



# Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace Report

2025

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ISSN: 3083-2349 (Online)

ISSN: 3083-2357 (Print)



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### Feedback and enquiries

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### Photography

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## Letter of transmittal

Senator the Hon. Sue Lines  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon. Milton Dick MP  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Presiding Officers,

I am pleased to transmit the 2025 Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace Report, prepared by the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, for presentation to the Parliament.

This report fulfils the annual reporting requirement set out in section 22 of the *Parliamentary Workplace Support Service Act 2023*. It brings together, for the first time, consolidated information on the culture, composition, performance and work health and safety of Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces, alongside reporting on the prevention of, and responses to, relevant conduct.

The report provides a system-wide perspective on parliamentary workplaces, drawing on a broad range of data sources including workforce information, remuneration data, work health and safety reporting and findings from the 2025 Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces Culture Survey. Together, these insights offer an evidence-based view of the characteristics that shape work across parliamentary offices, parliamentary departments and the wider parliamentary precinct.

The report highlights the many strengths of Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces, including high levels of commitment to public service, strong interpersonal trust within teams, a shared sense of purpose and consistently positive perceptions of professional capability and ethical intent across cohorts. It also provides measured insight into the pressures and risks that we know accompany parliamentary work, which should serve as a foundation for reflection, learning and continuous improvement.

This report does not prescribe solutions or apportion responsibility for workplace satisfaction. Rather, it establishes a shared evidence base to support Parliament's ongoing consideration of workplace culture, safety and performance. Over time this reporting will allow trends to be monitored, progress to be assessed and informed conversations to take place about creating and sustaining safe, respectful and effective parliamentary workplaces.

I commend this report to the Parliament as an important step in building transparency of parliamentary systems, and in strengthening understanding of, and confidence in, Australia's parliamentary workplace.

Yours sincerely,

Leonie McGregor  
Chief Executive Officer  
Parliamentary Workplace Support Service



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## Executive summary

The 2025 Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace Report provides a consolidated, parliament-wide view of the culture, workforce characteristics, performance and safety of Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (CPWs). Drawing on multiple data sources from across the parliamentary ecosystem, including workforce and remuneration data, work health and safety reporting and the 2025 Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces Culture Survey, the report establishes an evidence base to support Parliament's understanding of the environments in which parliamentary work takes place and the factors that shape workplace experience.

Overall, the findings show a parliamentary workforce that is highly committed, professionally capable and strongly motivated by purpose. Across all cohorts, people report a clear sense of service to democracy and the community and many describe their work as meaningful despite its intensity and public scrutiny. These intrinsic motivations contribute to high levels of engagement, individual accountability and satisfaction with personal contribution, providing important strengths on which the parliamentary system relies. The report also highlights significant progress in representation and capability. Women now comprise almost half of all parliamentarians, placing Australia among leading parliaments internationally with regard to gender balance, with particularly strong representation in the Senate. Parliamentarians and staff display high levels of educational attainment and professional expertise, reflecting the complexity of contemporary parliamentary roles. The workforce employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (referred to as MOP(S) Act employees), along with parliamentary departments, bring diverse skills and experiences to parliamentary and electorate work. This supports the effective functioning of Parliament.

Culture survey results indicate strong interpersonal trust and teamwork at the local level, with respectful relationships, collegiality and cooperation commonly reported within teams. Ethical intent and professionalism are widely recognised as shared norms and most participants express confidence in their own conduct and that of their immediate colleagues. Communication is generally experienced as respectful and inclusive and collaboration across roles and functions is a consistent feature of parliamentary workplaces. At the same time, the data shows that confidence is less consistent when viewed at the system level. Trust in processes, consistency of decision-making and the predictable application of standards is lower than trust within teams. Perceptions of leadership capability vary significantly across workplaces, particularly in relation to people-management skills, workload management and follow-through under pressure. While many leaders are seen to behave positively, gaps in consistency contribute to uneven workplace experiences.

Workload pressure emerges as a persistent structural challenge. Many MOP(S) Act employees report working above capacity and experiencing sustained increases in workload, reflecting the inherently demanding nature of parliamentary work and the constraints of small, fast-paced teams. These pressures intersect with psychosocial risks and contribute to fatigue, stress and variation in wellbeing outcomes, even where relationships remain positive.

The report also identifies mixed confidence in how unacceptable behaviour is addressed. Awareness of reporting pathways is generally high, yet fewer participants feel fully safe when raising concerns or confident that consequences of unacceptable behaviour are applied consistently. The establishment of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC) represents an important step in strengthening independent oversight and accountability, although awareness of and trust in the new framework are still developing.

Work health and safety systems support a wide range of diverse and geographically dispersed workplaces and reporting shows active identification of physical hazards and incidents. However psychosocial risks, while evident in workload and stress indicators, are less frequently reported through formal hazard channels, indicating an ongoing need to strengthen recognition and management of these risks.

This report does not prescribe solutions or assign responsibility. Instead, it provides a balanced and evidence-based account of both the strengths that sustain parliamentary work and the pressures that challenge consistency, safety and trust. While CPWs operate in a uniquely demanding environment, they are underpinned by strong professional values, high capability and a shared commitment to public service. This first consolidated report establishes a foundation for continued reflection, monitoring and informed dialogue about how parliamentary workplaces can evolve to remain safe, respectful and effective over time.

# Reporting requirement

This report responds to the following requirement of the *Parliamentary Workplace Support Service Act 2023* (PWSS Act):

## s22. Reports by the PWSS

(1) The PWSS may prepare reports about matters relating to the functions of the PWSS, IPSC or Chief Executive officer (CEO).

(2) Without limiting subsection (1), at least once each financial year, the PWSS must prepare a report that contains information relating to the following:

- (a) gender and diversity characteristics of parliamentarians and MOPS employees;
- (b) gender equality in relation to remuneration for parliamentarians and MOPS employees;
- (c) the employment of persons under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 and the engagement of designated workers;
- (d) progress in the prevention of and responses to, alleged relevant conduct that is engaged in:
  - (i) in the course of a core participant performing duties as a core participant; or
  - (ii) at places covered by paragraph (a) or (b) of the definition of **Commonwealth parliamentary workplace** in section 5;
- (e) the culture and performance of workplaces covered by paragraph (a) or (b) of the definition of **Commonwealth parliamentary workplace** in section 5;
- (f) work health and safety matters connected with the duties of parliamentarians, MOPS employees and designated workers;
- (g) conduct complaints and conduct issue referrals received and conduct issues dealt with, by the IPSC, including general information about:
  - (i) the investigation of conduct issues; and
  - (ii) any actions taken as a result of those investigations.

# The 2025 Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces Culture Survey

During 2025, the PWSS administered surveys to better understand the perceptions and experiences of current CPW participants.



## Parliamentarians

**18** of **226**

responded to the **culture survey**



**59** of **226**

responded to the **diversity survey**



## Parliamentary department staff



**103** of **204**

Department of the House of Representatives responded to the **culture survey**



**87** of **200**

Department of the Senate responded to the **culture survey**



**393** of **1302**

Department of Parliamentary Services responded to the **culture survey**



**18** of **76**

Parliamentary Budget Office responded to the **culture survey**

## MOP(S) Act employees

**360** of **2,583**

responded to the **culture survey**



## Designated workers

**98** of **~278**

Comcar drivers responded to the **culture survey**

**3\***

AFP Officers based in APH responded to the **culture survey**

**3\***

Media professionals based in APH responded to the **culture survey**

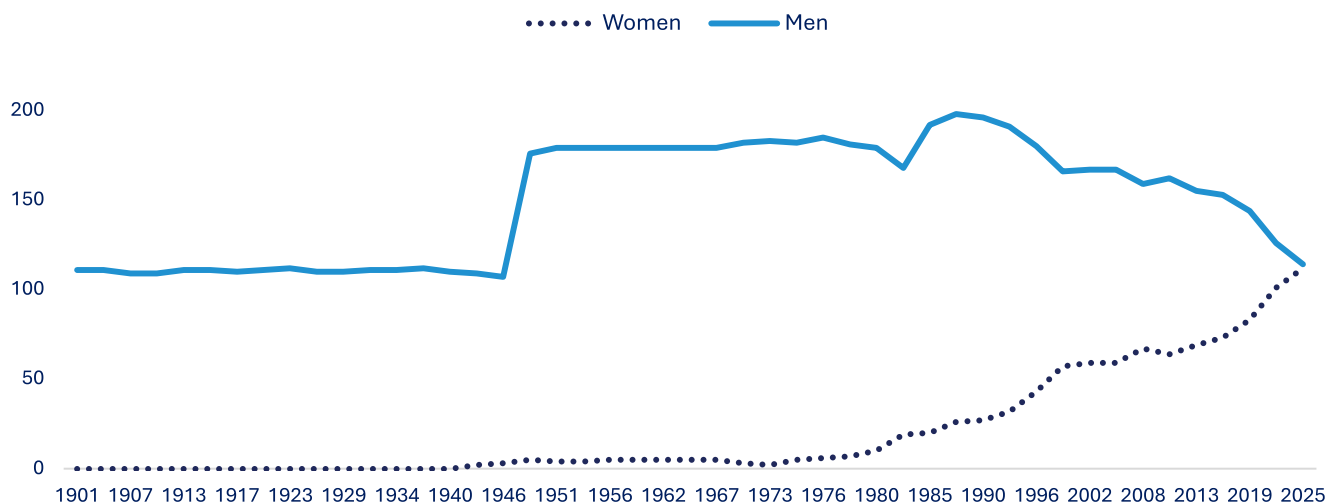
*\* of an unknown total pool responded  
~ approx. as of December 2025*

# Gender and diversity characteristics of parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees

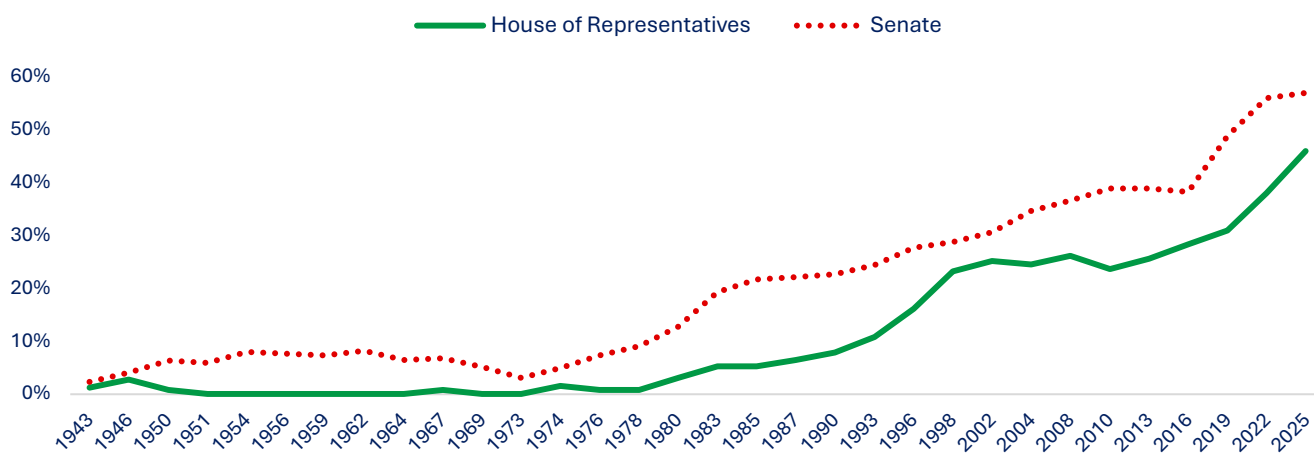
## Gender of parliamentarians

The first Australian Parliament in 1902 was all-male. Since then, the gender balance has changed completely and now almost mirrors the proportions of women and men in Australia's population.<sup>1</sup> By the opening of the 48th Parliament in 2025, women comprised a historical high of 49.6% of parliamentarians (**Figure 1**). **Figure 2** shows that the Senate has consistently had a higher proportion of female representatives than the House of Representatives.

