



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

Institution Details	
Institution name	Geoscience Australia
SAGE Cygnet number	2
Key Barrier	Everyday sexism and sexual harassment

Key barrier

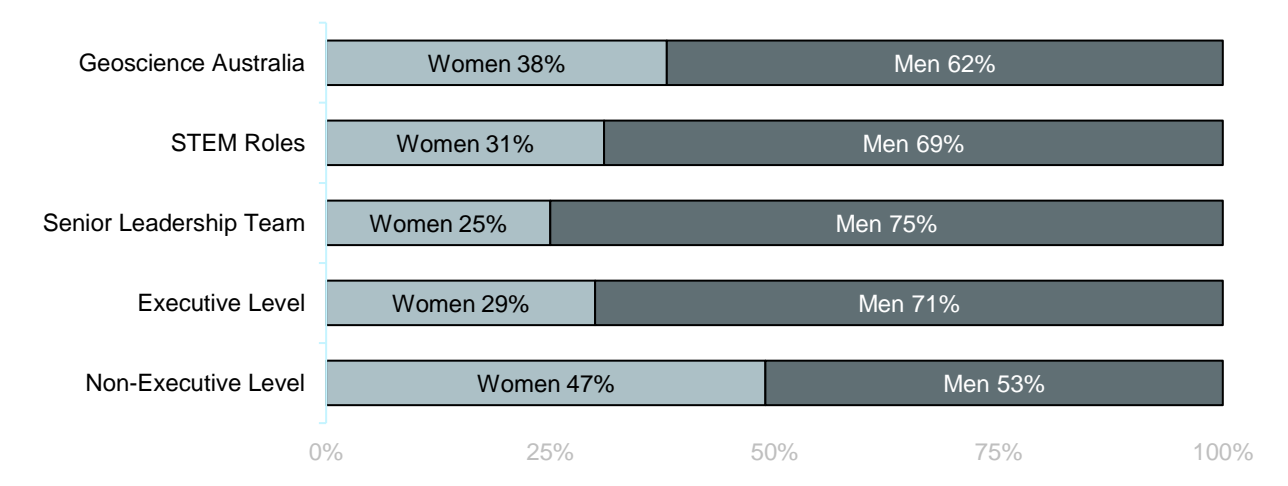
Geoscience Australia has identified **everyday sexism and sexual harassment** as the second key barrier to address in our SAGE accreditation journey.

Evidence of barrier

Geoscience Australia's identification of this barrier began in 2018 when developing our decadal strategic plan, Strategy 2028. During this process, it became apparent that we would need to have a workforce reflecting the diversity of the Australian community in order to continue to deliver impactful science and remain an employer of choice in the science and public sector industries.

For context, in 2018, our organisation was 38% women, of which 31% of our Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) roles and 25% of our senior leadership positions, were occupied by women (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Snapshot of gender diversity at Geoscience Australia in 2018



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

Table 1. Snapshot of gender diversity at Geoscience Australia in 2018

	Female	Male	Total
Total workforce	230	369	599
STEM roles	110	241	351
Senior leadership team	4	12	16
Executive level	73	182	255
Non-executive level	153	175	328

Our research into achieving gender equity^{1 2} revealed to us that everyday sexism and sexual harassment was a potential barrier to the progression and retention of women in our organisation and therefore we chose this as one of our key barriers.

We reviewed our 2019 Australian Public Service (APS) employee census (census) for insights into the occurrence of everyday sexism and sexual harassment within our organisation. The census was completed by 73% of our employees and indicated sexism and sexual harassment was not a widespread issue, with just one person (0.002%) saying they had experienced such behaviours in 2019.

Response to more information request – evidence from official reporting mechanisms

At the same time, the number of official complaints of sexism and sexual harassment was considered. At the end of 2019 zero (0) official complaints of sexism and sexual harassment were made to our Human Resources Team.

