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Size and composition

Chapter 2

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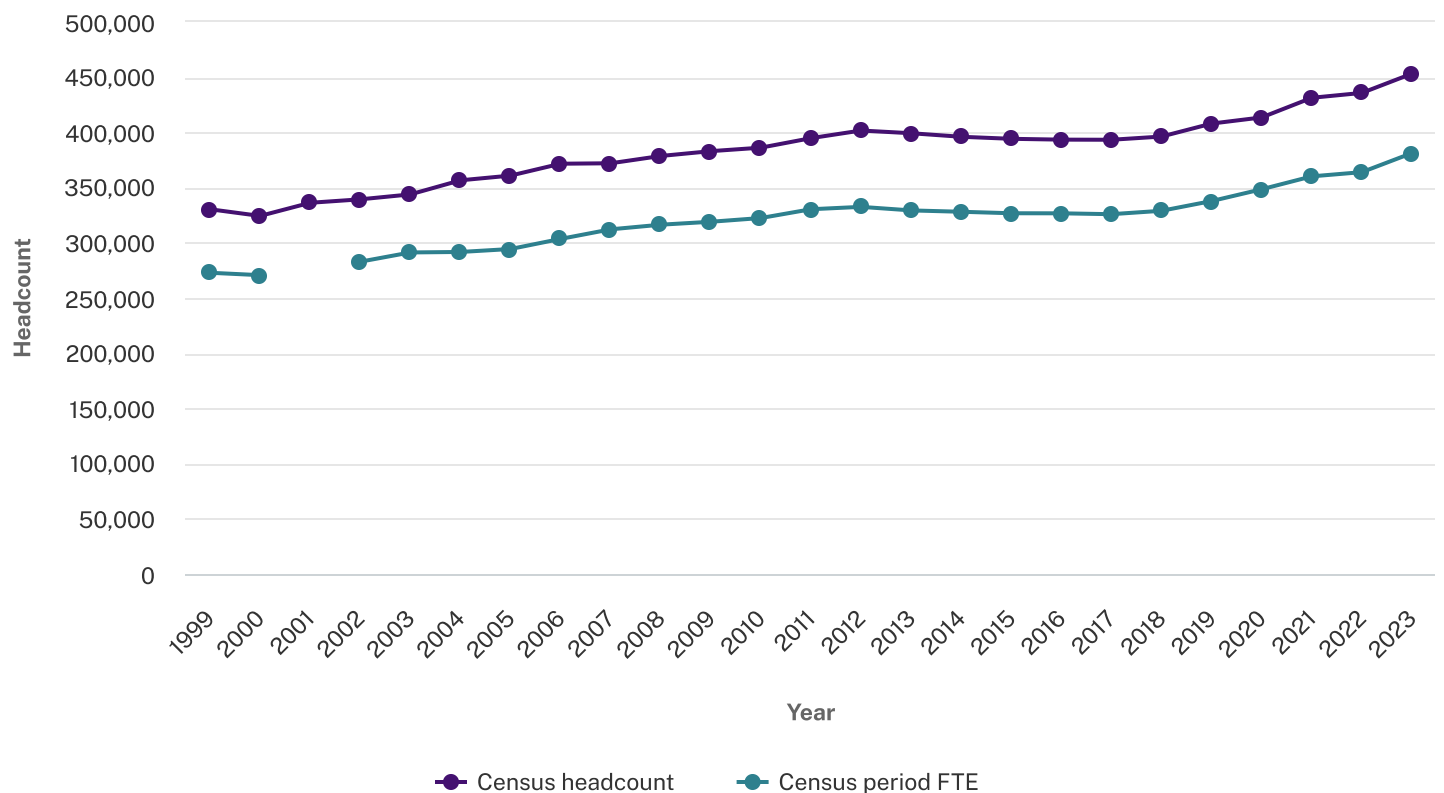
Public sector employed persons

10.3% of all people employed in NSW are NSW public sector employees.

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 2023 the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the census period increased by 4.7% (+17,265) compared to 2022, and the census headcount increased by 4.0% (+17,438)¹. This is the largest recorded increase in FTE since the workforce profile commenced in 1999 and the second largest increase in headcount.

