Independent Review into Workplace Culture at EY Oceania

Content Warning

We wish to advise that this report contains some distressing personal stories of harmful behaviours. As a reader, you may experience a range of emotions, particularly if you have directly experienced or witnessed harmful behaviours yourself. Please use your available support networks.

ELIZABETH
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& Co.

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EY Oceania

EY Oceania is one of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand's leading professional services firms. One of the "Big Four", EY Oceania provides customised services and solutions to a vast array of corporate and government clients. Although an independent entity, EY Oceania is a member of Ernst and Young Global and operates within the broad policy and strategy umbrella of the Global Firm.

EY Oceania's purpose is to *"build a better working world"*, and in recent years the firm has embarked on a range of strategies to ensure that their own workplace is an exemplar of their organisational purpose, vision, and values.

There have been signs of success, in particular progress toward gender parity at the Executive Leadership Team. However, EY Oceania – as is the case with many professional services firms – has also experienced challenges in delivering consistency of opportunity and experience across the firm.

Psychological safety, diversity and inclusion are vital to individual wellbeing, team and organisational performance. Individuals working in organisations that are inclusive and embrace diversity are more satisfied, more effective and more innovative. This in turn can drive significant organisational benefit, through increased revenue and productivity and as such is a powerful competitive advantage.

About this Review

The organisational resilience needed to survive over the last 3 years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense, with unprecedented threats to workplace culture, staff and Partner wellbeing and organisational viability. As part of a desire to continue learning and evolving, EY Oceania has recognised that now is a critical time to strengthen and renew workplace culture, so as to contribute to the wellbeing and retention of staff and Partners, and the performance of the organisation.

The tragic passing of Aishwarya Venkatachalam, a young Indian-Australian auditor, at the EY Oceania Sydney premises in August 2022, also provided an important impetus for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to commission this independent Review of the firm's workplace culture. In doing so, the ELT sought to more deeply understand the experiences of staff and Partners in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, including gaining insight into their experience of the firm's strengths and those aspects which were not meeting EY Oceania's aspirations. This Review, led by Elizabeth Broderick AO, and undertaken by a diverse and highly experienced team of cultural change and diversity and inclusion specialists, had a mandate to examine:

▶ psychological safety;

▶ sexism and sexual harassment;

▶ racism;

▶ bullying; and

▶ the wellbeing impacts of long working hours.

The focus of the Review was on workplace culture and as such, the Review did not investigate any individual complaints or review past investigation outcomes.

Executive Summary

The findings and recommendations in this report are supported by evidence obtained from a wide range of sources, including:

▶ A tailored online survey of current EY Oceania staff and Partners, completed by **4,171 people** (achieving a robust sample representing 36% of EY Oceania's workforce);

▶ 216 confidential one-to-one listening sessions, 184 of which were with current staff and Partners and 32 were with former staff and Partners;

▶ 21 key informant interviews, the purpose of which was to more deeply understand the EY Oceania context, and to inform the development of the Review methodology, including the development of question guides and recruitment strategies. These interviews were conducted with members of the Leadership Advisory Forum, the leads of each of the Diversity Networks, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Lead, the EY Tahi Lead, the Māori Cultural Capability Lead, the EY Chief Mental Health Advisor, and selected Service Line and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Leads;

▶ 11 confidential small group listening sessions; and

▶ 159 written submissions.

In addition, Elizabeth Broderick & Co (EB&Co.) completed:

▶ a desktop review of relevant Australian and International literature, including literature on promising practices in Professional Services Firms; and

▶ a review of all relevant EY Oceania policies and strategies.

All participation in the Review was voluntary with verbal informed consent obtained from each participant and all notes taken by the Review Team kept entirely confidential.

Key Insights

The Review found:

Inclusion and safety

▶ Overall, the vast majority of staff and Partners feel safe in EY Oceania workplaces;

▶ Likewise, the vast majority of staff and Partners believe that people behave in a respectful manner towards others in EY Oceania workplaces;

▶ However, positive experiences are not equally experienced by all, and negative experiences have a significant impact on individuals, teams and the firm as a whole;

▶ Some 74% of people report that they rarely feel excluded in the workplace, suggesting that a significant minority do at times feel excluded;

▶ Groups who experience systemic disadvantage in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand likewise experience lower levels of safety and inclusion in EY Oceania. This includes:

  ◉ Women;
  ◉ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
  ◉ Māori;
  ◉ People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;[1]
  ◉ LGBTQI+ people;
  ◉ People with disability; and
  ◉ People with caring responsibilities.

▶ The strengthened focus on diversity and inclusion has also led to a perception that there will be 'winners' and 'losers', with some Anglo-Celtic men, in particular, fearing that they may be losing opportunities, status and position in the organisation.

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1   We note that the term and concept of 'culturally and linguistically diverse' is contested and there are currently national conversations underway to inform new terminology and concepts to more appropriately capture people who are marginalised on the grounds of race.

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Harmful behaviours

▶ EY Oceania has a range of initiatives in place to advance a safe, inclusive and respectful culture. Many of these are evidence-based and widely regarded. Engagement is largely voluntary and as such there is higher participation among those with lived experience and those who are already committed allies.

Despite these efforts, bullying, sexual harassment, and racism continue to exist in the firm and cause significant human harm:

- Some 15% of people experienced bullying at EY Oceania in the last five years with women (17%) more likely to have experienced bullying than men (13%);

- Some 10% of people at EY Oceania experienced sexual harassment in the last five years, with women (15%) more likely to experience sexual harassment than men (6%); and

- Some 8% of people experienced racism at EY Oceania in the last five years, with people who identified as ethnically Indian (16%), Chinese (15%) or Māori (21%) more likely to have experienced racism. Similarly people whose religion is Hinduism (18%) or Islam (17%) were more likely to have experienced racism in the last 5 years at EY.

▶ There is low trust in reporting mechanisms, which means that people are often seeking to resolve issues without access to specialist support or formal investigation:

- A minority of those who experienced a harmful behaviour in the last five years reported the incident either formally or informally within EY Oceania or to an independent or external party:

    i. Of those who experienced bullying, approximately one third (36%) made a report

    ii. Of those who experienced sexual harassment, one in six (17%) reported their experienced

    iii. Just over one in twenty (7%) reported their experience of racism

- People who experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years were also less likely to have confidence in making a report or complaint to a person or group inside EY Oceania (53%, compared to 70% overall); and

▶ Many people have experienced retribution, particularly loss of access to advancement opportunities, when they have either formally or informally reported harmful experiences.

Long working hours

▶ Long working hours and overwork are a critical issue. For many people, long working hours and overwork create unsustainable ways of working and are having a negative effect on individual wellbeing, team cohesion and retention. In some cases, the impact on individuals is devastating;

▶ The impact of long working hours is also not being experienced equally. Partners and Associate Partners, for example, are those who are working some of the longest hours yet not feeling overly negatively affected as they feel like they have sufficient agency and reward to manage those hours. Others, such as Senior Managers, are working long hours and feeling like they don't have sufficient control or reward:

- 31% of people at EY Oceania are working 51 or more hours in a week routinely, (i.e. at least one week out of every four); approximately one in ten (11%) are working 61 or more hours in a week routinely, (i.e. at least one week out of every four);

- 10% of EY Oceania's people who work 'part time' are working 51 or more hours in a week routinely (weekly, fortnightly or monthly);

- A substantial proportion of EY Oceania people report experiencing a range of negative impacts associated with their long working hours and experiences of overwork, with nearly half of EY Oceania people (46%) reporting that their health has already been negatively affected as a result of their long working hours;

- More than two in five people are considering quitting their role as a result of their long working hours (42%), in particular, Senior Managers and Associate Directors (47%) and Managers and Assistant Directors (50%);

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- EY Oceania's people believe that many of these issues – in particular, long working hours and, to a lesser extent, bullying – have their origin in the firm's business model, which they perceive as driving a focus on profit and delivery over people. This in turn shapes how people treat each other in the workplace; and

- This focus on profit margin shapes resourcing decisions at an engagement and Service Line level, such that teams may not have the staffing levels required to deliver on an engagement without working excessive hours. Addressing this will require a shift in both resourcing and mindsets.

Leadership and change

- Leadership across the firm is variable, with some experiencing exceptional leadership and others experiencing sub-optimal leadership. Some 88% of EY Oceania people agree that people in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful workplace behaviour. For those who have experienced poor leadership, however, the results have been devastating.

- The vast majority of EY Oceania's people want change, and they are keen to contribute to the journey. There is a relatively high level of confidence that EY Oceania can address many of the issues explored through this Review:

  - 78% of EY Oceania's people are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to sexual harassment;

  - 74% are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to racism;

  - 70% of EY Oceania's people are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to bullying; and

  - However, only 31% are confident that EY Oceania can change a culture of long working hours and overwork.

Framework for Action

EB&Co. commends EY Oceania for initiating this Review and particularly for making the findings and recommendations public. This creates a potent opportunity for all of EY Oceania's people to build a shared understanding of the lived experience of staff and Partners, including both the strengths and the areas where the practice does not yet align with EY Oceania's values and purpose – its aspiration to *"build a better working world".*

The Framework for Action provides a powerful blueprint for action against five key principles:

Principle 1: Human dignity is integral in leadership, recognition, and reward systems.

Principle 2: Work is costed, resourced, and scheduled appropriately.

Principle 3: Harmful behaviours are eradicated, and people are safe and thriving at work.

Principle 4: Diversity is celebrated.

Principle 5: Cultural and organisational change is co-designed and transparently monitored.

The Framework is evidence-based and has drawn on all the data gathered across the Review. The Review Team has particularly appreciated the generosity of EY Oceania's people in sharing their lived experience, their insights and their recommendations.

EY Oceania now has a unique opportunity to further strengthen its culture and its performance – for the benefit of its 11,000 staff and Partners and its clients, and for its capacity to deliver on its purpose and values.

1. Introduction and the case for change

1.1 Introduction

EY Oceania is one of Australia's and Aotearoa New Zealand's leading professional services firms. One of the "Big Four", EY Oceania provides customised services and solutions to a vast array of corporate and government clients. Although an independent entity, EY Oceania is a member of Ernst and Young Global and operates within the broad policy and strategy umbrella of the Global Firm.

EY Oceania's purpose is to *"build a better working world"*, and in recent years the firm has embarked on a range of strategies to ensure that their own workplace is an exemplar of their organisational purpose, vision, and values. There have been signs of success in this area, in particular progress toward gender parity at the Executive Leadership Team. However, the organisational resilience needed to survive over the last 3 years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense, with unprecedented threats to workplace culture, staff and Partner wellbeing and organisational viability.

The tragic passing of Aishwarya Venkatachalam, a young Indian-Australian auditor, at the EY Oceania Sydney premises in August 2022, also provided an important impetus for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to commission this independent Review of the firm's workplace culture. In doing so, the ELT sought to more deeply understand the experiences of staff and Partners, including gaining insight into their experience of the firm's strengths and those aspects which were not meeting EY Oceania's aspirations.

This Review, led by Elizabeth Broderick AO, and undertaken by a diverse and highly experienced team of cultural change, diversity and inclusion specialists, had a broad scope, with a mandate to examine psychological safety, bullying sexism and sexual harassment and racism, as well as the wellbeing impacts of long working hours.

Upon commencing the Review, the team met with Aishwarya's family to extend their condolences and to hear about Aishwarya's life and her time at EY Oceania. Whilst not specifically investigating Aishwarya's death, the team wanted to ensure that her story would not be lost, but rather, through this work, would inform positive change within the firm. Throughout the report, we have referred to Aishwarya and her passing in line with the family's wishes.

Understanding the lived experience of staff and Partners is core to this Review. The Review Team was privileged to meet with hundreds of staff and Partners through confidential individual interviews and small group listening sessions, and to hear the reflections of thousands more via written submissions and a confidential survey. Across the Review, there was strong participation from diverse cohorts, including staff and Partners across all Service Lines, all ranks, and all locations; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Māori, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)[2], people with disability and LGBTQI+ people. Together, the insights generated form a compelling picture of both where EY Oceania has made progress, and where additional focus is required.

The Review Team drew on the expertise of a number of key specialists to inform the Review's methodology, analysis, findings and its recommendations. These included a specialist Advisory Group consisting of Maria Dimopoulos AM, a national leader in the intersection of culture, race and gender in the workplace, and Natalie Walker, a Kuku Yalanji woman widely respected for her experience in business, social enterprise and policy advocacy. The team also consulted with Dr Jaelea Skehan OAM, Director of Everymind and an internationally respected leader in the prevention of mental ill-health and the prevention of suicide.

This chapter provides an overview of the context for the Review, including the context within EY Oceania, and the broader national and global contexts. It then examines the case for change, including the business case for change and the appetite for change among EY Oceania's people. It also examines levels of confidence in EY Oceania's ability to make meaningful change on harmful behaviours as well as the culture of long working hours and overwork.

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2   We note that the term and concept of 'culturally and linguistically diverse' is contested and there are currently national conversations underway to inform new terminology and concepts to more appropriately capture people who are marginalised on the grounds of race.

1. Introduction and the case for change

Confidence in change: Findings at a glance

77%
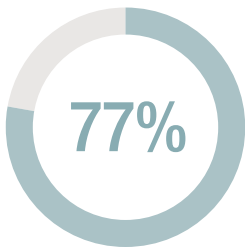
77% of staff and Partners are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to **sexual harassment**.

Some **3%** of staff and Partners were 'not at all confident' that change would occur, with confidence lowest among: women aged 18-24 years (**7%** of whom were not at all confident), women who work in roles below manager level (**5%**), and people who work in Strategy and Transactions (**6%**).

69%
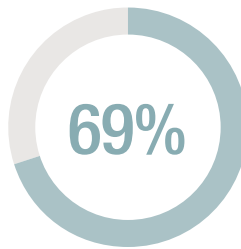
69% of staff and Partners are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to **bullying.**

Some **8%** of staff and Partners were 'not at all confident' that change would occur, with confidence lowest among: mid-level managers (**10%**), people with disability (**15%**), and people who work in the Business Consulting Service Line (**12%**).

74%
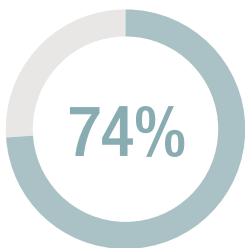
74% of staff and Partners are confident that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to **racism**.

Some **4%** of staff and Partners were 'not at all confident' that change would occur, with confidence lowest among: Māori (**16%** of whom were not at all confident), people whose religion is Baptist (**15%**) or Hinduism (**16%**), people who speak Cantonese at home (**13%**) and people who identify as LGBTQI+ (**8%**).

31%
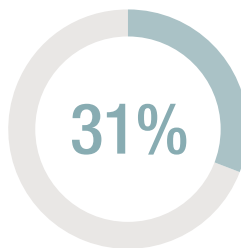
Only 31% of staff and Partners are confident that EY Oceania can change a culture of **long working hours and overwork.**

Confidence was lowest among mid-level managers (between **48-50%** of whom were 'not at all confident'), people who identify as LGBTQI+ (**49%** of whom were 'not at all confident'), people who work in the Sydney office (**45%**), and staff and Partners in the Tax (**56%** 'not at all confident') and Strategy and Transactions (**50%**) service lines.

1. Introduction and the case for change

1.2 EY Oceania's people

Ernst and Young was founded in 1989 and is one of the largest professional service networks in the world with headquarters in London and offices in more than 150 countries. There are over 300,000 employees worldwide.

EY Oceania is a multinational, multidisciplinary professional services partnership offering customised, knowledge-intensive business services and solutions to clients in many areas including assurance, consulting, people advisory services, financial services, tax and law, and strategy and transactions.

EY Oceania is a sub-region of EY which includes Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea. EY Oceania has a presence in major cities throughout this region, including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Auckland, Wellington, Port Moresby, and Suva, among others. Some two-thirds of the firm's staff and Partners are located in either the Sydney or Melbourne office. As noted previously, the scope of this Review was limited to Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

As of 2022, EY Oceania employed just over 11,000 staff and Partners in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, making it one of the largest professional services firms in Oceania.

EY Oceania has a distributed model of leadership, with the Executive Leadership Team providing overarching strategic leadership and accountabilities, and the 777 Partners providing leadership and management both within their own Service Line and for the firm overall.
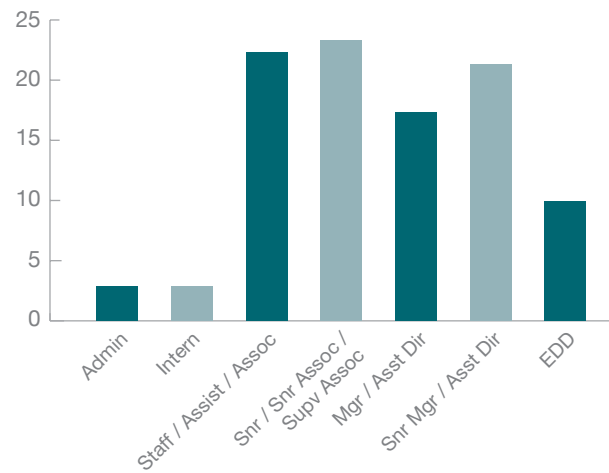
Figure 2: Headcount by Staff Level (Consolidated Rank) (%)
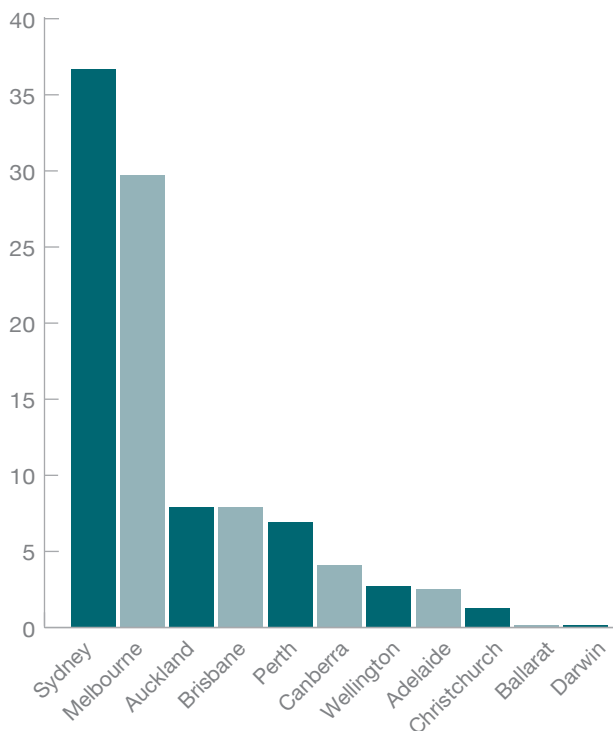
Figure 1: Headcount by Location (%)
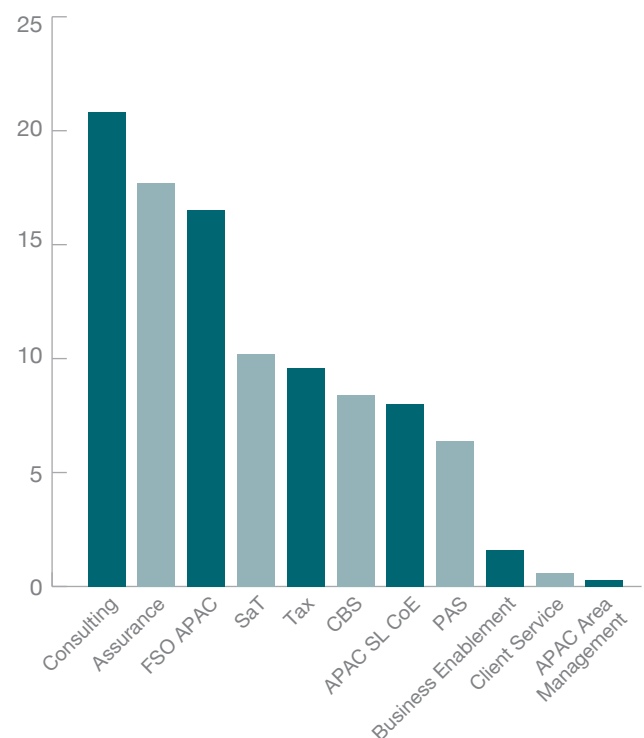
Figure 3: Headcount by Service Line (%)

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CONSOLIDATED RANK AUSTRALIA

281	212	2,553	2,095
Administration	Intern	Staff / Assistant / Associate	Senior / Senior Associate / Supervisor Associate

1,681	2,028	291	703
Manager / Assistant Director	Senior Manager / Associate Director	Executive Director / Associate Partner / Director	Partners

TOTAL 9,844

CONSOLIDATED RANK AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

35	12	417	295
Administration	Intern	Staff / Assistant / Associate	Senior / Senior Associate / Supervisor Associate

193	258	29	74
Manager / Assistant Director	Senior Manager / Associate Director	Executive Director / Associate Partner / Director	Partners

TOTAL 1,313

11,157[3] TOTAL AUSTRALIA / AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND
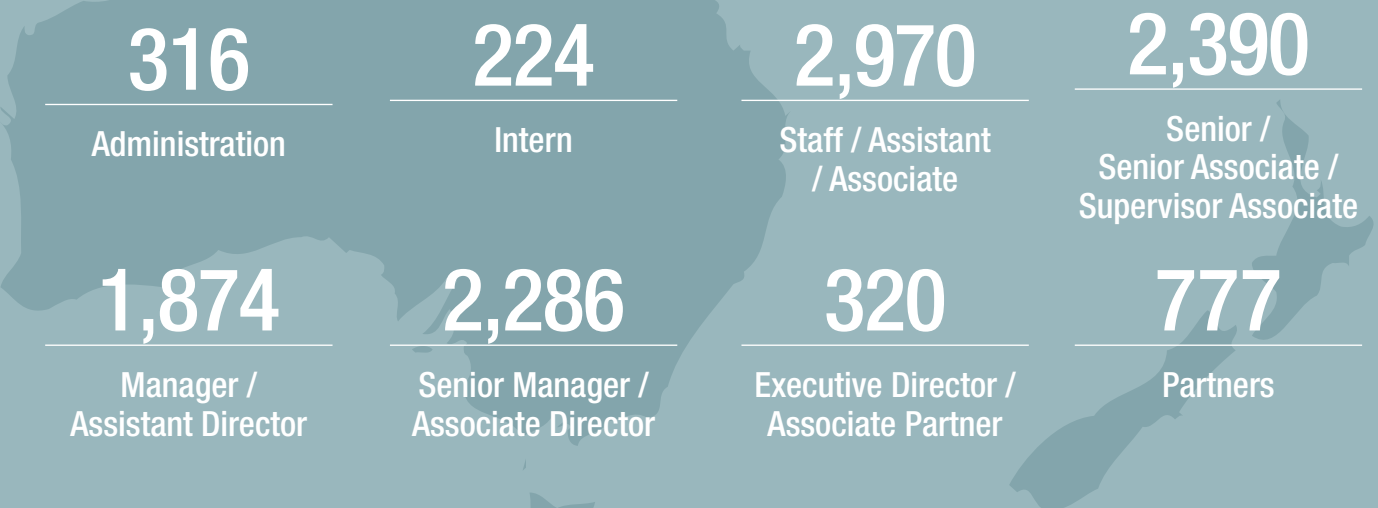
316	224	2,970	2,390
Administration	Intern	Staff / Assistant / Associate	Senior / Senior Associate / Supervisor Associate

1,874	2,286	320	777
Manager / Assistant Director	Senior Manager / Associate Director	Executive Director / Associate Partner	Partners

1. Introduction and the case for change

1.3 The Case for Change

1.3.1 The National and Global Context

This Review is occurring at a pivotal time for EY Oceania, and for professional services firms in Australia.

Workplace dynamics are changing rapidly. Over the past decade, social movements have had a significant impact on workplace culture, and have particularly affected and, organisations like EY Oceania, given their vision to *"build a better working world"*.

Social movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have highlighted issues of systemic bias and discrimination in the workplace. In response, organisations have deepened their focus on these issues, with many developing frameworks to accelerate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

At the same time, the disruption from new technologies has been substantial. Advances in technology have led to significant changes in the way work is done, including the rise of remote work and the use of automation and artificial intelligence. There has been a rise of the gig economy characterised by short-term contracts and freelance work. This has grown in recent years and led to new challenges for workers and the organisations that employ them.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities in the economy and across society. The impact on the economy meant wide-spread job losses and economic hardship, low wages and casual workers being hit particularly hard. The pandemic highlighted existing gender inequalities in caregiving responsibilities and access to childcare. It also accelerated changing attitudes toward work-life balance. There has been a growing recognition of the importance of work-life balance, with many individuals seeking greater flexibility and opportunities for remote work.

The rise of new power has been enabled by advances in technology and has resulted in increased activism. In recent years, there has been a rise in employee activism, with workers speaking out on issues such as climate change, social justice, and human rights. This activism poses risks to organisations and their brands particularly when there is limited ability for people to raise their concerns internally.

These changes have led to new challenges and opportunities for professional services organisations, and there is a clear need to adapt and innovate in order to remain competitive and relevant.

A Human Rights Imperative

A safe and respectful workplace is a matter of human rights. All workers have the right to physical and psychological safety at work. This right is enshrined in many examples of domestic legislation, as well as in international agreements. In 2019, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the first-ever international treaty on violence and harassment in the workplace. The ILO Convention 190 and its accompanying Recommendation 206 recognises the right of all people to work free from violence and harassment. Protections in this convention also cover gender-based violence and sexual harassment. As a result, employers and organisations have an international, as well as a domestic, legal responsibility to create a 'safe environment' in the workplace[4].

An Economic Imperative

The cost of inaction on this front is significant. Sexual harassment, bullying and racism in the workplace cause significant harm to an individual's physical and mental health but harmful workplace behaviours also impose a significant financial cost on organisations. In an Australian study Deloitte Access Economics estimated that, in 2018 alone, workplace sexual harassment cost the Australian economy $3.8 billion[5]. A study in the United States of 200 sexual harassment incidents at high-profile companies demonstrated a strong connection between sexual misconduct and poor financial performance. These researchers found that on the day following an incident of sexual harassment being reported and made public, major companies experience a market value decline of 1.5% the following day, amounting to an average drop of $450 million USD.

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4   International Labour Organisation 2022 *Transforming enterprises through diversity and inclusion* at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_841348.pdf

5   Borelli-Kjaer, M., Schack, L.M. and Neilsson, U. (2021) "MeToo: Sexual harassment and company value", *Journal of Corporate Finance*, 67(3) at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2020.101875

1. Introduction and the case for change

Innovation, Performance and Productivity

At the same time, a growing body of international evidence has established that having a diverse workforce, and diverse leadership team, coupled with an inclusive culture generates significant benefits for both organisations and individuals.

Diversity, particularly of leadership teams, is a key driver of innovation and capacity to adapt to changes in customer demand. Over time, this translates into greater financial success, with one study showing that:

> increasing the diversity of leadership teams leads to more and better innovation and improved financial performance...Companies that have more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenue due to innovation[6].

More recently, research conducted by the Diversity Council of Australia (DCA) has found that workers in inclusive teams are:

- Ten times more likely to be very satisfied; and
- Four times less likely to feel work has a negative or very negative impact on their mental health.[7]

The DCA further found that organisations with a diverse workforce benefit from:

- Far greater retention, with workers four times less likely to leave their job in the next 12 months;
- Significantly (five times less) lower rates of discrimination and/or harassment;
- Increased effectiveness, with workers in diverse teams eleven times more likely to be highly effective than those in non-inclusive teams; and
- Greater innovation, with workers in diverse teams ten times more likely to be innovative.[8]

1.3.2 The Context for Professional Services Firms in Australia

The final stage of this Review is being conducted against the backdrop of an Australian Senate inquiry into management and assurance of integrity by consulting services. The focus of that inquiry is on conflicts of interest and other unethical conduct. The inquiry, and the instigating matters, have raised the issue of the social licence to operate for consulting and assurance firms, highlighting the call from the Australian people and the Australian Government for those firms to truly live up to their own aspirations and values.

Many of the challenges currently faced by EY Oceania reflect the broader systemic issues within professional services firms in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly of balancing productivity and wellbeing, managing workload when timeframes are outside the control of the organisation (e.g. set by regulators), and ensuring that the makeup of the leadership team and Partners truly reflects the diversity of the workforce. As many of these matters are systemic and belong to the sector rather than any single organisation, these issues also lend themselves to shared learning and shared problem solving across firms.

1.3.3 The Context for EY Oceania

The context for change

EY Oceania has identified a strong case for change, arguing that the path to fulfilling its purpose is through

> 'empowering our people… to become the transformative leaders the world needs'.

As such, the firm has set ambitious targets in relation to diversity, inclusion and sustainability, with those targets seen as integral both to building a strong and resilient business and to making a positive contribution to the environment and the society in which they operate.

