



# SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA  
GENDER EQUITY

## SAGE Cygnet Award Application

<b>Name of Institution</b>	Australian Institute of Marine Science
<b>Date of Application</b>	31/10/2024
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# Australian Institute of Marine Science

## SAGE CYGNET #1

### Flexible Work Arrangements

**Key Barrier:** Flexible work

**Barrier type:**

- Institution-wide Barrier <sup>i</sup>
- Sub-group specific Barrier <sup>i</sup>

**Barrier description:** The Australian Institute of Marine Science identifies an institution-wide barrier of equitable access to Flexible Work through cultural perceptions and structural limitations.

**Note on Language:** The Australian Institute of Marine Science recognises the non-binary nature of gender. We acknowledge that the terms 'male' and 'female' refer to biological sex. However, due to system limitations and availability of data, for the purpose of this application, gendered data has been reported as 'male' or 'female', as historical data has been collected and reported in this manner. We also acknowledge that this binary assumption may not fully represent all the identities of the persons included in these datasets and we recognise the importance of intersectionality when collecting data. Lastly, we note that for 2024 EDGE survey gendered language changed to previous years. There is no record of why this changed, due to staff who organised this are no longer at AIMS.

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Australian Institute of Marine Science acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

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## Glossary

**AIMS** – Australian Institute of Marine Science

**EDGE** – Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality Working Group at AIMS

**AOF** – AIMS Officer

**ALT** – AIMS Leadership Team

**P&C** – People and Culture

**FY** – Financial Year

**FWA** – Flexible Working Arrangements

**TOIL** – Time Off in Lieu

**RWA** – Remote Work Arrangements

**IFA** – Individual Flexibility Arrangements

**48/52 leave** – 48/52 is a work/life balance initiative which provides Staff members with access to up to twenty (20) days unpaid leave each year in addition to Annual Leave and other Staff leave entitlements.

**9-day a fortnight** – Full time employees (Indefinite, Fixed-Term or Temporary) at AIMS generally work nine (9) days a fortnight, having 1 day off as 'Stand Down Day' per fortnight.

**SDD** – Stand Down Day

**Commuter Car Opt In/Opt Out** – This option is exclusively available to employees based in Townsville due to the remote location of the Cape Ferguson site. AIMS provides transportation for its staff between Townsville and Cape Ferguson to attend for duty. However, staff members working at AIMS' Townsville site may choose to opt out of the commuter car arrangement (and receive an allowance) to allow for greater flexibility in their transportation to and from the facility. The commuter cars leave at fixed times in the morning and evening, so the 'opt-out' option allows flexibility in hours and days to come to site.

## 1. KEY BARRIER

AIMS is committed to creating a work environment where all staff have equal access to employee entitlements, including flexible work, and see the benefits of universal adoption of existing Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) by all genders at AIMS in fostering a more equitable work environment. During the creation of our Bronze Award Application, AIMS identified a gender disparity for staff accessing Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA). As such, our Action Plan aimed to improve the adoption of FWA across all genders at AIMS. Over subsequent years, the goal was focused on a single objective – to improve the perceptions of FWA among staff.

*Key Barrier: Barriers to Accessing Flexible Working Arrangements*

*Sub-barrier: Perceptions of Flexible Working Arrangements*

## 2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

### 2.1 Summary and conclusions of initial findings in Bronze Award

The AIMS Bronze Award identified a perceived lack of FWA and limited information about available options and entitlements.

In focus groups prior to the Bronze Award, staff commented that *'the location of AIMS Townsville presented challenges to flexible work'*. Staff in Perth said their *'work was flexible but that they sometimes felt isolated from other AIMS staff'*. In 2017 and 2021, the EDGE Working Group ran a Diversity Survey to gather data on perceptions of AIMS staff. As part of the 2017 EDGE survey (154 respondents (59.7% of AIMS staff), 76 female (50%), 74 male (48.68%) and 2 other (1.32%)), staff were asked if they have used any of these options for flexibility in the workplace before (Table 1).

The trend showed that more women than men used FWA, the most common being teleworking and the commuter car opt-out. This last one was more commonly used by women (42%) than men (27%), while teleworking was used by 36% of men but 26% of women. Part-time work was also more common for women, which could presumably drive the increased proportion of women opting out of the commuter car for greater flexibility.

**Table 1: 2017 staff survey responses to question 'Have you used any of these options for flexibility in the workplace before?' (multiple responses allowed)**

Answer choices	Number of Female responses	Number of Male responses	Percentage of Female responses	Percentage of Male responses
48/52	17	5	22%	7%
Part-time	19	1	25%	1%
Commuter Car Opt in/Opt out	32	20	42%	27%
Teleworking	20	27	26%	36%
Other	4	0	5%	0%
None/ Did not respond	18	25	24%	34%

*\*Percentages are represented as a proportion of the total survey participants, separated by gender. Gender 'other' has not been included due to low numbers (n=2).*

At that time, EDGE felt confident that staff were aware of FWA options. However, further analysis of the 2017 and 2021 survey data indicated potential issues regarding staff perceptions of FWA, which will be explored below.

## 2.2 Use of FWA and baseline data

The following sections specify the uptake of the three most common FWA at AIMS. Data collection began in different years due to the different priorities at that time.

### 2.2.1 48/52 leave arrangements

In the 2020-21 financial year (FY) women were five times as likely as men to use 48/52 leave arrangements (11% of women, 2% of men) (Table 2).

**Table 2: 48/52 leave requests data for 2020-2021 FY.**

48/52 leave requests 2020-2021	
Total employees	289 (134 women and 155 men)
Women Percentage	11%
Men Percentage	2%
Women Headcount	15
Men Headcount	3

### 2.2.2. Remote Working Arrangements (RWA)

The RWA procedure was established in 2022 (see Actions), and data collected from the 2021-22 FY (Table 3). It's notable that similar proportions of men and women use RWA (31% and 35% respectively).

**Table 3: Employees with RWA – data for 2021-2022 FY.**

Employees with RWA 2021-2022	
Total employees	319 (155 women, 163 men and 1 blank)
Women Percentage	35%
Men Percentage	31%
Women Headcount	55
Men Headcount	59

### 2.2.3. Commuter Car Opt-Out

This data shows employees utilising the Commuter Car Opt-Out allowance, for greater flexibility, at the end of the FY. Women were slightly more likely than men to opt out of the commuter car scheme in the 2020-21 FY (31% of women and 21% of men opted out) (Table 4).

**Table 4: Baseline data of employees with Commuter Car Opt-Out allowance 2020-2021 FY.**

Employees with Commuter Car Opt-Out allowance as of 30 June 2021	
Total employees (Townsville only)	225 (105 women and 120 men)
Women Percentage	31%
Men Percentage	21%
Women Headcount	33
Men Headcount	25

### **2.3 2017 and 2021 EDGE survey findings (baseline data)**

In 2017 and 2021, the EDGE Working Group ran a Diversity Survey to gather data on AIMS staff perceptions of FWA. The 2017 EDGE survey gathered a total of 154 respondents (59.7% of AIMS staff), 76 female (50%), 74 male (48.68%) and 2 other (1.32%). In 2021, a higher number of respondents was reached, having a total of 220 respondents (74.5% of AIMS staff), 111 Female (52%), 98 Male (46%) and 5 Prefer not to say (2%), which provides a higher representation and more accurate data.