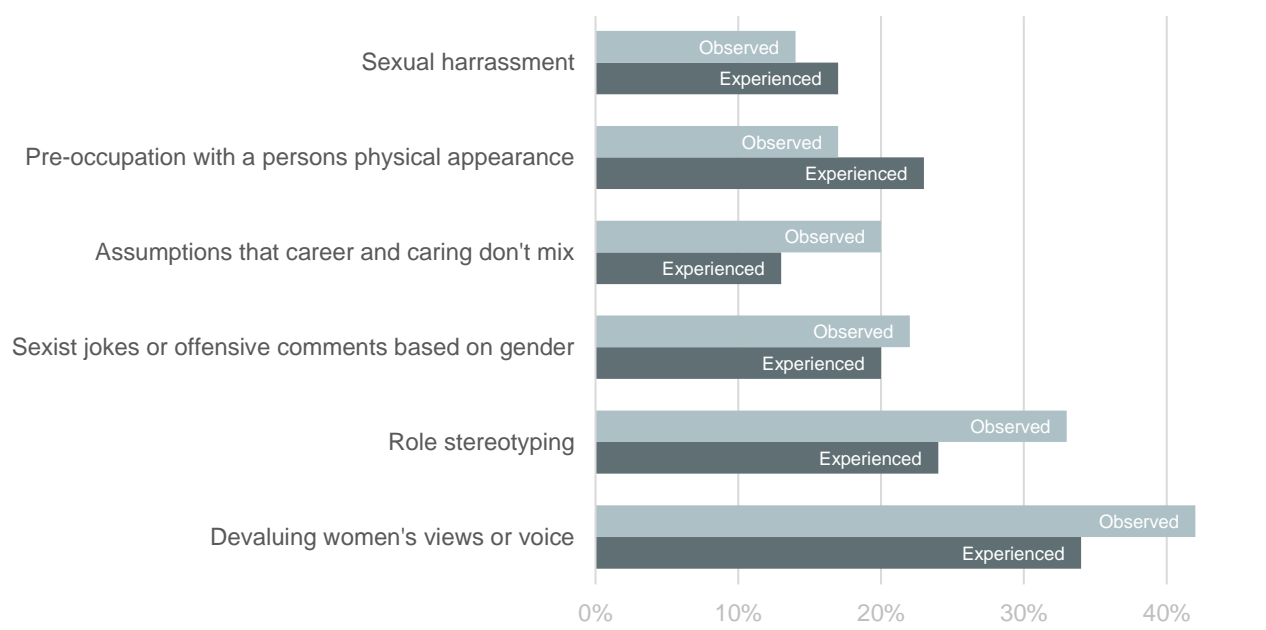
These results were concerning as, at face value, they were inconsistent with anecdotal evidence being provided to Human Resources that the instance of sexual harassment was higher than the census results indicated. Subsequently, we commenced an organisation-wide education campaign and a more targeted survey in early 2020 with the initial goal to enhance people's understanding of everyday sexism and sexual harassment and then explored the prevalence of it. Following this, we saw a different story.

We had 126 responses (20% of our organisation), and they reported both experiences and observations of everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace (Figure 2). Of those who had experienced sexual harassment, 16% had considered leaving their role because of it.

¹ Science and Technology Australia, 2019. *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*. Retrieved from: <https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/STA-Submission-Sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace-.pdf>

² Champions of Change Coalition, 2019. *Disrupting the System Preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace*. Retrieved from: https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Disrupting-the-System_Preventing-and-responding-to-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace_CCI_web-FINAL.pdf

Figure 2. Have you observed or experienced any of the following in the workplace?
2020 everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace survey



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

Table 2. 2020 survey on everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace

	Female	Male	Gender not disclosed	Total
Total responses	68	55	3	126
Observed Sexual Harassment	9	8	1	18
Experienced Sexual Harassment	19	2	0	21
Observed pre-occupation with physical appearance	11	10	0	21
Experienced pre-occupation with physical appearance	24	5	0	29
Observed assumption that career and caring don't mix	14	11	0	25
Experienced assumption that career and caring don't mix	12	4	0	16
Observed sexist jokes	16	11	1	28
Experienced sexist jokes	19	6	1	26
Observed role stereotyping	25	16	1	42
Experienced role stereotyping	28	1	1	30
Observed devaluing of women's voices	26	26	1	53
Experienced devaluing of women's voices	39	3	1	43

The difference between this survey and our census results led us to reflect on how our people understand and respond to everyday sexism and sexual harassment. It was only when people were asked to

consider specific behaviours that they were able, or willing, to identify them. This was despite 74% of respondents of the same survey indicating that they could identify and respond to the behaviours if they witnessed them.

