

Age

Chapter 7

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Non-casual median age in 2020

44 years (same as 2019)



Non-casual employees under 35

27.1% in 2020 (+3.2 pp vs 2011)



Non-casual employees 55 or over

23.6% in 2020 (+1.9 pp vs 2011)



Non-casual average retirement age

64.2 in 2020 vs 61.0 in 2011

The median age of NSW public sector non-casual employees in 2020 was 44 years, which was unchanged from 2019, with only a minor difference between genders (45 years for men and 43 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.¹

Figure 7.1 shows that a higher proportion of NSW public sector employees were aged between 35 and 64 (68.7%) compared to this age bracket across the entire NSW workforce (57.5%) in 2020. Proportionally fewer employees were aged under 35 or over 65 in 2020. Those under 35 accounted for 27.1% of public sector employees compared to 37.8% of the total NSW workforce. Those in the 65 plus age bracket accounted for 4.2% of public sector employees and 4.7% of the total NSW workforce.

Figure 7.1: Age profile of NSW public sector and NSW employed persons, 2020

A comparison of 2020 figures for the NSW public sector and the Victorian public sector² reveals a similar age distribution (see Figure 7.2). The greatest difference between the two jurisdictions was in the 25–34 age range, with 22.9% in NSW and 26.3% in Victoria. Workers aged under 35 accounted for 27.1% of the public sector in NSW and 31.2% of the Victorian public sector.

Table 7.1: Median age and proportion of non-casual employees aged over 44 by service, at census date, 2020

Service	Median age	Employees aged 44 plus (%)
Public Service	44	49.9
NSW Health Service	43	46.0
NSW Police Force	40	37.2
Teaching Service	42	43.5
Transport Service	46	54.8
Other Crown services	49	63.9
Total government sector	44	48.4
State owned corporations	45	50.9
External to government sector	51	61.6
Total public sector	44	48.5

Table 7.1 shows the median age ranged from 40 to 49 across NSW government services in 2020.

The NSW Police Force had the lowest median age in the sector (40 years), unchanged from 2019. The Police Force had the highest proportion of employees aged under 35 (32.3%, compared with 27.1% across the sector) and the lowest proportion of employees aged 55 or over (10%, compared with 23.6% across the sector). Compared to 2014, the median age has increased (38 years in 2014). At that time, the proportion of employees aged under 35 was higher (36.5%), and only 7% of employees were over 54.

In contrast, other Crown services had the highest median age in the sector (49 years at census date). Within other Crown services, 72.5% of Clerical and Administrative Workers were aged over 44, with a median age of 51. Among Managers, 67.8% were aged over 44, with a median age of 50.

Age diversity is an important element to promote diversity of perspectives, experience, talent and knowledge in the workforce, to improve services for NSW citizens. The proportion of public sector employees aged under 45 increased from 49.3% in 2011 to 51.5% in 2020. Figure 7.3 highlights that the largest proportional change in the workforce occurred in the 45–54 years category. In 2011, the percentage of employees aged 45 to 54 was 29%, and this had decreased to 24.9% in 2020. At the same time, the proportion of employees aged 55 to 64 marginally decreased, by 0.2pp, while the proportion aged 65 or over increased by 2.0pp.

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 or over (6.9%) within the government sector. 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

The average retirement age of public sector employees has risen steadily from 61.0 in 2011 to 64.2 in 2020. The proportion of employees retiring aged 65 or over has more than doubled since 2011, from 20.5% in 2011 (581) to 47.1% (1,685) in 2020. In 2011, 25.4% of retiring employees were aged 60 (700), and this has decreased to 12.3% in 2020 (432).

Commencements and separations in agencies vary widely by age, with commencements trending down with age and separations trending up with age (see Figure 7.6). Commencements include employees moving from one public sector agency to another, and separations include moves to other agencies as well as exits from the sector, including retirements.

The rate of commencement in 2020 for those aged 50 or over was around a quarter of the level of commencements for those aged under 50 (3.1% compared to 11.7%). Despite this, 35.3% of NSW public sector employees were over 50, and 4.6% were over 65. There have been small increases in the commencement rate of employees aged 50 or over in the past five years, from 2.8% in 2016 to 3.1% in 2020.

Employees aged 50 to 54 had the lowest separation rate in 2020, at 5.1%, and comprised more than 10% of the NSW public sector. In contrast, employees aged 65 or over accounted for just 4.6% of the NSW public sector workforce and had the highest separation rate and lowest commencement rate, at 17.8% and 1.3%, respectively.

The top two key occupations with the highest commencement rate for people aged 50 or over were Clerical and Administrative Workers and Bus Drivers. These occupations accounted for 11.9% of commencements for this age group.

Notes

¹ ABS, 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 Table Builder data. 2016 Census data is the most current available data for median age for the NSW working population.

² Victorian Public Sector Commission, 'Data Insights: A Decade of Public Sector Workforce Data, Age Profile', <https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/data-and-research/past-releases/data-insights-d...>

³ Commencement and separation rates both include movements across agencies as well as exits from the public sector. Totals exclude those whose age is unknown.

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Mobility