#### **2.3.1 Mixed perceptions and lack of clarity in process for requesting FWA**

Although FWA have been part of our Enterprise Agreements since 2016, there has been mixed perceptions among staff, which has been evidenced through 2017 and 2021 surveys. When analysing the question '*Are you aware of these options to make your work arrangements flexible?*' (Figure 1), it is evident that people are becoming less aware of these options.

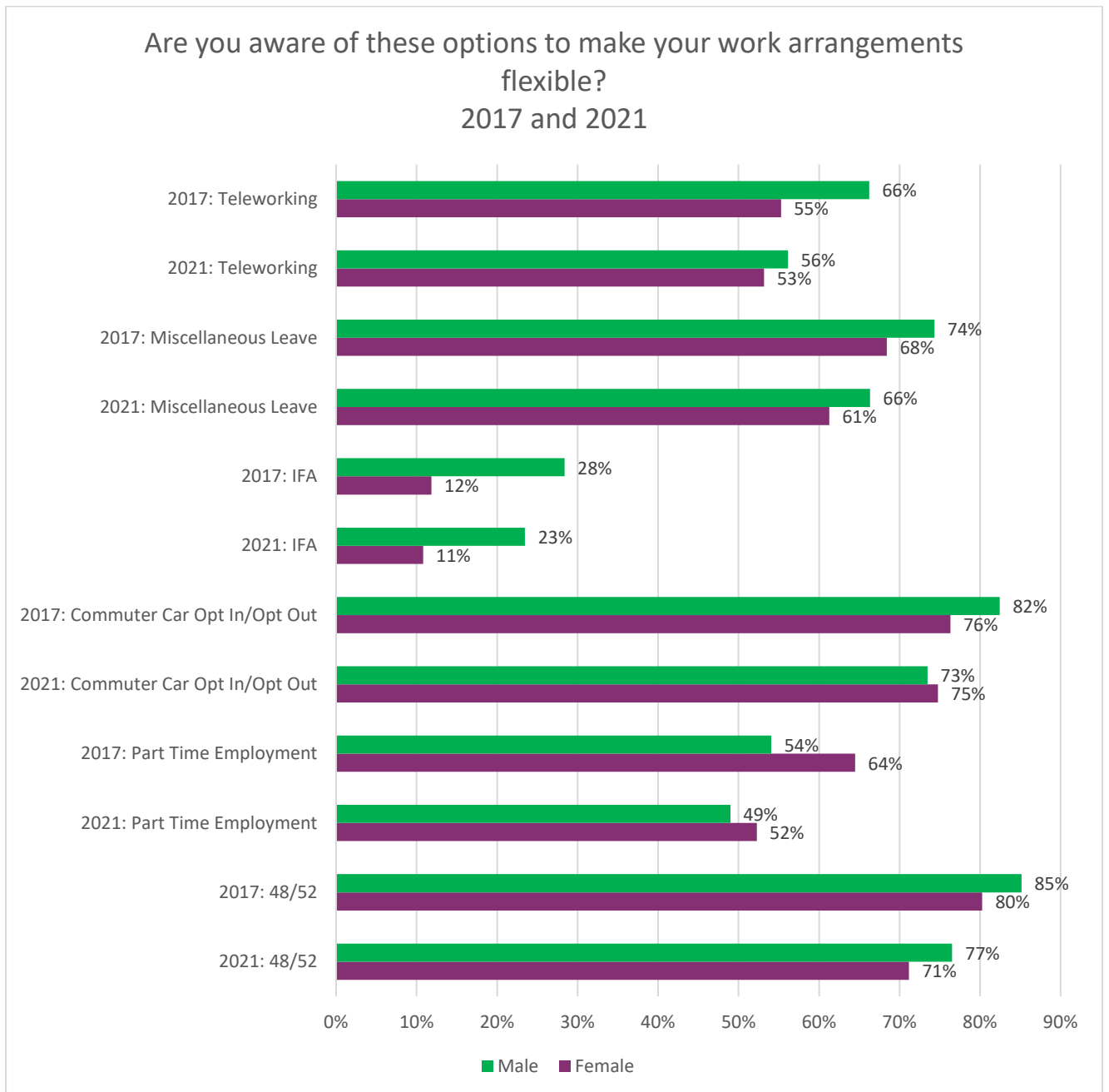


Figure 1: Responses for 'Are you aware of these options to make your work arrangements flexible? 2017 and 2021.

A lack of clarity among staff regarding the process for requesting FWA was evidenced. There was confusion among staff about *how* to access FWA or whether they were eligible, how to start that conversation and alternatives if the request was rejected. As a consequence, a feeling of lack of support from supervisors and leadership regarding FWA emerged, leaving staff uncertain when considering whether to request FWA. This is evidenced within the open-answers question in the 2021 survey, in which staff stated:

*'Not familiar with most of them - my workload does not allow much flexibility' 'I'm not sure how TOIL works and am hesitant to ask lest I be judged. I have an IFA, but my ALT member was very hesitant about approving it, so I have not pushed to vary it'*

*'I don't believe I am able to use those arrangements as I am engaged VIA labour hire. I could be wrong though'*

*'Concern that it won't be approved, and I will be judged negatively for my request'.*



### 2.3.2 Barriers to access FWA.

In the 2017 and 2021 EDGE surveys, around 20% of men and women identified that they had ‘... felt prevented from accessing FWA?’ (Figure 2).

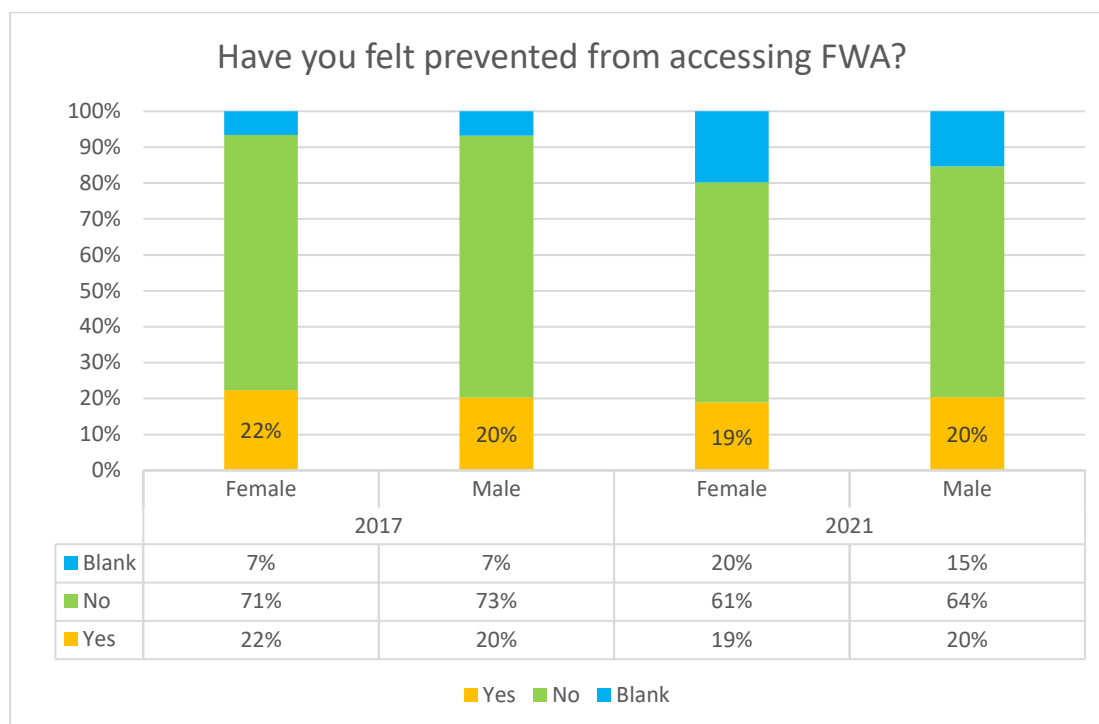


Figure 2: Answers to ‘Have you felt prevented from accessing FWA?’ – by gender and year. ‘Prefer not to say’ has not been considered in the graphs for this report due to little data available)