With this information we understood that everyday sexism and sexual harassment was present within our organisation and people who experience such behaviours are possibly more likely to leave their roles as a result. Additionally, our workforce data showed that women were less represented across all leadership levels (refer to Figure 1), suggesting that progression was not equal for all genders, and that everyday sexism and sexual harassment may be a contributing factor.

Activities and outputs

To reduce everyday sexism and sexual harassment in our organisation, we:

- Sought to better understand our employees' views on everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace and where they felt we could better support them and respond.
- Utilised our networks and resources to better understand the frameworks we could implement to address these behaviours, including the Champions of Change Coalition, the Australian Public Service Commission and other APS organisations, and the Respect@Work Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report 2020.
- Developed a framework and provided resources and materials to educate and support our people to actively and safely address everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Established collective and individual expectations to ensure our people understood and acknowledged that safely addressing workplace everyday sexism and sexual harassment was everybody's responsibility.

To further understand this barrier and raise the profile of the issue, in 2020, we conducted three Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Listen and Learn sessions with our people. The purpose of these sessions was to discover how people were experiencing everyday sexism and sexual harassment and what practical actions we could take to make change. Our people told us that the following actions would have the most potential to improve the situation (refer to Figure 3 for more information):

- Targeted education on how to identify and safely address everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Clearer organisational processes, including anonymous reporting options and more transparent complaint handling processes.
- Training for our managers on how to better support people involved in everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Figure 3. What are some practical actions that we can take to combat everyday sexism and sexual harassment?

CEO Listen and Learn sessions: October to November 2020, 27 participants



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

The CEO listen and learn sessions were conducted between October and November 2020 and included 27 participants. Participants were asked to identify actions that could be taken by Geoscience Australia to combat everyday sexism and sexual harassment. Participants were able to submit more than one action if they wished. At the conclusion of these sessions, actions were analysed and grouped into the following themes.

Table 3. What are some practical actions we can take to combat everyday sexism and sexual harassment?

Element	Number of responses
Organisation processes	40
Education	32
Training	26
Support networks	13
Culture change	8
Organisation development	7
Leadership Accountability	6
Leadership Actions	5

These sessions were open to all employees and at the time participants were not asked to provide their gender identity or other personal details, we acknowledge this is an area for improvement in the future so that we can be sure that no group is left behind in our actions.

Following our research and analysis of better practice initiatives, the following support initiatives and resources were developed and delivered, driven by our Senior Leadership Team:

- A new Sexism and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure to clearly outline our zero-tolerance stance, available support options (internal and external), complaint handling processes and avenues to report anonymously.
- An anonymous everyday sexism and sexual harassment hotline for reporting and requesting immediate support both in and outside the workplace.
- Mandatory e-learning to provide training on how to identify, prevent and support individuals who are experiencing everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace. These are reviewed regularly to ensure employees are completing them annually.
- We reviewed the Respect@Work Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report 2020 to look for opportunities to improve our reporting and management of everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace. Adopting several recommendations which include:
 - updating our Work Health and Safety management system to include sexual harassment as a workplace risk that can cause both psychological and physical harm, requiring an appropriate risk assessment and controls to mitigate the risk
 - voluntarily, and in advance of mandatory reporting requirements, demonstrated our commitment to gender equality and workplaces free of sexual harassment by expressing our interest to participate in the 2022 Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) survey. This

will involve our gender equity results and sexual harassment incidents being published on WGEA's data explorer which is publicly available information.