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6   Powers, A. 2018 "A Study Finds that Diverse Companies Produce 19% More Revenue" in *Forbes*, 27 June at https://www.forbes.com/sites/annapowers/2018/06/27/a-study-finds-that-diverse-companies-produce-19-more-revenue/

7   D'Almada-Remedios, R., and O'Leary, J. 2021 *Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce Diversity Council Australia* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf

8   D'Almada-Remedios, R., and O'Leary, J. 2021 *Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce Diversity Council Australia* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf

1. Introduction and the case for change

EY Oceania has ambitious targets in relation to gender parity and has made significant progress towards attaining those targets:

In 2022	Target: By 2025
50% Women constituted 50% of EY Oceania staff (firm-wide)	**50%** Women will constitute 50% of EY Oceania staff (firm-wide)
54% Women constituted 54% of the Executive Leadership Team	**50%** Women will constitute 50% of the Executive Leadership Team
30% Women constituted 30% of Partners	**40%** Women will constitute 40% of Partners
0.9% There was a 0.9% gender pay gap	**ZERO** There will be zero gender pay gap

Although data is limited, anecdotal reports suggest that progress has been significantly slower for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and Māori women.

More recently, EY Oceania has set ambitious targets in relation to the inclusion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

In 2022	Target: By 2027
23% People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds constituted 23% of Partners	**30%** 30% of Partners will be from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
5% There was a 5% pay gap between CALD and Anglo-Celtic staff[9]	**ZERO** There will no longer be a pay gap between CALD and Anglo-Celtic staff

EY Oceania has also committed to increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in Australia, and is striving to increase cultural awareness in each country.

In 2023, EY Oceania had	
25	Full-time permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
49	Māori staff (including interns)
10	Pasifika staff (including interns)

EY Oceania aims to have 95% of staff undertaking cultural awareness training within 6 months of commencing with the firm in Australia.

In 2023, 9% of staff and Partners undertook cultural awareness training within 6 months of commencing at EY Oceania – Aotearoa New Zealand.

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9   EY Oceania 2022 *Value Realised Scorecard 2022* at https://www.ey.com/en_au/2022-oceania-value-realised-scorecard

1. Introduction and the case for change

EY Oceania is currently implementing a range of initiatives to progress these targets, including mentoring and support for women and people from CALD backgrounds, as well as raising awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity and the strengthening of capability across the firm.

In addition, EY Oceania uses its purchasing power to support diverse suppliers, tracking the percentage of influenceable spend directed to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers (2024 target - 3%; 2022 spend - 1.3%);

- Māori and Pasifika suppliers (2022 actual spend $2.7m NZD, no target currently in place); and

- Female-owned suppliers: (2023 actual spend – $2m, no target currently in place).

At present, EY Oceania's ability to track its diversity and inclusion impacts is somewhat constrained by data availability. EY Oceania's data on the cultural and ethnic background of staff and Partners, as well as data on disability and sexual orientation, is incomplete. Anecdotal reports suggest that this is due to concern that disclosure of identity may lead to a person being marginalised. Whilst there may be technical work to do to build an appropriate data system, the key objective is strengthening a culture of inclusion, so that people feel safe to disclose their identity and know that it will be welcomed.

Alongside this focus on inclusion, EY Oceania has also identified some priority action areas in relation to employee experience and has been trialling innovative ways of working to better balance productivity and wellbeing.

Building on the strengths of EY's COVID response

As noted earlier, the past three years have been a period of unprecedented upheaval in global workplaces. Early in the pandemic, EY Oceania recognised the vulnerability and concern among staff and took a range of bold steps in response, including making a commitment that no one would be made redundant during the crisis. As a part of the suite of measures, Partners took a 20% pay cut, to both fortify the business and signal their commitment to the wellbeing of the firm as a whole. The firm also expanded access to both sick leave and unplugged days, and built relationships and practices around checking in and supporting each person. This approach allowed the firm to sustain its workforce during a challenging time, and provides a compelling example of a multi-faceted, firm-wide response to a complex challenge.

1.3.4 What they told us

Over the course of this Review, many people described very positive experiences of EY Oceania, highlighting a strong culture of learning and praising those leaders who provided opportunities for professional development and advancement. They also noted and supported EY Oceania's desire to build a more diverse and inclusive firm.

However, others described less positive experiences and called for significant change. In doing so, many Review participants commented that there is no one EY Oceania culture, and that each person's experience and psychological safety is more dependent on their immediate team environment and their leader than on organisation wide policies and processes.

Indicator	2022 People Survey Result	Target
Exceptional experience	77% of people report Exceptional Experience of working at EY	80% of people report Exceptional Experience of working at EY by 2023
Belonging and inclusiveness	87%[11]	80%
Time for health and wellbeing needs[10]	61%	No current target

10 This indicator measures the proportion of EY people who felt that they were able to dedicate time to their health and wellbeing needs.
11 It is understood that there are likely to be variations between cohorts on this indicator, as people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds report lower levels of belonging and feeling included in the workplace.

1. Introduction and the case for change

Almost all participants expressed a desire to contribute to change at EY Oceania, to assist the firm move closer to truly living its values and purpose:

I would do anything to help EY Oceania address some of our real challenges around inclusion and safety.

I see this review as an opportunity to push EY Oceania in the right direction. It's important for me to contribute.

I am so pleased the firm has asked you to review our culture. At last I feel something will change.

EY Oceania as a company has great values but there's a tension between what we want to be and who we actually are, and for me the main concern that drove me to speak [to the Review] is the workload and hours that are required to fit into the business system. We want to be a person-centred business. The problem is that the system currently is directly in tension with this because it drives people to keep working to meet unrealistic deadlines and meet the mantra of "it just has to get done".

1.4 Confidence that meaningful change is possible

1.4.1 Survey insights

Changing harmful behaviours

Findings from the Review survey of staff and Partners indicate high levels of confidence across EY Oceania for the firm to make a meaningful difference in relation to three key areas (bullying, sexual harassment and racism).

Approximately three quarters of staff and Partners at EY Oceania were confident (extremely confident, very confident or quite confident) that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to sexual harassment (77%) and racism (74%) in the workplace. Across both measures, men were more confident than women by a small degree (79% for sexual harassment, compared to 75% of women, and 76% with respect to racism, compared to 74% of women). Views of non-binary people have not been reported due to low numbers within the survey sample, to protect the confidentiality of these respondents.

Fewer than one in twenty people were 'not at all confident' there would be a meaningful change with respect to sexual harassment (3%) or racism (4%).
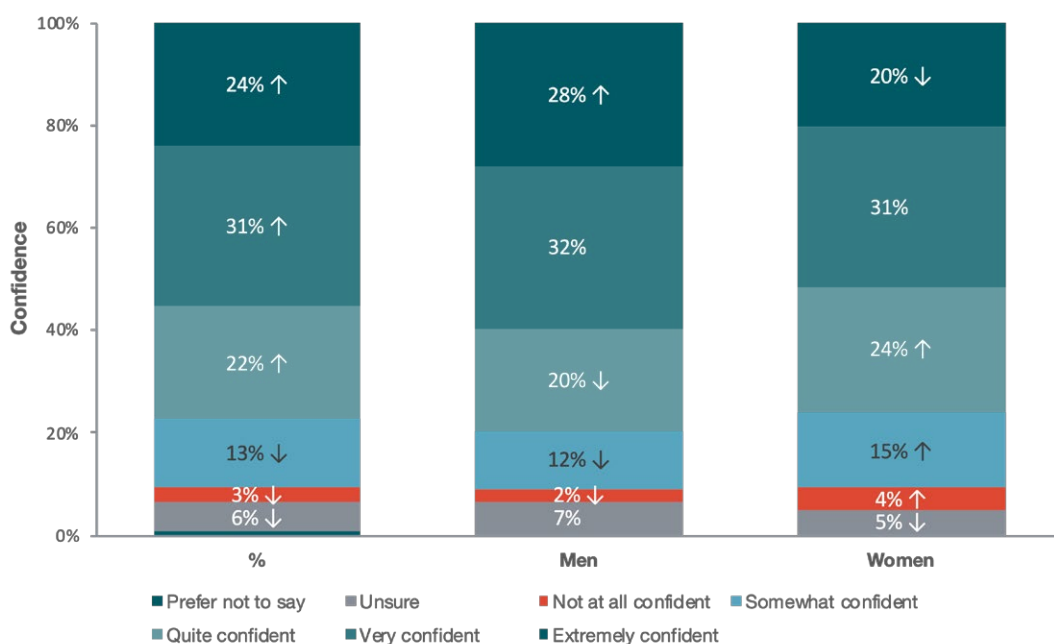
Figure 4: Confidence in a change with respect to sexual harassment by gender (%) *Q: What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Sexual harassment) Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

1. Introduction and the case for change
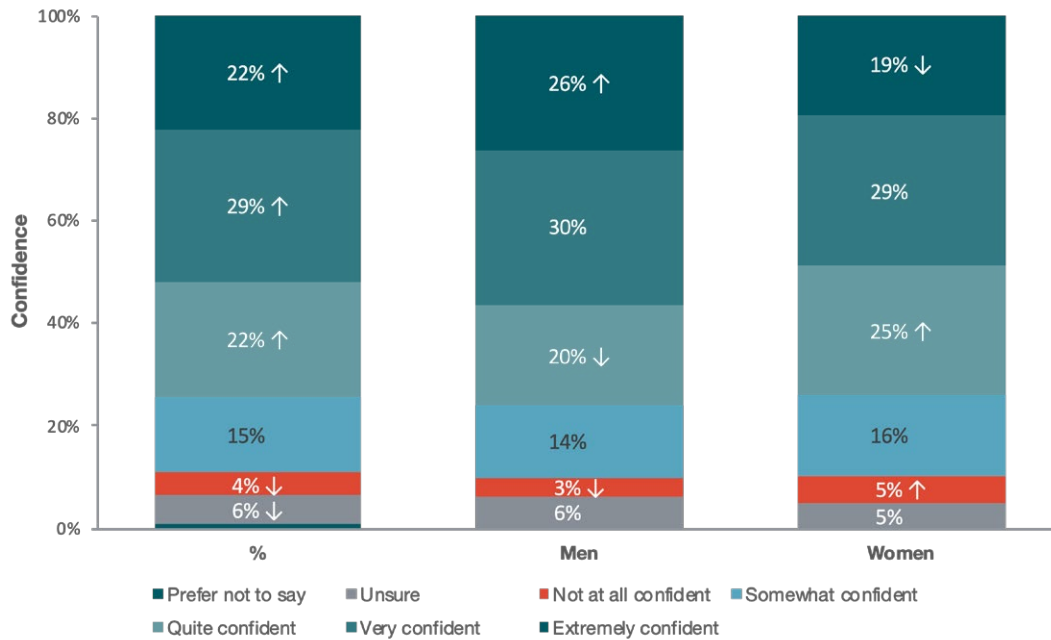
Figure 5: Confidence in a change with respect to racism by gender (%) *Q: What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Racism) Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Some groups were more likely to be 'not at all confident' with regard to the firm's ability to make change in EY Oceania's workplace culture in these areas, and these included:

With respect to sexual harassment (3% overall)

▶ Women aged 18 to 24 years (7%);

▶ Women who work in roles below manager level (5%); and

▶ People who work in the Strategy and Transactions Service Line (6%).

With respect to racism (4% overall)

▶ Māori (16%);

▶ People whose religion is Baptist (15%) or Hinduism (8%);

▶ People who speak Cantonese at home (13%); and

▶ People who identify as LGBTQI+ (8%).

Almost seven in ten (69%) staff and Partners at EY Oceania were confident (extremely confident, very confident or quite confident) that the firm will make meaningful change with respect to bullying at work, and there were minimal differences in confidence levels of men (71%) and women (69%). Fewer than one in ten (8%) of staff and Partners were 'not at all confident' EY Oceania would make meaningful change in this area.

1. Introduction and the case for change
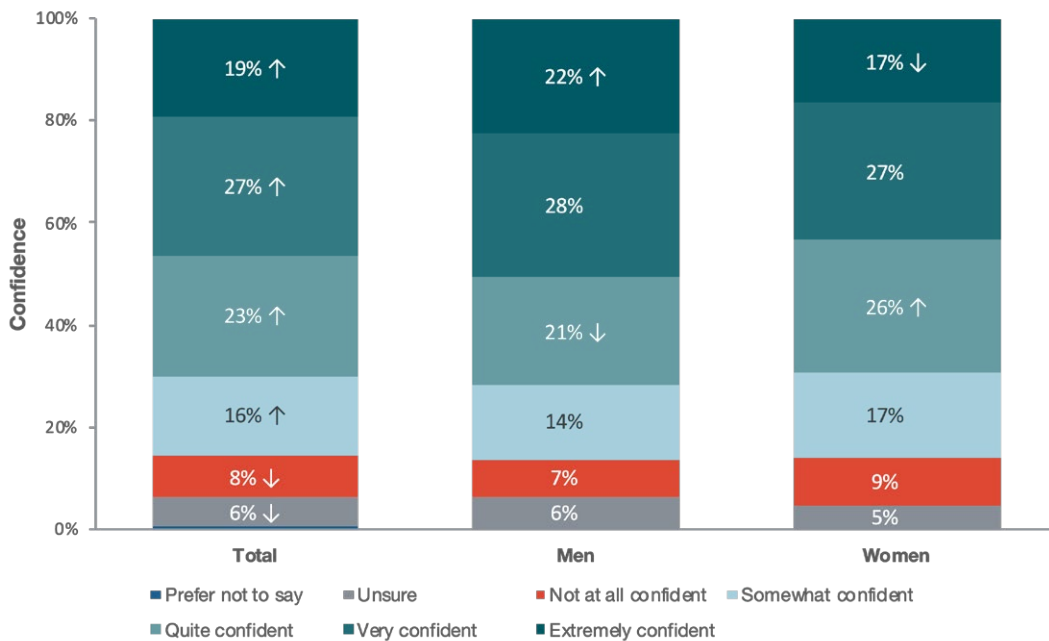
Q: What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Bullying) Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say') ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Confidence in a meaningful change with respect to bullying varied across roles at EY Oceania. Those more likely to be confident (extremely confident, very confident or quite confident) included Partners and Associate Partners[12] (85%), Directors and Executive Directors (75%) and Administrative staff (84%).

People in the roles of Senior Managers or Associate Directors, and Managers or Assistant Directors had lower levels of confidence in a change with respect to bullying at work, and one in ten were 'not at all confident' (10% and 11% respectively).

Some other groups at EY Oceania that were more likely to be 'not at all confident' of change being made in the area of bullying, included people with a disability (15%) and people who work in the Business Consulting Service Line (12%).

Figure 7: Confidence in a change with respect to bullying by rank (%) *Q: What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Racism) Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

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12 The role of Associate Partner was presented as Principal in the survey.

1. Introduction and the case for change

Changing a culture of long working hours and overwork

Meaningful change related to a culture of overwork and long working hours is perceived as a much greater challenge for the firm, with fewer than one in three (31%) having confidence (extremely confident, very confident or quite confident) of a change. No differences were observed between men and women's confidence with respect to this change. It is noted that the views of non-binary staff and Partners have not been reported, to protect confidentiality due to low sample sizes.

Across EY Oceania, staff and Partners were more likely to be 'not at all confident' of a meaningful change being made with respect to long working hours and overwork than they were for changes in other areas (41%, compared to 8% for bullying, 3% for sexual harassment and 4% for racism), and there was some variation across roles within the firm. Confidence was lowest for those in mid-level roles; half of those in the roles of Manager or Assistant Director (50%) or Senior Manager or Associate Director (48%) were not at all confident of a meaningful change with respect to work demands, while this reduced to approximately one in twenty (18%) Partners or Associate Partners.
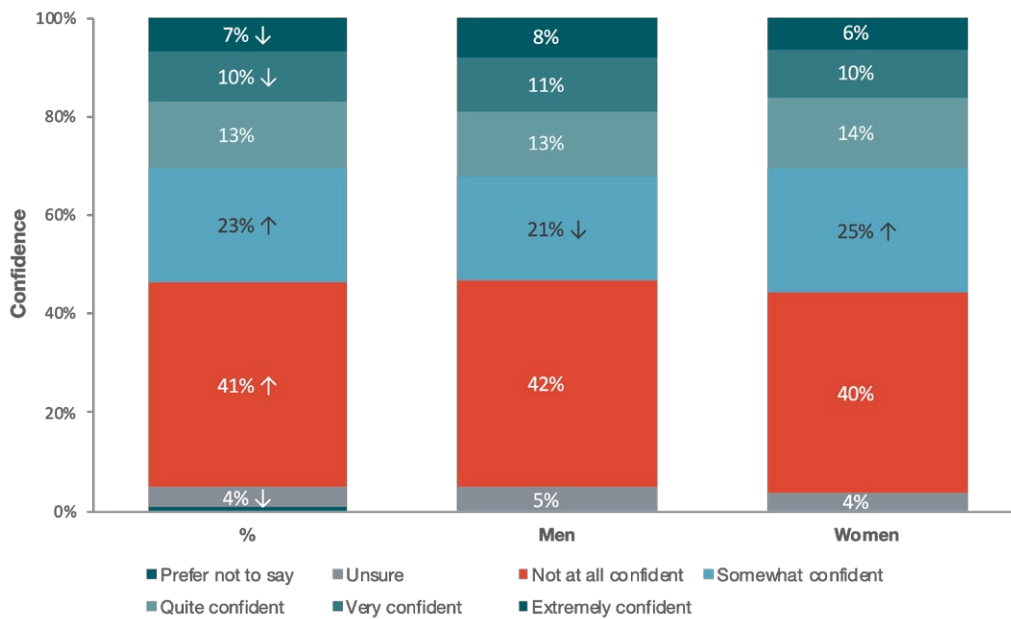
Figure 8: Confidence in a change with respect to work demands by gender (%) *Q What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Work demands) Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Other groups at EY who were more likely to be 'not at all confident' of a meaningful change with respect to work demands (41%) overall, included:

▶ People who identify as LGBTQI+ (49%);

▶ People who work in the Sydney office (45%);

▶ Staff and Partners in the Tax (56%) or Strategy and Transactions (50%) service lines; and

▶ People who work in a client-facing role (43%).

|	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
Extremely confident	7	15↑	11	6	6	6	10
Very confident	10	18↑	7	7↓	7↓	11	20↑
Quite confident	14	21↑	19	11	12	12	20
Somewhat confident	24	26	29	24	19↓	23	28
Not at all confident	41	18↓	33↓	48↑	50↑	41	18↓
Unsure	4	2↓	1	5	5	5	4
Prefer not to say	1	1	1	0↓	1	1	1

Figure 9: Confidence in a change with respect to work demands by rank (%)
Q: What is your level of confidence that EY will make a meaningful difference in each of the following areas in the next two years? (Work demands) Base: All respondents.) ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

1.5 Conclusion

The organisational resilience needed to survive over the last 3 years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense, with unprecedented threats to workplace culture, staff and Partner wellbeing and organisational viability. As part of a desire to continue learning and evolving, EY Oceania has recognised that now is a critical time to strengthen and renew workplace culture, so as to contribute to the wellbeing and retention of staff and Partners, and the performance of the organisation.

Commissioning this Review is an important step in fully understanding the progress EY Oceania has made and also identifying and responding to the hard truths about some less positive aspects of EY Oceania's culture. That the firm commissioned the Review, and immediately committed to making the report public, even in the face of potentially challenging findings, represents an act of courageous leadership and a deep desire to learn and grow. The Review provides a strong platform for EY Oceania to shape its own workforce for the future, learning from the many voices who spoke to the Review Team. Additionally, EY believes that these findings may be a source of learning for other professional services firms across Australia and the globe.

Whilst this report is important, the process that has led to its development is equally crucial. EB&Co.'s previous experience suggests that the process underpinning this Review will have already resulted in many hundreds of conversations across the firm about culture. The substantial process of developing the Review, the robust discussions that were had, the planning involved, and the active participation of people all across EY Oceania has been a critical part of stimulating change. The journey of cultural transformation commenced well before this report and recommendations were delivered. Indeed, where EB&Co. has identified early priorities for action, EY Oceania has shown a strong appetite for commencing the work. This, together with strong employee and Partner engagement, has built momentum for change and will accelerate cultural reform.

2. Methodology

The findings and recommendations in this report are supported by evidence obtained from a wide range of sources.

In particular, the Review has sought to learn from the lived experience of current EY Oceania staff and Partners and those who have left the firm in the past two years. In order to understand the diversity of that lived experience, the Review has gathered qualitative and quantitative data via:

▸ A tailored online survey of current EY Oceania staff and Partners, completed by 4,171 people (achieving a robust sample representing 36% of EY Oceania's workforce);

▸ 216 confidential one-to-one listening sessions, 184 of which were with current staff and Partners and 32 of which were with former staff and Partners;

▸ 11 confidential small group listening sessions; and

▸ 159 written submissions.

In addition, EB&Co. completed:

▸ a desktop review of relevant Australian and International literature, including literature on promising practices in Professional Services Firms; and

▸ a review of all relevant EY Oceania policies and strategies.

All participation in the Review was voluntary and participants were able to choose if, when and how they engaged with the Review. This allowed participants greater control over how they shared their experiences. These options were communicated via the EB&Co. EY Oceania Review website, with more specific timing shared by EY Oceania. Informed consent to participate in the listening sessions was obtained verbally from each participant, and participants were informed that any information they provided would be anonymised prior to being used in the final report. Some participants requested to provide information 'off the record' – that is, for information not to be quoted in the Review report, but as useful background or supporting detail.

Given the potentially distressing nature of the Review content, EY Oceania actively promoted the existing supports available for staff and Partners via their Employee Assistance Program. Contact information for a full range of support services (within Australia, and within Aotearoa New Zealand) was provided through the EB&Co. website, and in one-to-one and group listening sessions as appropriate.

The Review did not investigate any individual complaints or review past investigation outcomes, nor did the scope of the Review extend to making findings about any individual incident or allegation made in this report.

The following sections describe the methodology adopted by the Review.

4,171	216	11	159	36%
people engaged in tailored online survey	1:1 listening sessions	confidential group listening sessions	written submissions	representation of EY Oceania's workforce

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey

An online survey was administered to current workers (employees and contractors) in EY Oceania (Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand) to understand their experience of EY Oceania workplace culture and work practices. This included an examination of psychological safety; the prevalence and impact of harmful behaviours, including bullying, sexual harassment and racism; and questions about working hours and the impact of work demands on employee wellbeing.

For the purposes of this Review, an EY Oceania workplace was defined as including EY Oceania offices, as well as any location at which the respondent was engaged in work or work-related travel, events, engagements or functions, including client offices. Consistent with the focus of this Review, the survey focussed primarily on respondents' experiences within EY Oceania workplaces over the time periods of the last 12 months and the last five years.

The questionnaire was developed collaboratively by EB&Co. and the Social Research Centre, a leading research institution affiliated with the Australian National University. Survey questions reflect the issues identified in the key informant interviews and one-to-one listening sessions. EY Oceania also provided advice and data to inform survey design. The Social Research Centre administered the survey and analysed the survey data on behalf of EB&Co.

All EY Oceania staff and Partners were invited to complete the online survey via a unique survey link emailed to them by the Social Research Centre. A detailed engagement and communication strategy was deployed to increase survey participation across the data collection period. This included information on the confidentiality of survey responses.

The survey was administered from 17 April to 5 May 2023. All EY Oceania staff and Partners were provided with at least 2 weeks to complete the survey.

A total of 4,171 people completed the survey, representing an overall response rate of 36%.

This represents a statistically significant sample and includes:

▶ Current EY Oceania staff and Partners based in Australia, including those located in each office and in each Service Line; and

▶ Current EY Oceania staff and Partners based in Aotearoa New Zealand, including those located in each office and in each Service Line.

All survey responses were de-identified and aggregated with the responses of other survey respondents. All results have been reported at a group level, so that no individual can be identified.

Participants were asked for demographic information and the survey responses were weighted to the employment profile (including staff and Partners) of EY Oceania. This accounted for differences between those who completed the survey and the entire staff and Partner group, with percentages quoted in this report reflecting the estimated weighted prevalence among EY Oceania staff and Partners.[13]

Survey results were analysed by a broad range of characteristics, including: gender, age, LGBTQI+, Indigeneity, ethnicity, country of birth, language spoken, religion, (for immigrants) time in Australia, duration of employment at EY, pathway into EY, role, location (office), service line and sub-service line. Differences in experiences that were found to be significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ have been reported. Statistical significance is indicated in charts and tables with arrows: ↑ indicates significantly higher results, and ↓ indicates significantly lower results.

Some cumulative column percentages may not add to 100%, and this is due to rounding that has been applied to figures which are presented without their decimal places). Likewise, aggregate percentages cited in the report (for example, total agreement) may also not appear as a direct addition of their component figures (such as "strongly agree" + "agree") in charts, again this is due to rounding effects.

Demographic and workforce groups with a small sample size (<30) (this includes Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people who identify as non-binary) are not shown as discrete groups in graphs and tables in this report but they do contribute to overall estimates shown. This approach minimises risks to the privacy of individual respondents and avoids potential statistical issues with small sample size.

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13 The survey of EY Oceania staff utilised the EY Global language of 'Partners and Principals' throughout. Principals has been changed to Associate Partners throughout our reporting, reflecting EY Oceania role titles. However we note that participants in the survey responded to the language of Partners/Principals in some questions.

2. Methodology

A relatively small, but significant, proportion of respondents (for example 14% for ethnicity, 3% for Indigeneity) were hesitant to disclose specific demographic details (i.e. chose "Prefer not to say" in response to specific demographic questions). This may reflect some hesitancy or concern that the results from the survey would not be kept confidential or that people may be able to be identified.

EB&Co. cautions against direct comparisons between data in this survey and other surveys because of differences in methodology (e.g. framing of questions, definitions, timeframes, etc). The most important and meaningful comparative data for EY Oceania will therefore be to compare future longitudinal data against the baseline data presented in this report.

2.2 Listening sessions

Participants self-registered for a confidential one-to-one listening session or a small group listening session via a confidential on-line platform. In registering for a one-to-one listening session, participants were invited to identify whether they had any preferences with regard to which member of the Review Team conducted the interview (e.g. that they would prefer a male or female interviewer or an interviewer from a culturally and linguistically diverse background).

Each one-to-one and group listening session was conducted by a member of the EB&Co. Review Team using a trauma-informed methodology. Participants experiencing significant distress were supported to identify where, when and how they might access support immediately following the session as well as their ongoing support arrangements.

Members of the Review Team took notes during each session, with all physical and digital notes securely stored. Notes from these sessions were then coded to identify themes. All physical notes will be destroyed following completion of the Review, and digital notes will be securely stored for 7 years and then destroyed.

2.2.1 Confidential one-to-one listening sessions

Given the significant concerns regarding confidentiality (which were largely attributed to the absence of a consistently psychologically safe environment, and the risk of retribution for 'speaking up'), confidential one-to-one listening sessions were a key strategy for hearing from people in their own words. A total of 216 individuals participated in these sessions, consisting of 184 current staff and Partners and 32 former staff and Partners. Current staff and Partners shared both positive and negative experiences of EY Oceania, as well as their reflections on the strengths and areas where change is required. These interviews were conducted on-line (via Teams) and face-to-face. Former employees who had exited EY since 1 January 2021 were also invited to participate in one-to-one interviews. These interviews were conducted on-line.

The one-to-one listening sessions were successful in attracting diverse participants, including EY Oceania personnel from all staff and Partner roles, geographic locations and Service Lines. In addition, the sessions included interviews with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; Māori; Pasifika people; people with a disability, women, men and non-binary people; and LGBTQI+ people.

2.   Methodology

2.2.2 Confidential small group listening sessions

A total of 17 small group listening sessions were offered. These sessions were offered to complement the individual listening sessions, recognising that some people are more comfortable participating in a group discussion than an individual interview.

Dedicated sessions were offered for:

▶ Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;

▶ Men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;

▶ Culturally and linguistically diverse staff and Partners in Aotearoa New Zealand;

▶ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women (led by an Aboriginal facilitator;

▶ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men (led by an Aboriginal facilitator);

▶ Māori (designed and facilitated in collaboration with the Māori Cultural Capability Lead);

▶ Pasifika people;

▶ LGBTQI+ people;

▶ Trans and gender diverse people;

▶ People with a disability;

▶ Reception and concierge staff;

▶ Catering staff;

▶ Cleaning staff;

▶ Executive Assistants and Team Leaders; and

▶ Workplace Services staff.

An open small group listening session (i.e. open to all staff and Partners) was also offered. Attendance varied across cohorts, with a total of 77 individuals participating in 11 small group listening sessions.

Each small group session was facilitated by a member of the Review Team. Notes taken during these sessions were subsequently coded to identify themes.

2.3   Confidential written submissions

Current and former EY Oceania staff and Partners were also invited to contribute to the Review via a written submission. Participants had the option of either completing an online submission form (reflecting the key areas of enquiry for the Review) or to simply email their experiences, observations and/or recommendations to the Review team. In total, 159 written submissions were received.

2.4   Key informant sessions

A total of 21 key informants, including both staff and Partners, participated in one-to-one and group listening sessions in the establishment phase of the Review. The purpose of these sessions was to more deeply understand the EY Oceania context, and to inform the development of the Review methodology, including the development of question guides and recruitment strategies.

These sessions were conducted with Senior Leaders within EY Oceania including leads of some Service Lines, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion leads, the lead of each of the Diversity Networks, the Managing Partner for Aotearoa New Zealand, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Lead, the EY Tahi Lead, the Māori Cultural Capability Lead and the Mental Health Advisor, and members of the Leadership Advisory Forum.[14] Consultation with the Leadership Advisory Forum was particularly useful in providing insight into the distinct experiences of Directors, Managers and Consultants.

