



Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Cygnet Award Progress and Impact Report

Institution Details	
Institution name	Geoscience Australia
SAGE Cygnet number	1
Key Priority Area (KPA)	Inclusive Culture

Key barrier

Geoscience Australia has identified Inclusive Culture as our first key barrier to address in our SAGE Silver accreditation journey. Specifically, this key barrier relates to improving the conscious and unconscious inclusive leadership capabilities at all levels of the organisation, ensuring the actions and behaviours modeled by all staff are in alignment with our values and culture.

As an organisation we strive to ensure our workforce reflects the community we serve, which is why having an inclusive culture is important. This was also identified through our SAGE Bronze application process as a systemic, structural, and cultural barrier with organisational-wide impacts on the progression and retention of underrepresented diverse employees in our organisation.

Our objective was to reduce the impact of this barrier through the following interventions:

- improving the inclusive capabilities in our people
- establishing resources to enable a safe, respectful and inclusive work environment
- recognising and rewarding staff who contribute to fostering an inclusive culture
- strengthening employee engagement in the ownership of our diversity and inclusion goals
- strengthening our formal and informal diversity and inclusion networks
- embedding inclusive behaviours and actions in our day-to-day work.

Evidence of barrier

We analysed a variety of qualitative and quantitative data to understand the impact of this key barrier. Data sources included the Culture Audit recommendations, facilitated workshop feedback, interview responses, anonymous attitudinal surveys and workforce data.

The analysis indicated an organisational imperative to improve inclusive culture at all levels of the organisation, with a specific focus on building inclusive leadership capability and ensuring we had systems and processes to support this capability. We also reflected on ensuring we embedded behaviours to mitigate systemic, structural and cultural sub-barriers such as:

- low representation of women in STEM roles and senior leadership positions
- gender disparity in experiences of workplace culture (cultural variability)
- limited and inconsistent accountability of leadership and management for cultivating safe and respectful working environments where all individuals can participate equally.

Quantitative evidence of these sub-barriers includes:

- representation of women in STEM roles was 31 per cent at 31 March 2019
- representation of women in Senior Leadership Team roles was 25 per cent at 31 March 2019
- the lack of formal policies and procedures to address aspects of inclusive culture, including sexual harassment and sexism. An anonymous staff survey identified that 23 per cent of respondents did not know where to report sexual harassment and sexism in the workplace
- the lack of formal leadership and commitment to diversity as the organisation didn't have a formal strategy that focussed on these challenges.

Our Gender Equity Network at Geoscience Australia (GENGA), an employee network that supports organisational action for gender equity and LGBTQIA+ inclusion, also provided the following qualitative evidence:

- A lack of breastfeeding facilities had created barriers to the attraction and retention of staff who are parents of young children
- A lack of individual accountability to actively invite and act upon the expertise of women, particularly in STEM and leadership roles, contributed to barriers in the progression and retention of women in the workforce. It was also recognised that women weren't attracted to apply for roles in the organisation. We generally focused on demonstrated experience in a lot of our advertised roles rather than potential, which also contributed to women not applying for roles, especially in STEM. This was amplified for women with intersectional diverse characteristics, such as women with a disability or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.

Activities and outputs

We took a dual approach to reducing inclusive culture barriers:

1. The organisation provided resources and materials to support individuals in fostering an inclusive culture.
2. Individual expectations were set by the organisation to foster inclusive culture, ensuring that our workforce understood that diversity and inclusion was part of everyone's role and not an additional add-on.

