

Northern Territory Community Sector Workforce Survey

2019



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The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) is a peak body for the Social and Community Service Sector (the Community Sector) in the Northern Territory (NT). NTCOSS is an advocate for social justice on behalf of the people and communities who may be affected by poverty and disadvantage. With a broad membership base, NTCOSS plays a coordination, advocacy, policy and sector support role for the Community Sector in the NT.

The Community Sector is a large and important part of the NT. It provides services that improve the lives of many Territorians. Members of the Community Sector range from small groups to very large and complex organisations, that work in social and community service delivery, sector development and advocacy.

The Community Sector plays a vital role in creating social wellbeing for all Territorians and in building safe and healthy communities by providing services that enable people to access and participate in health services, education, employment, economic development, family and community life.

NTCOSS is pleased to present the findings of the 2019 Northern Territory Community Sector Workforce Survey, following on from similar work conducted in 2007 and 2012. The Workforce Survey is an opportunity for NTCOSS to collect and analyse data relating to the Community Sector in the NT, providing a snapshot of the different organisations working across the region and their staff.

The Workforce Survey will assist NTCOSS to identify workforce trends and inform future sector support activities. Some survey results highlight:

- Overall the Community Sector has a highly qualified workforce. The majority of staff who responded to the survey have attained higher education or vocational training.
- The majority of respondents identified that they had been working in the Community Sector for upwards of 5 years, a similar result from the 2012 Workforce Survey.
- 54% of employees surveyed stated they were considering leaving their current role within the next 12 months, emphasising the need to focus on staff retention within the Community Sector.
- Social and emotional wellbeing and management practices were identified by employees and managers as key areas that can improve workplace wellbeing and retention.
- Funding security was identified as the biggest issue facing managers in the Community Sector.
- Developing, supporting and sustaining the Community Sector workforce continues to challenge the Sector.

NTCOSS thanks the Community Sector workers who took the time to complete the survey and hope that this document is a useful resource.



Deborah Di Natale
CEO

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Methodology

The 2019 Northern Territory Community Sector Workforce Survey saw 163 people engage with the survey, of which 129 provided responses to all questions (61 Employees and 68 Managers).

The survey was open for all people working within the NT Community Sector and was available to complete online. The survey was promoted across online platforms (e-bulletins, newsletters and email) and numerous networks across the NT, with organisations and their staff encouraged to participate and share across the Community Sector.

The survey was divided into two parts, one directed at Employees and the other directed at Managers (Managers being those who were responsible for one or more Employees). Respondents identified in question one which survey was most applicable to their position, with 56% selecting that they were in a management role.

While the two survey options were available, many of the same questions were asked of both streams of respondents. Due to this, data has been displayed comparing Managers and Employees in some sections of this report, while those independent to one stream are clearly identified.

Additional comments:

- As the survey was available on Survey Monkey and promoted across the Community Sector, responses received were not collated from a sample size. Due to this, the response rate cannot be measured.
- A challenge for organisations is the capacity to meet the demand for service, while juggling funding and resourcing constraints. Monitoring changes in client need is vital to understand trends of service use and changing demands. This survey did not set out to measure patterns of service use, demand or the number of individual services provided by organisations in different categories.
- Anecdotally, demand exceeds the capacity of organisations. This is confirmed by the 2014 Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Australian Community Sector Survey. Services were not asked about client numbers and profiles or turn away rates. The aim of this survey was to assist in demonstrating not only the needs of those working in the sector, but service provision gaps in training and development.
- The NTCOSS Value of the Not-for-profit Sector Report 2017 provides insight into the economic contribution of the not-for-profit human services sector in the NT. This data is not available in the Workforce Survey.

1 Organisation and Service Locations

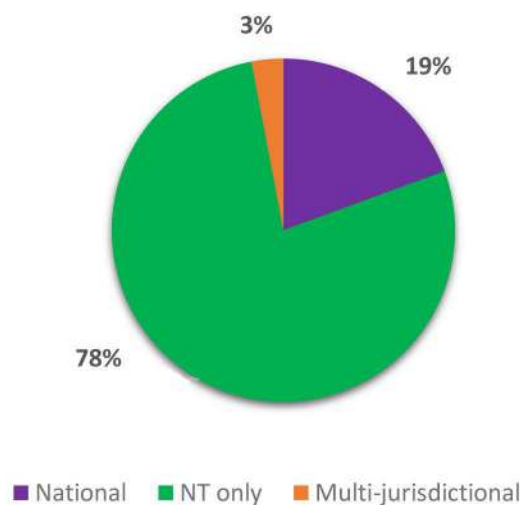
This section identifies each respondent’s jurisdiction, geographic work location and the area of service provision.

While respondents identified larger urban townships (i.e. Darwin City, Palmerston City, Alice Springs, Katherine and the Barkly) as primary areas of service delivery and workplace location, the number of ‘other’ locations selected shows an increase of over 50% regarding geographical areas serviced by organisations. While there was still a clear trend favouring areas with greater populations this increase helps understand the remote service delivery context of the NT. While the majority of organisations identify that their jurisdiction is NT specific, they often service multiple communities across the region.

Jurisdiction

The majority of respondents identified that their organisation’s jurisdiction was specific to the NT (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1– Organisation Jurisdiction



Geographical Work Location

No specific standard or schema such as the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) was used to ask this question. Respondents self-selected the location after being asked where their primary workplace was located (Figure 1.2 and 1.3) and what other locations they have undertaken work in within the last 12 months (Figure 1.4 and 1.5).

All respondents were asked the same question. Locations were split by Shire area, however only those Shires where a respondent selected it as their location of work are displayed. Most respondents identified their primary workplace location as being in either Alice Springs or Darwin City, which correlates with the larger populations that live in these areas.

Figure 1.2 - Primary Workplace Location: Employee

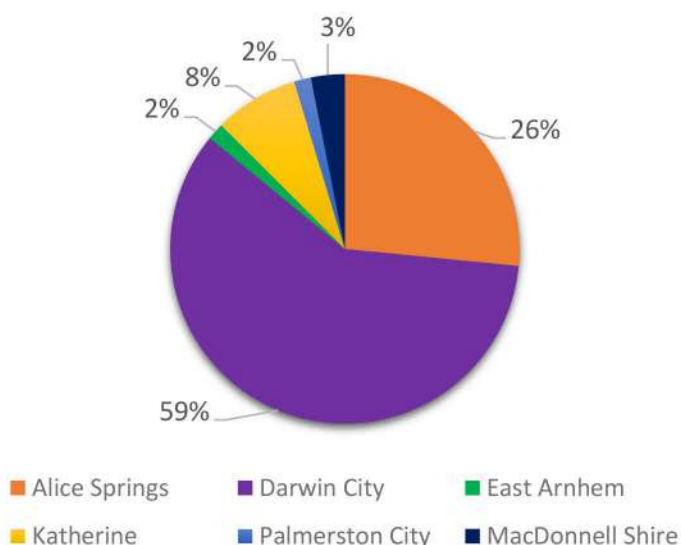
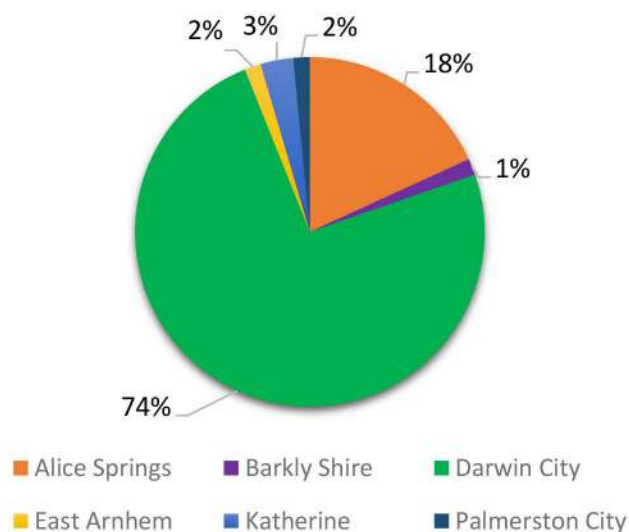


Figure 1.3 - Primary Workplace Location: Manager



When selecting other locations of work, respondents were asked to select all that apply. Again, regions with larger populations were dominant.

Figure 1.4 - Other Work Locations: Employees

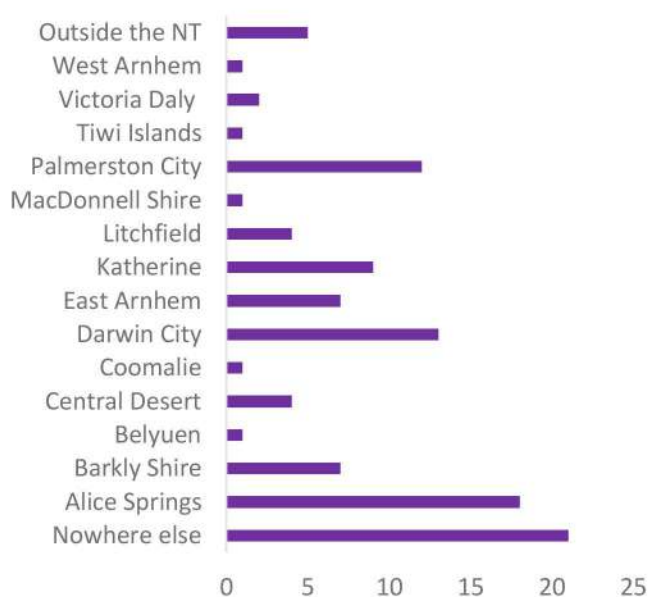
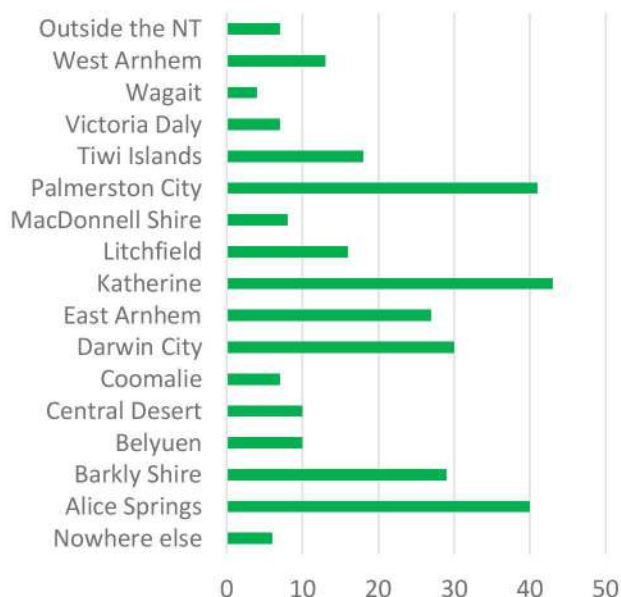


Figure 1.5 - Other Work Locations: Managers



Primary Area of Service Provision

All respondents were asked to specify the core service area of their agency/organisation (Figure 1.6). Due to the variety of services that are delivered, respondents also had the option to select an 'Other' service category (Figure 1.7). Given the nature of the NT, many organisations respond to varied needs across the sector.