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14 The Oceania Leadership Advisory Forum (LAF) is a consultative forum established to provide feedback on, and contribute ideas to, a range of firmwide strategic priorities directly to CEO, David Larocca. The LAF are representatives for all EY Oceania people, and are from all ranks from Consultant to Director.

2.   Methodology

2.5   Desk top review of literature

The Review Team completed a review of relevant literature, guidelines and policies, drawing on insights from other research into other professional services firms as well as broader literature regarding leadership, culture and inclusion, psychological safety and the impact of long working hours. The insights from this exploration have informed the analysis and findings, and the recommendations presented in the Review.

2.6   Desk top review of policies and other organisational information

The Review Team also completed a review of relevant EY Oceania policies, strategies, data and other organisational information.[15]

2.7   Briefings

The Review Team has provided periodic updates to EY Oceania on the implementation, and early findings, of the Review. This has included briefings to the Steering Committee (SteerCo) overseeing the Review, the EY Oceania Executive Leadership Team, the Review Working Group (including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Networks and Peer Network leads) and the Partners.

2.8   Limitations

As with all Reviews, the Review of EY Oceania has some limitations.

The Review Team had a set quota of the number of confidential one-to-one listening sessions. Whilst this quota was expanded to meet demand as far as practicable, the Review Team was unable to accommodate all those who requested a one-to-one session. Whilst the number of interviews was significant, and provided an excellent coverage of the relevant issues, it did mean that some individuals did not have the opportunity to engage with the Review in their preferred way. Most, although not all, individuals who were unable to secure an individual session then elected to provide a written submission.

One consideration for survey findings is the potential for non-response bias to impact estimates, i.e. for error to be introduced if the sampled population differs from the full population of EY Oceania staff and Partners. This would be a concern, for example, if those experiencing harmful behaviours were more or less likely to complete the survey, impacting prevalence estimates. While estimates of the prevalence of experiences amongst non-respondents is not available, we can compare patterns in participation for those who have had a harmful experience compared with those who have not.

There was no evidence of an obvious bias related to early or late completion based on negative experiences, in the sample. The sensitivity of the topic and the high rate of non-response to some items in the questionnaire, suggests that people who have had negative experiences may be under-represented in the sample due to an unwillingness or unease in completing the survey.

A substantial minority of staff and Partners chose to not disclose key demographic data for particular characteristics (such as ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation) in the survey. Those who did not disclose demographic data tended to report higher rates of negative and harmful experiences, suggesting that the prevalence of harmful behaviours among particular demographic groups may be under reported in survey findings.

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15 This was undertaken with policies and strategies in place at the time of the Review. EY Oceania has been reviewing and further developing a range of policies and strategies concurrent with the Review.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.1 Introduction

Inclusion, belonging, and psychological safety are critical to individual wellbeing and organisational performance. Psychological safety, in particular, is key to wellbeing, and to team performance, particularly in relation to innovation and complex problem solving. Psychological safety is also critical to be able to call out and report harmful behaviours (see Chapters 4 and 6)

Experiences of being included and feelings of belonging are associated with positive outcomes in relation to reduced stress and anxiety, increased mental wellbeing, increased job satisfaction, increased team cohesion and greater commitment to shared values and purpose.[16] Conversely, repeated experiences of exclusion and/or low psychological safety can have significant, often devastating, personal and professional impacts.

Across this Review, many EY Oceania people described feeling deep loyalty to the firm, a personal alignment with the firm's purpose and values, appreciation for the opportunities that working for the firm had created for them, and deep affection for their colleagues.

This experience was, however, unevenly distributed, with some people feeling that

> *EY Oceania hires for diversity but manages for consistency,*

and that differences in thinking and ways of working were not embraced or leveraged.

The Review has also identified that EY Oceania is not always inclusive of diversity, with some women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Māori, and people with disabilities feeling that their strengths and contributions were often under-valued, and that they had at times been excluded. In addition, those who had joined EY Oceania as lateral hires and Directly Admitted Partners commented on the difficulties in building connection and accessing support in their early years.

Whilst some noted the negative leadership style and impact of individuals, many felt that the absence of psychological safety reflected broader systemic and cultural dynamics, including what some described as a "profits over people and purpose" approach, a competitive culture, and inconsistent accountability for individuals who perpetrate harmful behaviours.

The following discussion is a snapshot of the experiences of EY Oceania's staff and Partners as told to the Review Team. It draws upon the lived experiences of EY people shared in the listening sessions and survey and identifies both positive experiences and experiences that negatively impacted staff and Partners, personally and professionally.

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16 Ryat, S. 2022 "The Powerful Connection Between Inclusion and Well-Being" in *Forbes* July 18 at https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2022/07/18/the-powerful-connection-between-inclusion-and-well-being

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

At a glance:

88% agree leadership roles promote respectful workplace behaviour

▶ There was a high level of agreement (88%) that people in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful workplace behaviour, with only slightly higher levels of agreement among men compared to women.

94% agree they feel safe in their workplace

▶ Over nine in ten staff and Partners (94%) agreed that they always feel safe in their workplace, and that people behave in a respectful manner towards others (92%).

4 in 5 people

▶ At least four in five staff and Partners agreed with most of the positive statements related to diversity and inclusion.

75% Australian / 84% New Zealander / 48% Māori

▶ However, across the statements regarding the inclusion of specific groups, those from the dominant groups were more likely to agree that EY Oceania was inclusive. For example, people who gave their ethnicity as Australian (75%) or New Zealander (84%) were more likely to agree that EY Oceania is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and/or Māori than Māori themselves (48%).

74% say they rarely feel excluded at work

▶ Some groups were significantly less likely than others (74% of all EY people) to say they rarely feel excluded at work (suggesting that they do sometimes feel excluded). Groups: women aged 35 to 54 years (69%), people whose religion was Islam (62%), people who speak Arabic at home (52%), people with disability (57%), staff and Partners who work in the Technology consulting (66%) service line, staff and Partners who work longer hours on a very regular basis (68%), and people who had experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years (53%).

9 in 10 staff / Partners

▶ Close to nine in ten staff and Partners reported that 'there is high degree of openness, trust and respect between me and my direct manager / supervisor' (85%).

62% agree that everyone is held accountable to the same standards of behaviour

▶ Agreement was lower for statements related to people being held accountable for their behaviour and the ease of calling out unacceptable behaviour, with only (62%) agreeing that everyone is held accountable to the same standards of behaviour, and (56%) agreeing with the statement that 'it is difficult to call out unacceptable behaviour when the behaviour comes from someone more senior than me'.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.2 Purpose, learning and opportunity

3.2.1 What they told us

Many individuals described the interesting and often rewarding work at EY, the high calibre of their colleagues, and the opportunity to be part of a high achieving, close-knit and supportive team:

> *There is so much that is good about my EY experience. There are ample learning opportunities. There is a lot of effort placed by leadership on the things that aren't part of your day-to-day job, like really meaningful and high impact diversity and inclusion conversations, … the exposure to different businesses and the opportunity to work with different clients. I feel like my direct manager completely has my back. He will challenge me and help me grow, but also has my back completely… I genuinely love the [firm].*

> " I really love the firm. I have really bought into the sense of purpose. I didn't feel fulfilled at [previous employer] like I do at EY. There's so much that's good about it – my immediate Counselling Family Leaders, the kind of work that I do, the footprint and market brand of EY, the diversity of the team in EY. "

> *There are amazing people in this team. The calibre of people is great. You grow in your ability. I'm always working with other teams and learning from them.*

> *The people I work with are lovely and there's definitely more flexibility since covid, like working from home…. Your experience does come down to your leaders. If they care about people, you will have a happy team.*

> " I am thrilled to be part of the team. I have (stayed because) I love my work from a technical perspective …but I also love my leadership team. Every time I come to them with a problem, they have helped me. When I told them I didn't feel challenged in a role they said let's try (something else) to keep you engaged. On some occasions when I have disagreed with the feedback (they have provided) it has led to productive conversations. "

Māori in particular highlighted purpose as a key attraction to working at EY Oceania.

> " The work I do affects my community directly. That's a privilege and an opportunity for me but it's also a responsibility. "

Pākehā staff also commented on the potential for EY Oceania to learn from and benefit from Māori ways of knowing, being and doing:

> *I have had some really great experiences. I worked on a project with EY Tahi that was informed by the Māori world view and [our ways of working] including emotional, physical, spiritual, and family health. It created connection and trust and safety, and it meant that when people did speak up, they were listened to and there was action.*

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.3 Leadership

Diverse, respectful and inclusive cultures are well established as drivers of organisational effectiveness, performance and innovation, as noted at the outset of this Report[17]. Leadership is central to building such cultures. Leaders set the tone and boundaries of behaviour that is either acceptable or unacceptable through their own behaviour, as well as what they recognise, incentivise and reward[18]. Leaders at all levels of an organisation establish and influence the culture, but committed and courageous leadership at the top, where power is concentrated, is particularly critical for driving any cultural transformation process.

3.3.1 Survey insights

There was a high level of agreement (strongly agreed/agreed) that people in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful workplace behaviour (88% overall, with 90% of men and 87% of women agreeing).

Partners were more likely to agree with the statement compared to all other ranks at EY (96% of Partners/Associate Partners agreed that people in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful workplace behaviours). Senior Managers/Associate Directors, and Managers/Assistant Directors had the lowest levels of agreement (86% each), and approximately one in ten people in these roles (11% of Senior Managers/Associate Directors and 9% of Managers/Assistant Directors) disagreed with the statement (the remainder were unsure).
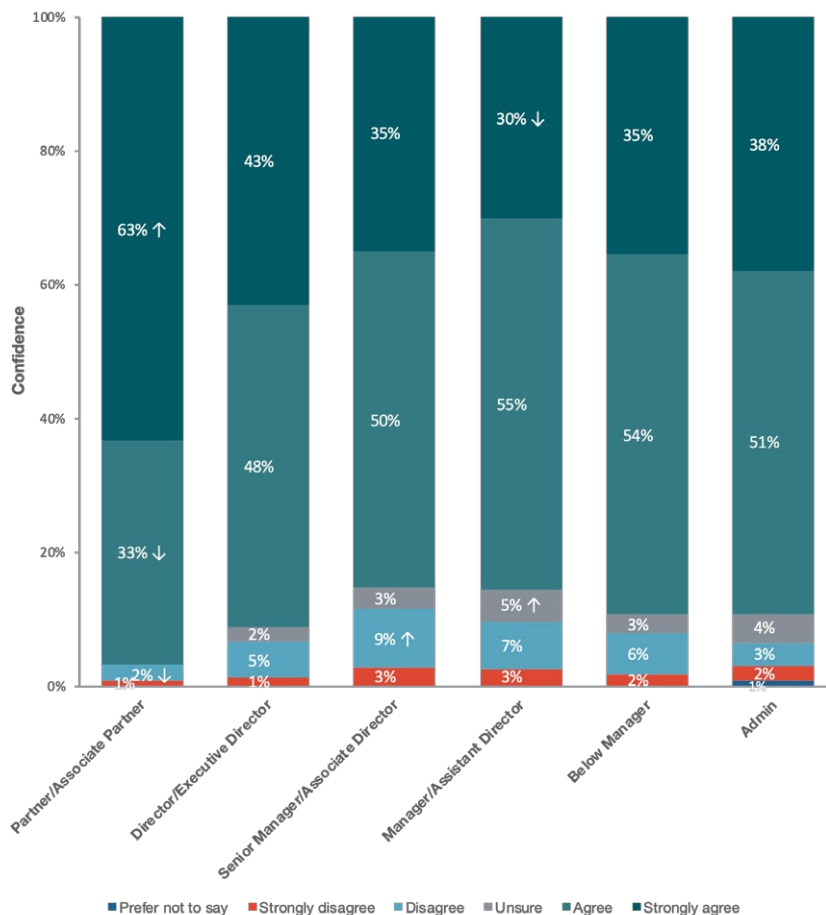
Figure 10: Perceptions of leadership (% agree) *Q Thinking about your current experience at EY Oceania, to what extent do you agree or disagree that people in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful workplace behaviour? Base: All respondents. (Does not include Client Service Contractors due to small sample size)* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

17 McKinsey & Company 2020 *Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters* at https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf; Boston Consulting Group 2018 How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation at https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership -teams-boost-innovation; Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion 2016 Inclusive Leadership... *Driving Performance through Diversity!* at https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/inclusive-leadership_2016-driving-performance-through-diversity_ tcm18-8811.pdf

18 Hart, C., Crossley, A. D. and Correll, S. J. 2018 "Study: When Leaders Take Sexual Harassment Seriously, So Do Employees" in *Harvard Business Review* 14 December at https://hbr.org/2018/12/study-when-leaders-take-sexual-harassment-seriously-so-do-employees

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.3.2 What they told us

The qualitative data gave important insights into the ways that experiences of leaders varied across EY Oceania.

Many individuals shared that they had had very positive experiences and felt that their leaders had provided consistent support and created opportunities for growth, learning and advancement.

> I've got lots of positives to say about the leaders at EY. Culturally, EY is so much better than the firm I worked for previously. (At EY) we were very well supported during COVID. Overall, I feel very supported by leaders.

> I'm quite happy working at EY. Everyone is quite understanding, and the leadership do look out for people's wellbeing.

> The first year and a half my counsellor/counselling family lead was […]. He was open and embracing, and a key advocate for my promotion. He saw himself as part of the team and we worked together to respond to the client's demands. His style empowered the team and meant that I was able to enjoy the work even when the client was demanding. It was a bottom-up approach rather than top down – a very collaborative approach – that is authentic. This is the kind of leadership that should be rewarded across the firm.

> The culture is driven by the Partners you work for. Mine is focused on work/life balance and leads by example – she works flexibly, takes time with her family, she's vulnerable and shares that work/life balance is important and makes explicit comments to staff about it so they feel they can ask and talk about what they need.

> There's good transparency – I always know what's going on. There's a good level of sharing - from top manager of team to junior people; people know who is doing what and that is visible to everyone. Partners publish project pipeline – what they are working on – note if it is a slow burn or a priority – and junior people will position themselves to work on different projects. Very accessible, very easy to volunteer for tasks.

However, many expressed a hunger for leaders to be more proactive in creating a positive, values-aligned culture and addressing challenges. This included a desire for leaders to be more vocal about the changes needed, as well as being more attuned to and responsive to emerging issues:

> Cultural change requires genuine buy-in from leaders in the business. Without them nothing will happen.

> " It has to start with leadership. We need to say 'this is not ok, we cannot allow this behaviour'. We are a professional services company and get asked to solve complex challenges. If our teaming is not world class, there is going to be collateral damage. "

> Partners are generally really good at taking action on issues that are on their radar, so you do have to ask for help, but I understand there are people who don't speak up and I'm not really sure why that is. I would say that senior management probably do have a bit of a "work hard and don't complain" mentality and could probably do with a bit of help in learning how to recognise when people might need help and are making calls for help, but maybe aren't speaking up.

> A neutral hands-off approach can also be problematic for people who are struggling and can be even worse in toxic cultures.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

Many people felt that the variable experiences of leaders reflected a deeper reality, which was that not all EY Oceania leaders have either a shared commitment to, or skills in, people leadership:

Managers need capability to notice and respond to early warning signs of people struggling with mental health. At the moment, it all comes down to luck.

…. in some parts of our business – the partners are charged with being people leaders, but they have no experience, or attributes to lead in that space. They still have a business, client facing function so [they] don't get to focus on the people aspect too much. System wide there are issues around capability and (getting) the right people being put in those roles.

One of the main reasons I joined the […] team was to develop my skill set and further my career... by learning from some of the leaders in this field. However, at almost all times I felt unsupported by the team's directors and partners, who typically had their calendars booked out weeks in advance, thus were unavailable if I needed help with an urgent and/or time sensitive issue. When I was able to speak with directors and partners, typically they would give very brief and rushed advice, and regularly gave the impression they would rather be somewhere else. Feedback and guidance was generally short-sighted and limited to whatever needed to be resolved at the time; there was no opportunity to engage with directors and partners for mentoring and coaching, as they were too busy (or at least gave this impression).

Partners really drive the culture and it's the hamster wheel of billables. We operate on chargeable work and the budget is managed for the Partner's target. Staff aren't considered in the budget and are treated as a resource and we are often told we are replaceable and that we are lucky to work here - there's a churn and burn mentality and Partners are incentivised not to care about staff wellbeing, because there's someone else on the conveyor belt ready to come in. The Partnership culture at the end of the day is really about making money. How staff are treated as humans is not really factored in.

A recurring theme was the disconnect between senior leaders and more junior staff, both in relation to organisational culture and in relation to engagements. Some felt that senior leaders had little understanding of the lived experience of junior staff, while others commented that the values and priorities set by the Executive Leadership Team were not always modelled or advocated by local leaders (including Partners):

Maintaining a good, healthy culture is critical. During COVID we did everything we could to encourage teamwork. Since returning to the office – we have had good numbers come back except some of partners are not visible. They need to come into office more, they are lagging behind.

There is a lack of connection between the leaders and those lower down – leaders don't see or recognise the extra input people are making and equally the people below aren't able to connect with the leaders.

Partners are very removed from the team here in Australia. Partners don't look at your work, and that just increases the pressure.

There's a gap between senior leadership and lived experience: […] People look to what their immediate supervisors are saying and doing, the tone from the top is impeccable but the tone from the middle is missing […] There are so many different (attitudes and behaviours) that are valued and reinforced that are different to our objectives as a firm. The middle leaders don't get the impact of the inappropriate behaviour […] It just makes everything that you are attempting to do (in setting a positive culture) meaningless.

Overall, EY is a great company to work for, I feel very supported by the leadership team. But unfortunately, there are leaders between sub-teams that don't necessarily have same values and that cascades down into teams.

[The ELT] have a deep commitment to change but the execution of this commitment across the business is just not there. We can tell people to change but the systems, processes and individuals are not walking the talk.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

Many commented on the lack of consistency between leaders, the 'leadership lottery'. This meant that an individual local leader style, preferences or temperament could have a significant impact on someone's experience of EY Oceania:

Before I joined EY I had heard that EY was known for having a strong culture – by and large its been a positive culture – with a big caveat – the culture is very much influenced by the local partners, the partners of the counselling families – who are more influential in setting the culture rather than the overall leadership.

It has been a mixed culture and experience. It depends on the partner – they determine the experience you have. 90% of partners are great but some outliers are quite difficult and stressful to work with.

Things can really fall apart because of one particular leader. Experiences can be very different depending on who you are working for.

Some Partners are great. Other Partners feel like they run the business and don't have to follow the structures or values of EY, so they will have favourites, hire friends, and promote the people they like etc. which cause rifts in the team because you aren't valued for your work. We're a service industry and we all suffer with poor quality hires and favouritism, because the work quality suffers and someone in the team has to pick up the slack.

Juniors talk about the effective managers – nobody talks negatively of the directors, but politely joke about it – i.e. project looks really good but you know that director is on it so will choose another project as they will have a better lifetime experience.

We have lots of good policies but there's no active management or compliance with them. Each Partner really decides how much of EY policies need to be followed or whether you just follow the will of the Partner's empire.

People learn about leadership and management from watching what others do. So, some are great, and some take on an authoritarian style that they have worked under or seen in another partner.

The Review also heard about individual senior leaders who actively perpetuate harmful behaviours:

I don't think (…) is a leader of 2023. His way of working might have worked in 1980 but it's not 1980 now. That treatment is not acceptable.

The Partners protect bullies. Often they are bullies and aggressive themselves.

There are some partners I wouldn't be in a room alone with.

Several people commented that some long-standing leaders at EY undervalue diversity, equity and inclusion, and are closed to new ideas or new ways of working:

Why DEI? It opens up a greater pool of talent, brings diversity of thought, better outcomes for clients and we better reflect our clients. It's also the right thing to do. That business case is not well understood by other Partners though.

I tried to coach one Indian worker who was excluded. No one wanted to coach (them), people would also say that you can't put X in front of (the client), that "(they are) very enthusiastic but not in the 'Australian way'. Partners didn't want to talk to them, if the conversation came from the Partner about inclusion that would have [made] a big difference.

I work for a Partner who has shown disinterest in this sort of thing (diversity, equity and inclusion). When gender diversity is discussed, they show boredom.

> "There are some leaders ...who have been around EY for a really long time. EY might have been their only job. They are set in their ways, their mindset is "it's my way or the highway". They are not really open to change, and they are stifling innovative thought.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

I find it hard to sell a new practice at EY because our Partners are happy to sell what they already sell.

I have no idea why the Partners don't like me – my guess is that it's because I voice my ideas about how things can be done differently, and they don't like that.

Many highlighted the limited diversity of those in senior roles:

There's barely any diversity at Partnership level, it's nearly all white, with only about a quarter of them women. There's barely any other cultural background, so it's hard for many staff to see where they fit in the organisation. The Partners are all the same kind of people, and they are out of touch with the actual workforce. There's a real irony in getting invited on to a Partner's boat to hear them all talk about when their Ferrari is arriving. All of the conversation is so elitist and there no sensitivity to how that all sounds to the staff when they all feel burnt out, demoralised and insulted.

I don't think we have these conversations [on race and diversity] in the company. There's a survey that Partners fill out each year and at the moment, none of them acknowledge that they are from any migrant background and some of them are. So, we can't even get Partners who are from a migrant background to acknowledge it and it speaks to the fact that these discussions are not top-down driven. The burden is on those at the bottom to speak up and have these conversations and it's very difficult to do. It feels like all our minority groups have to fight for space. We talk about gender in recruitment, but we can't bring in a conversation about LGBTQI+ and cultural diversity in recruitment.

Many noted the role of the firm's structures and processes in intensifying these dynamics:

A partnership is an unusual dynamic, sometimes there are behaviours that happen here that wouldn't be tolerated in other larger organisations. There's a lack of accountability for Partners.

There's no incentive for Partners to be good leaders, to pay attention to the human element. The thing they get rewarded for is their performance on the money aspects.

There's really poor governance and a lack of transparency in decision-making. On paper, it's a matrix model – but nobody really knows who is in charge.

As long as they (the Partners) own the business and that is the structure, they will always drive the culture. You can't speak up about a Partner or anything they approve of – they are bulletproof, so you just have to suck it up.

The other thing that is challenging is the partnership, which can mean operationally we Partners can all .... act like sole practitioners with our own focus on objectives, which can lead to inconsistencies and pressure on people to meet targets across different teams if you're working for different Partners. There can be a breakdown in working as a team and an absence of trust and support when this happens. I don't think people are inherently bad but I do see that sometimes people prioritise themselves first rather than their staff or clients and will manage accordingly, without considering the damage of the demands. Some partners just want to be successful Partners at any cost.

We do have some structural issues because of the partnership model, in that sometimes I think we can have a lack of consistency across the business because decisions on a daily basis are fairly decentralised and there's not a lot oversight. In some ways, the company values are reliant on the relevant Partner aligning with and executing those values and there are challenges to bringing issues in relation to people in very senior positions to light.

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3.4 Safety, diversity and inclusion

As noted above, diversity is central to EY Oceania's ability to deliver on its purpose, as diversity is a vital ingredient for innovation. Accessing the benefits associated with diversity, however, requires an organisational culture that creates enough safety for people to share their experiences and perspective, and actively celebrates diversity.[19]

3.4.1 Survey insights

Safety

EY staff and Partners were asked about their sense of safety and respect while working at EY Oceania.

The majority (over nine in ten) agreed with the following statements:

- I always feel safe in my workplace (including at work-related events) (94%); and

- People behave in a respectful manner towards others (92%).

Women recorded lower levels of agreement with all statements associated with respect and safety when compared to men. They were less likely to report they always feel safe in the workplace (93% compared to 97% of men). Most notable were the low levels of agreement recorded for statements related to working late and travelling in the evenings, with women reporting they feel less safe working late at client offices than they do when travelling to or from work late at night.

- I feel safe working late at EY offices, even at night time (80% women compared to 93% of men);

- I feel safe late at night travelling to or from work (63% women compared to 90% of men); and

- I feel safe working late at client offices, even at nighttime (46% women compared to 71% of men).

	Total	Men	Women
I always feel safe in my workplace (including at work-related events)	94	97 ↑	93 ↓
I feel safe working late at EY offices, even at night time	86	93 ↑	80 ↓
I feel safe working late at client offices, even at night time	58	71 ↑	46 ↓
I feel safe late at night travelling to or from work	76	90 ↑	63 ↓

Figure 11: Perceptions of safety and respect in the workplace by gender (% agree) *Q: Thinking about your current experience at EY Oceania, to what extent do you agree or disagree that...? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Those who were significantly less likely than others to agree with the latter two statements included:

'I feel safe late at night travelling to or from work' (76% of all workers)

- Young women aged 18 to 24 (55%);

- Women who work in admin (61%), below manager level (58%) or as a Manager/Assistant Director (61%);

- People with disability (58%);

- People with caring responsibilities (69%);

- People who identify as Māori (57%);

- Workers in the Perth (66%) or Auckland (70%) offices; and

- People in Executive/APAC Management (63%) or CBS (62%).

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'I feel safe working late at client offices, even at night time' (58% of all workers)

- Young people aged 18 to 24 (51%), especially young women (43%);

- Women who work, below manager level (43%) or as a Manager/Assistant Director (46%);

- People with disability (44%);

- People who started working at EY Oceania in the last 12 months (52%); and

- People who work in Executive/APAC Management (42%) or CBS (33%).

It should be noted that findings for non-binary people have not been reported, to protect confidentiality due to low numbers of non-binary respondents in the survey sample.

People with disability recorded lower levels of agreement for all respect and safety statements when compared to people without disability. These findings were significant for all but the statement related to feeling safe working late at EY offices.

People who have experienced any negative workplace behaviours (such as sexual harassment, bullying or racism, as discussed in Chapter 4) were more likely to disagree with all positive statements related to safety.

Perceptions of safety were also lower amongst staff who opted not to answer demographic questions such as gender, age, ethnicity, country of birth, religion and language spoken at home.

3.4.2 Diversity and inclusion

When asked about their perceptions of diversity and inclusion at EY Oceania, at least four in five people agreed with most of the positive statements related to diversity and inclusion. The highest level of agreement (90%) was recorded for the statement, 'Homophobic jokes and comments are rare in my workplace'. The lowest levels of agreement were recorded for the following statements:

- I rarely feel excluded (74%);

- It is inclusive of people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander and/or Māori background (69%); and

- It is inclusive of people with a disability (66%).

Fewer gender-based differences in perceptions were recorded between men and women, for the questions about diversity and inclusion. However, those who preferred not to disclose their gender recorded lower levels of agreement for almost all the diversity and inclusion statements. Findings for non-binary people have not been reported due to low numbers within the survey sample, to protect the confidentiality of these respondents.

Despite there being fewer gender differences observed for most diversity and inclusion statements, women were considerably less likely to agree with the following relevant statements:

- I rarely feel excluded (72% of women agreed compared to 79% of men);

- Sexism is not tolerated (80% of women agreed compared to 91% of men);

- Sexual harassment is not tolerated (88% of women agreed compared to 92% of men); and

- It is an inclusive environment for women (85% of women agreed compared to 90% of men).

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	Total	Men	Women
People behave in a respectful manner towards others	92	93	91
It is a diverse and inclusive environment	87	89	87
I rarely feel excluded	74	79↑	72↓
I feel a sense of belonging	77	78	79
Diversity is not just accepted, it is celebrated	78	80	78
It is inclusive of people who identify as being part of the LGBTQI+ community	88	88	88
It is inclusive of people from different ethnic backgrounds	87	90↑	86↓
It is inclusive of people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander and/or Māori background	69	70	68
It is inclusive of people from non-English speaking backgrounds	78	81↑	75↓
It is inclusive of people with a disability	66	70	64
It is inclusive of people with diverse religious beliefs	87	89↑	87↓
It is an inclusive environment for women	87	90↑	85↓
I can be my whole self at work	76	77	76
I feel I need to change or hide my ethnic or cultural identity to fit in	14	14	13
Bullying is not tolerated	80	84↑	77↓
Sexist comments and sexist jokes are rare in my workplace	86	89	84
Sexism is not tolerated	85	91↑	80↓
Sexual harassment is not tolerated	89	92↑	88↓
Sexualised conversation and sexualised banter are rare in my workplace	87	89↑	86
Racism is not tolerated	88	91↑	86↓
Racist jokes and comments are rare in my workplace	87	90↑	86
Homophobia is not tolerated	87	89↑	86↓
Homophobic jokes and comments are rare in my workplace	90	91↑	91

Figure 12: Perceptions of diversity and inclusion by gender (% agree)
Q: Thinking about your current experience at EY Oceania, to what extent do you agree or disagree that...? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say') ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

EY staff and Partners were more likely to agree with a general statement related to diversity and inclusion if they belonged to the following groups:

'It is a diverse and inclusive environment' (87% of all staff and Partners)

▶ Males aged 18 to 24 years (93%);

▶ Partners/Associate Partners (92%);

▶ Staff and Partners who identified as being Australian (92%) or New Zealander (94%); and

▶ Staff and Partners who started working at EY Oceania in the last 12 months (92%).

While there were very minimal differences between men (89%) and women (87%), people who chose not to disclose their gender were less likely to agree (73%). It is noted that findings for non-binary people are not able to be reported, due to low numbers in the survey sample. People who identified as Indian (82%) or Māori (73%) or did not want to provide their ethnicity in the survey (77%) were less likely to agree with the statement 'It is a diverse and inclusive environment'. Across EY service lines, those who worked in Strategy and Transactions were least likely to agree (82%), particularly those working in the Sydney office (77%).