**Figure 1: Number of female and male parliamentarians 1901 to 2025**



**Figure 2: Percentage of women in each chamber of parliament by year of parliament**



As at 30 June 2025, there were 226 parliamentarians of which 114 (50.4 %) were men and 112 (49.6%) were women. In the House of Representatives 46% of members were women while 57% of senators were women. Of the 82 parliamentarians who held a parliamentary office (such as Cabinet membership, a ministry, presiding officer or committee chair role), the distribution between men and women was 50% each.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) publishes rankings of the number of women in national parliaments around the world. In 2025<sup>2</sup>, the IPU reported that women held 27.2% of national parliamentary seats globally. Australia was ranked ninth but, in comparison to other G20 countries, it ranked second (behind Mexico) in overall representation of women in parliament. The Australian Senate has the highest representation of women of any chamber in G20 countries, at 57% women.

1 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/2024>  
 2 [Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments | IPU Parline: global data on national parliaments](#)

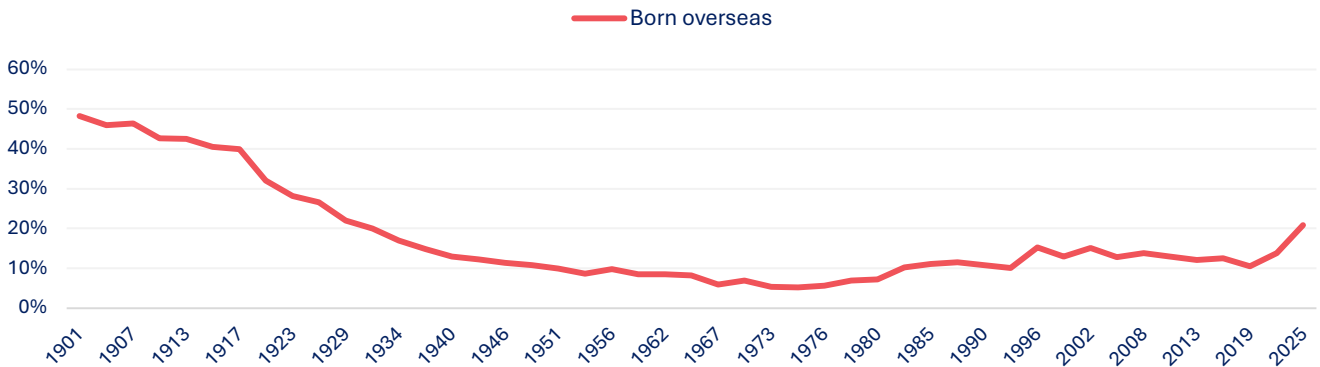


## Diversity of parliamentarians

Measuring the degree of diversity is challenging as this information is generally provided voluntarily. For this report, diversity information was collected by a voluntary survey at the beginning of the 48th Parliament, which had a 26% response rate. This data was supplemented by publicly available data collected through the Parliamentary Handbook.

Early parliaments were dominated by representatives born in the United Kingdom and Ireland, with almost half of parliamentarians overseas born in 1901. This reflects the strongly Anglo-Celtic composition of Australia at the time of Federation. Over time, the proportion of overseas born parliamentarians fell and eventually began to rise again, but with a more diverse spread of birth countries across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas (see **Figure 3**).

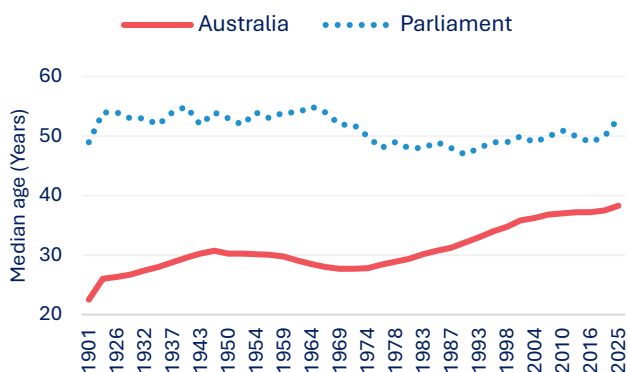
**Figure 3: Proportion of parliamentarians born overseas by parliament year 1901 to 2025**



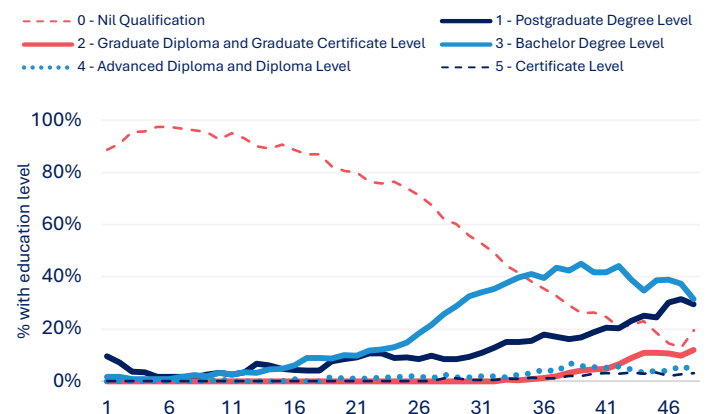
Of the parliamentarians who provided their information in 2025, 71% were born in Australia, while 12% were born in Europe (primarily England and Germany). Fewer parliamentarians were born in Asia (3%), Africa (2%) and the Americas (2%), with 7% not stated. This indicates that parliamentarians are more likely to be Australian born compared with the general population, where, as of June 2024, 68.5% of Australians were born in Australia. Among the parliamentarians who provided their ancestry information, 72% reported ancestries linked to Europe, 13% linked to Asia (including China, India and Pakistan) and 12% to Oceania, i.e. Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region.

The median age of parliamentarians has remained at around 50 since Federation, compared to a population median age that has risen from 23 in 1901 to 38 in 2024, as shown in **Figure 4**. This trend is broadly comparable with the age, relative to general population, of parliamentarians in other countries.

**Figure 4: Median age of parliamentarians compared the Australian public by year of parliament 1901 to 2025**



**Figure 5: Parliamentary education levels 1901 to 2025**



Historical records of the education levels of parliamentarians were limited in the early phases of Australia's history, with only 10% of parliamentarians in the first Australian Parliament publicly recording their education, compared with 97% by the 47th Parliament in 2022. In 2025, 95% of parliamentarians held a bachelor's degree or higher and 37% had postgraduate degrees. By comparison, only 33% of Australians aged 15–74 held a degree in 2024 (see **Figure 5**). The fields of tertiary study most reported by parliamentarians (comprising a total of 62%) were humanities, social sciences and law.

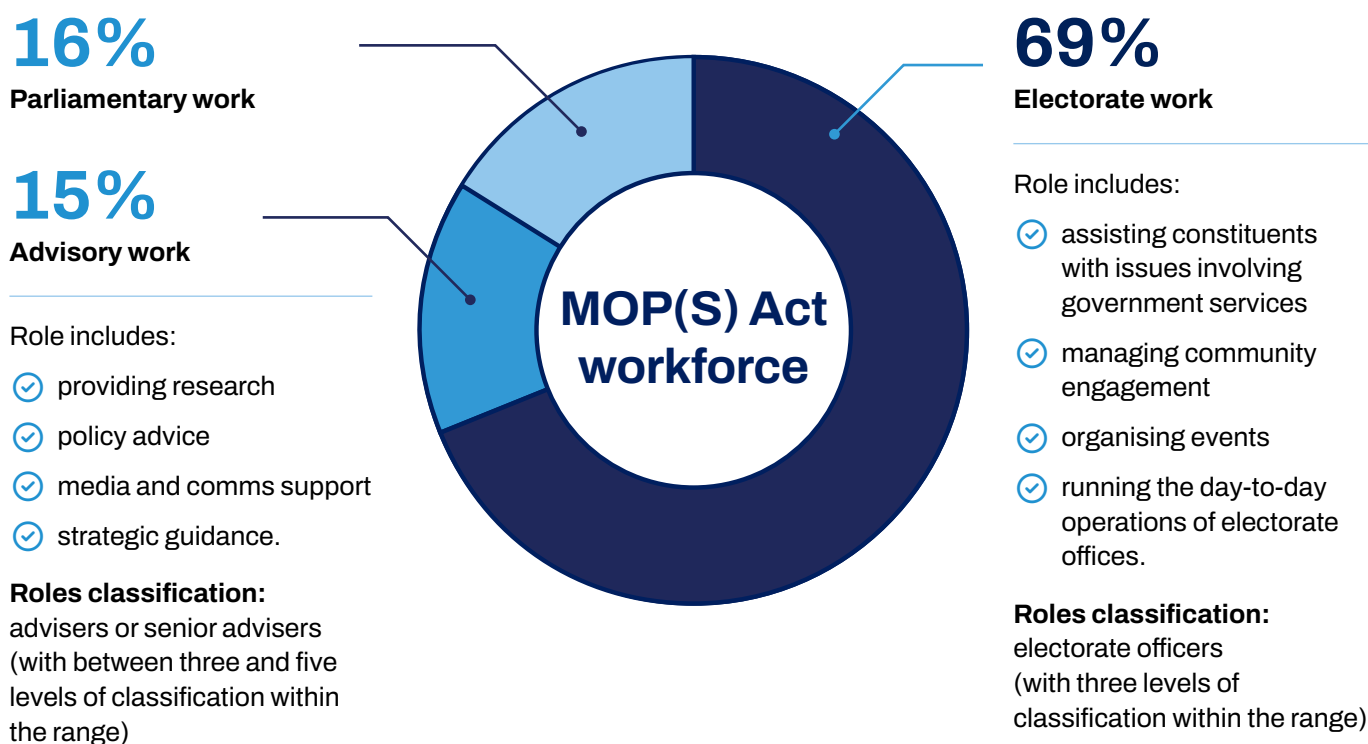
Of the 56 parliamentarians who provided information on their socio-economic background through the PWSS' 2025 diversity collection program, 46% indicated that one or both parents had at least a bachelor's degree level of education, compared with an Australian average of 28-32%. Of parliamentarians' parental occupations, 51% were employed in high-skill groups such as managers or professionals, compared with an Australian average of 30-35%. As at 30 June 2025, 12.5% of parliamentarians who provided diversity information reported living with a long-term health condition, mental illness or disability that affected their participation in routine tasks. In comparison, approximately 21.4% of Australian live with such a disability.

Among parliamentarians who offered diversity information, 36% reported providing unpaid care or assistance to family members or others because of disability, long-term health conditions, or problems related to old age. This is significantly higher compared with the 22.5% of Australians who report providing unpaid care or assistance to family or friends. The difference between genders reporting caring responsibilities was minimal (36% of women and 35% of men) but the difference between members of the House of Representatives (31%) and senators (43%) was significant.

In the 48th parliament, 9 parliamentarians (approximately 4%) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, including 2 members of the House of Representatives and 7 senators. This reflects the broader Australian population, of which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up 3.8%.

## Roles and diversity of MOP(S) Act employees

MOP(S) Act employees work in the offices of federal parliamentarians to help them perform their duties. These staff are not part of the Australian Public Service; they are employed under a separate legislated framework that reflects the unique nature of parliamentary work. MOP(S) Act employees support parliamentarians in three main areas:



MOP(S) Act staff can be employed on an **ongoing, non-ongoing or casual basis** to meet operational needs. Casual employees are paid an hourly rate plus a 25% loading instead of receiving the allowances and leave entitlements that are payable to other employees. As at 30 June 2025, there were 1792 ongoing, 183 non-ongoing and 305 casual MOP(S) Act employees. In the 2024–25 financial year, there were 2,491 commencements for MOP(S) Act employees, of which 1,672 were casual engagements.