The more nuanced service delivery highlighted in 'Other' (such as gambling assistance, volunteer services, Victims of Crime) highlights some of these needs. The areas of service provision listed are solely representative of responses to this survey, not of service provision across the Territory.

Figure 1.6 - Core Service Delivery

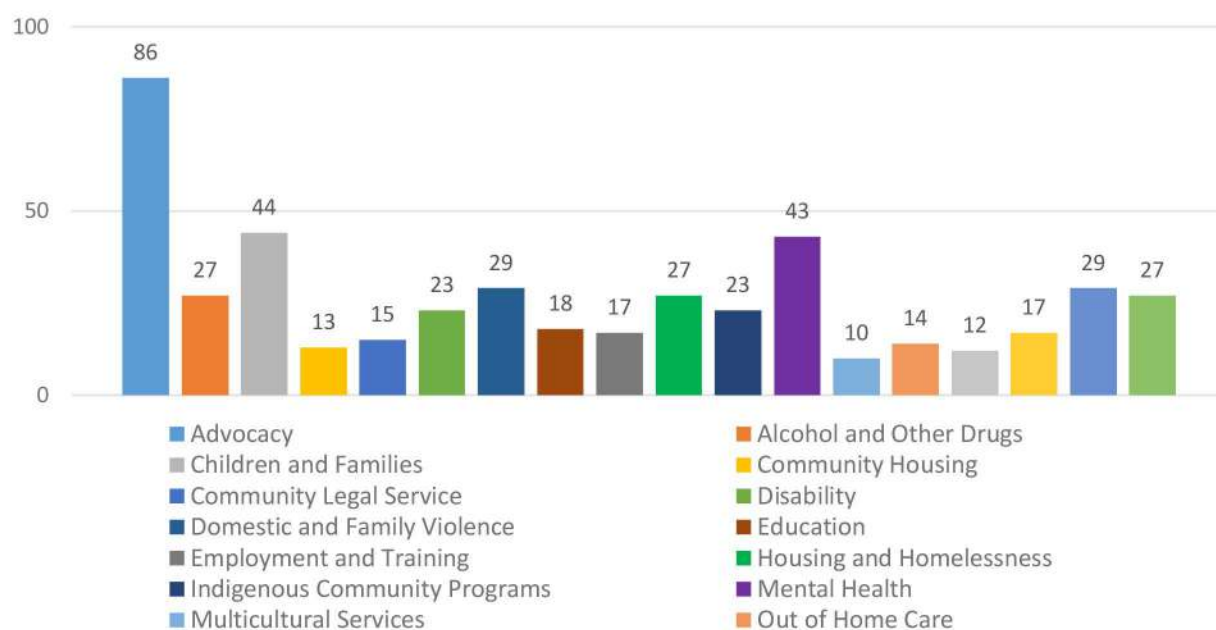
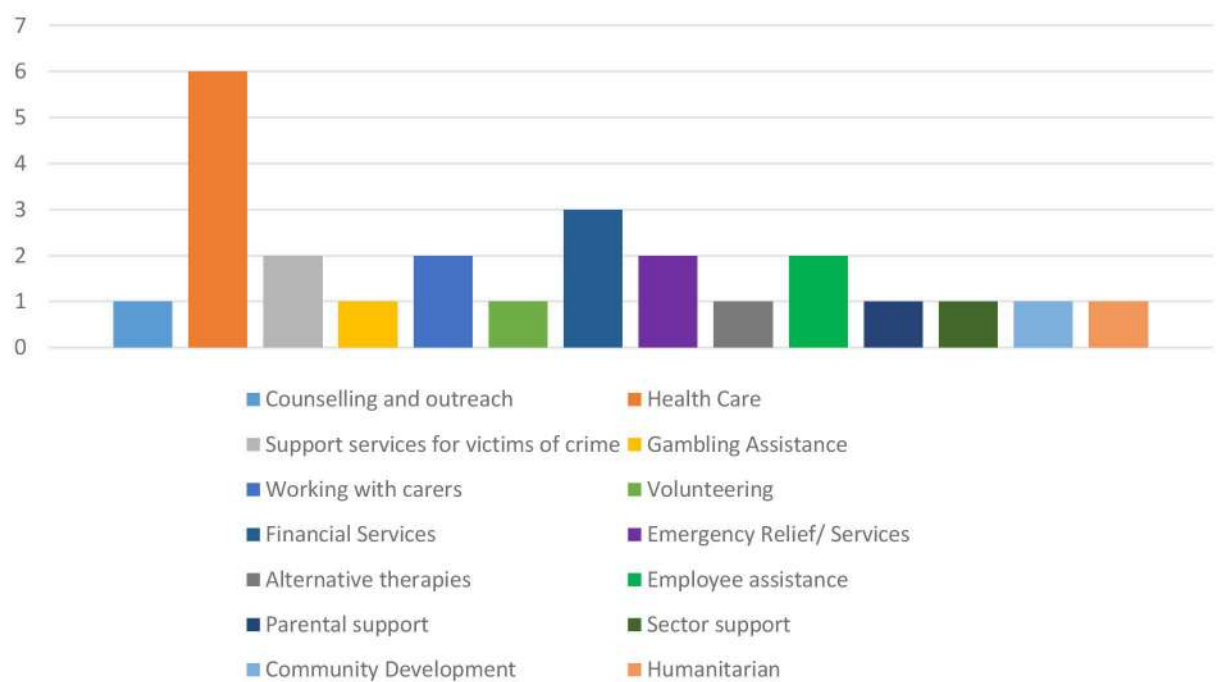


Figure 1.7 - Other Service Delivery



2 Organisational Income and Charity Status

Organisational Income

Community Sector organisations source income in a variety of ways from an array of funding sources.

Managers were asked to identify their organisation's total annual revenue for the last financial year (Figure 2.1) and sources of income within the same period as a percentage that contributed to their overall funding (Figure 2.2).

The largest percentage of funding for organisations comes from the NT Government and the Commonwealth Government.

Figure 2.1 – Total Annual Revenue Last Financial Year

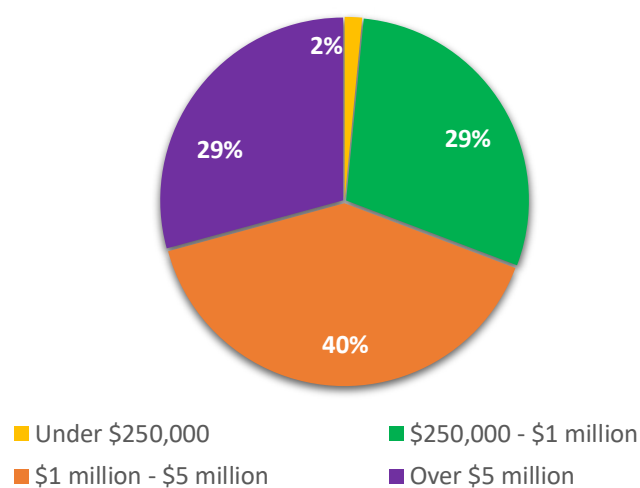
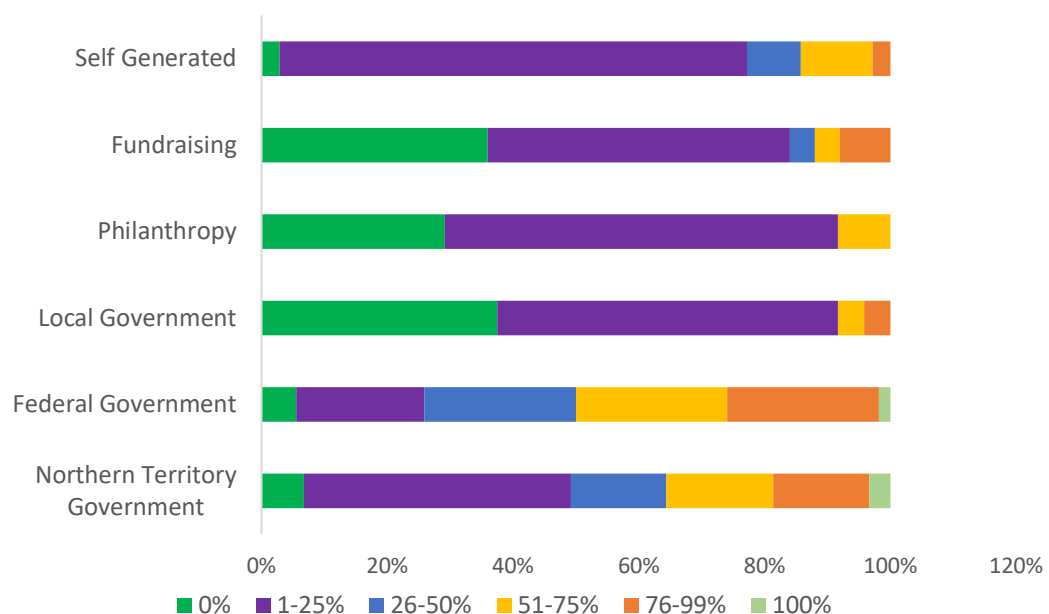


Figure 2.2 – Estimate of Sources and Percentage of Income for the Previous Financial Year



Charity Status

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) is the national regulator of charities.

The ACNC maintains and enhances public trust and confidence in the Australian not-for-profit sector and supports a robust, vibrant, independent and innovative sector. The ACNC also promotes the reduction of unnecessary regulatory obligations on the sector.

89% of respondents identified that their organisations were a registered charity with the ACNC (Figure 2.3).