Some of the barriers and staff perceptions in the open text sections of the survey were:

*‘I think AIMS is a great place to work and there are many systems in place to make work more flexible. Remote location does however represent a challenge for staff with kids’ (2017 survey)*

*‘The workload and demand deny any flexibility’ (2017 survey)*

*‘Work/life balance is an issue for everyone not only those that do a lot of field work’ (2021 survey)*

*‘Make work/life balance easier for ALL staff. It’s 4:53 PM on a Friday, and I can’t see myself getting out of here before 7!’ (2021 survey)*

This data suggests barriers to accessing FWA, such as workload and work location, are ‘an issue for everyone’ (see above).

### 3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

#### 3.1 FWA included in Enterprise Agreement

In 2020, when AIMS re-submitted our Athena SWAN Bronze Award Application, an Enterprise Agreement was already in place. This agreement included provisions for FWA and Individual Flexibility Arrangements (IFA), detailing the process for establishing an IFA.

In 2024, AIMS enhanced its commitment to supporting FWAs. The current Enterprise Agreement not only continues to include the broad range of FWA considerations but also better recognises the importance of these arrangements. AIMS has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting FWAs and recognising their importance.

AIMS current Enterprise Agreement states that *'AIMS is committed to engaging with employees and their union to build a culture that supports flexible working arrangements across AIMS at all levels'*. It recognises the importance of maintaining a balance between employees' work and personal responsibilities. Additionally, the agreement acknowledges that access to FWA not only enhances AIMS's capabilities but also increases diversity in employment and leadership. The agreement outlines various types of FWA available to employees, including, but not limited to: Working from Home (Remote Work Arrangements), Individual Flexible Arrangements (IFA), 48/58, Part-time/Job Share, Commuter Car Opt-Out.

#### 3.2 RWA Procedure and data collection

In 2022, the Remote Working Arrangements Procedure was implemented and issued to formally communicate AIMS's commitment to providing a workplace that supports and enables FWA. This procedure outlines the standards and principles of RWA, including eligibility, working hours, equipment, onsite office and workspaces, and commuter car arrangements. It also details the process for requesting RWA and formally states through a written statement that FWA applies to all AIMS employees, including those engaged via labour hire arrangements, who seek regular and formal remote working arrangements. When implementing the Procedure, data started being collected of those who make use of this option.

#### 3.3 Increasing awareness of availability of FWA

A number of activities were undertaken to increase awareness of the availability of FWA, with the aim of encouraging employees to use these options and lessen any sense of intimidation related to applying (Table 5).

**Table 5: Actions to increase awareness of availability of FWA**

Action	Description
48/52 email process	Notice of deadlines and general information on the 48/52 process is sent out to all staff via email when the round is about to open for the next financial year. Included in this email are links to internal webpages and resources to further explain the process and eligibilities.
Information in onboarding.	Information regarding the availability of FWA is included within the [mandatory] inductions for all new starters and onboarding processes at AIMS. Pursuing FWA is then a responsibility of the new staff member and their supervisor.
Use of SharePoint site:	Internal SharePoint sites host valuable information and advice on FWA options and processes. These sites are shared regularly with all staff via email and webinar announcements. All staff, students and visitors have access to this information. The FWA section in SharePoint was published in October 2023 and we have 233 Views as of 24/10/2024.
Diversity minutes – All Staff monthly meetings.	FWA has been promoted regularly in our All-Staff monthly webinars through the Diversity Minutes (a 3-minute presentation on topics of Diversity and Inclusion with rotating voluntary speakers), with the purpose of creating awareness around this topic and promoting a culture that supports flexibility. Topics that have been shared on FWA include personal experiences with 48/52, the benefits of work/life balance and balancing being a parent and scientist by utilising FWA.
Statement in job advertisements – Careers website.	Promotion of AIMS' commitment and support to SAGE and to FWA through dedicated pages available on our public website in the 'careers' section and included within each job listing.
Creation and use of Toolkits	A toolkit in FWA was created and promoted within P&C SharePoint with the purpose of making information more accessible to all employees. This was published in October 2023 and 'Views' to the site are 208 as of 24/10/2024.

### 3.4 FWA questions included in Exit Questionnaire

In 2021, EDGE-related questions were incorporated into the 'Exit Questionnaire' survey for exiting employees. The aim was to gather insights on the perceptions of exiting staff and identify areas for future improvement, considering intersectional demographics such as gender, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, and disability.

The survey included questions related to Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), such as:

- Reason for leaving (with Work/Life balance as one of the options)
- 'Do you consider that AIMS' work-life balance initiatives were adequately promoted and practiced?'
- 'Do you consider that the other employment benefits available (leave entitlements, working hours, roster, superannuation, etc.) were satisfactory?'

However, due to the broad scope of the questions and the low turnover rate (0.7%), insufficient data was collected to identify any significant trends. As a result, there is no evidence to suggest that FWA is a factor in employees' decisions to leave AIMS.

### **3.5 FWA questions in 2024 EDGE survey**

The 2024 EDGE survey was meticulously designed to capture the evolving perceptions and emerging trends within our organisation. This survey included specific questions regarding awareness and perception of FWA options. The response rate was higher than previous years with a total of 326 respondents (176 Female (54%), 144 Male (44%) and six Prefer not to say (2%)), 78.2% of AIMS, with staff participation from all sites.

To track changes in perceptions over the years, some questions from previous surveys were included in the 2024 survey, as a source of comparison, which allowed us to identify significant shifts in attitudes and opinions. Additionally, new questions were introduced to address emerging trends and areas of interest.

The 2024 EDGE survey was run by an external provider to ensure anonymity in all responses and maintain confidence in staff to provide insights (unlike previous years).

### **3.6 Implementation of Focus groups**

To gather input from employees and understand staff perceptions, in August 2023 we ran four Work-Life Balance focus groups with the purpose of obtaining qualitative data regarding work-life balance and FWA.

Twenty (20) participants attended (17 women and 3 men), including a mix of new and long-term employees. Most attendees were Townsville-based staff, with participants from the other two main sites as well. One-third of the participants were non-STEMM employed staff, while the remaining two-thirds were STEM employed staff.