Compared to parliamentarians, there is limited information available in relation to the diversity of MOP(S) Act employees, but recent data collections (including voluntary self-reporting on ancestry and disability) provide the following insights:

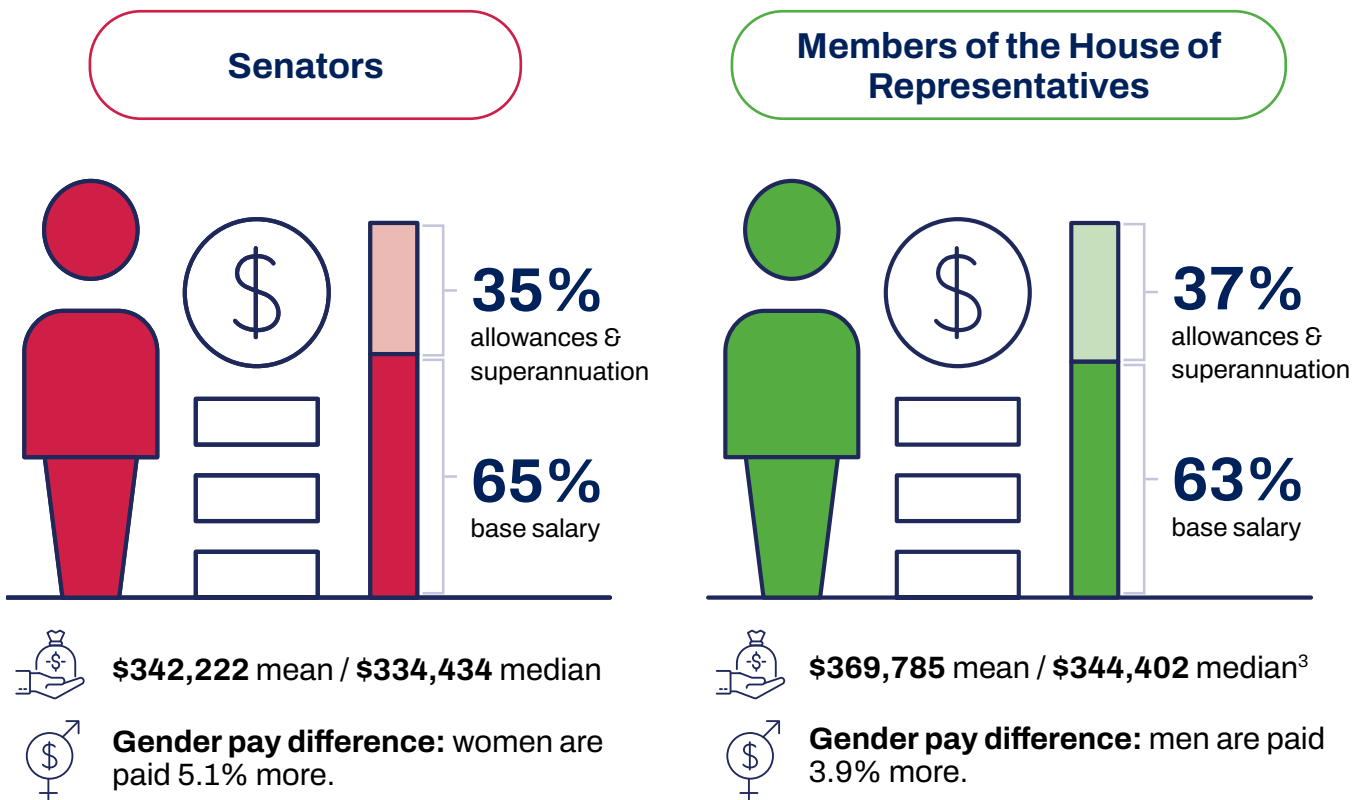
- **Gender:** women represent 57% of all MOP(S) Act employees and men 43% (reporting of genders other than male or female is less than 1%).
- **Age:** female MOP(S) Act employees are aged 42.6 years on average and male 39.6 years. Most employees are under the age of 50; however, a notable proportion are aged 50 and over (women 36% and men 35%).
- **Nationality and ancestry:** 86% of MOP(S) Act employees were born in Oceania. The remaining cohort is composed of employees born in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. Self-reported ancestry data shows significant representation of Australian, English, Irish and Scottish heritage alongside a broad array of other cultural backgrounds. Employees born outside Australia are more likely to enter the MOP(S) Act workforce later in their careers and often begin in electorate-based positions.
- **Indigenous representation:** approximately 2.3% of the MOP(S) Act workforce identifies as Indigenous. Most Indigenous employees work in electorate offices and a significant proportion are in their early careers. A notable characteristic of this cohort, which is explored later in the report, is that although many Indigenous staff report a strong sense of belonging in their immediate workplace, their trust in the broader institution of parliament is significantly lower than the general MOP(S) Act cohort.
- **Disability:** Of those MOP(S) Act employees who volunteered data, 17% identify as living with disability, slightly below the national estimate of 21.4%. Employees with disability are more likely to work in lower-classified electorate roles with declining representation at higher classifications, which may indicate structural barriers to career progression into more senior roles. Compared with the rest of the workforce, employees with disability report stronger confidence in the support provided by their employing parliamentarian, yet they also report higher exposure to unacceptable behaviour.
- **Caring responsibilities:** Of those who responded, 20% of MOP(S) Act employees provide unpaid care to a family member or another person due to disability, long term health conditions or age-related needs. Caring responsibilities are more common among employees aged 45 and older and occur across all classification streams including senior advisers. This distribution highlights the importance of both flexibility and consistency in workload management for employees dealing with complex responsibilities both at work and at home.
- **Education:** educational attainment data of MOP(S) Act employees was not collected for this report. However, information about the occupation and education levels of their parents indicates a broad spread of occupations (including managers, professionals, technicians, trades workers, clerical roles and labouring roles) and education levels, suggesting that MOP(S) Act careers attract individuals from varied family contexts and educational backgrounds.

## Gender equality in parliamentarians' remuneration

Parliamentarians have a base salary applied equally to every member and senator regardless of their gender, age, background or length of service. As at 30 June 2025, the base salary was \$233,660 per year. The consistent application of this base rate ensures that pay for the core parliamentary role is uniform across the chambers and does not vary between individuals who perform the same fundamental duties. In addition to the base salary, all parliamentarians receive:

- travel-related allowances and support arrangements
- superannuation (typically 15.4% of their total salary)
- an electorate allowance to recognise the costs incurred servicing constituents and performing electorate duties.

Total remuneration can vary due to these factors as well as the extra payment parliamentarians receive if they hold formal offices with additional responsibilities (see **Table 1**). It is predominantly these office-holding responsibilities that account for the differences in total remuneration across the parliamentary cohort. Because office-holding varies over time and is determined by parliamentary processes rather than individual attributes, these differences do not reflect unequal pay for comparable work, but rather the specific duties carried out by the parliamentarian during the reporting period. The data below was provided by respective chamber departments.



3 Member's remuneration data is based on annualised figures, while Senator's data is based on accrual figures

**Table 1: Elements of parliamentary remuneration**

Payment / Allowance	Purpose	Amount/Rate
<b>Base salary</b>	Core remuneration for being a parliamentarian	\$233,660 per annum
<b>Electorate allowance</b>	Supports costs of servicing constituents and electorate duties	\$39,700 per annum (all) + \$7,500 or \$17,400 for large electorates (for Members)
<b>Office holder's salary</b>	Recognises additional responsibilities of holding parliamentary or leadership offices	% of base salary (e.g. Speaker = 75 % (\$175,250); Leader of Opposition = 85 % (\$198,620))
<b>Vehicle provision or additional electorate allowance</b>	Provides transport for electorate and parliamentary duties; additional electorate allowance if vehicle declined	Commonwealth-funded vehicle lease, managed through the Department of Finance, or \$19,500 per annum (if opting out of vehicle)
<b>Internet and telephone services</b>	Ensures connectivity for parliamentary work from private residences	Actual costs reimbursed (no fixed cap)
<b>Travel expenses</b>	Covers cost of travel for official parliamentary business (e.g., home base to Canberra)	\$0.85 per km (private vehicle allowance)
<b>Travel allowances (domestic)</b>	Compensation for accommodation and meals when travelling for parliamentary business	Rates per night vary by location (e.g. Canberra \$310; Sydney up to \$469)
<b>Work expenses</b>	Covers operational costs incurred in conducting parliamentary business	Variable, prescribed by regulation
<b>Other public resources</b>	Provides goods, services, or facilities needed for parliamentary work	Variable, prescribed by other regulation

**Note:** Member's remuneration data is based on annualised figures, while Senator's data is based on accrual figures

**Table 2: Senators' gender remuneration data, including gender comparison, 24-25 (Accrual)**

Item	Gender	Base salary	Electorate allowance	Office holder allowance	Superannuation	Total remuneration <sup>4</sup>
<b>Average</b>	Female	\$222,601	\$40,868	\$52,500	\$40,859	\$349,773
	Male	\$219,476	\$41,763	\$43,242	\$38,844	\$332,842
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$221,244</b>	<b>\$41,257</b>	<b>\$48,826</b>	<b>\$39,972</b>	<b>\$342,422</b>
<b>Median</b>	Female	\$225,875	\$38,377	\$37,895	\$39,590	\$337,218
	Male	\$225,875	\$38,377	\$31,630	\$38,612	\$327,718
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$225,875</b>	<b>\$38,377</b>	<b>\$33,178</b>	<b>\$39,312</b>	<b>\$334,434</b>

**Note:** Member's remuneration data is based on annualised figures, while Senator's data is based on accrual figures

**Table 3: Members of the House of Representatives remuneration data, including gender comparison, 24-25 (Annualised)**

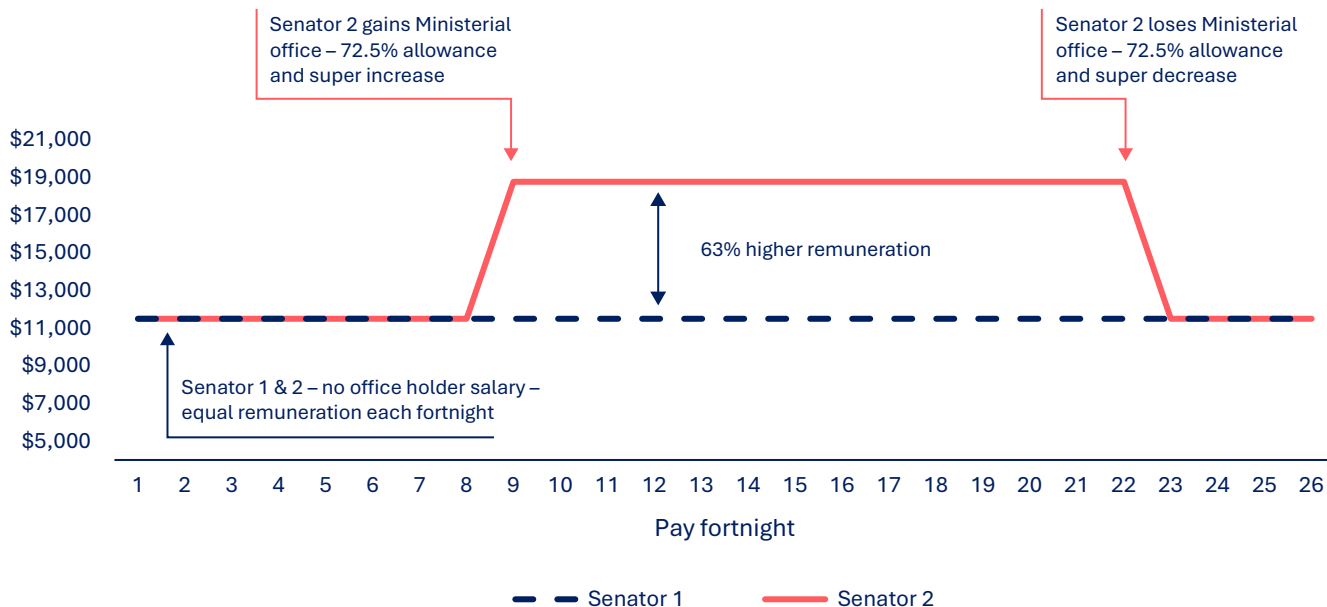
Item	Gender	Base salary	Electorate allowance	Office holder allowance	Superannuation	Total remuneration
<b>Average</b>	Female	\$233,660	\$44,083	\$44,142	\$39,021	\$360,907
	Male	\$233,660	\$45,133	\$54,788	\$41,898	\$375,479
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$233,660</b>	<b>\$44,723</b>	<b>\$50,628</b>	<b>\$40,774</b>	<b>\$369,785</b>
<b>Median</b>	Female	\$233,660	\$39,700	\$19,870	\$37,964	\$341,584
	Male	\$233,660	\$39,700	\$26,875	\$39,943	\$347,103
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$233,660</b>	<b>\$39,700</b>	<b>\$25,710</b>	<b>\$39,044</b>	<b>\$344,402</b>

**Note:** Member's remuneration data is based on annualised figures, while Senator's data is based on accrual figures

4 The remuneration items will not equal the total remuneration. Each item is the applicable average or median. They are independent of each other.

