NSW Public Sector Report 2024

December 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country across NSW. We acknowledge the spiritual connections and relationships that Traditional Custodians have continued to maintain and strengthen since time began, which will continue well into the future. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise their cultural knowledge and wisdom has been passed down through generations and will remain present through stories and song lines for generations to come.

We extend this respect, acknowledgement and appreciation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members who helped develop this report and who contribute across the public sector. We recognise their skills and experiences as foundational assets to support the people of NSW.

Contents

About this report

The *2024 NSW Public Sector Report* is an assessment of the state of the NSW public sector by the Secretary of the Premier's Department. The report assesses the sector's performance, including notable achievements, challenges and priorities, and also provides an analysis of government sector workforce data. Under section 82A of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act) the Minister must ensure that the report is tabled in both Houses of the NSW Parliament.

How to read the data discussed in this report

This report draws on evidence from a range of sources, including the People Matter Employee Survey (People Matter survey) and Workforce Profile. The following points will help you to better understand the information in this report.

- The abbreviation 'pp' stands for 'percentage points'.

- 'Full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce' describes the total number of full-time employees required to account for all ordinary paid hours worked.

- All diversity statistics are based on self-disclosed information.

- Representation of cultural background, non-binary representation, LGBTIQA+ representation, and representation of people who provide care for someone outside work is based on results from the People Matter survey.

- 'Frontline' is defined in the People Matter survey as 'Service delivery involving direct contact with the public (e.g. teaching, nursing, policing, shopfront/counter service, train driver, customer service)'.

- 'CALD' stands for 'culturally and linguistically diverse' and refers to People Matter survey respondents who nominated at least one non-English speaking cultural background.

People Matter Employee Survey

The People Matter survey asks NSW public sector employees about their experiences at work; with their teams, managers and leaders; and in their organisations more broadly. The 2024 survey was open from 19 August to 13 September 2024. Over 220,000 employees across the sector responded to this year's People Matter survey, representing a 51% response rate.

Most of the survey results are presented as 'per cent favourable', which combines the number of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses to a question or set of questions. In this report, some questions have been grouped for theoretical or practical reasons. Responses that are considered 'favourable overall' are reported as a percentage for these questions.

These scores provide an overview of workplace practices that affect employee experience, and they are each assessed through multiple survey questions.

Workforce Profile

The Workforce Profile is an annual and comprehensive report of the demographic characteristics and employment arrangements of all NSW public sector employees. The Premier's Department and all public sector agencies jointly collect data for, and contribute to, this report. The census date is the last payday of the financial year, and the census period comprises the 2 weeks leading up to and including the census date. The data in this report is for the census date, unless otherwise specified. The census date was 20 June 2024.

Geography

Throughout this report, 'metropolitan' refers to the Greater Sydney metropolitan area and the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas (LGAs). 'Regional' refers to the remainder of NSW.

The maps showing the geographic distribution of NSW public sector employees use the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS's) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) classification. SA4s are the largest sub-state regions in the Main Structure of the ASGS and are designed for the output of a variety of regional data. They represent labour markets. Those that make up the Greater Sydney metropolitan area have been grouped into Sydney East and Sydney West subclassifications for ease of reporting.

Areas of government covered in this report

This report discusses the performance of the Public Service, government sector and public sector, each of which has a specific definition under the GSE Act.

- The Public Service means the Public Service of New South Wales, which consists of those employed under Part 4 of the GSE Act by the Government of New South Wales in the service of the Crown.

- The government sector, as defined in the GSE Act, comprises the Public Service, the Teaching Service, the NSW Police Force, the NSW Health Service, the Transport Service of New South Wales, and any other service of the Crown (including services of any NSW Government agency). It also includes services of certain persons or bodies constituted by or under an Act or exercising public functions that are prescribed by the regulations.

- The public sector incorporates the government sector and other government agencies, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Audit Office of New South Wales, the staff of the Parliament of NSW, the Judicial Commission of New South Wales, judicial officers of NSW, and State Owned Corporations such as water and energy companies.

The data in this report relates to the public sector, unless otherwise specified.

Foreword

The 2024 NSW Public Sector Report is a comprehensive assessment of the NSW public sector, reflecting on its composition and performance.

Simon Draper PSM
Secretary, Premier's Department

Our state is fortunate to be served by around 460,000 dedicated public sector employees. This accounts for 10.4% of people employed in NSW – the majority serving in frontline roles.

These workers play a critical role in shaping the community's perspectives of our work, through their service in classrooms, hospitals, police stations, offices or service centres.

A key focus of the government has been to improve the pay and conditions for these workers.

Median remuneration for non-casual employees in the NSW public sector was $100,647 in 2024, an increase of 4.9% from 2023.

Progress has also been made on increasing the representation of women in leadership. Close to half of senior executives in the sector were female in 2024, up slightly from the year prior.

This year, more than half of all public servants (51%) completed the People Matter survey, providing valuable insights into the strengths and challenges of our workforce.

In welcome news, our highest scores – for 'ethics and values' (81%) – underscore the importance of integrity in maintaining community trust and building strong public institutions. Over the last few years, trust has never been more important for government and leaders in the public sector as they deliver on key government priorities to build a better NSW.

Employees are also finding 'job purpose and enrichment' (71%) and approve of how we are managing 'risk and innovation' (69%).

Given the importance of our frontline workers, it's also promising that the government's focus on addressing recruitment and retention issues appears to be bearing some fruit. The intention of police officers and teachers to stay in their organisation has improved, and we'll continue working on improving intention to stay for all employees.

The latest survey results also highlight what a meaningful difference improved pay and conditions can make. While 36% of frontline workers are satisfied with their pay (which is stable), there were differing results within the group. Teacher's satisfaction with their pay surged by 20 percentage points to 42% after a pay rise last year. It's promising that salary agreements have been reached for many frontline cohorts – including with police officers and health workers – and that negotiations are continuing with others.

There was also an increase in ongoing employment this year, and a corresponding decrease in temporary employees. This is primarily related to making more teachers permanent.

While we have a lot to celebrate, challenges remain. The results tell us we need to get better at managing change and addressing burnout. Burnout rates have been relatively stable across the sector, but they are still notably higher among our frontline employees.

We are also looking at ways we can improve wellbeing, engagement and workforce diversity.

The NSW Government has reorganised itself to respond to the challenges ahead. While managing this can be tough for workers, it is essential for us to fulfil our role, to advance the government's priorities and best serve the people of NSW.

I thank everyone who contributed to this year's NSW Public Sector Report. This includes the employees who took the time to fill out the People Matter survey, providing valuable feedback, and the agencies that provided examples of their excellent work. This helps us understand what we're doing well, where improvements can be made, and overall, the positive impact of the work we do for the people of NSW.

Our structure

Our structure

Over 460,000 employees work in the NSW public sector to deliver a wide range of services to the people of NSW.

Due to machinery of government changes, there have been some changes in the way government functions and responsibilities are allocated and structured across government agencies since the 2023 *State of the NSW Public Sector Report*.

Headcount and full-time equivalent employees

466,689

ongoing, temporary and casual employees

Source: *Workforce Profile (2024)*

Equating to

391,451

full-time equivalent employees

Source: *Workforce Profile (2024), census period*

The number of people (headcount) employed in the NSW public sector increased by 3.0% in 2024, outpacing the growth in the number of people employed in NSW overall, at 1.8%.

The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the sector increased by 10,179 (or 2.7%) from 2023 to 2024. The key contributors to this increase were the NSW Health Service (+4,886), the Public Service (+2,443) and other Crown services (+1,749).[1]

The main contributors to the growth in the NSW Health Service were an additional 2,197 FTE Nurses (+4.1%), 480 FTE Medical Practitioners (+3.4%) and 244 FTE Ambulance Officers (4.3%).

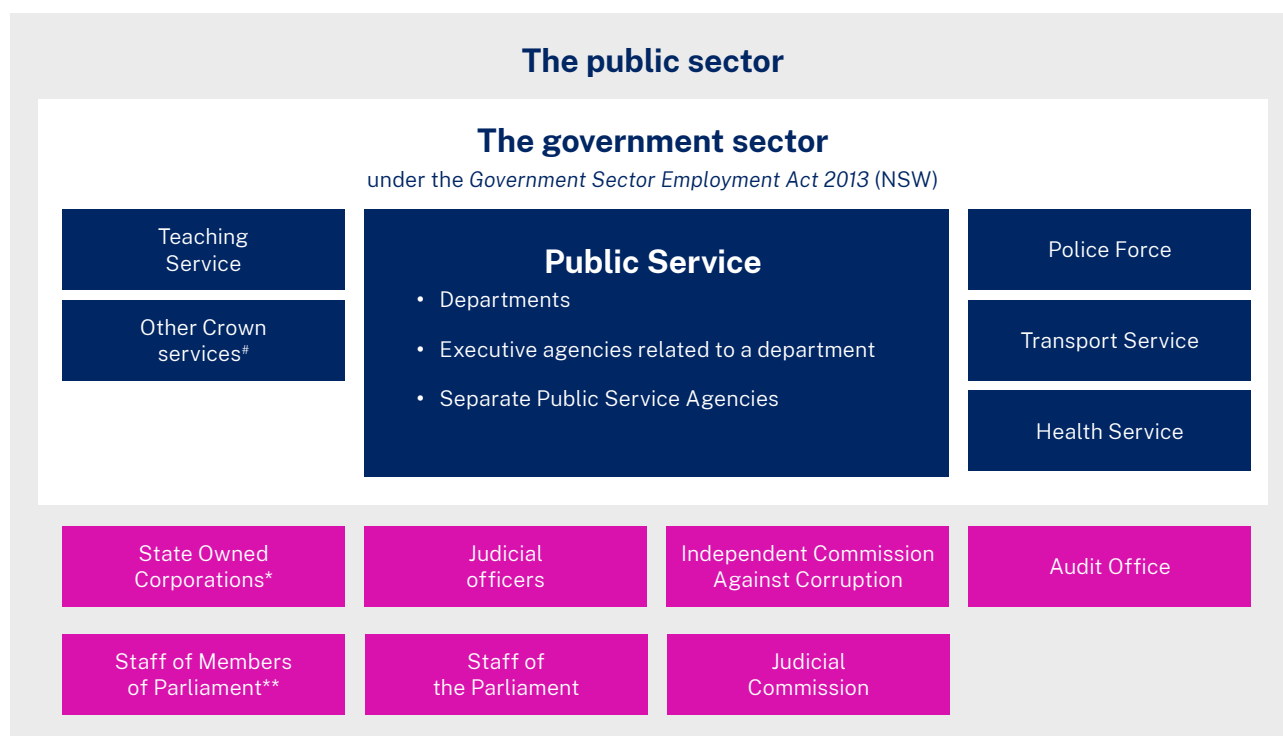1   See table 2.2 in the *Workforce Profile Report 2024*

In the Public Service there was an increase in Communities and Justice (1,634 FTE or 4.9%), Education (842 FTE or 7.3%) and Premier and Cabinet (389 FTE or 26.9%).

In other Crown services, the TAFE Commission increased by 852 FTE (+8.0%), Sydney Trains increased 500 FTE (+4.8%) and School Administrative and Support increased by 219 FTE (0.9%).

Overall, 77.8% of employees in the public sector are ongoing. There was an increase in ongoing FTE employees during 2024 of 2.8pp and a corresponding decrease in temporary FTE employees (14.5%, -2.8pp). This primarily related to changes in the Teaching Service and School Administrative and Support Workers.

Structure of the NSW public sector

The GSE Act establishes 2 main employment groups: the government sector and the Public Service within it. Most NSW public sector employees are in the government sector.

The public sector

The government sector
under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW)

Teaching Service	**Public Service** • Departments • Executive agencies related to a department • Separate Public Service Agencies	Police Force
Other Crown services#		Transport Service
		Health Service

| State Owned Corporations* | Judicial officers | Independent Commission Against Corruption | Audit Office |
| Staff of Members of Parliament** | Staff of the Parliament | Judicial Commission | |

\# Examples of other Crown services include the TAFE Commission, School Administrative and Support Staff, and Sydney Trains.

* Under the GSE Act, State Owned Corporations are included in the government sector for certain specified purposes. However, in this report, they are treated as part of the public sector, not as part of the government sector.

** The Premier's Department does not collect data on these employees.

Note: Under the GSE Act, NSW universities are part of the government sector for certain specified purposes. The Premier's Department does not collect data on the employees of NSW universities. They are not considered part of the public sector or government sector in this report.

There are 11 departments of the Public Service, each led by a secretary.

In 2024 there have been changes to the composition of the public sector by portfolio due to machinery of government changes.

The Climate Change, Energy and the Environment portfolio was created from the environment agencies formerly in the Planning portfolio and the energy agencies formerly in the Treasury portfolio.

From 1 July 2024, the Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport portfolio was created from agencies formerly in the Enterprise, Investment and Trade portfolio. The industry and investment functions of the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade were returned to the Premier's Department through the transfer of Investment NSW. The Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer also joined the Premier's Department.

The Department of Regional NSW was renamed the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, clearly articulating the focus of the department.

