

Regional profile of the Public Service

Chapter 12

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Notes

The Public Service is a key part of the public sector, with 63,730 non-casual FTE employees in the 2020 census period, accounting for around one-fifth of the public sector workforce. It is also a key employer in regional areas. The balance of the location of employees between metropolitan and regional areas has changed over time, as policies have supported the movement of agencies out of office space in Sydney's central business district and focused on regional employment.

The Workforce Profile collection includes the postcode and work suburb of employees, and any analysis is subject to the accuracy of these data. Figures exclude records where location cannot be determined due to missing suburb and postcode data.

Regional analysis in this report is based on employees' normal stated work locations, as submitted in the Workforce Profile data by departments and agencies. This analysis does not reflect any work-from-home arrangements, which were widespread as part of the pandemic response.

In the Far West and Orana region, 4.2% of employed persons were Public Service employees, the highest representation of all regions.

Change over time

Figure 12.2: Proportional change in Public Service FTE distribution by region, 2011 and 2020^{1,2}

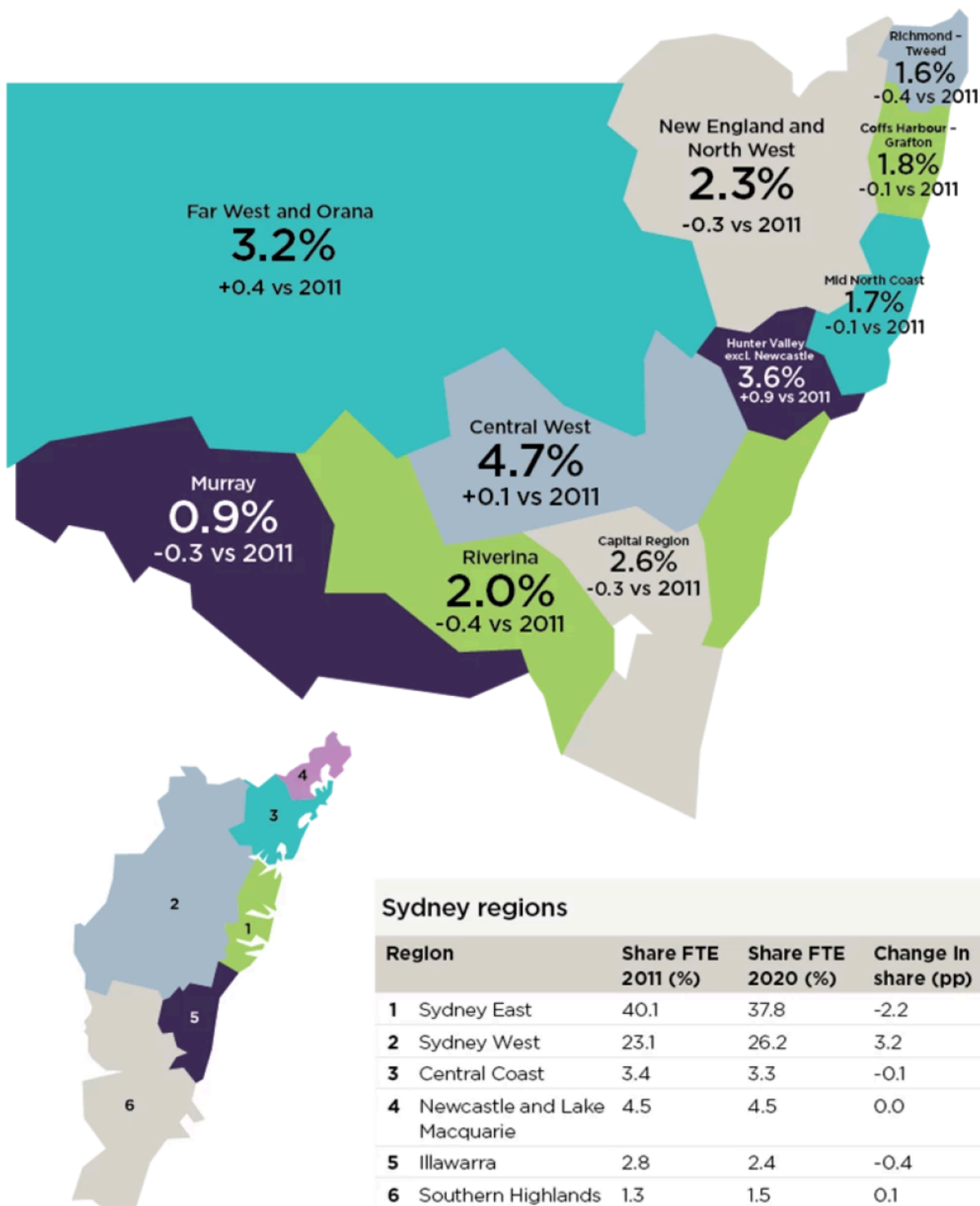


Figure 12.2 map: text version of image



Region	Share FTE 2011 (%)	Share FTE 2020 (%)	Change in share (pp)
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	2.8	3.6	0.9
Mid North Coast	1.8	1.7	-0.1
New England and North West	2.6	2.3	-0.3
Far West and Orana	2.8	3.2	0.4
Coffs Harbour-Grafton	1.9	1.8	-0.1
Richmond-Tweed	2.0	1.6	-0.4
Capital Region	2.9	2.6	-0.3
Riverina	2.4	2.0	-0.4
Murray	1.2	0.9	-0.3
Central West	4.6	4.7	0.1
Region	Share FTE 2011 (%)	Share FTE 2020 (%)	Change in share (pp)
Sydney East	40.1	37.8	-2.2
Sydney West	23.1	26.2	3.2
Central Coast	3.4	3.3	-0.1
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	4.5	4.5	0.0
Illawarra	2.8	2.4	-0.4
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	1.3	1.5	0.1

Between 2011 and 2020, Sydney West experienced the largest growth in the proportion of employees working in the Public Service (3.2pp), with the Parramatta region contributing the most (59.5%).³ The other notable increases were in the Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle (0.9pp), Far West and Orana (0.4pp), Central West (0.1pp), and Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven (0.1pp).

