

4.1.1. Caseload characteristics

Characteristics across the whole of Workforce Australia

The Workforce Australia caseload encompasses participants facing diverse circumstances and attachment to the labour market. For example, participants have varying ages ranging from youth to those over 65, as well as varying levels of education and degrees of work experience. Participants may also belong to varying cohorts, such as being a parent, having a disability, being a refugee, an ex-offender or having a culturally or linguistically diverse background. There is a high level of disadvantage in the caseload, including participants who have multiple disadvantages, which interacts with income support settings, health care, disability support and education systems as well as employer and labour market factors.

These characteristics can all affect a participant's likelihood of being able to find work and remain employed. A substantial part of the caseload is undertaking part-time or casual work. There are many participants who return to the system after short periods of employment; this indicates that there is room for improvement in helping job seekers find and maintain ongoing employment.

The caseload is not homogenous. There are substantial differences in the size and composition of the caseload between geographical areas, and differences in work experience and barriers between participants within the same area. Throughout jobactive and the transition into Workforce Australia, the youth caseload has been trending down as a share of the total caseload, while the mature age caseload has been trending up. There is a gender segregation in both cases with the youth caseload trending down at a faster rate for men than for women while the mature age caseload has seen a significant increase for women at a much faster rate than for men. Women aged 50 years or older accounted for 12.1 per cent of the jobactive caseload in July 2015; this rose to 16.9 per cent of the Workforce Australia caseload in December 2022 — an increase of 4.8 percentage points.

By comparison, the share of the caseload attributed to men aged 50+ rose by 1.5 percentage points over the same period (11.2 per cent to 12.7 per cent). These changes are being driven by a number of factors including an overall and sustained trend for increased female labour force participation which is expected to continue for some time⁷⁰, and historical changes to eligibility settings for a range of income support payments over the past two decades with the closure of some 'partner payments', increases to the age pension age and tightening of Parenting Payment and Disability Support Pension eligibility that have had long lasting impact resulting in more women in receipt of JobSeeker Payments.⁷¹

The distribution of population cohorts is unequal, reflecting the difficulties in obtaining employment faced by people who are disadvantaged in society. The characteristics of the caseload also vary between different programs.

⁷⁰ Department of the Treasury (2021), *2021 Intergenerational Report*, p. 33. <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/2021-intergenerational-report>

⁷¹ Parliamentary Budget Office (2020), *JobSeeker Payment: Understanding economic and policy trends affecting Commonwealth expenditure*, Report no. 03/2020, p. 12. www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Budget_Office/Publications/Research_reports/JobSeeker_Payment

Workforce Australia Online

Workforce Australia Online is aimed at participants that are assessed as job-ready and require limited assistance to find work. Participants in Workforce Australia Online tend to find work and exit the system quickly. They tend to be younger, more educated and less likely to belong to a disadvantaged cohort, with a majority of participants spending less than 12 months in employment services.

Workforce Australia Services

Workforce Australia Services is aimed at participants that are assessed as at risk of becoming long-term unemployed and that would benefit from the assistance of a provider to help them build their job-readiness and find work. Workforce Australia Services participants tend to be slightly older, less educated and more likely to belong to a disadvantaged cohort. The majority tend to stay in the system long-term, spending 24+ months in employment services.

Transition to Work

Transition to Work participants are, by design and according to eligibility, generally among the most disadvantaged young people. Participants are more likely than young people in other services to experience employment barriers, such as homelessness. Compared to other services, Transition to Work participants' younger age and lower education reflects the nature of the Transition to Work program as targeted towards supporting young people to move between education and work. Around two out of three participants on the Transition to Work caseload have not completed secondary school. Almost half of the participants on the caseload have been registered in employment services for less than 12 months.

Table 6: Workforce Australia cohorts (31 December 2022)

Cohort⁷²	Workforce Australia – Online	Workforce Australia - Services	Transition to Work	Total Workforce Australia Caseload⁷³
People with Disability (PwD)	12.1% (18,844)	33.9% (156,434)	17.3% (5,187)	27.7% (176,764)
Culturally or Linguistically Diverse	17.7% (27,583)	19.8% (91,447)	6.0% (1,798)	18.7% (119,147)
Indigenous	5.8% (9,027)	15.2% (69,849)	31.3% (9,409)	13.7% (87,405)
Ex-offenders	4.7% (7,386)	15.2% (70,190)	9.6% (2,883)	12.5% (79,634)
Homeless ⁷⁴	4.6% (7,178)	11.8% (54,158)	17.5% (5,263)	10.3% (65,849)
Drug and Alcohol	2.4% (3,687)	8.9% (41,139)	1.8% (532)	7.0% (44,935)
Did not complete secondary school	19.1% (29,760)	41.2% (190,083)	48.9% (19,937)	37.1% (236,703)

⁷² A given participant may belong to one or more of these cohorts.

⁷³ Total Workforce Australia caseload is the unique number of participants across the three contracts (Workforce Australia Online, Workforce Australia Services, Transition to Work). Totals across a cohort will not add to the Workforce Australia caseload total as a participant can be on multiple caseloads at the same time (e.g. pending in Workforce Australia Services and commenced in Workforce Australia Online).

⁷⁴ Homelessness is counted as those participants who disclose that they are experiencing homelessness or living in unstable accommodation (e.g. 'couch surfing', living in hostels or other short-stay accommodation).

Cohort⁷²	Workforce Australia – Online	Workforce Australia - Services	Transition to Work	Total Workforce Australia Caseload⁷³
Completed a post-school qualification ⁷⁵	58.2% (90,758)	42.6% (196,087)	18.8% (5,659)	45.2% (288,322)
<12 months in employment services	61.6% (96,031)	11.6% (53,664)	51.7% (15,525)	25.5% (162,429)
24+ months in employment services	23.8% (37,147)	76.9% (354,059)	26.2% (7,883)	61.9% (394,711)

⁷⁵ This group includes participants with a university degree or a trade or TAFE qualification.