Parliamentarians receive their base salary as an equal amount each fortnight and other non-variable allowances are also paid with some predictability across the year. However, office holder allowances comprise a significant component of some parliamentarians' remuneration and can be reassigned at any time, making parliamentary salaries potentially volatile, even within a single year. An indicative example of a single year of 26 fortnightly pay cycles for 2 senators is shown in **Figure 6** to illustrate this effect

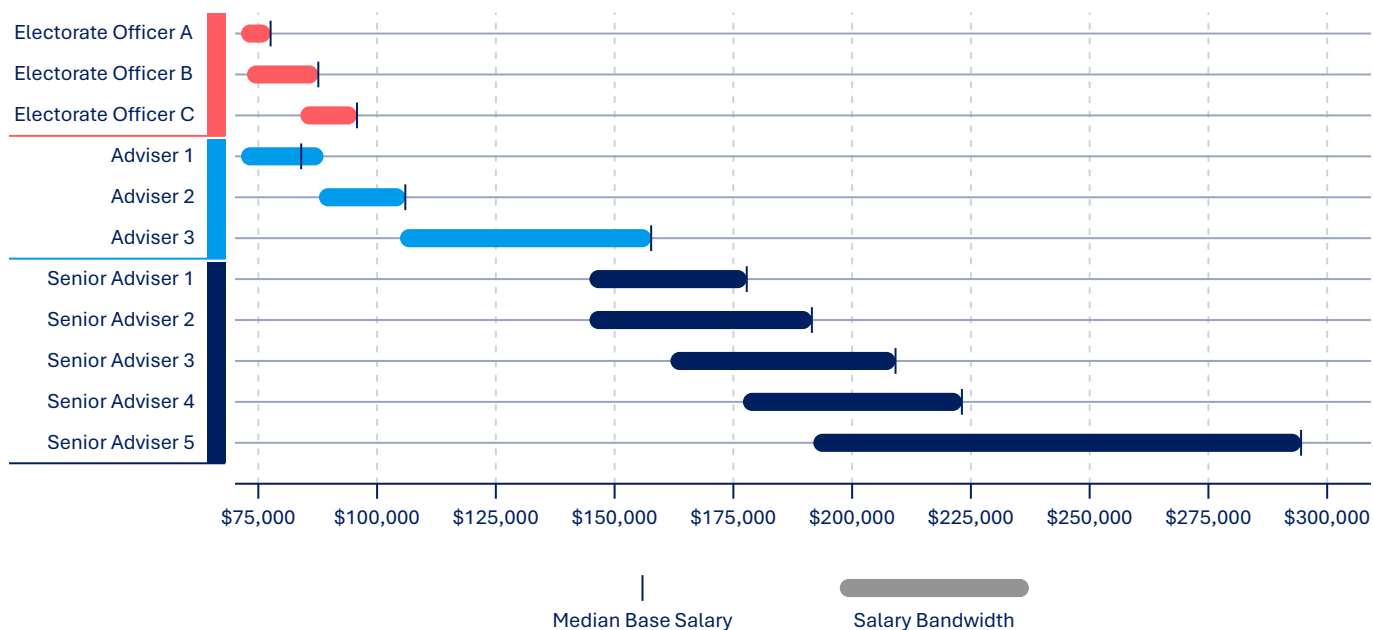
**Figure 6: Fortnightly senatorial remuneration examples: pay per fortnight**



## Gender equality in MOP(S) Act employee remuneration

MOP(S) Act employee remuneration is structured around classification-based salary bands that reflect the different responsibilities performed. Each classification has a defined salary range and employees may be engaged at any point within that range based on their skills and experience, as shown in **Figure 7**. Total remuneration for MOP(S) Act employees includes base salary (which accounts, on average, for about two thirds of total remuneration), allowances (electorate staff receive an Electorate Staff Allowance of between \$2,237 and \$40,267 annually and advisers can receive a Personal Staff Allowance of between \$27,710 and \$35,996 annually). Some senior staff receive a private-plated vehicle allowance. These allowances are fixed amounts that apply to positional duties and expectations. Superannuation is paid at a rate of 15.4 percent of total remuneration for all MOP(S) Act employees.

**Figure 7: MOP(S) Act classification levels, salary bands and median salary at 30 June 2025**



Average remuneration across the workforce was \$117,018 and the median was \$105,273. Men had an average remuneration of \$118,638 and women had an average remuneration of \$115,839 which results in a gender pay gap of 2.2% in favour of men. This gap is within the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) benchmark range used to assess natural variation (+/- 5%) and is significantly below the national average gender pay gap for total remuneration. A more detailed breakdown aligned to ABS reporting methods is in **Table 4** and analysis of mean remuneration across all classification levels by gender (aligned to WGEA reporting methods) is in **Table 5**.

**Table 4: Remuneration percentiles and amounts for MOP(S) Act employees by gender 2024-2025 FY**

Gender	Min	P5	P25	Median	P75	P95	Max
<b>Female</b>	\$629	\$10,170	\$55,313	\$106,286	\$150,195	\$273,656	\$447,681
<b>Male</b>	\$404	\$7,021	\$46,227	\$103,728	\$160,158	\$285,559	\$479,935
<b>All</b>	<b>\$404</b>	<b>\$8,840</b>	<b>\$51,274</b>	<b>\$105,273</b>	<b>\$152,868</b>	<b>\$277,165</b>	<b>\$479,935</b>

**Table 5: Average total remuneration of MOP(S) Act employees by classification and gender 2024-2025 FY**

Classification	Male avg	Female avg	Gender pay gap
Electorate Officer A	\$45,476	\$52,591	-15.6%
Electorate Officer B	\$82,650	\$89,946	-8.8%
Electorate Officer C	\$110,656	\$115,366	-4.3%
<b>Electorate Officer average</b>	<b>\$69,639</b>	<b>\$78,996</b>	<b>-13.4%</b>
Adviser 1	\$105,795	\$94,457	10.7%
Adviser 2	\$130,250	\$126,593	2.8%
Adviser 3	\$172,699	\$168,083	2.7%
<b>Adviser average</b>	<b>\$154,403</b>	<b>\$146,758</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
Senior Adviser 1	\$243,694	\$235,390	3.4%
Senior Adviser 2	\$270,128	\$255,446	5.4%
Senior Adviser 3	\$283,326	\$268,313	5.3%
Senior Adviser 4	\$291,254	\$300,357	-3.1%
Senior Adviser 5	\$345,664	\$367,035	-6.2%
<b>Senior Adviser average</b>	<b>\$266,814</b>	<b>\$255,429</b>	<b>4.3%</b>

## Termination of MOP(S) Act employees

In the 2024–25 financial year, there were 2,448 separations from MOP(S) Act employment. The most common reason for termination was the end of a contract, followed by employee resignations, loss of office resulting from the federal election, and loss of office due to ministerial reshuffles.

Before terminating a MOP(S) Act employee's employment, the MOP(S) Act requires that the employing parliamentarian must consult with the PWSS to ensure that their decision is fair, well-informed and consistent with safe and respectful workplace practices. During the 2024-25 financial year, there were 6 instances of parliamentarians failing to consult with the PWSS prior to a MOP(S) Act employee's termination.

# Culture of CPWs

CPWs are diverse and geographically dispersed, encompassing a range of physical, social and operational environments. These include Parliament House in Canberra, electorate offices located across metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Australia and mobile work settings where staff and parliamentarians travel for official duties.

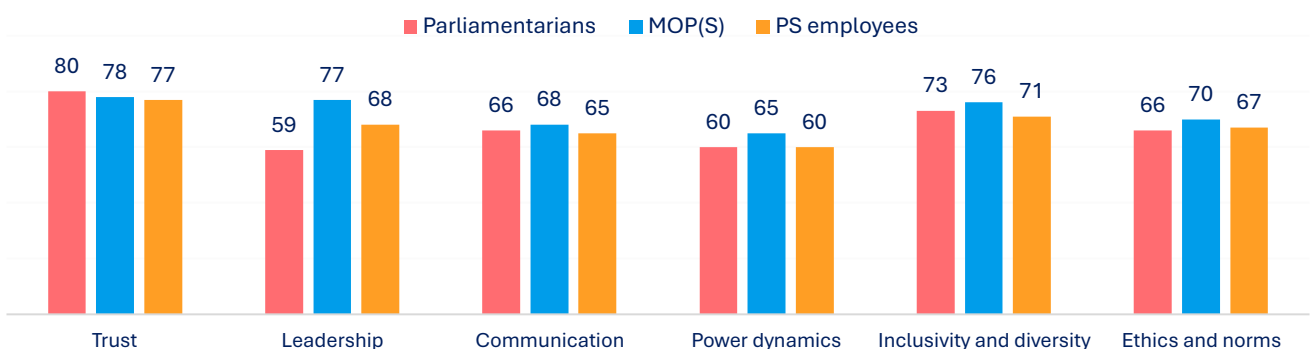
Workplace culture in CPWs is shaped by the attitudes, behaviours and everyday interactions that occur across parliamentary offices, parliamentary departments and the broader precinct. Parliamentary workplaces are characterised by small teams, high interdependence, irregular hours and heightened public and political scrutiny. These features introduce unique pressures and increase variation in individual workplace experiences, reinforcing the need for a clear and repeatable assessment methodology. Despite these contextual differences, many core dimensions of workplace culture can still be observed and assessed in ways that align with broader public-sector and organisational practice.

This report and the survey that informed it measure culture through the perspectives of parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees, parliamentary and public service staff and related professionals against a comprehensive framework consisting of 6 pillars:

- **Trust** reflects the confidence individuals have in their colleagues and in the systems that support workplace safety and fairness. It is shaped by perceptions of competence, goodwill and integrity. Trust strengthens when people see consistent behaviour and fair treatment and it declines when uncertainty, inconsistent decisions or a lack of transparency arise.
- **Leadership** behaviour sets the tone for respectful and professional interactions. Strong leadership behaviours include sound judgment, clear expectations, emotional awareness and the ability to provide support during periods of high workload.
- **Communication** is essential to creating workplace cultures where efforts are coordinated, risks are understood and managed and there is clarity around expectations and the alignment of individual responsibilities to shared goals. Communication is particularly important given the pace at which parliamentary offices operate to ensure that timely and accurate information sharing underpins decisions and actions.
- **Power dynamics** reflect differences in authority, job security and influence within parliamentary settings. Employment relationships in CPWs can feature steep hierarchies especially when small teams are working directly with a senior adviser or employing parliamentarian. Healthy power dynamics enable people to speak up, share concerns and contribute ideas.
- **Inclusiveness and diversity** are the extent to which individuals feel valued and respected regardless of their background, identity or lived experience. Inclusive workplaces encourage a range of perspectives and strengthen decision making. In parliamentary settings, inclusivity is particularly important because offices interact daily with diverse communities and manage issues that affect a wide range of people.
- **Ethics and norms** relate to the behavioural standards that guide daily interactions and the extent to which those standards are understood and upheld. These include professionalism, fairness, courtesy and responsible conduct. Strong ethical norms help prevent misconduct and create clarity about what behaviour is acceptable.