Full-time equivalent employees by portfolio
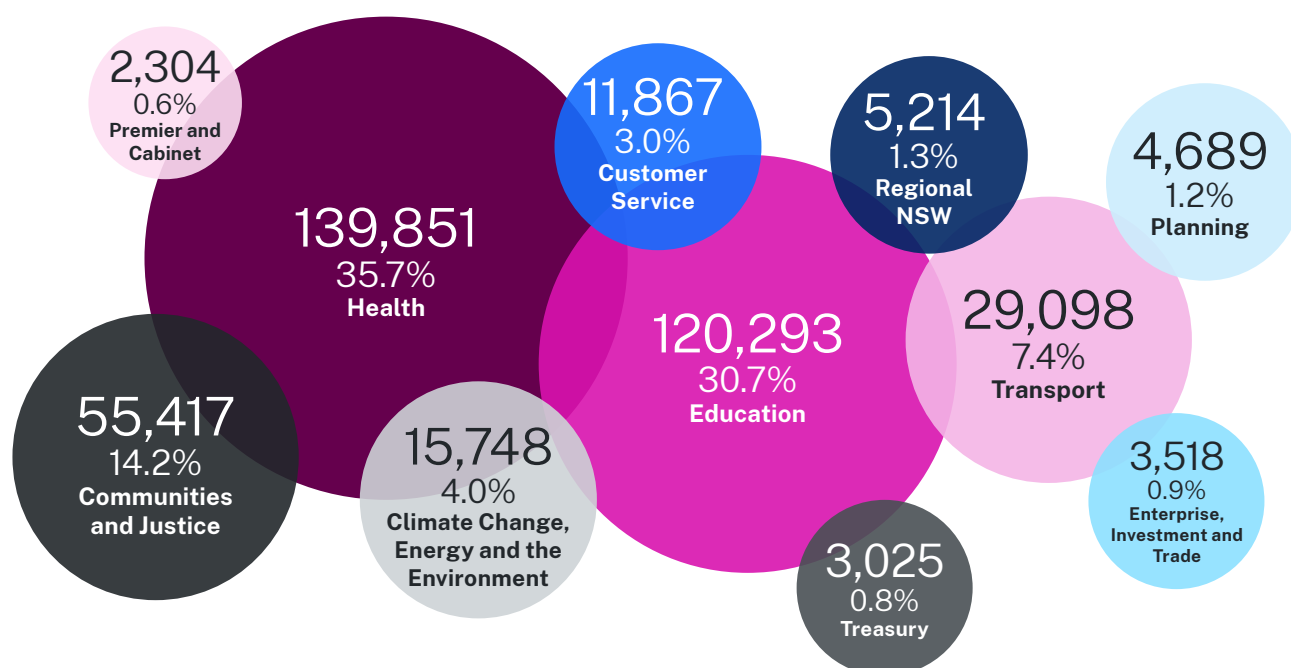
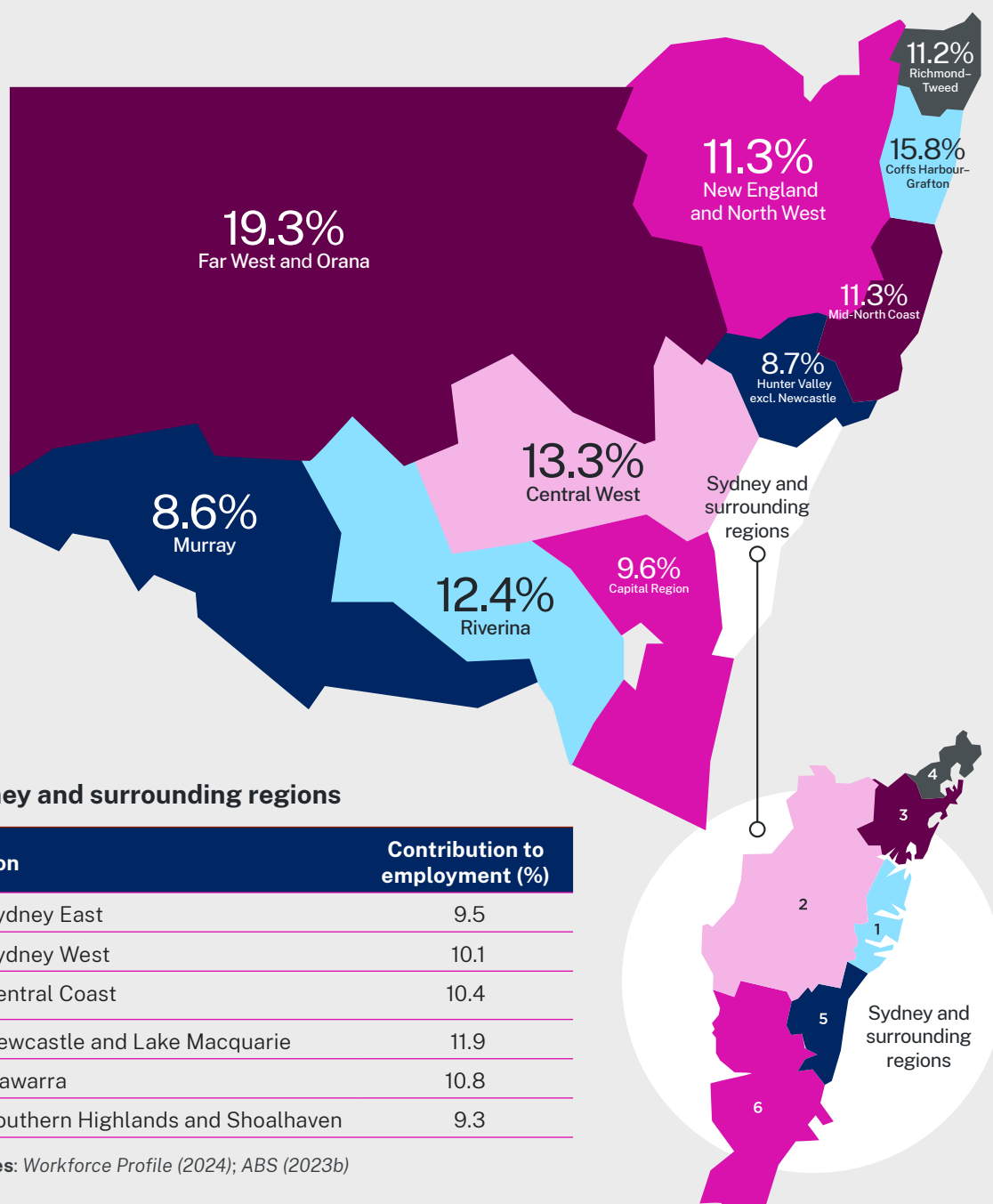Source: *Workforce Profile (2024), census period*

Note: Percentages indicate the contribution of the portfolio's FTE to the public sector's total FTE.

The changes related to the creation of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport; and Primary Industries and Regional Development occurred on 1 July 2024 and are not captured in the figure above.

Employment by NSW region

The NSW Government is a significant employer in every part of the state. Many public sector employees work in Sydney (59.6%). However, the sector contributes relatively more to overall employment in regional areas of NSW than it does to employment in Sydney.

In 2024, 66.2% of public sector employees worked in a metropolitan area (Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong), compared with 33.8% in regional NSW. Of the NSW Estimated Resident Population, 63% worked in a metropolitan area, while 33% worked in regional NSW. The NSW Government is a significant contributor to regional employment. In recent years, the government has succeeded in increasing the number of regionally based public sector employees, including at the senior executive level.
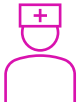

11.2% Richmond–Tweed

15.8% Coffs Harbour–Grafton

11.3% New England and North West

19.3% Far West and Orana

11.3% Mid-North Coast

8.7% Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle

13.3% Central West

Sydney and surrounding regions

8.6% Murray

9.6% Capital Region

12.4% Riverina

Sydney and surrounding regions

	Region	Contribution to employment (%)
1	Sydney East	9.5
2	Sydney West	10.1
3	Central Coast	10.4
4	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	11.9
5	Illawarra	10.8
6	Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	9.3

Sources: *Workforce Profile (2024); ABS (2023b)*

Sources: *Workforce Profile (2024); ABS (2024a)*

Key occupations

The NSW public sector employs people in a wide range of occupations.

Full-time equivalent employees in key occupations, 2024 vs 2023

School Teachers
70,235
70,442 in 2023

Nurses
55,614
53,417 in 2023

Clerical and Administrative Workers
54,021
52,188 in 2023

School Support
28,940
28,585 in 2023

Police Officers
15,760
16,286 in 2023

Medical Practitioners
14,492
14,013 in 2023

Social and Welfare Professionals
7,485
7,923 in 2023

Ambulance Officers
5,945
5,702 in 2023

Cleaners and Laundry Workers
5,392
5,253 in 2023

Prison Officers
4,343
4,520 in 2023

Labourers
4,738
4,314 in 2023

Firefighters
4,183
4,208 in 2023

Train Drivers
2,241
2,168 in 2023

Food Preparation Assistants
2,149
2,069 in 2023

Source: *Workforce Profile (2023, 2024), census period*

Our people

Our people

This section examines the many aspects of employment that are important to our people, including employee engagement, effective leadership, learning and development, inclusion and diversity, tenure and remuneration. It explores what is driving engagement across the sector, with an emphasis on change management and wellbeing.

The NSW Government is committed to remaining an attractive employer in the state and recognises the importance of fair and competitive remuneration to attract the best talent to the sector.

Employee engagement

The People Matter survey has tracked employee engagement since 2012. Employee engagement refers to an employee's connection to their organisation. It is a global measure of employee experience and in this report is expressed as an index score out of 100. Employee engagement has a strong connection to productivity, making it a key indicator of the sector's overall performance.

Many factors influence employee engagement, including leadership, a positive and inclusive work culture, wellbeing, manager support, accountability and flexible working arrangements. This year, employee engagement for the public sector fell, from 64.5 to 62.3. Notably, all 5 engagement questions saw significant declines between 3 to 5 points. Employee engagement fell in almost all portfolios, with score variations ranging from a minor increase of 0.3 points in one portfolio to a decrease of 8.9 points in another portfolio.

Employee engagement trend, 2016–24
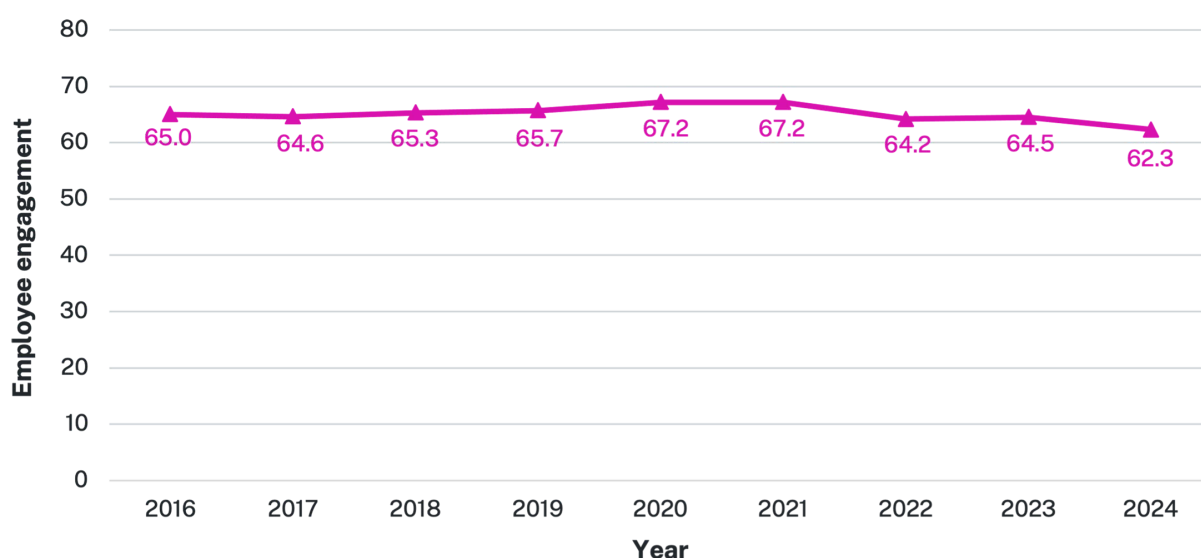
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2016–24)*

What is driving employee engagement across the sector?

Each year, the survey data is analysed to identify the factors influencing employee engagement in the workplace. This key driver analysis highlights the questions that have the stongest relationship with employee engagement.[2] These questions are listed below in order of importance for the sector.

Questions with the strongest association with engagement across the sector

Topic	Engagement key driver questions	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
Communication and change management	I am supported through changes that affect my work	54.8	-3.5
Wellbeing	I am satisfied with current workplace practices to help me manage my wellbeing	55.2	-3.5
Recognition	I receive adequate recognition for my contributions from my organisation	49.6	-3.7
Ethics and values	My organisation shows a commitment to ethical behaviours	70.7	-2.6
Risk and innovation	My organisation is making improvements to meet future challenges	51.9	-3.4
Employee voice/ senior executives	My senior executives listen to employees	42.2	-

In 2024, change management, wellbeing and employee recognition are identified as having the strongest relationship with employee engagement across the sector overall.

The strongest driver of employee engagement related to change management and communication. The question 'I am supported through changes that affect my work' decreased by 3.5pp in 2024. The strong relationship between change management and engagement is highlighted as this was the only item with a second question ('Change is managed well in my organisation') in the top 10 drivers. The importance of change management and the second-highest driver, wellbeing, is discussed in more detail in the next 2 sections.

The question 'I receive adequate recognition for my contributions from my organisation' had the third-strongest association with employee engagement for the sector. This question fell by 3.7pp, reversing a 3.8pp increase between 2022 and 2023.

The question 'My senior executives listen to employees' was one of the top 6 key drivers this year for the first time. This question had the lowest favourable and the highest unfavourable score out of the 6 questions. Only 42.2% of employees agreed that senior executives listen to employees and almost one in 3 employees disagreed that senior executives listen to employees.

While change management, wellbeing, and ethics and values are commonly observed drivers across the sector, each agency and business unit has its own distinct drivers, shaped by its specific context, challenges and workplace culture. To support agencies taking action, the Premier's Department provides agencies and business units with reports outlining their key drivers of engagement, along with guides to support action planning based on People Matter survey results.
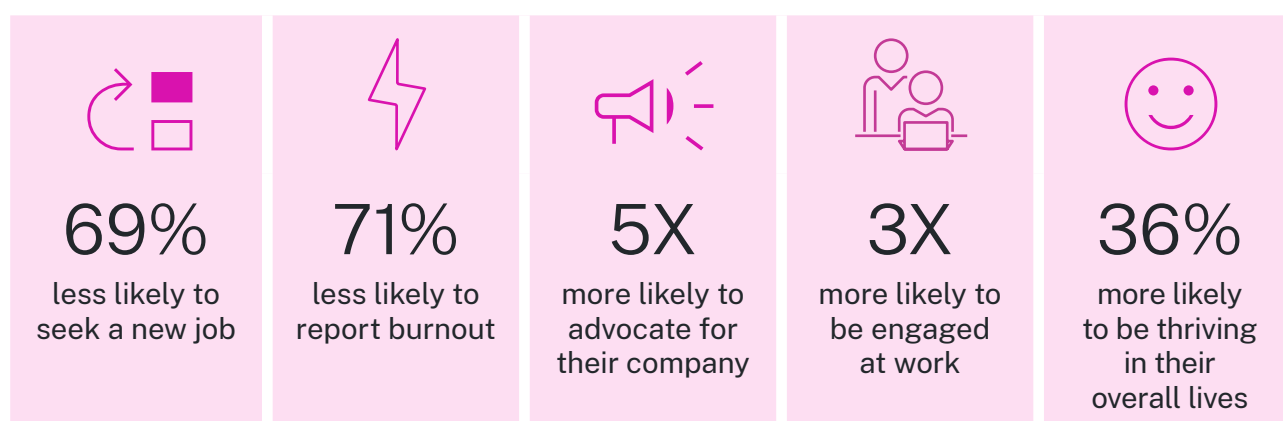
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2   Key driver analysis identifies factors (survey questions) that have the strongest relationship with overall employee engagement. It involves calculating the correlation between survey questions and the engagement score. Questions with high correlations are considered key drivers.

Wellbeing

'Wellbeing' means feeling good, functioning well and experiencing satisfaction and fulfilment in work and life. There is a strong connection between wellbeing and employee engagement, such that wellbeing influences how employees perceive their work and their level of commitment.

Positive wellbeing is achieved when workplaces effectively use employees' skills, adapt to new ways of working, maintain manageable stress levels, and foster an environment where employees feel respected, safe and supported. These factors are foundational to a thriving workforce and help employees not only manage challenges but also to excel in their roles.

Research from global analytics and advisory firm Gallup (2022) indicates that employees who feel their employer cares about their wellbeing are:

69%	71%	5X	3X	36%
less likely to seek a new job	less likely to report burnout	more likely to advocate for their company	more likely to be engaged at work	more likely to be thriving in their overall lives

Source: *Gallup (2022). Why the percentage of employees who feel their employer cares about their wellbeing is plummeting.*

Last year, we asked public sector employees for the first time if they 'were satisfied with current workplace practices to help them manage their wellbeing'. In 2024, this question ranks as the second-highest driver of employee engagement, demonstrating the importance of effective workplace wellbeing programs and initiatives in sustaining higher engagement levels. However, in this year's People Matter survey the question fell by 3.5pp to 55.2%.

The overall wellbeing topic score for the public sector was 62.0%. While the topic score could not be trended, 2 specific wellbeing questions with long-term data indicate a concerning downward trend, reinforcing the need for agencies to maintain a focus on employee wellbeing. There are also broader factors including the rising cost of living that may impact this score.

The following graph highlights a notable decline in the percentage of employees who agreed that 'there are effective resources in my organisation to support employee wellbeing', from 70.0% in 2021 to 62.2% in 2024.[3] Similarly, the favourable response for 'In general, my sense of wellbeing is…' dropped from 64.9% in 2019 to 56.8% in 2024.[4] Both questions experienced sharp drops between 2021 and 2022 and a slight decline in the last 2 years. The change in the distribution scores for 'In general my sense of wellbeing is…' between 2020 and 2024 is shown in the second graph on page 17.

Employee perceptions of wellbeing, 2024

62.1%
favourable

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
The amount of stress in my job is manageable	54.1	-0.4
In general, my sense of wellbeing is …	56.8	-1.0
I am satisfied with current workplace practices to help me manage my wellbeing	55.2	-3.5
There are effective resources in my organisation to support employee wellbeing	62.2	-1.6
I feel burned out by my work^	36.0	2.0
I am able to adapt when changes occur	87.4	n/a
I am confident in my ability to overcome setbacks at work	82.5	n/a

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

^ The favourable score for burnout represents respondents who did not feel burnt out by their work.

