



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

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Date of Application	31 October 2024
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La Trobe University: SAGE CYGNET #2

Key Barrier: Support for Parents and Carers

Barrier type:

- Institution-wide Barrier
- Sub-group specific Barrier

Barrier description: At La Trobe, career interruptions, particularly for women, remain a barrier to career progression, even with flexible work policies in place. Despite efforts such as an overhaul of the support provided to parents and carers in 2018, more support is needed to prevent career interruptions and part-time work from impeding staff advancement to senior levels.

Word limit – 2500 words (excluding the institutional context and excluding the action plan)

Section	Word Count
Key Barrier	133
Evidence of Barrier	470
Activities and Outputs	1,080
Outcomes	508
Impact	214
Total	2,405

**CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION:
SUPPORT FOR PARENTS
AND CARERS**



**LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University acknowledges and pays our respect to the Traditional Owners and their Elders, past and present, and will continue to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols as part of our ongoing strategic and operational business.

The lands on which La Trobe University campuses are located belong to many Traditional Owners across multiple language groups who have observed a rich array of cultural traditions over tens of thousands of years. We recognise Indigenous Australians' ongoing connection to the land and waters of Australia and value their unique contribution to the University and wider Australian society.

CONTENTS

Key Barrier	2
Evidence of Barrier	3
Activities and Outputs	9
Outcomes	17
Impact	32
Further Actions	36

Notes on Data Presented in this Cygnet Application

Timeframes

The data presented in the 'Evidence of Barrier' section leverages baseline information from La Trobe University's SAGE Bronze Application Award, specifically covering the years 2015 to 2017. This baseline serves to contextualise the barriers identified in the Bronze Application Award by referencing prior findings and benchmarks.

Data presented in the 'Outcomes' section primarily covers the years 2019 to 2024. For certain figures, such as the number of individuals who have taken parental leave or the volume of research outputs, data is limited to the period from 2019 to 2023. This approach ensures consistency, as these metrics rely on complete calendar years to provide accurate representation.

Limitations

La Trobe respects all gender identities and acknowledges gender diversity beyond the binary framework of men and women. However, due to current limitations in La Trobe University's HR system's data collection, insights for trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse staff are not currently reportable, and the data presented reflects a binary framework. This limitation is being addressed through the 2024 La Trobe University Inclusive Systems Project, led by Information Services, which aims to update HR systems to better represent gender diversity and improve future reporting on gender equity and inclusion.

KEY BARRIER

Barrier to PROGRESSION & RETENTION – Support for Parents and Carers

Despite the implementation of flexible work policies at La Trobe, career interruptions and caring responsibilities, including parental leave, working part-time, and over-representation of women in fixed-term and casual contracts, continue to hinder career advancement for women particularly due to their predominant role in caregiving. Whilst efforts to overhaul the support provided to parents and carers were implemented in 2018, more support is needed to prevent career interruptions and part-time work from impeding staff advancement to senior levels. Offering comprehensive support for parents and carers is crucial not only for removing these barriers, but also for retaining talent and strengthening La Trobe's reputation and employee value proposition. By enhancing our practices, processes and support, we can better attract and retain a diverse workforce, making La Trobe a more inclusive and attractive workplace for staff.

Table 1: Sub-barriers to career progression of parents and carers¹.

1.1	Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
1.2	Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.
1.3	Women academics are overrepresented in fixed-term and casual contracts.

¹ Sub-barriers were identified from data included in La Trobe University's Bronze Award Application and SAGE Action Plan.



EVIDENCE OF BARRIER^{2,3}

Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.

Figure 1 highlights that in 2017:

- There was an inverse relationship between men's and women's gender representation as Academic levels progressed.
- There was a declining trend in the number of women through Academic Levels, with Academic level E having the lowest number of women.
- The proportion of women as a percentage of the total academic population decreases as Academic levels progress.

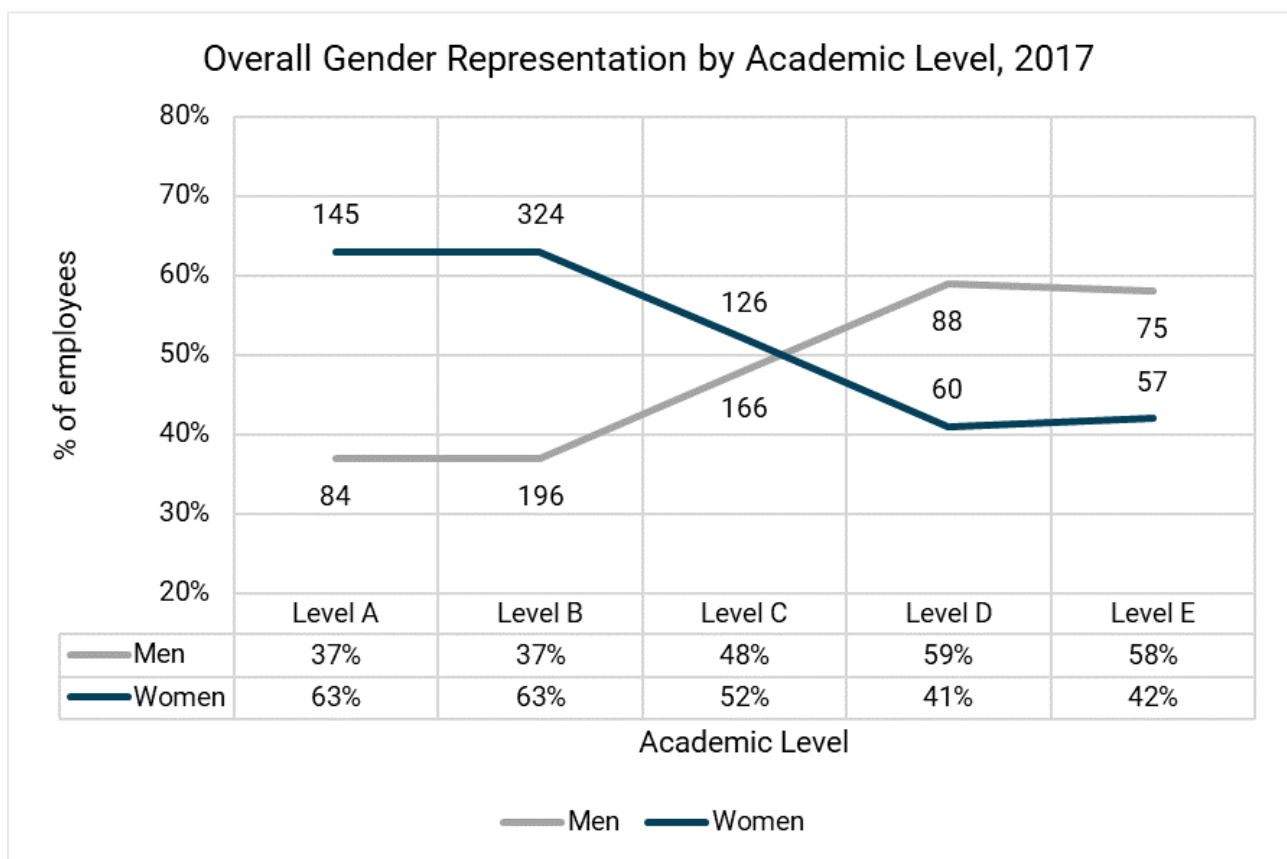


Figure 1: Overall Gender Representation (headcount) by Academic Level at La Trobe University, 2017

² Due to data limitations and a small number of non-binary and gender-diverse people captured in La Trobe systems, this cohort is not reported in the following graphs and figures to maintain individual anonymity.

³ Data presented in this section uses the data from La Trobe University's SAGE Bronze Application Award as baseline data. This includes the years 2015-2017.

Despite there being a declining number of women from Levels A through to E, uptake of parental leave was gendered. Through 2015 - 2017, the highest uptake of Primary Carer Parental Leave⁴ was among academic women at Levels A and B (Figure 2). The highest uptake of Primary Carer Parental Leave for professional women was at HE05 and HE06 classifications (Figure 3). The drop in the number of women at higher academic levels (Levels C, D and E) could be linked to the barriers faced by those with caring responsibilities, potentially impeding career advancement. Further investigation is required to confirm whether there is any correlation.

Data on uptake of Secondary Carer Parental Leave between 2015-17 is not available⁵. Notably women took carer’s leave at significantly higher rates than men (Figure 4). Insights from focus groups held in 2017 revealed an issue with a lack of support for academic staff to manage their laboratories or fieldwork during extended periods of leave. This issue was highlighted by several women who reported taking shorter periods of leave than desired to ensure research momentum was maintained, while others experienced setbacks with losing progress altogether.