The total share of FTE for regional areas decreased 1.5pp, from 37.4% in 2011 to 35.9% in 2020. Over the same period, the FTE share for metropolitan areas increased from 62.6% to 64.1%.

The Regional NSW cluster – established in 2020 to deliver positive outcomes for regional areas of NSW – had the highest proportion of FTE workers in regional areas, at 80% (see Figure 12.3). Employees were spread across all regions, with roughly half of regional staff located in Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle (18.7%), Central West (18.4%), and New England and North West (12.2%). The Customer Service; Education; Planning, Industry and Environment; and Stronger Communities clusters all had 30% or more of their FTE in regional areas. The Premier and Cabinet cluster had a low regional presence, at 2.6% of its workforce (+0.5pp from last year), and the low numbers recorded for the Treasury cluster meant it was below a reportable level. While the Health and Transport clusters had no Public Service employees in regional areas, both maintained a large regional presence in the NSW Health Service and Transport Service within the broader public sector.

Table 12.1: Public Service in regional areas by cluster, non-casual census period FTE, 2020 (and estimated change from 2019)^{4,5}

Region	Customer Service	Education	Planning, Industry and Environment	Premier and Cabinet	Stronger and Communities	Regional NSW
Capital Region	120 (19)	129 (4)	369 (30)	13 (2)	875 (35)	167
Central Coast	804 (24)	135 (14)	78 (3)	*	1,004 (-5)	57
Central West	600 (3)	338 (51)	480 (-40)	16 (10)	1,023 (37)	550
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	82 (2)	113 (31)	305 (-2)	8 (-3)	471 (-53)	134
Far West and Orana	53 (0)	141 (-3)	423 (5)	26 (1)	1,185 (50)	185

Region	Customer Service	Education	Planning, Industry and Environment	Premier and Cabinet	Stronger and Communities	Regional NSW
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	319 (11)	123 (-21)	116 (-266)	*	1,209 (65)	559
Illawarra	113 (1)	310 (24)	131 (-9)	*	871 (12)	89
Mid North Coast	68 (14)	106 (-9)	170 (0)	*	657 (45)	76
Murray	44 (0)	59 (-9)	129 (5)	*	195 (15)	137
New England and North West	66 (3)	224 (11)	227 (15)	8 (7)	579 (2)	365
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	507 (32)	334 (33)	441 (-29)	9 (4)	1,431 (-220)	119
Richmond-Tweed	75 (-4)	152 (9)	111 (7)	*	511 (19)	160
Riverina	57 (-1)	167 (-2)	174 (1)	*	546 (-10)	310
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	51 (8)	55 (6)	147 (-4)	*	593 (-8)	82
Total regional areas	2,958 (113)	2,387 (138)	3,301 (-284)	89 (21)	11,150 (-17)	2,990

* Numbers less than five have been suppressed.