Note: A comparison to the 2023 overall score was not possible because 2 new questions have been added to the 2024 topic score.

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3   This question was asked using a 5-point agreement scale. The % favourable score reported is the sum of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' percentages.

4   Respondents were asked to rate the statement, 'In general, my sense of wellbeing is …', on a scale of 0 to 10. The results were grouped into % favourable (7–10), % neutral (4–6) and % unfavourable (0–3).

Wellbeing questions with trend, 2019–24
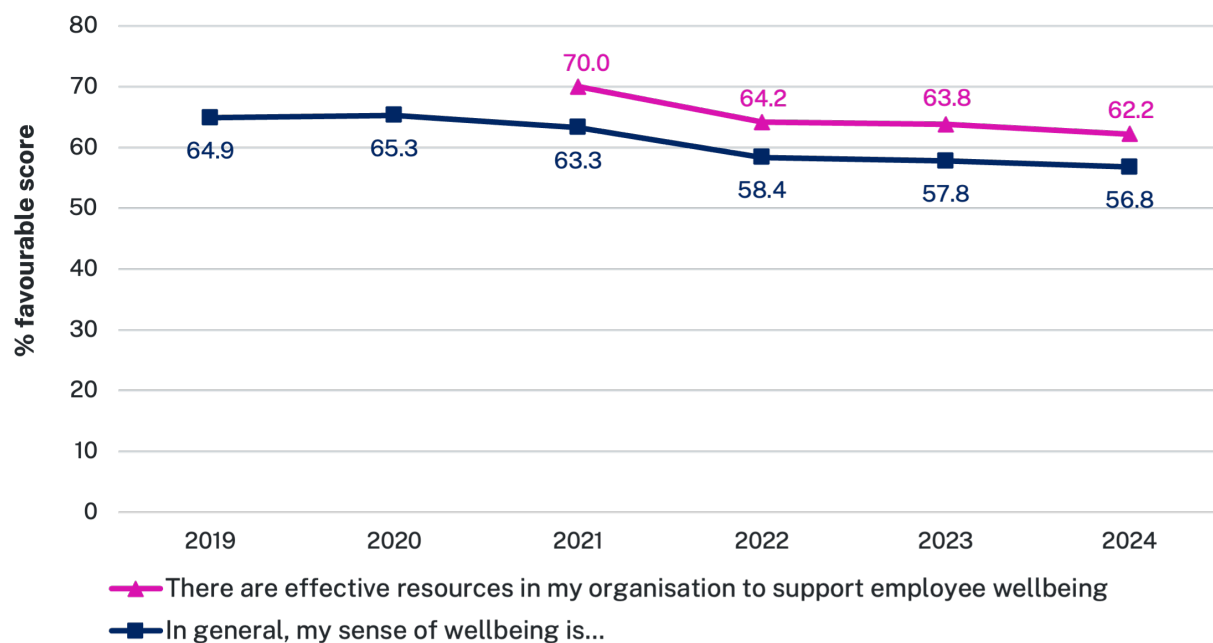
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2019–24)*

Distribution of employees' general sense of wellbeing, 2024 vs 2020

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2020, 2024)*

Note: Respondents were asked to rate the statement, 'In general, my sense of wellbeing is …', on a scale of 0 to 10.

Burnout is a specific type of work-related stress that results from chronic exposure to stressful work conditions. According to the World Health Organization (2019), 3 dimensions characterise burnout: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy.

This year, 38.7% of respondents reported feeling burnt out by their work. This is a slight decrease of 0.5pp from 2023, following on from a 1.4pp increase between 2022 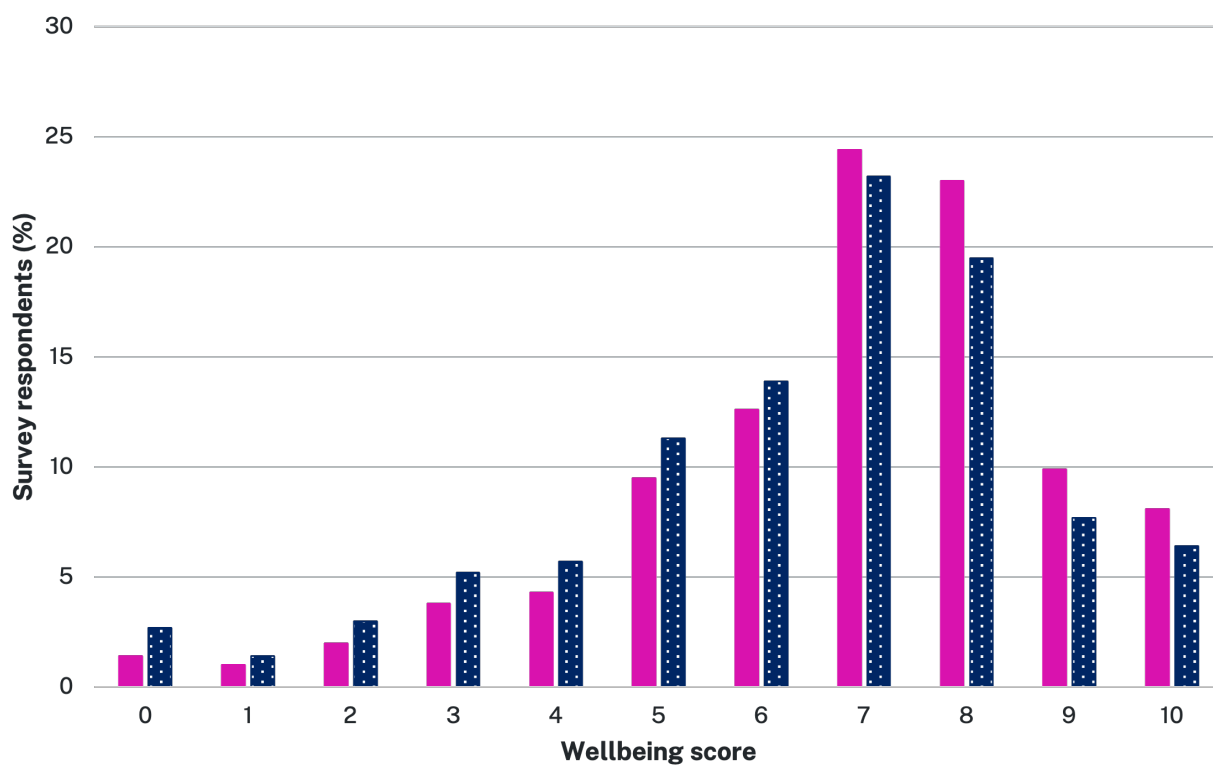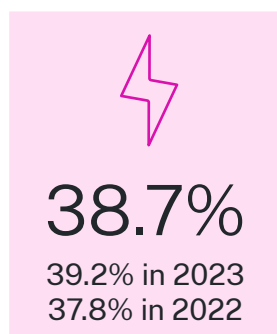and 2023. This trend aligns with findings from the *State of Workplace Burnout 2024* report (Infinite Potential 2024), which found that burnout rates have steadily increased over the past 3 years but have stabilised this year.

Employees who felt burnt out, 2022–24

38.7%
39.2% in 2023
37.8% in 2022

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2022–24)*

Burnout is not merely an individual challenge; it has substantial implications for organisations. Research consistently demonstrates a strong negative correlation between burnout and job performance. Burnout results in reduced productivity, increased absenteeism and reduced innovation, which ultimately hinders organisational progress (Infinite Potential 2024).

To address burnout effectively, organisations must adopt a proactive approach that prioritises wellbeing. This strategy benefits both employees and organisations and is essential for fostering healthier, sustainable workforces. Instead of implementing individual-level interventions such as resilience training, research indicates that organisations should focus on tangible actions such as enhancing leadership capability, improving communication, reviewing job design and resourcing, and investing in employee development.

This conclusion is supported by research analysing the People Matter survey results, which identified 3 universal key drivers of burnout: adequate time to perform one's job well, sufficient support to execute tasks effectively, and access to effective wellbeing resources (Public Service Commission 2023a).

The inclusion of 2 new questions on resilience in the 2024 People Matter survey revealed that employees generally perceive their resilience levels to be high. Specifically, 87.4% of employees noted they can adapt when changes occur and 82.5% expressed confidence in their ability to overcome setbacks at work. This underscores the notion that burnout can and does occur despite high levels of individual resilience, emphasising the need for organisations to focus on structural and systemic solutions.

Elevated absenteeism rates resulting from burnout pose significant risks to the sector's workforce. The hours of paid unscheduled absences per FTE employee had been increasing over time, peaking at 73.1 in 2023. Encouragingly, this figure decreased to 70.6 hours in 2024, indicating a modest improvement. Continued efforts will be crucial to ensure this positive trend continues.

Hours of paid unscheduled absence per full-time equivalent employee, 2014–24
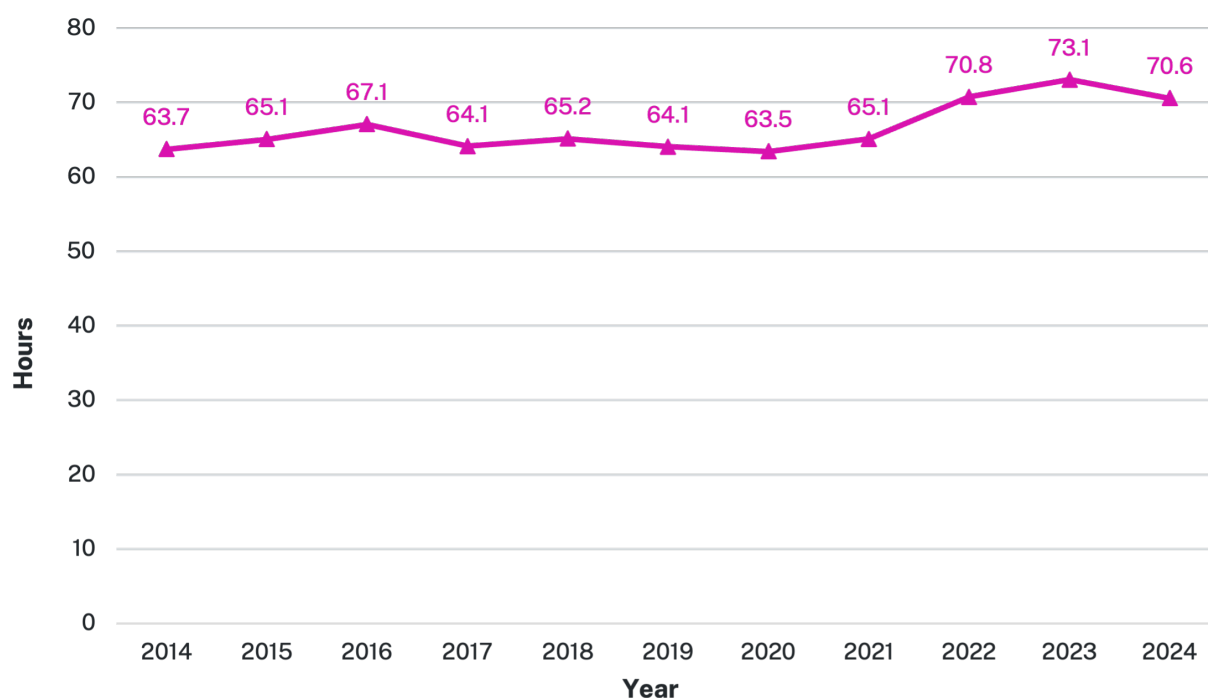
Source: *Workforce Profile (2014–24)*

Communication and change management

Effective communication is proactive, timely and focuses on essential information employees need, particularly regarding the impact of organisational changes on them. Good change management is crucial for public sector organisations, as it minimises disruption to employees' daily work and lives while maintaining productivity and morale (Prosci 2021).

Change is a constant in the public sector, making change management a key focus area for leaders. The People Matter survey question, 'I am supported through changes that affect my work' remains a significant key driver of employee engagement, emerging as the top driver for 2024. This shift underscores the increasing importance of support during change as a key factor in employee engagement.

However, only 35.1% of respondents agreed that change is managed well within their organisation, marking a 4pp decrease from 2023. The primary reasons cited for poor change management were poor communication from leadership (54.8%), limited employee consultation (46.9%) and poor planning and execution (45.8%).

These findings present an opportunity for organisations to strengthen their change management processes. While employees value feeling supported through change, there is potential to enhance leadership approaches, systems and processes to improve communication, consultation and planning during periods of change.

For frontline employees, there was an additional question relating to change management, 'Change is managed well in my organisation', that ranked in the top 6 key drivers of employee engagement. This indicates the need for more targeted change management practices that address frontline experiences of change management.

Machinery of government changes are essential for realigning organisational priorities within the NSW government sector. However, large-scale restructures pose unique challenges. Senior leaders must make these changes in ways that minimise transitional risks and associated costs. Effective communication and planning during change are crucial to maintaining employee trust and engagement.

Employee perceptions of communication and change management, 2024 vs 2023

53.4%
favourable overall

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
My manager communicates effectively with me	74.1	-0.8
Change is managed well in my organisation	35.1	-3.8
My senior executives provide clear direction for the future of the organisation	46.8	n/a
I am supported through changes that affect my work	54.8	-3.5
I have the opportunity to provide feedback on change processes that directly affect me	55.9	-3.3

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Note: A comparison to the 2023 overall score was not possible because one of the questions that contributed to the 2024 overall score was changed.

Effective leadership and trust

Leadership is crucial in setting direction, executing strategies, shaping culture, inspiring purpose and delivering services.

The Premier's Department provides executive leadership programs to equip sector leaders with the mindsets, behaviours and capabilities essential for leading high-performing, outcomes-focused workplaces. Updated leadership programs were introduced this year, emphasising ethical, inclusive and sustainable leadership.

In today's dynamic work environment, leadership extends beyond traditional management approaches. Leaders should adopt competencies suited for the next generation of employees, fostering a strong sense of accountability and trust. This requires a human-centred approach where leaders balance individual needs with organisational goals to create an environment where both can thrive. Trust in senior leaders is essential for navigating change and uncertainty.

The Qualtrics *2025 Employee Experience Trends Report* (2024) highlights that trust in senior leaders varies across industries, with government employees reporting lower levels of trust. Trusted leaders demonstrate 3 critical characteristics:

- competence – the skills and knowledge to perform effectively

- integrity – consistent alignment with organisational values, and

- benevolence – prioritising employees' wellbeing over immediate profit or gain.

Measuring 'employee perceptions of senior leaders' competence and demonstration of values is commonplace, but at the heart of trust is a belief that leaders genuinely care about people's wellbeing' (Qualtrics 2024). The most effective leaders proactively seek input from diverse perspectives, demonstrate openness to change, and take meaningful action based on feedback.

The overall topic score averaging employee perceptions of senior executives in the People Matter survey was 48.3% favourable this year. The topic was unable to be trended as the underlying questions asked employees their opinions on their 'senior executives' rather than their 'senior managers' as in previous years.[5]

Employee perceptions of senior leaders, 2024

48.3%
favourable overall

Question	2024 (% favourable)
My senior executives provide clear direction for the future of the organisation	46.8
My senior executives model the values of my organisation	51.4
My senior executives promote collaboration between my organisation and other organisations we work with	49.4
My senior executives communicate the importance of customers in our work	62.4
My senior executives listen to employees	42.2
I feel my senior executives support my career advancement	37.7

Senior executive numbers are included in chapter 3 of the *Workforce Profile Report 2024*, the companion report to the NSW Public Sector Report.

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5   The term 'senior executives' refers to the group of senior executives in the respondent's organisation, not an individual manager.