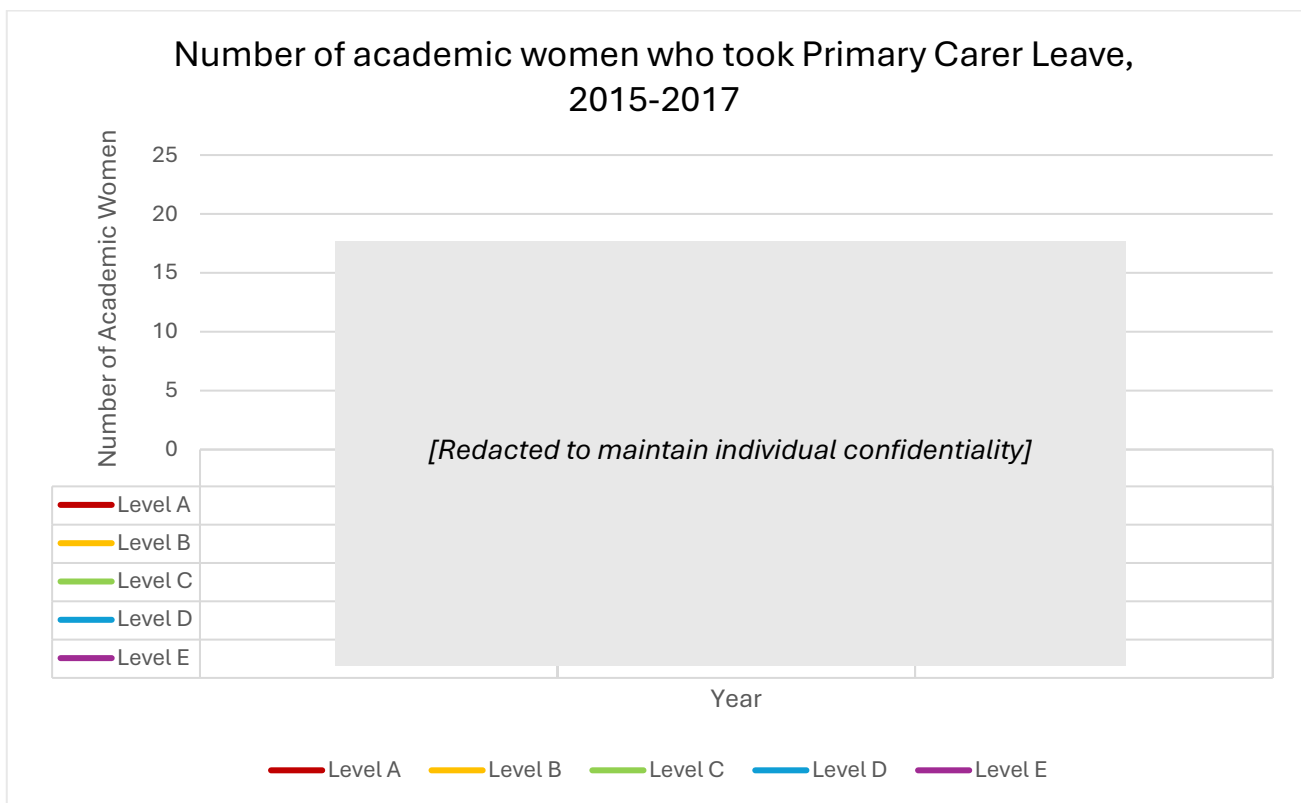


Figure 2: Number of academic women who used Primary Carer Parental Leave, 2015-2017

⁴ La Trobe updated the terminology of this leave category from maternity leave to parental leave for primary carers (and made available to all genders) in 2018.

⁵ Information on partner leave and paternity leave is not available for 2015-2017 due to migration to a new HR system in 2017.

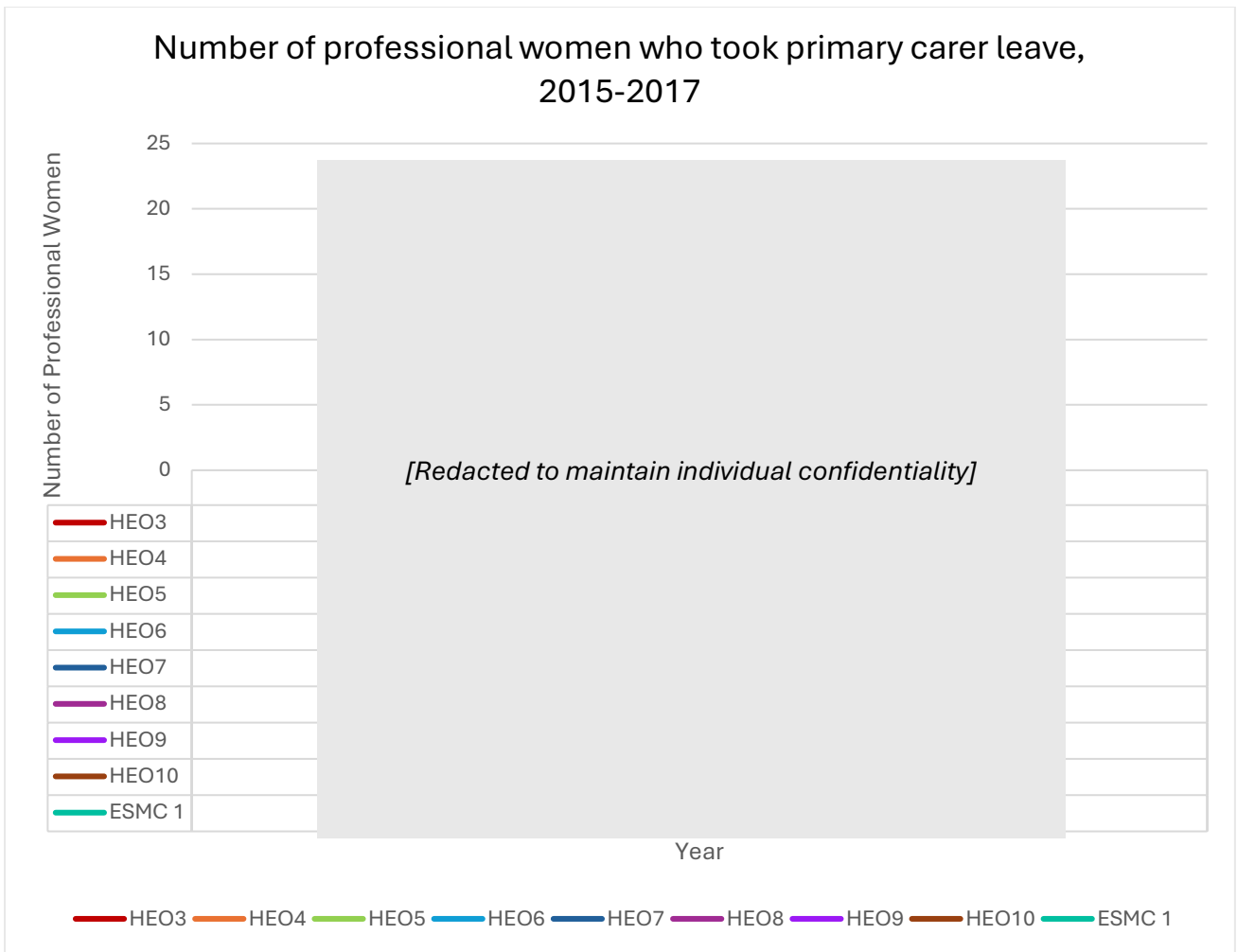


Figure 3: Number of professional women who took primary carer leave, 2015-2017

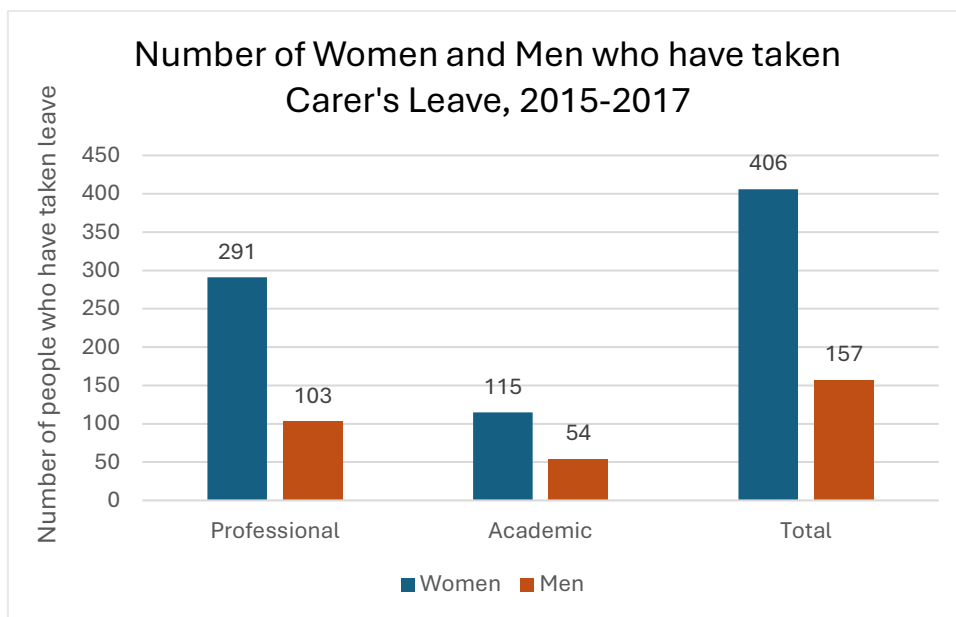


Figure 4: Number of people who have taken carer's leave, 2015 - 2017

Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

Between 2015-2017, 38% of women worked part-time compared to 18% of men. Women are more likely than men to be the primary caregivers in a household, which means they are also more likely to work part-time to balance work and family responsibilities⁶. Due to current HR system limitations, quantitative data on the carer status of employees is unavailable, however, focus group discussions identified career progress barriers for part-time staff, particularly women. Focus group participants reported intensive teaching/research responsibilities as incompatible with part-time work. The inflexibility of teaching loads was of particular concern to part-time staff with carer responsibilities. Given the disproportionately high percentage of women academics in part-time roles, further support is needed to negate the impact of fractional appointments on career progression.

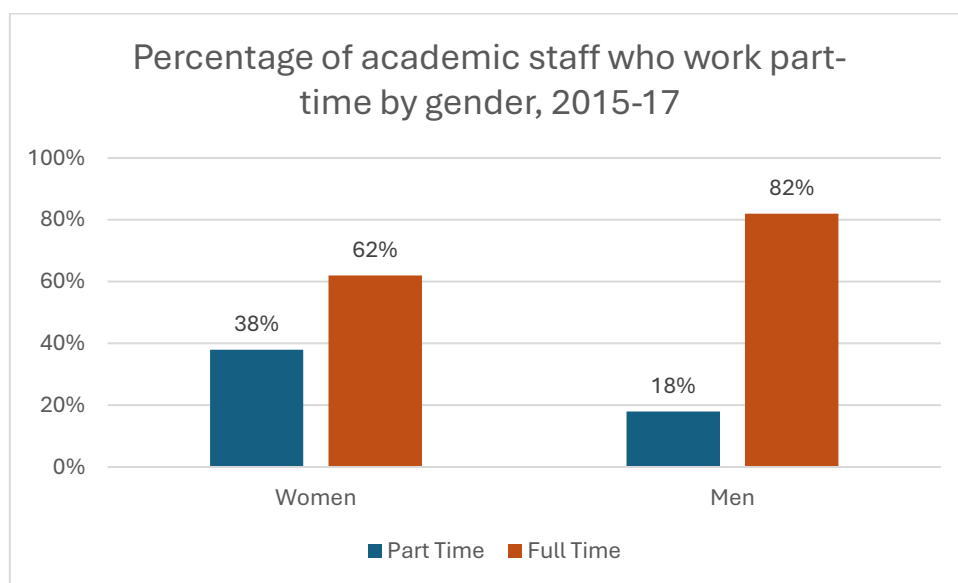


Figure 5: Percentage of academic staff who work part-time by gender, 2015-17

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023-24). *Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia/latest-release>.