## 4. OUTCOMES

### 4.1 Use of FWA

Requests for FWA have grown, as a general overview, over the years with growth in requests varying across different types of FWA. This increase is attributed to both the expansion of AIMS and the active promotion of FWA.

#### 4.1.1 48/52

Figure 3 shows an increase in the number and proportion of employees requesting 48/52 leave arrangements since actions were put in place, for men and women, indicating that more employees are becoming aware of the availability of this option. For men, this proportion has grown a lot (although from a very low base and is still less than the proportion of women).

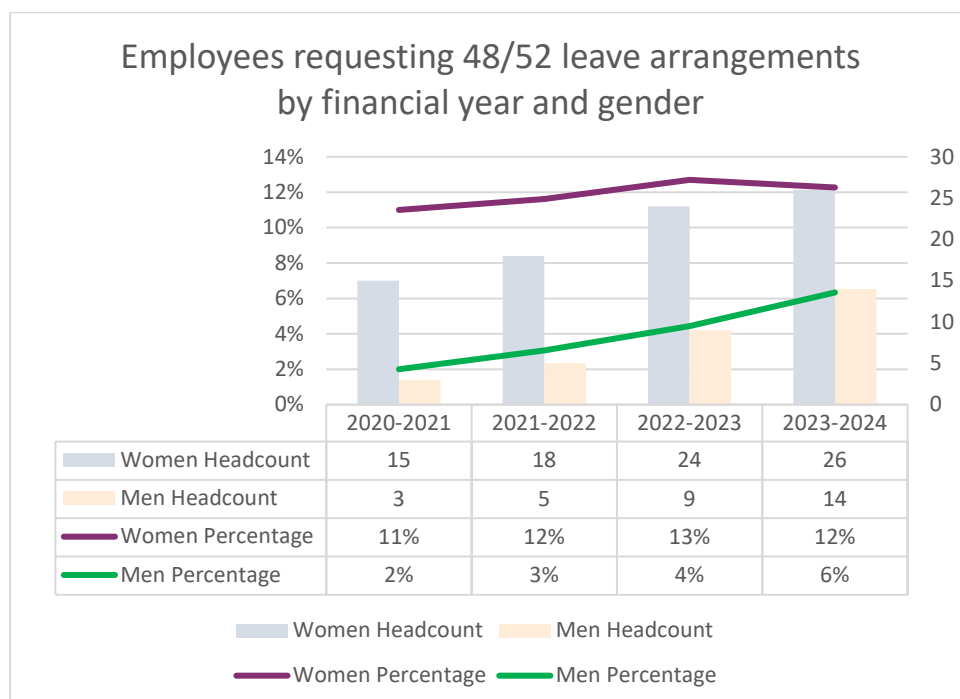


Figure 3: Number and percentage of employees requesting 48/52 leave arrangements by financial year – 2020 to 2024. Total employees: 2020-21 men= 155, women= 134; 2021-22 men= 163, women= 155; 2022-23 men= 203, women= 189; 2023-24 men= 221, women= 212, prefer not to say= 2.

The slight drop percentage in women requesting 48/52 leave arrangements for the 2023-2024 period is likely due to a significant increase in new employees, which was more than 100 new employees compared to previous years. However, we can still observe an increase in percentage when comparing to our baseline data, for men and women.

Additionally, the observed increase in 48/52 use has been proportional across all AIMS locations and AOF levels.

#### 4.1.2 Remote Working Arrangements (RWA)

By the end of 2023-2024 FY, after approximately 2 years of implementing the RWA procedure, an exponential increase was observed, with 57% of women and 40% of men using RWA (n= out of 433 employees, 212 women and 221 men).

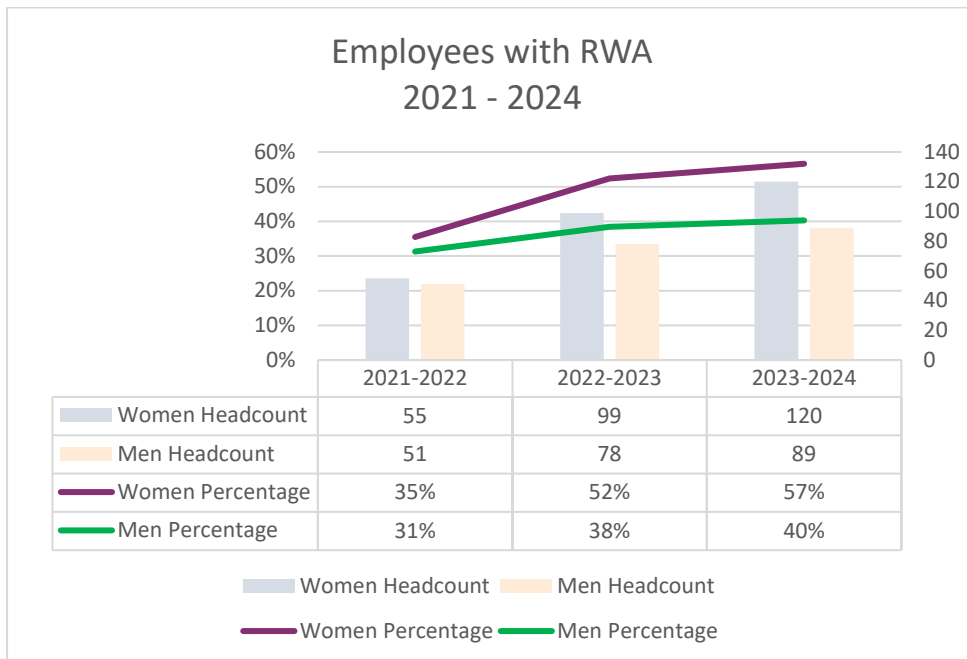


Figure 4: Number and Percentage of employees with Remote Working Arrangements 2021 – 2024. Total employees: 2021-22 men= 163, women= 155; 2022-23 men= 203, women= 189; 2023-24 men= 221, women= 212, prefer not to say= 2.

The upward trend in the number and proportion of employees utilising RWA suggests that there is growing confidence among staff in requesting RWA (and that the increase is not merely a reflection of the overall increase in total employees). This could be attributed to better communication and understanding of the policy.

Additionally, the observed increase in RWA use has been proportional across all AIMS locations and AOF levels. This consistent trend suggests that the policy is being applied equitably across different levels within the organisation and employees at different levels are aware of and have access to the RWA policy.

The data also reveals a disparity between the number of women and men that are using these options, suggesting that it's possible that some men may be reluctant to fully embrace FWA due to broader cultural beliefs. This issue requires exploration to understand the issue and potentially action to create awareness of the benefits of FWA, for both men and women, and to emphasise the importance of achieving work-life balance.

#### 4.1.3 Commuter Car Opt-Out

When analysing this option, it is hard to visualise clear trends due to the versatility of this option (it can change on a fortnightly basis). The number of people making use of the Commuter Car Opt-Out allowance has increased over the years. However, the proportions have fluctuated up and down (Figure 5), so trends are not visible to create conclusion. The data on the figure below is represented as of 30<sup>th</sup> June of each year.

