

Age

Chapter 7, Workforce Profile Report 2021

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Non-casual median age in 2021

44 (same as 2020)



Non-casual employees under 35

27.3% in 2021 (+3.1pp vs 2012)



Non-casual employees 55 or over

23.7% in 2021 (+0.7pp vs 2012)



Non-casual average retirement age

64.8 in 2021 vs 61.7 in 2012

The median age of NSW public sector non-casual employees in 2021 was 44 (unchanged since 2018), with only a minor difference between genders (44 for men and 43 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

In the NSW public sector workforce, 68.2% of employees were in the 35 to 64 age group in 2021. In comparison, 56.9% of the NSW working population were in the same age bracket (see Figure 7.1). In addition, fewer NSW public sector employees were aged under 35 or over 65. Those aged under 35 accounted for 27.3% of public sector employees, compared to 37.9% of the entire NSW workforce. Those aged 65 and over accounted for 4.4% of public sector employees and 5.2% of the total workforce in NSW.

A comparison of 2020 figures for the NSW and Victorian public sectors² reveals a similar age distribution. The greatest difference between the two jurisdictions was in the 25 to 34 age range, with 22.9% in NSW and 26.3% in Victoria. Workers aged up to 34 accounted for 27.1% of NSW public sector employees and 31.2% in the Victorian public sector.

Table 7.1: Median age, and proportion of non-casual employees aged over 44 by service, at census date, 2021

Service	Median age	Employees aged >44 (%)
Public Service	44	49.1
NSW Health Service	42	45.3
NSW Police Force	40	37.3
Teaching Service	42	43.1
Transport Service	46	54.3
Other Crown services	49	63.3
Total government sector	44	47.8
State owned corporations	45	51.7
External to government sector	49	59.1
Total public sector	44	47.9

Table 7.1 shows that the median age ranged from 40 to 49 across NSW Government services in 2021. The NSW Police Force had the lowest median age in the sector of 40, which is unchanged from 2020. It had the highest proportion of employees aged under 35 (33.0%, compared to 27.3% across the sector) and the lowest proportion of employees aged 55 or over (10.1%, compared to 23.3% across the sector).

In contrast, Other Crown services had the highest median age in the sector of 49, at the census date. Within Other Crown services, 72.9% of Clerical and Administrative Workers were 45 or older, with a median age of 52. Among Managers, 69.5% were aged 45 or older, with a median age of 50.

Having 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 48.9% in 2012 to 52.0% in 2021. Figure 7.3 highlights that the biggest change in the proportion of the workforce over this

period occurred in the 45 to 54 years category. In 2012, 28.1% of employees were in this category, compared to 24.6% in 2021. The largest increase occurred in the 25 to 34 age group, with the proportion of employees rising by 2.8pp (from 20.1% in 2012 to 22.9% in 2021). At the same time, the proportion of employees aged 55 to 64 marginally decreased, by 1.2pp, while the proportion of employees aged 65 or over increased by 1.9pp.

The non-casual age profile of the public sector workforce varied across services (see Figure 7.4). Within the government sector, the Transport Service had the highest proportion of employees aged 65 and over (7.3%). Employees of the NSW Police Force and Teaching Service were highly concentrated in the 25 to 44 age group, and accounted for more than 50% of all non-casual employees in each of the two services. Nearly 50% of employees of the NSW Health Service were in this age bracket, whereas 57.4% of all non-casual employees in Other Crown services were between 45 and 64.

Retirement age

The average retirement age of public sector employees has steadily risen from 61.7 in 2012 to 64.8 in 2021. The proportion of employees retiring at age 65 or over has doubled since 2012, from 25.2% (806 employees) in 2012 to 51.7% (1,859 employees) in 2021. In 2012, 24.9% of retirees were aged 60 (797 employees), and this decreased to 10.9% (391 employees) in 2021.

The year 2021 marks the first time the most common retirement age has been 66 years, surpassing 60 years as the most common age of retirement (see Figure 7.5).

Commencements and separations vary widely by age, and trend lower with increasing age, until the 50 to 54 age range and older (see Figure 7.6). Commencements include where employees move between public sector agencies, and separations include both moves to other agencies and exits from the sector, including retirements.

The rate of commencement in 2021 for those aged 50 or over was around a quarter of the level of commencements for those aged under 50 (3.5% compared to 11.9%). Overall, 35.3% of NSW public sector employees are over 50, and 4.4% are over 65. There has been a small increase in the commencement rate of employees aged 50 or over in the past five years, from 2.9% in 2017 to 3.5% in 2021.

Employees aged 50 to 54 had the lowest separation rate in 2021, at 5.3%, and comprise up to 12.0% of the NSW public sector. In contrast, employees aged 65 or over account for just 4.4% of the NSW public sector workforce and had the highest separation rate and lowest commencement rate, at 17.1% and 1.8%, respectively.

The top three key occupations with the highest commencement rate for people aged 50 or over were Clerical and Administrative Workers, Social and Welfare Professionals, and Bus Drivers. These occupations accounted for 18.1% of employees in this age group.

Notes

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) *Twenty years of population change - Statistics about the population and components of change (births, deaths, migration) for Australia and its states and territories*, released 17 December 2020, <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/twenty-years-population-change>, accessed 29 October 2021.

² Victorian Public Sector Commission, 'Workforce data, facts and visuals (state of the public sector) – Employee work status, gender and age', <https://vpvc.vic.gov.au/data-and-research/data-facts-visuals-state-of-the-sector/employee-work-status-gender-and-age/>, accessed 29 October 2021.

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

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Mobility