Groups who were significantly less likely than others (74% of all EY people) to say they rarely feel excluded at work (suggesting that they do sometimes feel excluded), were:

▶ Women aged 35 to 54 years (69%);

▶ People whose religion was Islam (62%);

▶ People who speak Arabic at home (52%);

▶ People with disability (57%);

▶ Staff and Partners who work in the Technology consulting (66%) service line;

▶ Staff and Partners who work more than 50 hours per week on a weekly (66%) or fortnightly (63%) basis; and

▶ People who had experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years (53%).

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Across the statements regarding the inclusion of specific groups, there was a trend of those from the dominant group being more likely to agree that EY was inclusive towards the group mentioned compared to the group members themselves:

- People who gave their ethnicity as Australian were more likely to agree 'It is inclusive of people from different ethnic backgrounds' (93%) than people who identified as Indian (81%);

- People who speak English only at home were more likely to agree 'It is inclusive of people from different ethnic backgrounds' (90%) than people who speak Hindi (78%) or Arabic (68%);

- People who gave their ethnicity as Australian (75%) or New Zealander (84%) were more likely to agree 'It is inclusive of people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Māori background' than people who identify as Māori (48%). Due to the small sample size, responses from people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander could not be included in the sub-group analysis (but are included at the overall level);

- People without disability were more likely to agree 'It is inclusive of people with a disability' (68%) than people with disability (49%);

- People who were LGBTQI+ were slightly less likely (86%) than those who did not identify as LGBTQI+ (89%) to agree 'It is inclusive of people who identify as being part of the LGBTQI+ community'; those who 'preferred not to say' were less likely to agree (77%);

- People who did not identify as LGBTQI+ were more likely to agree 'Homophobia is not tolerated' (88%) compared to people who did not specify their sexual identity (72%); and

- People who did not identify as LGBTQI+ were more likely to agree 'Homophobic jokes and comments are rare in my workplace' (92%) than people who identified as LGBTQI+ (86%) or did not specify their sexual identity (80%).

The one negative statement:

'I feel I need to change or hide my ethnic or cultural identity to fit in'

recorded higher levels of agreement from people who identified as Chinese (27%), Indian (23%) or preferred not to provide their ethnicity (25%) than people who identified as Australian (6%) or New Zealander (3%). People who speak Mandarin (24%), Hindi (25%), Cantonese (33%) or Arabic (43%) at home were also more likely to agree that they have to hide their identify compared to people who speak English only (9%).

3.4.3 What they told us

People across EY Oceania reported to the Review Team very different experiences of being included.

Some people at EY Oceania recounted very positive experiences of inclusion and believed that the firm's overall culture was an inclusive one:

> As a person who has worked in EY for over 4 years, I do believe EY has a great culture and I appreciate the diversity and inclusive nature of the workplace.

I've recently returned from … parental leave… and in the lead up to leave plus my return to work, I've received an outstanding level of support… I have felt supported, heard, and I am a key part of the conversation in determining what is right for me, how much I can take on, and what I will not do.

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Others, however, spoke of negative, often distressing experiences and had a negative perception of the culture. Several people described EY Oceania as having in-groups and out-groups:

> I don't hate going to work, but if it was more friendly to people from different backgrounds it would make a big difference to me.

> Where I worked [in the firm] there was a drinking culture, and it was expected that you did it to fit in and be part of the team. If you didn't, you would be on the outer.

> I have a Partner who has a problem with me. He behaves differently with me and I have been observing it for a while. I don't know why. I've never had this problem before. Partners are generally very respectful with me. The Partner is very temperamental, and I feel like I am walking on eggshells. I don't know if it is racism or bullying. The Partner does not give me high value work. I'm excluded from lunches. He is always positive with written feedback though. […] The moment I get a call from him I am very nervous. What impacts me the most is that I am excluded.

> Unfortunately, women, particularly women over 50 are marginalised and have no voice. Seems like the voices of men who are 55 and over are actually amplified – I cannot understand it when the women are usually a lot more pragmatic and wise.

Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and Partners also commented on the complexity of their role within EY Oceania, with the firm perceived as using cultural knowledge to sell engagements but not fully authorising cultural ways of working. One Māori staff member commented:

> A lot of the Kaupapa we work on is about serving our people. We care about the impact. We care about the deliverables. When things happen on the EY side that jeopardise that impact – that's an additional thing that Māori carry. EY has old ways of working such as projects driven by time pressure, that jeopardise [our ability] to design solutions that will serve our society.

EY Oceania has a celebrated program for neurodiverse people, which has actively created opportunities for neurodiverse people within EY, and sought to create conditions for success (including capability building in EY Oceania, and creating Autism Workplace Champions). There is a mixture of views about the impact of that work:

> There's been a lot of organisational learning around neurodiversity, about looking at how our processes support people to succeed in EY. It's increased awareness and it's been great to see a number of Partners come forward as Champions. The tone from the top (globally and in Australia) has been very supportive, with senior leaders driving things.

> The program for neurodiverse people is great. The edgy bit is when the individual goes to work on an engagement. Sometimes it's positive, which is often linked back to who the staff member is attached to. When it doesn't go well, it's sometimes because of micro behaviours - people sometimes aren't aware of their impact on the neurodiverse staff member.

> " The systems are such that the values and the metrics we use focus on chargeable work with no adjustment of targets for neurodiverse people. "

Several people commented that there's a need to expand inclusion and belonging initiatives, and particularly for more senior leaders to step up as allies:

> Initiatives are driven by minorities themselves. The heavy lifting needs to be carried by a broader group.

People who had joined as a lateral hire or a Directly Appointed Partner particularly commented on the challenges in settling into EY Oceania and building connection. People who had joined via those pathways commented:

> When I started, I was struck by the cliques. It's very hard to make connections as a lateral hire, I've had to work extra hard to prove myself.

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It was very hard as a lateral hire to come in during COVID. I didn't have the network that you have as a grad. […] People stick to their groups. You are not included in conversations.

> "
> It feels like there are two different workplace cultures – one for EY people and one for laterals. You come into EY with KPIs and don't get that extra support. It makes it very difficult to thrive and survive.
> "

The lateral hire situation is just explosive. Because of resource constraints, we are recruiting a lot from the Philippines. It's an exploitative situation. They are overwhelmed with work and feel like they need to perform to keep their visa...Then managers take advantage of these workers' precarious situation, by pushing them harder than other staff. There's no psychological safety for this group. They are vulnerable because they don't want to jeopardise their visa status.

Since I joined EY, the practice to "automatically" downgrade and disregard a lateral hire's previous audit experience from other countries (even in Big4 firms) has been too prevalent. Whilst there are differences between regions and firms, due consideration needs to be given on a case-by-case basis rather than on an exception basis. From a high performer's perspective, it can be perceived as EY exploiting the candidate's desire to move to Australia by offering lower ranks and salaries.

EY does not put in enough effort or considerations towards lateral hires. Lateral hires are seen as a means of just getting work done. However, I see the firm put in a lot of effort and time towards welcoming graduates to make sure they have a good time at the workplace. It would make a huge difference if the firm came up with customised sessions just for lateral hires. Aussies tend to undermine how hard it is for lateral hires to leave their home country and work in a completely new work environment and culture while being tied to a work visa. At the moment – I feel lateral hires are left alone once they move to EY Oceania and I think it is extremely hard for them to adjust to the work demands while adjusting to a new country and culture at the same time. Further, the senior employees tend to prefer working with or interacting with graduates (usually Australian) over a lateral hire - this is clearly evident to the lateral hires.

As a lateral hire, the biggest cultural challenge I have found at EY has been the 'in group, out group' dynamics, compared to colleagues coming in through Grad/Intern cohorts who have known one-another and worked together for years. While there hasn't been explicit instances of bullying in that context, I have often felt unwelcome, excluded and judged, particularly in my first few months at EY. More needs to be done to retain and support laterals, else they will continue to resign.

I joined EY as a Directly Admitted Partner. I was pursued by the firm for years. Through that process I felt highly valued as an individual with areas of expertise. I think most Directly Admitted Partners have a similar experience – so much effort goes into the recruitment process, and then you are left alone. No real support to understand the context of the business, the priorities, the ways of working. The internally recruited Partners don't have much empathy because they had to come up through the revenue path.

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Several others commented on the particular challenges for people who are 'on the Bench,' and the challenges in getting onto high value projects from the Bench:

Resource managers conduct a virtual session with everyone on the Bench every Monday – they go through all the available roles and people on the bench identify which roles they want to work for. Those people who are already on an engagement with an account, they get reengaged very quickly because of their proven capability – because people in resourcing will know them by name so will reach out to them quicker. The result is that not every opportunity goes out for people to put their hands up for – it is not a transparent process when building their teams. Not all opportunities are equally available to everyone. Although you are in EY, you still have to keep looking for projects on your own – keep establishing relationships, make yourself visible – attend networking events, talk to senior managers and Partners. If they have something, then they will pick you – this was new for me. When you are new to EY you have to find out how to do this. It feels like I am applying for a job everyday even after I got the job.

The Review Team also heard that the strengthened focus on diversity and inclusion can lead to a perception that there will be 'winners' and 'losers', with a sense among some Anglo-Celtic men, in particular, that they worry they may be losing out opportunities, status and position in the organisation. Such views are consistent with the process of cultural change in all organisations where there are people who embrace the change and others who may feel a sense of fear and loss.

Effective strategies in building buy-in across the workforce include inviting all people, particularly those in power, to play a role in championing cultural change and articulating the case for change for the organisation, including the business benefits of tapping into diverse experiences and perspectives.[20]

3.5 Alcohol and Drugs

3.5.1 Survey insights

While many people (82%) agreed that there are opportunities to socialise with colleagues that do not involve drinking, a relatively high proportion (70%) agreed that drinking alcohol is generally seen as acceptable during work hours at social gatherings and events.

Approximately one in four people agreed with the following statements related to alcohol consumption and attitudes:

- Excessive drinking is common among people in my workplace (including at social gatherings and events) (26%);
- There is pressure to socialise with colleagues outside working hours where alcohol is involved (26%); and
- The level of alcohol consumption amongst people affects the safety of others in the workplace (23%).

Approximately one in ten agreed with the remaining negative statements related to alcohol:

- Drinking alcohol during working hours when not at social gatherings or events is generally seen as acceptable (13%, noting that agreement was much higher for drinking at social gatherings and events during working hours, 70%);
- Disrespectful behaviour is excused if the person has been drinking (11%); and
- Excessive drinking with clients is common among people in my workplace (including at social gatherings and events) (10%).

One in twenty workers indicated that drug taking is generally seen as acceptable at social gatherings and events.

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20 Male Champions of Change and Chief Executive Women https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MCC-CEW-Backlash-and-Buy-in.pdf

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

There were no gender differences observed in most alcohol and drug-related statements, however, women were more likely than men to agree that:

▶ Excessive drinking is common among people in my workplace (including at social gatherings and events) (29% compared to 23% of men);

▶ The level of alcohol consumption amongst people affects the safety of others in the workplace (26% compared to 21% of men); and

▶ Disrespectful behaviour is excused if the person has been drinking (14% compared to 9% of men).

Some people were more likely to agree that alcohol consumption was acceptable during working hours at social gatherings and events, and these included:

▶ Women Partners or Associate Partners (82%);

▶ People who identified as being Australian (75%, increasing to 95% amongst Australians who described themselves as Caucasian), Chinese (78%) or English (79%);

▶ People who speak English only in their household (74%), or who speak Cantonese at home (83%);

▶ People who work in the Perth office (78%); and

▶ People who work in Strategy and Transactions (77%) and Tax (83%) Service Lines.

Agreement that drinking alcohol during working hours when not at social gatherings or events is generally seen as acceptable' was higher for:

▶ Men aged 25 to 34 years (16%); and

▶ Staff and Partners who work in the Tax Service Line (19%), especially if located in the Perth office (29%).

	Total	Men	Women
The level of alcohol consumption amongst people affects the safety of others in the workplace	23	21↓	26↑
Drinking alcohol during working hours at social gatherings and events is generally seen as acceptable	70	69	71
Drinking alcohol during working hours when not at social gatherings or events is generally seen as acceptable	13	14	12
Excessive drinking is common among people in my workplace (including at social gatherings and events)	26	23↓	29↑
Excessive drinking with clients is common among people in my workplace (including at social gatherings and events)	10	8↓	11
Disrespectful behaviour is excused if the person has been drinking	11	9↓	14↑
There is pressure to socialise with colleagues outside working hours where alcohol is involved	26	25↓	27
There are opportunities to socialise with colleagues that do not involve drinking	82	84↑	81
Drug taking is generally seen as acceptable at work events and social gatherings	5	5	5

Figure 13: Perceptions of alcohol and drugs in the workplace by gender (% agree) *Q: Thinking about your current experience at EY Oceania, to what extent do you agree or disagree that...? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

There were similarities between the groups of people who agreed that 'there is pressure to socialise where drinking is involved' and that 'disrespectful behaviour' is excused if the person has been drinking. In particular, this included:

▶ Young women (36% and 16% respectively);

▶ Women in roles below manager level (30% and 15% respectively);

▶ Workers in the assurance service line in the Sydney office (34% and 20% respectively);

▶ Those in client-facing roles (28% and 12% respectively); and

▶ Those who had experienced negative behaviours in the workplace (41% and 22% respectively).

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.6 Psychological safety

Psychological safety in the workplace is a group culture and shared belief within a team that the team supports, and is safe, for interpersonal risk-taking[21]. In a workplace that supports psychological safety, workers feel empowered to speak up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. Importantly, workers believe they can confidently engage in this conduct without fear that they will experience negative consequences to themselves, their reputation or their career progression[22].

There are several elements to psychological safety, including:

1 ▸ **Inclusion safety** – being safe to be oneself, being accepted for who you are, and having a sense of connection and belonging;

2 ▸ **Learner safety** – safety to ask questions, to give and receive feedback, to experiment and take risks and to make mistakes;

3 ▸ **Contributor safety** – safety to use one's skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution; and

4 ▸ **Challenger safety** – safety to speak up and challenge the status quo when there is an opportunity to change or improve[23].

Power dynamics play a key role in whether a workplace or team is psychologically safe. Power differentials between senior and junior staff can undermine the expression of candid feedback and contributions from more junior staff, which is compounded when leadership does not value, prioritise or model psychological safety in the workplace.[24]

Psychological safety is one of the most significant factors of success supporting high-performance teams.[25] It is in the interests of businesses and organisations to prioritise psychological safety in the workplace, for their workers' well-being, and for organisational success. Psychological safety is not about lowering performance standards[26]. Research supports that psychological safety is not a destination in itself but a context that leads to high-quality decision making; healthy group dynamics and interpersonal relationships; greater innovation and more effective execution in organisations[27].

> Studies show that psychological safety allows for moderate risk-taking, speaking your mind, creativity, and sticking your neck out without fear of having it cut off —just the types of behaviour that lead to market breakthroughs[28].

Further, organisations are more at risk of preventable business or human safety failures when psychological safety is not valued.[29]

Psychological safety is key to establishing cultures where people feel safe to challenge and report harmful behaviours to create a safe reporting environment. On the other hand, research supports that when managers are non-inclusive, they significantly reduce team performance, increase the risk of discrimination and harassment, and adversely impact employee well-being.[30]

21 Edmondson, A. C. and Mortensen, M. 2021 "What Psychological Safety Looks Like in a Hybrid Workplace" in *Harvard Business Review* 19 April at https://hbr.org/2021/04/what-psychological-safety-looks-like-in-a-hybrid-workplace

22 Clark, T. *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*, cited in The Center for Creative Leadership What Is Psychological Safety at Work? How Leaders Can Build Psychologically Safe Workplaces, Greensboro, 2023.

23 The Center for Creative Leadership 2023 "What is Psychological Safety at Work? How Leaders Can Build Psychologically Safe Workplaces" 10 January, citing T. Clark at https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-psychological-safety-at-work/

24 Edmondson, A.C. 2018 *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. New Jersey, Wiley.

25 Delizonna, L. 2017 "High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It" in Harvard Business Review 24 August at https://hbr.org/2017/08/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety-heres-how-to-create-it

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27 Edmondson, A.C. and Mortensen, M. 2021 "What Psychological Safety Looks Like in a Hybrid Workplace" in *Harvard Business Review* 19 April at https://hbr.org/2021/04/what-psychological-safety-looks-like-in-a-hybrid-workplace

28 Delizonna, L. 2017 "High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It" in *Harvard Business Review* 24 August at https://hbr.org/2017/08/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety-heres-how-to-create-it

29 Neilson, K. 2021 "3 Steps to Foster Psychological Safety, According to the Leading Researcher on the Topic *HRM* 27 July, citing A. Edmondson at https://www.hrmonline.com.au/section/strategic-hr/psychological-safety-amy-edmondson/

30 Diversity Council Australia 2022 *Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Synopsis Report* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.6.1 Survey insights

A majority of EY workers reported that 'there is high degree of openness, trust and respect between me and my direct manager/supervisor' (85%).

Agreement was lower for statements related to people being held accountable for their behaviour and the ease of calling out unacceptable behaviour:

▶ Everyone is held accountable to the same standards of behaviour (62%); and

▶ It is difficult to call out unacceptable behaviour when the behaviour comes from someone more senior than me (56%).

Men were more likely than women to agree that 'everyone is held accountable to the same standards of behaviour' (67% compared to 58% women), and this was higher for men who are Partners/Associate Partners (76%) and men below manager level (72%), while women who work as Senior Managers/Associate Directors (50%) and as Managers/Assistant Directors 53% were **less likely** to agree.

Difficulty calling out unacceptable behaviour appeared to be more common among women with 61% agreeing that 'It is difficult to call out unacceptable behaviour when the behaviour comes from someone more senior than me' (compared to 51% of men).

Among those who preferred not to specify their gender when asked, agreement was lower than average for the following statements:

▶ There is a high degree of openness, trust and respect between me and my direct manager/supervisor (72% compared to 85% of all workers); and

▶ Everyone is held accountable to the same standards of behaviour (49% compared to 62% of all staff and Partners).

Findings for non-binary people have not been reported due to low numbers in the survey sample, to protect the confidentiality of these respondents.

Others who were significantly **more likely** than others to agree that they have difficulty calling out unacceptable behaviour when a person is more senior (compared to 56% of all staff and Partners) were:

▶ People who work in the Wellington (68%) or Sydney (59%) offices;

▶ People who work in the Business Consulting Service Line (64%), especially those in the Sydney office (73%);

▶ People who work more than 51 hours per week on a weekly basis (62%); and

▶ People who had experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years (77%).

The fact that a substantial minority declined to disclose demographic information (such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, country of birth, or religion) in the survey provides a further indicator of lack of psychological safety for some workers at EY Oceania.

Psychological safety was also explored in findings relating to making a report. Confidence in making a report or complaint was lower for women and more junior members of staff at EY Oceania across all Service Lines and office locations.

Of those who had experienced a harmful behaviour in the last five years, only a minority had reported the incident either formally or informally within EY Oceania or to an independent or external party. Rates of reporting were highest for those who had experienced bullying, with approximately one third (36%) making a report. This dropped to one in six (17%) who had reported their experience of sexual harassment, and just over one in twenty (7%) who had reported their experience of racism. People who had experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years were also less likely to have confidence in making a report or complaint to a person or group inside EY Oceania (53%, compared to 70% overall). These findings are presented in further detail in chapter 6: Systems, Policies and Processes.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

3.6.2   What they told us

Some people told the Review team that they have experienced all four dimensions of psychological safety at EY Oceania:

We have a set of commitments that came out of [staff consultations pre-COVID] that reflects the positive aspects of our team: real you, real team, real conversation – most importantly, having the difficult conversations, real growth, and real impact.

As an organisation, [our culture is strong and positive]. We are in the best position we have been [for some time].

The grass roots culture [is one of] of curiosity, excitement, learning…That is the corporate culture as well.

> It's a workplace that values respect, collaborative work, and diversity of people. If I have a different point of view, it's generally heard and listened to.

Some EY Oceania staff and Partners highlighted the role played by leaders, including Managers, Directors, and Partners, in creating psychological safety:

The positive leadership and culture created a sense of strong psychological safety – there is no sense of fear of making mistakes. Even if I make mistakes I know [my leader] will have my back.

I'm really happy in my workplace and I think we are one of the better firms in the big 4. I think we successfully support people much better than other firms and we felt very supported during Covid with things like extra tech support and Covid leave. There was lots of visibility from senior Partners asking how people are feeling and lots of check-in practices.

Others described a strong orientation to teamwork and collaboration:

Despite a hierarchical structure, I would say everyone is approachable and willing to help and this is particularly for outgoing people who put their hand up and say they need assistance or advice or are searching for an opportunity. I do think there's a strong focus on team building and putting people front and centre and we also have a really growth mindset and try to share the wins.

Some people also benefited from specific initiatives designed to strengthen inclusion and connection:

One good thing we did a few years ago was Dress for Your Day. Without that, I would resign. It opened up a lot of spaces for creativity.

We have social club ... and the people organising it invest a lot of time into this, organising events such as mini golf etc…It is cool to see these different kinds of activities [but] there is no requirement to participate. Wellbeing breaks in the busy season are especially appreciated, for example, team building, games etc.

Some, however, described quite variable experiences, with positive experiences sitting alongside negative experiences:

I have been with EY for [just under 2 years] and I have had a very mixed experience, ranging from high highs to some very low lows, especially in the last couple of months.

EY people are amazing, and the culture is really strong. My blood flows yellow and black. I genuinely believe it's a great place to work, the opportunities are phenomenal, and clients are amazing. However, others shouldn't have to go through what I have had to go through.

I fluctuate between being incredibly pissed off, and grateful because I can see things being done to address problems.

Psychological safety very much depends on who you work for – it's emotionally and cognitively draining. It undermines your confidence.

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Some individuals who had had both positive and negative experiences commented on the role that individual leaders make to psychological safety:

> *EY has good values, it's a good organisation. Top level management seem to mean well and stand behind their values, but it gets lost down the layers. It's almost like two different organisations.*

> *At the top levels, such as Partners there are still individuals who have very narrow views and I'm old enough to deal with it, but new grads aren't. Our system relies on people's resilience.*

> *It really is an amazing firm, but experiences are so varied. You can have one great project and then one terrible project. Leadership can be great on one project and toxic on the next. It's not ok to have such varied experiences. There is something around the consistency of the experience that needs attention.*

The Review Team also heard from a number of workers who spoke directly about a lack of psychological safety, trust and empathy in the workplace.

The following quotes speak to these issue. If the content is distressing is distressing to you, please access your available support networks.

> *It was really hard to find the confidence to go back out there and trust people that you work with again.*

> *I had a real lack of trust and confidence from being yelled at so much.*

> "There is an injustice, constructive bullying, gaslighting at scale. I did not expect it at EY."

> *Overall there isn't psychological safety. Whenever I raised something with [a former Partner] I felt like I was pissing her off.*

> *I do worry about more junior staff. They lack the autonomy and choice.*

Other participants described workplace dynamics as lacking empathy, and driving competition rather than collaboration, which can create a sense of isolation:

> "There is a real lack of empathy that people are here from overseas with no family, different cultural backgrounds. It's all about the bottom line regardless of whether you have serious health issues, even."

> *The culture is very competitive – teams competing against each other, which creates bad energy. Here opportunities are not merit based. It depends if management likes you or not.*

> *I have found it really difficult to make friends and get support to do my work as someone new. No-one has really trained me or shown me how EY works and I am worried about whether I can stay here.*

Some people felt that EY Oceania placed low value on people with different ways of thinking and working, and in doing so created an environment that wasn't psychologically safe:

> *You receive poor treatment if you don't tow the line, if you have a different view. But if you are a part of the club, you are flying.*

> *My time in [location] office hasn't been great. I've found the office to be very hostile towards anyone who is a bit different or has new ideas. The Partners here are 'old school' and less open minded and are resistant to change, including having new people in the office. They seem opposed to innovation and disruption and it's more of a popularity contest and culture of who's kissing arse the most.*

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

Some also commented on the specific dynamics within some service lines or some offices.

> *My personal view is that even in the [service line] group I don't feel psychologically safe. For example, I am counselling a junior staff member who I feel needs recognition, but another Partner said she wouldn't progress. I feel like I can't challenge [the Partner's] view because she has been at EY longer. I reached out to her ...but she didn't even respond. The hierarchy of partners impact on psychological safety.*

> *Until I worked in that [office location], I had never worked anywhere where there is a complete disregard for people's wellbeing.*

Several people commented that there was limited tolerance for people making mistakes. One person expressed it as follows:

> *In most teams, the juniors are very scared to accept fault if errors are made. There does seem to be finger pointing. I am always telling the juniors to name the mistake, not dodge it [...] Everyone makes mistakes, own up to it. Say you have done it, find a fix. There is that fear.*

The majority of those who had negative experiences saw the issues as systemic rather than created or sustained by a single individual:

> *The damaging culture ...is so deeply ingrained in the fabric of the team that it can be challenging to attribute it to one or several individuals. It is 'baked in' and allowed to perpetuate, in a way that is normalised, accepted, and unquestioned at all levels, from junior staff beginning their careers, all the way to the most senior… Partners.*

> *I had a Partner blocking [opportunities and promotions] every step of the way…Other women in the firm are now targets for his behaviour.*

> *My experience at EY left me traumatised and will do so for many years to come, so much so, that I could never work in another professional services environment again.*

> " I haven't been disappointed by the culture, it's what I was expecting. It is a competitive culture, but that's consulting. The problem is the culture of conflict avoidance. This means things go unaddressed. "

> *EY has a very passive aggressive culture compared to the other big 4. It's very risk averse. No one wants to rock the boat.*

Several people commented on the gap between policy and implementation, with one person expressing it as follows:

> " EY has good intent and policies but what they say and what they do are different things. There's such a high turnover, particularly of young people, hundreds of grads are just cannon fodder because of the volume of work and little commitment to help them … develop, so they are left to flounder and are overworked and leave or are managed out because they are set up to fail. "

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Many participants spoke about how they did not feel safe in speaking up about concerns they had, and that if they did, it would negatively impact their reputation and career:

My comfort level is such that I wouldn't raise these issues with other partners.

[Speaking up just puts] another target on my back for advocating on gender equity and diversity.

When I highlighted some specific negative cultural issues in my service line, I got sidelined. You really need to be a part of the club to get ahead at EY.

> "The overall vibe in [my service line] is not good but no one can say that openly. Even in the People surveys if there are any suggestions to improve our workplace, they're knocked down and we're made to feel that the problem actually lies with the team and our attitudes. So, the general sense is why do we fill out these surveys in the first place when nothing is ever done to improve the way we work?"

I have felt psychologically unsafe. I feel like you will be undone if you speak.

I wake up most days thinking I will lose my job.

Everyone's saying 'speak up about mental health' but if we do we are totally victimised, taken off projects, asked to leave. We have been tricked into talking about our mental health issues.

Some participants spoke very openly about the detrimental impact working at EY Oceania had on their own wellbeing, including significant and serious mental health impacts:

People were in tears in the [location] office all the time. It took me leaving to realise that was not normal.

I hated the person I had become. I had no energy to do anything. I was very negative. I was in a bad space. I would never recommend EY as a workplace; I want all my friends who are still there to leave. The culture is unethical in how it treats people. They care more about their bottom line than their people. Anybody will step on anybody to get ahead.

The last couple of weeks, my mental health is so bad. I ruminate every night about my projects, and I dread coming to work.

To sum up in a more colloquial fashion – working at EY was an awful time, with a culture that made me feel like shit every single day I worked there. I quit before having my next role lined up, something I have never done before. It was either walk out of that horrible place and move on or have a full-blown nervous breakdown.

We break people.

Some people also commented that low psychological safety caused people to rely on their peers, rather than leaders, EAP or other firm-wide systems for support:

It's just not psychologically safe to speak out. I ended up getting everyone coming to me. It was so draining for me. I had quite a few people who were suicidal texting me or calling me in the middle of the night for support.

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Performance was also impacted by negative workplace dynamics, with retention and productivity diluted:

> *[One service line] is known for its burn and churn culture.*

> *We are all exhausted. A lot of my team are not happy. And when they are not happy, they are not productive.*

> *If there was the collaborative environment, with true teaming and true trust, the money that is getting made out of the market segments would be ten times greater because we would have the right people with the right experience and expertise.*

> *Because of the values we espouse we attract amazing people, but they are not being leveraged, encouraged, or nurtured. Most of them experience being discouraged, they leave, they adjust to survive.*

Many attribute the lack of psychological safety to the dominance of revenue generation over other priorities:

> *If you are delivering on the money, you can do anything and you can lose as many staff as you like, put them in mental health facilities, fail to protect them, be racist, be mean to people with disability.*

> *The focus on generation of revenue creates a toxic, competitive, and bullying environment. Many of the Partners appear to be in a "club" that creates and fosters very poor behaviour, which in turn creates a firm-wide culture that is psychologically unsafe.*

> *EY didn't care about my mental state. They were just obsessed with making money.*

> *The business model is about enriching our Partners at the expense of our younger folks. We make our greatest margin off employing our younger folk at 98% [utilisation]...I don't know the solution, but you probably need a more distributed form of wealth.*

> *The imbalance of power drives the culture and KPIs also play a role. There are no KPIs on staff well-being.*

There was a sense that people who generate significant revenue are protected from accountability:

> What I'm witnessing is that bad behaviours are rewarded because the perpetrators are leaders of large value engagements and are being protected from consequences. You would expect to see people seriously reprimanded or moved on because we are so public with our values. Our values are our selling point, why we are different to [our competitors]. But we have a passive aggressive culture, and we never measure the cost to productivity. These behaviours are a silent killer for retention and our reputation.