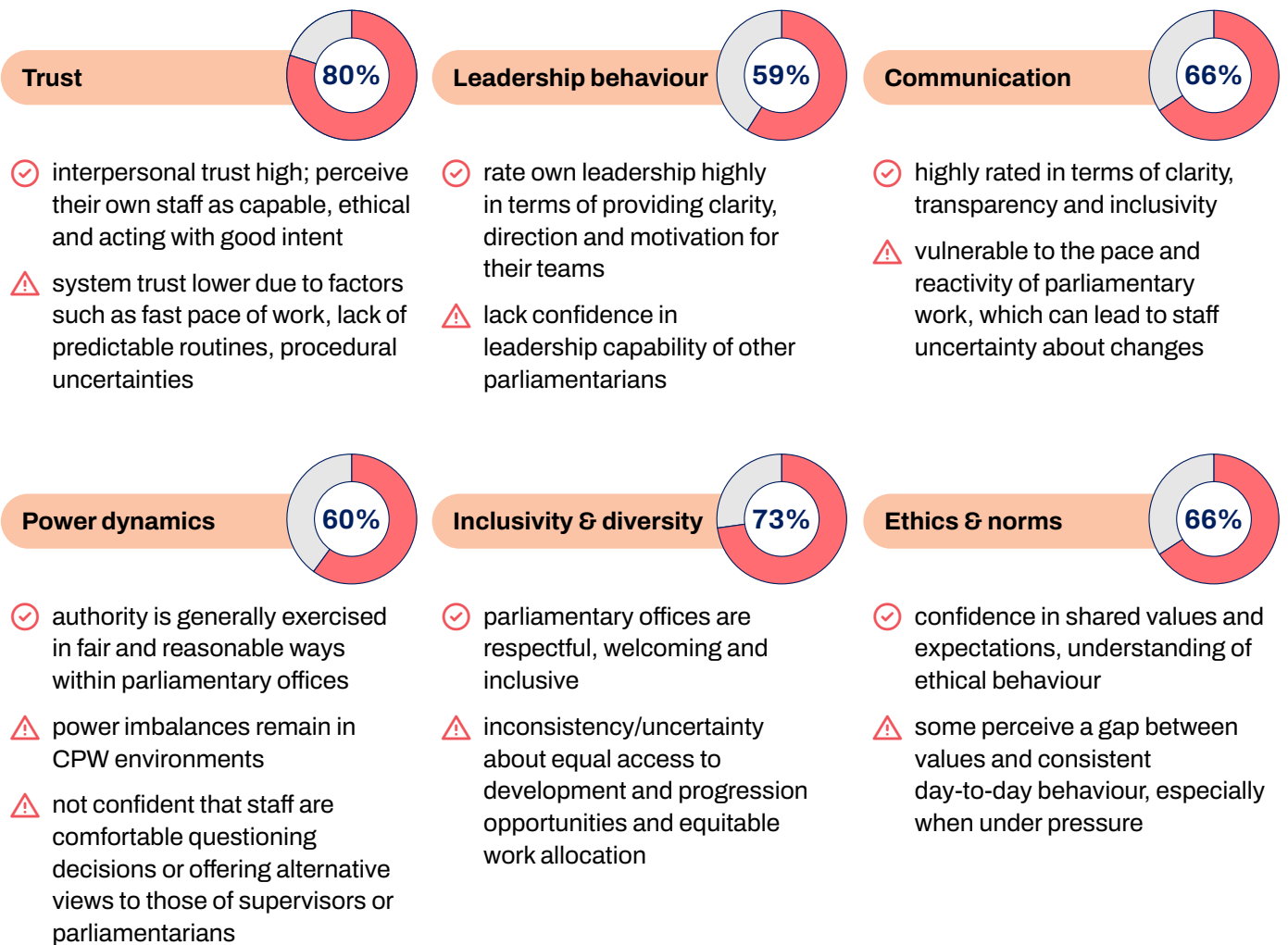
Figure 8 shows the average scores to a set of questions related to each pillar.

Figure 8: Overall perceptions of CPW culture by cohort



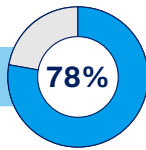


## Parliamentarians' perceptions of CPW culture



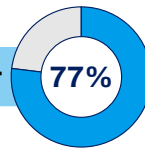
## MOP(S) Act employees' perceptions of CPW culture

### Trust



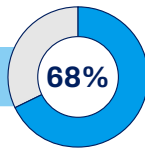
- ✔ high interpersonal trust; confidence in colleagues' honesty, predictability, care and capability, strengthened by clear instructions, timely follow-through and equal enforcement of standards
- ⚠ trust is strongest when expectations and changes are explained clearly; when this is uneven, predictability drops even if relationships remain positive

### Leadership behaviour



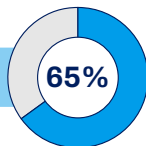
- ✔ leadership is rated positively where integrity and competence combine; this sentiment is strongest when leaders keep commitments, own mistakes, balance workloads transparently and enable contribution
- ⚠ leadership capability varies significantly across offices; gaps appear in people-management skills, consistent delegation, timing of communication and accountability

### Communication



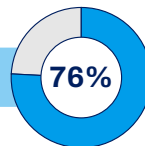
- ✔ inclusive, respectful and generally effective communication, especially where leaders restate priorities in plain language and invite questions without judgement
- ⚠ communication becomes vulnerable under pace and workload pressure, leading to rushed updates, incomplete information and role confusion

### Power dynamics



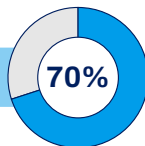
- ✔ staff experience fair authority where input is shared, respectful challenge is encouraged and standards are applied consistently
- ⚠ power imbalances are a persistent feature of MOP(S) Act environments, driven by small teams, personalised authority and employment dependence on a single parliamentarian

### Inclusivity & diversity



- ✔ strong sense of respect, belonging, connection, team cohesion and interpersonal inclusion is consistently high across roles
- ⚠ lower confidence in contribution and progression, staff feel diverse viewpoints are not always sought and access to stretch tasks or opportunities can be informal or uneven

### Ethics & norms



- ✔ clear understanding of expected values and professional standards, with strong everyday civility and fairness within teams
- ⚠ inconsistent application of standards; consequences for poor behaviour are perceived as uneven, particularly where authority or status influence whether issues are addressed
- ⚠ integrity signals vary across offices; some experience honest, responsible behaviour while others report selective responsibility-taking, variable follow-through and tolerance of misconduct

## MOP(S) Act employees' perceptions of CPW strengths and weaknesses

As part of the 2025 cultural survey, MOP(S) Act employees were asked to identify the greatest strengths and priorities for improvement in their workplace cultures. Their responses are summarised below (with the proportion of responses that contained this topic):

Strengths	Improvement priorities
<p><b>1 Team-first mindset (40%)</b> Teams collaborate, share knowledge, help one another during busy times and treat colleagues with respect.</p> <p><b>2 Shared purpose and service orientation (22%)</b> There is a clear vision or sense of mission, serving the community and making a positive difference.</p> <p><b>3 Approachable leadership (20%)</b> Where leaders are accessible, trust their staff and minimise power differentials, staff see culture and performance benefits</p>	<p><b>1 Resourcing, workload and wellbeing pressure (27%)</b> MOP(S) Act staff of all role types seek more staffing or resources to reduce workload pressures and improve work-life balance.</p> <p><b>2 Managerial capability (25%)</b> Electorate officers identify a need for managers to set clear expectations, lead consistently and implement systems of accountability. Personal staff seek stronger middle management skills and improved communication. Many respondents felt that standardised procedures, resources and tools could help.</p> <p><b>3 Consequences for unacceptable behaviour (16%)</b> Some respondents seek more consistently applied consequences for people who engage in bullying and unfair treatment of others.</p>

## Motivation: Why MOP(S) Act employees join (and leave) parliamentary roles

When asked why they became MOP(S) Act employees, intrinsic motivators such as personal beliefs, values or interests were identified as the primary reasons (**Figure 9**). Extrinsic motivators such as pay, location and job availability were less cited.

**Figure 9: MOP(S) Act employee reason for joining**



Although the reasons for staying in or leaving MOP(S) Act roles were not obtained through the survey, it did identify that approximately half (48%) of employees who responded intend to remain in the workplace for at least 3 years, while 8% indicated they intend to leave as soon as possible and a further 15% within 12 months (see **Figure 10**).

**Figure 10: MOP(S) Act employee retention perceptions**



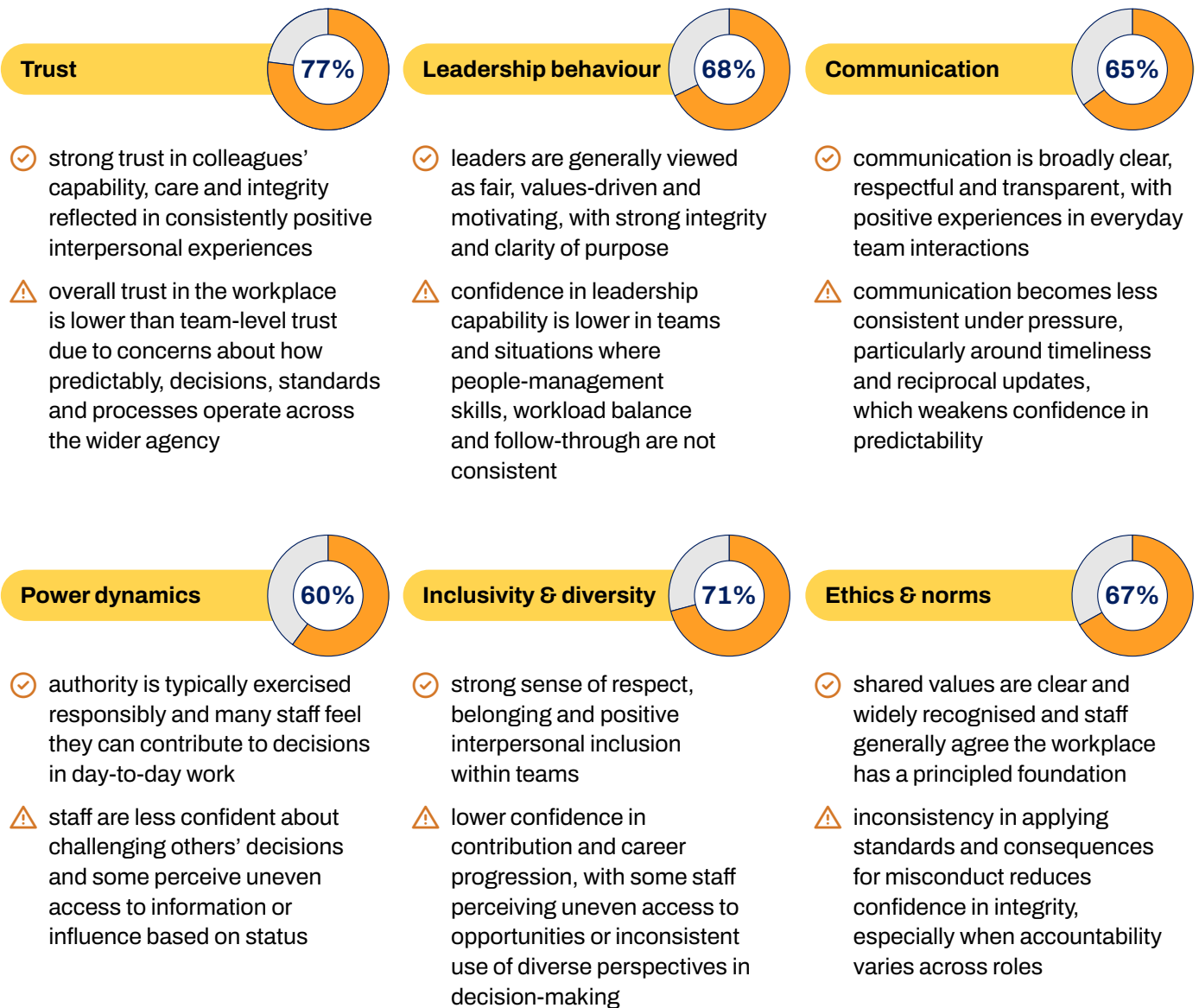
Within the parliamentary environment, 5 federal government agencies work in and around Parliament House to

support the functioning of parliament, parliamentarians and their staff:

- Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) provides and manages professional support, advice and facilities to Parliament and parliamentarians.
- Department of the Senate (DoS) provides secretariat support for the Senate and its committees and advice and support to senators.
- Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) supports the House of Representatives by providing advice and services and engaging with the community.
- Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) provides independent and non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle, fiscal policy and the financial implications of proposals.
- Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) provides a range of services to parliamentarians, their staff and other CPW participants to support building and maintaining safe and respectful workplaces.

Together, these agencies comprise the parliamentary and public service CPW employee cohort. Their perceptions of CPW culture are summarised below.

## Parliamentary and public service employees' perceptions of CPW culture





## Designated workers perceptions of CPW culture

In addition to the parliamentary, MOP(S) Act and parliamentary/public service cohorts, a range of designated workers were invited to share their views about working in CPWs through a survey that was circulated amongst COMCAR drivers, Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers and media representatives based at Parliament House. The response from AFP and media officers (fewer than 10 in total) was too low to be considered statistically significant and has been excluded from this report. There were 98 responses from COMCAR drivers, a significant proportion of this workforce, which enables a high level of confidence in the representativeness of their views.

COMCAR drivers who responded shared predominantly positive cultural perceptions, with 91% reporting that their interactions with parliamentarians are constructive and respectful, 83% perceiving integrity levels to be high in CPWs and 74% observing consistently high standards of conduct. Communication was generally viewed as clear and respectful (67%), although views about the transparency and relevance of information shared was lower at 48%. Respectful use of authority is acknowledged by 58% of drivers. They also noted occasional inconsistency in how expectations are applied and expressed a desire for greater recognition of their operational expertise. Inclusive behaviour is viewed favourably, with 67% perceiving respectful treatment of people from different backgrounds and 70% agreeing that diverse perspectives are valued.

