



NDS Workforce Census

Key Findings June 2021

The sector experiences a year of unprecedented disruption

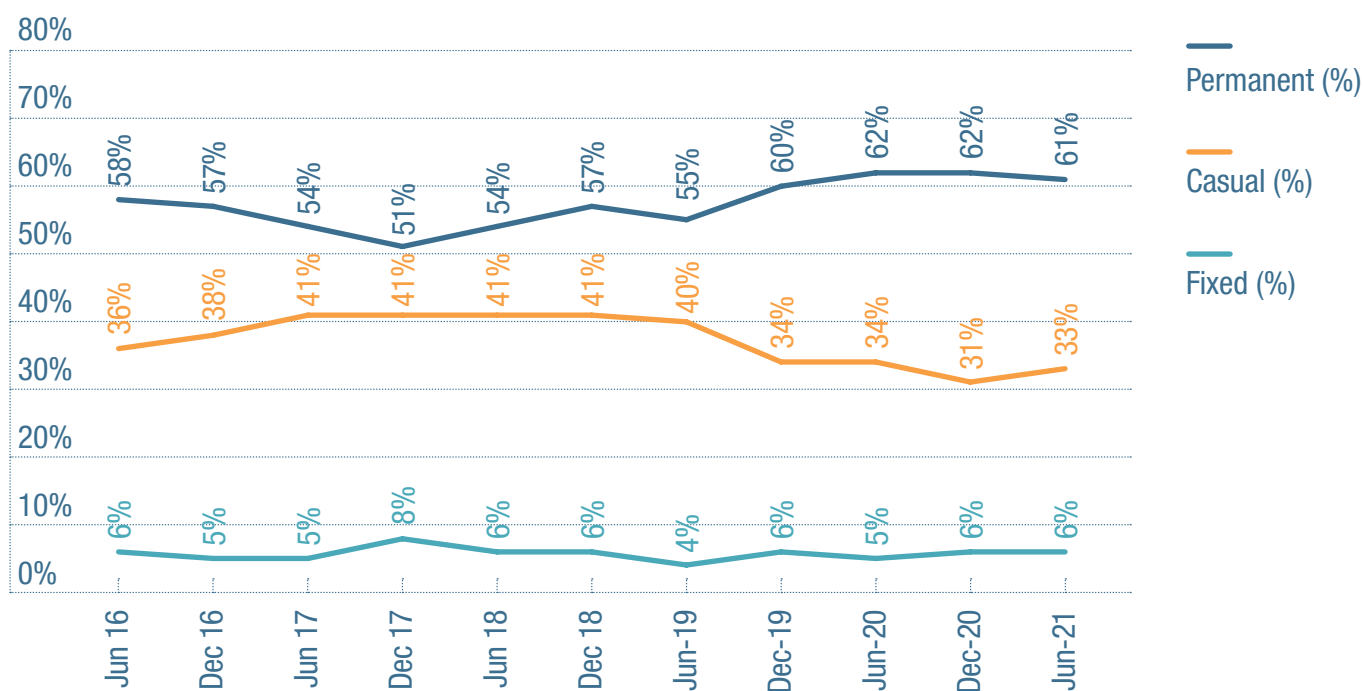
The census of January to June 2021 covered a period where the sector continued to re-build and consolidate its workforce after the widespread COVID restrictions of 2020. While JobKeeper was extended until the end of March 2021, its withdrawal may have resulted in some temporary disruption to this consolidation. Supports such as community activities and in-home services began to be delivered more flexibly, responding to the preferences of participants and the availability of staff. It will be interesting to see whether some of these innovations remain as the support delivery preference of some participants.

This Workforce Census survey attracted a record number of 305 responses from providers, covering a total workforce of 60,679.

Permanent employment across the sector slightly declined

Despite the census period taking place during a period of recovery for the sector, there was a decrease in permanent employment of disability support workers and allied health workers (combined) from the December 2020 figure of 62.5% to 61% in June 2021. The reduction may reflect the impact of the removal of JobKeeper from 1 April 2021.

Figure 1 Type of employment – disability support workers and allied health workers who work in the disability sector (per cent)



Growth in permanent employment over the census period was evident in NSW (from 65% to 69%) and South Australia (57% to 63%), however, declines were experienced in all other states and territories. Victoria recorded the largest decline, from 63% to 56%.