Under the former approach, the following support initiatives and resources were developed and delivered, driven by our Senior Leadership Team:

- Our Strategy 2028, our decadal organisational strategic plan
- Our Science Strategy 2028
- Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 (the Strategy)
- Establishing Diversity Champions in our Senior Leadership Team, aligned with key themes of the Strategy and underrepresented groups
- Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023
- Our Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure, accompanied by new anonymous reporting hotline and a mandatory learning module
- Our Domestic and Family Violence Policy and Procedure, accompanied by a new Family Room facility and a mandatory learning module
- Our Mental Health Strategy, accompanied by our Model of Care and capability-based mental health and wellbeing training
- Embedding our 40:40:20 gender targets into our boards, committees, and recruitment panels
- Developing Branch Cultural Action Plans to identify and measure progress for targeted local inclusion outcomes across the organisation
- A new Diversity and Inclusion Learning Pathway for all staff
- Strengthened partnerships and networks with [Pride in Diversity](#) and the [Australian Network on Disability](#) in addition to our existing connections/memberships with [SAGE](#) and the [Champions of Change Coalition](#)

Under the latter approach, we have implemented the following initiatives to embed expectations for inclusive workplace behaviours and actions:

- Conducted an entity-wide Small Acts of Inclusion program, which was a decision made and led by our Senior Leadership Team to build inclusive leadership capability at all levels. The program embedded inclusive organisational habits through three 'Sprints', each delivered over a four-week period, encompassing:
 - Knowing Ourselves: Self-reflecting to better understand our values, beliefs, assumptions and impact on each other
 - Dignified Dialogue: Consciously engaging with others to create an environment where we are all seen, safe, heard and respected

- Conscious Recognition: Celebrating the way we work together as much as the outcomes we achieve
- Updated our performance management framework to incorporate mandatory performance-related goals and deliverables on fostering and contributing to an inclusive culture, and preventing and addressing bullying and harassment
- Formally recognised inclusive leadership as a specific award category in our Reward and Recognition Framework
- Set expectations for mandatory online learning completion for inclusion modules

Our intersectional approach

While many of the outputs to reduce the impact of inclusive culture barriers delivered measurable improvement in gender equity outcomes, all initiatives applied an intersectional lens. This is particularly evident in the following areas:

- Senior Leadership Team all have roles as Diversity Champions, such as our Pride Champion, Disability Champion and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Champion
- Launching our Innovate RAP 2023 and participating in the JAWUN Indigenous partnerships program
- Providing opportunities and platforms for employees to participate and contribute with intersectional perspectives through the Small Acts of Inclusion program
- Applying human-centred design principles, utilising consultation workshops and survey data to collate intersectional perspectives and develop bespoke solutions to meet the needs of our people. For example, our CEO conducted 'Listen and Learn' sessions with people from our organisation to understand intersectional lived experiences of sexual harassment and sexism, accompanied by a clinical psychologist. This feedback informed the development of our Sexual Harassment and Sexism Policy and Procedure.

Outcomes

We are continuing to monitor and evaluate Inclusive Culture outcomes through a variety of measures including workforce data, staff surveys and leadership-led 'Listen and Learn' workshops.

Women participation in STEM and Leadership roles

Over the last three years, representation of women in STEM roles increased by 6.5 per cent, reaching 37.8 per cent at 31 March 2022 (see Figure 1). Representation of women in Senior Leadership Team roles increased by 25 per cent, reaching 50 per cent as at 31 March 2022 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Gender Representation in STEM roles at GA

