



# NDS Workforce Census

## Key Findings December 2020

### The disability sector continues to recover from unprecedented challenges

This census period of July to December 2020, reflects the sector's recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns, following their easing in mid-2020 in all jurisdictions except for Victoria. Consequently, the census shows improvements in all workforce indicators, except turnover of permanent staff and the turnover of allied health staff, reflecting the sector's ongoing difficulty in retaining these key workers.

Despite improvement in workforce indicators, there are still significant challenges ahead for the sector, including the end of JobKeeper on 31 March and the logistical issues impeding the phase 1a and 1b rollout of COVID vaccines.

246 organisations responded to the December 2020 census, covering almost 44,000 workers nationally.

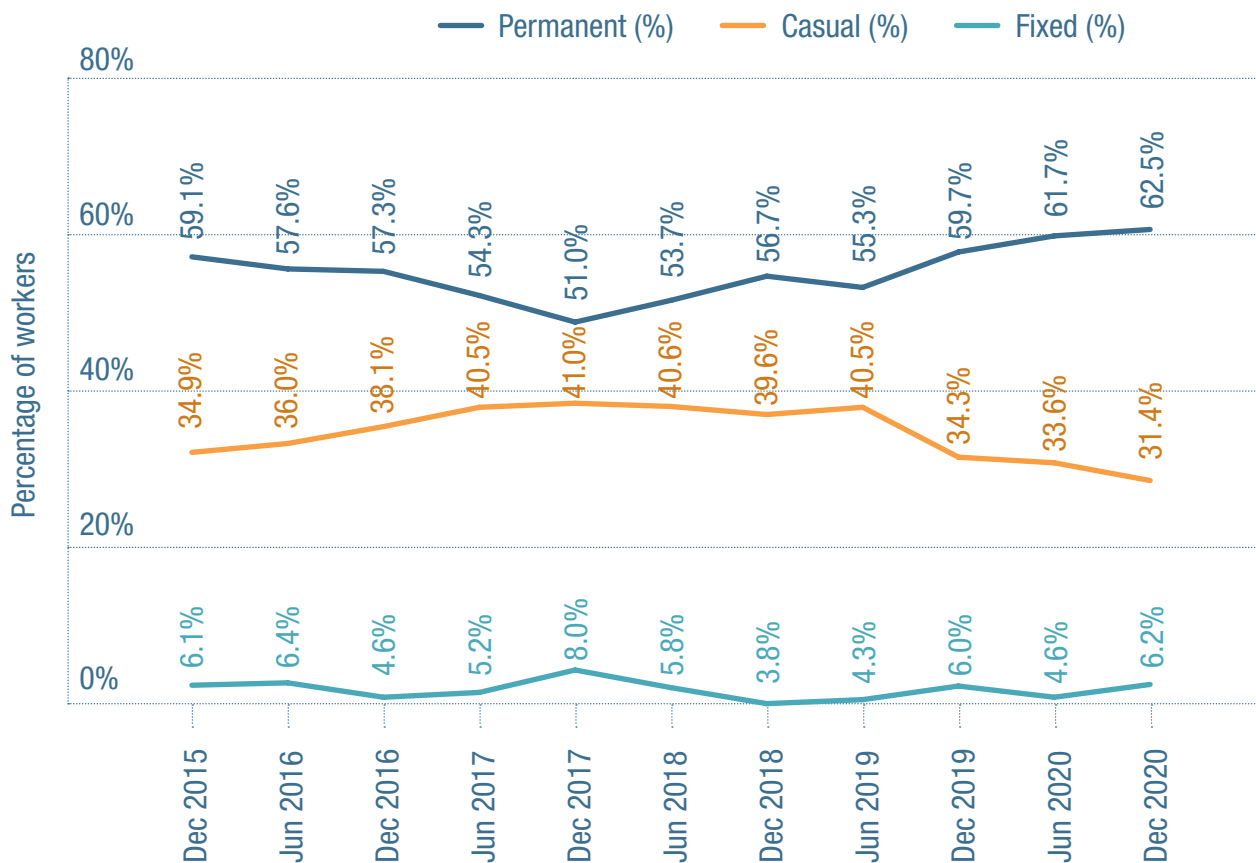
### Disability sector permanent workforce continues to grow

The increase in the sector's rate of permanent employment, evident since December 2019, has continued. In this census, permanent employees account for 63 per cent, the highest level since data collection began in 2015.