Figure 2.1: Public sector census headcount and census period FTE, 1999 to 2023



Year	Census headcount	Census period FTE
1999	330380	272863
2000	324345	270688
2001	336251	
2002	339372	282897
2003	343847	291264
2004	356598	291701
2005	360880	294376
2006	371632	303534
2007	372033	312201

Year	Census headcount	Census period FTE
2008	378645	316400
2009	383014	319059
2010	386185	322452
2011	394789	330400
2012	401703	332555
2013	399243	329336
2014	396036	328111
2015	394194	326765
2016	393442	326706
2017	393333	325917
2018	396243	329005
2019	407999	337817
2020	413567	348508
2021	431350	360190
2022	435772	364006
2023	453210	381272

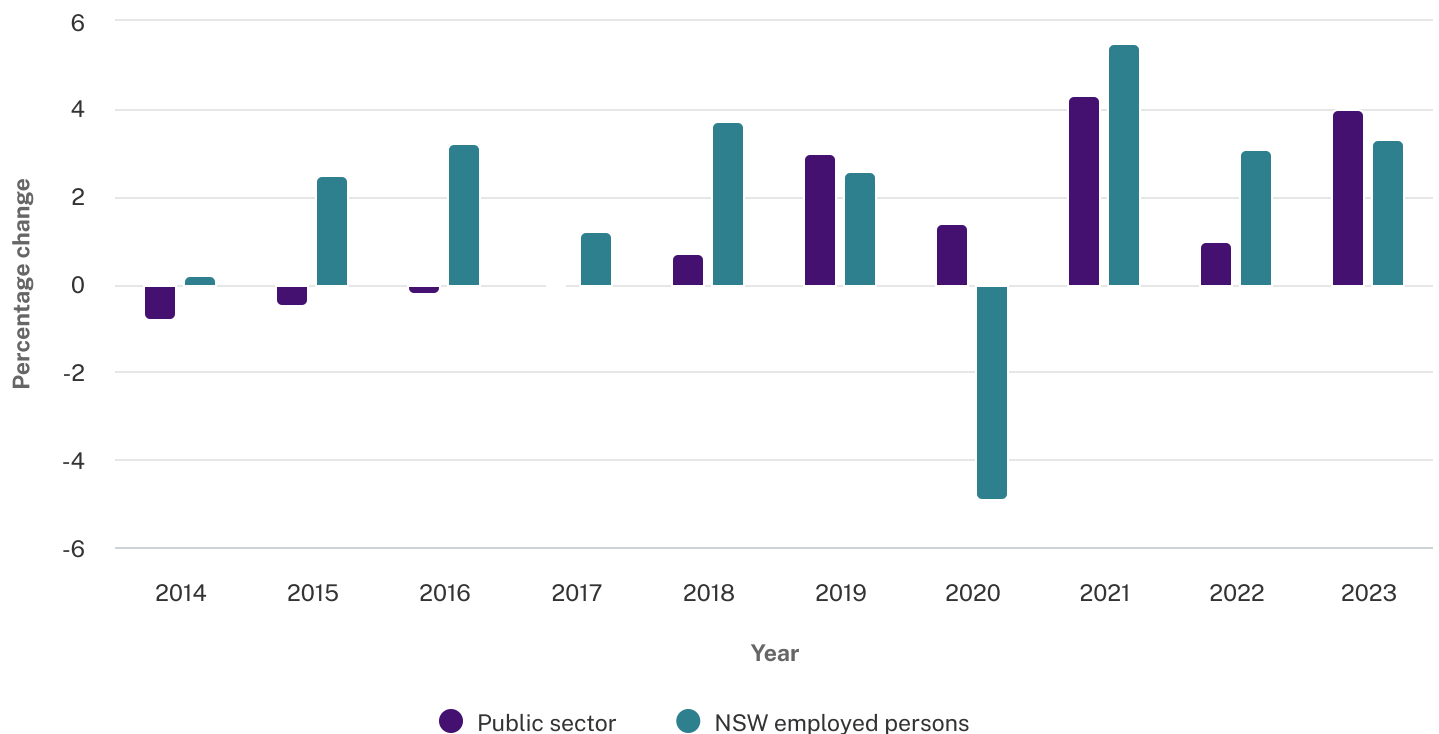
Figure 2.1: Public sector census headcount and census period FTE, 1999 to 2023

Table 2.1: Public sector census headcount and census period FTE, 2014 to 2023

Year	Census headcount	Change from previous year (%)	Census period FTE	Change from previous year (%)
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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	337,817	2.7
2020	413,567	1.4	348,508	3.2
2021	431,350	4.3	360,190	3.4
2022	435,772	1.0	364,006	1.1
2023	453,210	4.0	381,272	4.7

