

Size and composition

Chapter 2, Workforce Profile Report 2021

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Employed persons



NSW employed persons

10.4% of all NSW employed persons are NSW public sector employees

-0.1pp vs 2020



Increase in NSW public sector

+4.3% census headcount, **up by 17,783** from 2020



Increase in NSW employed persons

+5.4%

Note: 'pp' stands for percentage points.

Size of the NSW public sector workforce

The NSW public sector is the largest employer in Australia. Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1 show that in 2021 the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the census period increased by 3.4% (+11,682) compared to 2020, and the census headcount increased by 4.3% (+17,783). This is the largest increase since the launch of the Workforce Profile collection.

Table 2.1: Public sector census headcount, census period FTE, 2012–21

Year	Census headcount	Change from previous year (%)	Census period FTE	Change from previous year (%)
2012	401,703	1.8	332,555	0.7
2013	399,243	-0.6	329,336	-1.0
2014	396,036	-0.8	328,111	-0.4
2015	394,194	-0.5	326,765	-0.4
2016	393,442	-0.2	326,706	0.0
2017	393,333	0.0	325,917	-0.2
2018	396,243	0.7	329,005	0.9
2019	407,999	3.0	337,787	2.7
2020	413,567	1.4	348,508	3.2
2021	431,350	4.3	360,190	3.4

Figure 2.2 shows that the NSW public sector has continued to grow since 2018. While the NSW public sector workforce grew by 4.3% in 2021, the increase in the broader NSW workforce was larger. NSW employed persons increased by 5.4% in 2021, following the 4.7% contraction in 2020. The proportion of NSW employed persons who worked for the NSW public sector decreased 0.1pp from 2020 to 10.4% in 2021 (see Figure 2.3).

Composition of the NSW public sector workforce

While headcount is an important measure of the size of the workforce, FTE provides a better indication of the level of resources.

In 2021, the census period FTE increased by 11,682 and the census headcount rose by 17,783. The key contributors to this increase in FTE were the NSW Health Service (4,600), the Public Service (2,853) and Other Crown services (1,426).

Table 2.2: Composition of the public sector by service, census period FTE, 2020–21

Service	2020	2021	Change	Change (%)
Public Service	66,631	69,484	2,853	4.3
NSW Health Service	122,921	127,521	4,600	3.7
NSW Police Force	20,613	21,041	427	2.1
Teaching Service	70,261	71,415	1,154	1.6
Transport Service	13,645	14,562	917	6.7
Other Crown services	45,310	46,737	1,426	3.1
Total government sector	339,382	350,759	11,377	3.4
State owned corporations	8,129	8,321	192	2.4
External to government sector	997	1,110	113	11.4
Total public sector	348,508	360,190	11,682	3.4

Table 2.2 shows that all services experienced increases in census period FTE from 2020 to 2021.

The increase in the NSW Health Service of 4,600 FTE (+3.7%) included an additional 1,839 (+3.7%) FTE Nurses and 1,163 (+7.3%) FTE Clerical and Administrative Workers. These increases reflect the additional resources required to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Public Service grew by 2,853 FTE (+4.3%) in 2021. The main contribution to this growth was the Customer Service cluster, which grew by 1,005 FTE (+12.2%). The largest increases in the cluster were in Service NSW (+664 FTE or 22.3%) and Digital NSW (+108 FTE or 24.1%). These increases reflect the role of the Service NSW app and call centre in the management of the pandemic. The Planning, Industry and Environment cluster increased by 993 FTE (+10.5%), with most of the increase in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (+792 FTE or 9.6%). This increase largely relates to additional resourcing required for projects and programs aligned with the NSW economic and social recovery plan, including planning reform initiatives and establishing new functional areas.

The increase in Other Crown services (+1,426 FTE or +3.1%) was mainly due to the increase in School Administrative and Support Workers (+1,066 FTE or 5.1%). The Teaching Service also grew, by 1,154 FTE (+1.6%). Increases in the Teaching Service and School Administrative and Support Workers were largely due to engaging additional teachers under the COVID Intensive Learning Support Program, recruiting new business managers to support schools, and growth in Training Services NSW.

The largest proportional increase in the government sector occurred in the Transport Service, which grew 6.7%, compared to 2020. This was due to the effect of major transport infrastructure projects on NSW employment. Transport for NSW had an FTE increase of 779 (+7.9%) and Sydney Metro was up 274 (+60.7%).

All clusters in the public sector recorded growth in 2021 (see Table 2.3). The Health, Education and Transport clusters account for 70% of the increase. The Premier and Cabinet cluster FTE also rose (+585 or 15.2%), mostly due to the establishment of Investment NSW (399).

Table 2.3: Composition of the public sector by cluster, census period FTE, 2020–21²

Cluster	2020	2021	Change	Change (%)
Customer Service	8,210	9,216	1,005	12.2
Education	110,507	112,929	2,421	2.2
Health	124,086	128,738	4,652	3.7
Planning, Industry and Environment	16,103	17,222	1,118	6.9
Premier and Cabinet	3,835	4,420	585	15.2
Regional NSW	4,428	4,646	219	4.9
Stronger Communities	52,342	52,782	440	0.8
Transport	26,454	27,616	1,162	4.4
Treasury	2,293	2,312	19	0.8
Total public sector	348,508	360,190	11,682	3.4

Notes

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (August 2021) 'Table 1: RM1 - Labour force status by age, labour market region (ASGS) and sex, October 1998 onwards' [time series spreadsheet], ***Labour force status***, accessed 28 September 2021.

² Other has been excluded from the clusters list but included in the public sector totals.

Chapter 3

Leaders