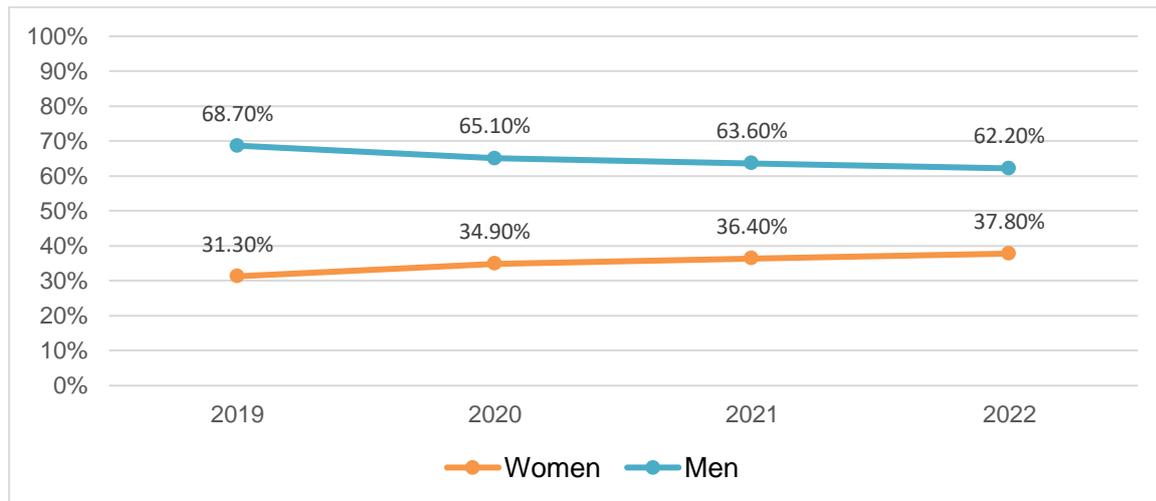
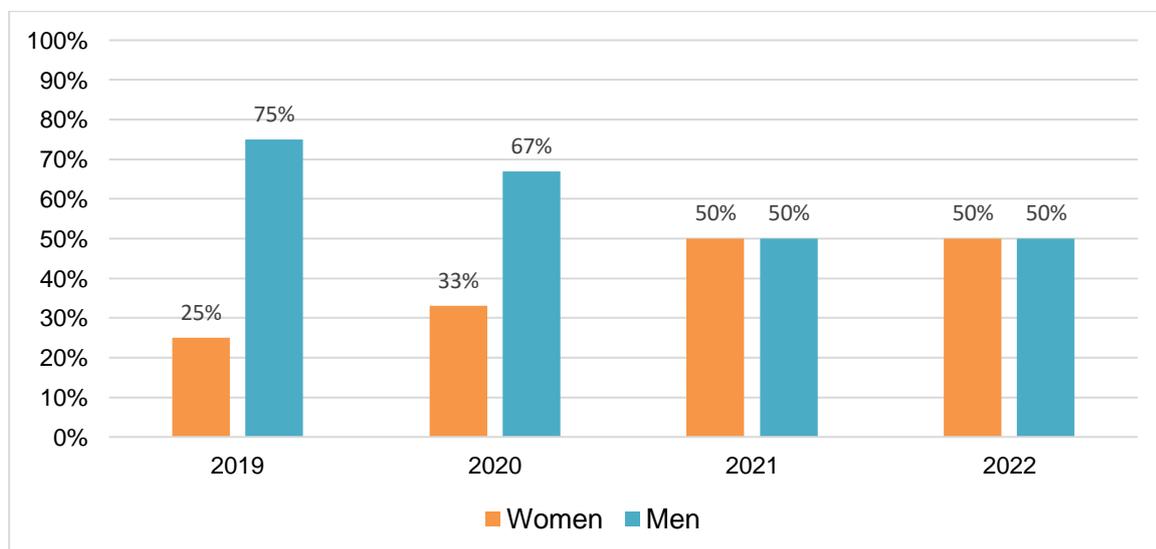