Charities are a subset of the not-for-profit sector. ACNC data shows that there are over 450 charities with their head office in NT. The majority of the NT's charities are small. There are:

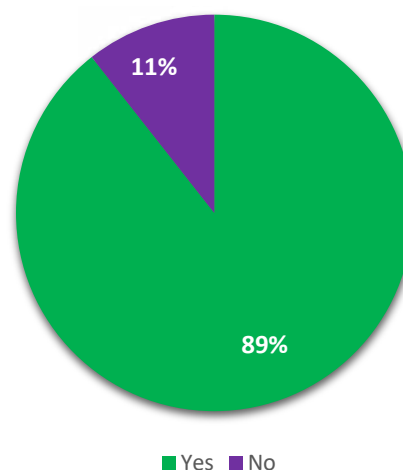
- 232 charities (52%) reporting an income of less than \$250,000 per year
- 75 charities (17%) with an income of between \$250,000 and less than \$1m
- 119 charities (26%) with an income of between \$1m and \$10m
- 24 very large charities (5%) with an income of over \$10m¹

Some charities in the NT are incorporated under the Associations Act 2003 (NT). Incorporated associations in the NT have a number of obligations to the NT government regulator, including keeping appropriate financial records, following their rules and holding annual general meetings.

As part of the ACNC's work to streamline reporting and cut red tape, many incorporated associations in the Northern Territory now have the option to report only to the ACNC via the Annual Information Statement instead of reporting to both the ACNC and Licensing NT.

This is a positive red tape reduction move and welcomed by the Community Sector.

Figure 2.3 – Organisations Registered as a Charity with the ACNC



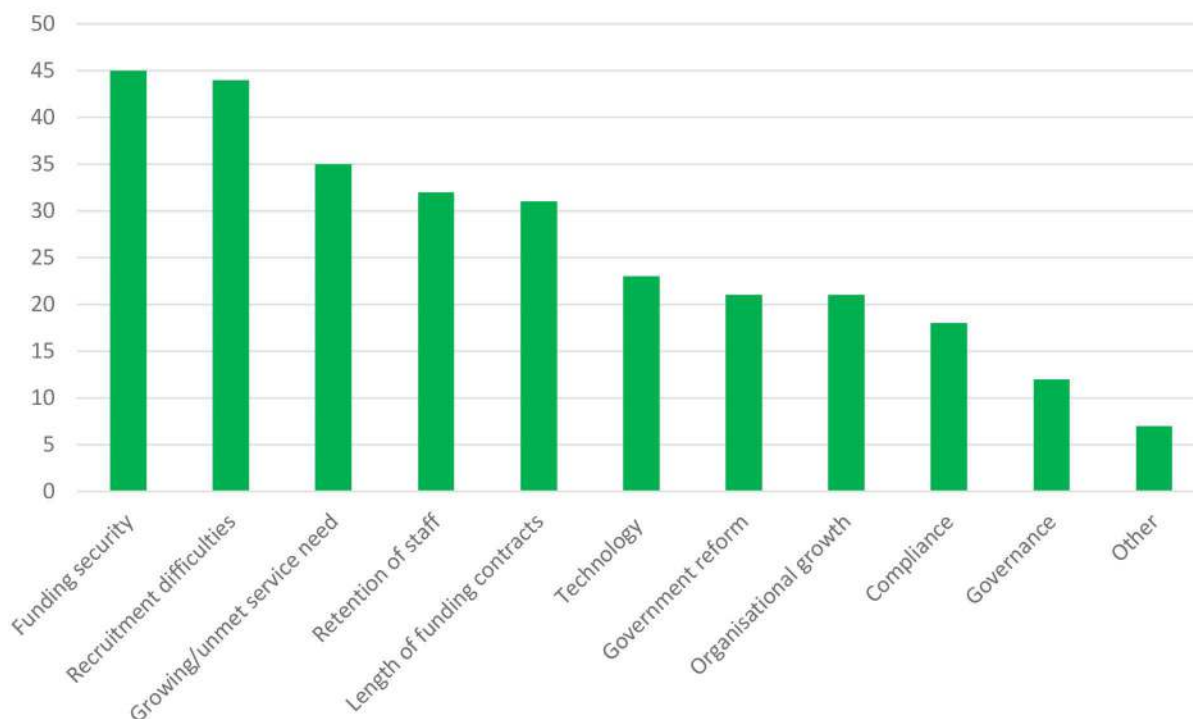
¹ Gilchrist, D.J. and Knight, P.A., (2017), Value of the Not-For-Profit Sector, 2017: An Examination of the Economic Contribution of the Not-for-profit Human Services Sector in the Northern Territory. A report for the Northern Territory Council of Social Service, Darwin, Australia.

3 Community Sector Workforce Challenges

Concerns around funding security, recruitment, retention of staff and resourcing are all identified issues that impact the Community Sector in the NT. Developing, supporting and sustaining the Sector workforce continues to be a challenge.

Managers were asked to identify the most significant issues they face in their role (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 – Key Issues as a Community Sector Manager



Funding Security

Funding security was identified as the most significant issue impacting the Community Sector by Managers.

As previously identified, the largest percentage of funding for all organisations is administered by either the NT or Commonwealth Governments (Figure 2.2).

It is noteworthy that in conjunction with this, most Managers also specified growing areas of unmet need as an issue for their organisation. The inability for services to meet demand due to lack of resources and need for increased capacity was exemplified in the 2014 Australian Community Sector Survey, where 80% of services reported not being able to fully meet demand. When demand outstrips the capacity to supply services, organisations can rationalise services by altering eligibility criteria or limiting the scope and creativity of their programs.

This can focus on reacting to crises and people's immediate needs rather than the underlying or structural issues. Alternatively, funding policy and practices can target very specific client groups and require precise outputs. This can result in services being focussed on less complex or demanding clients so specific contractual measures are met (for example collecting statistics), to ensure continued funding.

The impact of contractual funding arrangements can change an organisation’s ability to advocate for its clients. The nature of Community Sector work in the NT, where agencies are sparse and have to deal with structural complications (long distances, lack of affordable staffing accommodation or no accommodation and significant travel cost and time) and a lack of ongoing referral options or over extended services as well as the complex needs of clients impact significantly on services in the NT.

The move by the NT Government to implement five-year funding agreements has been an important milestone but many organisations have not yet transitioned to this arrangement.

Recruitment

Recruitment and retention of staff was identified as another major issue facing Managers (Figure 3.1). Around 42% of respondents identified that they had ongoing vacant positions within their organisations (Figure 3.2), with the majority identifying the positions went unfilled for between 2-6 months (56%) and 6 months – 1 year (22%) (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2 – Ongoing Unfilled Job Vacancies

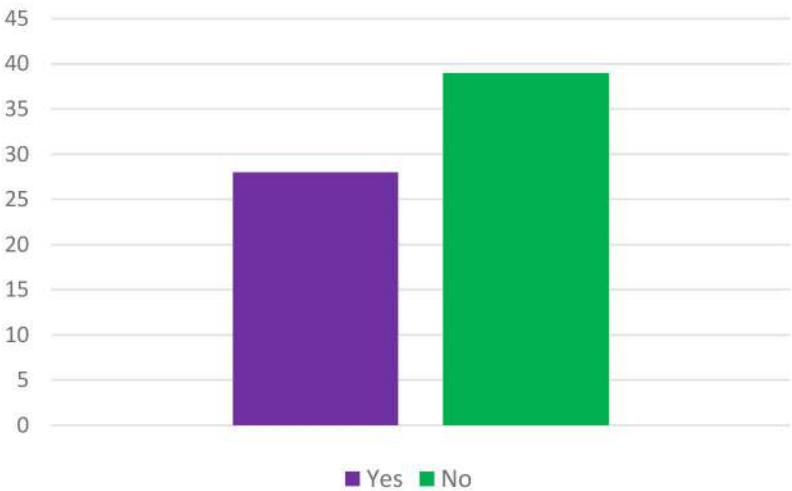
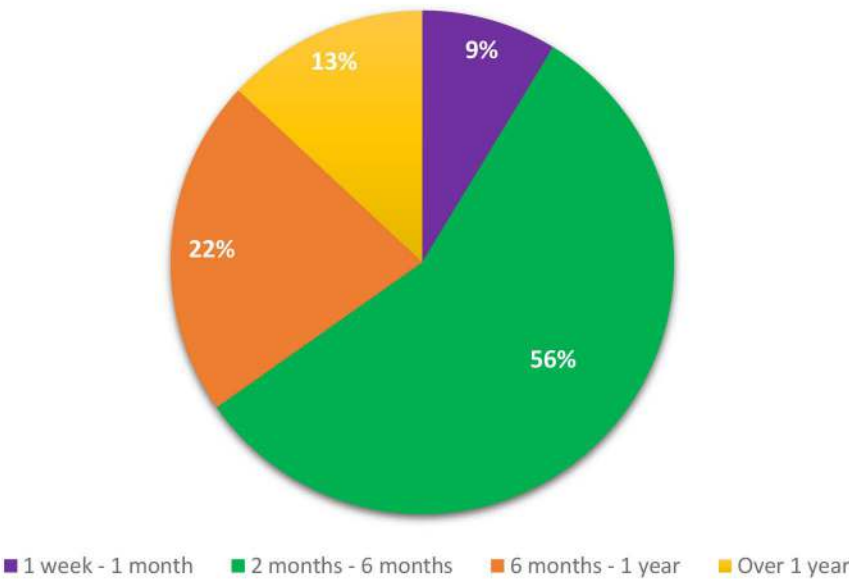


Figure 3.3 – Length of Unfilled Vacancies



Respondents were asked to identify the three most consistently successful methods used within their organisation to recruit staff (Figure 3.4). The most successful methods identified were: websites, advertising in the local newspaper and social media. Other methods used were: professional networks and Government secondment programs.