People management

A high-performance culture is underpinned by an effective system for managing individual, team and organisational performance.

The percentage of employees with a performance and development plan fell by 1.8pp this year, from 75.9% to 74.1%. Employee perceptions of feedback and performance management was unchanged from 2023 at 56.4%.

Employees with a performance and development plan, 2024 vs 2023
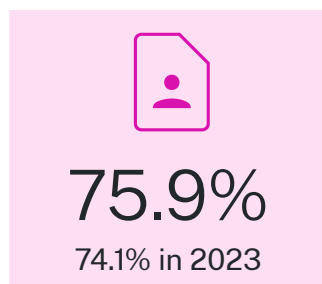
75.9%
74.1% in 2023

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Employee perceptions of feedback and performance management, 2024 vs 2023

56.4%
favourable overall
56.4% in 2023
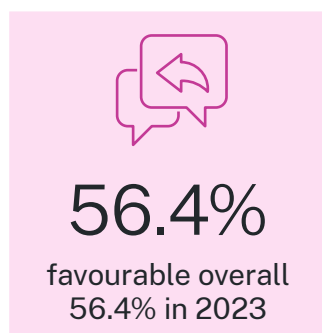
Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
In the last 12 months, I have received feedback to help me improve my work	64.5	-0.1
My performance is assessed against clear criteria	55.7	0.4
My manager appropriately deals with employees who perform poorly	48.8	-0.4

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

While employees' perception that they receive adequate recognition for their contributions from their organisation was low, at 49.6%, the perception that managers provide recognition for their work is much stronger, at 70.5%.

Employee perceptions of workplace recognition, 2024 vs 2023

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
My manager provides recognition for the work I do	70.5	-0.6
I receive adequate recognition for my contributions from my organisation	49.6	-3.7
Employee recognition	60.3	-2.0

Recognition is an essential tool for driving employee engagement and performance. Effective recognition helps employees feel valued and can significantly impact morale and productivity. To improve recognition practices, organisations should ensure that recognition is timely, specific and aligned with organisational values. Research indicates that recognition programs can drive engagement and reduce turnover (Gallup 2024a; Gallup 2024b).

Learning and development

Learning and development is essential to adapt to the rapidly changing technological landscape driven by the adoption of artificial intelligence. By focusing on learning and development initiatives, agencies enable employees to build the skills and capabilities they need to succeed in their role and achieve business outcomes.

This year, just over half of People Matter respondents reported satisfaction with professional development opportunities in their organisation. Nearly two-thirds of respondents felt they had the opportunity to develop the required skills and received the training and development needed to perform their job effectively.

Satisfaction with 'opportunities available for professional development in their organisation' for frontline employees increased by 3.3pp from last year.

Inclusion and diversity

Creating an inclusive and diverse workforce is essential for high-quality services in NSW. An inclusive workplace fosters a positive culture, boosts productivity and reflects the diversity of the community.

Inclusion enables participation and contribution regardless of seen or unseen individual differences. Inclusion helps drive improvements in organisational performance, innovation and customer service (Diversity Council Australia 2017). The government supports this through:

- upholding core values

- leading disability and Aboriginal employment initiatives

- flexible work

- facilitating employee networks

- setting targets and supporting diversity and inclusion action plans.

However, this year's People Matter survey shows a decline in perceptions of inclusion and diversity across the questions that could be trended, with a 4pp decline in feelings of belonging. This underscores the need for respectful, psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces where everyone can contribute.

Employee perceptions of inclusion and diversity, 2024 vs 2023

65.8%
favourable overall
in 2024
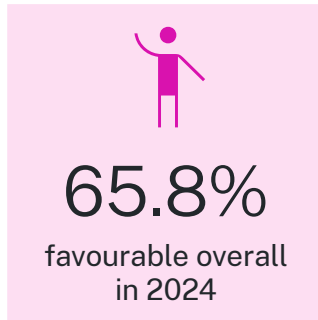
Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
People in my workgroup treat each other with respect	78.2	-1.6
I am comfortable sharing a different view to others in my organisation	67.5	-0.8
I feel that I belong in my organisation	66.7	-4.0
I feel my senior executives support my career advancement	37.7	n/a
I feel culturally safe at work	77.0	n/a
If I chose to, I would feel safe sharing personal aspects about myself at work	67.8	n/a

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Note: A comparison to the 2023 overall score is not possible because some questions contributing to the 2024 overall score have changed.

Employee engagement score by employee group, 2024 vs 2023
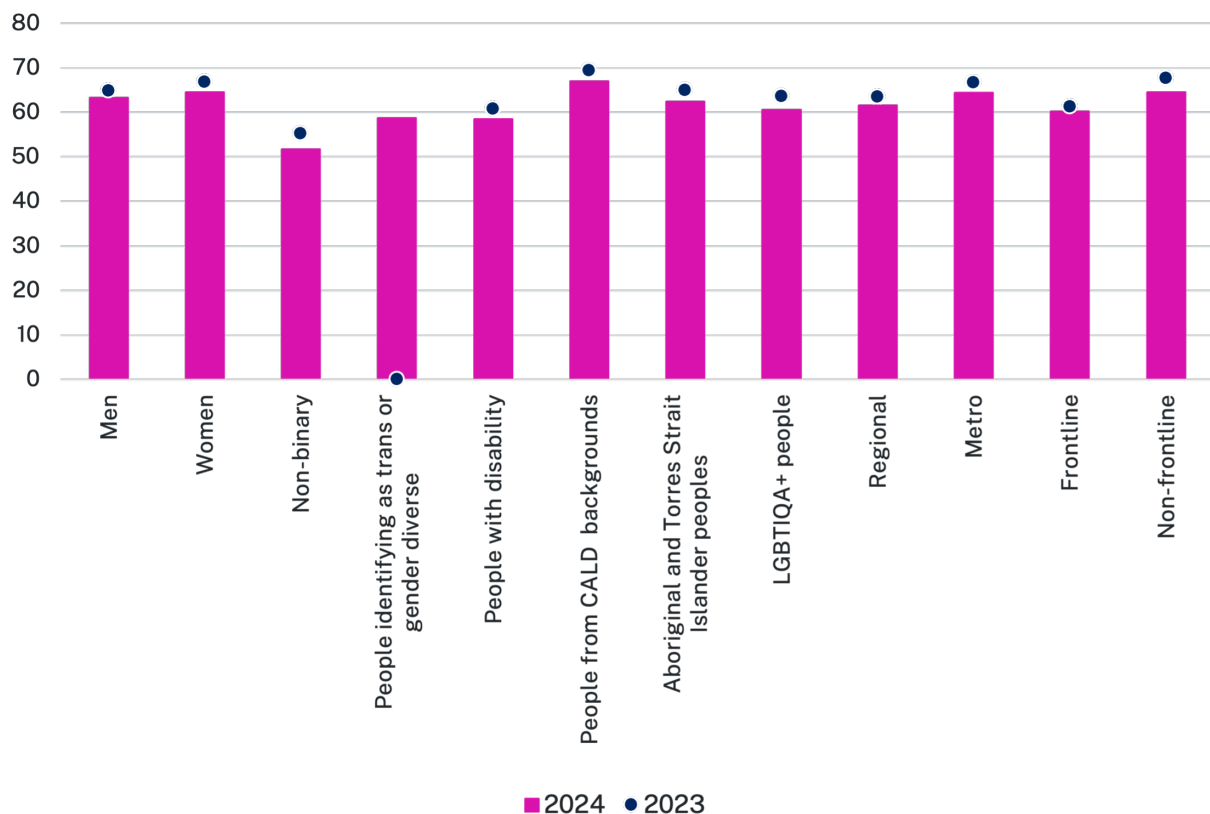
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

The previous chart shows that employee experience can vary significantly for different demographic cohorts.

The People Matter survey included a question on identity safety: 'If I chose to, I would feel safe sharing personal aspects about myself at work'. Employees who agreed with this statement reported higher scores across all survey questions. This indicates a connection between identity safety and overall engagement and employee experience.

People with disability

Significant efforts are needed to improve workforce inclusion of people with disability. The government has committed to a target of 5.6% of the total workforce being people with disability by 2025. In 2024, 2.7% of our workforce reported having a disability, a slight increase of 0.1pp from last year but still below the target. Notably, 6.9% of respondents in the People Matter survey identified as living with a disability, which is higher than the figure reported in the Workforce Profile of 2.7%.

People with disability, variance in People Matter survey vs Workforce Profile, 2018–24
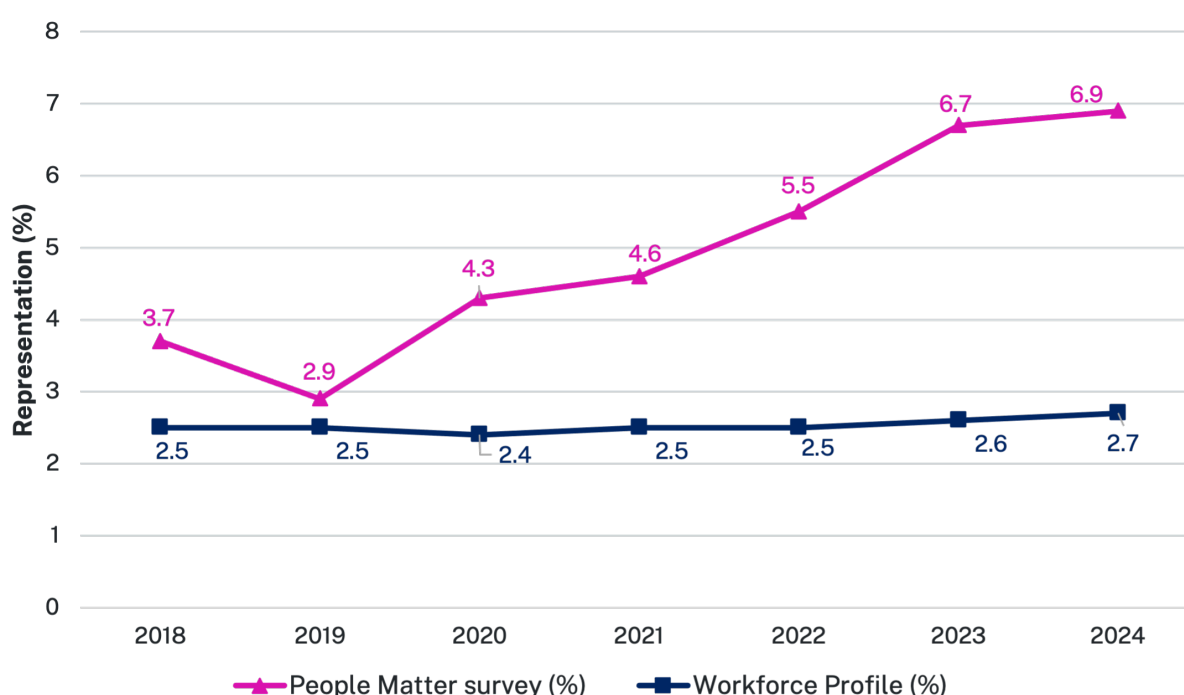
Sources: *Workforce Profile (2018–24); People Matter Employee Survey (2018–24)*

There are several factors contributing to the difference between reported disability in the Workforce Profile and the percentage of respondents identifying as having a disability in the People Matter survey. The People Matter survey is anonymous and provides a current response. The Workforce Profile collects data from HR systems where updating disability data is optional. Both datasets are valuable, and the Premier's Department will continue collaborating with the sector to improve measurement.

In 2024, significant progress was made on implementing recommendations from a 2022 sector-wide review of disability employment. The Public Service Commissioner issued a direction for agency heads to implement a workplace adjustment policy that meets minimum standards by 1 November 2025 (Public Service Commissioner 2024). The direction supports the NSW Government's commitment to increase disability employment in the sector by establishing a consistent approach to workplace adjustments.

Communities and Justice, Customer Service and Education are working on tailored actions that support disability employment, including development of Disability Inclusion Action Plans, recruitment reviews, training and toolkits.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2022–2025* (AES) embedded a target to double the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leaders, alongside an additional target for at least 3% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at all grades. As the AES comes to an end in 2025, the Premier's Department will undertake a review of the strategy followed by consultation and development of a new AES.

The Premier's Department is also responsible for actions under Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations. The department, and in particular Aboriginal Affairs NSW, will continue to work in partnership with the NSW Council of Aboriginal Peak Organisations to seek Aboriginal community input into reform initiatives.

Tenure and intention to stay

'Tenure' is the duration an employee has worked for an organisation, while 'intention to stay' refers to their desire to remain with their current organisation. This intention, influenced by factors like employee engagement, predicts turnover but does not always lead to action. It is healthy for organisations to experience some turnover, but determining a healthy level in the diverse NSW public sector is challenging.

Employees' decisions to stay are increasingly influenced by career development opportunities and senior leadership quality. The top 3 reasons for employees considering leaving their organisation, according to the People Matter survey, are a lack of future career opportunities, perceptions of poor quality of senior leadership, and higher salary opportunities elsewhere.

To improve retention, agencies should use insights from 'intention to stay' survey results, turnover data and exit surveys.

Median agency tenure, 2024 vs 2023

6.9
years' tenure
7.0 in 2023

Source: *Workforce Profile (2023, 2024)*

This year, 36.9% of respondents agreed they were likely to stay for over 10 years in their organisation, compared to 40.7% in 2020. This shows employees are intending to stay for less than 5 years. These trends highlight the need for effective workforce retention strategies, particularly for frontline roles where tenure and expertise are critical to organisational performance.

Employees' intention to stay in current organisation, 2024 vs 2020
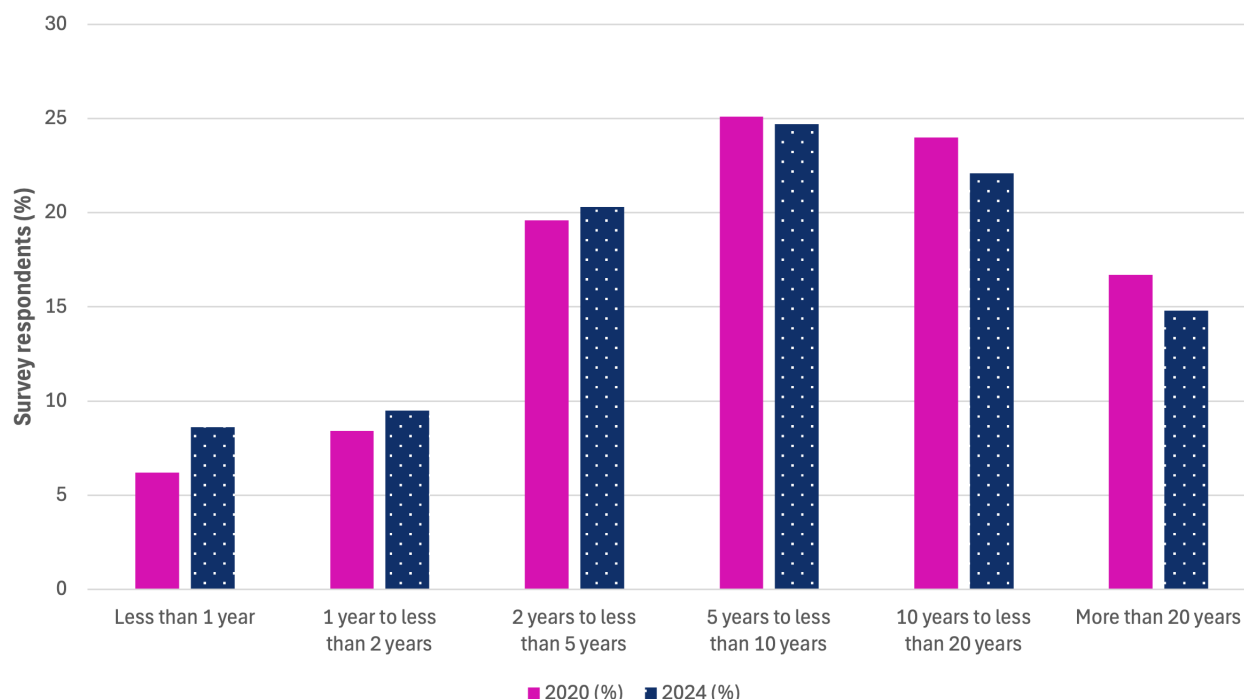
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2020, 2024)*

Industrial relations reform

NSW Industrial Relations ensures compliance with industrial legislation by providing direction on industrial relations matters and promoting best practice across the sector.