Sub-barrier 1.3: Women academics are overrepresented in fixed-term and casual contracts.

In 2017, women represented 56% and men represented 44% of the total academic workforce. However, women held 54% of continuing appointments compared to 46% for men. More women held fixed-term appointments (60%) compared to men (40%) and women were also more likely to be in casual appointments (61%) compared to men (39%) (Figure 6). Focus group discussions held in 2017 identified several challenges facing academic staff who are parents or carers on fixed-term and casual contracts including challenges with childcare provisions, career advancement difficulties, and pressure to secure grant funding while between employment contracts.

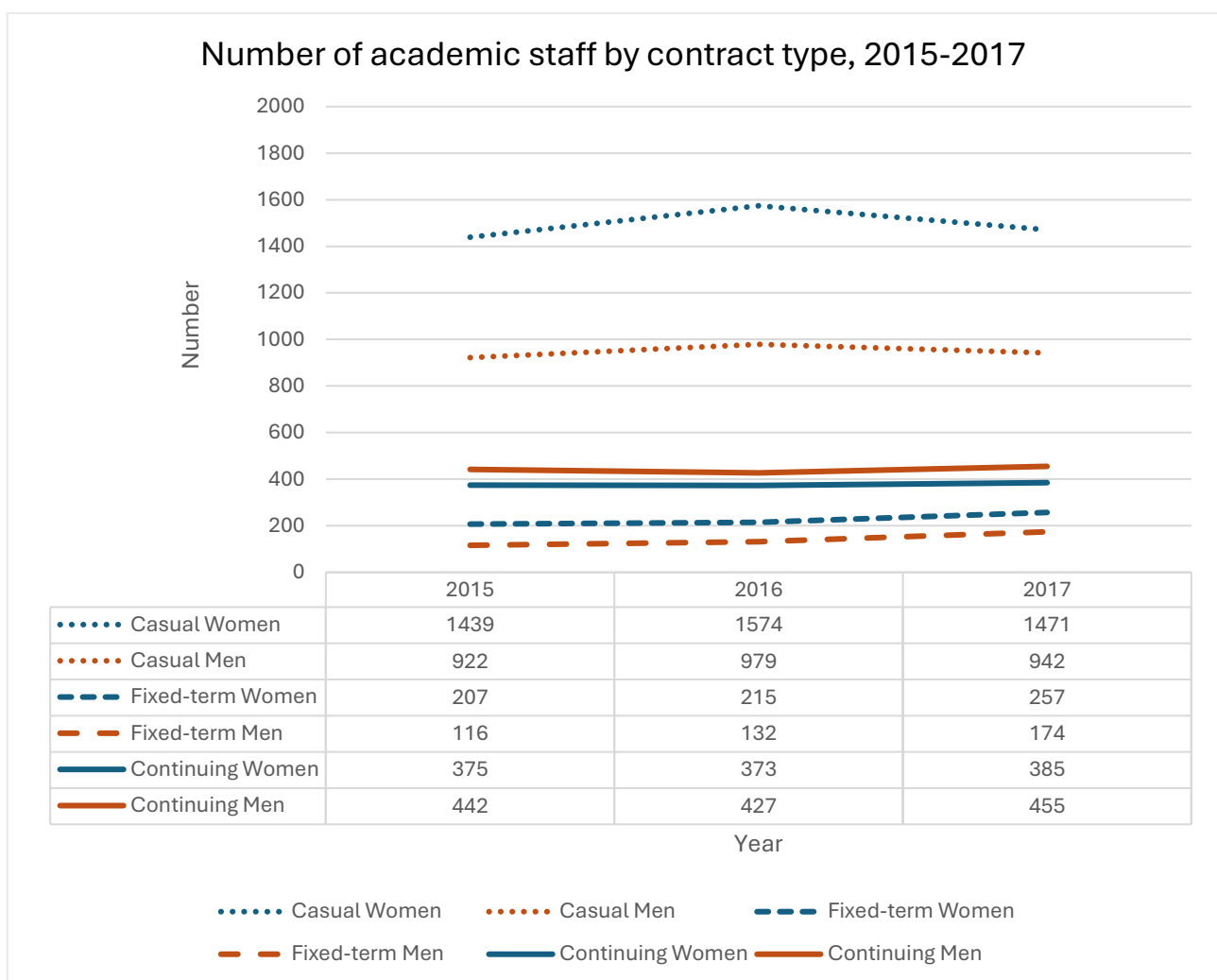


Figure 6: Number of academic staff by contract type, 2015-2017

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Between 2010 and 2024, several targeted activities were implemented to reduce or remove known barriers to career progression and retention for parents and carers (Table 2 and Table 3). Actions highlighted in this section are drawn from the actions committed to in La Trobe’s SAGE Silver Action Plan.

Table 2. A timeline of initiatives implemented at La Trobe University to reduce or remove barriers to career progression and retention for parents and carers

TIMELINE	OUTPUT	DESCRIPTION
2010	‘Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation’ obtained	La Trobe has maintained the Australian Breastfeeding Association’s ‘Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation’ since 2010.
2018	Tracey Banivanua Marr Fellowship introduced	At least one fellowship is awarded annually and aims to support casual and fixed-term staff whose research careers have been impacted by career breaks and/or intensive caregiving responsibilities.
	Carers Conference and Travel Fund introduced Parental Leave Toolkit and Keeping in Touch Guide introduced	The fund aims to assist researchers with caring responsibilities to travel to conferences, undertake field work etc. The Maternity Leave toolkit was reviewed and was relaunched in 2019 as the Parental Leave toolkit with the aim to support education and increase men’s uptake of parental leave.
2023	Annual Communications Calendar redeveloped	Ensures consistent messaging about parental, carer leave and flexibility options.
	Mentoring at La Trobe program reintroduced	An internally run program designed to enhance the development of both our Academic and Professional staff through personalised mentoring, networking and skill development. Mentees have the option to focus on a range of topics such as transitioning back to work after parental leave, navigating flexible working arrangements and managing care responsibilities.
	Introduction of new Workplace Adjustments Policy	La Trobe formalised Workplace Adjustment for staff into a new policy and process.
	Improved leave entitlements introduced through the 2023 La Trobe University Enterprise Agreement (EA)	La Trobe introduced a range of new and improved leave entitlements, including Early and Late Pregnancy Loss leave, Paid Surrogacy leave, Assistive Reproductive Technology leave, Indigenous Australian Kinship Carer’s Leave, and improved Family and Domestic Violence Leave. The EA also recognises and supports diverse family structures.
2024	Improved pathways to continuing employment introduced through the 2023 La Trobe University EA.	La Trobe introduced a casual consolidation program in Q1 2024 under the 2023 EA, creating systemic, enterprise-wide, pathways for casual staff to transition to continuing employment. Additionally, Clause 15 of the EA established a pathway to continuing roles for research-only staff on fixed-term contracts for four years or more.
	Parental Leave Entitlements Policy, Gender Equity Policy and Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding Policy updated	Policies were updated to align with the 2023 EA’s enhanced leave and support provisions, incorporating an intersectional lens throughout.
	Audit of parents rooms completed	The audit recommended enhancements be made to ensure a consistent and welcoming environment for parent rooms across all La Trobe campuses with further budget allocated in 2025 to implement improvements.
	New Parent and Carer Support Toolkit launched	This toolkit covers parental leave and was expanded to also include support for carers, conversation guides and checklists, and increased guidance for managers.
	Tracey Banivanua Marr Fellowship reviewed	After a review of the TBM Fellowship program in 2024, La Trobe has committed to developing a pathway to continuing employment for future TBM fellows.

Table 3. Leave entitlements for parents and carers in La Trobe University Enterprise Agreement 2023

LEAVE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Paid Primary Carer Parental Leave (Up to 36 weeks)	If the staff member has, or will have, responsibility for the care of the child during the leave either by way of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • birth of a child of the staff member, or their partner or legal surrogate; or • adoption of a child under school age; or • an Indigenous Australian Kinship caring arrangement of a child under school age.
Paid 'School Age' Primary Carer Parental Leave (Up to 12 weeks)	If the staff member has, or will have, responsibility for the care of the child during the leave either by way of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adoption of a school aged child; or • an Indigenous Australian Kinship caring arrangement of a school aged child.
Paid Secondary Carer Parental Leave (3 weeks)	A staff member, who will be the Secondary Carer of a child either by way of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • birth of a child of the staff member, or their partner or legal surrogate; or • adoption of a child; or • an Indigenous Australian Kinship caring arrangement of a child.
Paid Early Pregnancy Loss Leave (3 weeks)	Available in the event of the staff member's pregnancy ending by miscarriage during the first 20 weeks of the pregnancy.
Paid Late Pregnancy Loss Leave (Up to 14 weeks)	Available to a staff member whose pregnancy ends (after at least 20 weeks) by miscarriage or the birth of a still-born child.
Paid Surrogacy Leave (12 weeks)	Available to a staff member who enters into a formal surrogacy arrangement
Paid Assistive Reproductive Technology Leave (1 week)	Staff who are attending treatments, appointments and other activities related to the treatment or procedures that address fertility. This can include artificial insemination; in-vitro fertilisation; ICSI; or gamete intrafallopian transfer.
Compassionate Leave (2 weeks)	Staff can take compassionate leave if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their partner, or an immediate family member or member of the staff member's household dies or develops a life-threatening illness or injury; • a baby of an immediate family member or member of the staff member's household is stillborn; or • their partner has a Miscarriage
Indigenous Australian Kinship Carer's Leave (2 weeks)	Available to staff who are required to care for a child under the age of 18 years as part of a Kinship Caring Arrangement
Paid Carer's leave (Up to 3 weeks, using personal leave entitlements)	Available to staff who are required to provide care or support to an immediate family member or member of the staff member's household because of an illness, injury or unexpected emergency

Action: Continue to fund and promote the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Industry Engagement’s (DVCRIE) Carers Conference and Travel Fund

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
- Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

The Carers Conference and Travel Fund was launched in 2018 and expanded in 2020 to include attendance at online events. The fund aims to provide support to staff to attend conferences and travel for research purposes that they otherwise would not be able to attend due to caring responsibilities, therefore, reducing a barrier to career progression.

A total of \$25,000 has been allocated annually for the fund. The fund offers individuals:

- **Online conference** - \$185 per day of conference (max 5 days) + \$270 for two day's preparation time
- **Intra-state travel** - \$500
- **Interstate travel** - \$1,000
- **International travel** - \$2,500

Since the fund was established, 31 people (29 women and 2 men) have successfully applied for the fund (Table 4).