Managers were also asked to identify how often their organisations recruit suitable candidates (regarding skills, education and experience) (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4 – Methods Used to Recruit Staff

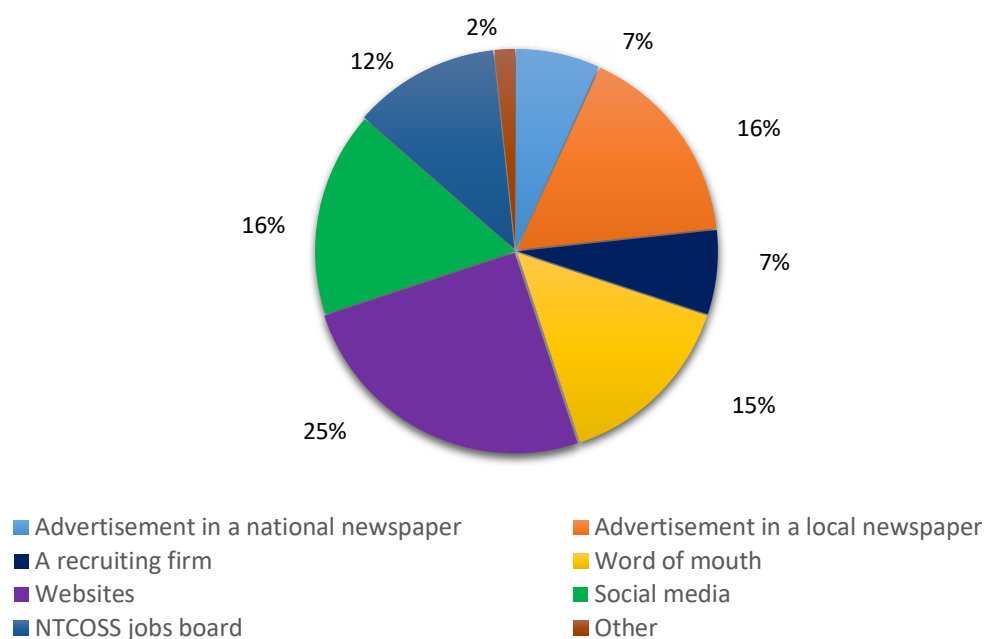
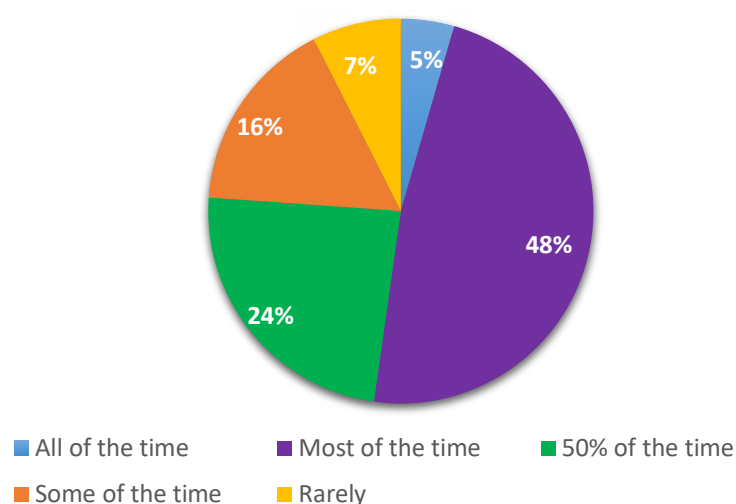


Figure 3.5 – How Often Organisations can Recruit Suitable Candidates



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment

The top occupation identified in the 2016 Census held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the NT was Community and Personal Service Workers (21.2%).

While Aboriginal people make up around 30% of the Territory's population,² the 2016 Census identified that roughly 54% percent of the population are identified as 'not in the labour force', compared to 44% nationally. Further, non-Indigenous people have a labour force participation rate of over 76% in the NT.³

Aboriginal people have not yet achieved proportionally equivalent employment participation rates relative to the wider NT population. There are numerous contributing factors that could explain a lower level of Aboriginal engagement in the workforce than non-Indigenous, including:

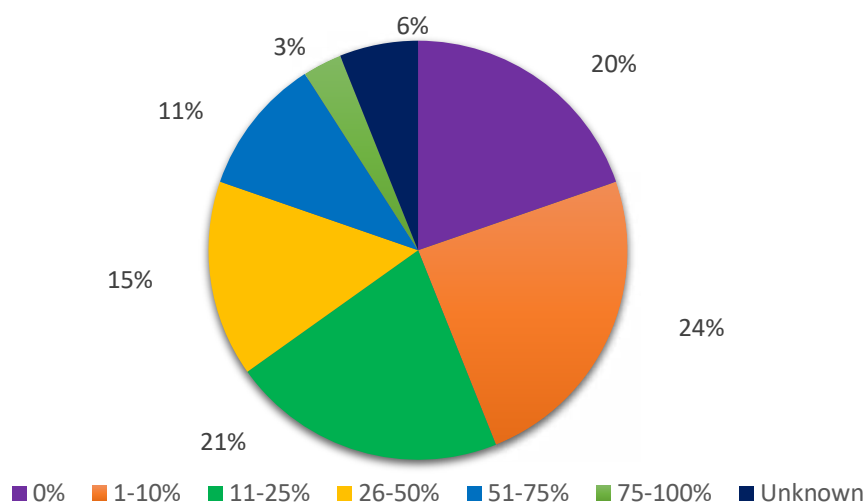
- A large percentage of Aboriginal people in the NT reside in remote areas, where there are fewer employment opportunities;
- Lack of access to appropriate training, education and development opportunities that are culturally appropriate and relevant; and
- Aboriginal people in remote communities have to participate in the work-for-the dole program, the Community Development Program, which is reportedly a disincentive to engaging in the labour force.

Creating workplaces that recognise and value Aboriginal culture and opportunities, supporting people to enter and stay in the workforce and flexible work practices would assist in increasing Aboriginal workforce participation.

While the majority of respondents identified that their workplaces have targeted strategies to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff (Figure 3.7) it is still a training area of need identified by Managers (Figure 3.12).

Managers were asked to identify the percentage of their current workforce that identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 – Percentage of Workforce that Currently Identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



² Northern Territory Government, Department of Treasury and Finance, Northern Territory Economy, viewed October 2019, accessed at <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/population>

³ Northern Territory Government, Labour Force July 2018, viewed October 2019, accessed at https://treasury.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/558124/Labour-Force-2018-July.pdf

Managers identified that their workplaces have targeted strategies for recruiting Aboriginal staff, with the majority selecting flexible employment, targeted roles and positions and career development opportunities as the three main approaches (Figure 3.7)

Figure 3.7 – Strategies Used to Recruit and Retain Aboriginal Staff

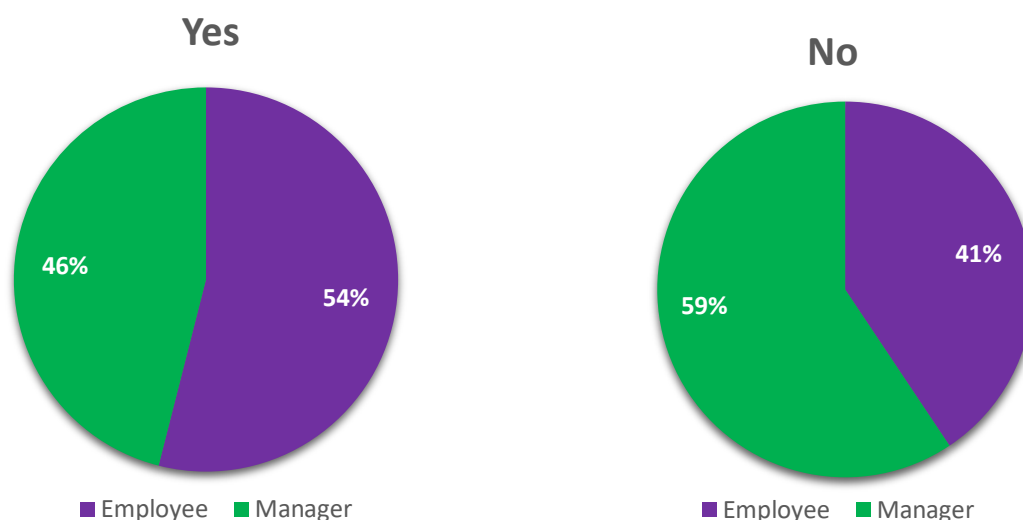


Retention

All survey respondents were asked if they were considering leaving their workplace for another Community Sector organisation within the next year (Figure 3.8). The majority of Employees selected 'Yes' (54%), while the majority of Managers selected 'No' (59%). The main reasons for Employees saying they were considering leaving their role were deterioration of social and emotional wellbeing due to work related stress and poor management practices.

Staff turnover can be a major loss to an organisation, draining organisational knowledge and resources. Recruitment and retention impact on planning, funding, program delivery and staff morale. Addressing issues that impact staff morale could help improve retention.

Figure 3.8 – Thinking of Leaving Current Role



Respondents were asked to identify what would assist them in staying in their role for a further 12 months (Figure 3.9). In both streams, a higher rate of pay was clearly identified as a factor that would help with staff retention.

For Managers, the second and third factors were opportunity to vary work hours along with access to Professional Development (PD). For Employees, it was improved management practices and greater access to PD. 'Other' comments included issues with housing and accommodation, employment contract security, funding security, workplace support and potential for organisational growth/ promotion and the need for practices that reflect cultural safety and Trauma Informed Practice. Figures 3.10 and 3.11 show a greater breakdown of both Employee and Manager priorities regarding role retention rated by level of importance.

Figure 3.9 - What Would Assist You to Stay in Your Role for an Additional 12 Months If You Were Considering Leaving