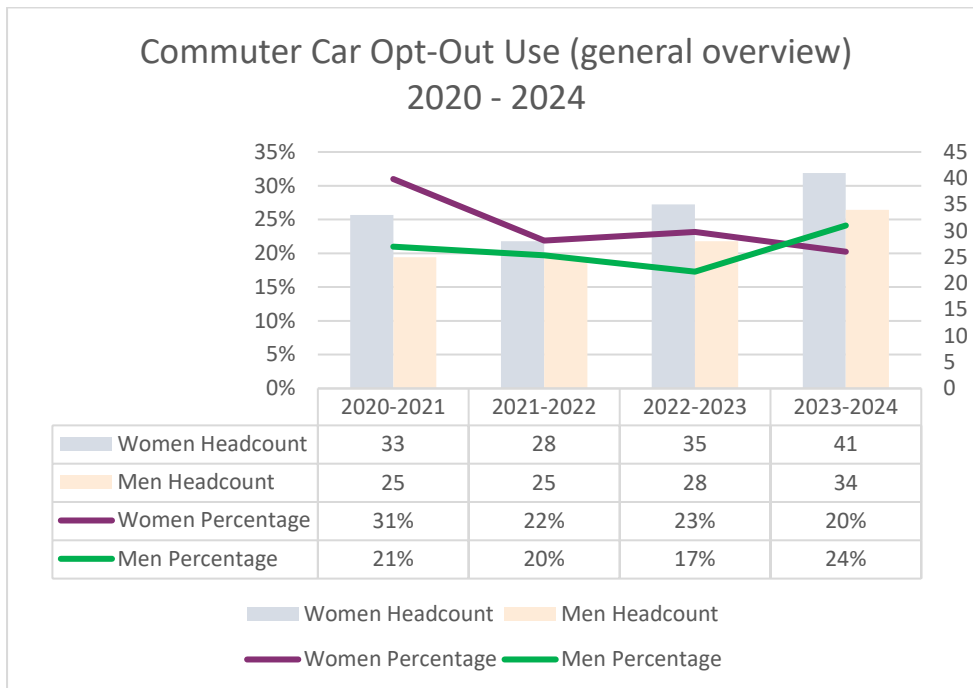


Figure 5: Number and percentage of employees utilising Commuter Car Opt-Out option 2020 – 2024.

## 4.2 2024 EDGE survey outcomes

Results for the 2024 EDGE survey showed the following trends:

### 4.2.1 Perceptions and beliefs (leadership support)

For figures 6 to 8, unfortunately, there is no previous data to compare to regarding these specific questions since the format of the questions changed in previous years, which made them not comparable. This 2024 data and format will be used as a baseline going forward, using the same questions and options in future surveys to monitor improvement.

A majority of men and women in 2024 reported that they consider AIMS a flexible workplace (Figure 6) and feel they have access to FWA at AIMS, with little difference by gender (Figure 7). The positive responses may reflect a growing awareness and acceptance of flexible working options within the organisation and indicate that the initiatives and policies implemented to promote FWA have been effective and well-received by employees.

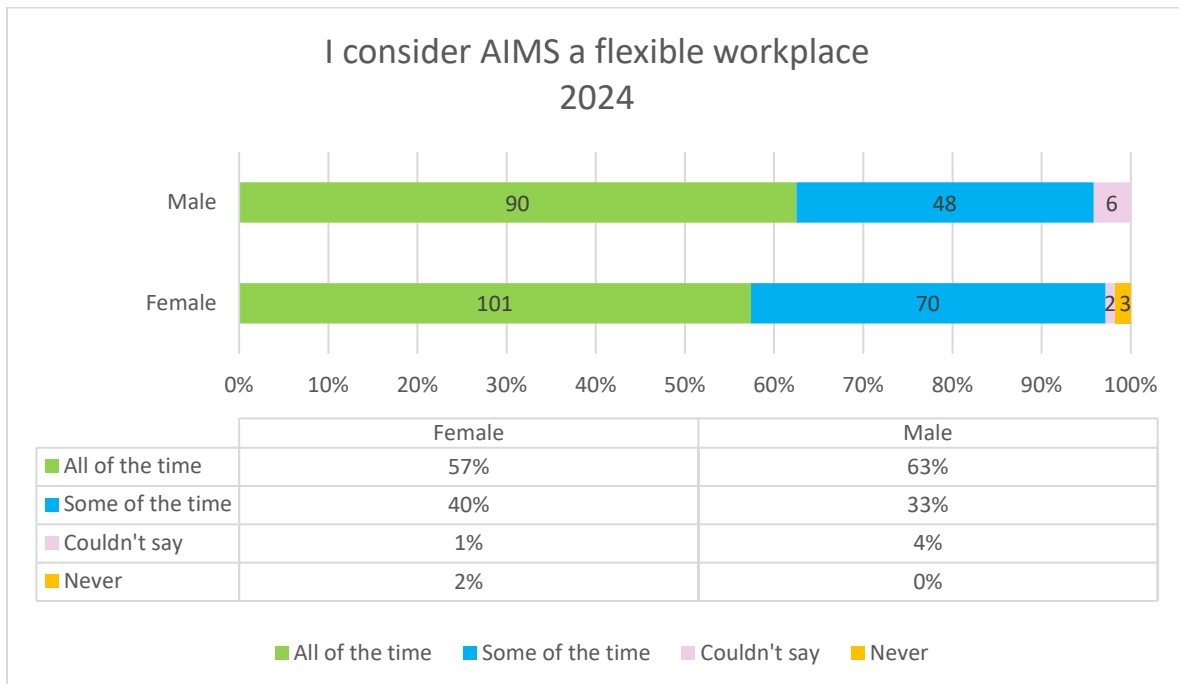


Figure 6: Answers to the question 'I consider AIMS a flexible workplace' – 2024.

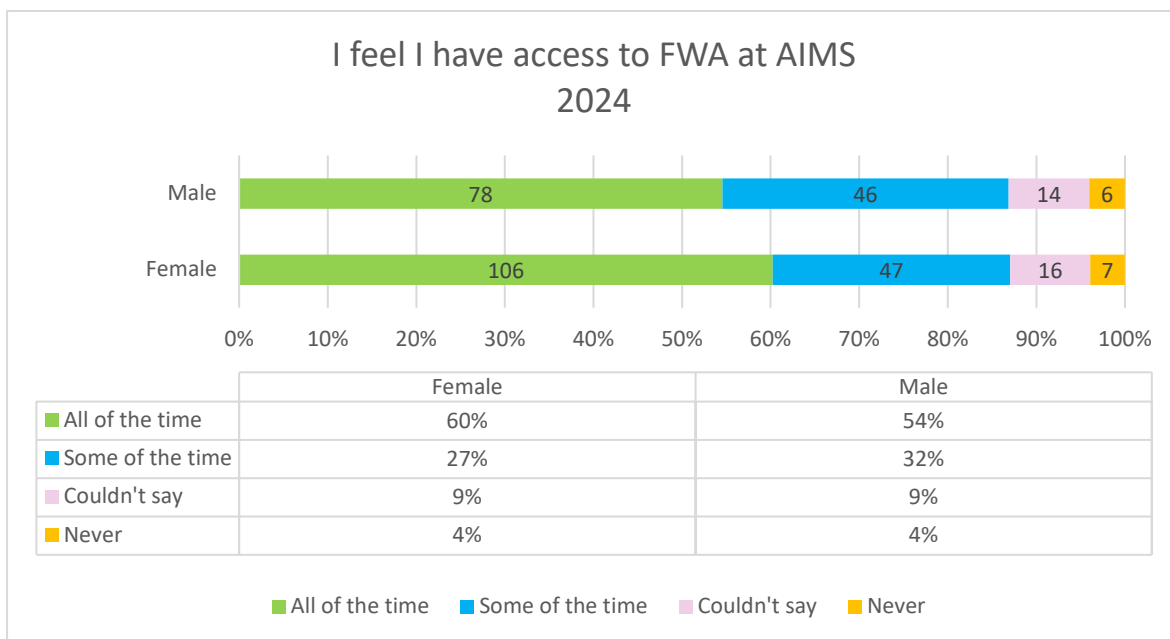


Figure 7: Answers to the question 'I feel I have access to FWA at AIMS' – 2024.