The *Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023,* which commenced in December 2023, amended the *Industrial Relations Act 1996* to:

- provide for mutual gains bargaining and the re-establishment of the NSW Industrial Court

- remove the power to cap wages, meaning the Industrial Relations Commission is not constrained by a wages cap when arbitrating awards and disputes[6]

- introduce a new objective for the Industrial Relation Commission to consider attraction and retention issues (NSW Government 2023a).

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6   While the wage cap has been removed, changes were also made to require the Commission to have regard to 'the fiscal position and outlook of the Government and the likely effect of the exercise of the Commission's functions on the position and outlook' (s146(2)(c)).

The NSW Industrial Court has jurisdiction to determine almost all industrial relations matters relating to NSW state government and local government employees. Private sector employees remain under the Commonwealth Fair Work Commission (NSW Government 2023a).

Since the wages cap was removed, the NSW Government has provided historic pay rises to public sector employees. Several deals have been struck recently to ensure pay increases for NSW Government frontline and public service staff:

- Public school teachers accepted a 3-year award agreement on 28 October 2024, formally completing last year's 4-year pay deal. Teachers will receive a 3% pay increase annually for the next 3 years. This follows a once-in-a-generation pay rise given to teachers last year.

- The NSW Government reached agreement with the Health Services Union on a record pay increase for paramedics. Almost 5,000 paramedics will receive an average wage increase of 25% over 4 years – with increases ranging from 11% to 29%.

- The NSW Government and the Health Services Union agreed to a one-year pay increase of 3.5% plus 0.5% in superannuation. The agreement covers a range of professions including allied health roles, hospital cleaners, scientists, security officers and patient transport officers.

- The NSW Government and the Public Service Association agreed on a multi-year pay agreement for Crown employees. The agreement covers more than 90,000 public sector workers – nearly a quarter of the NSW Government's workforce – including prison guards, school assistants and other essential workers.

- The Police Association of NSW accepted a 4-year pay agreement to recruit and retain police officers with highly competitive salaries on 26 November 2024.

Remuneration

Employees' pay and conditions differ depending on the legislative and industrial instruments applicable to their job type and employing agency.

The government aims to maintain competitiveness as an employer and acknowledges the role of fair remuneration in attracting talent to the sector. The median remuneration for non-casual employees in the NSW public sector was $100,647 in 2024, which represents a 4.9% increase from 2023. The NSW Government wages policy provided for annual increases of up to 4.0% effective 1 July 2023 (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2023). This was higher than Sydney's Consumer Price Index (3.8%) (ABS 2024c).

Median salary for NSW public sector employees, 2024 vs 2023

$100,647
$95,984 in 2023
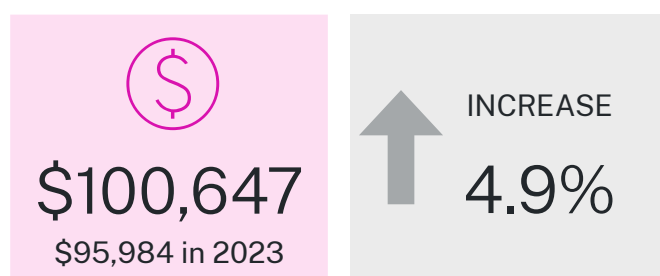
INCREASE
4.9%

Source: *Workforce Profile (2023, 2024)*

Changes in median salary, 2015–24
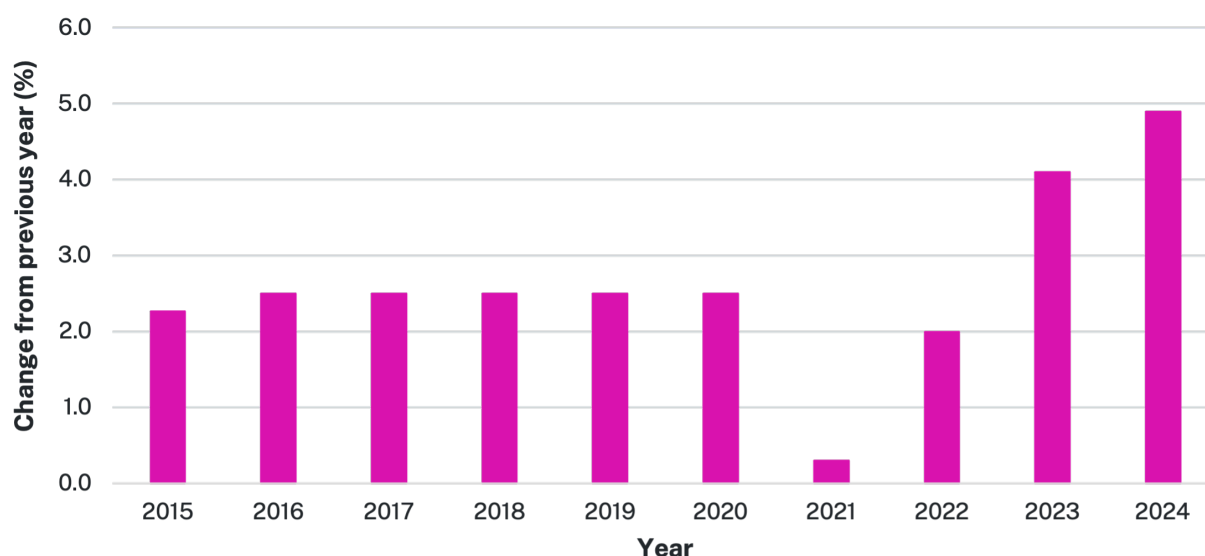
Source: *Workforce Profile (2015–24)*

In this year's People Matter survey, 'satisfaction with pay' decreased by 1.6pp from 45.6% to 44.0%. Overall, 37.7% of respondents do not believe they are paid fairly for the work they do, compared to 36.0% in 2023.

Employee perceptions of being paid fairly for the work they do, 2024 vs 2023

44.0%
45.6% in 2023

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Employee satisfaction with pay differed between the 2 major role types, with 36.2% of frontline employees satisfied with their pay compared with 53.2% of non-frontline employees. However, there are differences in satisfaction with pay between frontline employee groups. Teachers' satisfaction with pay increased this year by 20pp to 42.3% and satisfaction with pay for NSW Ambulance staff increased by 17.2pp to 29.4%.

Respondents who believe they are paid fairly for the work they do, by specific groups, 2024 vs 2023

Specific group	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	pp difference
Teachers	21.8	42.3	20.5
Health frontline	30.2	24.7	-5.5
Nurses	27.3	17.8	-9.5
NSW Ambulance	12.2	29.4	17.2
Police frontline	40.7	29.0	-11.7

Type of work: 'Service delivery involving direct contact with the public' is used to identify frontline employees

Gender equality and the gender pay gap

In 2024, the gender pay gap calculated using median renumeration increased to 7.2% ($7,674) from 6.2% ($6,205) in 2023 (Workforce Profile 2024).[7] The median remuneration for women increased 4.0% compared to 2023, while the median remuneration for men increased 5.2%. In contrast, when calculating the pay gap using average remuneration, the gap narrowed by 1.3pp to 8.0% ($9,059) from 2023 to 2024.

The gender pay gap can partly be explained by industry and occupational segregation, with men disproportionately represented in higher-paid industries and occupations, as well as positions of leadership (NSW Government 2023b). Female-dominated industries are often associated with caring roles, providing essential social infrastructure to individuals and communities. The NSW Government employs large workforces in these industries, including nurses, teachers, and school-based support staff, and is committed to strengthening them (NSW Government 2023b).

The NSW Government aims to advance gender equality for the people of NSW and the NSW public sector workforce by improving outcomes for women. This year, the NSW Treasurer released the second Gender Equality Budget Statement alongside the NSW Budget to assess the impact of the budget on gender equality outcomes.

NSW Government departments are developing Gender Equality Action Plans, which are due for publication in 2025. The action plans require departments to proactively champion gender equality in their workforce strategies, and when developing and delivering policies, programs, services and legislation.

CASE STUDY

Transforming Aboriginal employment at TAFE NSW through local targets and staff support

Building a strong First Nations workforce is crucial for TAFE NSW to engage Aboriginal learners and ensure equitable access to education and employment opportunities. TAFE NSW is addressing this by delivering an *Aboriginal Employment Strategy (2023–2027)* that focuses on local communities, staff networks and support, and creating a more inclusive workplace for Aboriginal staff.

TAFE NSW delivers vocational education and training from more than 150 locations across the state and recognises that education and employment are fundamental to the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, the employment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at TAFE NSW remained steady and was below the statewide community level. The Aboriginal Employment Team saw this as an opportunity to connect with communities across the state and transform TAFE NSW's approach to Aboriginal employment.

A strategy informed by lived experience

With a clear mandate to boost Aboriginal employment outcomes, the team began a journey of consultation and collaboration. More than 16 consultation sessions were held with Aboriginal staff, ensuring the strategy was shaped by lived experience and employee needs. TAFE NSW's Aboriginal Senior Leadership Group, Executive Leadership Team, and Diversity and Inclusion teams, as well as external organisations, were also consulted, which was integral to the process.

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7   For more detail on gender pay gap methodologies refer to chapter 6 of the *Workforce Profile Report*.

CASE STUDY CONTINUED ...

The *2023–2027 Aboriginal Employment Strategy* articulates a roadmap to achieve a target of 3.5% of the workforce being Aboriginal. Key features of the new strategy include:

- aligning employment targets to LGA Aboriginal population rates instead of a single, one-size-fits-all target. This has energised campuses, encouraging local ownership of their target and fuelling their ambition to meet and exceed it

- introducing end-to-end case management in recruitment, including for Aboriginal Identified and targeted roles

- re-designing recruitment advertising to feature Aboriginal staff and tapping into organic sharing of posts by family and community networks

- encouraging participation in TAFE NSW's Paid to Learn program, which supports newly recruited teachers to study the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

- designing new customer-centred ways of working across the employment lifecycle

- introducing Aboriginal Employment Advocate roles to provide new staff with ongoing support

- providing Aboriginal employees with new career development opportunities and pathways

- supporting TAFE NSW's Aboriginal Staff Network and celebrating long-serving staff.

Accelerating progress towards equity and inclusivity

Since March 2023, there's been a 16% increase in Aboriginal staff. TAFE NSW's Aboriginal Staff Network has been revitalised, holding its first-ever conference. The new strategy is accelerating TAFE NSW's progress towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace. This will enable TAFE NSW to engage more effectively with learners and provide culturally responsive vocational education and training that meets the needs of communities across NSW.

Our work environment

Our work environment

Our workplaces should support the wellbeing of all employees. The public sector aims to evolve our work environments to reflect our values and provide safe, healthy and flexible settings. Bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and racism will not be tolerated.

Work health and safety

Managing work health and safety (WHS) involves addressing risks to the health and safety of everyone in a workplace. 'Health' includes both physical and psychological aspects.

SafeWork NSW is committed to improving the physical and psychological health and safety standards in NSW workplaces and to creating a strong culture of safety practices (SafeWork NSW 2024a).

This year, SafeWork NSW introduced a 5-year strategic plan to keep workers both physically and mentally safe (SafeWork NSW 2024a). The plan adopts the national targets and actions for reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses that are set in the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023–33*.

SafeWork NSW's strategic plan will continue to prioritise psychosocial health and safety, focusing on eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace by improving existing tools and programs. National data indicated a 28% increase in workers compensation claims for mental health conditions between 2007–08 and 2019–20 (SafeWork NSW 2024b).

Employers have an explicit duty to manage psychosocial hazards at work since the changes under the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022. These changes mandate the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace. The regulation defines 'psychosocial hazard' and 'psychosocial risk', and specifies control measures that people conducting a business or undertaking are required to implement to manage those risks (SafeWork NSW n.d.).

It is crucial for employers to address psychosocial hazards by fostering a healthy work environment and implementing strategies to manage and reduce workplace stress.

Employee perceptions of health and safety, 2024 vs 2023

64.9%
favourable
66.3% in 2023
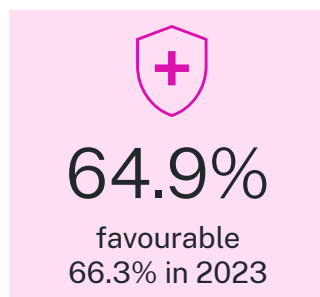
Overall, employee perceptions of health and safety decreased by 1.4pp, after a 3pp decline between 2022 and 2023. Confidence in prompt WHS issue resolution decreased by 1.3pp after a significant 6pp drop from 2022 to 2023.

Health and safety confidence question, 2021–24
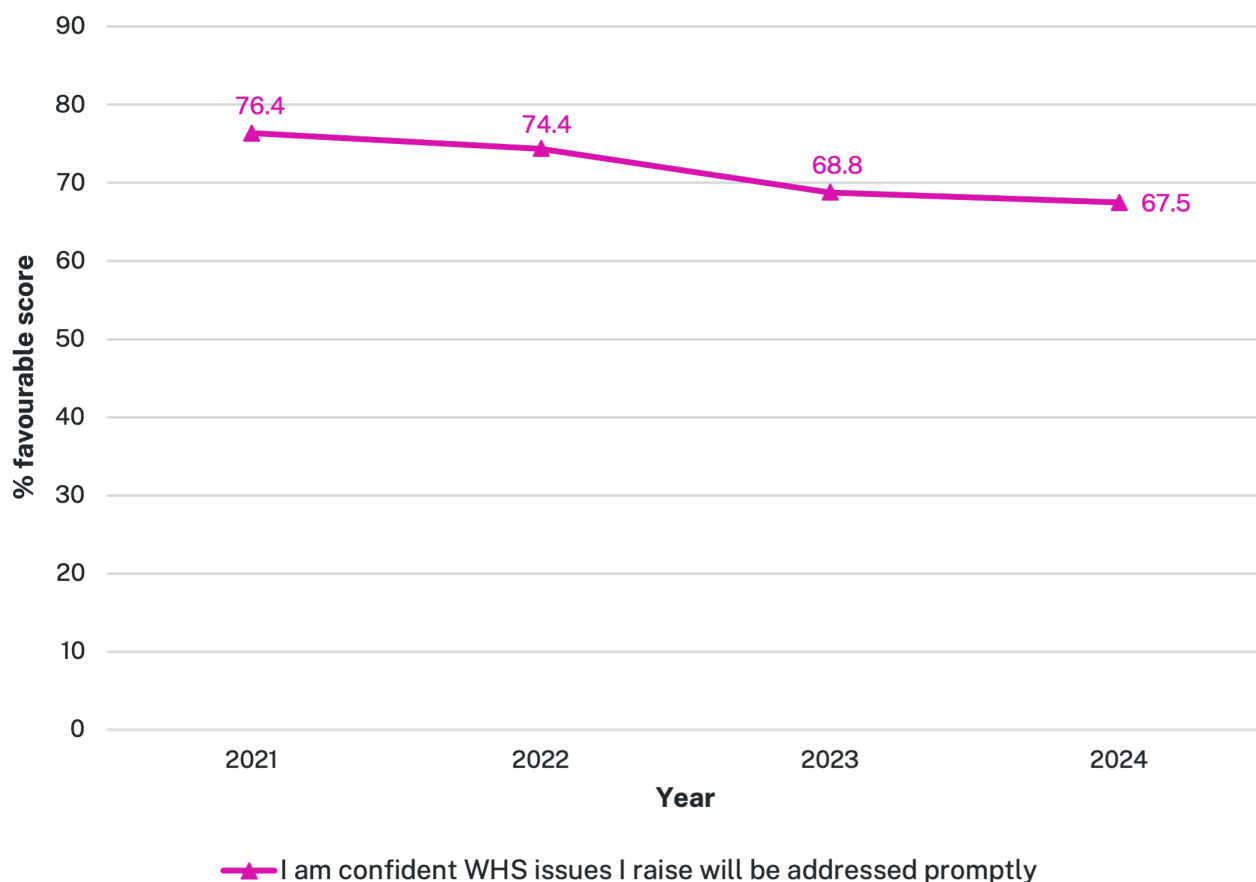
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2021–24)*

Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements have been a priority since in 2016 and have assisted the NSW government sector in attracting and retaining talented people, particularly people with carer responsibilities and other commitments outside of work.
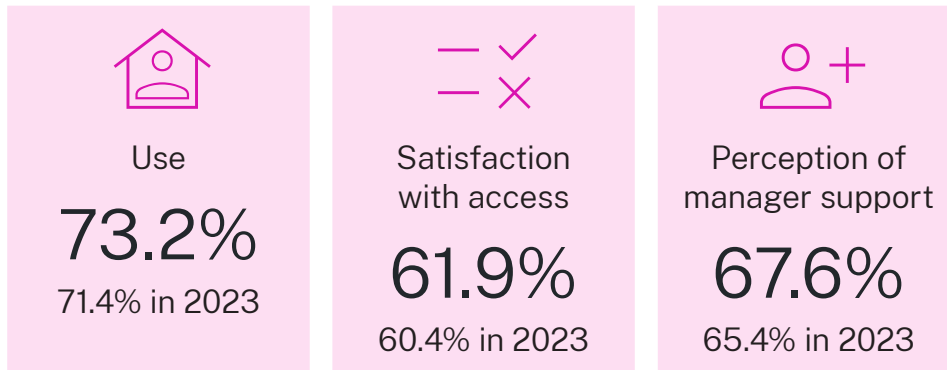
In August, the NSW Government Sector Workplace Presence Circular was published. COVID-19 disrupted conventional work practices economy-wide and highlighted the important work that government sector agencies deliver for the community. The circular provides guidance to government sector agencies about employees working principally in an approved workplace, office or worksite.

There are many ways to achieve flexibility in the workplace, such as part-time roles, job-share arrangements, compressed hours, purchased leave, variations to starting and finishing times and career breaks (Premier's Department 2024).

According to the People Matter survey, the top 3 flexible working arrangements in 2024 are:

• flexible start and finish times

• working from home

• working from different locations.

Employee use and perceptions of flexible working arrangements, 2024 vs 2023

| Use	Satisfaction with access	Perception of manager support
73.2%	**61.9%**	**67.6%**
71.4% in 2023	60.4% in 2023	65.4% in 2023

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

This year there has been an increase in both the use of and satisfaction with flexible working arrangements. Employees' use of flexible working arrangements increased by 1.8pp and satisfaction with flexible working arrangements increased by 1.5pp. Offering flexible working arrangements can enhance employee productivity and retention. There is a strong correlation between satisfaction with flexible working arrangements and employee engagement. Employees using flexible working arrangements reported an overall engagement score of 63.9, while those without such arrangements scored 57.9.

Frontline employees had less access to flexible work given the duties of their roles. Only 47.1% of frontline employees who responded to the survey were satisfied with their ability to access and use flexible working arrangements, compared to 76.3% of non-frontline employees.

Employee use and perceptions of flexible working arrangements, frontline vs non-frontline, 2024
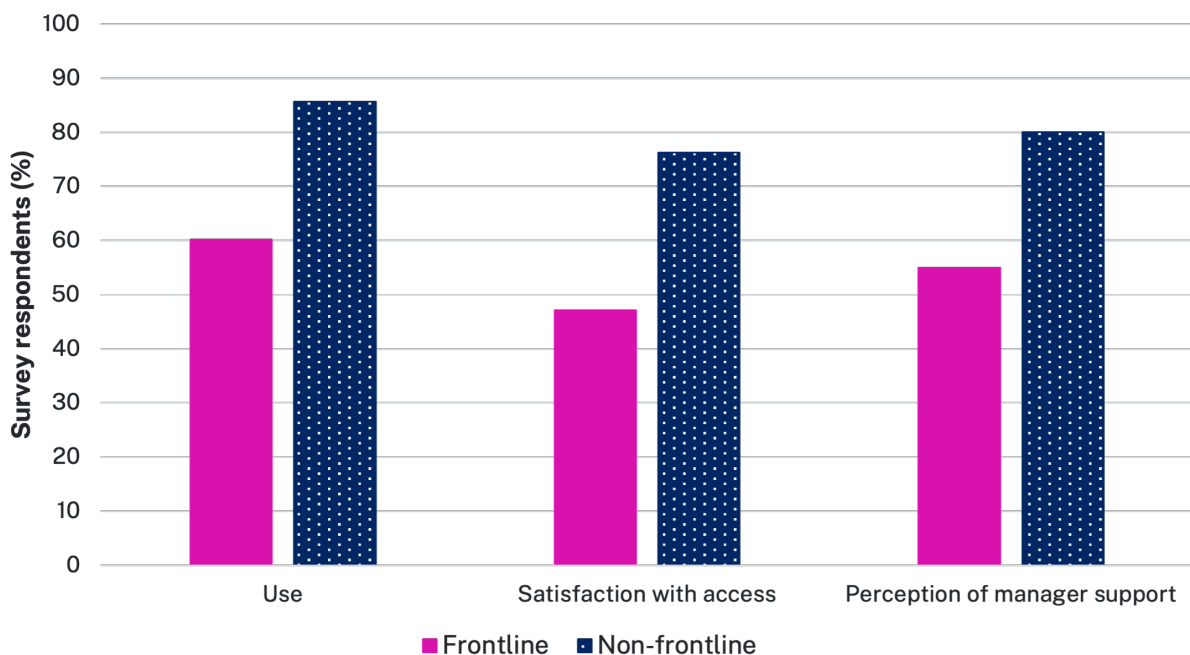
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2024)*

Creating positive workplace environments

Negative workplace behaviours have detrimental effects at both the individual and organisational levels, and undermine efforts to create positive and productive workplaces.

According to this year's People Matter survey, negative workplace behaviours in the sector remained largely unchanged from last year. The percentage of respondents reporting they experienced discrimination fell by 1.7pp and reported racism fell by 1pp.

Negative workplace behaviours, 2024 vs 2023

| Negative workplace behaviour	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	pp difference
Aware of misconduct	14.3	14.1	-0.2
Witnessed bullying	20.6	21.1	0.5
Experienced bullying	13.2	13.6	0.4
Witnessed sexual harassment	2.5	2.6	0.1
Experienced sexual harassment	5.1	5.0	-0.1
Experienced threats or physical harm	9.6	9.8	0.2
Witnessed discrimination	-	11.6	-
Experienced discrimination	10.1	8.4	-1.7
Witnessed racism	-	8.4	-
Experienced racism	5.0	4.0	-1

Bullying

Bullying is defined as 'repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers' (People Matter survey 2024). Reasonable feedback on work performance, delivered in an appropriate manner, is not bullying.

Reducing negative behaviours such as bullying is essential for fostering positive workplace environments and enhancing inclusion. Although rates of bullying in the sector have decreased over time, it remains a significant issue that requires continued focus and proactive measures to reduce occurrences to zero.

People Matter survey results for bullying remained stable in 2024, with 21.1% of respondents indicating they had witnessed bullying in the last 12 months, and 13.6% indicating they had experienced bullying. One in 2 respondents who had experienced bullying reported their experience of bullying, of which 26% indicated their complaint was resolved to their satisfaction.

Rates of self-reported experienced and witnessed bullying, 2020–24
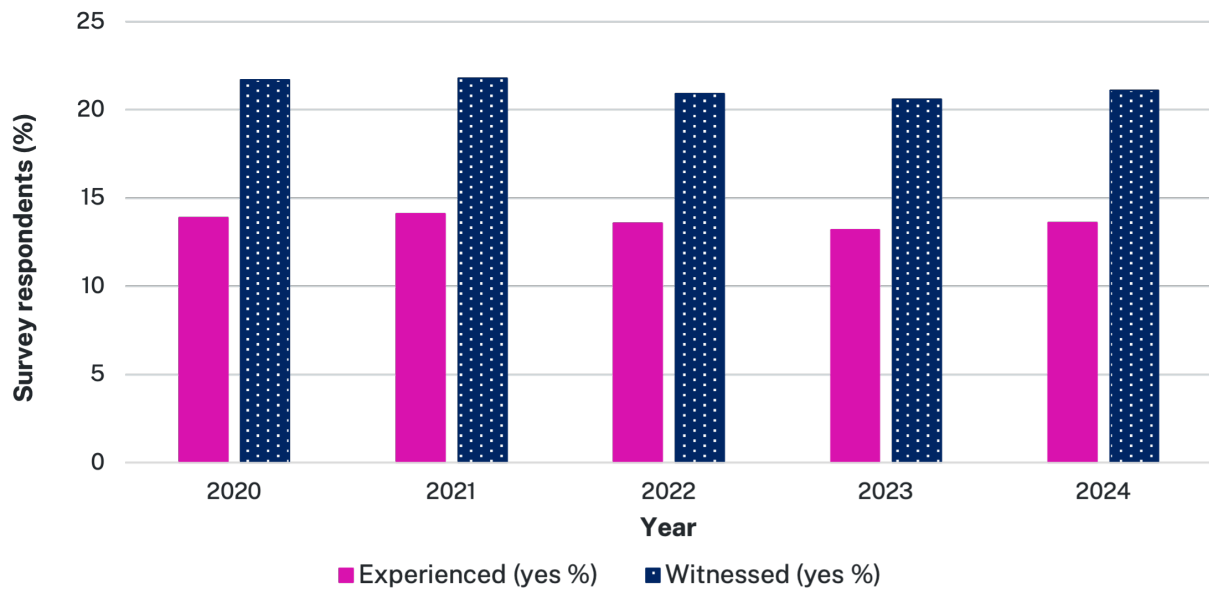
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2020–24)*

Rates of self-reported experienced bullying, by employee group, 2024 vs 2023
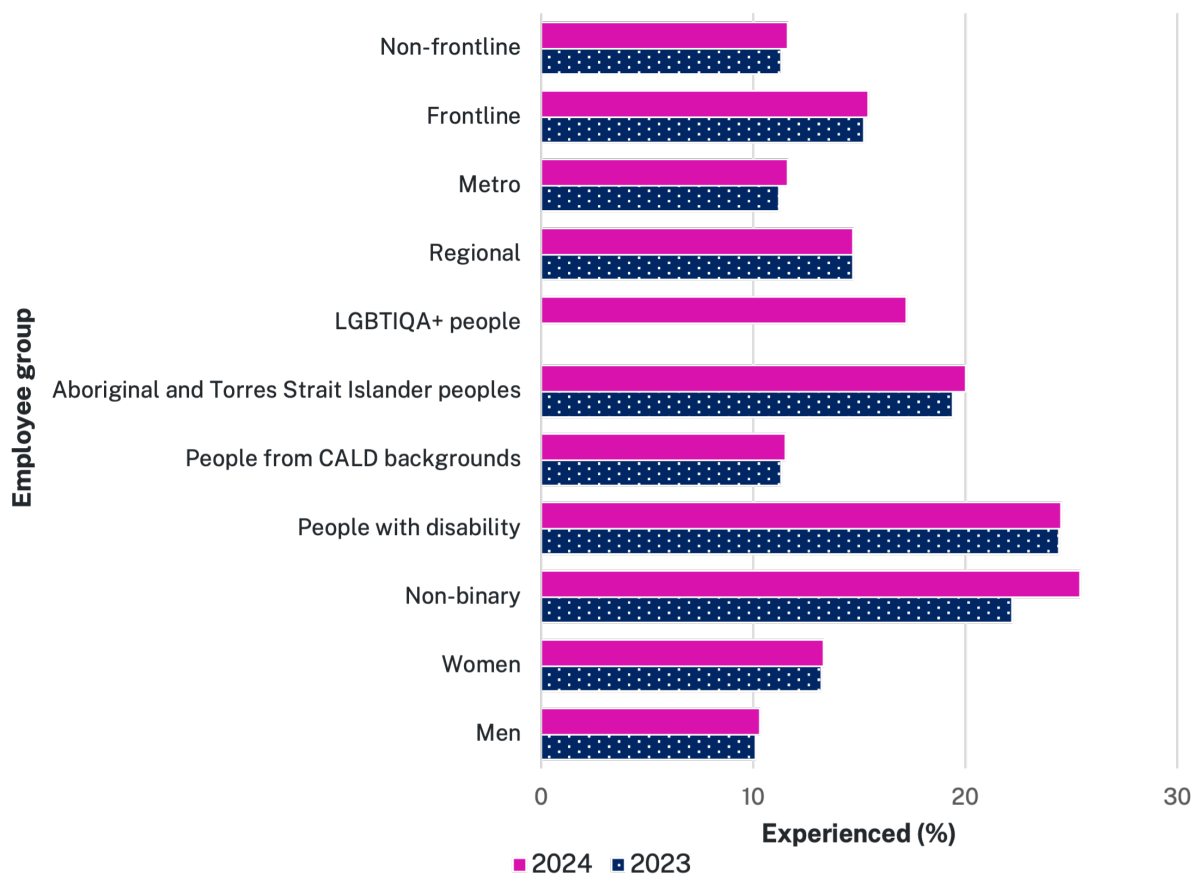
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024*

Note: 2023 data is not available for LGBTIQA+ people. This is due to a change in the question set to align with the ABS standard.

Frontline employees experience higher rates of bullying compared to non-frontline employees. In this year's People Matter survey, 15.4% of frontline employees reported experiencing bullying, compared to 11.6% of non-frontline employees.

As shown in the previous graph, bullying disproportionately affects individuals with certain demographic characteristics. Non-binary employees reported the highest rate of bullying at 25.4%. Additionally, 24.5% of respondents with disability reported experiencing bullying. The rates of bullying reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees increased by 0.6pp in 2024, reaching 20%.

Zero tolerance of bullying is more likely to be achieved where a proactive, systemic approach is taken to a range of workforce management and workplace culture factors. Bullying can cause both psychological and physical harm, making it a risk to employee health and safety (Safe Work Australia n.d.). Changes to the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022 mean employers have an explicit duty to manage psychosocial hazards, including bullying and other harmful behaviours, at work.

Discrimination and racism

Discrimination occurs when a person or group is treated less favourably than others due to their background or certain personal characteristics. Racism refers to prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity or national origin.

Racism and unlawful discrimination are never acceptable. It is crucial to understand these experiences among employees to reduce the incidence of these harmful workplace behaviours towards zero.

In this year's People Matter survey, 8.4% of employees indicated experiencing discrimination, representing a decrease of 1.7pp from last year. Nearly one-third of respondents who experienced discrimination reported their experience, of which 20% were satisfied with how their complaint was handled.

Discrimination disproportionately affects individuals based on employee attributes. The most frequently reported type of discrimination was race-based discrimination, accounting for 28.4% of incidences. This was followed by discrimination based on employment activity (22.1%) and age (22.0%).

Gender-based discrimination is adverse conduct directed at, or that affects, a person at work because of their gender, sex or sexuality, or because they do not adhere to socially prescribed gender role (SafeWork NSW 2023).

Within this category, 14.7% of respondents indicated that the discrimination they experienced was due to gender identity, reflecting a 2.3pp fall from 2023. This positive trend may be attributed to the implementation of workplace gender affirmation policies and support from LGBTIQA+ employee networks.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reporting that they experienced discrimination based on one or more attributes was 16.6%, compared to 8.4% of overall public sector respondents.