## Behaviour in CPWs

Parliamentarians who responded to the culture survey reported relatively high levels of exposure to behaviour that is in contravention of the Behaviour Codes and Standards for CPWs. Notably, 39% reported witnessing or experiencing bullying over the past 12 months and 22% reported witnessing or experiencing harassment. **Table 6** provides data in greater detail. Interpretations of this data vary as the respondent sample size for parliamentarians was small and this survey question did not require respondents to specify how or where in the CPW environment they were exposed to

these behaviours.

**Table 6: Parliamentarians’ experience of unacceptable behaviours in the last 12 months**

	Bullying	Harassment	Discrimination	Sexual harassment	Unequal treatment
<b>% Yes – witnessed or experienced</b>	39%	22%	22%	17%	33%

Parliamentarians who responded demonstrated a high level of awareness of unacceptable behaviours and how to respond; 83% knew how to report unacceptable behaviours, 72% felt safe to raise concerns and 72% believed that there is a safe and confidential reporting process. Confidence in the institutional responses to behaviour was somewhat lower; 67% believed that reports are taken seriously, 61% felt that complainants are supported rather than punished, 67% said that help is available for those affected and 61% agreed that there are clear consequences for misconduct. Of those surveyed, 72% said that their workplace provides training to recognise and prevent unacceptable behaviours and 78% said that their leaders make it clear that such behaviours will not be tolerated.

**Table 7** summarises MOP(S) Act employees’ perspectives in relation to their exposure to unacceptable behaviours in the past 12 months. The proportion of staff who responded and reported witnessing or experiencing bullying was 35% (slightly lower than for parliamentarians) and harassment 26% (slightly higher than for parliamentarians).

**Table 7: MOP(S) Act employees’ experience of unacceptable behaviours in the previous 12 months**

	Bullying	Harassment	Discrimination	Sexual harassment	Unequal treatment
<b>% Yes – witnessed or experienced</b>	35%	26%	18%	8%	24%

Although 76% of MOP(S) Act employees who responded know how to report unacceptable behaviours, only 62% felt safe raising concerns and only 52% were confident that those who report misconduct will be supported rather than punished. Confidence in the integrity of responses to poor behaviour was also mixed; 59% thought that reports are taken seriously and 61% felt that there is a safe, confidential reporting pathway. In relation to preventing misconduct, 59% of MOP(S) Act employees agreed that training is provided to help recognise and prevent poor behaviours and 60% said there are clear consequences when misconduct occurs. The majority of MOP(S) Act employees (66%) who responded agreed that leaders make it clear such behaviours will not be tolerated and 71% believed that support is available for people affected by unacceptable behaviours.

Parliamentary and public service agencies operate under different legislative arrangements from parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees and are subject to more comprehensive values, principles or codes of conduct that apply to all employees. The Behaviour Codes and Standards for CPW participants also apply to this cohort. Respondents to the culture survey indicated that unacceptable behaviours were experienced at lower rates than those experienced by the parliamentarian and MOP(S) Act employee cohorts (**Table 8**). However, these rates are still higher than in the general public sector.

**Table 8: Parliamentary and public service employees’ experiences of unacceptable behaviours in the last 12 months**

	Bullying	Harassment	Discrimination	Sexual harassment	Unequal treatment
<b>% Yes – witnessed or experienced</b>	30%	24%	15%	7%	22%

Most of this cohort who responded said they knew how to report unacceptable behaviour (83%) and felt that their workplace provided training to recognise and prevent it (81%). Confidence that support is available for people affected was also high (77%), though fewer employees (63%) felt safe raising concerns, believed there is a safe and confidential process (66%) and were confident that reports are taken seriously (60%). Only 49% of respondents believed that people who report unacceptable behaviours are supported, not punished.



## Interactions between cohorts

All cohorts who were invited to share perspectives on CPW culture and behaviour (parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees, parliamentary/public service staff and COMCAR drivers) interact with one another in their work.



### Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians who responded reported strong confidence in their inter-cohort relationships; 94% agreed that they collaborate respectfully with their staff, 78% believed public servants are treated fairly and professionally and 94% said they understand and value the role of the public service in the CPW environment.



### MOP(S) Act staff

Among MOP(S) Act staff, 82% who responded experienced respectful communication from their employing parliamentarian, 64% felt comfortable raising concerns with senior staff or parliamentarians, 63% felt safe speaking openly with peers, 75% believed public servants are treated professionally and 93% valued the public service role.



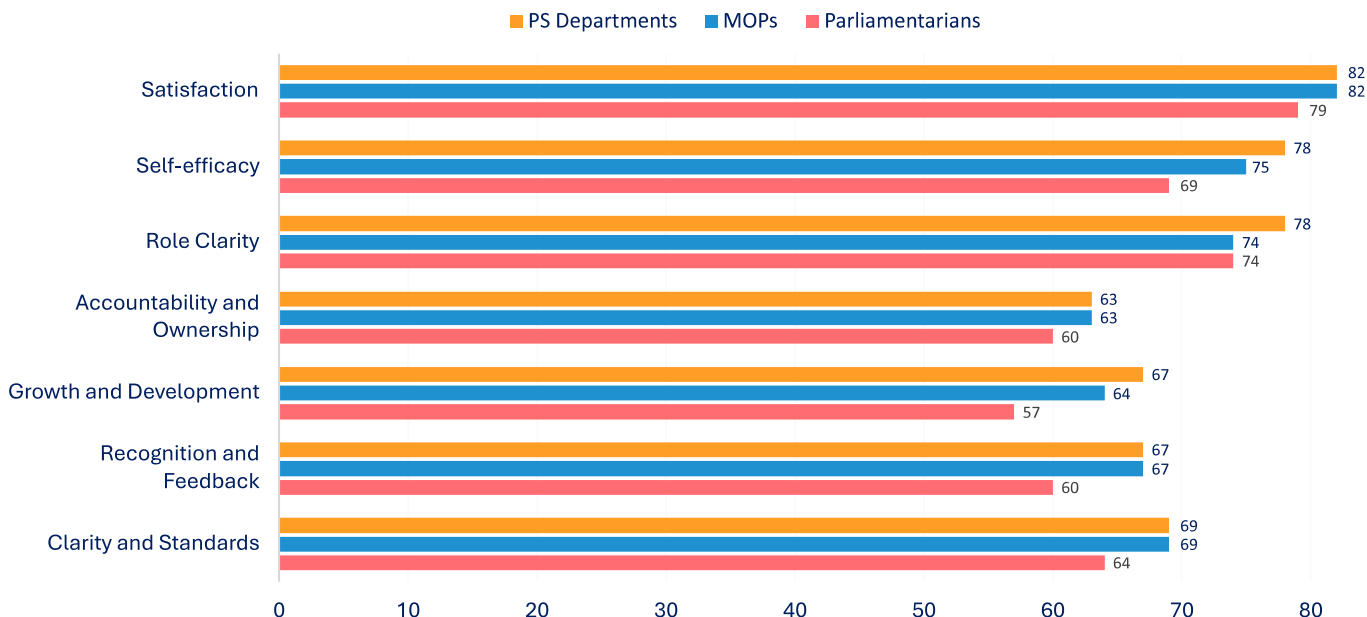
### Public servants

Public servants who responded reported strong alignment with their agencies (78%) and a good understanding of MOP(S) Act roles (72%), but only 49% felt MOP(S) Act staff engage respectfully with them and only 41% perceived that MOP(S) Act staff treat them fairly.

## Performance in CPWs

Across all cohorts, respondents generally held positive views about their own and others' professional capability, ethical intent and ability to communicate constructively. Trust in the broader system declines when routines are inconsistent, when confidentiality feels uncertain, or when consequences are not applied or communicated consistently. **Figure 11** outlines the performance pillars and compares scores across cohorts. Overall, perceptions of the individual performance elements (such as satisfaction with one's own work, self-efficacy and role clarity) were more positive than perceptions of the transactional elements (including accountability, recognition, clarity and opportunities for growth). Parliamentarians had the least positive perceptions of performance, while MOP(S) Act and public service employees held more positive views, although the difference was less than 10% for an individual pillar across all cohorts.

**Figure 11: Performance components index scores 2025 culture survey by cohort**



# Work Health and Safety

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), parliamentarians (as officers) and MOP(S) Act employees (as workers) have duties to ensure health and safety (so far as is reasonably practicable) and maintain a safe working environment. The PWSS and the Department of Finance, on behalf of the Commonwealth, carry PCBU<sup>5</sup> duties in relation to CPWs, with overlapping PCBUs (for example, DPS at Parliament House) requiring cooperative risk management and sharing the responsibility. The WHS Act requires that all PCBUs consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other where they share the same duties.

Each environment presents its own distinct WHS challenges.

Parliament House is the central workplace of parliament. During intensive peak periods throughout the year such as sitting weeks and Senate estimates, up to 5,000 people may work in the building on a single day. The work is often time-sensitive and can be subject to a range of other pressures. By contrast, electorate offices are standalone workplaces within local communities that vary significantly in size, infrastructure and staffing. The public-facing nature of electorate offices increases the risk of exposure to constituent aggression. Due to the diverse nature of these workplaces, a flexible and responsive approach to WHS is required. These environmental factors interact with the physical and psychosocial risks examined in the following sections, including traditional office hazards, workload pressures, bullying and harassment and constituent experiences.

## Hazards

Workers (including MOP(S) Act employees) have a responsibility to report WHS hazards and to take reasonable care for their own health and safety in the workplace. A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment. Risk is the likelihood that this harm will occur. Hazards should be removed whenever possible and if they cannot be removed, the associated risks must be controlled. Identifying and addressing hazards is a critical step in achieving this obligation and building a safe working environment. Hazard reporting enables the early identification of risks before they result in injury or illness. There are multiple channels for reporting, including a self-service portal, email or phone.

During the 2024–25 financial year, 130 hazards were reported to the PWSS by parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees under the following categories:

- **physical hazards** e.g. electricity, fire, amenities, housekeeping and building faults
- **ergonomic hazards** e.g. manual handling, lighting, equipment layout, workstation design
- **chemical hazards** e.g. skin irritants, solvents
- **biological hazards** e.g. mould, viruses, toxins from biological sources
- **psychosocial hazards** e.g. bullying and harassment, mental stress, constituent aggression.  
(See [Psychosocial Hazards in CPWs](#)).

Physical hazards were the most frequently reported hazard across CPWs, with fire safety accounting for 40% of all hazard reports. These reports commonly relate to the upkeep and maintenance of fire extinguishers, blocked emergency exits and the testing of fire alarms.

**Table 9: Hazards reported to the PWSS, by type**

Type of hazard	Number of reports
<b>Physical Hazards</b>	109
Fire Safety	52
Office Infrastructure	19
Workplace Climate	15
Electrical Safety	<10
Office Facilities	<10
<b>Ergonomic Hazards</b>	13
Office Design	<10
Lighting	<10
Manual Handling	<10
<b>Chemical Hazard</b>	<10
<b>Biological Hazard</b>	<10
<b>Psychosocial Hazard</b>	0
<b>Total Hazards</b>	<b>130</b>

<sup>5</sup> PCBU stands for a person conducting a business or undertaking responsible for work health and safety

## Incidents

A WHS incident is any unplanned event that arises from work and could cause harm, including injury, illness or a dangerous situation. Serious cases, such as death, serious injury or a dangerous incident, are classified as notifiable incidents under the WHS Act. In the reporting period, 116 incidents were reported through official channels by parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees. Of these, 71 resulted in an injury and one was deemed to be a notifiable incident.

**Table 10: Incidents by mechanism**

Type of incident	Number of reports
Slips, Trips and Falls	30
Protestor activity	21
Mental stress	12
Body stressing	11
Hitting object with a part of the body	<10
Aggression/Violence	<10
Being hit by moving object	<10
Chemical and other substances	<10
Heat, Electricity and Other Environmental factors	<10
Vehicle Incidents and other transport	<10
<b>Total incidents</b>	<b>111</b>

CPWs operate in a mixed risk environment where common physical hazards such as slips, trips, falls and body stressing coexist with significant psychosocial and public-facing risks, including protestor activity and aggression. The prominence of mental stress and related mechanisms highlights the growing importance of controls that support psychological wellbeing alongside traditional physical safety measures.