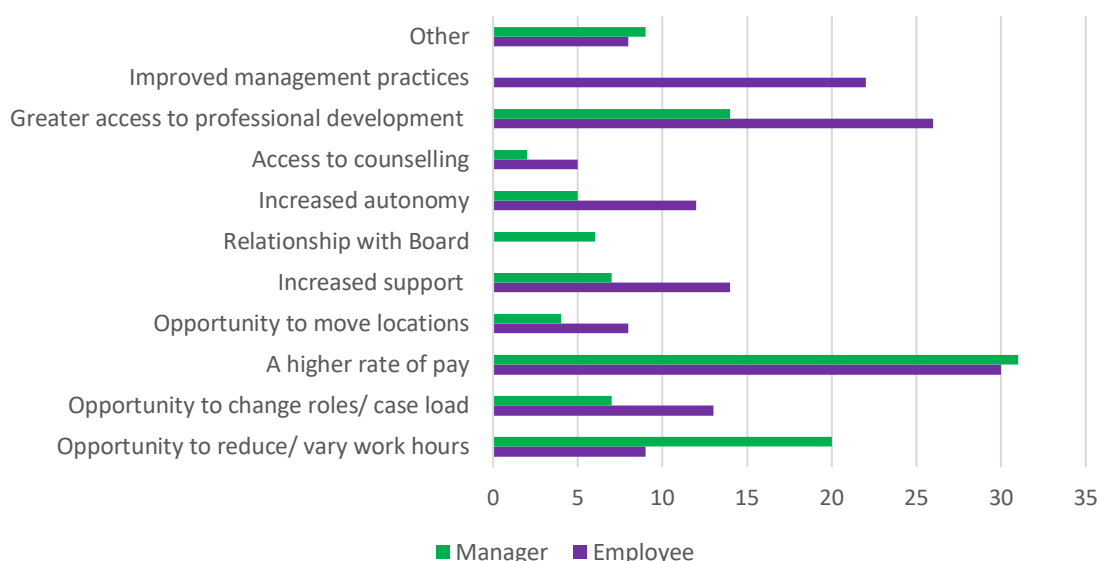


Figure 3.10 – Workplace Values to Ensure Retention - Employee

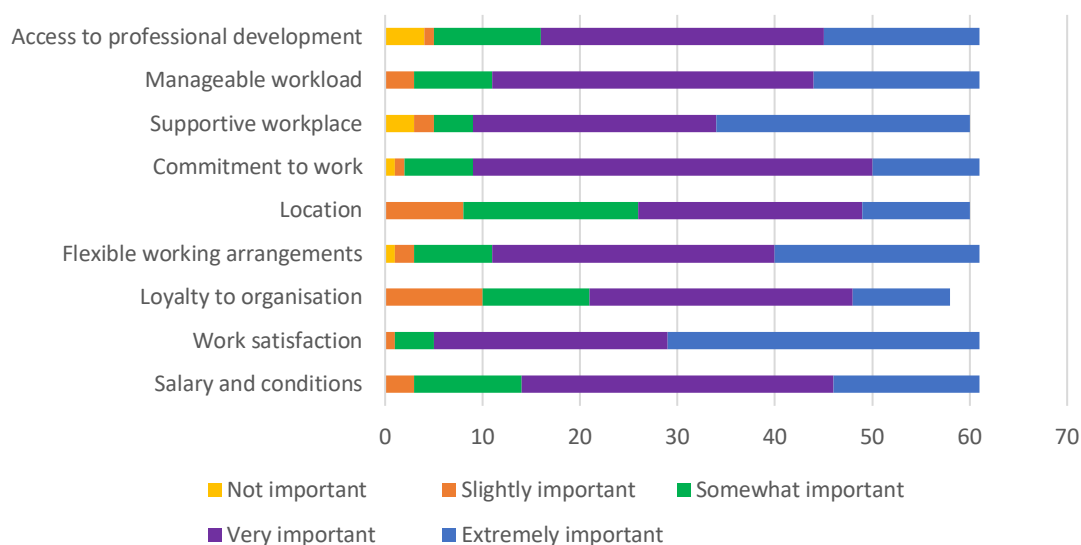
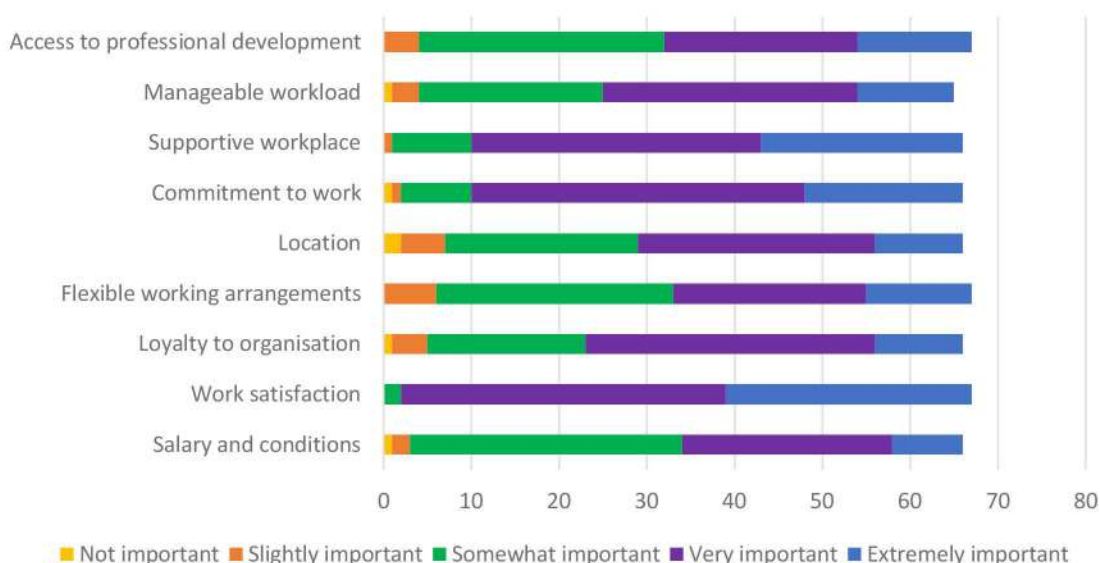


Figure 3.10 – Workplace Values to Ensure Retention - Manager



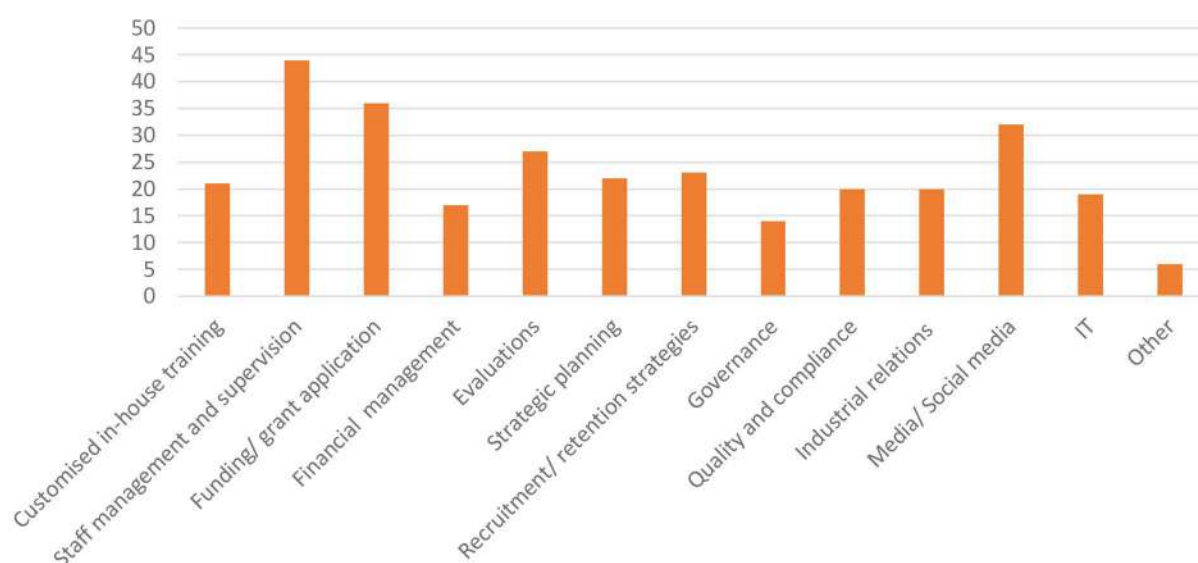
Training and Development

Managers were asked to select training topics that they felt would be useful for training and development within their organisation (Figure 3.12)

The two most useful training areas identified by Managers were staff management and supervision and development of funding/grant applications, two of the same top priority areas identified in the 2012 Workforce Survey.

Other areas were: advocacy, policy and procedure development, Aboriginal staff development, case management and Community Development models.

Figure 3.12 – Training and Development Needs



4 Working in the Community Sector in the Northern Territory

Respondents were asked a range of questions relating to their employment within the Community Sector, including how long they have worked in the Sector in the NT and how long they have spent in their current role.

Length of Service

Figure 4.1 demonstrates the length of time respondents have spent in their current roles. Most respondents in both Employee and Manager streams identified that they have been in their role for between 1-5 years. Figure 4.2 demonstrates the amount of time that respondents have spent working in the Community Sector in total. These results are similar to the 2014 Australian Community Sector Survey, which found that on average respondents had spent 12 years working in the Sector.

Figure 4.1 – Length of Service in Current Role

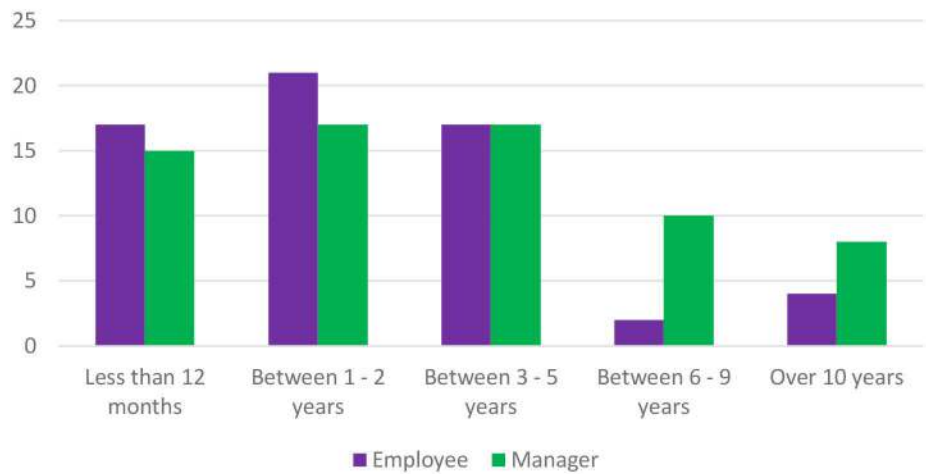
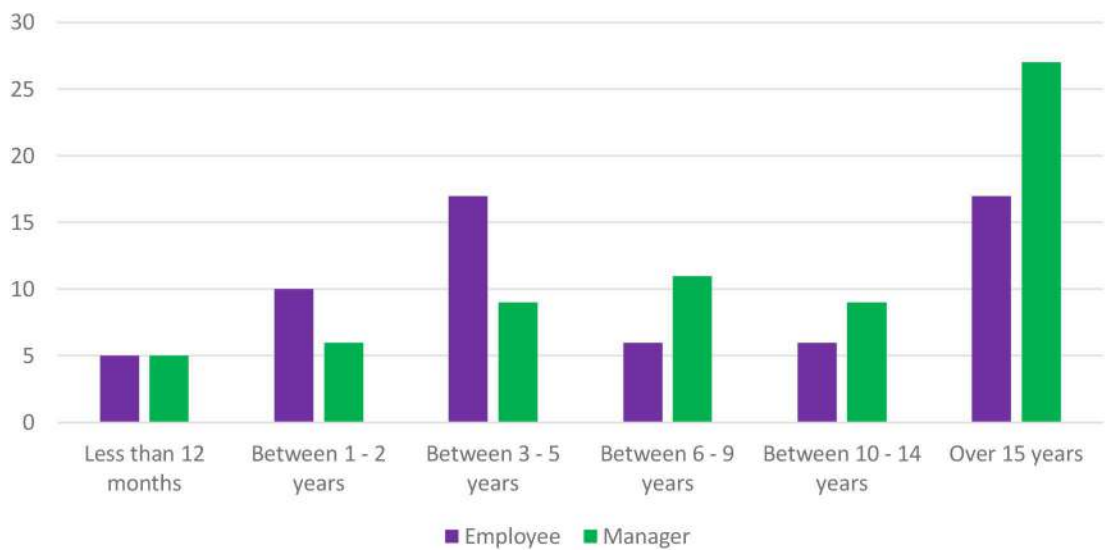