Year	Number applied	Total Awarded
2018	6	\$5,723.57
2019	9	\$16,673.90
2020	2	\$4,856.00
2023	11	\$19,721.10
2024	3	\$5,378.14
Total	31	\$52,352.71

Table 4. Number of Carer’s Conference and Travel Fund Recipients and Total funds awarded⁷.

La Trobe intends to continue supporting this fund into the future and will expand the fund to provide support to people with disability who require a carer when travelling for research-related purposes.

⁷ This table is up-to-date as of October 2024.

Action: Develop a DVCRIE's Academic Returners Support Fund

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.

To enable staff with caring responsibilities to rebuild their research career after a career break or career interruption, the development of an Academic Returners Support Fund was proposed. The fund was intended to be used flexibly for academics in arranging the best fit for the individual's research plan and provide support such as teaching or marking buyouts, research and administrative assistance, attendance at training, etc. After assessing the feasibility, practicality and potential impact of the fund, it was determined that the likelihood of this fund having a true impact would be limited, given resourcing constraints. As a result, La Trobe decided not to proceed with implementing this action. Instead, La Trobe prioritised continuing the Carers Conference and Travel Fund rather than offering smaller amounts for both funds. To make a tangible difference in people's careers, La Trobe would need to provide around \$10,000 per person – which are funds that are not currently available. La Trobe may reconsider implementing this fund in the future if further resources become available.

Action: Continue to Fund Tracey Banivanua Mar (TBM) Fellowship

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.3: Women academics are overrepresented in fixed-term and casual contracts.

Established in 2018, the Tracey Banivanua Mar (TBM) Fellowship provides part-time or full-time research-only fixed-term contracts for up to three years. It supports and enables eligible researchers to develop or re-establish their research track record where they have been interrupted or delayed by caring responsibilities so that they are competitive for external funding.

Since its establishment, the Fellowship has been awarded to at least one person each year, and, overall, it has been awarded to 13 researchers, including 12 women and one trans man (Table 5). To date, La Trobe University has invested \$4,029,136 in the TBM Fellows, including \$3,742,709 on salaries and \$286,427 in research activity support for the Fellows.

Year	Number of TBM fellowships awarded
2018	3
2019	2
2020	3
2021	1
2022	1
2023	2
2024	1
Total	13

Table 5. Number of TBM Fellowships Awarded

One of the past eight fellows have since begun a continuing position at La Trobe, one is now an ARC Future Fellow at La Trobe, one remains on a fixed-term contract, four have taken positions at other Universities and one now has a role outside of the University Sector. As part of La Trobe’s refreshed Research 2030 Strategy, the university has committed to continuing TBM Fellowship funding and, following a review of the TBM program in 2024, La Trobe has also committed to developing a pathway to continuing employment for future TBM fellows.

Additionally, sub-barrier 1.3 is also being addressed through La Trobe’s casual consolidation program, introduced in Q1 2024 under La Trobe’s Enterprise Agreement 2023. This initiative provides enterprise-wide, systemic pathways for casual staff to access continuing employment. Further, clause 15 of the 2023 Enterprise Agreement aims to provide a path to continuing employment for research-only staff on fixed-term contracts for four years or more. While these initiatives are in the early stages, they are expected to bring improvements to job security and greater access to career progression, with their full impact becoming clearer in 2025 or beyond.

Action: All academic staff returning from a career break are assigned a mentor and helped to develop a career transition plan

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
- Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

In 2023, La Trobe reintroduced its annual mentoring program called 'Mentoring @ La Trobe' and rebranded it to 'Mentoring for High Performance' in 2024. During enrolment participants are asked which support or skills they are looking for in their mentoring partnership. This includes options such as 'Work-Life Balance' (returning from Parental Leave, Flexible Working, Carer's Responsibilities etc.), 'Building Connections', 'Leadership Development', etc.

- In 2023, 130 people participated in the program. 11 women and 0 men out of 196 enrolments selected the 'work-life balance option'.
- In 2024, 110 people participated in the program. 9 women and 1 man out of 203 enrolments selected the 'work-life balance option'.

As the program is an enterprise-level initiative, it is designed to accommodate people who wish to participate in mentoring for various reasons, including parents and carers returning to work from a career break, to assist them in maintaining their career momentum.

Action: Provide guidance to staff with caring responsibilities on how to document the impact of COVID-19 and to managers on how to assess performance relative to opportunity

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
- Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

The Assessing Performance Relative to Opportunity Guidelines for Decision Makers were developed in 2020 and used by the Academic Promotions Committee to assess 2020 and 2021 applications. These guidelines explained how principles for assessing achievements relative to opportunity should be applied by decision-makers when making assessments of career progression or achievement. They were redeveloped in 2021 to consider the impact of COVID-19 on academic performance and were used by the Academic Promotions Committee to assess 2022 promotion applications.

Action: Ensure HR Business Partners and line managers are equipped to manage queries about parental leave, flexible work and part-time work

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
- Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

In 2024, La Trobe launched a new Parent and Carer Support Toolkit. The toolkit includes guidance for managers on how to have effective conversations about providing support and flexibility for parents and carers, checklists for support options available before, during and after someone takes parental leave, and guidance around parental and carer leave entitlements.

The toolkit was presented to La Trobe's HR Business partners who were briefed on how to operationalise the toolkit with staff and managers to maximise the effectiveness and usage of the toolkit. Positive feedback was received, particularly around the added section on guidance for managers. In 2025, the toolkit will be incorporated into La Trobe's 'Manager Essentials' training, which aims to build manager capability. As part of the monitoring and evaluation of the toolkit, HR Business Partners, as well as staff and managers/supervisors, will provide feedback on the usefulness of the toolkit and the quantity and types of queries that come through to La Trobe's online AskHR system will be evaluated to help assess the toolkit effectiveness.

Action: Campaign to encourage men and partners to take up flexible work arrangements and extended parental leave

Sub-barriers addressed

- Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression.
- Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression.

In 2024, the refreshed annual communications calendar had an increased focus on promoting the benefits of flexible working and extended parental leave. La Trobe produced two articles in the La Trobe Staff news, one focused on flexible working, and two with interviews with two men at La Trobe who took extended parental leave. The purpose of the articles was to create cultural change

and raise awareness of the benefits of flexible working, and also highlight men who are role-modelling taking the new parental leave entitlements (where men who are primary carers can take extended parental leave). La Trobe intends to continue promoting profiles of senior leaders who have taken parental leave and flexible working arrangements.

Outcome a. Retention of academic women at Levels B-C and increase the pool of women at Levels C-D to address the gender imbalance at Levels D-E

In 2024, women represent 66% and men represent 34% of the overall workforce. Academic staff represent 57% of the overall workforce, where women represent 63% and men represent 37% of this cohort.

The number of women in Level D now outnumber men, and women continue to outnumber men in Levels A, B, and C (Figure 9). The gap in the proportion of men and women in Level E has reduced. There are half as many women in Level C as there are in Level B, a trend that has not changed since 2017. Overall, gender proportions across academic levels have improved, which may be attributed to a range of new or enhanced leave conditions, employee programs, improved awareness and strengthened workplace and carer support.

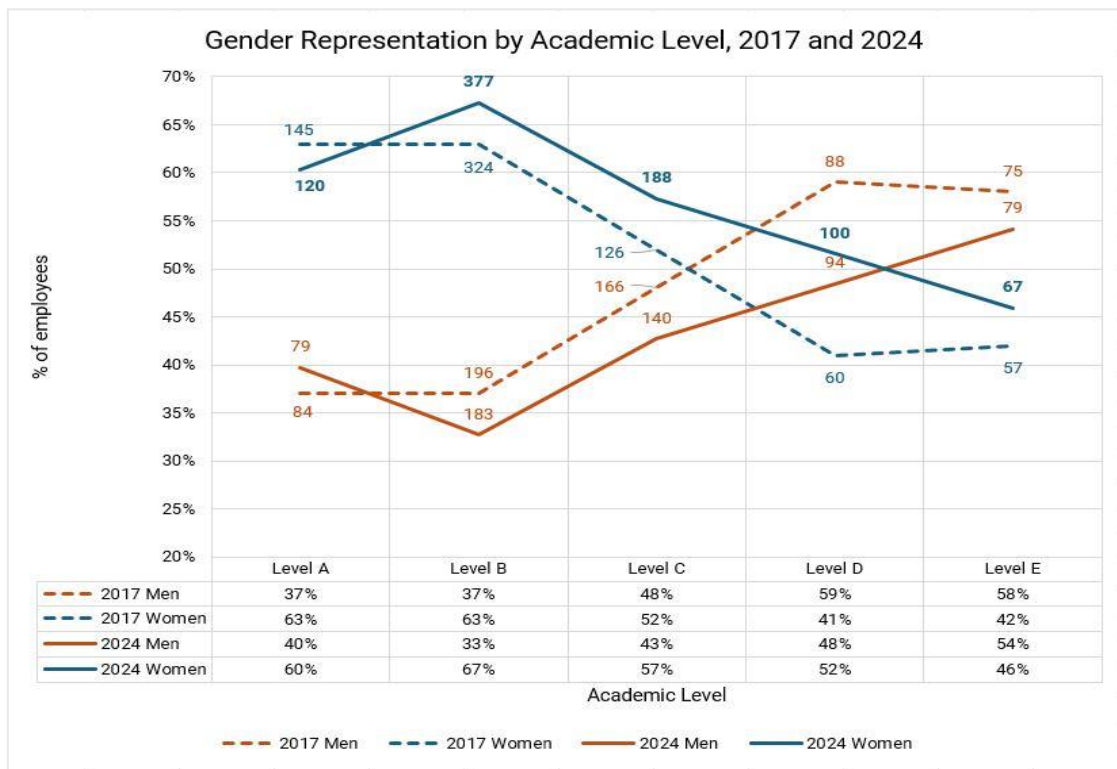


Figure 7. Gender Representation by Academic Level 2017 and 2024

⁸ The data presented in this section typically uses data from 2019 through to 2024. In some figures, such as the number of people who have taken parental leave, or the number of research outputs, only data from 2019 – 2023 is included, as the nature of these data sets require information to be captured using full calendar years.