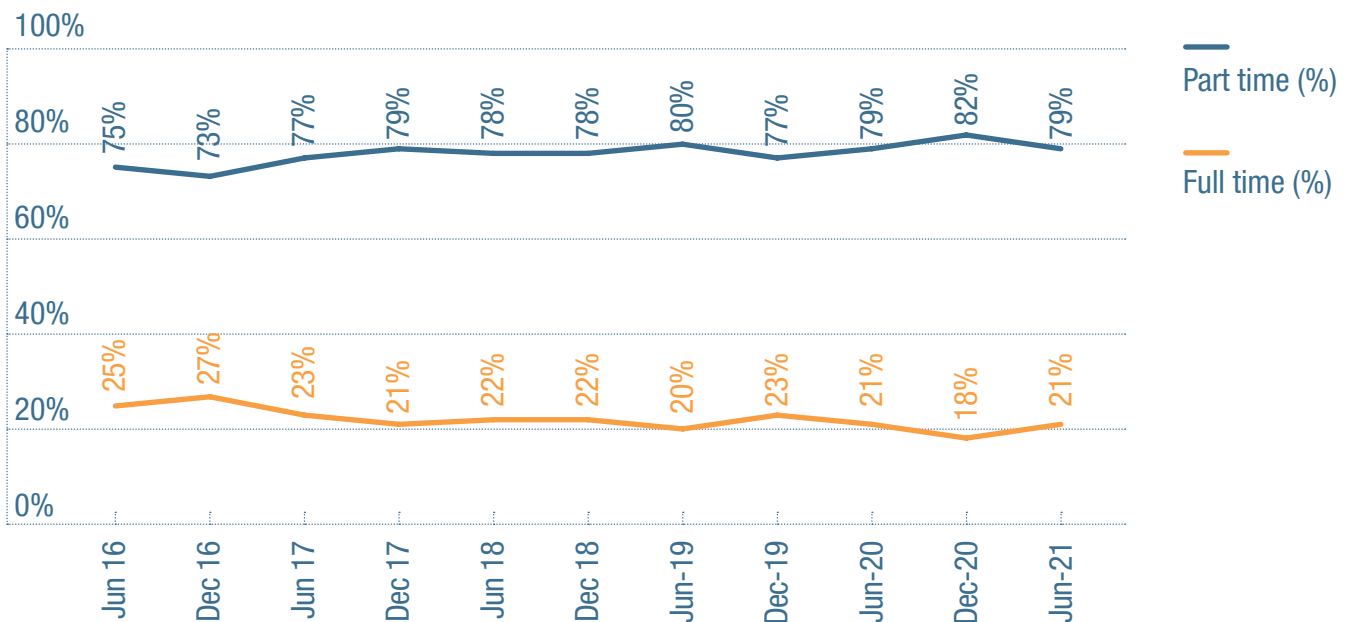
The proportion of permanent allied health workers (only) increased from 79% to 83%, while the proportion of permanent disability support workers (only) declined from 57% to 53%.



Part time employment share showed a decline

Permanent part time employment decreased over the census period from 82% to 79%, with the most pronounced decline being evident in Queensland (from 88% to 82%). South Australia saw an increase in permanent part time employment from 80% to 92% (with a corresponding decline in full time employment), although the sample of 15 providers may not be reflective of the wider sector in that state.

Figure 2 Full-time and part-time work: employment share (per cent)