More than 60% of female and male employees indicated that they feel actively supported to access FWA (Figure 8), which could indicate that there's a shift in leadership perceptions towards FWA that is transmitted to AIMS staff. However, still around 20% of female and male respondents don't feel actively supported to access FWA, which was further explored with our qualitative data (in the impact section) to try to understand the reasons of this.



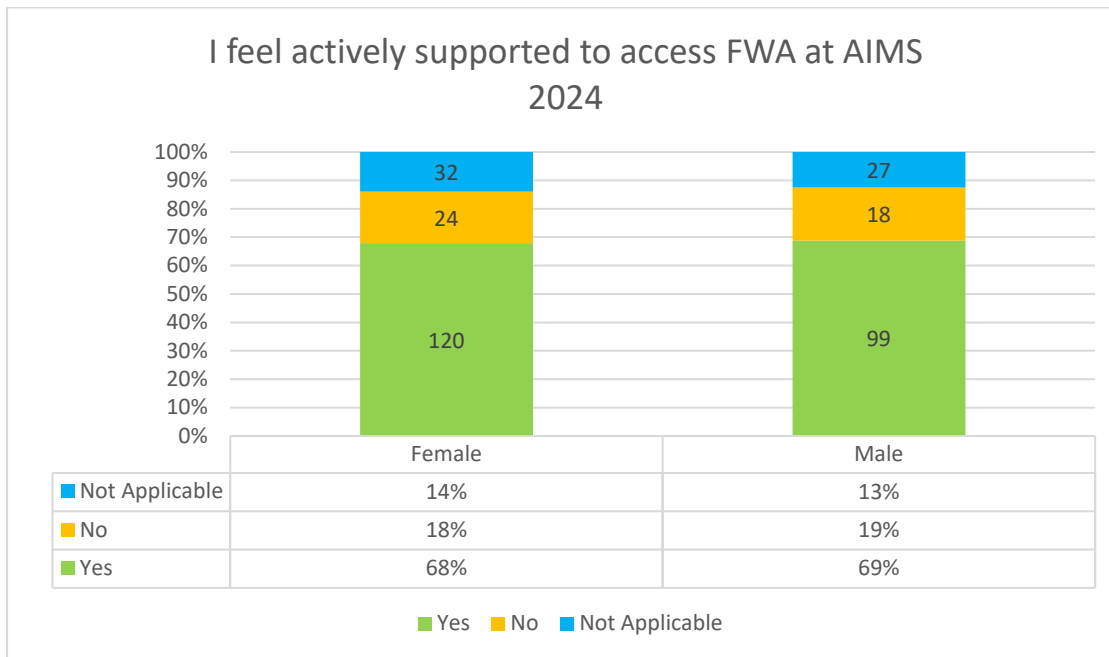


Figure 8: Answers to the question 'I feel actively supported to access FWA at AIMS' – 2024.

#### 4.2.2 Barriers to access FWA

Compared to around 20% in 2017, only 10% of men and women now feel prevented from accessing FWA (Figure 9). This is a positive outcome and improvement over the years, which could show that employees feel they have equitable access to FWA as well as feeling more confident to request it.

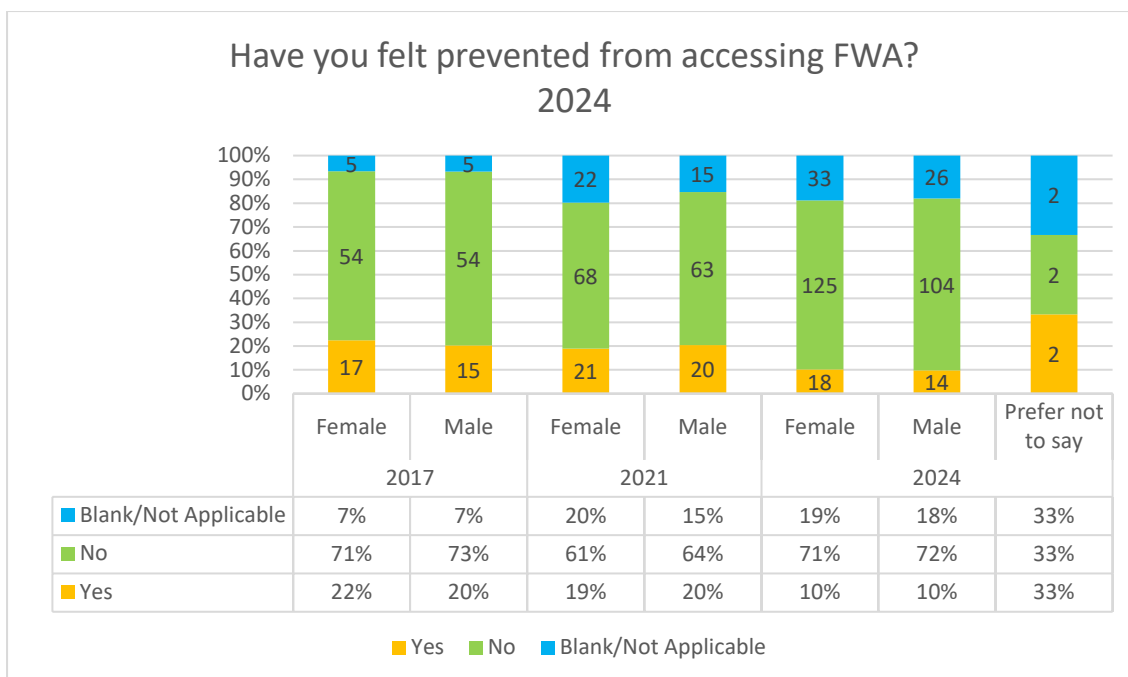


Figure 9: Responses to the question 'Have you felt prevented from accessing FWA?' – all years.

When analysing figure 8 and 9 together, there's a 10% gap between people who 'feel prevented' and 'actively supported' to access FWA. This explains that less people feel prevented from accessing FWA (women and men), as the options are available. However, they might not feel actively supported to request them, due to management constraints, beliefs, or other reasons like role restrictions.

### 4.2.3 Awareness of FWA

A positive outcome was observed in awareness of FWA, with an increase in number and proportion of all the FWA options in 2024 compared to previous years. The biggest increase was IFA with 40% increase for male employees and 47% increase for female employees. The options that follow is RWA with around 35% increase for both female and male respondents, making awareness of RWA reach over 90% for male employees and 88% for female employees.

