Force had the lowest median age in the sector. On the census date, the median age in the NSW Police Force was 40 years, unchanged from 2018. The Police Force also had the highest proportion of employees aged under 35 (34.9%, compared with 26.9% across the sector) and the lowest proportion of employees aged 55 or over (9.7%, compared with 23.8% across the sector). However, the median age is increasing, as it was 38 years in 2014. At that time, the proportion of employees aged under 35 was 36.5%, and only 7.0% of employees were over 54.

In contrast, other Crown services had the highest median age in the sector – 49 years at census date. Among these services, 75.4% of Clerical and Administrative Workers were 44 or older, with a median age of 51. Around 71.2% of Managers were 44 or older, with a median age of 50.

Age diversity in the workforce provides a range of perspectives, experience, talents and knowledge sharing. The proportion of public sector employees aged up to 44 grew marginally, from 48.8% in 2010 to 51.2% in 2019. Figure 7.3 highlights that the largest change in terms of proportion of the workforce occurred in the 45–54 years category. In 2010, the percentage of employees aged 45 to 54 was 30.3%, and this has declined to 25% in 2019. At the same time, the proportion of employees aged 55 to 64 and 65 or over increased by 0.8pp and 2.0pp respectively.

The non-casual age profile of the public sector workforce varied across services (see Figure 7.4). The Transport Service had the highest proportion of employees aged 65 and over (6.6%). Employees of the NSW Police Force and Teaching Service were highly concentrated in the 25–44 age group, whereas many in other Crown services tended to be between 45 and 64.

Retirement age

While the proportion of non-casual employees aged over 65 has steadily grown, the average retirement age has incrementally increased (see Figure 7.5). The average retirement age of public sector employees has risen steadily from 61.5 in 2010 to 63.9 in 2019. This change was primarily driven by an increase in the proportion of employees retiring at age 65 or over, which doubled from 22.8% in 2010 (686) to 44.6% (1,769) in 2019.

The number of commencements and separations vary widely by age, with commencements concentrated at the lower end of the age spectrum and separations at the higher end (see Figure 7.6). The rate of commencements in 2019 was more than three times lower for those aged 50 or over (3.6%) than for those aged under 50 (13%). Despite this, 35.6% of the NSW public sector employees are over 50, and 4% are over 65. The commencement rate for employees aged 50 or over has increased steadily in the past five years, from 2.3% in 2015 to 3.6% in 2019.

Employees aged 45 to 54 had the lowest separation rate in 2019, at 5.5%, and they comprise almost a quarter of the NSW public sector. In contrast, employees aged 65 or over account for just 4% of the NSW public sector workforce but had the highest separation rate and lowest commencement rate, at 17.3% and 1.4% respectively.

The top three occupations with the highest commencement rate for people aged 50 or over were General Clerk, Programs/Project Administrator and Bus Driver. These occupations accounted for 17.8% of commencements for this age group. The Public Service, NSW Health Service and other Crown services accounted for 81% of commencements in this age range.

Notes

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a, Census of population and housing, New South Wales (STE) (state/territory), Age of population single year, labour force status, cat. no. 2006.0, TableBuilder. Findings based on ABS TableBuilder data.
[2] Victorian Public Sector Commission, 'Data Insights: A Decade of Public Sector Workforce Data, Age Profile', **https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/data-and-research/data-insights/data-insights-d...**
[3] Both commencement and separation rates include movements across agencies as well as exits from the public sector.