Figure 4.2 – Length of Service in the Community Sector (total)

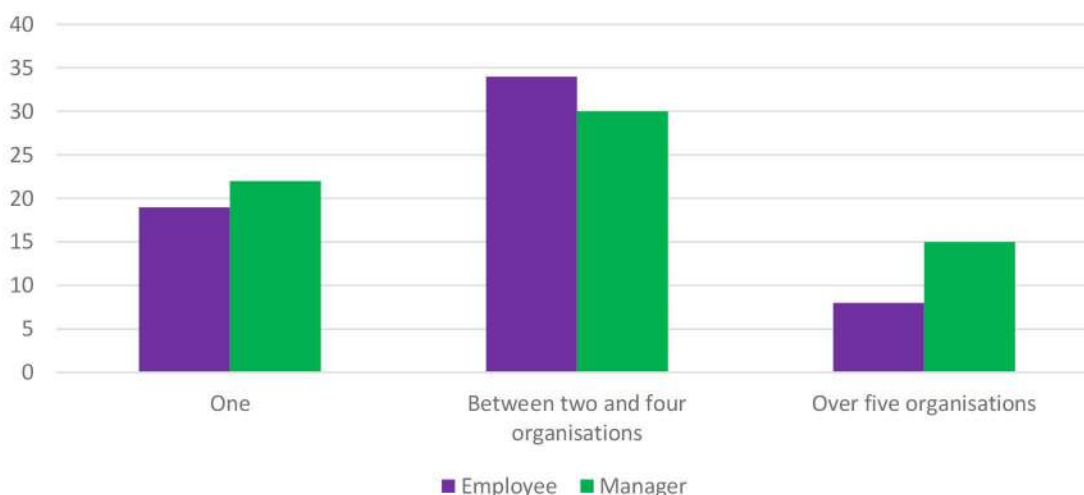


Movement Within the Community Sector

Respondents were asked to identify the number of organisations they have worked for within the Community Sector (non-jurisdictional specific). The majority of respondents in both Manager and Employee streams identified that they have worked in 2 - 4 organisations.

Movement within the Sector demonstrates the need to develop and support initiatives that help not only with retention, but long term financial and employment security for Community Sector workers. The introduction of portable long service leave is one such initiative that would benefit the Sector and those employed within it.

Figure 4.3 - Number of Organisations Worked at Within Community Sector



Attraction

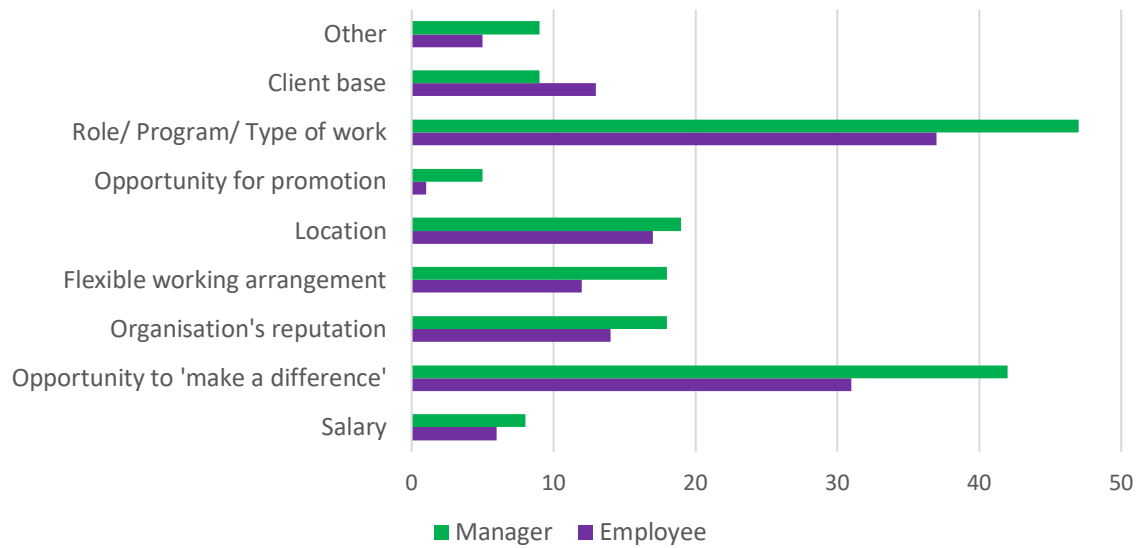
Figure 4.3 demonstrates that the most predominant factor that attracted people to their current role in both Manager and Employee streams was the program and type of work, along with the opportunity to 'make a difference'.

Opportunity for promotion was the most prominent factor in attracting people to their current roles in conjunction with salary, which could be indicative of opportunities within the Sector (particularly considering funding cycles and the relatively small size of Community Sector organisations in the NT).

Other reasons Managers were attracted to their roles were: workplace culture and diversity of services, working in an organisation that aligns with personal values and taking on a challenge and developing skills.

Other reasons Employees were attracted to their roles were: ability to self-manage work load, wanting experience in the non-Government sector, non-financial benefit and being offered a contract greater than one year.

Figure 4.3 – What Attracted Respondent to Current Role



Remuneration

Figure 4.4 highlights the gross annual salary of respondents. Although salary is not the main driver for people being attracted to the Community Sector, the cost of living in the NT and the cost of attracting staff in regional and remote areas means organisations often pay above award rates to attract suitable staff.

Many Community Sector employers also offer salary packaging. Approved by the Australian Tax Office (ATO) as a way of restructuring income if you are an employee of a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) in Australia, salary packaging enables employees to buy a range of items out of pre-tax salary rather than after-tax salary. This results in a net benefit to the employee.

Pay rates for some employees in the Community Services Sector industry are increasing under the Equal Remuneration Order made by the Fair Work Commission. The increase will apply in full by July 2021.

Other non-financial benefits are often offered by many organisations, including incentives such as flexible working arrangements and additional or special leave provisions.

Figure 4.4 – Gross (pre-tax) Annual Salary

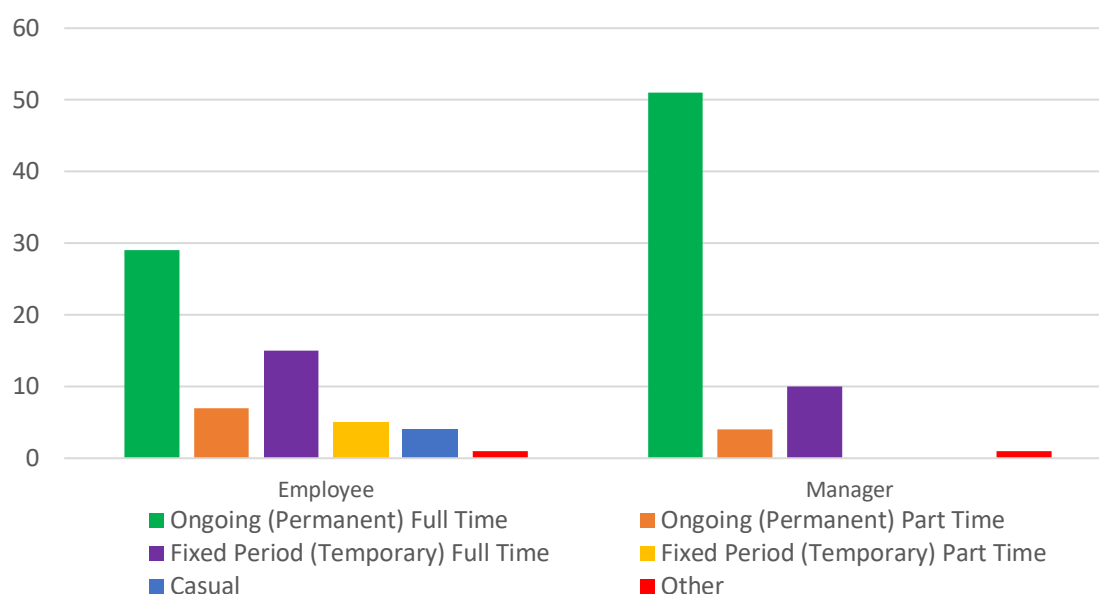


Type of Employment

The majority of respondents identified that they are in either permanent or temporary full-time employment (ongoing) (Figure 4.5). This is in line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) which identified 67% of the NT population as having worked full-time in the 2016 Census.

To note, fixed term (temporary) contract employees are employed for a specific period of time or task. Fixed term employees are different to permanent employees, who are employed on an ongoing basis until the employer or employee ends the employment relationship. Full-time or part-time fixed term employees are generally entitled to the same wages, penalties and leave as permanent employees. An award or registered agreement may provide extra terms and conditions for a fixed term employee.