> *There is a protection racket for rainmakers. The men have obviously all received training around how to respond to escalations. They use the right rhetoric like "I am sorry that you have had that experience and I am here to support you". But none of them speak up in public and there are consequences for raising an issue.*

> *We tend to look after those who are at the top. That is just how it has been. I have heard of other bullying cases – senior against junior. And then the junior leaves because that is the easiest option. We have to teach our people to do better.*

> *Those who do call out bad behaviour are then victimised as being bullies or not sensitive enough. Poor performance, especially at senior levels is not dealt with effectively and god forbid someone actually calls out unethical behaviours that could see us in the headlines – the individual calling out the behaviours because they want to protect the firm is then reprimanded for not being "nice".*

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The Director (she) gets on well with senior people but has a reputation for not great management among juniors. But because she gets on with the client and brings in the money the partners don't tend to look at that. Bringing the money tends to excuse some of the bad behaviour.

Some highlighted the particular challenges experienced by those joining EY Oceania at a more senior level:

I came from outside EY, and you aren't given support in how it all operates, and you are expected to just know. Again, you are set up to fail because you then won't hit your targets and will have bad utilisation, which means you then get stuck on all the crap jobs and are being performance managed out.

"
If you come in as a lateral hire… you are expected… to hit the ground running but there is only a one-day induction and no support. I had a big support network that helped me get through it but if you're a brand-new person who has just moved into the country, it would be really challenging, and I think even now lateral hires can get lost in the cracks. We need to provide better training and more guidance.
"

People also highlighted the limits of the current arrangements for support, which one person described as follows:

The counselling system is problematic. They understand that they should provide psychological safety, they talk about it a lot, but they don't really understand what it actually means or looks like.

Based on the listening sessions, it is evident that many workers at EY Oceania do not feel safe in speaking up, and this is having serious adverse impact on their wellbeing and performance. The data presents a strong theme of workers feeling unable to challenge hierarchies or provide feedback, fearing rejection or punishment.

3.7 The response to Aishwarya's Venkatachalam's death

Aishwarya Venkatachalam's death was an enormous tragedy. Her passing has been devastating for family, friends and colleagues. Several people spoke of the response to Aishwarya's passing as reflecting the broader workplace dynamics in EY Oceania.

3.7.1 What they told us

Some people felt that the messages from the Executive Leadership Team had been compassionate and respectful to both Aishwarya's memory and her family's wishes.

Several Review participants, however, felt that the firm's response to this tragedy embodied the inconsistency of experience across the firm, and was insufficient to either honour Aishwarya's memory or support those experiencing shock, grief and distress:

News of Aishwarya's [passing] was a real shock. It was very difficult to talk about. We were given no space to process what happened. We were just expected to keep delivering. No one ever asked if I was ok after it happened.

A week passed without any of our managers discussing [Aishwarya's passing] with us. Eventually I went to [a senior leader] and suggested that they check in with the team, to see how everyone was going. How did it not occur to them to do that?

The message after Aishwarya's death was all about managing your workload and resilience. They put everything back on the individual.

Some of our team's junior staff are not doing well. The leadership think they are not impacted because they didn't know Aishwarya but of course they are impacted because they are facing similar issues.

3. Leadership, inclusion and psychological safety

After Aishwarya died, the firm's narrative focused on the media 'beat up'...The firm focused on everything but reports of her citing racism. The firm's belated consideration of the impact on the firm's people of colour, and then only engaging with the Cultural Diversity network rather than acknowledging it firm-wide upfront. The resulting upset and trauma was put down to people's personal issues, rather than systemic workplace issues.

Since Aishwarya's passing, EY Oceania has commissioned a review of best practice responses to a death or other critical incident in the workplace. EY Oceania engaged Everymind to advise on these best practices and has subsequently developed a new "Postvention Plan" that will enable a coordinated, person-centred approach should it be required in the future."

3.8 Conclusion

The insights shared with EB&Co. via listening sessions, submissions and the survey suggest that some leaders at EY Oceania provide an exceptional experience of inclusion and psychological safety. Together, they create an environment in which individuals can flourish, and bring their best thinking and best work to the table. This creates a collaborative and enabling environment for excellence.

Others successfully create 'safe-enough' environments, in which people can contribute to engagements and progress their careers.

This is not, however, a shared experience at EY Oceania. Many do not experience enough inclusion and safety to truly thrive. This has significant negative impacts on individual wellbeing and reduces the collaboration within and performance of teams.

Across the discussions of culture and leadership was a strong call for a new approach to leadership, one which places human dignity at the heart of human interaction, one which celebrates and leverages diversity as an asset, and one which fully supports each person to bring their full skills and talents to their role.

Many commented that at present there is a 'leadership lottery', with individual leaders given significant room to shape local cultures. This works well when an individual leader is engaged and skilled at people leadership but is more problematic when an individual lacks either skill or commitment.

Strengthening inclusion, belonging and psychological safety will require a considerable uplift in capability across the organisation, including cultural capability, anti-racist capability, skills in leading diverse teams, and skills in creating and leading psychologically safe teams. At the same time, strengthening onboarding will deliver new staff and Partners a better foundation for their role at EY Oceania.

As part of this, diversity, equity, and inclusion Key Performance Indicators should be embedded into each Partner's suite of indicators, to build a whole of firm commitment to truly leveraging the organisation's collective capability.

These capability initiatives should be complemented by systemic interventions that reduce barriers for diverse cohorts, including continuing to drive targets for increasing the number of Partners who are female and/or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and reducing pay gaps for female and CALD Partners and staff; reviewing recruitment pathways to maximise the diversity of engagement, strengthening sponsorship programs for female and CALD staff; and targeted strategies for specific groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Māori and people with disability (including neurodiverse people).

There is also real potential to increase the visibility of, and status of, female and CALD staff and Partners who are active champions for inclusion. This will strengthen visible role models within the organisation and could also be extended to give those diversity inclusion champions a role in performance and promotion reviews.

Finally, EY Oceania is a data-driven organisation and will benefit enormously from improving the completeness of diversity data and using that to inform future initiatives. Achieving this will require both technical activities such as updating the data system, as well as a cultural shift to make it safer to name difference.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

4.1 Introduction

The elimination of harmful behaviours such as bullying, racism, everyday sexism and sexual harassment is fundamental to creating a workplace where everyone thrives. It is a matter of human rights and also key to productivity and organisational performance. As described in Chapter 3, leadership and organisational culture plays a key role in establishing the boundaries of behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable in an organisation.

Harmful behaviours have significant impacts on individuals personally and professionally, including on their physical and mental health, and their career progression and prospects. At a broader level, the costs of harmful behaviour are not only borne by individuals, but by the workplace and broader community.

The individual and group listening sessions and the results from the online survey identified that many people have rewarding and stimulating experiences at EY Oceania and work in cohesive, supportive, and collaborative teams. Many pointed to the efforts of EY Oceania to eliminate harmful behaviours, and address behaviour swiftly when it occurred.

However, others shared that they had experienced or witnessed harmful behaviours including bullying, racism, everyday sexism, and sexual harassment – behaviours that have significant impacts on individuals, teams and the organisational culture. The Review Team also identified several cohorts of people that are at greater risk of harmful behaviour due to structural inequalities, particularly those who experience intersecting inequalities.

This chapter draws on the voices and lived experiences of EY Oceania people with respect to harmful behaviours and exclusion. It describes the experiences of bullying; racism and gender inequality in the organisation, including everyday sexism and sexual harassment; and experiences of specific groups.

At a glance:

15% experienced bullying

▶ **Approximately one in seven (15%) people experienced bullying** at EY Oceania in the last five years with women (17%) more likely to have experienced bullying than men (13%).

8% experienced rascism

▶ **Compared to the overall group (8%), people who identified as** Indian (16%), Chinese (15%) or Māori (21%) **were more likely to have experienced racism** in the last five years at EY Oceania, as were people whose religion is Hinduism (18%) or Islam (17%).[31]

10% experienced sexual harassment

▶ One in ten (10%) people at EY Oceania indicated they had experienced sexual harassment in the last five years, with women (15%) more likely to experience sexual harassment than men (6%).

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31 The rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not reported separately due to the small size of the cohort.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

4.2 Bullying

Workplace bullying is a widespread phenomenon that occurs globally, across various industry sectors and occupational groups. It is estimated that bullying affects at least one-third of workers through direct exposure or indirect witness exposure, both of which lead to compromised health and wellbeing, leading to absenteeism and reduced organisational effectiveness or productivity.[32]

Workplace bullying includes a range of behaviours and can be experienced verbally, physically, and/or through body language. Bullying can be identified in both direct action and a lack of action. It includes:

▶ Repeated hurtful remarks or attacks;

▶ Making fun of someone's work or someone as a person (including any aspect of their identity);

▶ Excluding someone or stopping them from working with people or taking part in activities that relate to their work;

▶ Psychological harassment including intimidation, belittling or humiliating comments;

▶ Holding back information which someone needs in order to do their work properly;

▶ Pushing, shoving, tripping or grabbing someone;

▶ Initiation or hazing – making someone do humiliating or inappropriate things in order to be accepted;

▶ Physical, verbal or written abuse, including via email or social media;

▶ Continued dismissal of someone's contributions;

▶ Limiting someone's career progression, despite strong work performance, or failing to appropriately recognise someone's contributions;

▶ Aggressive conduct towards someone, including threats or attacks; and

▶ Victimisation or retaliatory action, including for making reports about wider bullying behaviour.

In general, a single incident of unreasonable behaviour does not constitute workplace bullying. However, it may represent broader cultural or organisational issues and should therefore not be overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant. While bullying is often considered an individual or interpersonal issue, more often broader systemic factors, such as poor organisational culture and inadequate leadership are key risk factors.

Necessary management action, carried out in a reasonable way, is not workplace bullying.[33] This includes directing and controlling the way work is carried out and performance reviews and disciplinary action undertaken after a transparent process.

Bullying has significant individual and organisational impacts. At the individual level, these include physical and psychological harm, reduced job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and compromised overall wellbeing. For the organisation, it can lead to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and high turnover rates. Further, the organisational consequences can also include damaged reputation, decreased employee engagement, and increased legal and financial risks.[34]

It is typical for workplaces to experience some level of workplace conflict. Workplace bullying, however, goes beyond this in that it consists of unwelcome conduct that has an intimidating, punishing or distressing effect and infringes upon an employee's personal dignity, self-esteem and life opportunities.[35] The persistent nature of bullying distinguishes it from other forms of workplace mistreatment, which can be characterised as disrespectful workplace behaviour. Disrespectful behaviour becomes workplace bullying when it forms part of a pattern or occurs consistently over a prolonged period.[36]

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32 Hodgins, M., MacCurtain, S. and Mannix-McNamara, P. 2020 "Power and inaction: why organizations fail to address workplace bullying" *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* 13(3), 265-290 at https://doi.org/10.1108/IJWHM-10-2019-0125

33 Fair Work Ombudsman "Bullying in the Workplace" at https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/bullying-sexual-harassment-and-discrimination-at-work/bullying-in-the-workplace

34 International Labor Organisation 2020 Safe and Healthy Working Environments Free from Violence and Harassment at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_751832.pdf

35 Rycroft, A. 2009 "Workplace Bullying: unfair discrimination, dignity of violence or unfair labour practice?" *22nd Annual Labour Law Conference* at https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/43670306/workplace-bullying-unfair-discrimination-dignity-violation-or-unfair-

36 Miller, P., Brook, L., Stomski, N., Ditchburn, G. and Morrison, P. 2020 "Bullying in Fly-In-Fly-Out employees in the Australian resources sector: A cross-sectional study" *Public Library of Science* 15(3) at https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0229970

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

A common characteristic of workplace bullying is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the target, where this power imbalance leaves the target unable to protect or defend themselves against further negative behaviours. Other key factors that increase the risk of bullying are rigid hierarchies, work design and organisational factors including role stressors, organisational constraints, and job autonomy.[37]

Recent studies have identified that poor people management significantly increases the risk of bullying at both an individual and team level within an organisation.[38] These risks are particularly acute in the context of supervisory people management practices which place an overly heavy focus on the pursuit of financial and operational objectives without sufficient attention to job satisfaction and wellbeing.[39]

Effective people management can play an important role in preventing workplace bullying, particularly approaches that prioritise psychological safety. Preventing bullying requires effective people management to be modelled by leadership at the senior levels of the organisation.[40]

4.2.1   Survey insights

Survey participants were provided a definition of bullying and asked about their experiences of bullying while working at EY Oceania. They were first asked about their experiences in the last five years, then in the last 12 months. They were asked to consider experiences at the office, client offices or sites or at any other time while engaged in work or work-related travel, events, engagements or functions.

Approximately one in seven (15%) people had experienced bullying at EY Oceania in the last five years with women (17%) more likely to have experienced bullying than men (13%). Due to low numbers, findings for non-binary people have not been reported to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

People in certain roles within EY Oceania were more likely to experience bullying, including Directors/Executive Directors (24%) and Managers/Assistant Directors (19%, compared to 15% overall). People in roles below manager level were less likely than others to report having experienced bullying in the last five years (12%).
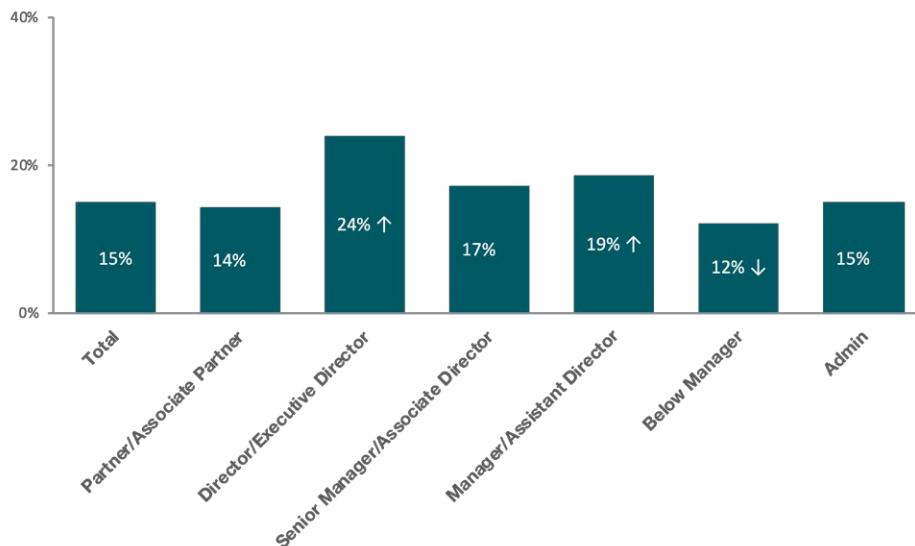
Figure 14: Experience of bullying at EY in the last five years by rank (%) *Q: In the last 5 years, have you personally experienced bullying while working or engaging in work-related activities for EY Oceania? Q: We would like to understand what types of bullying behaviour you have experienced. Which of the following types of behaviour have you experienced while working at EY Oceania or while engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

37 Tuckey, M. R., Li, Y., Neall, A. M., Mattiske, J. D., Chen, P. Y. and Dollard, M. F. 2018 *Developing a Workplace Bullying Risk Audit* Tool University of South Australia Asia Pacific Centre for Work Health and Safety at https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018-01/apo-nid172316.pdf

38 Tuckey, M. R., Li, Y., Neall, A. M., Chen, P. Y., Dollard, M. F., McLinton, S. S., Rogers, A., Mattiske, J. 2022 "Workplace Bullying as an Organisational Problem: Spotlight on People Management Practices" Journal of Occupational Health Psychology 27(6), 544-565 at https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000335

39 Ibid.

40 Plimmer, G., Nguyen, D., Teo, S., and Tuckey, M. R. 2022 "Workplace Bullying as an Organisational Issue: Aligning Climate and Leadership" *Work & Stress: An International Journal of Work, Health & Organisations* 36(2), 202-227 at https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2021.1969479

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

In addition, the data showed that those who were more likely than others to report having experienced bullying in the last five years included:

▶ Women aged 35 to 54 years (19%);

▶ Women in the role of Partner/Associate Partner (23%) or Director/Executive Director (28%);

▶ People with disability (30%);

▶ People with caring responsibilities (19%); and

▶ People who work in the Consulting Service Lline in the Sydney office (23%).

There were no significant differences in experiences of bullying based on ethnicity or office location. However, the likelihood of having experienced bullying was significantly higher amongst staff who opted not to answer demographic questions such as ethnicity, country of birth, religion and language spoken at home. This may suggest a lower level of trust sharing demographic information amongst those who had negative experiences in the workplace.

People who had experienced bullying were given a list of behaviours that constitute bullying and asked to indicate which behaviours they had experienced. The bullying behaviours that had been most commonly experienced (by around one in ten EY Oceania workers) in the last five years included:

▶ 'Unjustified criticism or complaints' (11%);

▶ 'Belittling or humiliating comments or conduct' (9%);

▶ 'Aggressive or intimidating comments or conduct' (8%); and

▶ 'Being given unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines' (8%).

There were some differences in the types of bullying behaviours experienced when broken down by rank. Having someone threaten the security of your job was more likely to be experienced by people in the role of Executive Director or Director (9%) and Associate Director or Senior Manager (5% compared to 3% overall). Executive Director/Directors were also more likely to have experienced 'Aggressive or intimidating comments or conduct (16% compared to 8% overall), 'Abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments' (12% compared to 6% overall), 'Having someone threaten the security of your job' (9% compared to 3% overall) and 'Belittling comments or exclusion based on your gender (8% compared to 2% overall). Managers and Assistant Directors were more likely to face bullying in the form of 'Unjustified criticism or complaints' (14% compared to 11% overall) and 'Being given unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines' (11% compared to 8% overall).

Among workers who had experienced bullying in the past five years, half said this had gone on for less than one month (26%) or one to three months (24%). For around one in four, the experience had been for a longer duration, lasting from six months to a year (11%) or over a year (14%).

A majority of EY Oceania workers (86%) saw their immediate managers as well informed in relation to bullying, agreeing with the statement, *'my direct manager/ supervisor understand the difference between reasonable performance management and bullying'.*

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

|	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
Physical violence or threats of physical violence	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments	6	5	12↑	7	8	5↓	4
Aggressive or intimidating comments or conduct	8	9	16↑	12↑	10	5↓	9
Belittling or humiliating comments or conduct	9	10	14	12↑	12↑	7↓	10
Being treated detrimentally because you made or were involved in a workplace complaint or report	3	3	3	3	4	2	3
Teasing, taunting, practical jokes	3	2	1	3	4	3	3
Unjustified criticism or complains	11	10	17	13	14↑	8↓	11
Being deliberately excluded from work-related events or activities	4	6	8	5	4	3	5
Having information withheld that is vital for your effective work performance	6	6	10	8	7	5	5
Being given unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines	8	4	12	9	11	7	7
Being given tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond your skill level	6	2	8	6	9	6	6
Being denied access to information, supervision, consultation or resources	5	7	7	7↑	6	3↓	4
Others spreading misinformation or malicious rumours about you (or a group that you are part of)	6	8	10	7	7	4	7
Experiencing changing work arrangements such as to your work hours or leave arrangement to deliberately cause inconvenience	2	1	3	2	3	2	4
Being assigned meaningless tasks unrelated to your job	5	1↓	6	4	7	5	6
Being exposed to offensive material (including images, video or text)	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Experiencing pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimating to yourself or others	2	1	3	2	3	1	3
Pressure to drink alcohol when you did not want to	2	1	1	2	3	2	1
Having someone threaten the security of your job	3	4	9↑	5↑	3	2	3
Experiencing harmful or punitive administrative sanctions such as intentional delays in processing your work or applications for training	2	0	0	2	2	2	2
Belittling comments about your culture or cultural practices	2	1	3	2	2	2	2
Belittling comments or exclusion based on your ethnic background	2	1	2	2	1	2	0
Belittling comments or exclusion based on your cultural background	2	1	5	2	2	2	2
Belittling comments or exclusion based on your religion	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Belittling comments or exclusion based on your sexual orientation	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Belittlingh comments or exclusion based on your disability	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
Belittling comments or exclusion based on your gender	2	4	8↑	2	2	2	1
Any other repeated, unreasonable behaviour that was directed at you (or directed to a group that you were a part of) that created a risk to your physical or mental health and safety	6	6	8	6	8↑	4↓	7

Figure 15: Types of bullying experienced in the last five years by rank (%) *Q: In the last 5 years, have you personally experienced bullying while working or engaging in work-related activities for EY Oceania? Q: We would like to understand what types of bullying behaviour you have experienced. Which of the following types of behaviour have you experienced while working at EY Oceania or while engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents.* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

For those who had experienced bullying in the past five years, two-thirds (67%) indicated the most recent incident had occurred in the workplace. Having been bullied online or via a digital platform was also relatively common with 38% indicating this had been the source of the bullying behaviour. Approximately one in ten people who had experienced bullying indicated that this had last happened at a client site or office (15%) or at a work-related social event (10%). Few (2%) had experienced bullying during work-related travel.

For those who had experienced bullying, half (50%) indicated that the experience involved just one person. Of the remainder, most (41% overall) indicated that more than one person had been involved with the remaining 9% opting not to provide a response.

Experiences of bullying were mixed in terms of the gender(s) of the people who had bullied a worker. Participants had most often experienced bullying from men only (37%), followed by women only (27%) and equal numbers of men and women (12%). However, men were significantly more likely to have experienced bullying from men (48%) and women from women (38%). Some 14% of men said the bullying had been from women only, while 32% of women had experienced bullying by men only.

Approximately four in five people who had experienced bullying (82%) indicated that the person who engaged in the bullying was in a more senior role than them. One exception was Partners or Associate Partners who were more likely to indicate that the person was at the same level (41%).

Roles of people who bullied

	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager
Partner	33	84↑	77↑	55↑	24↓	11↓
Executive Director/Associate Partner	8	3	26↑	14↑	8	3
Director	20	7	12	26	29	18
Senior Manager/Associate Director	26	9	7	17	41↑	31
Manager/Assistant Director	16	2	0	6↓	12	31↑
Senior Consultant/Supervising Associate	10	0	0	4	7	19↑
Staff/Assistant/Associate/Senior Associate	8	0	0	2	2	17↑
Administrative Advanced or Lead	1	0	0	1	0	1
Administrative Entry or Intermediate	1	0	0	0	0	1
Graduate	1	0	0	0	1	2
Intern	0	0	0	0	0	0
Another role (please specify)	1	0	3	1	0	1
Client	4	3	8	8	4	2
Prefer not to say	12	9	1	6	11	14

Roles of people who were bullied

Figure16: Role(s) of person(s) involved in bullying incident by role of person who experienced bullying (%) *Q: What was / were the roles of the person / people who bullied you in the most recent incident of bullying at EY Oceania…? Base: Experienced bullying in the last 5 years (excludes Admin staff due to small sample sizes)* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

4.2.2 What they told us

The Review Team heard from people whose experience at EY Oceania was positive, and they worked in a supportive and inclusive team environment. Participants shared:

> I have worked with EY for almost 20 years and the key reason is that I believe we have a great culture that puts people at the heart of what we do. I have every confidence that our leaders take reports of any type of bullying very seriously and act on this.

> I think EY does a good job on the topic of bullying. I think they act quickly, regularly communicate how you can get help and I believe it would be taken seriously if I ever experienced anything like that. In all my time at EY, I haven't seen or experienced problems myself, and am proud to work here.

> " My overall experience has been a positive one and I am confident my team leaders would be supportive in addressing bullying if it happened. "

Others disclosed that they had experienced a range of bullying behaviours. For example, people shared that being repeatedly excluded from work assignments, or having information held back from them, were common forms of bullying in the firm. The Review Team also heard that bullying was rarely challenged by colleagues or leaders due to the fear of negative career consequences. Comments from participants included:

> We say we have zero tolerance of bullying and harassment but that's not true.

> A lot of people left because of the poor culture, particularly bullying.

> I got good feedback from a client, but when I highlighted some specific negative cultural issues with specific service lines, I was side-lined for 9 months. There are cliques and you really need to be part of the club to fit in or you get bullied and micro-managed.

> There was no bystander intervention at the time the bullying was happening. This is despite training on bystander intervention at the time of on boarding. People don't have the courage to speak. I felt bad for the people that were there, that they had to witness the abuse [of me].

> " Recognition about little things would make a big difference ... Instead, there is often constant criticism which at times feels like bullying. "

A theme raised by participants was that bullying is normalised, and even expected, in many of EY Oceania's workplaces. As described in the survey results above, Participants spoke of these behaviours occurring from the top down, where instances of bullying by Partners and more senior staff was accepted, particularly in circumstances where it is perceived as leading to higher rates of productivity within the team:

> There are still some people with terrible tempers, and it is accepted that they have those and they take it out on people ...One Partner is very unreasonable and rude and I will tell them they are being rude. They will apologise but do it again and again. As it is a Partner there is no room to do anything other than raise it with the person.

> When I came back in [a particular year] I was on the receiving end of scary and intimidating behaviours by some Partners. ...[B]ehaviours when you look at them holistically, they can create a culture of fear.

> Bullying happens in this place, and you can fall out of favour really quickly. People get driven so hard on work hours or loaded up with work they can't attend events. Some people are blatantly not invited to team events and are isolated and excluded from work opportunities. Because of the hierarchy, no one speaks up or can do anything about it, so this all continues until you resign.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

This situation has been tolerated for a lot longer than it should have – for years. I have taken on a person from that team – she has PTSD from bullying – the kinds of things the Partner said are designed to undermine the person. It has taken Partners to make complaints to create change.

I definitely saw bullying by more senior staff, stuff like lots of micromanaging, completely unreasonable demands and overloading people with work and then giving them bad performance feedback after they set them up to fail. There were a couple of people in my section who were notorious for treating people badly and throwing staff under the bus, but it would be ignored by the Partners and they would turn a blind eye because these people were high performers, especially when it came to delivering the margins Partners wanted.

Participants identified that they experienced bullying behaviours which were often excused or normalised as 'performance management'. This is reflected in the 14% or one in seven EY Oceania workers who, in the survey, did not agree their manager or direct supervisor understood the difference between bullying and performance management. Many participants highlighted the way in which the current feedback and performance processes contribute to the risk of bullying:

> The way that performance is measured and the economic structure of EY means that certain teams are managed in a particularly strict way which can lead to bullying and they are not psychologically safe teams. There can be a feeling of ownership over you perpetuated from the top.

I worked for a Partner who was a bully. He wrote nasty emails, was abusive and never supported me. He bullied and yelled at me. He clearly didn't like me. He gave me a bad rating.

One of the challenges working in a high-performance culture is balancing giving firm, reasonable feedback, and knowing when it goes too far and has stepped over the line. We're not very good at that or providing positive feedback to people.

I confided in my manager that I was seeing a mental health professional and they put it in my performance feedback that I needed to prioritise my mental health and wellbeing. There's no privacy or confidentiality. Performance feedback is all based on gossip rather than a proper assessment.

Bullying often takes the form of exclusionary behaviour. Managing underperformance is not always done well.

My motivation is fear. I'm scared people will look down on me with high expectations and I'm fearful that my career could be affected by poor feedback on performance.

> The culture is of a lot of feedback and criticism in the name of high performance. There's a high level of scrutiny all the time to the point you are always second guessing yourself.

The Review heard about the impact of bullying behaviours where participants spoke of suffering anxiety, panic attacks and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), feelings of isolation and exclusion, and the experience of not feeling safe in the workplace:

The thing that I wanted to bring to the review is the experience of someone who dealt with sexual harassment, bullying and mental health issues in the workplace. I don't want anyone else to have this experience. It took so much from me. I won't ever be the same person again. It was all preventable.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

"

My team member was hospitalised a few times after bullying by a key client who is volatile and problematic.

"

During my first year working at EY, I ended up on anxiety meds from the pressures and stress to perform and the burnout. You can't really afford to be sick or to have a bad day at work because you're still kind of seen as weak and get a bit isolated, and then you are playing catch up on your performance indicators.

My new manager started screaming at me in a meeting because I was two minutes late, 'if you aren't ready at 9.30 what are you doing?'. The next morning, I was so anxious and ended up being anxious every day.

I also experienced bullying from a director, who was well known to be a bully. She actually told me, 'I make people cry'. She kept threatening to give me bad feedback. I wonder though [why] everyone knew she was a bully and she was still getting roles.

I had an issue with a female manager who was a bully. I, and others, complained about her behaviour and nothing happened. Bullying and deeply negligent behaviour. She was in charge of a team that had serious mental health issues but did nothing. Her behaviour was like death by a thousand cuts. Micro-aggressions. Constantly putting you down. I would have full on panic attacks. Someone [was] bought in to support her team because of the wellbeing concerns. There is no way they can say there is no awareness of her behaviours.