Queensland demonstrated the strongest growth, with an increase to 60 per cent (from 56 per cent). Other states and territories remained fairly consistent with the data reported in June 2020.

The extension of JobKeeper payments until 31 March 2021 is likely to have prevented a decline in permanent employment during this survey period.

**Figure 1 – Type of employment (%)**



The permanent employment of allied health workers (AHW) decreased by 3 per cent to 79 per cent. Most states and territories were fairly consistent with the figure reported in the previous census, except South Australia which saw a decrease from 88 per cent to 67 per cent (although caution should be taken with the relatively small sample size of AHW in SA).

Permanent employment of disability support workers recovered strongly over the survey period, increasing from 54 per cent to 57 per cent. The strongest growth in permanent employment of disability support workers was evident in South Australia (37 per cent to 50 per cent), Queensland (47 per cent to 51 per cent), and Tasmania and the Territories (59 per cent to 65 per cent).

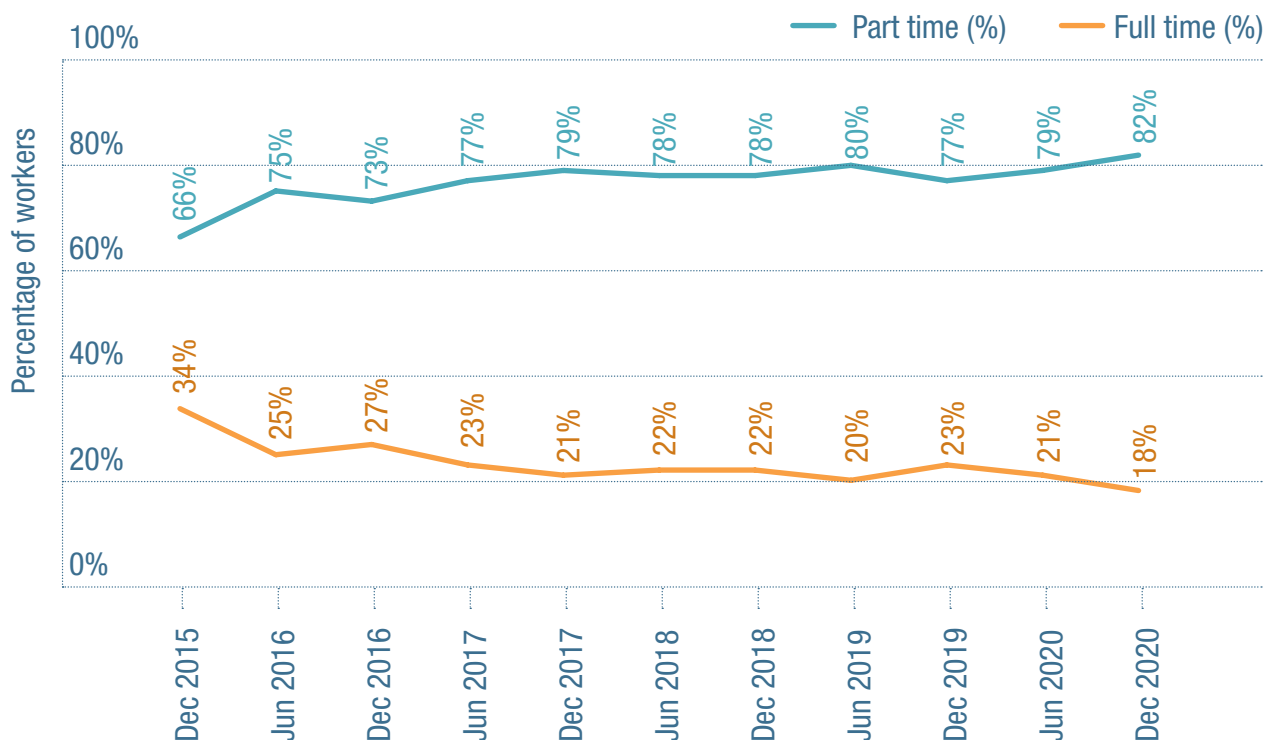
Ongoing uncertainty over casual employment conditions is likely to have contributed to a decline in this form of employment.