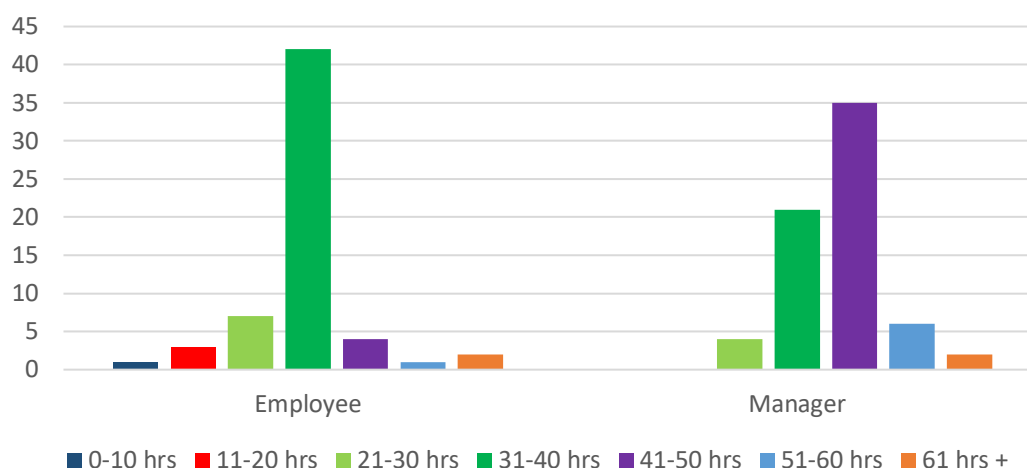
Figure 4.5 – Employment Type



Working Hours

Most respondents identified that they work between 31-50 hours per week on average (Figure 4.6), with Managers making up the majority of those in the 41-50 hrs bracket. This statistic aligns with findings in the 2016 Census, where 72% of the NT's working age population identified that their weekly work hours were between 35-39 hours (22%) or above 40 hours (50%).

Figure 4.6 – Average Work Hours (Weekly)



5 Workforce Wellbeing

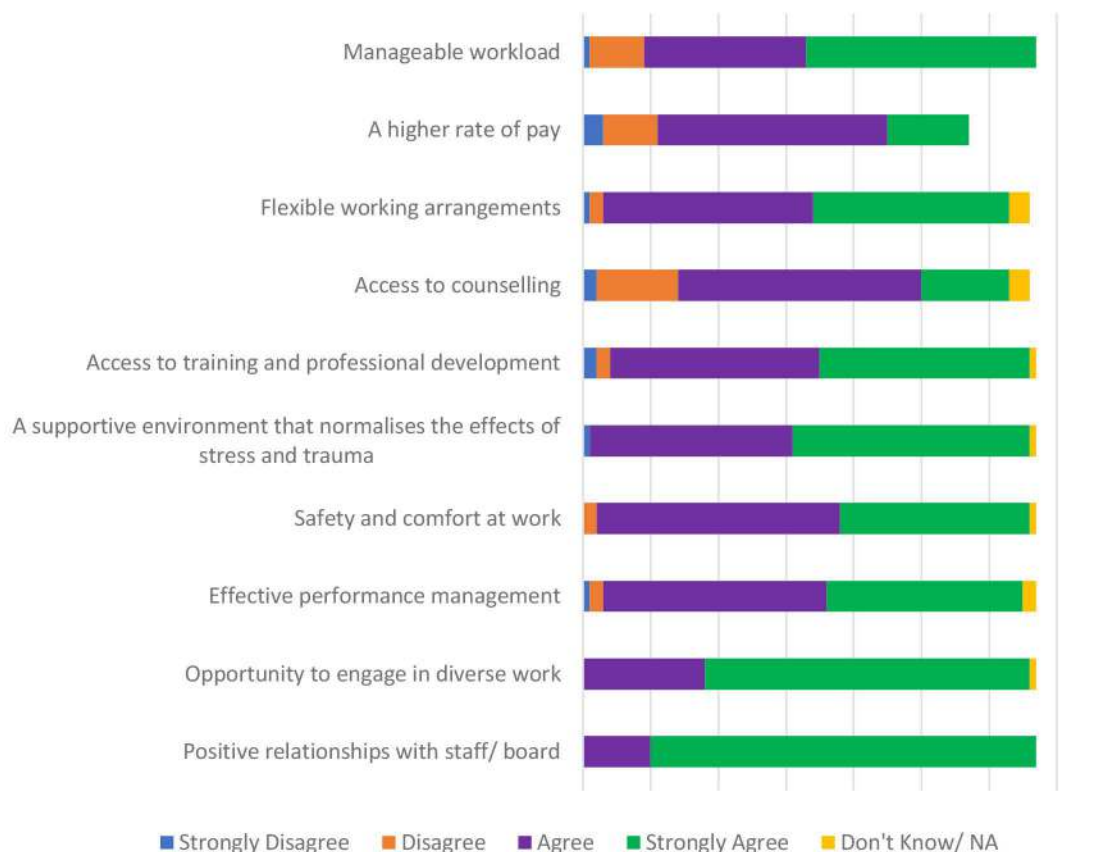
Respondents were asked to rate several statements regarding factors that influence their wellbeing in the workplace along with statements measuring how they view their workplace culture.

Both Managers and Employees were asked to rate their wellbeing at work.

The top factors influencing Managers' workplace wellbeing were identified as (Figure 5.1);

- Positive relationships with staff/board;
- Opportunity to engage in diverse work; and
- A supportive environment that normalises the effects of stress and trauma.

Figure 5.1– Workplace Wellbeing (Manager)



When asked to what extent they agree or disagree with statements regarding workplace culture (Figure 5.2) there were mixed responses from Managers regarding the appropriateness of salary and award conditions. A value area identified by Managers is that their prescribed workloads be achievable in their contracted hours.

Figure 5.2 – Workplace Values – Agree/Disagree

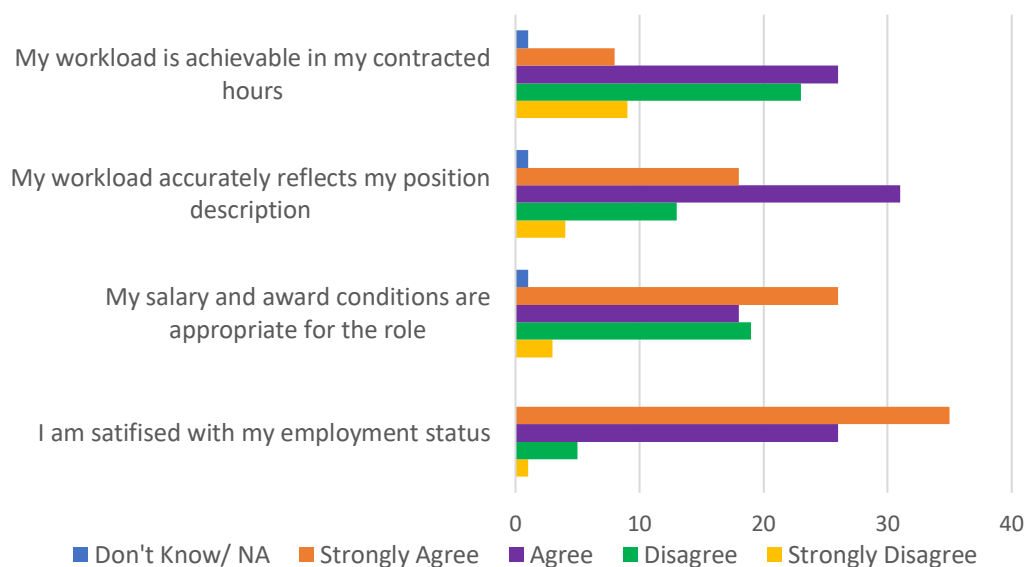
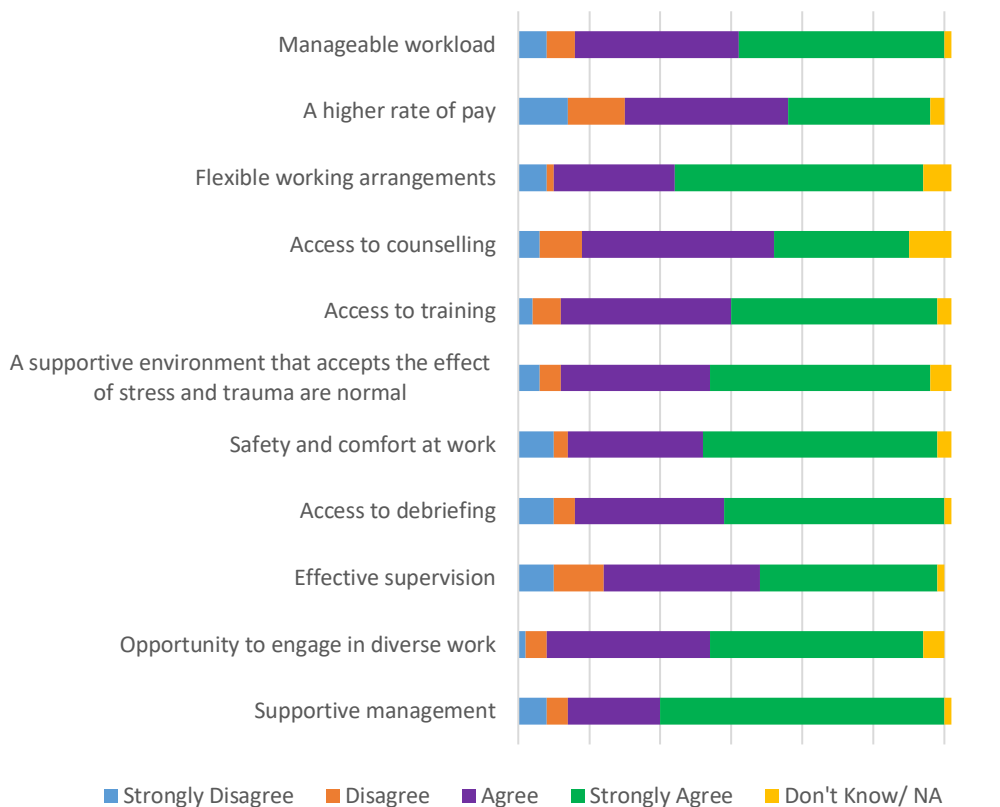


Figure 5.3 shows that Employees prioritise a range of areas when it comes to their wellbeing at work, with most questions responded to in the affirmative.