Outcome b. Maintain the high retention rates of staff returning from parental and carers leave

At La Trobe, the retention rate of people who have returned from parental leave has steadily increased from 2019-2020 to 2023 -2024 (Figure 8)⁹.

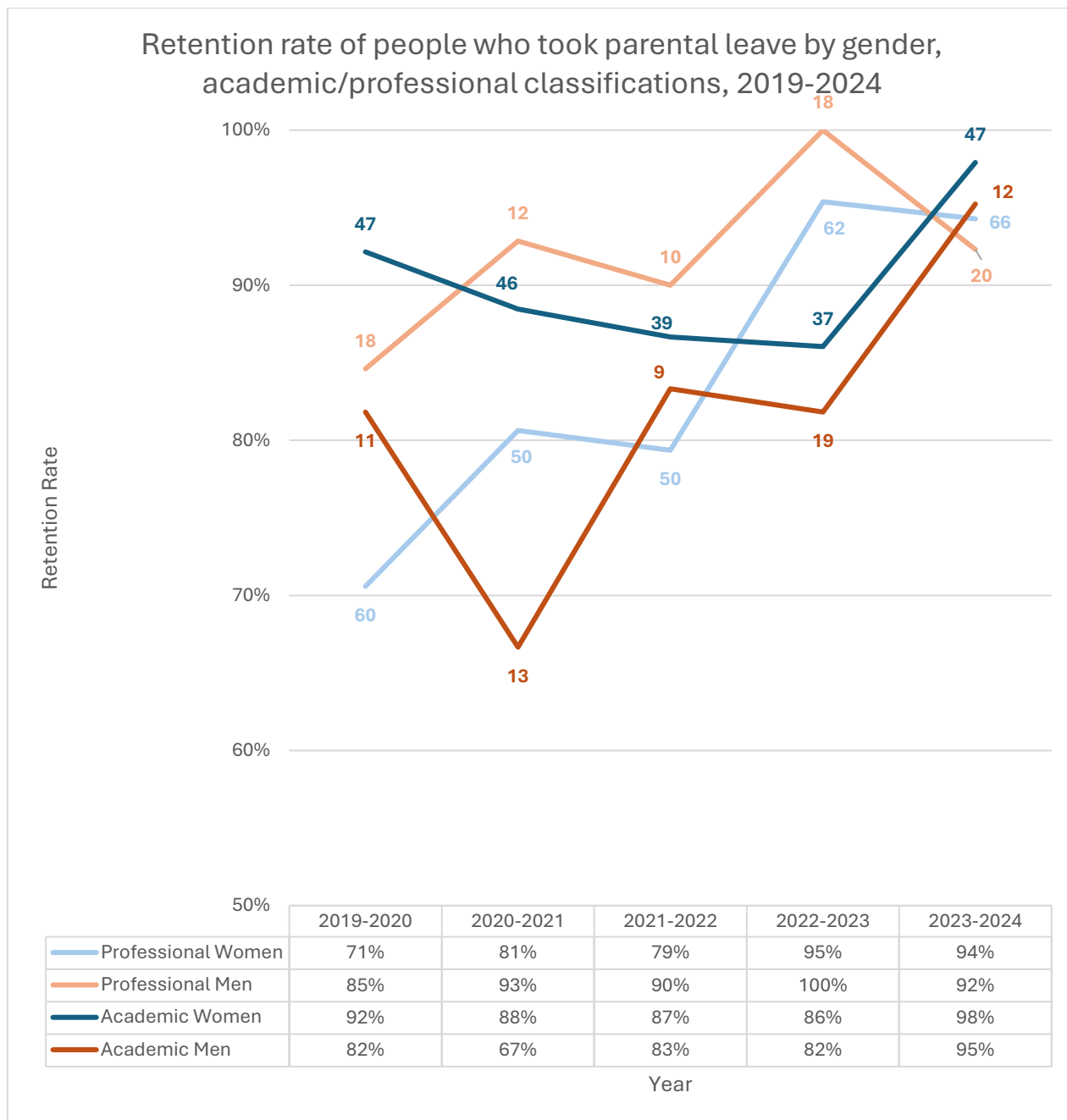


Figure 8. Retention rate of people who took parental leave by gender, academic/professional classifications, 2019-2024

⁹ Historical data prior to 2019 is not available for Figure 8

At La Trobe, the retention rate of people who have taken carers leave has also steadily increased from 2019-2020 to 2023-2024 (Figure 9)¹⁰.

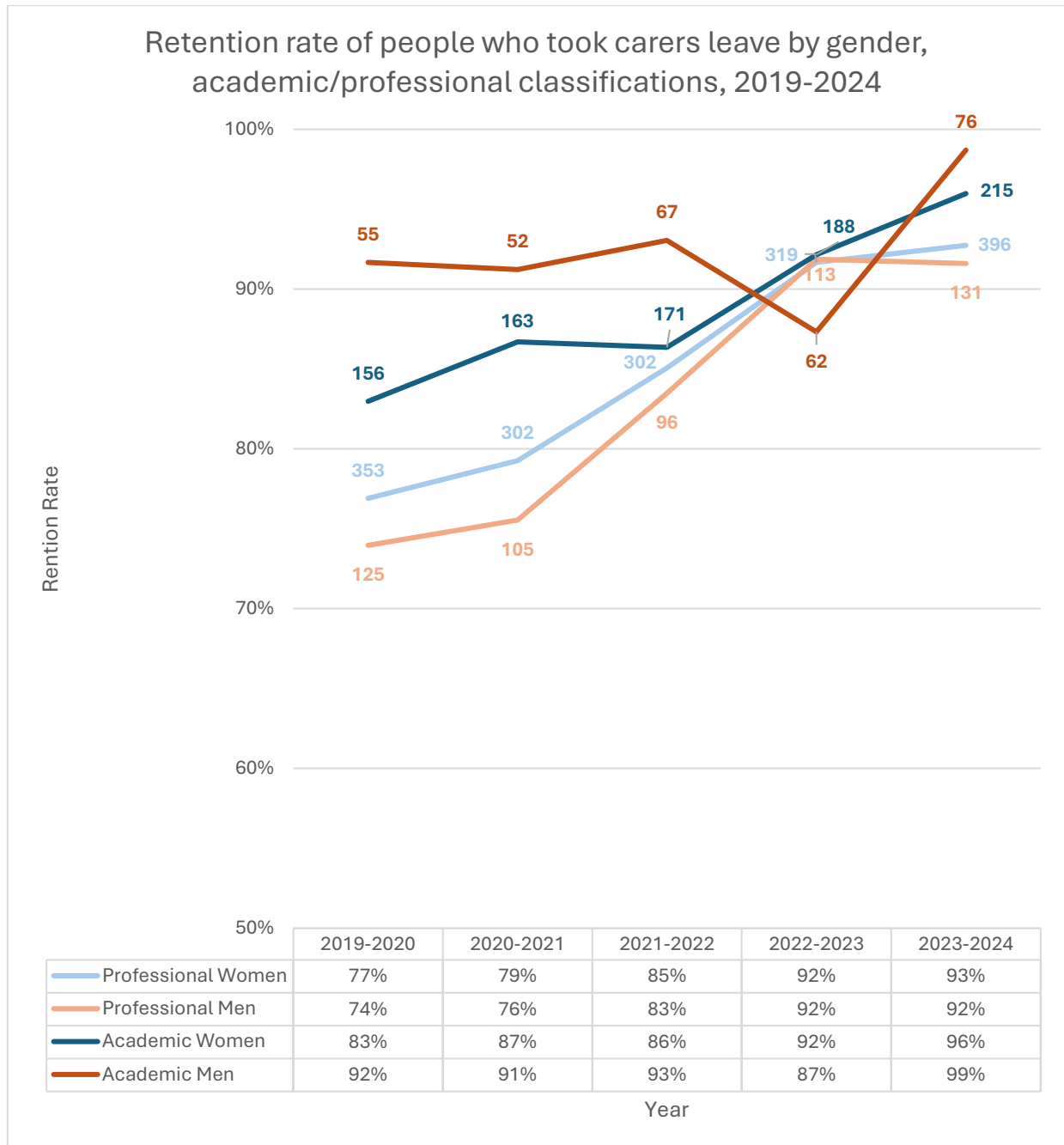


Figure 9. Retention rate of people who took carers leave by gender, academic/professional classifications, 2019-2024

¹⁰ Historical data prior to 2019 is not available for Figure 9

Outcome c. Improved parent and carer Employee Experience Survey results

La Trobe Employee Experience Survey 2023 (2187 responses) and Pulse Survey 2024 (1057 responses) data suggests that carer's experiences may vary depending on the type of caregiving responsibilities. Parents of preschool and primary-secondary aged children had higher favourable engagement and wellbeing responses compared to the overall university response, with modest improvements in perceptions of career opportunities (increasing from 45-49% in 2023 to 49-50% in 2024). The favourable responses among these carer cohorts may indicate that they feel relatively supported in their roles by the university. In contrast, carers of people with disability, mental or medical health conditions and older people had more varied responses, with lower favourable responses for engagement, wellbeing, career opportunities and workload, indicating they feel less supported. These findings highlight a need for La Trobe to further explore, understand and address the support needs of these cohorts.

	La Trobe Overall staff response	Yes, care for child(ren) pre-school	Yes, care for child(ren) primary-secondary age	Yes, care for person(s) with disability	Yes, care for person(s) with mental health conditions	Yes, care for person(s) with medical conditions	Yes, care for older or aged persons	No	Prefer not to say
Engagement: I would recommend this organisation as a good place to work									
2023	75	82	78	79	65	72	70	77	52
2024	70	73	72	65	71	71	67	74	41
Wellbeing: I experience more positive than negative emotions at work									
2023	70	81	76	64	68	64	70	71	45
2024	67	72	70	65	67	67	65	70	41
Diversity & Inclusion: La Trobe University has effective mechanisms (policies, processes) in place to address discrimination towards employees									
2023	81	87	85	82	86	70	85	81	68
2024	69	70	69	68	69	66	68	72	48
Career Opportunities: Enough time and effort is spent on career planning									
2023	45	49	45	31	39	38	38	49	36
2024	49	50	49	43	43	40	47	54	29
Workload: I am given enough time to do my job well									
2023	52	67	59	57	42	38	36	55	31
2024	51	50	50	44	48	42	44	58	33

Key	
Green	>5 percentage points above the overall university score for each question
Yellow	-/+5 percentage points from overall university score for each question
Red	>5 percentage points below overall university score for each question

Table 5. Select La Trobe Employee Experience Survey 2023 and Pulse Survey 2024 results for parents and carers compared to overall staff response¹¹

¹¹ This employee experience survey data is new baseline data against which future progress will be able to be measured. Historical data for employee experience surveys prior to 2023 are unavailable.