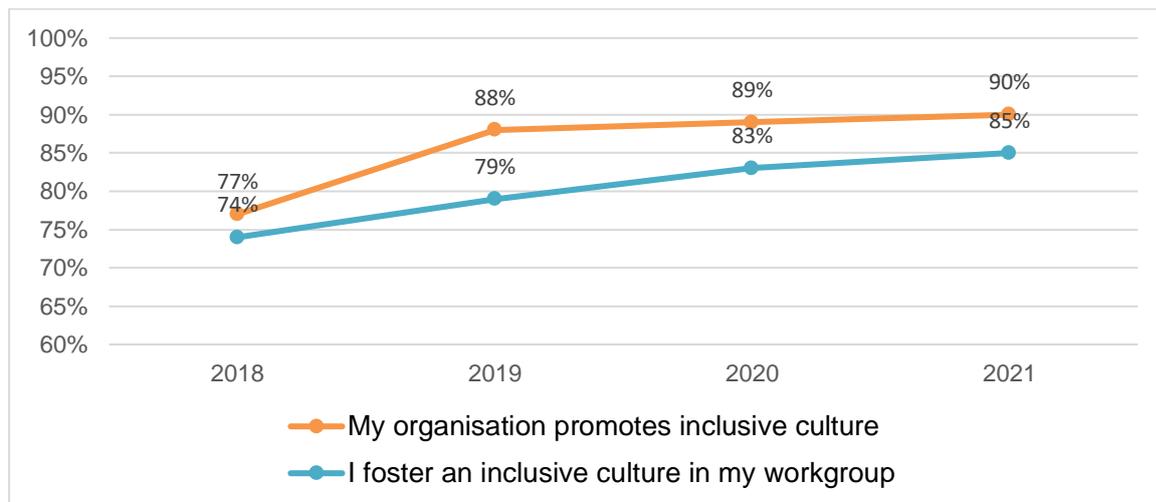
Figure 2: Gender Representation in our Senior Leadership Team



Leadership at every level

Our annual staff survey indicates that our people are increasingly taking personal accountability for inclusive culture, with a positive growth trend over four years in individuals and the organisation fostering inclusive culture (see Figure 3). In our most recent staff survey, 92 per cent of respondents indicated that they believe an inclusive culture improved organisational outcomes.

Figure 3: Inclusive Culture and Engagement



This evidence is further supported by data from the baseline and endline surveys conducted before and after the Small Acts of Inclusion program, respectively. In the endline survey, 97 per cent of respondents indicated that the program improved the way diverse perspectives were heard and acted upon. In addition, nine out of ten respondents identified that they would continue to evaluate the behaviours and capabilities learned in their workgroup. A comparative analysis of the surveys demonstrated a six per cent increase in employee perceptions of accountability for inclusive behaviours, from 89 per cent to 95 per cent.

We have also achieved significant improvements by establishing the following initiatives:

- On 3 June 2021, we officially received accreditation as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW), a program facilitated by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA), enabling us to offer employment conditions that support women to combine breastfeeding and work, including lactation breaks, flexible work options and access to private facilities to express breastmilk. We recently received our reaccreditation for 2022.
- Achieving gender representation of 50:50 in our Senior Leadership Team.
- Improving inclusive recruitment resources to increase representation of women in STEM by 6.5 per cent, on track to achieve 40:40:20 representation in STEM by 2025.

Responding to challenges

Small Acts of Inclusion Program

The Small Acts of Inclusion Program was delivered in three four-week sprints between May 2021 to October 2021. Following the first Sprint, a pulse survey indicated some respondents did not feel that they could actively participate in activities due to activities not being tailored to unique learning styles and needs.

We responded through iterative improvements and adjustments to make the activities more accessible and flexible, particularly to improve learning for neurodiverse people, and people with flexible working arrangements. We also created online learning hubs in Microsoft Teams, to provide a platform for peer-to-peer advice and support.

During the final Sprint we experienced unexpected challenges due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. These included increased workload, increased unscheduled absence and varied staff availability,

particularly for people with parenting and caring responsibilities. We adapted to a fully online learning environment and offered additional support through our Human Resources team and our Employee Assistance Program.

Influencing whole of Government change

While we endeavour to be an agent for whole of Government change, we have identified challenges throughout this journey in addressing direct or indirect barriers within public sector workplace legislation and employment frameworks.

For example, we are continuing to influence inclusive and equitable parental leave entitlements by making recommendations to the *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973* Review for equitable leave provisions regardless of gender and relationship status. We are also seeking to improve inclusive parental leave entitlements under our Enterprise Agreement, subject to requirements of the APS Workplace Relations Policy 2020.

Getting our workforce to own the journey

We also had some challenges ensuring our workforce owned and engaged with the Strategy and our vision. It was important for us to engage early with employees, establishing a clear path for our vision for the organisation and establishing clear expectations and accountability for all employees.