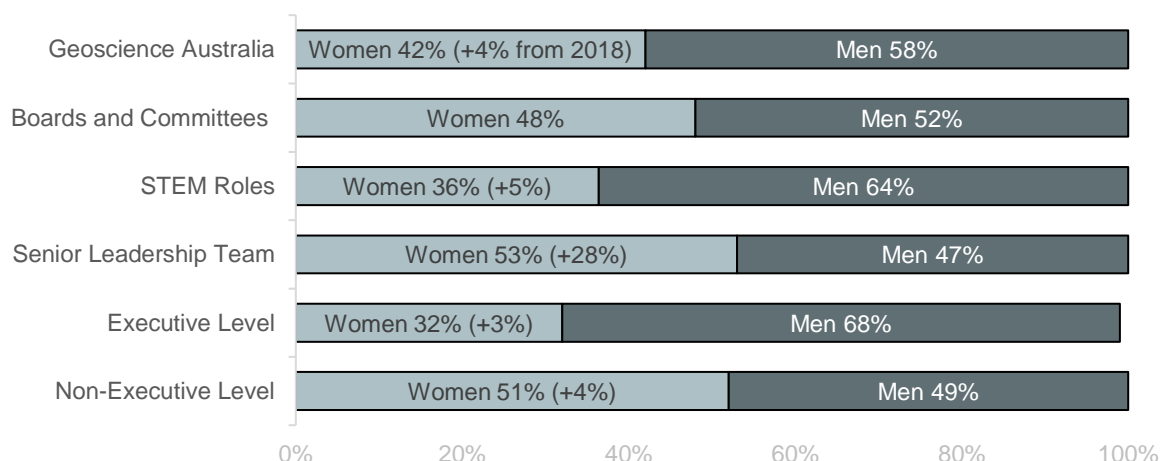
We implemented the following initiatives to embed expectations for workplace behaviours and actions:

- Updated our Respect and Courtesy Guidelines to make it clear that everyday sexism and sexual harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our organisation
- Implemented transparent reporting to our Workplace Relations, Health and Safety Committee on the incidences and findings of everyday sexism and sexual harassment; the Committee uses this information to determine strategies and further action for addressing workplace behaviours
- Updated our performance management framework to incorporate mandatory performance related goals and deliverables to prevent everyday sexism, sexual harassment and discrimination in our workplace
- Set expectations on mandatory e-learning completion rates for everyday sexism and sexual harassment training
- Implemented mandatory procurement requirements for contractors and other external service providers with 100 or more employees to ensure they have a sexual harassment policy in place
- Established a Mental Health Strategy, accompanied by our Model of Care and capability-based health and wellbeing training to ensure our people are appropriately supported and to reduce psychological work health and safety risks which are posed by workplace sexism and sexual harassment
- Utilised the Gender Equity Network at Geoscience Australia (GENGA) to influence cultural and organisational change towards the pursuit of gender equality and equity in the organisation
- Improved representation and diversity in our leadership and decision-making structure by establishing a 40:40:20 gender target for our Senior Leadership Team, boards, committees, and recruitment panels.

Outcomes

Since implementing these activities and actions we have seen positive change in our organisation. As at 30 June 2022, our gender diversity has improved (refer to Figure 4). We are also proud to say we have achieved our 40:40:20 gender target across our senior leadership roles, boards, committees and recruitment panels.

Figure 4. Snapshot of gender diversity at Geoscience Australia 30 June 2022 compared to 2018



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

Table 4. Snapshot of gender diversity at Geoscience Australia in 2022

	Female	Male	Total
Total workforce	268	371	639
STEM roles	168	296	464
Senior leadership team	8	7	15
Executive level	95	203	298
Non-executive level	165	161	326

Disaggregation of the gender diversity of people on committees and boards is not collected in a way that allowed us to go back to the time of submission and provide this information. We acknowledge this is an area for improvement and will ensure this is stored in a more accessible way in the future.

Since its introduction, 71% of our people have completed their everyday sexism and sexual harassment e-learning modules with minimal prompts required. We continue to look for opportunities to improve completion rates through formal and informal communication channels.

Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

At the time this Cygnet was submitted the completion rate for the e-learning module was not extracted in a way that allowed us to report on completion rates by classification or seniority. Improvements in the way we collect this information allows us to report on it as at 31 December 2022, which is why a slightly higher overall completion rate appears below.

Table 5. Everyday sexism and sexual harassment learning module completion rate by classification

Classification	Number completed	Completion rate
Non-Executive Level	258	84%
Executive-Level	231	76%
Senior Leadership Team	12	71%
All	501	80%

When introduced, the completion of these modules was monitored by individual business areas. When this was reviewed from a whole of organisation level we identified our e-learning platform did not allow leaders to easily see completion rates for learning modules in their entire span of control and take actions to enforce completion, at the same time employees were not prompted to complete training if it was overdue. Recent actions to combat this where:

- Automated completion prompts have been enabled.
- More regular reporting of completion rates is made to our Executive Board and easier access to completion rates for line managers is currently being implemented.

Insufficient time has passed to see an improvement in completion rates and we continue to monitor completion rates of this learning module to assess the need for future actions.

We continue to monitor the prevalence of everyday sexism and sexual harassment through annual and ad-hoc surveys, official complaints processes and anonymous reporting hotlines.

Response to more information request – outcomes from official reporting mechanisms

Since the introduction of the sexism and sexual harassment reporting line, our employees have made 30 calls. It is important to note that this hotline is there to provide an anonymous way of reporting as well as providing support to the people calling, therefore detailed information on the nature of each call is not available and caller's demographics are not available.

Table 6. Anonymous calls to the sexism and sexual harassment reporting line from its introduction to June 2022

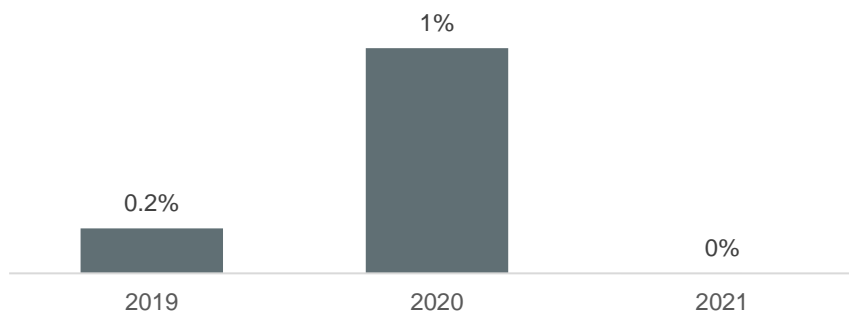
Year	Month	Calls
2021	October	10
2021	November	12
2021	December	1
2022	January	3
2022	February	1
2022	March	2
2022	April	0
2022	May	1
2022	June	0

At the time of submission Geoscience Australia has had one official complaint of sexism and sexual harassment in February 2021.

Respondents in our annual census continue to indicate low overall rates of everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace (Figure 5). While we recognise the census is not necessarily the best way to capture all instances of everyday sexism and sexual harassment, it does provide a consistent snapshot over the years from which we can measure impacts and cross reference with other reporting mechanisms. For example, our efforts to define everyday sexism and sexual harassment in 2020 coincided with a spike in reports in the census for 2020.

Figure 5. Have you experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months?

2019 to 2021 APS census



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data and further years in figure 5

Table 7. Responses of Yes to the APS employee census question: have you experiences sexual harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months?

	2018	2019	2020	2021
All	0	1	5	0
Male	0	0	0	0
Female	0	1	4	0
Neither male or female OR prefer not to say (grouped for anonymity)	Insufficient responses	Insufficient responses	Insufficient responses	Insufficient responses

Refer to [Appendix A](#) for the number of responses broken up by demographic groups to these surveys.

Data from before 2018 is not available due to limitations in the online portal displaying the results.