4.3 Racism

A workplace free from racism is essential for creating a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels respected, safe and empowered to contribute. In recent years, movements such as Black Lives Matter, have shone a light on the prevalence of racism across society, including in the workplace.

In Australia, under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) racial discrimination and racial hatred is unlawful. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Human Rights Act 1993 similarly provides that racial discrimination is against the law. According to the *International Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination*[41], the term "racial discrimination" refers to "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".

Racism in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand manifests at the interpersonal level (between people) and at the structural level (in organisational policies, practices and systems). It is important to note, that racism may not be overt but can be subtle, including being embedded in the structures and system of an organisation where people who do not fit the dominant group lack access to opportunities and networks, and do not thrive to the same extent. It can also include a failure to acknowledge the lived experiences of certain groups, through for instance, bias and stereotyping.

Racism in the workplace can take many forms, such as jokes or comments that cause offence or hurt, name-calling or verbal abuse, harassment or intimidation, and commentary that reinforces negative stereotypes or inflames hostility towards racialised groups that are marginalised. Racism can be intentional, or unintentional, conscious or unconscious. Racism can also take the form of unfair treatment of people on the grounds of race.[42]

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41 United Nations General Assembly 1969 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination at https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/UNTS/Volume%20660/v660.pdf
42 Australian Human Rights Commission "Racism" at https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12083

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

The 2020 Diversity Council of Australia's research report on Racism at Work included a survey of 1,547 workers from various sectors and organisations across Australia.[43] The survey found that 93% of respondents believed that Australian organisations needed to take action to address racism and only 27% said that their organisations were proactive in preventing workplace racism.[44]

Like other forms of discrimination, racism is rooted in systems of unequal power relations and privilege. Power is about who has access to resources, rights, opportunities and influence. Privilege, in this context, refers to the advantage, benefits and power that individuals or groups acquire because of their relative social position or identity. In Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand societal and organisational structures have generally served to provide white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men with advantages and access to power.

Systems of power and privilege in workplaces are entrenched in many ways. These include who has voice and influence; how merit is defined; whose work is visible and invisible; what kinds of experience and contribution are most valued; whose 'world view' is seen as the norm; as well as who benefits from opportunities and the kinds of life experiences that underpin workplace practices and policies.

Racism does not always target a specific person and is often not intended to cause any offence or harm. The lack of intent, however, does not minimise the impacts of racism which can be significant and long-lasting. For individuals who experience racism, it can affect their physical and mental health. For organisations, racism left unaddressed creates a lack of psychological safety, erodes trust and stifles creativity and innovation. One participant who spoke to the Review about the impact of racism on motivation in the workplace stated:

> *Racism sets an invisible block in your head. It saps motivation because you know that no matter what you do it won't be recognised or acknowledged. Why am I struggling and working so hard if it's not appreciated?*

4.3.1 Survey insights

Survey participants were provided a definition of racism and asked about their experiences of racism while working at EY Oceania. They were asked to consider experiences at the office, client offices or sites or at any other time while engaged in work or work-related travel, events, engagements or functions.

Experiences of racism have been calculated based on responses to a general question about having experienced racism combined with people who agreed that they had experienced specific behaviours defined as racism. This ensured consistency in understanding the types of behaviour that constitute racism.

Overall, just under one in ten people (8%) indicated they had experienced racism in the last five years, with no difference observed on the basis of gender (7% of men and 8% of women). Experiences of racism were especially prominent among those who did not provide their gender when asked, with one in four (25%) indicating they had experienced racism in the last five years.

The survey also collected demographic data to understand the specific groups who were more likely to experience racism. The Review Team notes that methodologies to measure experiences of racism are evolving, and that there are limitations to commonly used classifications and definitions used such as ethnicity, country of birth and language spoken at home. In reporting the results of the survey to understand experiences of racism, the Review Team have not sought to establish categories of those that have experienced racism (such as people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds), but instead have reported experiences of racism based on the specific self-reported ethnic and cultural identities of survey respondents, based on current ABS classifications. The Review Team recognises that some classifications around ethnicities used in this methodology may be understood as nationalities rather than ethnicity.

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43 Diversity Council of Australia 2020 Racism at Work: How Organisations Can Stand Up to and End Workplace Racism; Infographic available at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/infographic_racism_at_work_final_1.pdf
44 Ibid.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

People who identified as Indian (16%) or Chinese (15%) or Māori (21%) were more likely to have experienced racism in the last five years at EY Oceania, as were people whose religion is Hinduism (18%) or Islam (17%). Findings about experiences of racism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not been reported numerically, to protect confidentiality given the lower numbers of respondents.

However, we note that experiences of racism were reported in the survey and listening sessions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at EY Oceania. Experiences of racism were also higher for those who chose not to disclose their ethnicity (18%) or religion (19%). This suggests that people who experience harmful behaviours may be concerned about sharing this specific demographic information.
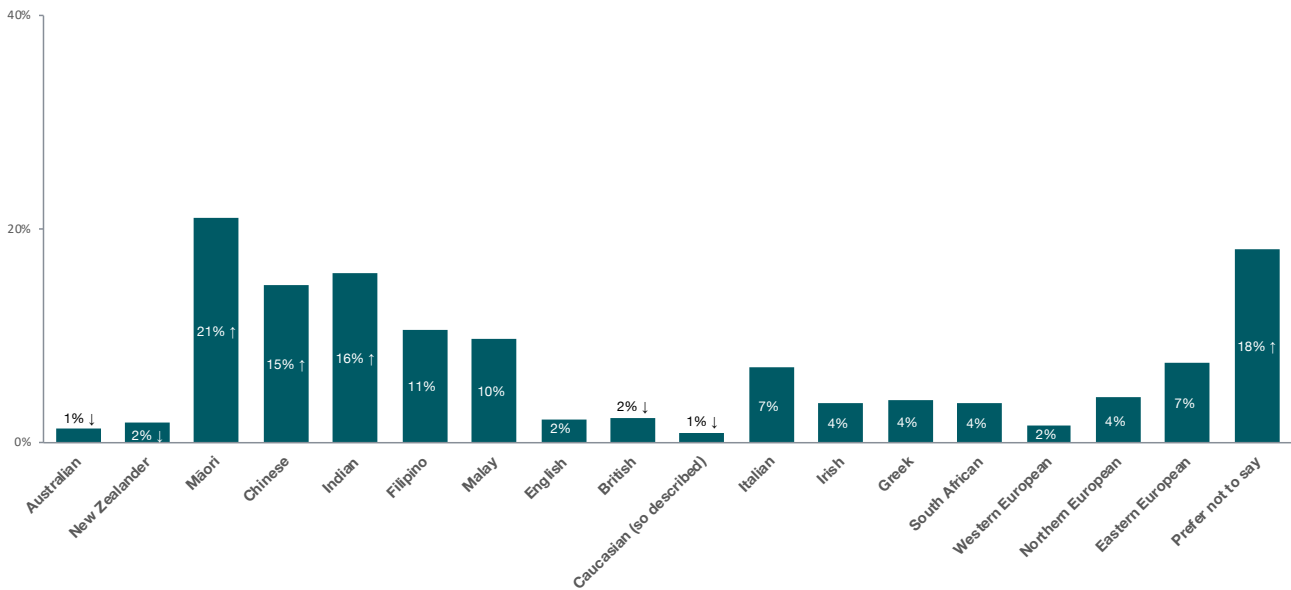
Figure 17: Experience of racism in the last five years at EY Oceania by (self-described) ethnicity (%) *Q: In the last 5 years, have you personally experienced racism while working or engaging in work-related activities for EY Oceania? Q: In the last 5 years at EY Oceania, have you experienced any of the following whilst working or while engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.
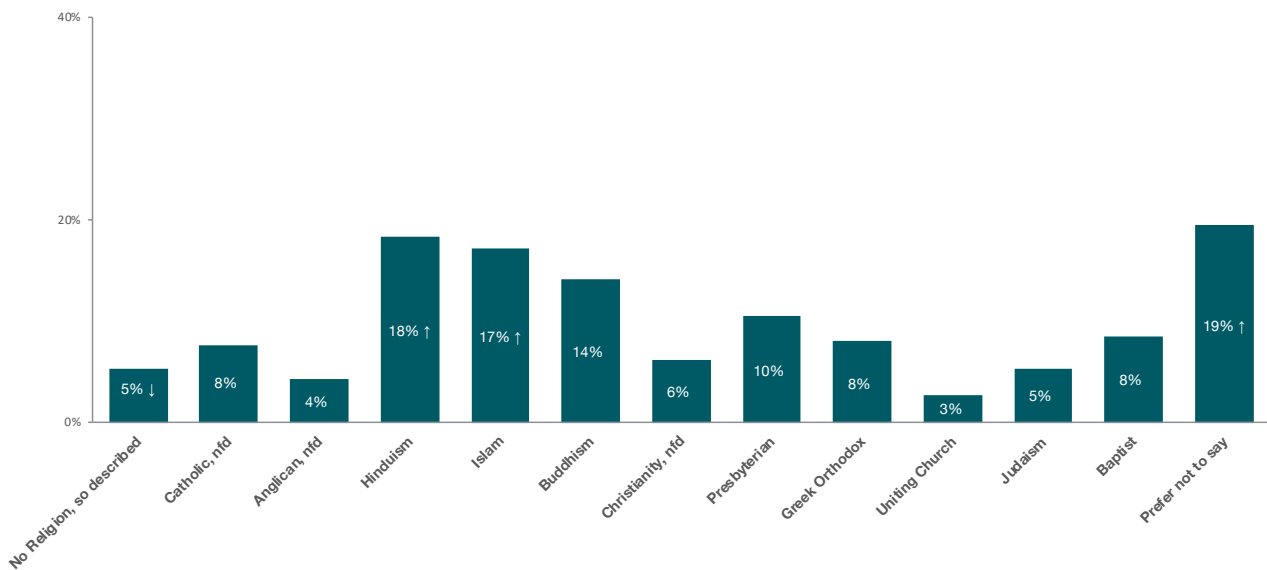
Figure 18: Experience of racism in the last five years at EY Oceania by religion (%) *Q: In the last 5 years, have you personally experienced racism while working or engaging in work-related activities for EY Oceania? Q: In the last 5 years at EY Oceania, have you experienced any of the following whilst working or while engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

Those who speak a language other than English at home were more likely to have experienced racism (13%), especially those who speak Arabic (35%), Tamil (23%), Cantonese (21%), Hindi (19%), or Mandarin (13%).

All survey participants were shown a list of racist behaviours and asked to indicate which of them they had experienced in the last five years. Māori people were most likely to have experienced a range of specific types of racism, including:

- 'Your view was dismissed because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (9% compared to 2% overall);

- 'Having racist slang used to describe you' (8% compared to 2% overall);

- 'You were excluded from meetings or decisions because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (5% compared to 1% overall); and

- 'Any other form of racism' (18%, compared to 3% overall).

People who identified as ethnically Indian also experienced higher rates of specific types of racism than other groups, including:

- 'You were denied a promotion because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (4% compared to 1% overall);

- 'You missed out on a job opportunity because English was your second language' (3% compared to 1% overall); and

- 'You were denied training and career opportunities because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (2% compared to 1% overall).

Australian-born workers who reported their ethnicity as Chinese were more likely to report 'Having racist slang used to describe you' (7% compared to 2% overall). People who speak languages other than English in their household were significantly more likely than others to report having experienced the following behaviours:

- 'Having racist slang used to describe you' (10% of people who speak Tamil compared to 2% overall);

- 'You missed out on a job opportunity because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (8% of people who speak Cantonese compared to 1% overall);

- 'You missed out on a job opportunity because English was your second language' (7% of people who speak Arabic, 5% of people who speak Hindi and 3% of people who speak Mandarin compared to 1% overall);

- 'You were blamed for mistakes because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (9% of people who speak Arabic compared to 1% overall);

- 'You were excluded from meetings or decisions because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (6% of people who speak Arabic, 4% of people who speak Cantonese compared to 1% overall);

- 'You were denied a promotion because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (7% of people who speak Arabic, 5% of people who speak Cantonese compared to 1% overall);

- 'You are/were paid at a different rate because of your ethnic background or cultural responsibilities' (7% of people who speak Arabic, 3% of people who speak Mandarin compared to 1% overall); and

- 'Your appointment to a role or capability for the role was questioned because of your ethnic or cultural background' (11% of people who speak Arabic, 7% of people who speak Cantonese compared 1% overall).

Just over one in three people who had experienced racism (37%) indicated that the most recent incident had lasted for less than one month, while one in ten (12%) indicated that the racist incident(s) had gone on for a year or longer. Less than half of those who had experienced racism (40%) indicated that it was a one-off incident with 35% indicating that the incident(s) had occurred two or more times. The remaining 25% were unsure or preferred to not say.

Racism tended to occur in the workplace (64%) with a further 23% occurring at a work-related social event (note that respondents could select multiple locations). For around two in five people the most recent incident of racism had involved one person only (37%), with a similar but slightly higher proportion indicating it had involved more than one person (43%).

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

When asked for the ethnicity of those involved in the most recent racist incident, almost two-thirds (63%) indicated that those involved were from a different ethnic or cultural background to themselves. People were more likely to experience racism from staff or Partners in more senior positions than themselves or in a position of authority (70%) and one in five experienced racism from someone at the same level of seniority as themselves (19%). The exception is Partners or Associate Partners where 53% of those who had experienced racism indicated that it had involved an EY Oceania member at the same level.

4.3.2. What they told us

Many EY Oceania participants to the Review reported that they had not witnessed or experienced racism at EY Oceania and that they worked in supportive and inclusive teams. They spoke of being given opportunities to progress, and thrive. Additionally, there were some who disclosed that they did not consider racism an issue and that if it occurred it would be dealt with expediently:

I haven't observed or experienced discrimination and racism as a person of colour. I would feel if those issues were known by leadership it would not be tolerated.

I've had great opportunities here. I don't think I've ever experienced any racism directly at EY but that's because I'm seen to be more 'white' than others in the business. I was born in Australia and have the same accent and went to the same schools. I have experienced some racist comments from a client in the past but I have a strong leader and he dealt with it straight away, directly with the client.

I don't think there is any issue around racism – I've worked with people from all different ranks and cultures – there is no difference.

EY is quick to address any issues around racism.

Others shared experiences of racism at EY, including being on the receiving end of overtly racist comments, casual racism and exclusion because of their race:

I've witnessed racist slurs. I have seen a Partner ask one of my Chinese-origin colleagues in front of a whole meeting whether he eats dogs. (My Chinese-origin colleague) said he then was left out and not invited to a social event hosted by that Partner after. The worst part is that he and others felt unsafe to say anything.

> I always heard casual racism such as comments about peoples' names and abilities based on race. People thought I was white so they said stuff to me, but I am half [Asian]. People felt like they were in the 'white zone' so they could be openly racist.

I heard a Partner engage in casual racism against Muslims. It's ok if they hate us but at least at the professional level they should hide it.

There is definitely racism in our team, mostly spoken against the Indian team members. This manifests as exclusion from social events, instant messenger comments.

Not having best in class English does not mean I'm dumb. Because English is not my first language I have noticed the way people talk down to me. They might think I am not smart. Yes, it might take [a native English speaker] 1 min to write a good email but if English is not your first language it might take 2 or 3 mins. I'm not incompetent but English is not my first language so it takes me a little longer. I try not to charge for that extra time.

There can be subtle racism, such as exclusion. There can be a culture of favouritism – particularly for people directly working with them – that is clear in lots of situations, and it is not a culture I like.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

I moved myself to a different team which was more inclusive and understanding of my religious background. My previous team kept holding events around alcohol and neglecting my dietary requirements. I didn't feel like I could be frank with my team leader. I felt cut out as I was the 'only person' with my cultural and religious background. I was also new so felt I couldn't speak out. In the end I went to my counsellor and another people leader to change teams. I was also told I was going to 'have an English issue'.

> As soon as they see you are from outside Australia, you are valued less – you are down-graded for not having local experience.

EY says you are in charge of your own career journey here – but I find that a lot of people from south Asian backgrounds are on the bench more and some have left. I am not surprised because I don't see them being included in the general practice.

Because of the Indian accent [my colleague] is spoken to differently. As an Indian, I can really feel the difference.

Structural racism in the workplace was also reported by some participants, pointing to how organisational structures and processes reinforce the marginalisation of people on the grounds of race. For example, being overlooked for promotion opportunities and expectations to take on a higher workload compared to white people:

We are not overly racist at all. What we are is structurally unequal. The level of effort to get a women of colour promoted is incredible. You get elbowed sideways. If you're a woman of colour it is much worse.

There is structural inequality rather than overt racism – marginalisation of CALD women and men. CALD people won't push as hard as white people. There is no racial diversity at the top. It is all very white.

As an Indian man, it's been very hard for me to reach Partner in Australia. People were promoted over me.

There's definitely racial bias. I am white but I've seen it. One time we had an absolute gun employee who was Filipino. This guy blew everyone out of the water in comparison but he could not get promoted because they thought his English wasn't good enough, so he ended up leaving. You see that type of stuff happen all the time.

I don't think there's explicit discrimination [...] [but there is an] expectation on Asian and Indian women to put in longer hours.

There are cultural expectations around young Asians to work long hours, which is not necessarily expected of locals.

There is a bias towards certain cultural groups perceived as being OK with longer hours and higher workloads.

The management from Directors and below are silently approving or supporting behaviours of this racial separation and bullying at work. It's reflected in the work allocation....The hardest engagements with longer daily working hours expected are mostly allocated to non-Australian born Asians especially those from overseas and [on a] visa sponsored by EY.

It's also an unspoken expectation that Asian background staff are subconsciously expected to be the hard workers who just work the longer hours to meet the tight deadlines. The same standard doesn't apply to non-Asian backgrounds, who are seen and treated as being more relaxed and where delays are acceptable.

> I find that white men receive the most praise for the least effort or work. While anyone who isn't white struggles to be held to the same standard while being overworked and undervalued.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

I haven't observed any bullying or sexual harassment in terms of racism – I haven't observed anything directly but I do worry that we don't have a diverse enough team which contributes to feelings of not belonging for people like me.

The Review heard about intersectional experiences where racially marginalised women, in particular, experience barriers on the grounds of race, as well as barriers because of their gender:

> " Being a woman of colour makes it very difficult to get promoted. "

I've noticed that brown women tend to get set up to fail in that they are given the hard or shit work that no one else really wants and then when they are struggling with the tasks, they are given no support and told that they can't handle it.

The blonde and beautiful get different treatment, but not if you have brown skin.

The concept of intersectionality has emerged as a tool to understand that marginalisation and exclusion can be compounded or be unique in various ways when multiple forms of inequality overlap. Recent research by the Diversity Council of Australia found that culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) women experience compounding effects of sexism and racism at work.[45] Sixty-six percent of women in the study said they felt they had to 'act white' to get ahead. Known as 'code-switching', this behaviour refers:

> *to the ways CARM people in interracial situations adapt their behaviour (e.g. change their speech, appearance, behaviour, expression). They do this to optimise the comfort of the white people they are interacting with and to try to minimise the hance of being discriminated against or excluded.*[46]

Participants shared their experiences of code-switching highlighting the cost to the individual of having to 'fit in' to the dominant culture at EY Oceania, and the way in which the centring of the white people's experience as the dominant frame serves to exclude people:

> *There's nothing really overt in terms of racism, but I feel like EY is 'very white' unconsciously, in that you don't really see people of colour in positions of power and the dynamic feels like you have to behave 'white', like you aren't going to be successful or accepted if you're too loud or outspoken or dress differently, which often applies to people who come from non-Anglo cultures. It's all very subtle and you definitely don't want to be too individual or speak out as a person of colour.*

> *There is an exhaustion to constantly emulate the way of working and being of white Anglo kiwi people. The onus is on me to adhere to the majority.*

Survey insights

Within ethnic and national groups that reported greater prevalence of racism, women were more likely than men to have experienced racism at EY Oceania in the last five years, including for:

▶ Chinese women
   (57% of all experiences of racism for Chinese people);

▶ Filipino women
   (75% of all experiences of racism for Filipino people); and

▶ Māori women
   (66% of all experiences of racism for Māori people).

Experiences of racism were experienced at approximately equal rates by Indian men and Indian women (51% and 48% of all experiences of racism for Indian people, respectively, and 1% were experienced by those who chose not to disclose their gender).

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45 Diversity Council Australia 2023 Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A Framework for (Intersectional) Organisational Action: Synopsis Report. Available at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/carm_women_synopsis_online.pdf
46 Ibid.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

4.4 Experiences of gender inequality, everyday sexism and sexual harassment

While EY Oceania has made important steps to advance gender equality in the workplace, the Review heard that experiences of everyday sexism remain. Participants, including staff and Partners, also shared experiences of sexual harassment. Overwhelmingly, the participants who experienced these behaviours were women.

4.4.1 Gender inequality and everyday sexism

Gender inequality is persistent across all Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand workplaces. In 2022, the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) reported that women across Australia are still under-represented in leadership and men are 1.5 times more likely to hold managerial positions. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Employment New Zealand reported that in 2022 research showed men earn on average 10% more than women. It also reported that women are underrepresented in higher-level jobs, and that many women are employed in industries where more than 80% of the workers are women, which tend to be lower paid occupations.[47]

Gender inequality in the workplace manifests in many ways including, barriers for women to progress their careers and attain leadership roles, barriers for people with caring responsibilities, the gender pay gap and occupational segregation. Everyday sexism is the subtle, seemingly harmless interactions involving language or actions which perpetuate and normalise gender inequality. Examples include:

▶ Insults masquerading as jokes;

▶ Devaluing women's views or voice;

▶ Gender role stereotyping, for example a woman being asked about marriage and having children, or that a woman with caring responsibilities will be unable to progress in her career;

▶ Preoccupation with physical appearance;

▶ Double standards applied to women and men, such as an assertive woman being called 'pushy' while an assertive man is considered 'ambitious' and promoted; and

▶ The use of gendered language such as women being called 'good girl', 'darling', 'sweetie' which infantilises women, can be condescending and suggests that women are not professional actors.

While this behaviour may be viewed as harmless or in good humour or 'how things have always been done', everyday sexism contributes to a workplace culture that excludes or is hostile towards women and normalises behaviour that creates a permissive context for more serious misconduct, such as sexual harassment. The Champions of Change Coalition writes:

> [this] continuum of behaviours and norms …reflect unequal gender power dynamics in the workplace. These behaviours can vary in how they manifest and can occur in isolation or concurrently. Workplace cultures that normalise, tolerate and excuse disrespectful behaviour at one end of the continuum may lead to more serious issues at the other.[48]

Further, the impact of everyday sexism can be both significant and lasting, causing harm to women's self-esteem, their personal relationships, their career aspirations and general health and wellbeing. A workplace culture that tolerates everyday sexism perpetuates negative and outdated gender stereotypes and undermines efforts to advance gender equality.

In December 2022, a new positive duty was introduced into the *Australian Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*. One part of this positive duty is an obligation on businesses, to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, as far as possible, their workers from experiencing sex discrimination, sex-based harassment, sexual harassment, hostile work environments on the ground of sex, and some acts of victimisation.

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47 Employment New Zealand 2022 "Gender Pay Gap" at https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/pay-equity/gender-pay-gap/
48 Ibid.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

Sex-based harassment involves behaviour that is sexist and demeaning in nature, but that is not necessarily sexual. It can happen when a person is degraded, put down or disrespected because of their sex, or a characteristic generally associated with their sex. All Australian employers now have an obligation under federal law to prevent and to eliminate sex discrimination and sex-based harassment in the workplace. Depending on the relevant circumstances, and the level of seriousness, acts of everyday sexism may amount to sex discrimination or sex-based harassment. Further, workplace environments may be hostile to women, even if conduct or language is not directed at a specific woman in the workplace.

In both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand work health and safety laws[49] also operate to protect workers from harm by requiring employers, to identify, manage and control risks.[50] Risks to health and safety arise from people being exposed to hazards. These include psychosocial hazards such as bullying and sexual harassment. This means addressing risk factors for harmful behaviours such as everyday sexism is critical.

The presence of everyday sexism perpetuates gender inequality in the structure of organisations and increases the likelihood of more serious forms of sex discrimination or sexual harassment occurring in the workplace.[51] While everyday sexism was not a universal experience of women participants in the survey and listening sessions, it was a recurring theme in the Review's discussions with these individuals. The Review Team heard that everyday sexism is a key barrier to women's inclusion and progression at EY Oceania.

4.4.2   Survey insights

When asked their views on whether sexism is tolerated at EY Oceania, 85% agreed that sexism is not tolerated. Women were less likely to agree that sexism is not tolerated, with one in five not agreeing with this statement (80% of women either strongly or somewhat agreed, compared to 91% of men) (see Chapter Three: Leadership, Inclusion and Psychological Safety for further discussion of this data).

The disparity in agreement on whether sexism is not tolerated was more pronounced between men and women within several roles at EY Oceania:

▶ Women Partners/Associate Partners (79%) compared to men Partners/Associate Partners (96%);

▶ Women Senior Managers/Associate Directors (75%) compared to men in this role (88%); and

▶ Women Managers/Assistant Directors (77%), compared to men in this role (89%).

Similarly, women were less likely than men to agree that 'sexist comments and sexist jokes are rare in my workplace' (84%, compared to 89% of men). Although Partners/Associate Partners were more likely to agree overall, the difference between men and women was greater amongst Partners (87% of women agreed compared to 97% of men).

The views of non-binary people have not been reported to protect confidentiality, due to low numbers of non-binary respondents in the survey. A substantial number of people chose to not disclose their gender in the survey, and this group was less likely to agree compared to the EY Oceania people overall that sexism is not tolerated at EY Oceania (73%) or that sexist comments and jokes were rare in their workplace (73%).

4.4.3   What they told us

Some participants felt supported as women within the business, including as working parents, and that attitudes towards women had improved in recent years:

> " Attitudes have changed towards women, flexibility and parental leave .... Men are now increasingly taking parental leave. "

Partners are very empathetic with my situation being a single mum.

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49 Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth), *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015* (NZ).

50 Safe Work Australia "Model WHS Laws" at https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation/model-whs-laws

51 Bobbitt-Zeher, D. 2011 "Gender Discrimination at Work: Connecting Gender Stereotypes, Institutional Policies, and Gender Composition of Workplace" *Gender & Society* 25(6), 764-786 at https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211424741

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

EY did really well on parental leave and promoting women when they were on maternity leave and stuff like that. Having said that, I did always think that having children at EY and being successful is not really doable and is not something I would do [have children] working there because of the amount of work that you're expected to get through and there's no real leeway given to working parents.

I never felt discriminated against as a woman. In fact, I got great opportunities. I do know in some other areas there was a boys' club culture.

From what I can see in my team it is mainly women's leadership in consulting, and that holds men to account.

> " I have felt very supported as a woman, and a lot of effort is put into supporting women who are performing. "

Women are treated equally to everyone else. There are no issues around being held back as a woman.

The Review also heard a strong theme about women being unable to progress to senior and leadership roles within the organisation. Participants spoke of the lack of women in those roles that "reflected the attitudes of senior men in the organisation" and a "culture of not supporting women," particularly those with caring responsibilities, to progress and lead:

The pathway for Partner works well for the male breadwinner patriarchal model, working full time. Most Partners have stay at home wives supporting that model. There is not much tolerance of different life experiences.

Up until Director level I've had equal opportunities as males at EY. But after this level it's a different ball game.

Women are underrepresented among Partners which also makes it difficult.

The only thing I would add is that there seems to be less gender diversity at the top of Financial Services and there tends to be less females staying as long or progressing past a certain level of middle management compared to the CORE business. That's an area we probably need to consider.

The Directors and Partners are all mainly men. They're big drinkers. As a consultant you have to sit there and laugh, even if they are touching you on the waist.

There is a sense that it won't be possible to do leadership roles and motherhood. One Associate Director joined part-time and moved to full time because she couldn't make it work. The juniors were watching to see how it could work and saw that it was not possible.

There's some extremely awful, gendered language that gets used by Partners. I've heard them describe clients as being like their wives and it's extremely demeaning to women. Again, they are so out of touch with the people they are meant to be leading and inspiring.

A further, consistent theme emerged of women being unable to thrive to the same extent as men in EY Oceania workplaces. Women workers identified several common challenges they face in their workplace, including achieving promotions; discrimination related to pregnancy, children and caring responsibilities; being subjected to everyday sexism; and feeling as though they have to work harder than their male counterparts for the same recognition:

I was the only single mum in my area when I started. I felt stigmatised, having to take my child to a lot of medical appointments. My Partner was always saying 'how will you make up the time?'.

Everyday sexism happens. I was in a team where the seniors referred to all the junior women as 'the girls'. It made everyone uncomfortable and created a weird environment.

You experience backlash. "Women are stupider than men because its scientifically proven that testosterone makes you smarter." I took that comment to a Partner, and he said "Please, not the women stuff, today."

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

There are day to day comments like "we keep hiring more women and they just go on maternity leave." "We have brought in a man to sort us [women] all out." In this space, leadership is not visible.

> " I see everyday sexism in isolated instances. For example, women doing the softer things. Women are always asked to get the coffee. "

I feel that I have to work twice as hard than a man to get promoted. It's hard to be taken seriously.

I refuse to believe that sexism did not play a role in the female Partners leaving. This needs investigation. There are some really low performing male Partners.