Outcome d. Increased uptake of carers leave and parental leave

The overall uptake of carers leave has increased among all cohorts in the previous three years from 2022-2024 compared to the time period from 2015-2017 (Figure 10).

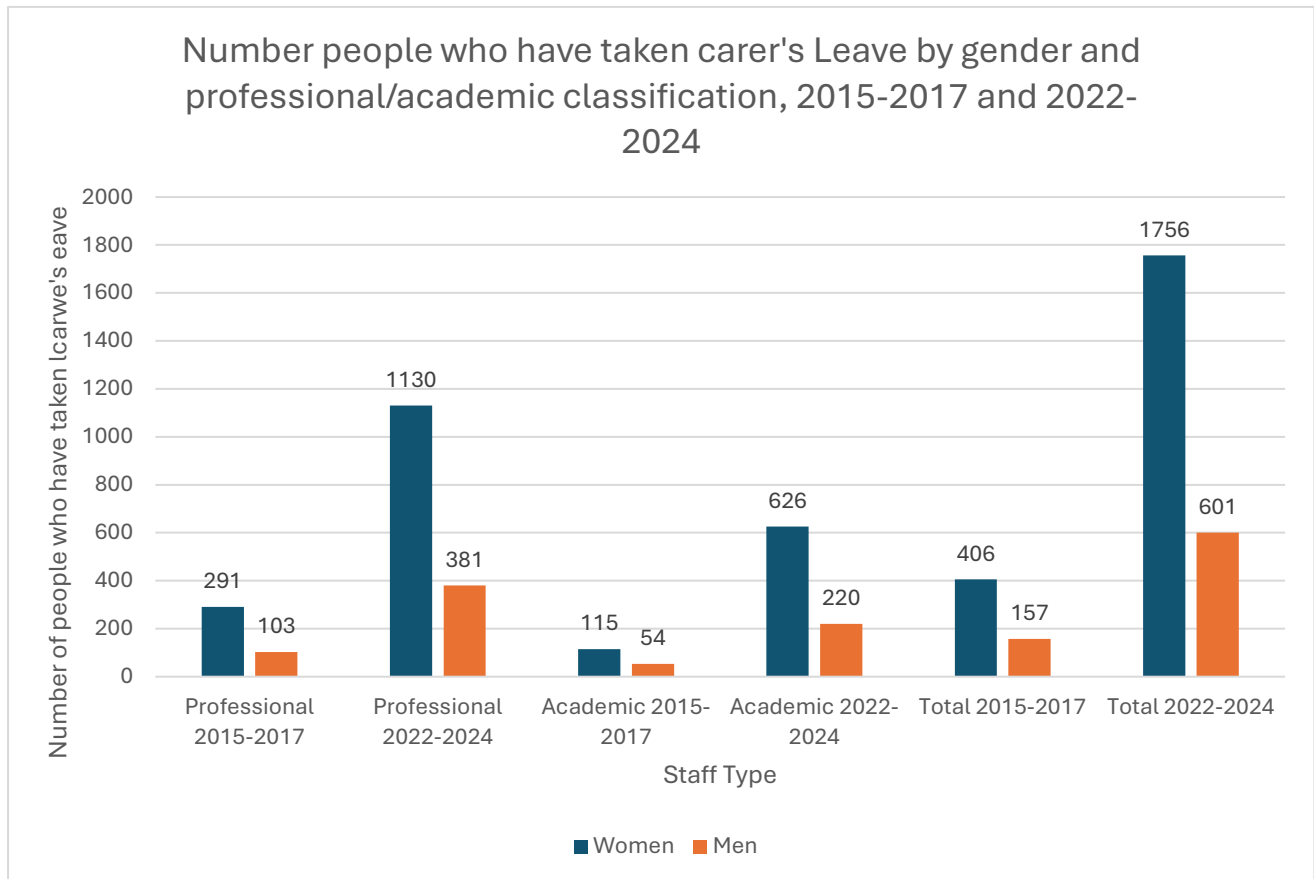


Figure 10. Number of staff who have taken carer's leave, by gender and professional/academic classification, 2015-2017 and 2022-2024¹²

¹² Data for 2018 is unavailable, therefore, a comparison has been made between the three year periods from 2015-2017 and 2022-2024

The overall uptake of parental leave has remained relatively stable from 2017-2023 (Figure 11).

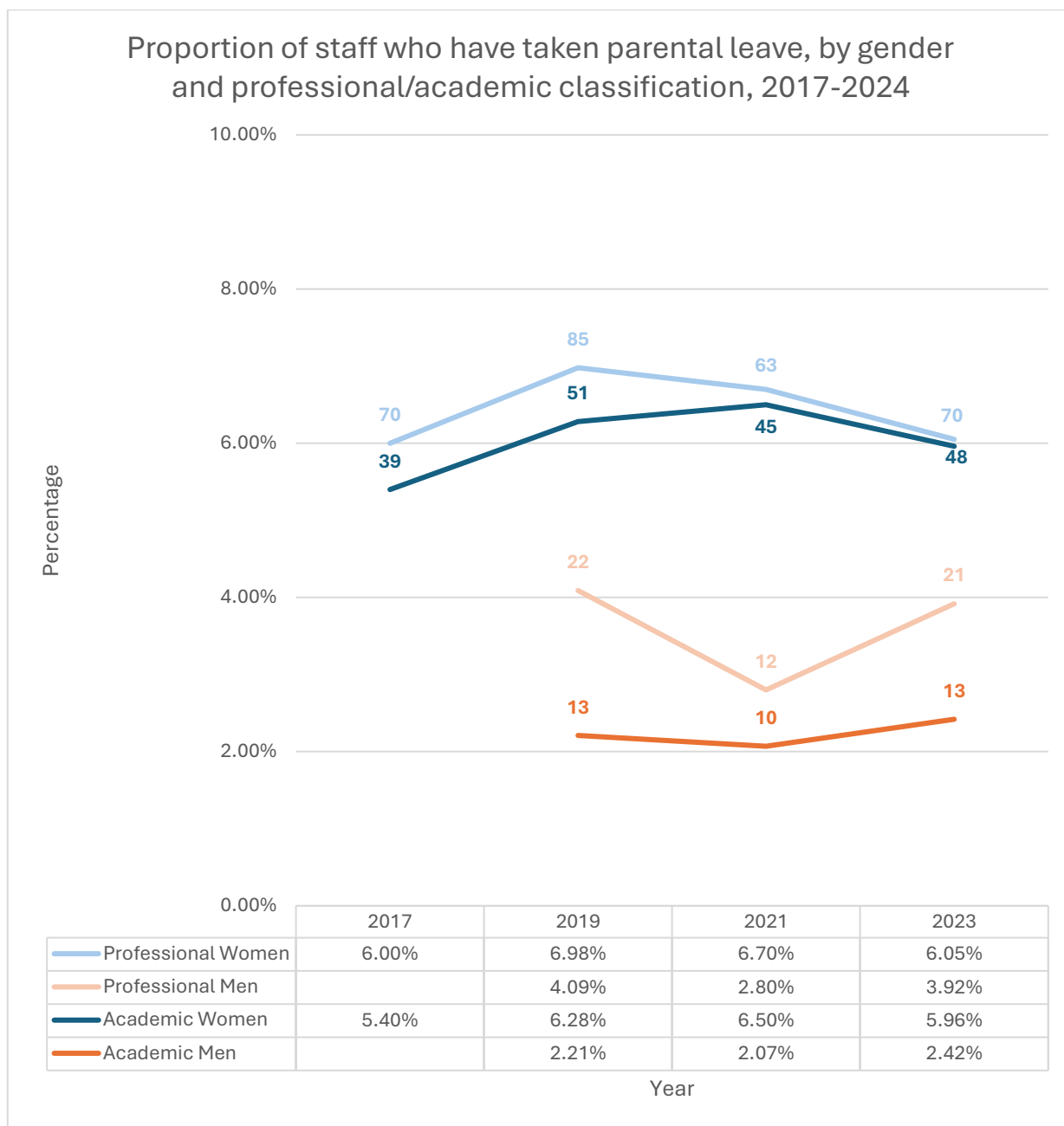


Figure 11. Proportion of staff who have taken parental leave, by gender and professional/academic classification, 2017-2023¹³

Figures 12a and 12b highlight that more women take extended parental leave compared to men, despite the introduction of primary carer leave in 2018, which is eligible for people of all genders.

¹³ Data for the number of men who took parental leave prior to 2018 is unavailable