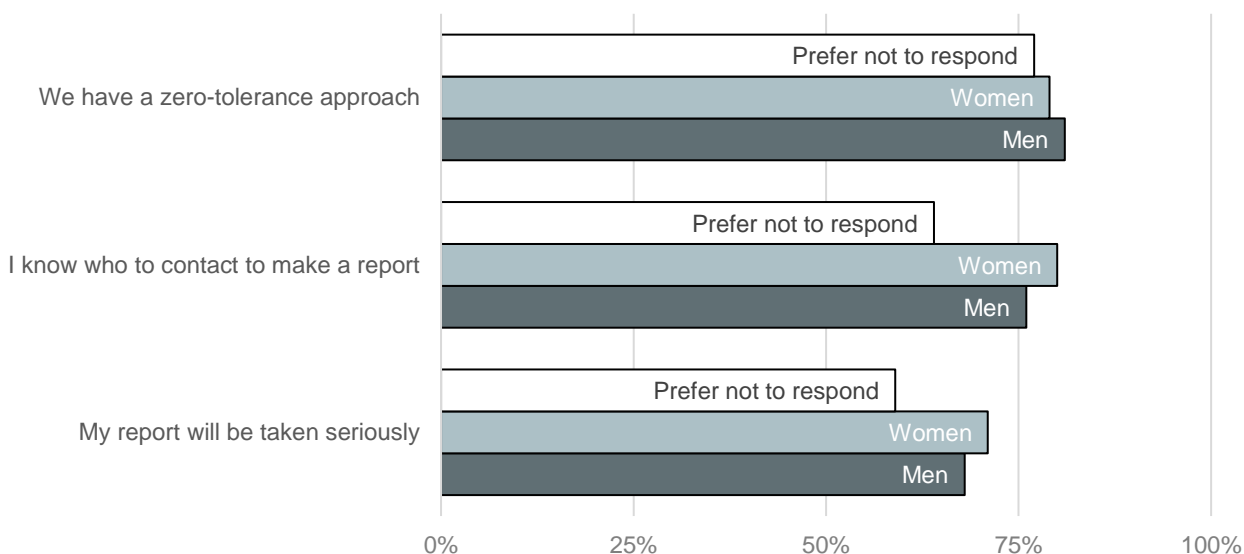
Of the reports of sexual harassment in Table 7, some occurred in other diverse groups. To include that level of detail in this submission may lead to these individuals being able to be identified by their colleagues. We are able to monitor and analyse across these groups, where sufficient responses are received, to identify intersections across demographics requiring more targeted interventions. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for details of the diverse groups being considered in this survey.

We acknowledge that despite reported instances being zero in 2021, everyday sexism and sexual harassment may be present in our workplace. Therefore, it is important that our policies and procedures are robust, accessible, fit for purpose and represent best practice initiatives.

Our 2021 census results showed us that our everyday sexism and sexual harassment reporting mechanisms are generally well understood and believed to be effective. The data also indicates that people who prefer to not disclose their gender in our surveys are least likely to have faith in our reporting and management processes (Figure 6). The next challenge for us is to ensure our processes are embedded in a way that allows for all genders to be represented and supported.

Figure 6. Employee perceptions of Geoscience Australia’s everyday sexism and sexual harassment policies and approaches

2021 Geoscience Australia APS census



Response to more information request – disaggregation of data

Table 8. Figure 6 by gender

Gender	Respondents	We have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment	I know who to contact to report harassment	My report will be taken seriously
Male	248	191 (77%)	180 (73%)	162 (65%)
Female	182	136 (75%)	141 (77%)	125 (69%)
Prefer not to respond	23	17 (74%)	14 (61%)	13 (57%)

Refer to [Appendix A](#) for the number of responses broken up by demographic groups to these surveys.

Slight overall percentage differences exists between table 8 and figure 6. The percentages in figure 6 are based on the number of people who answered that specific question. The percentages in table 8 are based on the total number of people who responded to the survey – this is done to provide consistency and full transparency of the number of people participating and the number who responded yes.