There was sexism with certain tasks given to women, such as minute taking etc. They would even ask senior women to take minutes.

There's a double standard around excusing anger etc. from men compared with women. You know they'll just say, "he's just having a stressful day."

I think I'd probably be taken more seriously if I was a man. The condescension and patronising tone wouldn't happen to a man. You have to work harder as a woman to be taken seriously.

My Senior Director is constantly making sexist jokes and inappropriate comments. It's well known but nothing is ever done.

Survey findings on perceptions of culture and inclusion at EY Oceania support this theme, with men consistently reporting more positively about EY Oceania culture than women. Men who are Partners are most likely to hold positive perceptions of culture and inclusion (see Chapter Three: Leadership, Inclusion and Psychological Safety), suggesting that women face more barriers to inclusion at EY Oceania than men, and that these barriers may not always be visible to senior men in the organisation.

4.5 Sexual harassment

The United Nations defines sexual harassment as:

any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the opposite or same sex.[52]

In Australia, there are both federal and state/territory laws that prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace or in connection with work. Importantly, some types of sexual harassment (for example, sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking, coercion into performing sexual acts or obscene communications) may also be criminal offences. While the statutory definitions are different, Aotearoa New Zealand also prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. This is achieved by the application of laws operating across employment, human rights, and workplace health and safety jurisdictions.[53]

Sexual harassment can take many forms. It is not always obvious, repeated or continuous. It can include one-off incidents, or it can include a pattern of behaviour that makes the working environment uncomfortable or threatening in a sexually hostile way. Examples of sexual harassment include:

- ▶ inappropriate physical contact;
- ▶ intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance;
- ▶ sharing or threatening to share intimate images or film without consent;
- ▶ unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing;
- ▶ repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates;

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52 UN Women 2013 "Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority" at https://www.un.org/womenwatch/uncoordination/antiharassment.html
53 Employment Relations Act 2000 (NZ), *Human Rights Act 1993* (NZ), *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015* (NZ).

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

- sexually suggestive comments or jokes that offend or intimidate;

- requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts;

- sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts;

- actual or attempted rape or sexual assault;

- being followed, watched or someone loitering;

- sexually explicit comments made in person or in writing, or indecent messages (SMS, social media), phone calls or emails—including the use of emojis with sexual connotations;

- sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body;

- unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that occurs online or via some form of technology—including on virtual meetings;

- inappropriate staring or leering; and

- repeated or inappropriate advances on email or other online social technologies.[54]

The new positive duty introduced in Australia into the federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), discussed above, places an obligation on organisations and businesses to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, as far as possible, their workers experiencing sexual harassment, including from third parties, such as clients (on or off-site) who encounter workers in connection with their work.

In Australia, the 2022 Australian Human Rights Commission national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces found that 1 in 3 people had been sexually harassed at work in the previous five years (41% of women and 26% of men).[55] In Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Kāhui Tika Tangata, New Zealand Human Rights Commission released the report Experiences of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand (2022).

The report found that 38% of women had experienced sexual harassment in the previous five years.[56] These reports, along with a range of recent reviews and studies which have documented sexual harassment within various organisations around the globe, have found that while people of all genders experience sexual harassment, women are predominantly the victims and survivors of sexual harassment and men are predominantly the harassers.[57]

The impacts of sexual harassment and sexual harm can be profound and long-lasting. They include significant physical and psychological impacts, such as anxiety, depression, fear, shame, headaches, sleep disorders, weight loss or gain, nausea, lowered self-esteem and sexual dysfunction. There are also costs to a victim and survivor's career, including job loss, decreased morale, decreased job satisfaction, decline in performance, increased absenteeism and damage to interpersonal relationships at work. US research has found that both women and men have experienced career fallout and job changes because of sexual harassment in their workplace.[58]

4.5.1 Survey insights

Survey participants were provided a definition of sexual harassment and asked about their experiences of sexual harassment while working at EY Oceania. They were asked to consider experiences at the office, client offices or sites or at any other time while engaged in work or work-related travel, events, engagements or functions.

Approximately one in ten (10%) indicated they had experienced sexual harassment while working or engaging in work-related activities in the last five years. Experiences of sexual harassment were more common for women, with 15% indicating they had experienced sexual harassment in the last five years compared to 6% of men. It is noted that the experiences of non-binary people have not been reported to protect confidentiality, due to the low numbers of non-binary respondents in the survey.

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54 Respect@Work "Defining Workplace Sexual Harassment" at https://www.respectatwork.gov.au/individual/understanding-workplace-sexual-harassment/defining-workplace-sexual-harassment

55 Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 Time for respect: Fifth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces at https://humanrights.gov.au/time-for-respect-2022

56 Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission 2022 *Experiences of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Nationwide Survey for Te Kāhui Tika Tangata the Human Rights Commission* at https://tikatangata.org.nz/cms/assets/Documents/Experiences-of-Workplace-Bullying-and-Harassment-in-Aotearoa-New-Zealand.pdf

57 See, eg, McDonald, P. 2012 "Workplace Sexual Harassment 30 Years on: A Review of the Literature" *International Journal of Management Reviews* 14(1) 1-17 at https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00300.x; Hersch, J. 2015 "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace' *IZA World of Labor* 188 http://dx.doi.org/10.15185/izawol.188; Pina, A., Gannon, T. A. and Saunders, B. 2009 "An Overview of the Literature on Sexual Harassment: Perpetrator, Theory, and Treatment Issues" *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 14(2) 126-138 at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2009.01.002

58 Edison Research 2018 Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: #MeToo, Women, Men, and the Gig Economy at http://www.edisonresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Sexual-Harassment-in-the-Workplace-metoo-Women-Men-and-the-Gig-Economy-6.20.18-1.pdf

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

Men (6%) ↓   Women (15%) ↓

Figure 19: Experience of sexual harassment at EY Oceania in the last five years by gender (%) *Q: Thinking about your time at EY Oceania over the last 5 years, have you personally experienced sexual harassment while working or engaging in work-related activities? Q: In the last 5 years at EY Oceania, have you experienced any of the following behaviours in a way that was unwelcome while working or engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Young women were more likely to experience sexual harassment while at work, with almost one in five aged between 18 and 35 years reporting at least one experience of sexual harassment in the last five years (19% of women aged 18-24 years compared to 6% of men, and 18% of women aged 24 and 34 years, compared to 7% of men).

Other groups that were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in the last five years included people with disability (18%) and those who identify as LGBTQI+ (21%).

When asked about having experienced specific sexual harassment behaviours, around one in ten women indicated that they had experienced intrusive questions about their private life or comments on their physical appearance (9%) or had felt offended by sexually suggestive comments or jokes (8%).

The most commonly mentioned location where sexual harassment had occurred was at a work-related social event (51%), followed by in the workplace (39%). When interpreting results, it is important to note that just over one in ten workers who had experienced sexual harassment did not provide a response to the question (12%), with this proportion increasing to around one in five for men (19%). This may reflect a lack of psychological safety in relation to disclosing details of their experience of sexual harassment through the survey.

Less than half of those who had experienced sexual harassment (42%) indicated that it was a one-off incident with a similar proportion (45%) indicating that the incident had occurred two or more times. One in five people who had experienced sexual harassment (21%) said more than one person was involved in their most recent incident, while over three in five (68%) indicated that only one other person was involved.

Over four in five women (85%) indicated that the most recent incident was by men only, with few indicating the incident was initiated by women only (4%). The incidents experienced by men were almost equally initiated by men only (34%) and women only (32%).

The most recent incident of sexual harassment was more likely to have involved a person in a more senior position (62% overall), rather than someone at the same level (19%) or at a lower level (12%) than the respondent. For example, Partners were more likely to have experienced harassment by other Partners (64% compared to 17% overall), Senior Managers or Associate Directors by Executive Directors or Associate Partners (11% compared to 3% overall), and those below manager level by graduates (11% compared to 6% overall) or by staff, assistants, associates, or senior associates (16% compared to 10% overall).

Women (68%) were more likely than men (50%) to experience a sexual harassment incident that involved a person in a more senior position or other position of authority. Although not statistically significant (noting a smaller sample size), more women (8%) had a client involved in the most recent incident (compared to 1% of men).

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

	Total	Men	Women
Unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering, or kissing	3	2 ↓	5 ↑
Inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated	1	1 ↓	5 ↑
Sexual gestures, indecent exposure, or inappropriate display of the body	1	1	1
Sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended	5	2 ↓	8 ↑
Seeing or being sent sexually explicit images and videos, cartoons, drawings, photographs, or jokes that made you feel offended	1	0 ↓	1 ↑
Repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates	1	0 ↓	2 ↑
Intrusive questions about your private life or comments on your physical appearance that made you feel offended	6	3 ↓	9 ↑
Indecent phone calls, including someone leaving a sexually explicit message on voicemail or an answering machine	0	0	0
Sexually explicit comments made in emails, SMS messages, or on social media	1	0 ↓	1 ↑
Repeated or inappropriate advances on email, social networking websites, internet chat roomsor other online platforms	1	0 ↓	2 ↑
Sharing or threatening to share intimate imagesof you without your consent (e.g. images or video of you involving sexual activity or nudity)	0	0	0
Inappropriate physical contact	3	2 ↓	5 ↑
Being followed, watched, or someone loitering nearby	1	0 ↓	2 ↑
Requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts	0	0	1
Inappropriate commentary, images or film of you distributed on some form of social media without your consent	0	0	0
Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault	0	0	0
Any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature	1	1 ↓	2 ↑

Figure 20: Experience of specific sexual harassment behaviours at EY Oceania in the last five years by gender (%) *Q: In the last 5 years at EY Oceania, have you experienced any of the following behaviours in a way that was unwelcome while working or engaging in work-related activities? Base: All respondents (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Just over half of people who had experienced sexual harassment at EY Oceania said that their most recent experience of sexual harassment had lasted for less than one month. Around one in ten people who had experienced sexual harassment (12%) indicated that the most recent experience had lasted longer than six months. Of note, one in five people who had experienced sexual harassment (19%) preferred not to answer the question related to how long the most recent incident had lasted, with this proportion even higher amongst men (27%).

4.5.2 What they told us

Experiences of sexual harassment were raised by a number of participants. Some participants stated that they had never experienced or witnessed sexual harassment in their workplace:

I definitely haven't seen any cases of sexual harassment or bullying at EY.

At EY I haven't been on the receiving end of bullying or harassment or sexual harassment. However, I keep in mind what other people's experiences are, particularly, as I'm a counsellor.

We used to have a problem with sexual harassment and the treatment of women historically but not now, That's been stamped out.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

Others stated that, where they had witnessed or heard of instances of sexual harassment occurring, EY Oceania dealt with those matters seriously and appropriately:

> In my team, a former Partner went to a strip club during the day and took staff with him. He was sacked.

> " The only time I have been involved in an issue like that was when we had clients sexually harass some of our staff and that was dealt with by EY immediately, very seriously, and appropriately in my view. "

> We had incident of sexual harassment last week at a social event. He was suspended. The investigation happened quickly. He was fired.

> In my many years I've had people raise with me incidents of misconduct but it's been dealt with immediately. That behaviour is not tolerated. Once a colleague experienced sexual harassment from a client. The Partner spoke to the CFO and said the contract would be terminated if it continued.

> I found everyone to be respectful and didn't see any sexual harassment or discrimination, though I'm sure it did exist.

Despite the views outlined above, the Review Team heard of experiences of sexual harassment from participants at various locations, with a number of responses characterising parts of the workplace as a "boys club", where workers who had experienced sexual harassment felt, or were explicitly told, that they should not or could not report these behaviours.

This issue was also highlighted by some participants feeling that there was a lack of accountability for men who engaged in sexually harassing behaviours if they were in leadership positions, senior roles or deemed by the company to be high-value workers:

> I've definitely heard more about these behaviours occurring top-down particularly from male Partners.

> There was a Partner who tapped a colleague on the bum after a presentation saying 'good job'. Other women complained but nothing was done. He is known to have problematic behaviours but nothing is done because he brings in a lot of money.

> It's a boys club culture. From the managers level down they created this environment.

> One Director would attend social functions and say inappropriate things. I felt uncomfortable. He would suggest I liked someone in the team and made it very sexual. I knew the Partners would protect him because he brings in clients. I went to my Partner to say how uncomfortable he made me feel. My Partner said, "your problem. You deal with it."

> A couple of colleagues have experienced blatant sexual harassment, bordering on assault by being touched inappropriately. Complaints have been lodged. One of the perpetrators was known as someone who engaged in that behaviour and we brought him (into EY). There was no flag on the system, and no due diligence was done. They are still in the building now. That's the lack of accountability. The message is that's ok. He is a Partner and part of the boy's club.

> It is very much the Partners, Directors and leaders who are the problem. What is worse is that they are all married with kids.

> EY is pretty good at taking action on things that are really obvious. I haven't really seen any of this and don't think it's a big problem but I know a colleague raised concerns about sexual harassment and swift action was taken by a Partner. I would say the exception to that though is if the concerns are about someone who is very valuable to the company, especially a Partner. Then it's most likely they will be protected because revenue drives the company.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

The Review also heard a number of accounts from women who experienced sexual harassment and sex-based harassment from EY Oceania clients. Some women also identified difficulty reporting these situations to senior staff, particularly in circumstances where there was a power imbalance between themselves and the client, or where they were concerned that reporting would impact a client relationship:

> I had a bad experience on an engagement where the Director on the client site would call me into the office and run 'welfare checks'. There was no black and white issue for me to raise. General questions as to why I'm not my bubbly self, coupled with inappropriate comments and sexualised jokes in front of my Senior Manager. Senior leaders on that account were all aware of these issues. When I raised it, they said, 'oh please don't make this an HR issue'.

> I previously had a situation where a client was asking young colleagues out but there is no way to navigate these issues.

> I had an experience where a client was flirty and handsy at a social event. We took it to the leadership team, and it was dealt with.

> We talk about workplace safety and what we can do to keep each other well. But a lot of the time we aren't even in the office. Our experience depends on the client. This client would say misogynist things., like 'If we don't get this done, I'll get bitch slapped'. He would treat women badly and be disrespectful. I couldn't say anything to anyone because I was new and the junior person on the team. There is a power imbalance with clients too.

The Review heard from participants about the detrimental impact of sexual harassment on their capacity to work, their working relationships with colleagues, and on their mental health:

> The sexualised comments used to make me cry. Now I am angry.

> As they are losing people, they are hiring anyone, including people who sexually harass. I found out guys in our team are ranking women who they would like to fuck. This includes details about women's bodies and their experiences. It was deeply distressing to know that my team members were thinking of me in this way.

> As a young woman, I see a lot of opportunity particularly as they are increasing women in leadership. But the sexual harassment impacts me.

> After my experience [of sexual harassment] the whole organisation felt so hypocritical, especially with all their focus on gender equality and good culture.

Participants also raised concerns about a lack of understanding within EY Oceania about what sexual harassment is and its impacts, and expressed the view that the training provided by EY Oceania on the issue is ineffective:

> There is a lack of understanding on appropriate workplace behaviours.

> Training in sexual harassment has been very basic. It doesn't explain exactly what sexual harassment is. It's not clear enough.

> Online training is a tick-box exercise.

> Guys talk about the "hot grads." The bystander training is not really effective. People are not called out on these things.

Together the survey data and listening session insights indicate that where everyday sexism and sexual harassment does occur, it has significant impacts on individuals and teams and presents an organisational risk for EY Oceania.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

4.6 Experiences of exclusion for specific groups

4.6.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

The workplace experience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is marked by significant barriers to inclusion and equality, stemming from the ongoing impacts of colonisation and dispossession. Across Australia, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have faced systemic and institutional barriers that have resulted in entrenched disadvantage in employment. This includes disparities in employment rates, career advancement, and wages compared to non-Indigenous Australians. According to the Prime Minister's most recent Closing the Gap report, the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people aged 15-64 years who are employed is 49% compared to 75% of non-Indigenous Australians.[59]

A 2020 report on the experience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace revealed Indigenous employees continue to experience significant workplace racism and exclusion, with significant impacts on wellbeing and job satisfaction.[60] This racism manifests in a number of ways, including people being treated unfairly because of their Indigenous background, hearing racial slurs and receiving comments about the way they look or 'should' look as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. The report also found that 28% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people work in culturally unsafe workplaces. These experiences were shown to reduce retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers.[61]

The most recent Inclusion@Work Index found that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers reported the highest levels of exclusion in the workplace. One in two reported experiences of discrimination and harassment and they were twice as likely as non-Indigenous workers to have experienced discrimination and harassment at work in the last 12 months, 50% compared to 23%.[62] A recent survey found the incidence of sexual harassment experienced in the workplace in the last 5 years was higher among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people compared with non-indigenous Australians, 56% compared to 32%.[63]

What they told us

Due to the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey respondents, specific survey data findings are not reported to protect the confidentiality of those survey respondents. However, through the listening sessions, the Review Team heard from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people on the impacts of a lack of visible First Nations people in leadership roles at EY Oceania:

> There are no senior Indigenous leaders. There needs to be a change in the structure of the organisation. We need more diverse leadership.

> The are no role models at senior levels. The most senior Indigenous person is a senior manager. There are no Partners. How are junior workers supposed to look up to anyone?

> We need to value the skill set of Indigenous workers and we need this to come from leadership. The business model doesn't value these skills.

Another theme that emerged from the listening sessions was that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers believed there was no meaningful engagement with cultural awareness and the significance of community:

> I can't put the firm before community. And EY doesn't understand that.

> The way they operate in this machine doesn't align with community. I won't burn my relationships with community.

The listening session with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people showed that there was a lack of understanding by non-Indigenous Australians at EY Oceania of culture and community, and no First Nations representation in leadership. It was also suggested that because of this, EY Oceania would not be recommended by participants as an inclusive and safe workplace to other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and as a result, would have difficulty retaining its Indigenous staff.

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59 National Indigenous Australians Agency 2020 "Closing the Gap Report: Employment" at https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/employment
60 Diversity Council Australia 2020 *Gari Yala Speak the Truth Synopsis Report* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_synopsisreport_web_0.pdf
61 Diversity Council Australia 2020 *Gari Yala Speak the Truth Synopsis Report* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_synopsisreport_web_0.pdf
62 Diversity Council Australia 2022 Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Synopsis Report at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf
63 Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 *Time for Respect: Fifth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces.*

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

The Gari Yala Report into the experience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace strongly emphasised that in order to retain Indigenous staff, organisations must recognise 'identity strain' and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues, cultural safety and inclusion.[64] The Diversity Council of Australia defines identity strain as an "Indigenous person having to work harder to prove that they can do the job, being asked to do something that compromises their cultural identity, or being told to 'tone it down' or be less outspoken about Indigenous issues".[65]

4.6.2 Māori

Māori have a history of experiencing discrimination and systemic exclusion in the workplace in Aotearoa New Zealand due to the ongoing structural inequalities as a result of colonisation. A recent study of Māori and Pasifika people in Aotearoa New Zealand found that only 6.4% of Māori employees reported experiencing no discrimination in the workplace.[66] The research found that workplace discrimination manifested as making jokes or negative commentaries about people of their cultural and ethnic background; experiencing stereotypes about their culture or ethnic group which dictated how they were treated; feeling actively hindered in their roles due to their background; not getting enough recognition; and being looked down upon if they practiced cultural customs.

Discrimination and exclusion have significant impacts on Māori, including higher job stress, job anxiety and job depression, as well as a decline in job satisfaction and work engagement. A recent study found that Māori income is 10% lower than Aotearoa New Zealand Europeans, with Māori over-represented in all low-income groups. Supportive workplace cultures are critical for buffering the negative impacts of discrimination.

Survey insights

As noted earlier in this chapter, Māori were found to experience racism at higher rates than any other group at EY Oceania, with more than one in five (21%) reporting an experience of racism at EY in the last five years, and approximately one in seven (16%) in the last 12 months.

They were also less likely to agree that 'racist jokes and comments are rare in my workplace' (61% compared with 87% overall) and that 'racism is not tolerated' (70% agreed, compared with 88% overall)

Fewer than half of Māori agreed that EY Oceania is 'inclusive of people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander and/or Māori background' (48%, compared with 69% overall), and that 'complaints about bullying, sexual harassment and racism are taken seriously' (48%, compared to 67% overall).

What they told us

The Review heard from Māori at EY Oceania on their experiences in the workplace, including the cultural and technical knowledge they brought to the organisation and their experiences of inclusion and belonging:

> In theory, Māori values align with EY's people values. There are a huge number of champions and allies, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Both Māori and pākehā staff highlighted the particular strengths in EY Tahi, the Māori-led and Māori-resourced firm within EY Oceania:

> EY Tahi is a space that is really successful. It demonstrates that if you are really open and willing, that culture can grow from strength to strength. (The partners in EY Tahi) provide so much support for junior staff and their teams, they really provide a safe space for us to exist, and have built relationships with other partners.

However, several Māori called out a disconnect in the broader firm, whereby Māori knowledge is used to secure work, and indeed is particularly central to EY Oceania's ability to secure work for the Aotearoa New Zealand government, but the cultural knowledge Māori staff and Partners bring isn't always valued or resourced.

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64 Diversity Council Australia 2020 *Gari Yala Speak the Truth Synopsis Report* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_synopsisreport_web_0.pdf
65 Diversity Council Australia 2021 "Leading Practice Principles" at https://www.dca.org.au/topics/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/leading-practice-principles
66 Haar, J. 2023 "Perceived Discrimination of Māori and Pacific Employees in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Work and Well-Being Consequences and Testing the Symbolic Interaction Perspective" *Evidence-Based HR*M at https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2022-0064

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

> ❝ A lot of the innovation and solutions in our work come from our Māori bodies of knowledge. But the value of what we are bringing isn't always recognised. ❞

The broader organisation engages with Māori culture on an instrumentalist perspective, not because they see the value inherent in it.

We were doing a proposal, I was (drawing on) my iwi affiliations – sometimes we are selling our Māori-ness. (Our cultural knowledge) is being sold hard as part of every proposal that comes out of this office...but we don't back Māori.

EY Oceania values technical knowledge but it doesn't see and value cultural knowledge.

(Māori get told) 'Your utilisation rate is dropping, you need to stop the DEI stuff.'

They need to stop asking for culture and then dictating what that looks like.

There is something very white, male, competitive, transactional and exclusionary about the culture. It's not a culture that I would want to promote or continue.

Māori also highlighted the cultural load they carry, and the impact it can have:

We carry a heavy cultural load. It includes being a cultural educator on engagement teams and often holding a lot of emotional and cultural space for the learning of others which isn't actually their job. Other examples are being asked to provide an ad-hoc response on work on behalf of all Māori, being called on last minute to perform cultural roles such as karakia and responding to translation requests (noting again that translation is its own role…and is not the job of Māori staff).

We are often coming up against a power dynamic which leaves us feeling exposed and culturally unsafe. We need to make sure that we are wrapping the right support around people.

EY brings Māori in to secure an engagement, or to bring cultural knowledge to a specific component of a project. But they don't resource it appropriately, creating this extra pressure around time required for each engagement.

There's a big burden on Māori staff to explain and bring people together.

Across listening sessions, Māori staff and Partners called for an increase in Māori recruitment and a strong focus on Māori retention:

Coming into EY feels like I've worked backwards in time… When I came to EY Auckland office, I could have walked into NY/Toronto office, what I didn't see is a NZ office, where are the Māori/Pacific faces. It was quite eye opening for me.

4.6.3   Pacific peoples

Pacific peoples[67] have a history of experiencing discrimination and systemic exclusion in Aotearoa New Zealand workplaces. As discussed above, a recent study of Māori and Pacific employees, found that only 4.1% of Pacific employees reported experiencing no discrimination in the workplace.[68] A recent survey conducted by the Aotearoa New Zealand Human Rights Commission, found that 62% of Pasifika people have been racially harassed in the workplace in the last five years.[69]

The experience of discrimination in the workplace has substantial effect on job-related anxiety and depression and highlights that significant damage occurs to Māori and Pacific employees in this context.[70] Inclusive and supportive workplaces are a key element in ensuring job satisfaction and retention for Pacific employees.

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67 In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, 'Pacific peoples' covers peoples from the Island nations in the South Pacific. Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan and Kiribati comprise the eight main Pacific ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. These peoples are referred to collectively as 'Pacific peoples'. Other words that are used in a similar fashion include Pacific Islanders, Pasifika Peoples, Tangata Pasifika and Pacificans.

68 Haar, J. 2023 "Perceived Discrimination of Māori and Pacific Employees in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Work and Well-Being Consequences and Testing the Symbolic Interaction Perspective" *Evidence-Based HRM* at https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2022-0064

69 Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission 2022 *Experiences of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Nationwide Survey for Te Kāhui Tika Tangata the Human Rights Commission* at https://tikatangata.org.nz/cms/assets/Documents/Experiences-of-Workplace-Bullying-and-Harassment-in-Aotearoa-New-Zealand.pdf

70 Haar, J. 2023 "Perceived discrimination of Māori and Pacific employees in Aotearoa/New Zealand: work and well-being consequences and testing the symbolic interaction perspective" Evidence-Based HRM at https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2022-0064

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

What they told us

Due to the small number of survey respondents who identified as Pacific peoples, specific survey findings are not reported to protect the confidentiality of those survey respondents. In the listening sessions, the Review Team heard from Pacific EY Oceania employees on their experiences in the workplace, including the need for representative leadership and cultural awareness training, and also their feelings of safety and inclusion:

> I feel valued and appreciated. As a Cook Islander, I feel safe and looked after.

> Some junior staff feel like their presence is tokenistic and that they're not really listened to.

> We need specific targeted recruitment for Pacific peoples.

> Currently there are all white Partners, but this will change. The next round of Partners should be ethnically diverse, so that there is representation in leadership.

> " Differences in cultural experiences and practices should be part of cultural awareness training and how some of these can come across in a workplace setting. "

> We need specific cultural representation and support so that people know who to reach out to if they're experiencing bullying or discrimination.

> When I came into EY. I was in love with the brand. As a (Pasifika) woman I was drawn to their platform around diversity and inclusion.

4.6.4 People with disability

Around one in five Australians and one in four Aotearoa New Zealanders have some form of disability. A lack of awareness, stigma, and discrimination are key workplace barriers for people with disability. These barriers are even more pronounced for people with disability who also experience overlapping inequalities due to gender, race, LGBTQI+, Indigenous status and socio-economic disadvantage.

Across Australia, workers with disability reported significantly higher levels of discrimination and/or harassment than workers without disability, (45% compared to 22%).[71] People with a disability were also more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in an Australian workplace within the last 5 years than those without a disability (48%, compared to 32% without a disability). Australia-wide, women with a disability with a disability were more likely than men with a disability to have experienced workplace sexual harassment during this period (54%, compared to 38% of men with a disability). Although people with a disability are under-represented in the Australian workforce, they were over-represented among people who have experienced sexual harassment.[72]

Survey insights

Within EY Oceania, people with a disability also reported higher levels of discrimination and or harassment; including being more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in the last five years (18% compared to 10% of people who do not have a disability). People with a disability at EY Oceania were less likely to agree they 'rarely feel excluded' (57%, compared to 74% overall) and fewer than half greed that EY Oceania is 'inclusive of people with a disability' (49%, compared to 66% overall).

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71 Diversity Council Australia 2022 Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Synopsis Report at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf

72 Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 *Time for Respect: Fifth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*.

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

The Review Team heard from EY Oceania people with a disability. The feedback demonstrated that some people with a disability felt supported and did not experience discrimination. There was also discussion about initiatives designed to foster inclusion:

> *As someone with a disability, EY has been great. I have never had a problem with discrimination.*

> *The purpose of the (Disability) Network is for people who identify with a disability, and allies, and carers. We want to educate, activate, and elevate. We want to support inclusion in the workplace.*

"
The Network has very supportive Partners on it some of whom have a disability.
"

> *There's been a general increase in awareness about disability. The piece on leadership really raised awareness.*

The Review also heard from others with a disability who suggested that there was not a culture of openness about having a disability, and that more could be done to support visibility and inclusion in the workplace:

> *After the 3 month internship in the (neurodiverse) program, people are transferred into general teams. ... some neurodiverse people have had terrible experiences beyond the program (i.e. once placed in engagement teams), not because of any one individual but because of the environment and culture in EY. If they don't present the same way (as neurotypical people) it is very hard for them to get the same work as others.*

> *EY needs to make the buildings more accessible.*

> *It's never outright discrimination, just a quiet word, 'maybe we won't put this person on this team, or this engagement'.*

> *Disability is still quite invisible at EY...some people are not comfortable to disclose. EY really likes data but people don't always feel secure about disclosure.*

4.6.5   LGBTQI+ people

There is growing global acceptance that the inclusion of individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTQI+)[73] offers significant advantages for workplaces. While human rights and equality for LGBTQI+ communities is advancing, this community continues to experience discrimination and exclusion in many contexts, including the workplace.[74] This includes in jurisdictions that provide equality before the law.

Recent surveys of Australian workers indicate that LGBTQI+ people experience significant barriers and challenges in the workplace. LGBTQI+ people report significantly higher levels of discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace,[75] (45% compared to 23% of non- LGBTQI+ people).