Figure 2.2: Annual percentage change in the size of the public sector workforce (census headcount) and NSW employed persons, 2014 to 2023 ²



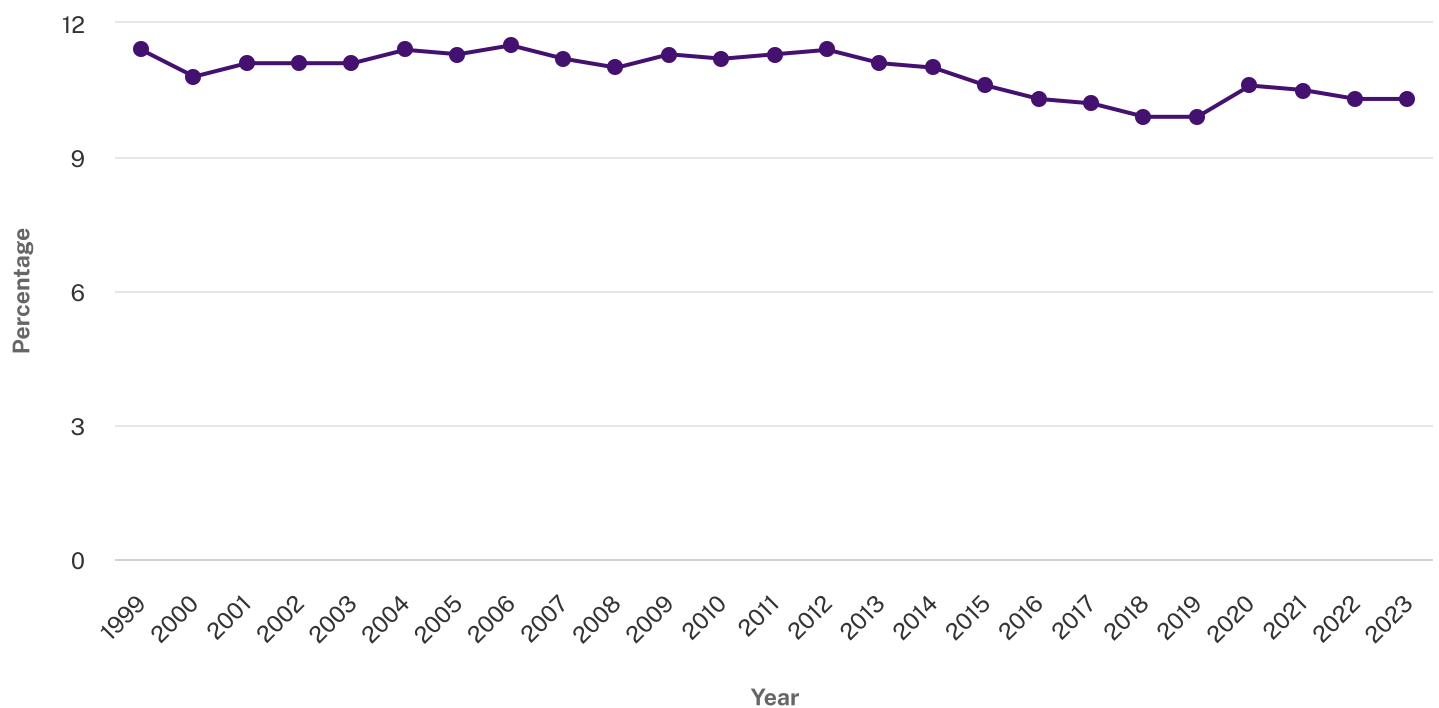
Year	Public sector	NSW employed persons
2014	-0.8	0.2
2015	-0.5	2.5
2016	-0.2	3.2
2017	0	1.2
2018	0.7	3.7
2019	3	2.6
2020	1.4	-4.9
2021	4.3	5.5
2022	1	3.1

Year	Public sector	NSW employed persons
2023	4	3.3

Figure 2.2: Annual percentage change in the size of the public sector workforce (census headcount) and NSW employed persons, 2014 to 2023

Figure 2.2 shows there was higher proportional growth in the NSW public sector (+4.0%) than the broader NSW workforce (+3.3%). Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of NSW employed persons who worked for the NSW public sector was 10.3% in 2023, unchanged from 2022.