## Psychosocial Hazards in CPWs

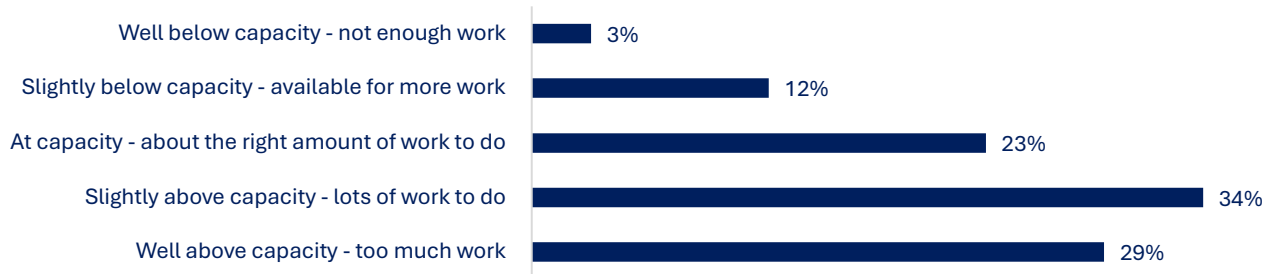
The Model Code of Practice<sup>6</sup> requires PCBUs to manage psychosocial risks using the same structured approach that applies to physical hazards, including identification, assessment, application of the hierarchy of controls and ongoing review. As shown in **Table 9**, there were no psychosocial hazards formally reported in the reporting period. However, of the incidents reported (**Table 10**), 37% appeared to relate to psychosocial aspects of CPW work. Psychosocial hazards are often less visible than physical ones and tend to develop gradually, making them harder to recognise and report.

The unique dynamics of parliamentary workplaces and the mix of adversarial debate, close public scrutiny and high stakes decision making create an environment that can exacerbate psychosocial risks. Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees are often exposed to high job demands, irregular schedules, direct constituent engagement and sometimes occupational violence or aggression. These pressures contribute to stress, burnout and fatigue and are often compounded by rising constituent expectations, limited staffing and the emotional labour of parliamentary work.

6 [Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work | Safe Work Australia](#)

Under Australia's WHS framework, high job demands and inadequate resourcing are recognised psychosocial hazards. Responses to the 2025 CPW Culture Survey indicate elevated job demands for MOP(S) Act employees (**Figure 12**), with 63% of MOP(S) Act employees reporting that they work above capacity. Additionally, 64% report that their workload has increased over the past 12 months and nearly half (45%) do not believe that their office has enough staff to meet work demands. Together, these findings indicate that elevated job demands are a persistent feature of the psychosocial risk profile in CPWs.

**Figure 12: What best describes your current workload?**



## Preventative systems and training

There are a range of proactive measures designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and illness and to address emerging issues before they escalate, including:

- **Ergonomic Workstation Assessments** through access to online modules, self-assessment tools and consultants who can access workstations and provide advice on suitable equipment. Where required, reasonable adjustments are implemented to accommodate individual needs and ensure equitable access to safe work practices. During the reporting period, 112 assessments were completed alongside 9 online self-assessments.
- **Emergency Response Management Audits** for all offices, as required under the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (PBR Act). In 2024-25, 225 offices underwent emergency response management training that includes maintaining evacuation diagrams, emergency response procedures and training of Emergency Officers in alignment with fire safety regulations to ensure, as much as is practicable, the safety of staff within the office.
- **WHS Positions** such as Health and Safety Representative, WHS Site Officer, First Aid Officer and Emergency Officer taken on by MOP(S) Act employees to assist parliamentarians, other MOP(S) Act employees, the PWSS and the Department of Finance to meet their duties under the WHS Act.
- **Safe and Respectful Workplaces training** provided by the PWSS to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to foster safe, inclusive environments.
- **The WHS eLearning module** which provides foundational knowledge of WHS risks and responsibilities and has 1,007 recorded completions (approximately 37%) by MOP(S) Act employees during the reporting period.

## Wellbeing support for Parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees and parliamentary agencies

The PWSS provides around-the-clock confidential wellbeing support for parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees to assist them with managing work pressures, addressing concerns early and talking through issues that may be affecting their wellbeing. The PWSS also participates in parliament-wide wellbeing and WHS initiatives. Current and former CPW employees can contact the PWSS at any time to discuss a concern, seek guidance, or understand available options.

Wellbeing support also includes practical assistance with workplace communication and interactions. The PWSS provides support for preparing for difficult conversations, addressing conflict in a constructive way and participating in facilitated discussions when required. This assistance helps individuals and teams maintain effective working relationships and respond to challenging situations in a clear and consistent manner.



Although these wellbeing supports are always available, overall use of the services remains relatively low. This limits the extent to which the PWSS can support wellbeing across the parliamentary workplace, reducing opportunities for early intervention and for strengthening safe and effective working environments.

Parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees and their immediate family and household members also have access to free, professional and confidential counselling through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). During the reporting period there were 29 instances of EAP services being used.

## Prevention of and responses to relevant conduct

Under the PWSS Act, relevant conduct is the term used to describe serious forms of misconduct in CPWs. Relevant conduct is:

- **Post-Codes conduct:** misconduct occurring on or after 14 October 2024, to which the Behaviour Codes and Standards apply. This includes:
  - » bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination
  - » conduct that abuses power, influence or authority
  - » conduct that creates a hostile or unsafe work environment, including breaches of work health and safety obligations
  - » breaches of the Behaviour Codes for Parliamentarians or MOP(S) Act staff, which are enforceable and may lead to sanctions.
- **Pre-Codes conduct:** certain serious matters, including assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, or unreasonable behaviour creating a risk to work health and safety, that occurred prior to the commencement of the Codes.

A breach of the Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians or the Behaviour Code for MOP(S) Act staff is relevant conduct and can be dealt with under the statutory framework. The Behaviour Codes and the Behaviour Standards for CPWs define acceptable and unacceptable conduct. They require all workers to:

- act respectfully, professionally and with integrity
- value diverse perspectives and support a free exchange of ideas
- uphold anti-discrimination, employment, WHS and criminal laws relevant to safe workplaces.

## Framework for responding to misconduct

### Statutory framework (PWSS Act and IPSC)

The PWSS Act established the PWSS with a function to review complaints about alleged relevant conduct by current or former Commonwealth parliamentary workplace participants that affects other participants. It makes recommendations in relation to alleged relevant conduct following such review. The PWSS does not have an investigative function. Through amendments introduced in October 2024, the PWSS Act established the Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC) as an independent investigation framework for CPWs and created a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Parliamentary Standards to oversee the operation of behaviour codes. The IPSC can investigate conduct issues and, for serious matters, refer them to the Privileges Committee of either House. CPW participants, including parliamentarians, are expected to cooperate with investigations and comply with any sanctions imposed by the IPSC or relevant bodies.

### Behaviour codes and standards

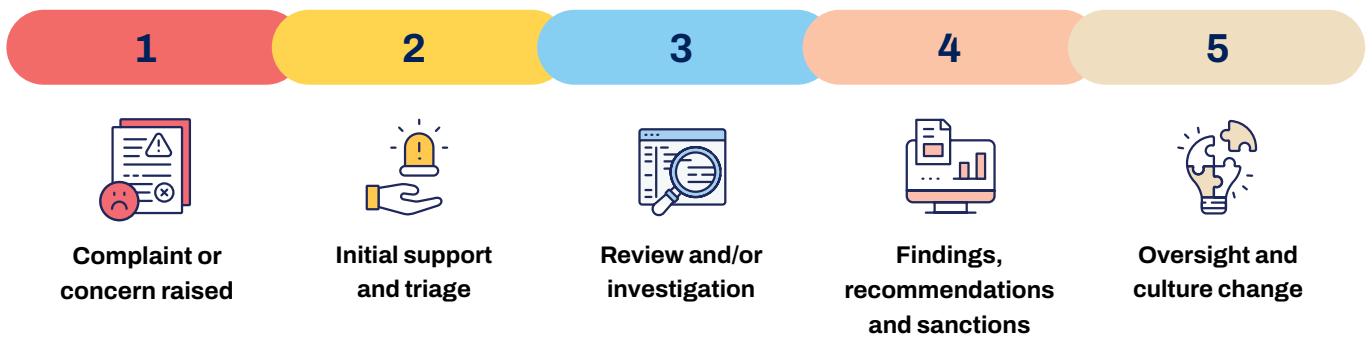
The Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians and the Behaviour Code for MOP(S) Act staff are enforceable and a breach can lead to sanctions. They apply to conduct in the course of parliamentary duties and activities, including social events, travel for work, outside normal business hours and via any means (in person or electronic communication). Alcohol is explicitly stated to be no excuse for a breach. The Codes outline shared responsibility; all parliamentarians and staff are responsible for meeting the highest standards of integrity, dignity, safety and mutual respect. They apply to all parliamentarians following approval by both houses of Parliament in October 2024 and were applied to all MOP(S) Act staff by determination of the Special Minister of State.

The Behaviour Standards for CPWs extend these expectations to all workers in CPWs, reinforcing their duties to take reasonable care that behaviour does not adversely affect their own health and safety or that of others.

## Responses to relevant conduct

The framework for responding to misconduct (referred to as alleged relevant conduct) in CPWs consists of 5 elements that can interact with one another in relation to a single concern, as described here and depicted in **Figure 13**. If a CPW participant experiences or witnesses behaviour that may constitute relevant conduct, they can seek assistance from the PWSS such as counselling, conflict-resolution support and information about available pathways. Once a concern is raised, the PWSS undertakes initial support and triage. During this time, information, guidance and options are provided to the individual, including whether they wish to make a formal complaint that could be reviewed under the PWSS Act framework. If a formal review is sought or required, the next stage involves review and/or investigation. The PWSS may review complaints concerning alleged relevant conduct and provide recommendations based on that review. In cases where there is sufficient information and with the complainant's consent, the IPSC may also investigate the matter. As the dedicated standards body, the IPSC exercises statutory powers and follows principles of procedural fairness throughout this process.

**Figure 13: The 5 elements in the framework for responding to misconduct**



## Prevention and early intervention

The PWSS was established to support behaviour change and culture improvement in CPWs. It provides preventive and early intervention services:

- The **HR Advice** service supports parliamentarians and staff by offering clear guidance on core HR practices such as recruitment, onboarding, performance discussions and workplace expectations. This helps to strengthen leadership capability and to promote positive workplace culture. Its effectiveness is greatest when offices actively apply this guidance, enabling more consistent people-management practices and contributing to safe, respectful and well functioning parliamentary workplaces.
- **Counselling and support** services provide early, confidential and trauma aware assistance to individuals navigating workplace difficulties. This helps staff and parliamentarians to address interpersonal challenges and to seek guidance when needed. These services play an important role in fostering wellbeing by offering a safe space for reflection and support. They complement broader efforts to promote healthy, respectful and well functioning parliamentary workplaces.
- The **WHS advisory** function helps offices identify and manage physical and psychosocial risks such as workload pressures, unreasonable behaviour and unsafe interactions. It supports parliamentarians to meet their obligations to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Its guidance promotes more consistent risk-management practices and strengthens overall workplace capability by helping offices to better understand and apply their WHS duties. This contributes to safer, more sustainable and professionally supportive parliamentary environments.
- The **PWSS Academy** (training service) provides training that builds practical skills to support safe, respectful and professional parliamentary workplaces. It assists staff and parliamentarians to strengthen communication, conflict management and conduct capabilities. It also delivers online learning and team workshops and supports MOP(S) Act staff to undertake relevant studies or external training.

# IPSC conduct complaints and conduct issue referrals received

As at 30 June 2025, the IPSC comprised one Chair Commissioner, 6 Commissioners and a small team of APS employees who provide support to the Commissioners.

The IPSC provides an independent investigatory mechanism for handling conduct complaints involving parliamentarians, their staff and other participants in parliamentary workplaces. It has a mandate to:

- receive complaints and referrals concerning alleged breaches of Behaviour Codes or Standards
- assess whether matters should be investigated
- conduct investigations with statutory powers
- make findings and recommend or impose sanctions
- refer matters to parliamentary Privileges Committees when serious breaches are found.