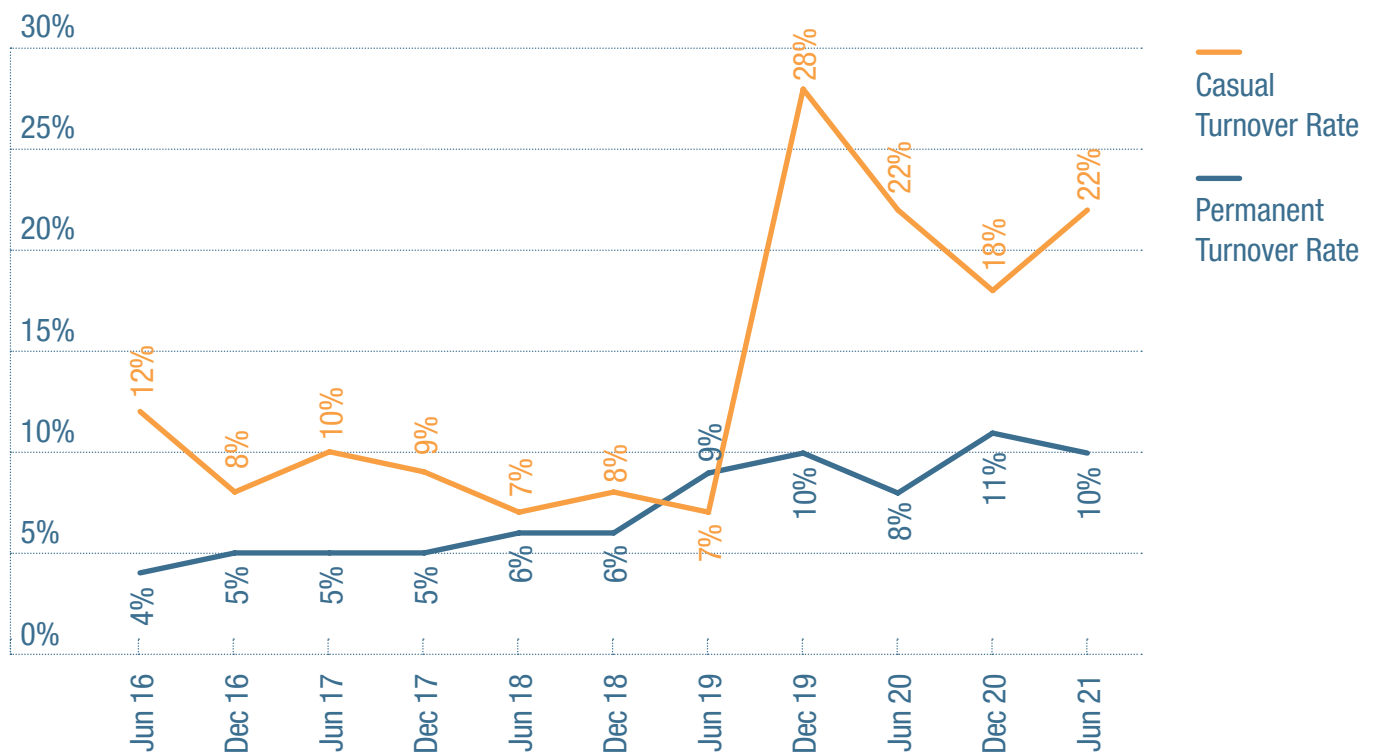




The turnover rate for permanent staff fell while the casual rate rose

The turnover rate for casual employees remained volatile, increasing from 18% to 22%, while the turnover rate for permanent employees declined from 11% to 10%. The increase in turnover rates for casual allied health and disability support workers was similar, reflecting reported sector sentiment in 2021 about the difficulty in retaining both types of staff. The largest increase in casual turnover rates was in Victoria (from 13% to 20 %).