Figure 2.3: Public sector census headcount as a percentage of NSW employed persons, 1999 to 2023



Year	Public sector as a percentage of NSW employed persons
1999	11.4
2000	10.8
2001	11.1

Year	Public sector as a percentage of NSW employed persons
2002	11.1
2003	11.1
2004	11.4
2005	11.3
2006	11.5
2007	11.2
2008	11
2009	11.3
2010	11.2
2011	11.3
2012	11.4
2013	11.1
2014	11
2015	10.6
2016	10.3
2017	10.2
2018	9.9
2019	9.9
2020	10.6
2021	10.5
2022	10.3

Year	Public sector as a percentage of NSW employed persons
2023	10.3

Figure 2.3: Public sector census headcount as a percentage of NSW employed persons, 1999 to 2023

Composition of the NSW public sector

FTE considers the number of hours employees work and provides a better measure of resourcing in the sector than headcount.

In 2023, census period FTE increased by 17,265. Table 2.2 shows the key contributors to the increase in FTE were the Public Service (+7,854), the NSW Health Service (+4,008), other Crown services (+2,679) and the Transport Service (+1,910).

Table 2.2: Composition of the public sector by service, census period FTE, 2022 to 2023³

Service	2022	2023	Change	Change (%)
Public Service	73,073	80,927	7,854	10.7
NSW Health Service	129,434	133,442	4,008	3.1
NSW Police Force	20,736	20,087	-649	-3.1
Teaching Service	70,968	71,787	819	1.2
Transport Service	13,328	15,238	1,910	14.3
Other Crown services	46,886	49,565	2,679	5.7
Total government sector	354,423	371,046	16,622	4.7
State owned corporations	8,461	9,003	541	6.4
External to government sector	1,122	1,224	102	9.1

Total public sector	364,006	381,272	17,265	4.7
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The main contributors to the growth in the Public Service were the Communities and Justice (+2,313 FTE or 7.5%), Education (+1,582 FTE or 17.2%), Customer Service (+1,453 FTE or 13.6%) and Environment and Planning portfolios (+1,344 FTE or 14.2%).

In the NSW Health Service, there were an additional 1,538 (+3.0%) FTE Nurses, 538 (+10.4%) FTE Ambulance Officers and 358 (+2.6%) FTE Medical Practitioners in 2023.

In other Crown services, School Administrative and Support increased 2,089 FTE (+9.3%) and the TAFE Commission increased 507 FTE (+5.0%). The increase in the Transport Service (+1,910 or 14.3%) was notably in Transport for NSW (+1,651 or 13.4%) reflecting the large transport infrastructure projects.

The only service which decreased in 2023 was the NSW Police Force (–649 FTE, –3.1%). The NSW Police Force confirmed that a factor contributing to this decrease was the Optional Disengagement Scheme, an initiative supporting police officers to transition from the NSW Police Force to pursue an alternate career or life path, with 235 police officers recorded as exiting under this scheme in 2023.

Similar to the services, Table 2.3 shows most portfolios experienced growth in 2023. More than half of the growth in the sector FTE was in the Education (+5,102) and Health (+4,188) portfolios.

Table 2.3: Composition of the public sector by portfolio, census period FTE, 2022 to 2023⁴

Portfolio	2022	2023	Change	Change (%)
Communities and Justice	52,102	53,799	1,697	3.3
Customer Service	10,665	12,118	1,453	13.6
Education	113,372	118,475	5,102	4.5
Enterprise, Investment and Trade	3,714	3,463	–251	–6.8
Environment and Planning	13,923	15,532	1,609	11.6
Health	130,676	134,864	4,188	3.2
Premier and Cabinet	1,597	1,876	279	17.5