Table 9. Figure 6 by classification

Classification	Respondents	We have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment	I know who to contact to report harassment	My report will be taken seriously
Non-Executive Level	190	141 (74%)	136 (72%)	130 (68%)
Executive-Level	241	181 (75%)	182 (76%)	149 (62%)
Senior Leadership Team	13	13 (100%)	12 (92%)	12 (92%)

Refer to [Appendix A](#) for the number of responses broken up by demographic groups to these surveys.

Response to more information request – further explanation on Figure 6

Following the census, our senior leadership team are made aware of how perceptions varied between management levels and all employees, it was determined that the leadership teams in each area consider and implement approaches specific to their work areas to close these gaps. This will be assessed again in ongoing census surveys with further actions decided based on these results.

The data presented in Figure 6 was gathered as part of the 2021 APS Employees Census, this was the first time we added these specific questions to evaluate perceptions and understanding of initiatives that were identified as gaps by our employees. This evaluation method did not exist before and as such there is not a baseline to compare them to.

When considering the baseline data that was collected to inform these initiatives, the purpose of it was to understand the experiences of our people historically and currently. To do this, we opened an all staff survey asking participants to tell us about their experiences with sexism and sexual harassment while working for Geoscience Australia (refer to Figure 2 and Table 2). There was no time frame placed on when these experiences occurred.

Re-completing the same survey would lead to us re-surveying many of the same people asking them to tell us what they may have already provided. Instead we are focused on the future and how we can monitor sexism and sexual harassment in a more methodical and sustainable way. Geoscience Australia is proud of this approach as it shows respect for, and the ability to learn from, the experiences of our people while establishing ongoing mechanisms to continue progress.

Impact

Response to more information request – methodology to collect qualitative data on experiences of our people

To assess the impact of these initiatives on the experiences of our people we collaborated with our Gender Equity Network at Geoscience Australia (GENGA). GENGA is comprised of 114 staff members, of which 70% are women. GENGA also includes the Pride network, Women's network, Parents and carers group and Men's support and engagement special interest groups.

This data was collected in July 2022 via requests for feedback on experiences since the initiatives were introduced. At that time our intent was to be as inclusive as possible in the preparation and development of our cygnet award, one way to do this was to reduce the barriers to providing input, by allowing people to submit anonymously and without the need to provide demographics data. However, in reflection, we needed to provide more guidance and oversight in this data collection process. This is because we acknowledge that we are unable to provide further information and there is opportunity in the future to improve the robustness of these processes.

We have received the following positive feedback from employees and members of our staff network, about improved experiences:

"It has been really encouraging to see how proactive the organisation has been in developing policies, procedures and training material to address everyday sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace. I feel more confident that if I needed to make a complaint I would know how to and feel supported to do so."

"For women in particular, it's easier now to see a career path forward within Geoscience Australia with more senior women across the organisation – you can't be what you can't see, and now we can see women throughout the highest ranks of Geoscience Australia, driving the decision-making, advocating for good outcomes and holding people accountable for their workplace behaviors."

"I've seen Geoscience Australia become a place where you can bring your whole self to work; instead of being just workers, we are recognised as parents, friends, volunteers, family members and carers. This practice of seeing people as people, instead of their compartmentalised selves, is a cultural shift which I believe stems from the progressive dismantling of barriers which has occurred in our organisation over the past few years. This includes achieving gender balance in the executive, the increasing prevalence of part time work in some senior jobs, as well as initiatives like the sexism and sexual harassment policy, procedure and education campaign, breastfeeding room and policy, and the GENGA Parents and Carers' Group Buddy Program. It's clear this cultural shift has come from the top-down, with our CEO being the biggest champion of some of these initiatives"

We are aware that by simply achieving the outcomes listed above, we have not necessarily stamped out everyday sexism and sexual harassment.