## Part-time permanent employment share continues to grow strongly

The sector's rate of permanent part-time employment continued its strong growth, to 82 per cent, up from 79 per cent in June 2020. This figure exceeds the previous highest rate of permanent part-time employment of 80 per cent in June 2019.

The percentage of allied health and disability support workers in full-time employment both declined by 2 per cent since June 2020. Among the disability support workforce, Western Australia and Victoria saw declines in the rate of full-time employment of 5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.

**Figure 2 – Full-time permanent and part-time permanent work: Employment share (%)**



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

The turnover rate for casual positions fell four percentage points to 18 per cent, a ten percentage point fall from the highest rate of 28 per cent in December 2019, but still eleven percentage points above the rate of 7 per cent in June 2019. The permanent turnover rate rose three percentage points to 11 per cent, the highest recorded.

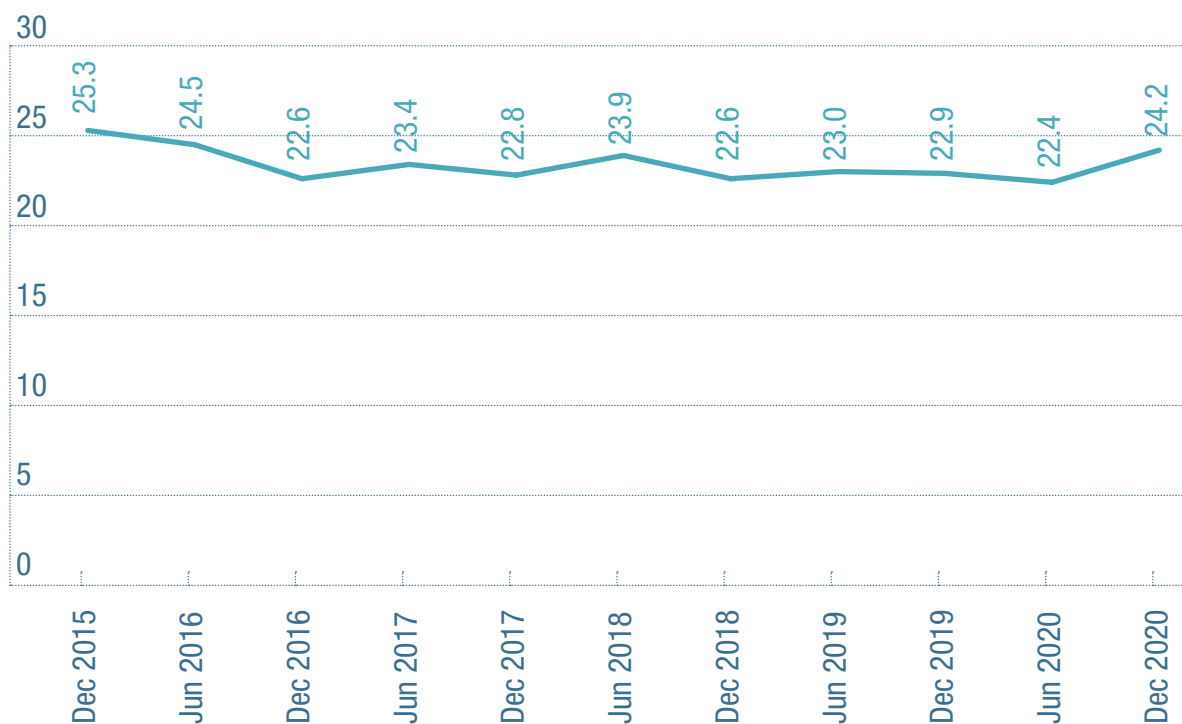
After seeing a significant increase in turnover rates for casuals to 37 per cent in June 2020, Western Australia recorded a decrease to 23 per cent in December 2020.