Under section 22(2)(g) of the PWSS Act, this report must include information on the IPSC's complaints and conduct issue referrals received and conduct issues dealt with by the IPSC. As the IPSC commenced operation part-way through 2024-25 and is subject to strict confidentiality provisions in the PWSS Act, the following information focuses solely on providing context about the IPSC's framework and processes and an overview of cases received prior to 30 June 2025.

## Pathways to raise concerns

The IPSC provides 2 primary pathways for matters to come before it: complaints and referrals.

Complaints may be lodged by an eligible person who is or was directly affected by the alleged conduct. A person may be 'affected' by conduct of which they were the target, or by conduct they have witnessed. Eligible complainants include parliamentarians, MOP(S) Act employees, designated workers such as volunteers or interns and other participants who work predominantly in CPWs (e.g. members of the Press Gallery or COMCAR drivers). The complainant must have been a CPW participant at the time of the alleged conduct. People outside of this, such as members of the public, are not eligible complainants.

Referrals regarding potential breaches of the Behaviour Codes or Standards also may be made by third parties, including Presiding Officers, party leaders or the PWSS CEO.

This dual pathway recognises that misconduct may be raised either through first-hand reporting or through observation and leadership oversight.

## Respondents

A respondent is the person alleged to have engaged in relevant conduct in a CPW. This can include:

- Parliamentarians (current or former senators or members of the House of Representatives)
- MOP(S) Act employees (current or former staff employed under the MOP(S) Act)
- Other designated workers (for example, a volunteer or intern carrying out work for parliamentarians in a parliamentary workplace)
- Non-core participants (for example, Press Gallery members, lobbyists or cafe workers who work predominantly in parliamentary premises).

The IPSC cannot investigate complaints made by a non-core participant about other non-core participants, or about certain parliamentary or government roles. These matters will be referred to their employer or authority.

## Scope of conduct

The IPSC can investigate two types of conduct:

- **Post-Code conduct:** misconduct occurring on or after 14 October 2024, to which the Behaviour Codes and Standards apply.
- **Pre-Code conduct:** certain serious matters, including assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, or unreasonable behaviour creating a risk to work health and safety, that occurred prior to the commencement of the Codes.

## Requirements and safeguards

Not all complaints can be accepted by the IPSC. For a complaint to be reviewed it must be:

- submitted in writing
- include the complainant's name and contact details (anonymous complaints are not accepted)
- supported by the complainant's consent, particularly for serious allegations such as assault.

The investigating Commissioner may decline to proceed where a matter is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived, lacking in substance, or more appropriately handled by another body. Confidentiality obligations under the PWSS Act protect participants and provide procedural fairness.

## Investigation process

### Allocation and assessment

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Chair Commissioner assigns each eligible matter to an investigating Commissioner. The investigating Commissioner deals with a conduct issue by investigating the issue, referring the issue, or taking no action (or no further action), in relation to the issue.

### Conduct of investigations

If an investigation proceeds, the investigating Commissioner may exercise powers to:

- compel production of documents and information
- require attendance at interviews
- issue confidentiality notices restricting disclosure of information preventing unreasonable prejudice or detriment to any person affected by the conduct issue
- recommend interim measures such as suspension of a respondent on work health and safety grounds.

Investigations must be carried out as expeditiously as possible while respecting procedural fairness. Respondents are notified of allegations and provided with an opportunity to respond before findings are made

### Decision on conduct issue and review

A draft report is prepared at the conclusion of an investigation. The draft report may be given to either or both the respondent and complainant. An opportunity to respond to preliminary findings and proposed sanctions must occur if the report sets out a finding that:

- recommends action be taken in a relation to a person
- proposes a sanction be imposed on a person, or
- proposes a referral of a serious breach to a Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

Where applicable, the person must be given a statement setting out the preliminary finding or proposal and be granted a reasonable opportunity to respond.

The final report includes a list of decisions made, a summary of evidence and any recommended sanctions or referrals. A copy of the final report must be given to the respondent, the complainant and the respondent's employer if they are a MOP(S) Act employee.

Parties may apply to the IPSC for a review of certain decisions within 28 days. A panel of 3 Commissioners is convened, not including any Commissioners who made, or were involved in making, the original decision.



## Actions resulting from investigations

The IPSC has a set of responses available depending on the respondent's role and the conduct's seriousness:

- Parliamentarians: serious breaches may be referred to the Privileges Committee of the relevant House. Possible parliamentary sanctions include suspension, fines, or loss of privileges.
- MOP(S) Act employees and designated workers: the IPSC may recommend sanctions to be implemented by the employing parliamentarian, ranging from reprimands to termination.
- Other workplace participants: actions may include reprimands, restrictions or removal of access to parliamentary workplaces.

Interim protective measures, such as temporary suspension, may also be taken during an investigation to mitigate health and safety risks.

## Cases 2024-25

Between 14 October 2024 and 30 June 2025, the IPSC received a range of complaints and referrals. Given the relatively small number of overall complaints received and referred, confidentiality provisions and the IPSC's recent establishment, only aggregate data is provided. When there are 10 or fewer cases, numbers are reported as <10 to protect the identities of those involved. This is a standard practice applied to data about people.



## Nature of conduct reported

Due to the small number of complaints, case numbers by nature of conduct cannot be provided. Some examples of the alleged types of behaviour that were included in complaints were (in no particular order):

- bullying and harassment
- discrimination
- sexual harassment
- other workplace behaviour issues.

## Participants involved

The two groups that were included in complaints were parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees/designated workers. Specific case numbers by participant types cannot be provided.

## Investigation outcomes

To protect personal identities, data about outcomes will not be reported until investigations are completed.



### IPSC awareness and trust

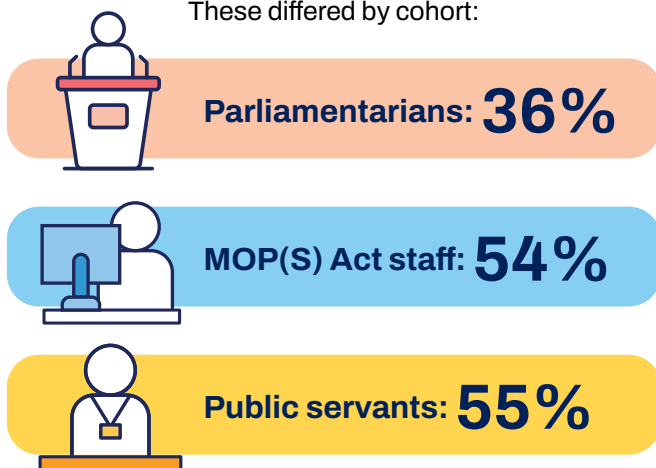
In the 2025 culture survey, 46% of respondents were aware of the IPSC. This differed between groups, with only 44% of MOP(S) Act employees and 47% of public and parliamentary service employees being aware of the IPSC. 72% of parliamentarians were aware of the IPSC.

Of those who were aware of the IPSC,

# 55%

understood the IPSC's role and responsibilities

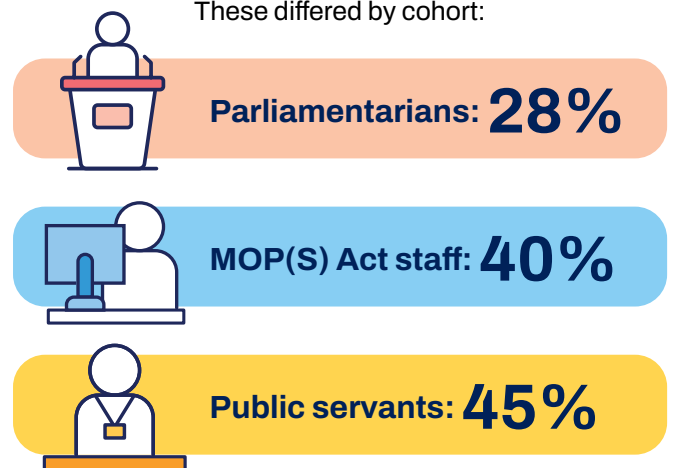
These differed by cohort:



# 43%

trusted the IPSC as an institution

These differed by cohort:



Across all groups, the most common response on trust in the IPSC was neutral (49%). This is expected for a new institution, particularly one whose work requires confidentiality. Most participants will not have had direct interactions with the IPSC, making it more difficult to form a view.

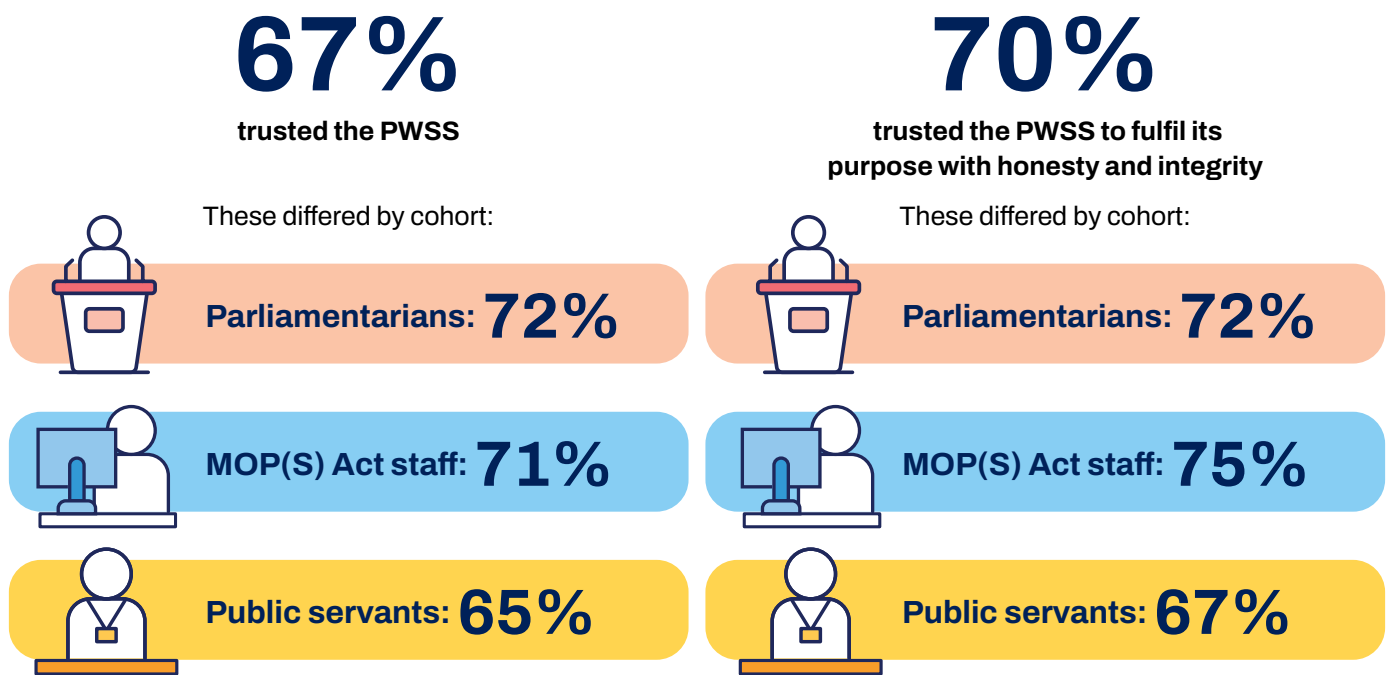
### Confidentiality and data constraints

As already noted, confidentiality provisions under the PWSS Act restrict the level of detail that can be published in relation to individual matters. In its first year, complaint volumes were modest, reflecting the early stage of implementation.

In future years, additional case and investigation data will be provided where case numbers are sufficient, noting individual privacy. Over time, reporting through yearly iterations of this report will allow the Parliament and public to assess whether the IPSC is achieving its purpose of strengthening accountability and workplace culture.

### Trust in the PWSS

In the 2025 survey, respondents also provided their perceptions of trust in the PWSS. Of those who responded to the survey:



Most respondents (67%) had positive perceptions of trust in the PWSS, with the next most common response neutral (26%). Across all groups, negative perceptions to trust in the PWSS were less than 10%. The perceptions differed slightly across cohorts, with differences in positive perceptions accompanying differences in neutral perceptions. Respondents perceptions of trust in the PWSS to fulfil its purpose with integrity and fairness followed a similar pattern, with most respondents (70%) having positive perceptions and all cohorts having less than 10% responses with negative perceptions. The lowest positive perceptions were held by public servants who also have the fewest interactions with the PWSS and had the highest neutral perceptions across both questions.