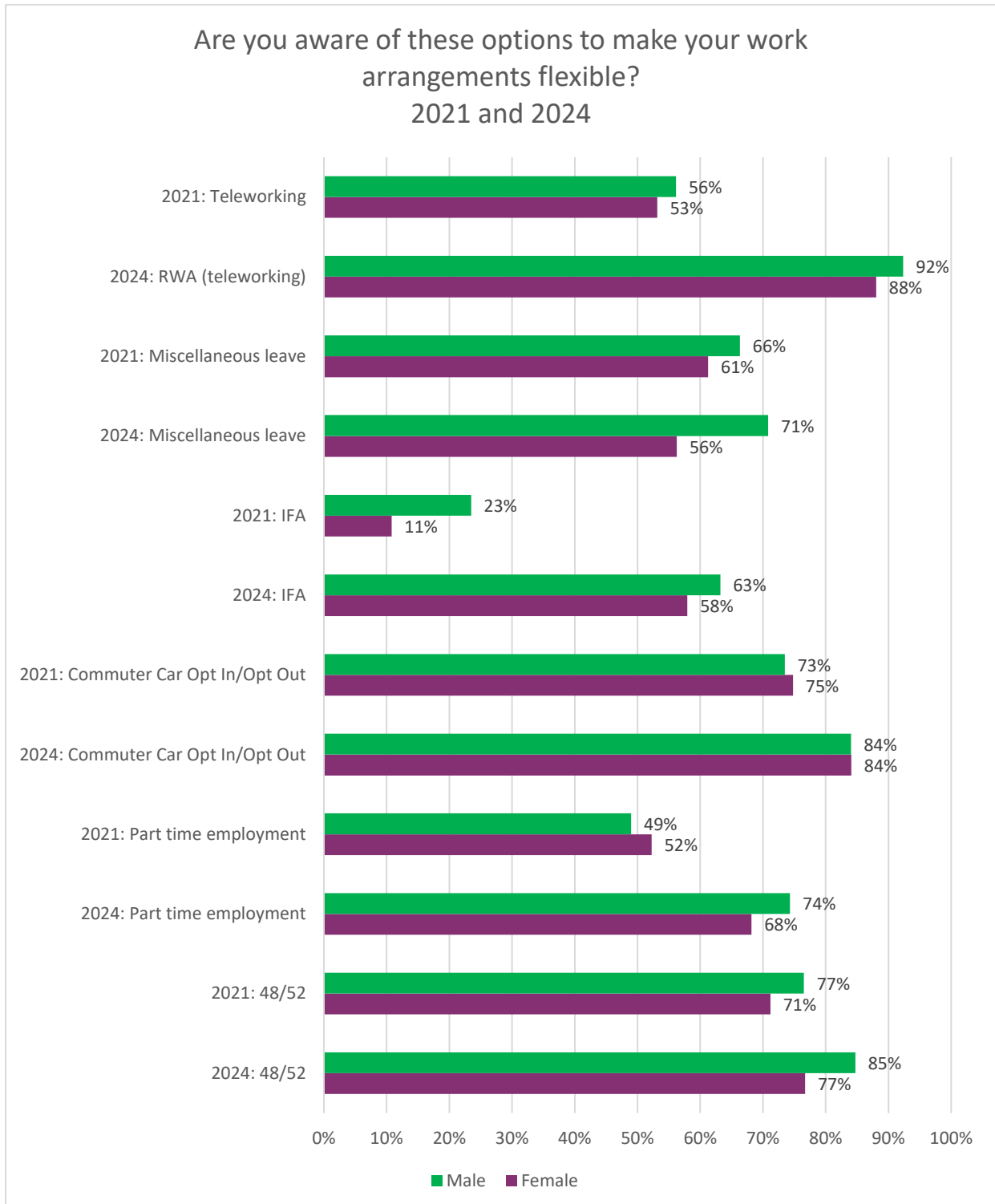


Figure 10: Responses for 'Are you aware of these options to make your work arrangements flexible? 2021 and 2024.  
\*Disclaimer: 2017 data was not included in the graph for better visualisation.

## 5. IMPACT

As mentioned in the actions section, Impact was assessed through open text comments from the 2024 EDGE survey and through focus groups on flexible work.

Participants reflected on the improvements made in enabling flexible work at AIMS, and spoke of AIMS as an organisation that embraced flexibility:

*'Currently it's like quite accepted and I think the culture is improved and is better and generally within AIMS, I'd say there's like an improvement occurring but there's always scope for further improvement ...'* (focus group participant)

*'AIMS is an extremely flexible working environment. I have alot [sic] of flexibility to juggle my work/life responsibilities and feel supported by my managers to do so...'* (survey response)

*'I'm extremely happy with the current arrangements. For someone with quite a few medical issues, I feel supported and never under pressure about my extra appointments needed.'* (survey response)

They also highlighted the importance of AIMS' commitment to building a culture that supports flexible working arrangements across AIMS at all levels when trying to attract and retain staff:

*'I wouldn't have taken the job if I hadn't been able to negotiate remote working flexibility.'* (focus group participant)

*'Remote working has benefitted me. If not available I would have left AIMS.'* (survey response)

The data provided valuable insights as well as suggestions on how to improve the current systems and helped identify sub-barriers within the context of different roles and responsibilities.

### 5.1.1 Workplace and supervisor support to access FWA

<p><b>Positive feedback</b></p>	<p>A significant number of the participants who had positive experiences expressed that their initial discussion around FWA was initiated by their supervisor:</p> <p><i>'I was really lucky. I've got very supportive management. It was made to be a very easy process'</i> (focus group participant)</p> <p><i>'[...] it was my manager who came to me and said 'hey, you're doing really well at the moment. Would you like to have the opportunity to work from home a couple of days a week' which I thought was fantastic and she sent me through all the information. She helped me to fill it out. She made sure that I completed all the paperwork, and it was an instant approval.'</i> (focus group participant)</p>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<p>Participants with negative experiences shared that it depends on the supervisor's attitude towards FWA if it gets approved or not, so they don't feel supported to even ask:</p>

	<p><i>'I think sometimes the attitude of supervisors can sometimes really affect someone's ability to access or feel comfortable to access remote working arrangements. Yeah, they're available, but sometimes it may not feel like you have the most amount of support and I think that comes down to, you know, people's attitudes to whether they personally agree with working flexibly, working elsewhere or not.'</i> (focus group participant)</p> <p><i>'Going through that process has been different depending on [who], I had different supervisors because I was under an ERA (Extra Responsibilities Allowance), and my supervisory structure changed for a couple of years then. And so still went through that same experience like same process. But my experience was very vastly different depending on the supervisor.'</i> (focus group participant)</p>
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This data further supports the previous conclusion that staff might not 'feel prevented' to access FWA but don't 'feel supported' to request it, as per supervisor's support and beliefs.