Table 12.1 shows that across all regional areas, the Stronger Communities cluster had the highest number of Public Service FTE workers (30,098), with 37% located in regional areas. Newcastle and Lake Macquarie had the highest number (1,431), followed by the Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle (1,209). Notably, the figure for Newcastle and Lake Macquarie represents a decrease of 220 FTE from 2019. However, this was the result of facilities transitioning from NSW Government to the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the region. The only other overall decrease was in the Planning, Industry and Environment cluster. This mainly relates to staff moving to Regional NSW as part of machinery of government changes. The largest increase in regional FTE from 2019 was in Central West (111), followed by Capital Region (94), Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle (84), and Far West and Orana (80). These four regions accounted for 81.7% of the increase in the Public Service in regional areas in 2020.

Regional profile of Public Service senior executives



Senior executives in regional areas

12.7% in 2020 (13.8% in 2019)

Regionally based senior executive roles provide a career path for employees working in regional areas, who understand the local context in relation to policy and program development and implementation. In 2020, 12.7% of Public Service senior executives were based in regional areas. This was around one-third of the number of Public Service employees based in regional areas (35.9%).

The proportion of senior executives in regional areas increased 1.5pp from 2019, to 12.7%. The Central West had the largest proportion (23.2%) of senior executives of all regional areas, with the majority working in the Regional NSW and Planning, Industry and Environment clusters (55.2% and 24.1%, respectively).

Around 1.8% of records for senior executives were missing postcode data, down from around 2.5% in 2019. Table 12.2 shows that Premier and Cabinet had the largest amount of missing location data in senior executive records, limiting the ability to analyse their movements.

Table 12.2: Proportion of Public Service senior executive records with missing postcodes or suburb names, 2019–2020⁶

Cluster	2019 (%)	2020 (%)
Customer Service	0.4	0.0
Education	0.3	1.4

Cluster	2019 (%)	2020 (%)
Planning, Industry and Environment	2.2	0.0
Premier and Cabinet	14.2	13.7
Regional NSW	-	0.7
Treasury	1.4	0.0

At a cluster level, 35.2% of senior executives based in regional areas were in the Regional NSW cluster, followed by 22.0% in the Planning, Industry and Environment cluster.

Table 12.3: Number of senior executives by region, census headcount, 2019–2020⁷

Region	2019	2020	Change
Capital Region	18	22	4
Central Coast	21	20	-1
Central West	65	58	-7
Coffs Harbour-Grafton	10	7	-3
Far West and Orana	18	20	2
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	28	25	-3
Illawarra	24	20	-4
Mid North Coast	5	5	0
Murray	7	5	-2
New England and North West	15	15	0
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	30	27	-3

Region	2019	2020	Change
Richmond-Tweed	11	6	-5
Riverina	13	13	0
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	7	7	0
Total regional areas	272	250	-22

A decrease of 22 senior executives was recorded for regional areas in 2020 compared to 2019. However, this largely seems to be an artificial reduction because 77.3% of the decrease (17 senior executives) is from Education which has confirmed that there was an issue with the quality of 2019 location data. For analysis in this chapter, this quality issue mainly affects the Senior Executive data because the majority of Education's employees are outside the Public Service.

Table 12.4: Number and percentage of senior executives in regional areas by Executive Bands 1–4, census headcount, 2020

Region	Band 1	Band 2	Bands 3 and 4
Regional	211	33	6
Metropolitan	1,294	334	93
Percentage regional	14.0%	9.0%	6.1%

Analysis of the number of senior executives by band reveals a lower proportion of higher-band roles in regional areas. Senior executives in regional areas accounted for 14.0% of Public Service Band 1 senior executives, while the proportion of Bands 2 and 3 senior executives was around half this level. Interestingly, despite the number of senior executives in regional areas decreasing overall, the proportion of executives in regions in each band fluctuated from 2019 (-1.5pp in Band 1; +1.1pp in Band 2; and +0.1pp in Bands 3 and 4). This suggests that the number of executives in metropolitan areas in Band 2 and above reduced more than those in regional areas.