"There are still challenges for women with caring responsibilities to take part in development and career progression opportunities – more needs to be done at an organisational level to enable these women to fully realise their potential. There's also still a noticeable gender bias in who is taking on the 'office housework' – In the past few years, I can only recall one meeting where a man offered to take the minutes and the task of organising office morning teas, or unpacking the dishwasher, still seems to fall to women most of the time"

Response to more information request – assessments of impacts on specific groups

We acknowledge our ability to assess outcomes and impacts on specific groups, especially at the intersection of minority groups, is challenging due to being a small agency with below average representation in some diversity groups – refer to [Appendix A](#) for demographic response rates to our annual surveys. This causes data collected on these groups to generally be unavailable and unsuitable for analysis as the insights may not be reflective of the actual situation. We are considering ways to address this when making future plans, including drawing on external research of groups where we may not have adequate information to ensure all people are considered.

We do have some specific groups that we can measure for, as demonstrated in Figure 6 and Tables 7 and 8. We can see that our female employees and management levels (executive level and senior leadership team) are more likely to understand our initiatives and find them effective. Both of these groups were more likely to agree that we have a zero-tolerance approach and be aware of the mechanisms we have in place to report and investigate instances of sexism and sexual harassment. This demonstrates that the people most likely to be impacted by sexism and sexual harassment, and the groups responsible for actions and setting cultural expectations have responded positively to our initiatives.

Response to more information request - addressing ongoing challenges

Making learning more accessible

In addition to the actions discussed above to improve and monitor completion rates of e-learning modules, further capability-based training to prevent sexual harassment and sexism is an action within our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 and scheduled for the 2023-24 financial year. This training will build upon what has been implemented and give us the opportunity to provide more targeted training based on further assessment of the needs of our organisation.

Low numbers of official complaints

We continue to see an overall low number of official complaints being made. To ensure monitoring of these initiatives regardless of the number of official reports, the questions asked in our annual survey (referred to in Figure 6) have continued. These questions seek to understand:

- If people have experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months.
- If people know how to make a report.
- If people feel Geoscience Australia takes a zero-tolerance approach.

In addition to this the anonymous sexual harassment reporting line will be continued into the future to provide all staff with a more immediate way of anonymously reporting occurrences.

This data is reviewed quarterly by the Human Resources team and reported to the Workplace Relations, Health and Safety Committee or Executive Board to ensure progress towards eliminating this barrier continues at Geoscience Australia.

It is evident we must continue our push to build better systems and be a visible and vocal advocate for change within the broader APS and science community too. Our approach has not only delivered impacts for our organisation and people but is being recognised positively by other organisations for the work we are actively delivering to improve everyday sexism, sexual harassment, gender equity and overall organisational culture. This is evident through the following outcomes:

- Requests for copies and positive feedback for our Sexism and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure from the Department of Finance, Services Australia and Intellectual Property Australia

- Request for a presentation on our journey to develop and implement our new Sexism and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure to Services Australia's Human Resources branch
- Recognition from the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) on the work being undertaken by Geoscience Australia to create a more diverse and higher performing workforce; in 2021 we were awarded a CEO Diversity Champion Award. In May 2022, senior leaders were asked to speak at the AHRI Diversity Conference to highlight the actions we have taken, the impacts and how this supports our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Our CEO, Dr James Johnson, being invited by the Air Force's senior leadership cohort to present on Geoscience Australia's diversity and inclusion journey. This presentation was a success with participants actively engaged and asking lots of questions.

Further action

Our [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025](#) identifies further themes 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
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	2021 – June 2023	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Branch Manager, Digital Earth	Increased applications and opportunities for 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 2024	Human Resources Senior Leadership Team	Branch Manager, National Positioning Infrastructure	Increased opportunities for recruitment and retention of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across all Divisions

Response to more information request – participant numbers of APS Employee Census

Appendix A: Geoscience Australia APS employee census participant breakdown

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Respondents	391	434	482	457
Male	213	247	259	248
Female	162	171	195	182
X	0	0	1	Not asked
Non-binary	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	3
Gender - I used a different term	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	1
Gender – prefer not to say	16	16	27	23
Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander	2	4	7	5
Ongoing disability	18	25	28	25
LBTQIA+	12	12	18	25
Carers responsibilities	158	191	227	214
Born overseas	122	141	Not asked	152