Impact

Our dual approach, top-down and bottom-up, to reducing inclusive culture barriers within our organisation has resulted in significant positive impacts. Expectations to foster inclusive culture are business-owned and leadership-driven.

We have received the following focus group feedback from our Gender Equity Network (GENGA):

- Breastfeeding parents have noted to GENGA the levels of comfort to come to work, which has in turn improved our attraction and retention of female employees
- LGBTQIA+ staff have noted the level of freedom to talk about challenges and share experiences with others at Geoscience Australia, indicating they feel comfortable to come and work at Geoscience Australia. This in turn means that our workforce is more diverse and we are able to realise the full range of skills and talents of our employees
- Female staff are empowered by existing role models within the organisation, which has led to an increase in female representation in the senior leadership group.

We have also received evidence of positive organisational impact through voluntary feedback interviews with staff from diverse backgrounds, including the below:

- “I’ve felt the particular benefits of Geoscience Australia’s inclusive working environment where I am able to bring my best self to the workplace. In further removing the barriers that prevent people from wholly contributing to their workplace and to their community, I hope to maximise the full breadth of geoscience to solve the world’s most pressing natural resource challenges.”

Finally, a member of our Senior Leadership provided the following feedback in a recent case study:

- “I have the privilege of leading our diversity and inclusion agenda from multiple perspectives. As a part of the pride community myself I have experienced and observed challenges earlier in my career where organisations did not acknowledge or encourage discussions around diversity and inclusion. I know we have made a significant shift in removing existing barriers and building on how we contribute to a stronger workplace culture. My role enables me to provide leadership and to influence my colleagues so that we all bring our authentic self to every situation and in doing so, are safe, supported and valued for our individual and collective identities.”

In 2021 our Chief Executive Officer, Dr James Johnson, was recognised with an award issued by the Australian Human Resource Institute through his leadership and committed advocate for inclusive culture. We believe this award to be evidence of our accelerated organisational culture change that was driven by our Senior Leadership Team.

Further action

We remain committed to gender equity in our organisation, progressing the actions in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 to create a nurturing and inclusive culture that supports people to achieve their full potential and reflect the community we serve. We are fully committed to creating an environment that is supportive, respectful and collaborative, and that embraces equality of opportunity based on talent alone. Our Strategy identifies a further four key barriers that will be our priority areas of action as detailed in the table below.

Key Barrier	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person / Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
Gender Equity	As per SAGE Bronze and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Continue our progress to achieve gender equity in the organisation with a particular focus on preventing and addressing everyday sexism and sexual harassment in our organisation	August 2021 – August 2022	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Chief of Place, Space and Communities Division General Manager, Enabling Services	Expected behaviours are defined, and understood, by all employees. Respectful and inclusive behaviours are encouraged and rewarded, leading to increased contributions to projects from employees from key diversity groups.
Talent Attraction	As per SAGE Bronze and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Ensure our pipeline of talented people is diverse to enrich our work, our culture and our science	August 2022 – June 2023	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Branch Manager, Natural Earth and Marine Observations	Increased applications and recruitment received across key diversity and underrepresented groups in line with APS targets, to access the full pool of human talent based on skill alone.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity	As per SAGE Bronze and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Understand the experiences of, and the barriers faced by, cultural and linguistically diverse people in our organisation to inform the development of initiatives to remove barriers to their progression and retention.	August 2022 – June 2023	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Branch Manager, National Positioning Infrastructure	Increased recruitment and retention of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across all Divisions and Increased promotion of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across all Divisions
Career Development	As per SAGE Bronze and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Remove the barriers to career opportunities and strengthen career progression and development opportunities for our employees from diverse backgrounds	June 2023 – December 2024	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Branch Manager, Advice, Invest Attract, Analytics	Increased rates of promotions of employees from key diversity groups across branches and divisions, leading to greater retention of employees and increasing gender equity in Senior Leadership Team