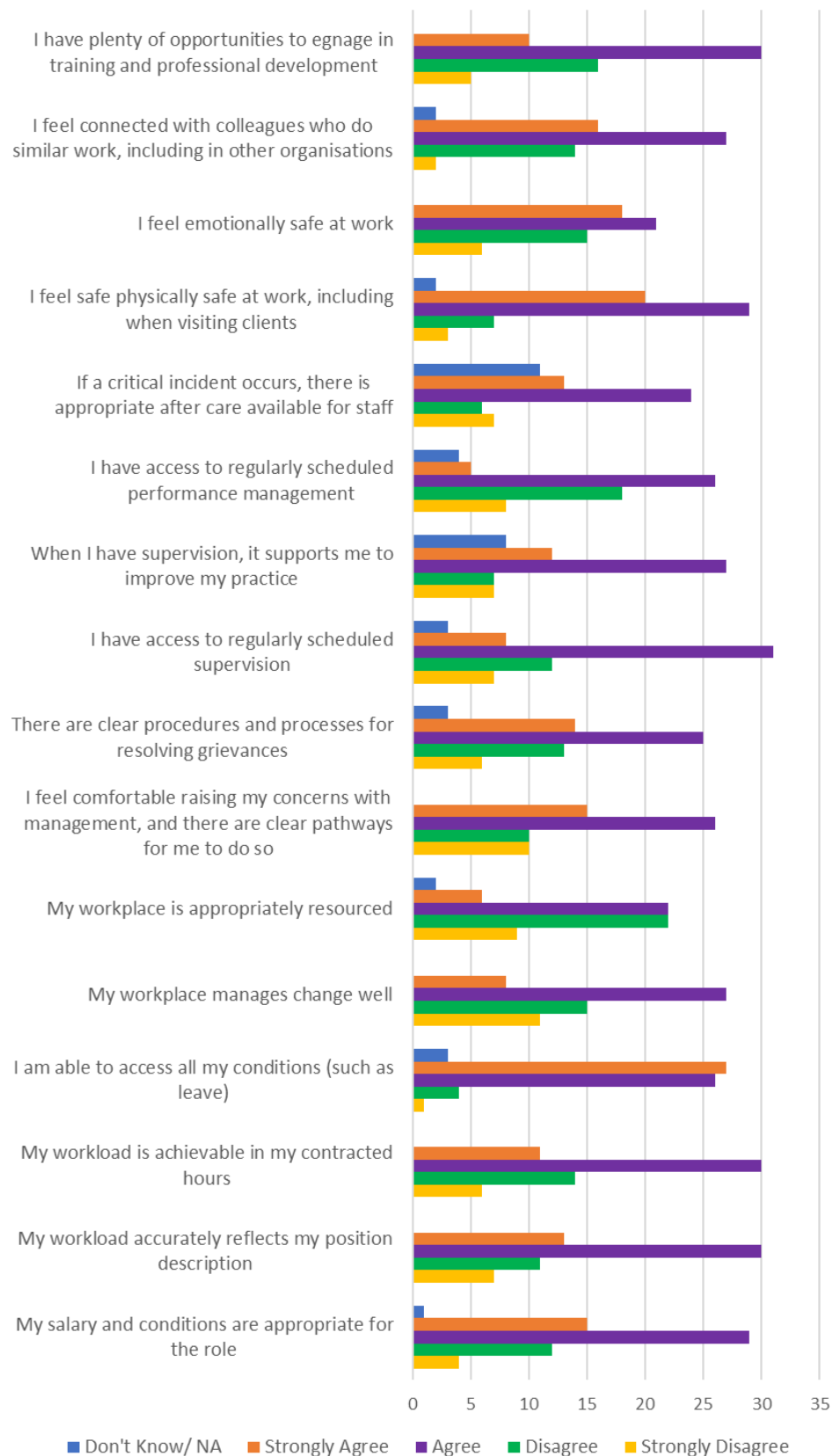
A clear trend from the results below is an emphasis placed on workplace support and growth (regarding access to training, counselling and support). This is reflective of previously identified responses (Figures 3.10 and 3.11) that identify supportive management/ workplaces and access to PD opportunities as important.

Figure 5.3 - Workplace Wellbeing (Employees)



In Figure 5.4, Employees were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements relating to workplace culture. Employee concerns regarding performance management, PD opportunities, support and management practices and workplace resourcing were displayed.

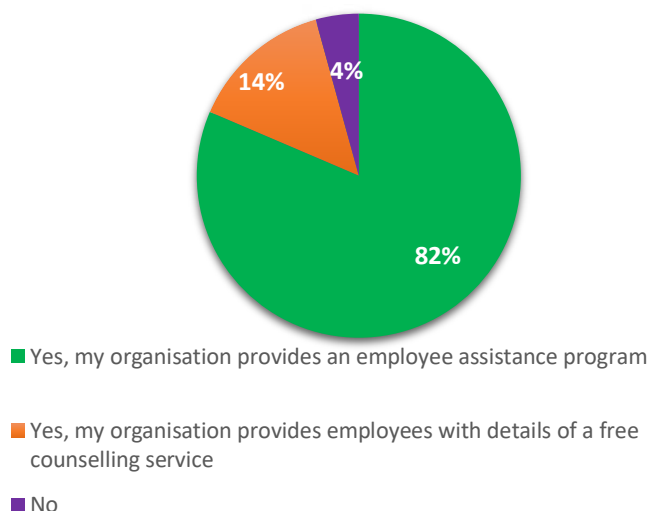
Figure 5.4 – Workplace Values – Agree/Disagree



The majority of Managers identified that their workplace offers access to an employee assistance program and/or counselling service.

Access to counselling was a priority area identified by all survey respondents as a factor that influences workplace wellbeing (Figures 5.1 and 5.3).

Figure 5.5 – Access to Counselling and Support



Respondents were asked the other ways that staff wellbeing was supported. They answered:

- Flexible working practices
- Leave conditions (including study leave and mental health day leave)
- Developing supportive workplace culture
- Cultural safety practices (acknowledging needs of Aboriginal staff, such as being on country)
- Regular staff support via face to face interaction (lunches, debriefs)
- External mentor/ mediator support
- Celebrating staff success
- Access to PD opportunities
- Vicarious trauma training and management

6 About the Respondents

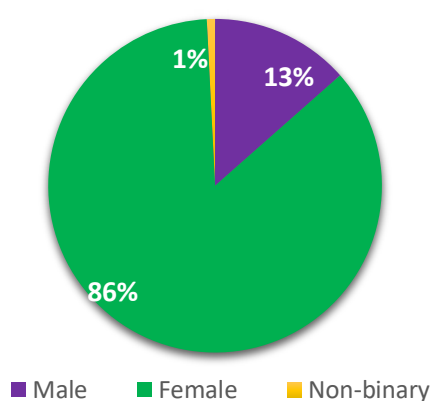
This section examines the personal characteristics of all survey respondents.

Gender of Respondents

Females form the majority of people who work in the Community Sector across Australia. The 2014 Australian Community Sector Survey identified that females make up 80% of the Sector's workforce. Reflecting this statistic, the majority of respondents who completed the Workforce Survey identified themselves as female (Figure 6.1).

While females make up the majority of the Community Sector workforce, they make up 48.2% of the NT population.⁴

Figure 6.1 - Gender



Age of Respondents

80% of respondents who identified themselves as Employees were aged between 18-24 years and 80% of Managers identified as between 55-60 years.

Having Employees identify in this age bracket is a delineation from the 2012 Workforce Survey results, where the majority of workers were 30 years or older,⁵ and the 2014 Australian Community Sector Survey, where 82% of respondents were aged between 36 and 65 years of age.⁶

This statistic, however, is representative of the NT median age of 32, with the NT generally having a younger population than the Australian average.⁷

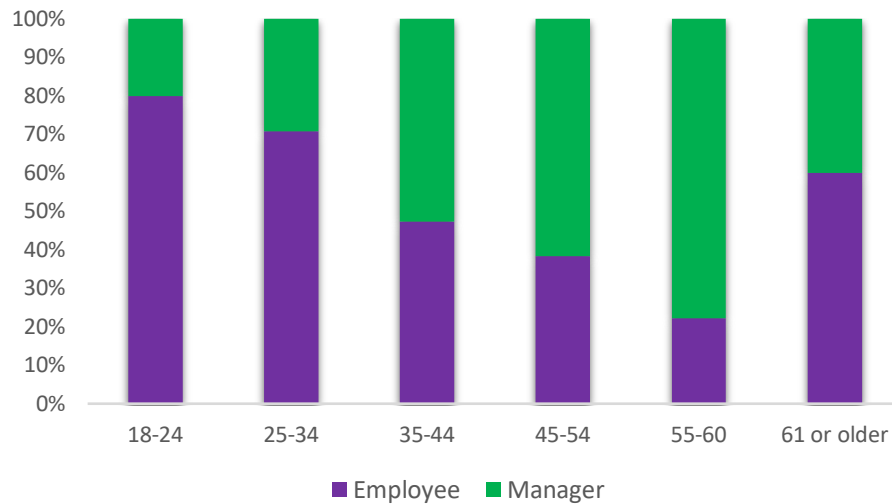
⁴ ABS, 2016, Quick Stats, October 2019, accessed at https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7?opendocument

⁵ NTCOSS, 2012 NT Community Sector Workforce Survey

⁶ Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), 2014 Australian Community Sector Survey

⁷ ABS, 2016, Quick Stats

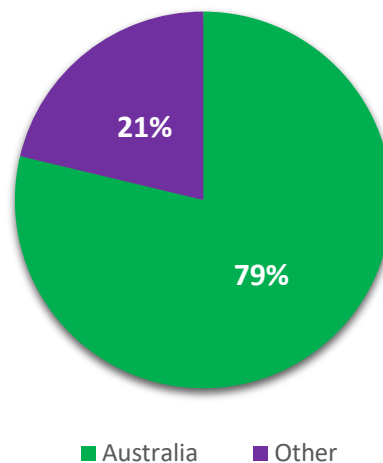
Figure 6.2 – Age



Background

The majority of respondents identified that they were born in Australia (Figure 6.3). Those that made up the 'Other' were from the United Kingdom, North America, New Zealand, Africa and other European countries. The statistic of those identifying as born outside of Australia is reflective of the general NT population, identified as 20% in the 2016 Census.⁸

Figure 6.3 – Country of Birth



14% of survey respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Figure 6.4).

As previously stated, Community and Professional Service Worker is the most common occupation for Aboriginal people within the NT.⁹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ ABS, 2016, Quick Stats

Figure 6.4 – Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



Levels of Formal Education

The majority of staff who responded to the survey have attained higher education or vocational training (Figure 6.5), with 68% of respondents identifying that they had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher. This demonstrates that the sector attracts qualified individuals, with the 2016 Census identifying that within the NT, 17% of surveyed adults had attained a Bachelor's degree or above.

Figure 6.5 – Highest Level of Education (Completed)



Disability

Out of all respondents, 8 identified that they have a disability (6.25%) with 1 respondent identifying that they require work-related adjustments.

Figure 6.5 – Disability Status



References

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NTCOSS acknowledges that we work on the land of the First Peoples of the Northern Territory and respect their continuing cultural connections as traditional owners of this country.