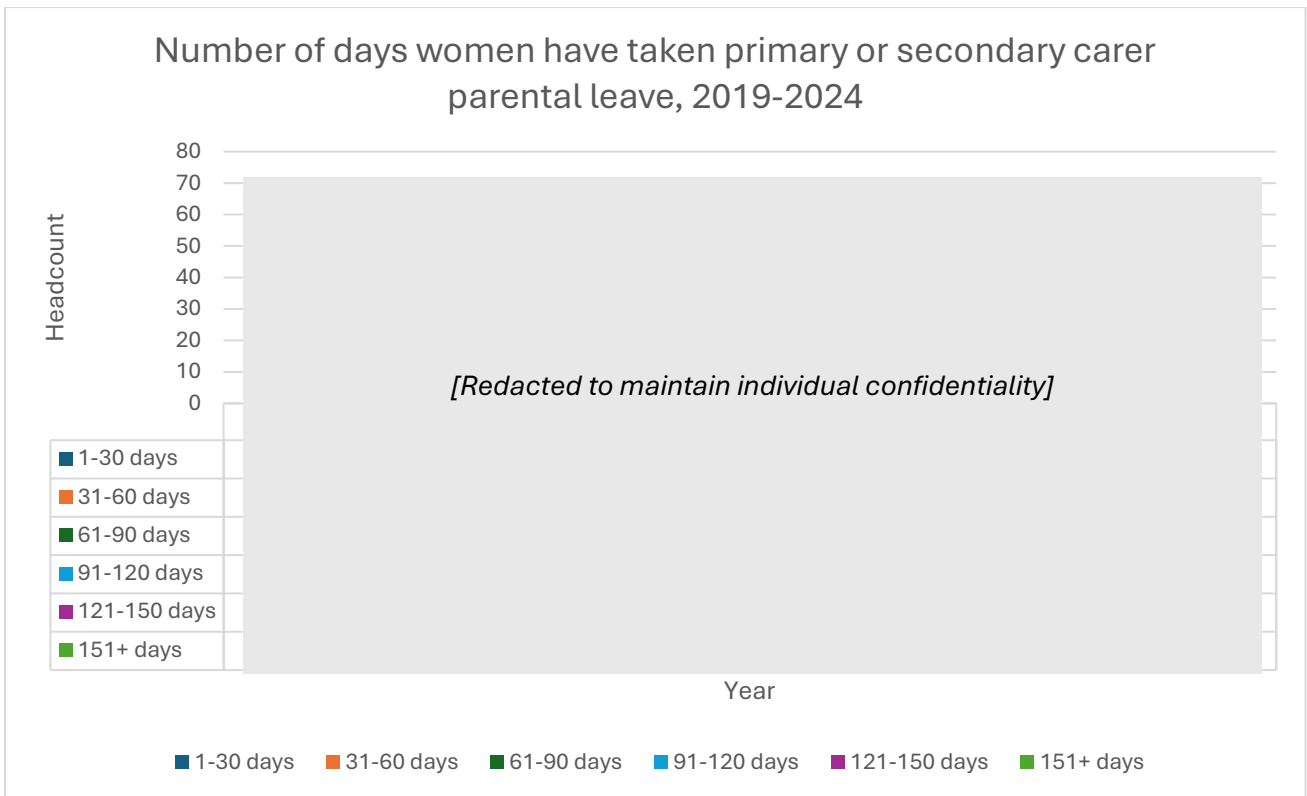


Figure 12a. Number of days women have taken primary or secondary carer parental leave, 2019-2024¹⁴

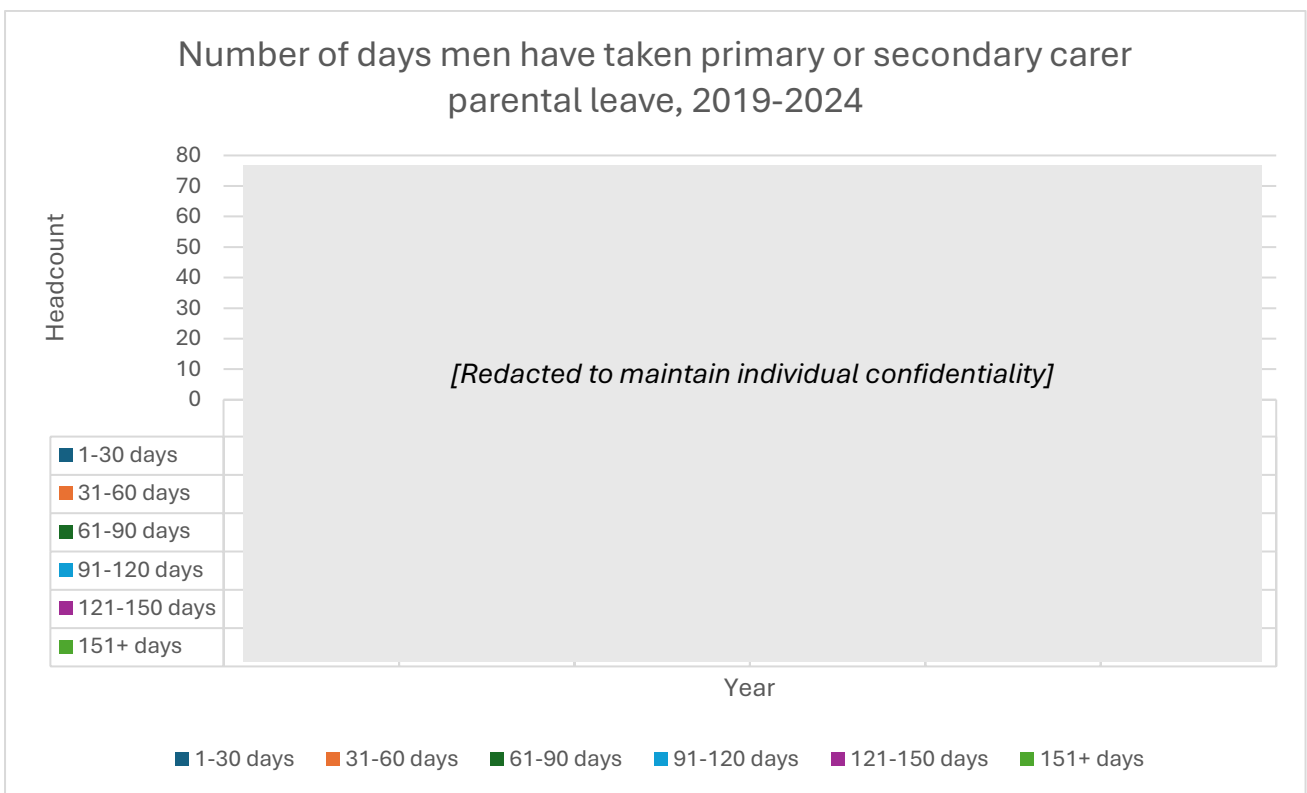


Figure 12b. Number of days men have taken primary or secondary carer parental leave, 2019-2024

¹⁴ Historical data prior to 2019 is unavailable for Figures 14a and 14b.

Outcome e. Increased uptake of flexible working and part-time roles

In 2023, 95% of La Trobe’s workforce was on a formal flexible working arrangement (due to COVID-19) and the gender composition of people with flexible working arrangements was representative of the broader La Trobe workforce. The only staff not on flexible working arrangements were a small cohort of technicians and trade employees and community and personal services employees who are required on site due to the nature of the role.

The overall proportion of people in part-time roles has remained relatively stable from 2019-2024 (Figure 13).

- Professional and academic women work part-time at a higher proportion compared to men.
- There is a larger disparity between the proportion of professional men and women who work part-time compared to academic men and women.

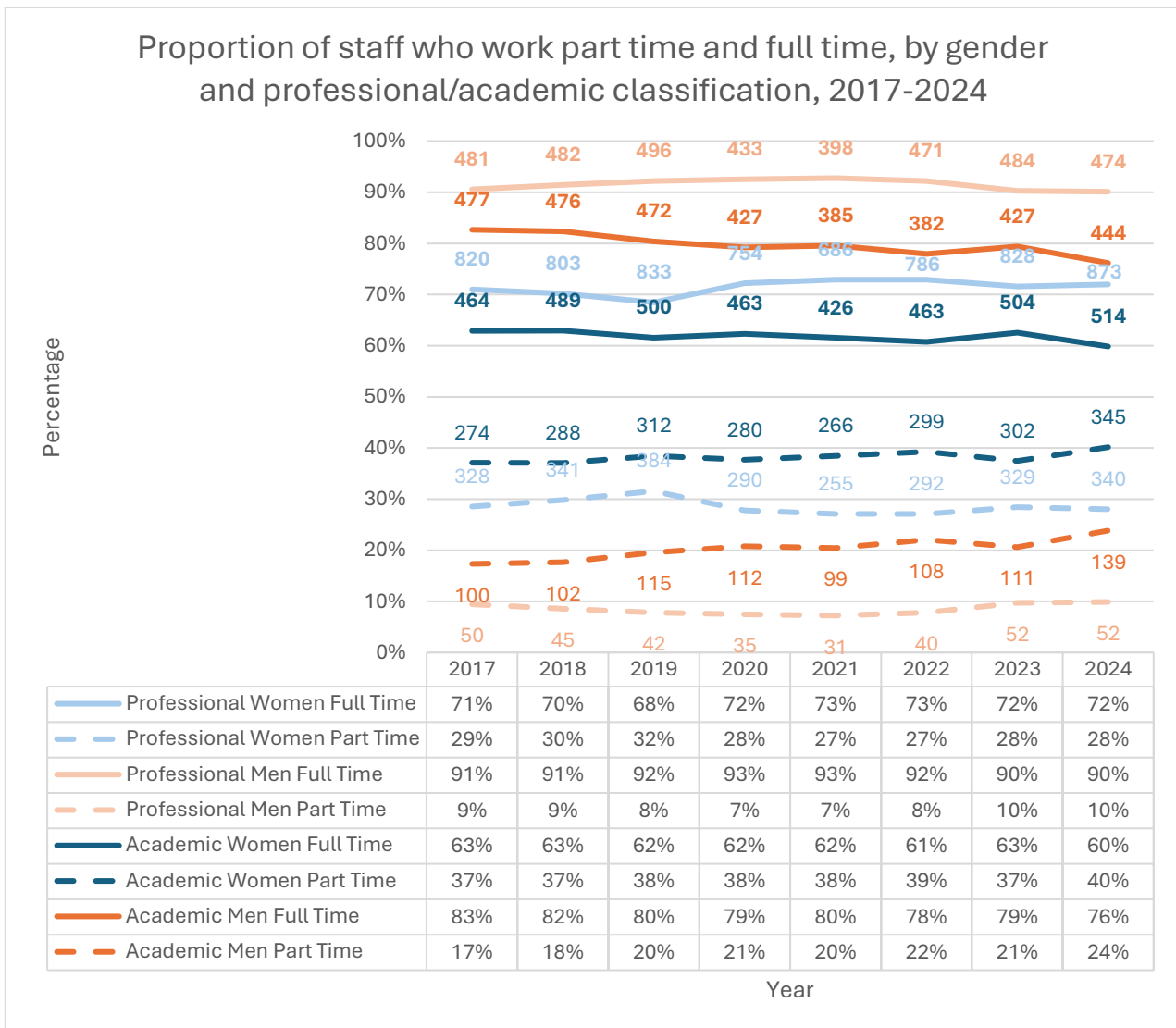


Figure 13. Proportion of staff who work part time and full time, by gender and professional/ academic classification, 2017-2024

Feedback from multiple sources was gathered and analysed to gather evidence of the impact of addressing the identified barriers (Table 6 and 7).