The following graph shows employee experiences of discrimination by age for those that reported discrimination, highlighting the top 5 attributes reported. For employees aged 65 years, 61.2% of respondents identified age as the basis for their discrimination. High rates of reported age discrimination also occurred for employees aged 15 to 24 years (36.8%) and 55 to 64 years (38.1%).

Employee experiences of discrimination by age, 2024
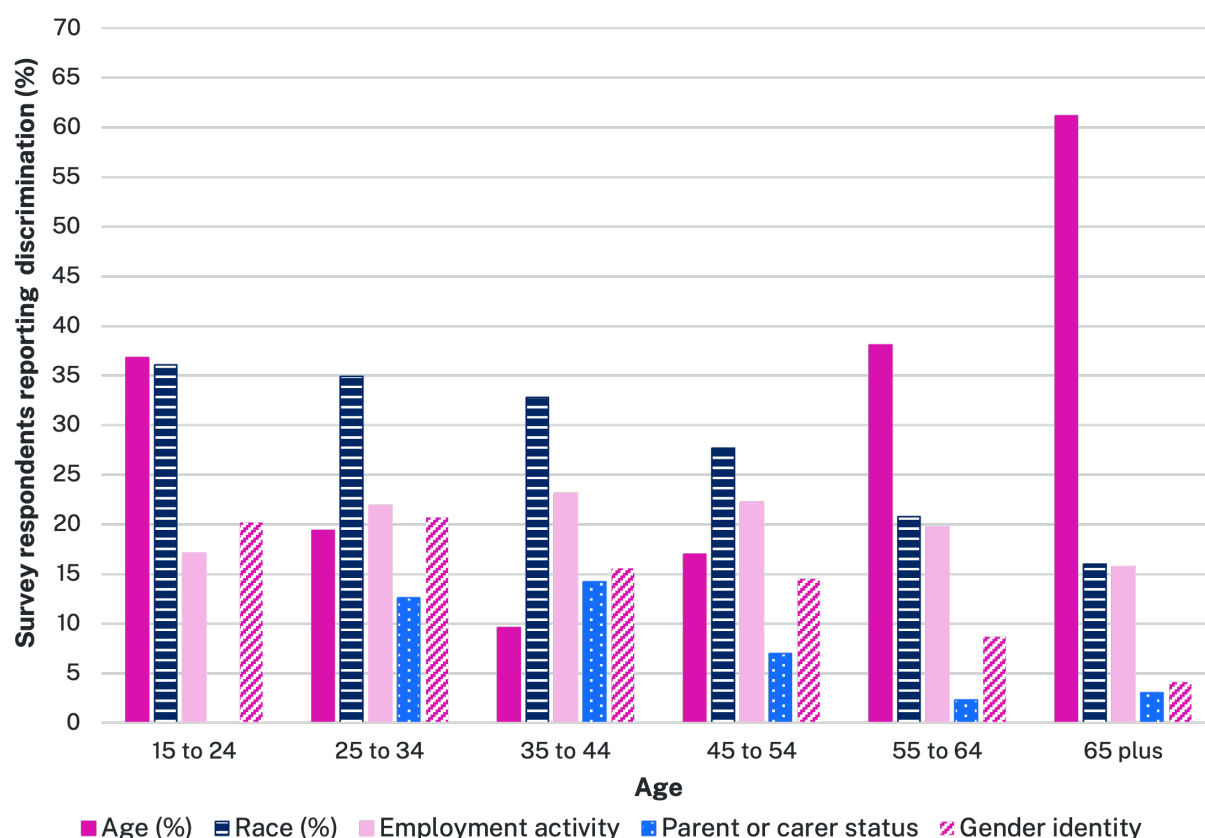
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey 2024*

Note: The question asked respondents who had selected they had experienced discrimination to select the attributes the discrimination was based on. Respondents could select more than one attribute from a list of 16 attributes. The attributes shown were the top 5 reported.

Positively, reported experiences of racism declined this year, from 5.0% to 4.0% (People Matter survey 2024).[8] Achieving zero tolerance towards racism is a high priority in the sector and linked to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations and the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2022–2025*. The Office of the Public Service Commissioner in the Premier's Department leads NSW public sector anti-racism efforts, implementing initiatives to identify, address and prevent racism in the sector.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. This kind of behaviour is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated in any form. Examples of sexual harassment include unwelcome touching, sexually suggestive comments and inappropriate staring that may make someone feel intimidated.

People Matter survey results for sexual harassment remained stable in 2024, with 5.0% of respondents experiencing sexual harassment. Among those who reported their experiences, nearly half indicated that their complaints were resolved to their satisfaction.

The NSW Government aims to foster safer and more respectful workplaces in NSW.

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8   This is derived from the survey question, 'In the last 12 months, have you experienced racism at work'

SafeWork NSW has introduced the *Respect at Work Strategy 2023–2024* to prevent harmful, gender-based behaviours in workplaces across NSW, focusing initially on sexual harassment. This strategy aligns with the national *Respect@Work Report*, which highlights the importance of recognising sexual harassment as a WHS issue and suggests a shift from a reactive to proactive approach, urging employers to take preventive measures before sexual harassment occurs (SafeWork NSW 2023).

To support this approach, the Public Service Commissioner has mandated that NSW public sector agencies implement a sexual harassment prevention policy that meets minimum standards by 1 March 2024 (Public Service Commissioner 2023b). Positively, reporting of sexual harassment increased according to the People Matter survey, by 3pp to 27.5% in 2024.

Employees who experienced sexual harassment, by gender, 2024 vs 2023

Women	Men	Non-binary
5.7%	**3.0%**	**14.4%**
5.6% in 2023	3.3% in 2023	12.5% in 2023
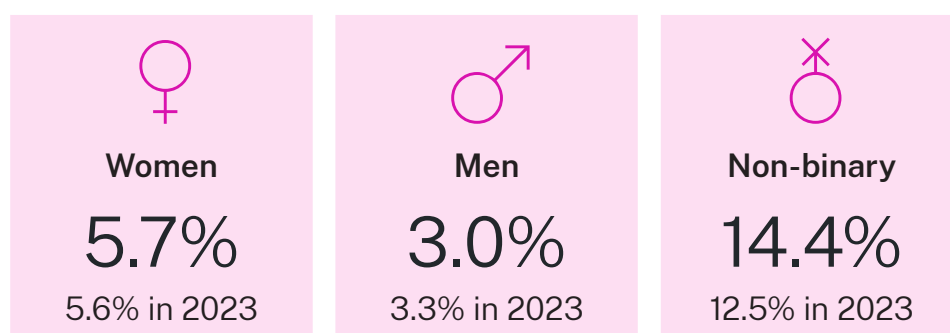
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Employees who experienced sexual harassment by age and gender, 2024
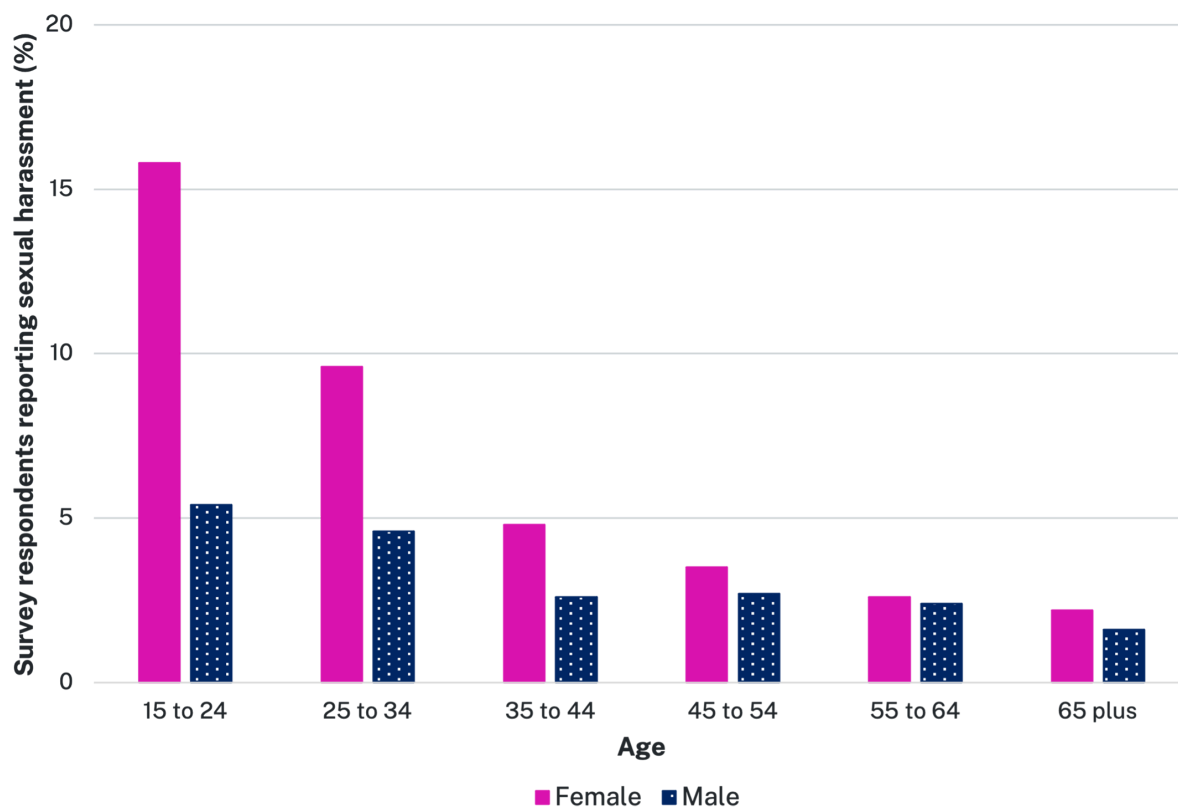
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey 2024*

Our organisations

Our organisations

To foster trust in public institutions, it is crucial to prioritise the interests of the people of NSW when designing and delivering services. The public expects the Public Service to remain apolitical, with public servants acting professionally, ethically and impartially (Public Service Commissioner, Public Service Commission 2023b). Cross-sector agency collaboration is essential for fostering innovation and developing novel approaches to addressing complex policy challenges.

Our organisations need to attract and recruit top talent, ensuring that organisational structures are designed to achieve stated strategies and missions.

Engendering trust in public institutions

In recent years, there has been significant enhancement of our government's integrity and transparency measures. Trust has become increasingly vital for government and public sector leaders as they navigate uncertain environments.

All NSW government sector employees are required and expected to act ethically, lawfully and in the public interest. This is achieved by embracing the government sector core values of integrity, trust, service and accountability.

These core values are underpinned by 18 principles that guide their implementation. Our core values and principles are collectively prescribed by the GSE Act as the Ethical Framework for the government sector and are all equally important.

Integrity

- Consider people equally without prejudice or favour
- Act professionally with honesty, consistency and impartiality
- Take responsibility for situations, showing leadership and courage
- Place the public interest over personal interest

Trust

- Appreciate difference and welcome learning from others
- Build relationships based on mutual respect
- Uphold the law, institutions of government and democratic principles
- Communicate intentions clearly and invite teamwork and collaboration
- Provide apolitical and non-partisan advice

Service

- Provide services fairly with a focus on customer needs
- Be flexible, innovative and reliable in service delivery
- Engage with the not-for-profit and business sectors to develop and implement service solutions
- Focus on quality while maximising service delivery

Accountability

- Recruit and promote employees on merit
- Take responsibility for decisions and actions
- Provide transparency to enable public scrutiny
- Observe standards for safety
- Be fiscally responsible and focus on efficient, effective and prudent use of resources

Source: *Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW Government Sector Employees*

The Public Service Commissioner has adopted a new Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees, effective from 1 November 2024 (Public Service Commissioner 2023c). Government sector departments and agencies may supplement this new Code with requirements specific to their operating environment and business risks, but cannot alter or subtract from it.

The new Code provides guidance on a broad range of foundational topics essential for understanding and compliance when working in the government sector. It also reflects changes introduced by the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* (PID Act).

Positive perceptions of an organisation's ethical culture are associated with higher levels of employee engagement, with senior leaders' commitment to ethics being particularly important for enhancing perceptions of ethical culture.

Employees understanding of ethics and values

People Matter survey respondents demonstrated a great sense of purpose and a strong understanding of ethics and values in the public sector.

The 'Ethics and values' topic achieved the highest topic score for the public sector at 80.8%. The 4 highest scoring questions in the survey were from the 'Ethics and values' topic.

Employees supported their organisation's values, and positively perceived its commitment to ethical behaviours. Awareness of employees' obligations under the Code of Ethics and Conduct for their organisation was exceptionally high, at 94.3%.

While ethical leadership is vital for fostering a culture and practice of integrity, it remains an area for strengthening within the public sector. This year's People Matter survey revealed that 51.4% of respondents believed senior executives model the organisation's values, compared with 54.4% in 2023.[9]

This year, some of the sector's most senior leaders completed an applied ethics course through the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

Employee perceptions of ethics and values, 2024 vs 2023

80.8%
favourable overall
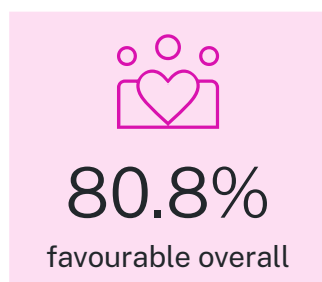
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2024)*

Question	2024 (% favourable)	2023 (% favourable)
My organisation shows a commitment to ethical behaviours	70.7	73.4
I support my organisation's values	87.7	87.5
My senior executives model the values of my organisation	51.4	n/a
I understand what ethical behaviour means within my workplace	93.7	93.2
I would know how to report unethical behaviour if I became aware of it	87.9	86.4
I am aware of my obligations under the Code of Ethics and Conduct in my organisation	94.3	n/a

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2024)*

Note: As the 2024 People Matter survey included new questions that contributed to the 2024 overall score, a comparison to the 2023 overall score was not possible.

9   Note, the questions are not directly comparable due to change in terminology from 'senior managers' to 'senior executives', but the change is broadly indicative.

Misconduct

Misconduct refers to behaviour that is unethical or illegal, or that constitutes a serious offence or a breach of an agency's code of conduct. The government sector core values guide employees on what constitutes 'misconduct' in their work.

A strong 'speak up' culture that encourages public officials to report wrongdoing is important to ensure the integrity of the public sector (NSW Ombudsman 2023). The PID Act strengthens the framework for reporting wrongdoing.

The People Matter survey showed 14.1% of respondents were aware of misconduct at work over the last 12 months, which remained stable.
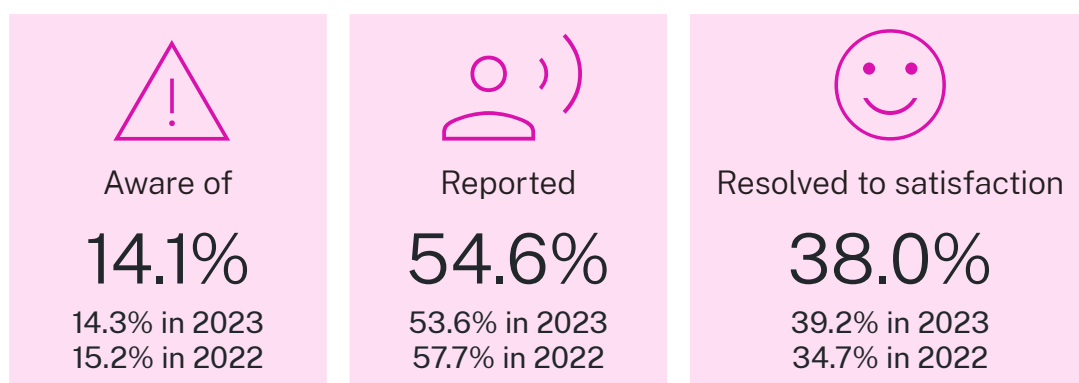
The types of misconduct they were aware of included:

- breaking workplace rules (over half)
- corruption (over one-third)
- behaviour endangering the health and safety of others (over one-third).