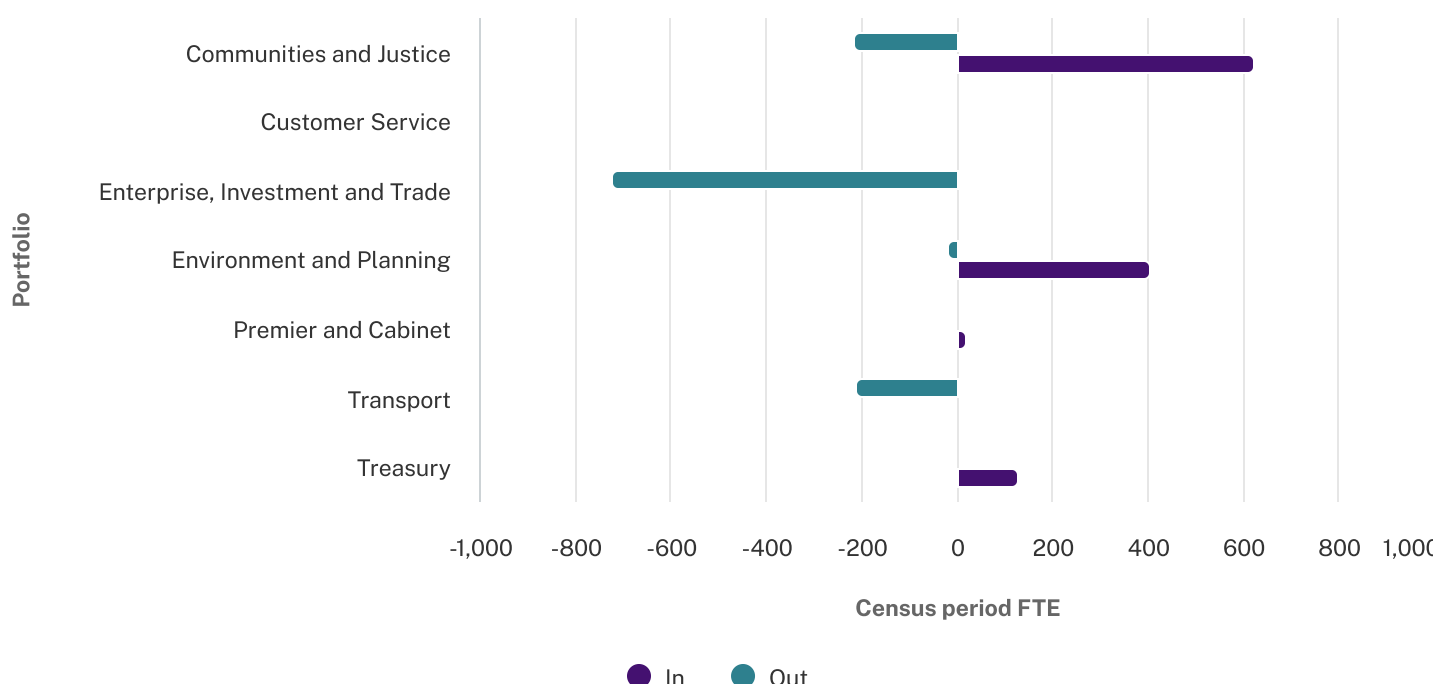
Regional NSW	4,821	5,519	698	14.5
Transport	27,024	28,588	1,565	5.8
Treasury	5,771	6,662	891	15.4
Total public sector	364,006	381,272	17,265	4.7

Machinery of government changes affected the size of some portfolios. One of the largest movements between portfolios was from Enterprise, Investment and Trade, with the Office of Sport (388 FTE), Venues NSW (146 FTE) and the Institute of Sport (87 FTE) transferring to the Communities and Justice portfolio.

Within the Communities and Justice portfolio, Resilience NSW was abolished on 31 December 2022 (217 FTE). Employees transferred on 1 January 2023 to either the newly established NSW Reconstruction Authority in the Environment and Planning portfolio, the NSW Police Force, Department of Premier and Cabinet or the Department of Communities and Justice according to their area of work.

In addition to the establishment of the NSW Reconstruction Authority (215 FTE) in the Environment and Planning portfolio, the Western Parkland City Authority (104 FTE) and the Greater Cities Commission (84 FTE) transferred to this portfolio.

Figure 2.4: Machinery of government portfolio changes, census period FTE, 2023



Portfolio	In	Out
Communities and Justice	620.6	-217.1
Customer Service		
Enterprise, Investment and Trade		-724.1
Environment and Planning	404.2	-17.4
Premier and Cabinet	17.4	
Transport		-210.3
Treasury	126.6	

Figure 2.4: Machinery of government portfolio changes, census period FTE, 2023

Notes

- ¹ Refer to the [Glossary in Chapter 12](#) for definitions of FTE, headcount, and census period.
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics (August 2022), 'Table 1: RM1 -Labour force status by Age, Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 onwards', [time series spreadsheet], Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, accessed 22 September 2023.
- ³ Refer to the [Glossary in Chapter 12](#) for the definitions of components of the public sector.
- ⁴ Some public sector entities do not align to a portfolio, so the public sector total differs from the total of the portfolios.

[Chapter 3](#)

Leaders