Table 6. Evidence of positive impact and barriers addressed

Evidence of positive impact	Barriers addressed
Improved flexibility and work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-barrier 1.1: Women are more likely to take extended parental leave and carers leave, which impacts career progression. • Sub-barrier 1.2: Women are more likely to work part time, which impacts career progression. • Sub-barrier 1.3: Women academics are overrepresented in fixed-term and casual contracts.
Improved parental leave entitlements	
Improved support for academic career interruptions	

Table 7. Sources of qualitative data and feedback

Source	Description
2023 Employee Experience Survey	The 2023 Employee Experience Survey was the first survey run since the 2021 Wellbeing Survey – post COVID-19 and post the University’s transformation in 2022 (n=1057; 62.5% women; 30.7% men; 0.8% non-binary or gender fluid).
2023 Gender Equality Employee Experience Survey	This survey was mandated and developed by the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (n=445; 68.5% women; 25.6% men, 1.3% non-binary or gender fluid).
2024 Pulse Check Survey	This 2024 survey was run to check the ‘pulse’ of staff engagement and wellbeing at La Trobe between the next major 2025 Employee Experience Survey (n=2187; 61.5% women, 30.5% men, 0.8% non-binary or gender fluid).
Feedback from key stakeholders	We invited feedback from key stakeholders (academic and professional staff) who were involved in the Gender Equity Working Group, HR Business Partners, Carer’s Conference and Travel Fund Recipients and Tracey Banivanua Marr

	<p>Recipients to participate in a focus group (n=14 women, 3 men). Questions asked included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which supports/entitlements have you used/accessed that are provided by La Trobe? • What were the positive aspects of using the support/entitlements offered by La Trobe? • What can La Trobe do to improve its support for parents/carers?
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Summary of key findings

Feedback and qualitative data indicate that staff experiences of work-life balance, flexibility and leave entitlements are generally positive due to a combination of processes and programs (Table 8).

- Staff were appreciative of the support for flexible working across the organisation.
- People were appreciative of inclusive and generous parental leave entitlements.
- People highlighted the importance of support such as the Carers Conference and Travel Fund and the TBM Fellowship in sustaining their career trajectory.

Whilst there were many positive sentiments about the overall support that La Trobe provides for its staff, people highlighted that there are still opportunities to enhance the progression for parents and carers, particularly for academic staff. Areas for improvement include:

- **Academic Workload Planning**¹⁵: Consistent feedback highlighted that academics with career interruptions could benefit from more time allocated to research, which would support them in producing a greater number of research outputs and assist in progressing to higher academic levels.
- **Capability Uplift and Supervisor Training**: Feedback highlighted the opportunity for managers and supervisors to receive additional training on how to effectively support people who are parents and carers, further enhancing a supportive work environment.

¹⁵ In 2024, La Trobe’s Academic Workload Allocation Model Review was initiated to comply with The *La Trobe University Enterprise Agreement 2023* (subclause [sections 31.9 and 31.10](#)), specifically to “provide a reasonable and evidence-based estimate of time required to undertake activities related to teaching, service and research”. This also includes reviewing research performance benchmarks that are used to inform the current research workload model. Recommendations from the review will be implemented in 2025.

Table 8. Evidence of Positive Impact

Improved flexibility and work-life balance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “La Trobe offers a great work and life balance for working parents” – <i>Anon., 2024 Pulse Survey</i> • “[A great] flexible working environment, especially for working parents” – <i>Anon., 2024 Pulse Survey</i> • “I’m lucky that there are ongoing flexible work arrangements and there’s compassion for that across La Trobe. It was so nice to have the warm welcome I got when I came back, with my colleagues checking in and so on, contributing to my desire to stay at La Trobe.” – <i>Key stakeholder</i> • “La Trobe is supportive of flexibility for both parents and non-parents, and has developed increased trust in staff through covid, which I believe leads to happier, more productive staff” – <i>Anon., 2023 Employee Experience Survey</i> • “My line manager is particularly supportive of flexible working arrangements and I wouldn’t be able to work full time without it... It really is the most important enabler.” – <i>Focus Group Participant</i> • “I have a really supportive work culture that embraces flexible work” – <i>Focus Group Participant</i>
Improved parental leave offerings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Parental leave - happy to see how inclusive it is.” – <i>Anon., 2023 Employee Experience Survey</i> • “The parental leave opportunity is great” – <i>Anon., 2024 Pulse Survey</i> • “I felt a bit guilty for not being there in the first six months, but the new Enterprise Agreement entitlements completely changed that narrative. I’m just an individual, but if we can give more people access to parental leave and make it less prescriptive and more open, it leads to more positive experiences.” – <i>Key stakeholder</i> • “Being supported by my team while working four days a week allows me to get a bit of balance while I find my feet.” – <i>Key stakeholder</i> • “I had nine months leave at full pay, which is one of the most generous parental leave options in the country.” – <i>Focus Group Participant</i> • “[The] paid parental leave policies are better than what is offered at many other institutions.” – <i>Anon., 2023 Employee Experience Survey</i>
Improved support for career interruptions

- “People have had opportunities to access the fund that they wouldn’t normally be able to access” – *Key Stakeholder*
- “The carers travel fund is a really wonderful initiative” – *Focus Group Participant*
- “I was able to undertake 3 months of intensive field work as part of my ARC funded DECRA project - without the carers travel funding it would have been impossible for me to do the research as I could not have left my small children at home without me for so long. I am so grateful to have had this support.” – *Focus Group Participant*
- “The Tracey fellowship has been a really wonderful way for me to feel like the university has my back and that the university is willing to invest in me to support research excellence for me and my team” – *TBM Fellowship Recipient*
- “The Tracey Fellowship has been fundamental for me in reigniting my passion for research and also giving me a sense of a longer-term career trajectory that I’m back on track towards achieving” – *TBM Fellowship Recipient*

FURTHER ACTION

La Trobe’s Bronze award identified several barriers to career progression and retention of parents and carers. In 2018, there was an ‘overhaul’ of the support provided for parents and carers, including introducing the TBM fellowships, the carers conference and travel fund, and improved parental leave entitlements. While progress has been made, including more women in senior academic roles and improved retention rates, challenges remain¹⁶.

The further actions in the table below are designed using the [SAGE Athena Swan principles](#). We also recognise that providing strong support for parents and carers is not only essential to breaking down these barriers, but is also critical to La Trobe’s talent pool, reputation and employee value proposition. By improving our practices, systems, processes and support, we will enhance our ability to attract and retain a more diverse workforce, making La Trobe a more inclusive and desirable place to work. As such, we intend to focus on fewer, but more strategic actions that will have a university-wide impact, ultimately driving meaningful improvements in future outcomes.

Table 9: Further Actions to reduce or remove barriers to retention and career progression of parents and carers

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
2.1	Rationale: More women take	Action: Continue the campaign to encourage men to take up	Start – Q1 2025 End – Q4 2029	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	Executive Director, Human Resources	Desired outcome:

¹⁶ Further actions to address job security for employees have not been included in this table, as this barrier is being addressed through the Research Continuing Clause (Clause 15) of the Enterprise agreement, and the Academic Casual Consolidation Program (introduced as a new program of work and a clause in La Trobe University’s 2023 Enterprise Agreement) and the *Closing Loopholes No. 2 Act 2024*.

	parental and carers leave compared to men.	flexible work arrangements and parental leave. Output: Men at all levels, including senior leaders are regularly profiled in the La Trobe News, and the benefits of parental leave, carers leave, and flexible working arrangements are regularly promoted.				La Trobe is considered a supportive, flexible, family-friendly and carer-friendly place to work for all genders. Success Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men feel encouraged and supported to utilise parental leave, part-time work and flexible work. There is an increase in the proportion of men who take parental leave, utilise flexible working arrangements or part-time work at each academic or professional level in each school or portfolio. Measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of people who take parental leave, utilise flexible working arrangements or part-time work at each academic or professional level in each school or portfolio is gender balanced (40% men, 40% women, 20% any gender)
2.2	Rationale: While La Trobe provides generous leave entitlements and flexible working arrangements, qualitative data indicates inconsistencies in how managers apply and support these offerings to meet the diverse needs of parents and carers.	Action: Introduce awareness and targeted training for managers on supporting staff with diverse needs (for example, different carer scenarios, gender affirmation, reproductive health, perimenopause/menopause, parents/carers, cultural/religious practices etc). Output: Relevant EDI capability offerings integrated into Manager Essentials training, supported by accessible resources for staff and managers on the intranet.	Start – Q1 2025 End – Q4 2029	Leadership, Capability & Performance, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	Executive Director, Human Resources	Desired outcome: There is a strengthened culture at La Trobe of recognising and supporting the diverse needs of staff. Success Indicator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers and staff are aware of and able to implement leave and flexible working entitlements to support the diverse needs of staff. There is an increase in the availability and uptake of EDI-related capability training. Measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favourable responses about Support for Staff with diverse Caring Responsibilities in Employee Experience Surveys increase from 62% in 2021 to 80% by 2027.

2.3	<p>Rationale: Data indicates carers of individuals with disabilities, health conditions, and older adults report lower engagement, wellbeing, career opportunities, and workload scores, suggesting they feel less supported.</p>	<p>Action: Continue to conduct staff surveys and feedback loops to further investigate the specific challenges and support needs of these carer cohorts.</p> <p>Output: Insights and challenges are gathered and inform tailored actions to address support needs of these carers.</p>	<p>Start - Q 3, 2025 End – Q4 2029</p>	<p>Leadership, Capability & Performance, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion</p>	<p>Executive Director, Human Resources</p>	<p>Desired outcome: La Trobe gains further insights into the challenges faced by carers of individuals with disabilities, health conditions, and older adults and tailor, evidence-based initiatives to enhance support.</p> <p>Success Indicator: Manager and staff implement tailored support to meet diverse caregiving situations.</p> <p>Measure: Year on year increase in favourable staff survey responses for engagement, wellbeing and support for carers of individuals with disabilities, health conditions, and older adults.</p>
2.4	<p>Rationale: There is a drop in the number of women from academic Level B to C.</p>	<p>Action: Further investigate the factors behind the drop in retention of women from Level B to Level C.</p> <p>Output: A report analysing data and providing key insights with recommendations to address the issue is developed.</p>	<p>Start – TBC End –Q4 2029</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity & Inclusion</p> <p>Data and Analytics</p> <p>Office of the Provost</p>	<p>Executive Director, Human Resources</p> <p>Provost</p>	<p>Desired outcome: There is increased understanding behind the factors causing the drop in Academic Women at Level B to Level C and targeted actions developed and implemented.</p> <p>Success Indicator: N/A</p> <p>Measure: N/A</p>

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