### 5.1.2 Awareness of FWA and clarity/communication of the process

<p><b>Positive feedback</b></p>	<p>Some positive feedback was gathered regarding our actions in communicating FWA options available:</p> <p><i>'Reminder that will go out in terms from P&amp;C that will say, you know, applications to be submitted. So just follow that process it- for me, it has been relatively easy.'</i> (focus group participant)</p> <p><i>'I always thought it [FWA] was just for kids, people that had kids for school holiday purposes, you know, and I think it's being more accepted now throughout AIMS. I was asked to do a diversity minute. And so, I talked about that and just work life balance, you know, just a little moment on the fact that I took it, and they did say that it is available to everyone.'</i> (focus group participant)</p>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<p>Some challenges and restrictions came up as well due to having the information available in the systems, but due to the number of different systems used within AIMS, sometimes the information gets lost, or employees don't know where to look for it:</p> <p><i>'Work in the labs a lot so miss emails or can't catch up on all emails – hear about it in the all staff but don't have any other information accessed'</i> (focus group participant)</p> <p><i>'Don't know where to go in AIMScope to find information – not easy to navigate [...].'</i> (focus group participant)</p> <p><i>'Um, but I think that's the difference between the SharePoint and the TechOne side of things, so I know the TechOne has the forms that I filled out.'</i> (focus group participant)</p>

	<i>'I think the information is available, but it's not easy to know where it is.'</i> (focus group participant)
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### 5.1.3 Role Restrictions to FWA

A new barrier was identified which is that access to FWA is restricted for some roles due to the work requirements. This creates an additional barrier for a sub-group of employees and contributes to negative feelings and perceptions of inequity. This was made evident in the surveys open-answers sections, and it was further explored in focus groups.

*'I think the balance of WFH and office is good to ensure employees are connected to their colleagues, workplace etc. This is good flexibility. Grateful as we know some staff can't access because of their operational roles.'* (survey response)

*'In some roles, working from home is impossible, and so there are no opportunities to work from home.'* (survey response)

*'AIMS is a flexible work environment but only for certain teams. For example, SeaSim staff members have absolutely no flexible work arrangements at all.'* (survey response)

*'The role, so yeah, probably could do a day or two here and there, but just the rest of the team that I work with do a lot of fieldwork [...] Yeah, unfortunately, somebody has to be here to assist with those sorts of things on the ground. So, the times I have chosen to, I generally will be at home and yeah, it's great. I can get other stuff done, but then I'll get a phone call going 'Ohh, we've got a pallet that's just arrived'. I'm like. 'Just gonna have to send the truck back.' or something like that will happen, so yeah.'* (focus group)

### 5.3 Challenges ahead

Despite the positive outcomes shown in this Cygnet application, including an increase in the uptake of FWA over the years, further work is needed to address ongoing barriers and future challenges. We have made positive progress, but we recognise that these actions might still not be perceived by the totality of the organisation and that, as we grow, new challenges will emerge, and constant actions need to be taken. AIMS remains proactive in gathering information, insights, and ideas to mitigate these barriers, by working closely with the EDGE working group as a consultant available for all teams and programs, as well with the help of the P&C team. AIMS is committed to promoting and supporting these benefits, with the purpose of creating a culture that feels comfortable to request FWA.

Lastly, we acknowledge that the situation reflected in this Cygnet might not be the same experience for everyone and we will continue working to ensure an equitable process of FWA, recognising the significance of intersectionality and that an individual's personal and professional identity will impact their need for and use of FWA. We will continue to improve our data collection and analysis, promoting AIMS' commitment to a safer and more inclusive culture, as well as increasing staff awareness about the importance of intersectionality, reducing all kind of stereotypes.

## 6. FURTHER ACTION

Our Bronze Award identified an institution-wide barrier of equitable access to Flexible Work due to cultural perceptions and structural limitations. Over the past few years, we have taken active steps to address this barrier and promote a more equitable work environment. The progress detailed in this application and the positive feedback from employees reflect our ongoing efforts. However, new barriers arise continuously as we grow and our commitment to improvement does not end here.

As we move forward, it's important to recognise that we are on a continuous journey. There isn't a single, definitive win, but rather a series of positive steps and progress that we are making towards a better work environment and society. Our focus remains on the actions and items we have in place to keep this momentum going. This ongoing commitment to improvement is reflected in the tangible steps we are taking that are outlined in the table below.

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Rationale/ evidence</b>	<b>Actions &amp; outputs (description)</b>	<b>Timeframe (start &amp; end)</b>	<b>Person/Group responsible for implementing action</b>	<b>Senior Leader accountable for action delivery</b>	<b>Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators</b>
1	Not all staff, including new and existing staff, are aware of the availability of flexible working arrangements at AIMS, as per the EDGE survey results.	Increase promotion of our policies and procedures related to FWA during onboarding and continue this promotion as a reminder for all employees, using different communication methods like email, SharePoint, Diversity Minutes.	Continuous action and reinforcement between 2025 and 2026 (when the next EDGE survey is due).	The EDGE Group at AIMS in collaboration with People and Culture.	CFO	Use of the EDGE Biennial Survey as a metric, considering the question 'Are you aware of FWA options available? Aiming to reach between 85-90% of employees aware of all the FWA options available at AIMS, with no difference by gender.
2	Not all staff feel supported or comfortable to request the full range of FWA – leadership perceptions regarding FWA.	Promote inclusive leadership training and create awareness among supervisors and managers of AIMS commitment towards the different options of FWA.	Start in 2025 and continue as needed.	The EDGE Group at AIMS in collaboration with People and Culture, as well as managers and supervisors.	All leaders	Use of the EDGE Biennial Survey as a metric to understand perceptions of all staff. Desired indicator is to have over 75% employees that feel supported to request FWA.
3	Explore if the lower number of men using RWA compared to	Explore reasons of why men use RWA less than women (through staff or EDGE survey – include new	Create action plan to investigate the hypothesis and start promotion and cultural awareness in 2026	The EDGE group responsible for the development of the survey and promoting	CFO	Find reasons through EDGE survey questions (open answers) with a response rate of at least

	women is an issue and if cultural beliefs underpin this difference.	questions) and decrease any cultural belief towards men and women stereotypes, through promotion and awareness of these topics within the organisation.	EDGE Plan and expected to see results after at least 2 years.	awareness of strategies to reduce cultural beliefs related to gender stereotypes.		50% of men respondents, to understand their perspectives.
4	There's a lack of intersectional focus in data gathering or processes within FWA.	Increase our ability to collect intersectional data on FWA to allow a deeper understanding of the barriers facing different cohorts within AIMS. Change the way data is presented and consider gender terms as 'woman' and 'man' as opposed to 'female' and 'male', considering gender beyond the binary.	Create a plan to gather data in 2025 and start collecting intersectional data from 2026.	The EDGE group in collaboration with P&C.	CFO	Change the wording in future EDGE surveys to 'women', 'men' and include more options like 'non-binary', 'gender fluid', 'other', 'prefer to self-identify my gender'.
5	Not enough data and information about Part Time arrangements as an option for FWA.	Gather data and normalise Part-Time employment and dismantle the notions of <i>the ideal worker</i> , by creating awareness of this concept.	Start gathering data available in 2025 and create a plan for 2026 in case no data is available. Promotion to normalise Part-time employment to begin in 2026.	The EDGE Group responsible to coordinate with P&C regarding data collection and create a plan to normalise Part-time employment.	CFO	Gather data on employees who use Part-time as FWA, including gender, AOF level, location, and any relevant demographic.