As reported in the 2020 NDS State of the Disability Sector Report, the recruitment and retention of Allied Health Workers remains moderately or extremely difficult. The Workforce Census December data collection sees the continuing trend with the turnover rate of permanent allied health workers increased from 7 per cent in June 2020 to 12 per cent in December 2020.

### Average hours worked per week increased across the sector

Combined average hours worked per week by sector workers increased from 22.4 to 24.2, as levels of service provision recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown period in the first half of 2020. Allied health workers recorded an increase of 1.2 hours and disability support workers an increase of 2 hours. Interestingly, Victoria recorded increases in work hours for both worker categories, again could be an indicator of face-to-face services commencing again after the extended lockdown in the state.

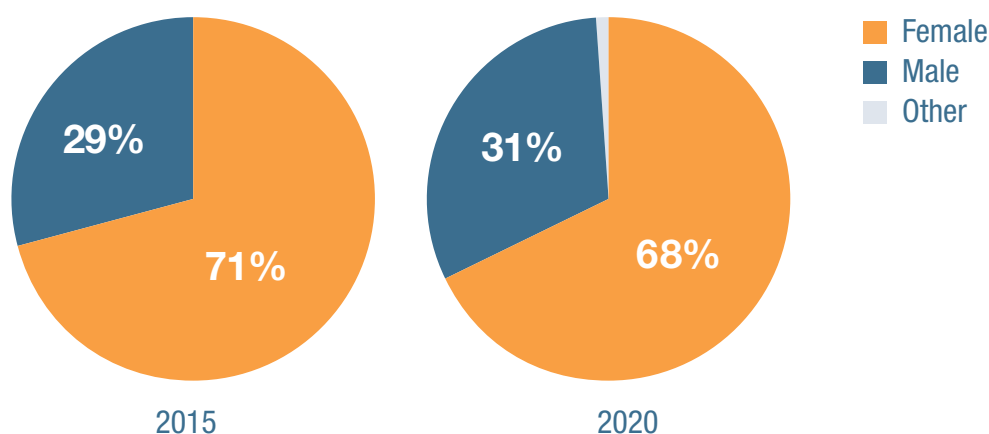
**Figure 3 – Average hours of work per week per worker**



## Workforce gender imbalance improved slightly over the survey period

While the workforce gender imbalance remains pronounced, there was an increase in the proportion of male sector workers to 31 per cent, up from 30 per cent in June 2020. The fact that 62 per cent of NDIS participants were male as of 31 December 2020 demonstrates that the NDIS National Workforce Plan will need to recommend practical ways to address this ongoing gender imbalance.

**Figure 4 – Female vs male staffing ratios**



## Age cohorts trending towards a younger workforce

While 16 per cent of NDIS participants are aged 15-24, almost 12 per cent of the disability workforce is in that age cohort, a narrowing of the previous gap in June 2020. The proportion of the workforce cohort aged 25-44 increased from 47 per cent in June 2020 to 49 per cent. This age cohort also has the highest proportion of male workers, at almost 37 per cent. The proportion of workers in the 15-24 age cohort also increased, from 11 per cent in June 2020 to 12 per cent. As with the gender workforce profile, a closer alignment between workforce age cohorts and NDIS participant age cohorts is preferred.

## Conclusions

The December 2020 Workforce Census highlighted improvements in the rate of permanent employment, casual turnover rates, hours worked per week and a workforce that slowly continues to more accurately reflect the gender and age cohorts of NDIS participants. The turnover rate for permanent staff remains a concern, especially for permanent allied health staff, whose turnover rate was the second-highest result returned since the workforce survey commenced. The December 2020 Census reflects the disability sector continuing to strongly recover from some of the most unprecedented challenges it has ever faced and is well placed to maintain a sustainable resilient workforce providing high-quality services and supports for people with disability.