Five regional areas had Band 3 senior executives – Capital Region, Central West, Illawarra, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, and Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven – and these were divided between the Regional NSW; Planning, Industry and Environment; and Stronger Communities clusters. This reflects an increase in the number of regions with Band 3 senior executives; there were no Band 3 executives located in the

Capital Region and Illawarra region in 2019. Band 2 senior executives were spread across regions, with most in the Central West (24.2% of overall Band 2 executives in regional areas). Mid North Coast, Murray, and Richmond – Tweed were the only three regions with no Band 2 senior executives. All regional areas had Band 1 senior executives. The highest number was in the Central West (49 or 23.2%). The majority of these (29) were in the Regional NSW cluster.

Regional comparison of work and home locations

In 2020, measures designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 led to a large proportion of the NSW Public Service working from home. Insufficient data are available to accurately determine how many employees were working from home full time. However, Table 12.5 shows the location shift if all Public Service employees were working from home.

Table 12.5: Impact on regions if all Public Service employees were working from home, census headcount, 2020

Region (ABS Statistical Areas Level 4)	Employees living in region	Employees working in region	Change if employees were working from home
Capital Region	2,662	2,167	495
Central Coast	3,644	2,563	1,081
Central West	3,859	3,703	156
Coffs Harbour-Grafton	1,512	1,462	50
Far West and Orana	2,458	2,563	-105
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	2,607	2,875	-268
Illawarra	3,213	1,879	1,334
Mid North Coast	1,622	1,415	207
Murray	750	897	-147
New England and North West	2,035	1,966	69
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	4,017	3,419	598

Region (ABS Statistical Areas Level 4)	Employees living in region	Employees working in region	Change if employees were working from home
Richmond-Tweed	1,433	1,437	-4
Riverina	1,686	1,738	-52
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	1,274	1,148	126
Sydney-Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury	2,079	410	1,669
Sydney-Blacktown	3,400	1,256	2,144
Sydney-City and Inner South	4,529	17,741	-13,212
Sydney-Eastern Suburbs	2,293	1,209	1,084
Sydney-Inner South West	4,226	1,927	2,299
Sydney-Inner West	3,597	2,337	1,260
Sydney-North Sydney and Hornsby	3,384	2,125	1,259
Sydney-Northern Beaches	1,707	436	1,271
Sydney-Outer South West	3,013	1,386	1,627
Sydney-Outer West and Blue Mountains	4,261	2,673	1,588
Sydney-Parramatta	3,871	11,647	-7,776
Sydney-Ryde	1,514	557	957
Sydney-South West	3,094	2,300	794
Sydney-Sutherland	2,426	527	1,899

In this scenario, the regions with the largest decreases are Sydney City and Inner South (-13,212), and Parramatta (-7,776), encompassing the two main employment hubs in Sydney. The regions outside Sydney with the highest increases are Illawarra (1,334), Central Coast (1,081), and Newcastle and Lake Macquarie (598). Within Sydney, the largest increases are in Inner South West (2,299), Blacktown (2,144) and Sutherland (1,899).

Overall, more regions had a higher number of Public Service employees living than working there (21 and eight, respectively).

Notes

¹ The FTE figures are indicative only because postcodes were the sole location data item collected in 2011. This data did not align with ABS Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4) boundaries because one postcode can overlap boundaries. FTE is apportioned across relevant SA4s using weightings as per ABS population concordance tables. For the purposes of this table, 2020 FTE is reported using this same methodology to allow for a more accurate comparison.

² Around 0.1% of data collected in 2020 have missing postcodes, compared to just 0.02% missing postcodes in 2011.

³ Sydney West comprises the SA4 areas of Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury; Blacktown; Outer South West; Outer West and Blue Mountains; Parramatta; and South West.

⁴ Around 0.1% of 2020 records were missing postcode or suburb data compared with 0.4% for 2019; this change could impact the reported change in regional representation.

⁵ Data are presented in the 1 July 2020 cluster structure, and the change from 2018 should be considered indicative only. Some parts of departments and agencies that moved under machinery of government changes effective 1 July 2019 are not able to be identified in 2018 data, so changes from 2018 are estimates.

⁶ All public servants in the Health and Transport clusters were in Sydney.

⁷ Numbers have been suppressed where FTE is less than five.

Next chapter

Data sources, conventions and limitations