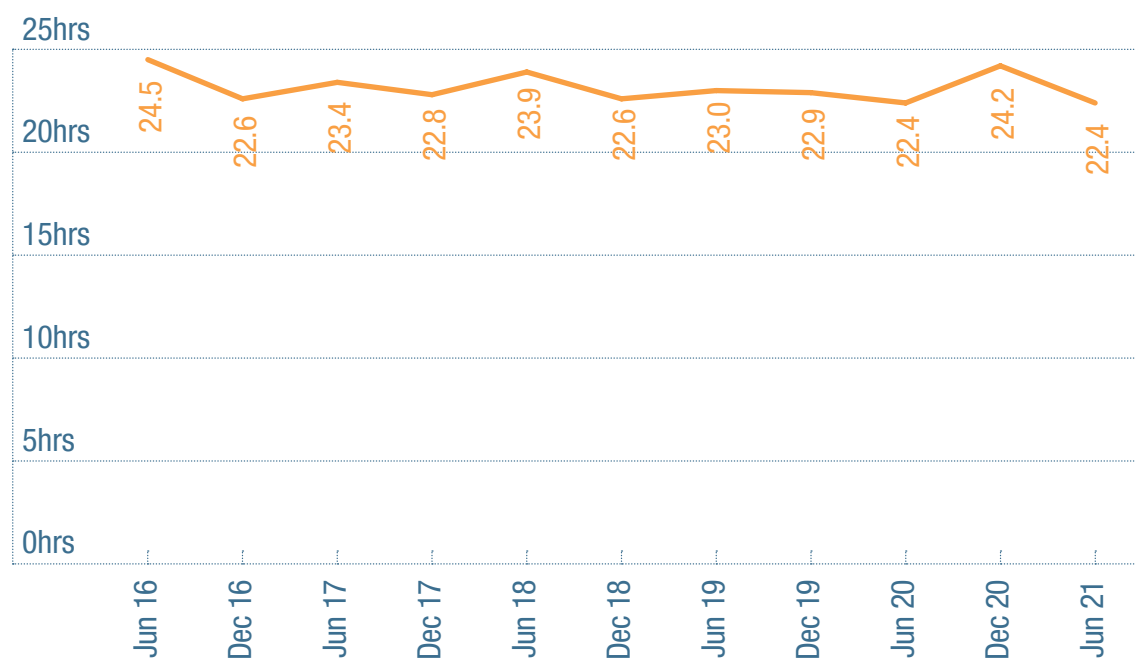
Figure 3 Turnover rates by forms of employment (per cent)



Average hours worked per week decreased across the sector

Average hours worked per week across the sector declined from 24.2 to 22.4, matching the equivalent figure in June 2020. Declines in weekly hours worked were seen in Victoria (24.1 to 18) and Western Australia (24.4 to 19.6), while NSW saw an increase from 24.3 hours to 26.5 hours.

Figure 4 Average hours of work per week per worker



Workforce gender imbalance remained unchanged over the survey period

Sector staffing ratios by gender remained unchanged from the previous census, with females making up 69% of staff and males 31%. It is important to note that since June 2016, the ratio of female staff has increased from 63% to 69%. This imbalance is in almost inverse proportion to the NDIS participant gender profile, with 62% of participants being male as at June 2021(1).

Age cohort patterns remain inconclusive

Workforce age cohorts remained largely unchanged, although the 45-54 age cohort increased from 19.8% to 21.1% over the census period. Almost half (48%) of workers are in the 25-44 age bracket, compared with just 17% of NDIS participants. Over time, a closer alignment between workforce age cohorts and NDIS participant age cohorts would be preferred.

Sector disability employment, board representation and disability awareness training

This round of the census saw the start of a new data collection. The new questions related to service providers' employment of people with disability in internal roles and the numbers of people with disability on boards. There were two questions on the provision of disability awareness training by providers, including if this training was mandatory.

Of the 285 responses, 30% employed 3 or more people with disability, while 50% either did not employ people with disability or did not know if they did. Regarding people with disability in management roles, 11% indicated they employed 3 or more people in management roles. On board composition, 9% indicated there were two or more people with disability in those roles.

Encouragingly, 87% of respondents indicated their organization provided disability awareness training, with a similar proportion indicating this training was mandatory.

Conclusions

The June 2021 Workforce Census highlighted slight declines in permanent and part time employment across the sector, an increase in casual turnover rates and a reduction in hours worked per week. The sector needs to continue to review and seek ways to improve the gender and age cohorts of the workforce, to perhaps be more in line with scheme participant's requirements.

While the results for this census were not discouraging (in particular, the response rate), the census period for the second half of 2021 is likely to reflect significant reversals in most indicators, given the return of widespread COVID related shutdowns, especially in NSW and Victoria.

The Federal Government's NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021–25(2) will be important over the second half of the 2021-22 financial year, as restrictions are wound back and the sector seeks to rebuild a skilled and capable workforce. The Plan's third priority, centered on the reduction of red tape, facilitation of new service models and innovation and the provision of more information about opportunities in the disability sector will be key to achieving that goal.

References

- (1) National Disability Insurance Scheme (2021, June), Quarterly Reports 2020-21 Q4, retrieved from [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)
- (2) For more information on the NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021-25 go to [dss.gov.au](https://www.dss.gov.au)

Further information

If you would like to participate in the next Workforce Census or have any questions relating to the data collection, contact workforce.data@nds.org.au.