Corruption was defined in the survey as dishonest actions or partial exercise of functions, misuse of position for personal gain or advantage of others, or misuse of information or resources.

The proportion of respondents who indicated pressure to engage in misconduct was 2.6%. The proportion of respondents who indicated they were aware of misconduct in their organisation was 14.1%, of which over half reported it. The top 3 reasons for not reporting included fear of negative consequences (48.4%), feeling it wouldn't make a difference (42.1%), and concerns about confidentiality (39.1%).

Proportion of employees who were aware of misconduct, who reported it and who had their report satisfactorily resolved, 2022–24

Aware of	Reported	Resolved to satisfaction
14.1%	**54.6%**	**38.0%**
14.3% in 2023	53.6% in 2023	39.2% in 2023
15.2% in 2022	57.7% in 2022	34.7% in 2022

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2022–24)*

Employees who experienced pressure to engage in misconduct, 2024 vs 2023

2.6%
2.7% in 2023
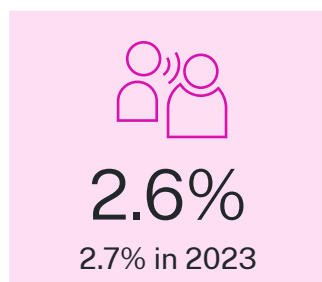
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Governance, risk and assurance

Effective corporate governance is essential to the performance, integrity and transparency of agencies. Corporate governance refers to the processes through which organisations are directed, controlled and held accountable (NSW Treasury n.d.). Although risk is often perceived negatively, when managed strategically, it can present opportunities and foster innovation within organisations. Robust internal audit and risk management practices enhance effective governance and support informed decision-making (NSW Treasury n.d.).

NSW public sector agencies prepare an annual report to demonstrate their accountability to Parliament, the government and the public. This report details the agency's activities and performance and outlines the application of public resources during the reporting period. A mandatory requirement to include climate-related financial disclosures within annual reports will commence from the 2024–25 financial year for larger organisations or those likely to have material climate-related risks. Remaining organisations will commence mandatory disclosures over the next 2 years.

Employee perceptions of decision-making and accountability, 2024 vs 2023

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
I have confidence in the decisions my manager makes	70.8	-1.0
People in my organisation take responsibility for their own actions	48.9	1.6

Employee perceptions of risk and innovation, 2024 vs 2023

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
I know how to manage risks related to my role	81.4	n/a
My manager encourages people in my workgroup to keep improving the work they do	74.4	-0.3
My organisation is making improvements to meet future challenges	51.9	-3.4

Fostering collaboration in the public sector

Among the most significant challenges and opportunities faced by modern government is the cultivation of a more collective approach and enhancement of cross-sector collaboration. Historically there have been challenges within the public sector in overcoming siloed approaches across portfolios. NSW faces significant and complex policy challenges that no single department, agency or portfolio can address independently.

In part, the drive to increase collaboration is behind the renewal of The Cabinet Office and the strengthening of central agencies. This year, Investment NSW was returned to the Premier's Department to enable seamless coordination across government and to make it easier for people to work together – including industry, investors and entrepreneurs.

In addition to these broader structural changes, several strategies can be employed to foster cross-sector collaboration:

- firstly, promoting a culture of openness and transparency, encouraging departments to openly share information and resources

- secondly, establishing interdepartmental task forces and working groups focused on specific cross-cutting issues to facilitate collaboration and idea-sharing.

A recent example of this collaborative effort is the ongoing 'asbestos in mulch' investigation led by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA has led the investigation, involving other agencies including the Premier's Department, and informing the rest of the sector. As a result, the NSW Government is doubling penalties for environmental crimes, marking the largest amendment to environmental protection laws since the creation of the EPA in 1991. This will address loopholes and enhance investigative capabilities.

The People Matter survey results indicate that over 75% of respondents agree that collaboration among work groups is strong, 55.2% of respondents agree that cooperation between teams in the organisation is good, and half of respondents agree that senior executives promote collaboration between their organisation and other organisations they work with.

Employee perceptions of teamwork and collaboration, 2024 vs 2023

61.0%
favourable overall
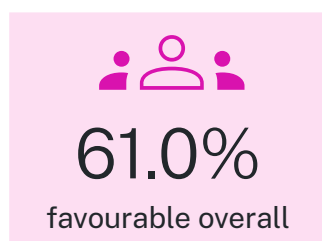
Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
My workgroup works collaboratively to achieve its goals	77.6	-1.2
There is good co-operation between teams across my organisation	55.2	1.3
My senior executives promote collaboration between my organisation and other organisations we work with	49.4	n/a

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Note: A comparison to the 2023 overall score was not possible because one of the questions that contributed to the 2024 overall score was changed.

Organisational and role design

Organisational and role design involves defining organisational structures, employee roles and workforce plans to support the business in achieving its objectives. Prioritising people-centred structures enables organisations to foster an environment conducive to enhanced productivity, reduced stress, and optimal employee performance.

Continuous improvement in job design, role support and work processes, along with thoughtful integration of technology, helps to unlock the full potential of both individuals and the organisation. Employees should be empowered to make informed decisions in their roles, having access to the necessary resources and support.

In 2024, employee perceptions of job purpose and enrichment remained stable at 71.1%. Perceptions of role clarity and support varied across different survey questions, with the majority of respondents acknowledging a clear understanding of job expectations. However, only 53.0% of respondents agreed they had adequate time to do their job well.

There is a strong correlation between burnout and perceptions of role clarity and support (Public Service Commission 2023a). As employees' perceptions of having sufficient support and time to do their job well increases, their risk of burnout decreases.

Employee perceptions of role clarity and support, 2024 vs 2023

64.7%
favourable overall
64.7% in 2023

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
I understand what is expected of me to do well in my job	83.9	0.0
I get the support I need to do my job well	64.1	0.6
I have the tools and technology to do my job well	68.0	-0.1
I have the time to do my job well	53.0	0.4
My performance is assessed against clear criteria	55.7	0.4
I have received the training and development I need to do my job well	63.2	-1.3

Source: People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)

Employees in the public sector should understand how their role aligns with their organisation's overall vision, mission and strategy. This understanding helps them see how their work adds value, which in turn, increases employee engagement.

My manager communicates how my role contributes to my organisation's purpose, 2024 vs 2023

68.7%
favourable overall
68.3% in 2023

Recruitment

Recruitment involves attracting, screening and onboarding people. As the largest employer in Australia, the sector advertised over 47,000 roles in 2024, a 2.6% increase from 2023.

In June 2024, the refreshed NSW Public Service Employee Value Proposition (EVP), titled 'For your future state', was launched to attract employees. It is designed to be flexible so agencies can adapt it to suit their local operating environment.
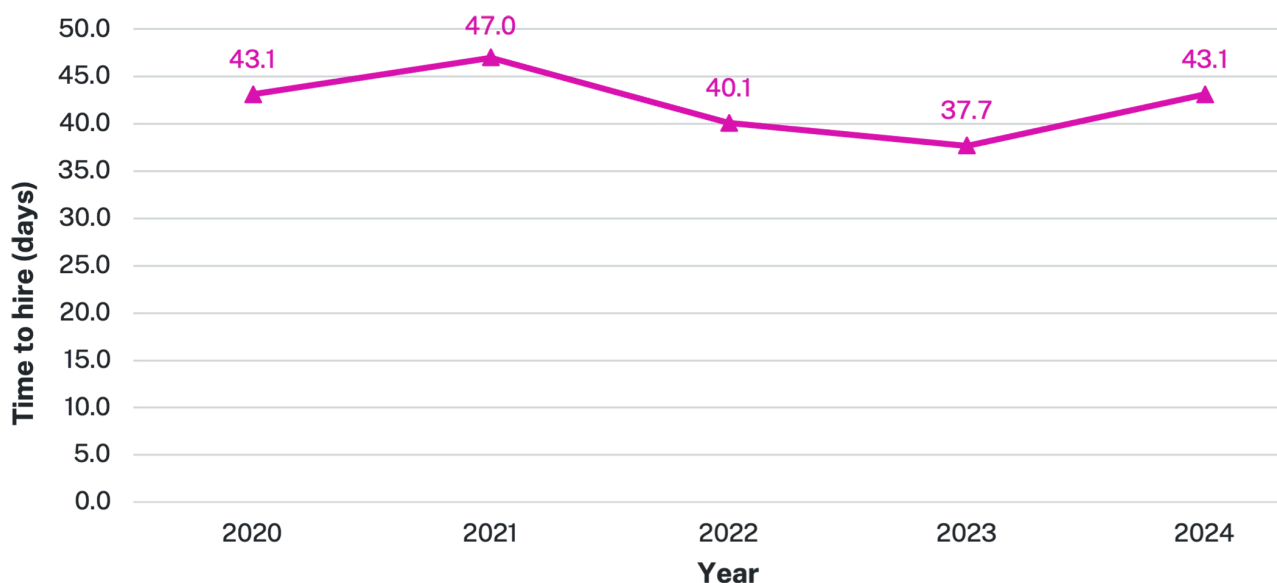
Effective recruitment based on merit helps select the best person for the role and supports managers in making informed decisions. The time to hire increased to 43.1 days, from 37.7 days in 2023.

Number of roles advertised, 2024

47,653

Source: *Recruitment data collection (2024)*

Average time to hire for roles with single openings, 2020–24

Source: *Recruitment data collection (2020–24)*

Employee perceptions of recruitment, 2024 vs 2023

| Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
My organisation follows a merit-based recruitment process	53.7	n/a
My organisation follows a merit-based promotion process	46.6	n/a
My organisation generally selects capable people to do the job	53.0	1.4

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Workforce mobility

A mobile workforce allows for quick resource redeployment, matching priorities, and adapting effectively to change. It helps place the right person in the right job quickly and may introduce innovative ideas and practices into a workplace.

Employee mobility is key to developing leadership capability, providing enriching careers and retaining expertise. In the 2024 People Matter survey, 41.5% of employees considered moving to another role within the sector, which was stable compared with last year; however, only 2.0% moved agencies during that time (Workforce Profile 2024). There is scope to boost mobility as the GSE Act provisions remain underutilised.

Employees considering another role within the sector, 2024 vs 2023

41.5%
41.2% in 2023
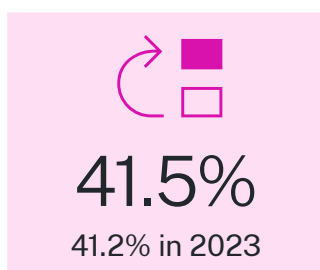
Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Employee perceptions of the barriers to moving to another role, 2024 vs 2023

Question	2024 (%)	2023 (%)
Personal/family considerations	31.6	30.7
Lack of visible opportunities	29.8	27.4
Lack of promotion opportunities	28.7	27.1
Geographic location considerations	26.4	24.1
The application/recruitment process is too cumbersome or time-consuming	21.9	21.9
Lack of support for temporary assignments/secondments	14.4	13.8
Insufficient training and development	13.9	14.0
Lack of required capabilities or experience	11.4	11.7
Lack of support from my manager/supervisor	11.1	11.1
Other	0.4	9.9
There are no major barriers to my career progression	26.8	28.1

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Community satisfaction with NSW Government services

A key measure of the performance of the NSW public sector is the community's satisfaction with NSW Government services. Sector agencies aim to deliver services that are easy to use, high quality and accessible to all.

Employee perceptions of customer service in the People Matter survey show mixed results. Just over half of respondents agreed that the processes in their organisation are designed to support the best experience for customers. Overall, 64.2% of respondents agreed that their organisation meets the needs of the communities, people and businesses of NSW, an increase of 1.5pp from the previous year.

Employee perceptions of customer service, 2024 vs 2023

68.7%
favourable overall

Question	2024 (% favourable)	Change from 2023 (pp)
I am empowered to make the decisions needed to help customers and/or communities	67.0	-1.1
People in my workgroup can explain how our work impacts customers	80.0	-1.1
My senior executives communicate the importance of customers in our work	62.4	n/a
The processes in my organisation are designed to support the best experience for customers	56.4	0.6
My workgroup considers customer needs when planning our work	80.9	-1.6
My organisation meets the needs of the communities, people, and businesses of NSW	64.2	1.5

Source: *People Matter Employee Survey (2023, 2024)*

Note: A comparison to the 2023 overall score was not possible because one of the questions that contributed to the 2024 overall score was changed.

The NSW Government's Centre for Economic Evidence is developing a Performance and Wellbeing Framework that will be presented in the 2025–26 Budget. The framework will allow the government to benchmark the delivery of services and track the overall quality of life of the people of NSW. The framework will bring together the evidence to make necessary reforms to drive efficient service delivery and innovative new programs (NSW Government 2024b).

Driving innovation and future technologies

Innovation in the public sector means creating new and better products, processes, services and technologies to benefit the people of NSW. Embracing risk can help promote innovation.

We face numerous complex challenges, like climate change, that are affecting planning, investment, community engagement and technology. Treasury predicts natural disaster costs will increase from $5 billion in 2020 to at least $15–16 billion by 2060 (NSW Treasury 2021).

The NSW public sector has a proud tradition of innovation. For example, NSW Health embraced and scaled up emerging technologies like telehealth during the pandemic to support paramedics and frontline employees to deliver essential services.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming how we work and the government services we provide for the people of NSW. It presents significant opportunities to enhance productivity, drive economic growth, and improve the way we live and work. While the NSW Government must be ready to embrace these opportunities, we must do so in a safe, ethical and responsible way.

The recently released *AI Guidelines* encourage responsible AI usage by the public sector workforce, balancing innovation with safety, while keeping pace with a rapidly evolving technological landscape (Digital NSW n.d.; Digital NSW 2023).

For example, through the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer, there are programs that incentivise new bushfire technologies[10] including AI-driven solutions, and programs to pay small businesses to prototype innovative solutions where they don't exist yet.[11]

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10 Bushfire Technology Pilots Program
11 Small Business Innovation & Research Program

CASE STUDY

Driving attraction and retention of essential workers in regional NSW through local support

Towns in regional NSW often lack essential workers such as teachers, police officers and healthcare workers. The Regional Development team in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is addressing these shortages through several initiatives to attract and retain essential workers in regional NSW.

One of these initiatives is the 'Make the Move' campaign – a large-scale campaign across metropolitan Sydney that promotes regional NSW to essential workers. The campaign includes hosting booths at high-attendance events and a website that provides information about moving to regional NSW.

Making local connections to support retention

The team identified that incentivising essential workers to move to regional NSW is not enough to get workers to remain there. The team determined that people often leave regional towns due to a lack of connection to the community.

The Essential Worker Attraction Program addresses this by identifying and providing the key support essential workers need to move to and stay in regional NSW. Under the program, The Welcome Experience helps essential workers relocate and settle in by connecting workers and their families with local people and resources to help them feel at home in regional NSW.

Local Connectors for The Welcome Experience are available in 55 LGAs and can help by:

- supporting workers and their partners to find employment

- connecting workers with key services such as removalists and real estate agencies in their new location

- recommending schooling or childcare options in their new location

- connecting workers to social, cultural, sports and community organisations in their new location

- providing information on events and activities in town.

The Make the Move website has seen a 50% increase in workers registering to move to regional NSW. A specific example is the town of Walgett in northwest NSW, which has seen the arrival of 50 essential workers through The Welcome Experience. The town's St Joseph's Primary School is fully staffed for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Premier's Department

More information

www.nsw.gov.au

Contact us

T 9228 5555
E nsw-psr@premiersdepartment.nsw.gov.au

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