The incidence of workplace sexual harassment is higher among LGBTQI+ people than those who identify as straight or heterosexual, (46% compared to 31% overall).[76] One US-based study found that 46% of workers identifying as LGBTQI+ say that they are closeted at work; one in five LGBTQI+ workers report having been told or had co-workers imply that they should dress in a more feminine or masculine manner; and 53% report hearing jokes about lesbian or gay people at least once in a while.[77]

A recent study found that LGBTQI+ people are under-represented in corporate environments.[78] Many LGBTQI+ participants in the study working in corporate sectors identified themselves as the sole representative of the LGBTQI+ community within their organisation or team.

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73 LGBTQIA+ is an evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual. See, eg, La Trobe University 2022 "What does LGBTIQA+ mean?" at https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/support/wellbeing/resource-hub/lgbtiqa/what-lgbtiqa-means

74 Bailinson, P., Decherd, W., Ellsworth, D. and Guttman, M. 2022 "LGBTQ+ Voices: Learning from Lived Experiences" *McKinsey and Co*. at https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/lgbtqplus-voices-learning-from-lived-experiences

75 Diversity Council Australia 2022 *Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Synopsis Report* at https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/synopsis_2021-22_inclusionwork.pdf

76 Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 *Time for Respect: Fifth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*.

77 Fidas, D. and Cooper, L. 2018 "A workplace divided: understanding the climate for LGBTQ workers nationwide" *Human Rights Campaign Foundation* at https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/AWorkplaceDivided-2018.pdf

78 Bailinson, P., Decherd, W., Ellsworth, D. and Guttman, M. 2022 "LGBTQ+ Voices: Learning from Lived Experiences" *McKinsey and Co*. at https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/lgbtqplus-voices-learning-from-lived-experiences

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

The experience of being an "only" – the only lesbian, trans person, or another identity – can lead to increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, and may also bring about various other disadvantages. One notable disadvantage is the lack of accessible role models for LGBTQI+ people in the workplace who can provide guidance and support based on shared experiences and identity.[79]

Employers play a fundamental role in advancing LGBTQI+ inclusion in the workplace. Creating a culture of acceptance, increased visibility and inclusivity benefits both LGBTQI+ individuals and the organisation.

Survey insights

Around three quarters of people who identified as LGBTQI+ agreed that EY Oceania is 'inclusive of people who identify as being part of the LGBTQI+ community (compared to 88% overall). A similar proportion agreed that 'homophobia is not tolerated (72%, compared to 87% overall) while four in five agreed that homophobic jokes and comments are rare in my workplace (86% compared to 90% overall).

As with the experience of other marginalised groups, there was generally lower levels of agreement on LGBTQI+ inclusion statements by LGBTQI+ people compared to the broader population, indicating that the lack of inclusion can often be less visible to those that do not experience it.

What they told us

The Review Team heard from LGBTQI+ participants at different levels of seniority. Overall, the responses indicated that there was an accepting culture for LGBTQI+ people at EY Oceania. Participants shared:

I am very proud to work at EY and be a queer person.

If someone made homophobic remarks at EY it would destroy their career.

EY has the intent to embrace diversity and inclusion but when I look at specific initiatives I think there is room to improve. The initiatives are driven by minorities themselves and the heavy lifting needs to be carried by a broader group.

> " I am gay and have always been fully supported and encouraged to be myself. "

However, some LGBTQI+ individuals shared that they did not feel empowered to bring their full selves to work and that they experienced barriers to inclusion. While the participants acknowledged the organisation had a strong commitment to inclusion, some shared that the day to day experience of being LGBTQI+ did not always match up to this commitment:

> " I hear there are a lot of queer and gender diverse people at EY, but they're not in my office. I have no role model or precedent. Being openly gay myself would be rolling the dice on my career. "

There's always going to be a mark against my name because I'm a gay woman. EY is not a safe space for me.

I'm gay so I didn't feel comfortable in the boys' club environment. I felt like they didn't know what to do with me. I was at the firm late. A Partner came in late drinking once. He acknowledged the other men in the team and then couldn't even remember my name. […] It's what happens when there are too many white straight men together.

Being queer is accepted but not celebrated in the organisation. You have to seek out the network and support yourself.

(I think EY) is quite a challenging organisation for gender diverse people, particularly if you come in at a junior rank. I think people end up thinking that they need to fit the mould of everyone else, that the landscape is not that safe.

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79 Bailinson, P., Decherd, W., Ellsworth, D. and Guttman, M. 2022 "LGBTQ+ Voices: Learning from Lived Experiences" *McKinsey and Co*. at https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/lgbtqplus-voices-learning-from-lived-experiences

4. Experiences of harmful behaviours

I wonder about the experience of people who transition while they are working at EY. I think People and Culture is quite supportive but I'm not sure that the rest of the firm is.

"

There's a lot of positive effort and energy in the networks and DE&I, and corporately, the firm fires out all the right (or mostly right) messages – but it's people's day to day, the Partner and colleagues they are working with who have the biggest impact on the lives of LGBTQ people, including our EY experience and our career progression, and frankly this is the area where I think the firm has the biggest work to do....People don't want to come out because of the passive under the radar bullying; if they're getting that from colleagues, their fear is that in end of year round tables people don't speak up for them, or even talk them down, because there is hidden homophobia.

"

4.7 Conclusion

Participants in this Review have shared diverse experiences at EY Oceania. Many EY Oceania people have had positive experiences, sharing that they have experienced the workplace as safe, inclusive and respectful. Others have told the Review Team of their experiences of harm and the toll it has taken on their professional and personal lives. Underlying these experiences are norms and attitudes that serve to justify, excuse or normalise inequality and discrimination.

At the core of experiences shared with the Review Team was a desire for the organisation to build on its strengths but also learn from the harm that has occurred and take concerted action to prevent such behaviour from happening in the future. This requires the organisation and leaders in particular to work collaboratively and continuously to eradicate any workplace harm so that every individual at EY Oceania has the same opportunity to thrive.

Key actions include ensuring leaders and people across the firm have a shared understanding of the impact of harmful behaviours and that they take visible action to address that harm and eradicate those behaviours. Further, ensuring that the organisation educates and creates awareness for all employees at all levels on what constitutes disrespect and harmful behaviours, the impacts and the role that each individual plays in addressing these behaviours in the work environment. As noted in Chapter 3, building leadership capability and addressing systemic barriers for marginalised groups will also be critical for eliminating harmful behaviours.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

5.1 Introduction

Working hours and work intensity play a central role in shaping individual health, satisfaction and productivity as well as team and organisational performance. Long working hours in particular have been consistently linked to poor health outcomes, with working over 50 hours per week increasing the risk of poorer physical and mental health.[80]

Studies have highlighted the phenomenon of overwork in professional service firms, noting that the drivers are both individual and systemic, with individual drivers including desire for progression, status and recognition; and systemic drivers including the increasing competitive and commercial pressures on professional service firms, the regulatory requirements, the increasing demands from clients, and the nature of the business model. Together, these lead to differentiated but increasing demands on junior staff, who may be seeking to secure their position within the firm; on Managers and Directors, who are balancing the need to support and guide junior staff with the imperative to deliver for Partners and clients; and on Partners, who may be seeking to secure or expand their commercial and leadership footprint.[81]

Throughout this Review, EY Oceania people have shared diverse experiences of working hours. Some people, particularly Partners, have shared that they expect to work long hours, and feel that these hours are sufficiently compensated. Likewise, many Partners felt that they have sufficient flexibility over working hours and as such do not feel adversely affected.

For many others, however, long working hours are causing significant distress. Many perceive that the hours they work have already negatively affected their health, and many are considering leaving EY Oceania as a result.

The impact of long working hours is particularly experienced by Managers, Senior Managers, and Associate and Assistant Directors. These staff often feel caught in the middle, trying to deliver high quality work within budget and meet Partner expectations, whilst also trying to lead teams and manage the demands of junior staff.

Consultants, senior consultants and graduates also shared that they felt significant pressure to work long hours and that to challenge expectations was to create a perception that they were 'not up to the task'.

The following discussion draws on the published literature and the lived experience of EY Oceania staff and Partners regarding working hours and overwork and highlights where focussed attention is required to address some of the negative impacts of long working hours.

At a glance:

31% work >51 hours / 11% work >61 hours

▶ Around one third (31%) of people at EY Oceania are working 51 or more hours a week routinely (i.e. at least one week out of every four); approximately one in ten (11%) are working 61 or more hours routinely (i.e. at least one week out of every four)

10% 'part-time' work >51 hours

▶ One in ten (10%) of EY Oceania's people who work 'part time' are working 51 or more hours a week routinely (weekly, fortnightly or monthly)

46% report their health has been negatively impacted as a result of long working hours

▶ A substantial proportion of EY Oceania staff and Partners report experiencing a range of negative impacts associated with their long working hours and experiences of overwork – nearly half of EY Oceania people (46%) report that their health has been negatively impacted as a result of their long working hours and two in five (41%) feel their health will be damaged if they continue to work at this pace

42% are considering quitting as a result of long working hours

▶ More than two in five people are considering quitting their role as a result of their long working hours (42%), in particular, Senior Managers and Associate Directors (47%) and Managers and Assistant Directors (50%)

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80 That study defined long working hours as >55hrs/week Pega, F. et al. 2021 "Global, Regional, and National Burdens of Ischemic Heart Disease and Stroke Attributable to Exposure to Long Working Hours for 194 Countries, 2000–2016: A Systematic Analysis from the WHO/ILO Joint Estimates of the Work-related Burden of Disease and Injury" *Environment International* 154(1), 1-15 at https:// doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2021.106595
81 Lupu, I., Empson, L. 2015 "Illusio and Overwork: Playing the Game in the Accounting Field" *Accounting Auditing & Accountability Journal* 28(8), 1310-40 at http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-02-2015-1984

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

5.2 Long working hours

A review of the research literature shows that what constitutes 'long working hours' is very much subject to debate.[82] Studies reporting the relationship between long working hours and negative health outcomes commonly use more than 50 hours/week work as a long working hours comparison group. The commonly used legal definition of a full-time employee being one who delivers 38 hours of work/week has little relevance in the contemporary workplaces of professional service firms.

Excessive working hours in professional service firms have attracted the attention of media over some years. Reports of deaths attributed to stress, lack of sleep and exhaustion have appeared including a London investment banker who died after he allegedly worked 72 hours without any break.[83]

The experience of long working hours is not just an issue for EY Oceania but for the whole professional services sector. The drivers of overwork are complex and include factors external to the organisation such as tight regulatory deadlines and intense competitive pressure between firms.

The long hours are a real challenge – it is not something EY can fix or make a drastic change on because this is how the whole profession works – the regulators have more requirements, so we have more work. There are resourcing issues, and we need more people, but we can't get more people in different areas.

5.2.1 Survey insights

The majority of the EY Oceania workforce who participated in the survey were contracted to work full time hours (94%), with most of the remainder (5%) working part-time. Only a small proportion (four people) worked as a contractor while ten people did not specify their contracted work hours.

Around two in three people (63%) reported working more than their contracted hours on a weekly (43%) or fortnightly (21%) basis. There were no notable differences in the frequency of working longer than contracted hours based on the gender of the respondent.
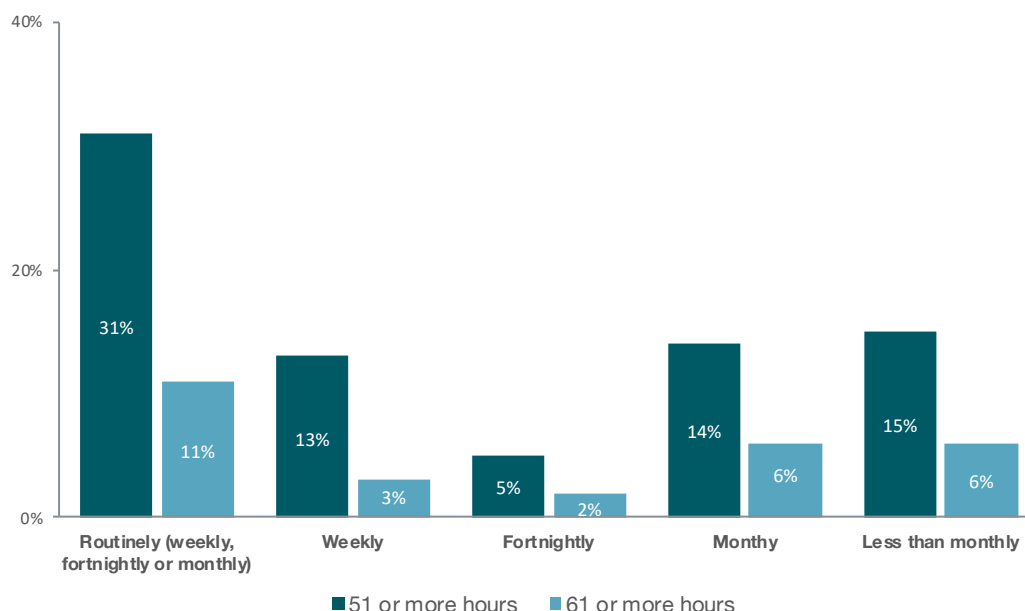
Figure 21: Prevalence of long working hours (%) *Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania in an average or 'normal' work week (including working from home)? Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania during a busy work week (including working from home)? Q: How often do you have busy periods at EY Oceania? Base: All respondents.* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

82 Blagoev, B., Muhr, S. L., Ortlieb, R., Schreyogg, G. 2018 "Organizational Working Time Regimes: Drivers, Consequences and Attempts to Change Patterns of Excessive Working Hours" German Journal of Human Resource Management-Zeitschrift Fur Personalforschung 32(3-4), 155-67 at https://doi.org/10.1177/2397002218791408

83 Ward V: Bank intern Moritz Erhardt found dead after working '72 hours straight'. Sydney Morning Herald 2013. https://www.smh.com.au/business/bank-intern-moritz-erhardt-found-dead-after-working-72-hours-straight-20130821-2sa2i.html

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

EY Oceania people were more likely to indicate that they work more than their contracted hours every week if they belong to the following groups:

▶ People who work in the role of Director or Executive Director (63%), Senior Manager or Associate Director (56%) or Manager or Assistant Director (49%);

▶ People with disability (53%);

▶ People with caring responsibilities (50%); and

▶ Staff and Partners in the Tax Service Line (54%.)

The survey results suggest that many people at EY Oceania are experiencing long working hours at levels that will increase their risk for poor health. Approximately one third (31%) of people at EY are working 51 or more hours in a week, at least one week out of every four.

> More than one in ten people (13%) are working 51 or more hours **every** week, while a similar proportion (11%) are working 61 or more hours in a week at least one week out of every four.

Concerningly, one in ten (10%) of EY Oceania's people who work 'part-time' are working 51 or more hours a week routinely (weekly, fortnightly or monthly).

Long working hours are particularly associated with those in senior roles who are most likely to be working long hours on a routine basis (weekly, every fortnight or every month), including:

▶ Partners or Associate Partners
  • Three in five (62%) are working 51 or more hours a week routinely, and approximately one quarter (24%) are working 61 or more hours a week routinely

▶ Executive Directors or Directors
  • Approximately two in five (40%) are working 51 or more hours a week routinely; and
  • Approximately one in seven (15%) are working 61 or more hours a week routinely

▶ Senior Managers or Associate Directors
  • More than two in five (43%) are working 51 or more hours a week routinely; and
  • Approximately one in six (17%) are working 61 or more hours a week routinely

Staff working in roles below Manager level were less likely to be working long hours, although one in five (22%) of people in these roles reported working 51 or more hours a week routinely (compared to 32% overall). Administrative staff were also less likely to be working long hours (11% were doing so routinely).

|	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
Routinely (weekly, fortnightly or monthly)	32	62↑	40↑	43↑	32	22	11
Weekly	13	40↑	24↑	19↑	12	7↓	4↓
Fortnightly	5	3	1	6↑	6	4	3
Monthly	14	19↑	14	18↑	15	11↓	3↓
Less than monthly	15	16	21	17↑	17	14	2↓

Figure 22: Prevalence of working 51 or more hours by rank (%) *Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania in an average or 'normal' work week (including working from home)? Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania during a busy work week (including working from home)? Q: How often do you have busy periods at EY Oceania? Base: All respondents ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
Routinely (weekly, fortnightly or monthly)	11	24↑	15↑	17↑	12	7	0↓
Weekly	3	11↑	4↑	4↑	3	2↓	0↓
Fortnightly	2	2	1	4↑	3	2	0↓
Monthly	6	11↑	10	9↑	7	4↓	0↓
Less than monthly	6	10↑	11	8↑	6	5↓	0↓

Figure 23: Prevalence of working 61 or more hours by rank (%) *Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania in an average or 'normal' work week (including working from home)? Q: How many hours do you actually work for EY Oceania during a busy work week (including working from home)? Q: How often do you have busy periods at EY Oceania? Base: All respondents ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

Overall, people working 51 or more hours every week was broadly consistent across offices and service lines, suggesting that working long hours is a firm-wide dynamic, rather than being driven by external or regulatory factors associated with particular service lines, or unique dynamics created by individual leaders. However, there were some exceptions where people were more likely to be working 51 or more hours a week on a weekly basis, albeit by a slight proportion (compared to 13% overall):

▶ People working in the Sydney office (16%); and

▶ Staff and Partners in the Strategy and Transactions (17%) and Tax (17%) Service Lines.

5.2.2 What they told us

One of the most consistent themes arising from the listening sessions and survey was that the working hours are too long, with comments including:

80+ hours/week is normal. There's an acknowledgement that the hours are bad but no recognition that there is a problem.

We lose perspective on the hours we are expected to do.

Because the work just never stops. People left but no-one replaced them. I was made to pick up extra work over and over. My hours on paper are 37.5 hrs per week but in reality, as an EA I'm working around 55-60 hrs per week.

Working across time zones is difficult – I'm not sure if EY arranges this so they can maximise the day.

People particularly commented on the periods of intense work, with a perception that these were becoming more frequent, with less 'downtime' (i.e. working normal hours) between. Comments included:

There are examples of team members working until 3am for a month. This is dangerous.

In non-peak, I work 12-hour days except Friday when I finish at 5.30pm.

A good week is 35-40 hours, but intense periods can be 80-hour weeks.

> " [There is an] unwritten expectation for some people to work around the clock. "

Several people noted that the long working hours disadvantage or exclude specific cohorts:

I'm at a disadvantage as a working mum – I can't work the crazy hours that the young people are doing, so I won't be promoted.

Overwork is rewarded and as a parent with young children, I'm not able to dedicate the hours to that.

Returning parents who wish to work flexibly have a hard time being staffed on projects.

For many people, the number of hours is consistent with what they signed up for and what they expect.

Some people also felt that EY Oceania had mechanisms in place to contain working hours. Comments included:

Working hard is not a bad thing, many people including myself like working hard.

For a high-performance focussed organization, the hours align with what I would expect.

EY does all it can to reduce employees working hours.

Several people commented that they felt that hard work and long working hours were 'worth it' given the opportunities for learning, growth and advancement:

I am afforded the opportunity to progress my career rapidly and meaningfully. However, this requires hard work, as it should. I do not begrudge EY for giving me the opportunity to work hard to achieve my strong career goals. I didn't sign up for "easy" and I can leave any time if I don't like it here.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

I kind of work extra hours out of my own enjoyment of my job, learn quickly and outperform my peers.

*I find the questions around working longer hours seemed to imply this is a bad thing. ….
I have happily worked extra hours, taken extra opportunities, and achieved more because of it.*

One person who shared this view also commented that the long working hours enabled them to contribute to achieving results for clients:

In some (many) cases, people who work here know that there is more than a 40-hour work week required, are here to work hard, get paid well, and solve really hard important problems for their clients. I am one of them and have been the entire time I've been at EY.

For some people, working long hours has become part of people's identity with the implicit understanding that being busy is a badge of honour. Over time, this belief can become an organisational norm leading to an environment where working long hours is expected regardless of actual productivity[84] One person commented:

> There's also a sense of being busy as a 'high status'. In this way it is normalised and rewarded.

Many participants told the Review Team that they felt pressured to consistently deliver at an exceptional – and unsustainable – level. One person commented:

Our ELT pushes that we are a high performing team – which sounds like a positive because everyone is good at their job – but it is starting to have negative connotations, because it is used to push everyone's performance even higher, so people are expected to perform to unrealistic expectations. The baseline for performance gets raised and if you don't meet the new higher performing baseline you are seen as not meeting your job, and are underperforming.

5.3 Work Intensity

While long working hours is a significant contributor to a culture of overwork there are other important drivers that intersect with Long Working Hours. Work intensity and the transactional nature of the work can significantly contribute to cultures of overwork.

A high work intensity may result from a combination of factors including:[85]

▶ a results-only only focus leading to no limit on the amount of work done in pursuit of results;

▶ vagueness or ambiguity about the work to be done;

▶ boundaryless work where the boundaries between work and non-work are blurred and the employee works most of the time; and

▶ low control over the quantitative load, where there is an expectation that employees are available to clients (and colleagues) at all times.

For example, the results-only focus and vagueness of the work is reflected in a common view among Danish management consultants that it is the difficult last 5% of the work that provides the greatest value for clients.[86] It is therefore worth spending excessive time on this making the results great. Such an approach can lead to difficulty in determining when an actual assignment is finished and can be one reason for the normalisation of long working hours amongst staff.

The volume and complexity of work assigned can also contribute to a perception of overwork. When individuals have excessive numbers of tasks to handle within a given timeframe, they may feel overwhelmed and perceive their workload as unmanageable, even if the actual hours worked are not excessively long.

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84 Kodz, J., Lain, D., Strebler, M., Rick, J., Bates, P., Cummings, J., Meager, N. 2003 *Working Long Hours: a Review of the Evidence* Department of Trade and Industry at https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/errs16_main.pdf

85 Backlander, G., Rosengren, C., Kaulio, M. 2021 "Managing Intensity in Knowledge Work: Self-Leadership Practices Among Danish Management Consultants" *Journal of Management & Organization*27(2), 342-60 at https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.64

86 Backlander, G., Rosengren, C., Kaulio, M. 2021 "Managing Intensity in Knowledge Work: Self-Leadership Practices Among Danish Management Consultants" *Journal of Management & Organization*627(2), 342-60 at https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.64

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

5.3.1 What they told us

The Review Team heard many comments from individuals at EY about the work intensity. Some people highlighted an overall 'churn' culture:

> *There is insane pressure to churn work which leaves you exhausted.*

> *My team hear the word urgent 40 times per day.*

Others highlighted setting 'unrealistic expectations' for the work can lead to long working hours. These can be a result of unreasonable project deadlines, underestimation of the time required for tasks, or inadequate resource allocation.

> *I work late every night because I was trying to get it right for the client.*

> *A lot of the problems stem from not being firm with clients re unreasonable deadlines.*

Many also commented that EY Oceania is not consistent in managing client expectations:

> *Pressure is driven by clients. Partners don't push back. The attitudes is 'deliver, deliver, deliver'.*

> *Partners do not manage client expectations, and people end up doing 12 hour days, it's very rare to push back….Consultant, senior consultants and managers bear the brunt of the strain.*

Others noted work ambiguity as a key element in driving work intensity:

> *I was working to midnight confused about where I should put my time.*

> *I get very concerned about our junior team members […] Not all managers are clear at setting expectations.*

> *There are unclear expectations especially in projects that are high stakes – people tend to do so much work – reliance on people's 'discretionary efforts'.*

> " *We have never at EY had specific clear guidelines on workload management – and particularly in relation to mental health.* "

> *We work really long hours – we don't know what good looks like – we are reluctant to push back on what is unreasonable.*

> *I have people calling me in tears because of unclear expectations, stress, misinterpretations – people are so exhausted and stressed […] People get sick and they can't get better because they are exhausted – people then leave.*

5.4 Impacts of overwork on health and wellbeing

Given the association between long working hours and poor health the Review Team sought to understand whether (i) an individual's health had been negatively impacted by their long working hours, and if (ii) an individual believed their health would be damaged if they kept working at their current pace.

5.4.1 Survey insights

EY staff and Partners reported a range of impacts associated with working hours, with approximately three in five agreeing with the statements 'I feel so tired after a day at work that I feel like doing nothing after work' (63%) and 'I worry how my long hours affect those in my personal life' (58%).

The impact of working hours on EY Oceania staff and Partner's health was observed, with almost half of EY staff and Partners reporting that their health has been negatively impacted as a result of their long work hours (46%), and two in five who held perceptions that their work hours are often excessive (40%) and that they feel their health will be damaged if they continue to work at this pace (41%).

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

The negative impacts of working hours were unevenly distributed across roles at EY, with Senior Manager or Associate Directors, and Managers or Assistant Directors consistently more likely to experience negative impacts associated with their hours of work. For example, these roles were more likely to agree that:

My health has been negatively impacted as a result of working longer hours (46% overall)

▶ 53% of Senior Managers and Associate Directors agreed; and

▶ 55% of Managers and Assistant Directors agreed.

I feel my health will be damaged if I keep working at this pace (41% overall)

▶ 47% of Senior Managers and Associate Directors agreed; and

▶ 50% of Managers and Assistant Directors agreed.

Figure 24: Negative experiences of working hours by rank (% agree)
Q: Thinking about your work at EY Oceania, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements…? (% agree = Strongly agree + Agree) Base: All respondents ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Of particular concern is the finding that more than two in five people at EY Oceania consider quitting their role as a result of their long working hours (42%), and this was particularly acute for Senior Managers and Associate Directors (47%) and Managers and Assistant Directors (51%).

Agreement with this statement was lowest for Partners and Associate Partners (19%).

It is noted that the negative impacts of working hours at EY Oceania do not neatly align with those in roles working the greatest numbers of hours. This finding is discussed in further detail in the compensation and control section 5.5.

5.4.2 What they told us

The health impacts of the long working hours were a strong theme in the listening sessions. People told the Review Team of physical and mental health impacts and the toll this takes. Comments included:

The hours are so unreasonable, and you really feel like your health isn't valued at all.

When I moved roles, I still didn't get my mental health back on track. Because the work just never stops.

The effects of intense workload include suicidal thoughts. All I do is work all night and day.

The last couple of weeks my mental health is so bad, I ruminate every night about my projects, I dread coming to work. I saw EAP who said I need intensive mental health support.

The workload is having a huge impact on health, sometimes I'm taking 1am calls from US, I often work 16 hrs day. Every evening my calendar is full of meetings because of the time differences/ global nature of the work. 3-4 days I work 16 hours, but I only log 37.5 hours because there is no point taking time off, because my inbox will be full of hundreds of emails.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

Many people felt that the organisation expects them to prioritise their work above all else with there being little room for non-work priorities. One person commented:

It is sad because I love it, I love the people, I love the work, I am grateful for the salary but all I do is work, I have nothing to offer to my family, my marriage, my house. I got a promotion and a great raise but I have spent all that money and more on psychiatry and psychology and acupuncture just trying to keep going. I'm not actively looking but if I find another job, I will leave because I do feel like I am killing myself doing this.

As noted above, the survey data indicates that long working hours has an impact on people's decision whether to remain at EY. Information from individual and group interviews has indicated that in some areas there exists a 'churn and burn mentality' with there being an extremely high turnover of staff. The Review Team also heard from many people who were considering leaving the organisation due to the long working hours and heavy workload. One person commented:

I will leave because of the unbearable workload.

People also told the Review Team that they felt that there was no safe way to raise these issues:

There is just no support or care for the impact of the hours on people. I've had colleagues calling me in tears saying they can't keep working these 15 hour days and all these good people leave because resigning is the only way out – there's a huge staff turnover.

I have the longest audit hours – at the extreme end. A lot of it is due to under-resourcing. My counsellor checked in once or twice – but if you say no to work it goes around the office that you don't pull your weight.

5.5 The role of compensation and control over work

The ability to control the number of hours individuals work and the remuneration provided for such work differs significantly between those at Partner level, those at the Director or Manager Level, and those at the Consultant level.

While Partners also experienced long working hours, the survey data above shows that they are not experiencing the adverse effects of long hours in such high numbers. One interpretation of this difference is that it can be explained by Partners having much greater agency and control over hours worked, and higher levels of compensation, compared to staff.

5.5.1 Survey insights

The survey data outlined above shows that the negative impacts of long working hours are mostly felt by Senior Managers or Associate Directors, and Managers or Assistant Directors. This is not surprising given their limited ability to control the quantity and timing of their work and is consistent with what the Review team heard during the listening sessions where many Managers and Directors mitigate the long working hours of junior staff by picking up this work themselves. In doing so, they often increase their own work burden and working hours.

While Partners and Associate Partners are observed to be working longer hours than those in other roles, they were also least likely to report negative impacts associated with their hours of work. They also indicated having greater control over their work, with four in five (82%) agreeing with the statement 'I'm able to set boundaries between work and life' whereas agreement with this statement is lowest for manager groups: 57% for Senior Managers or Associate Directors and 56% for Managers or Assistant Directors.

Overall, fewer than one in five people agreed their salary takes into account additional hours (18%) or that they are remunerated for working over their contracted hours (16%). By contrast, a majority of Partners and Associate Partners agreed that their annual remuneration takes into account additional hours worked (82% compared to 18% overall), and that they were remunerated for working over their contracted hours (71%, compared to 16% overall).

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

Those in the Senior Manager or Associate Director roles or below were least likely to feel compensated for their working hours, with agreement (strongly agree + agree) that:

'I am remunerated for working over my contracted hours' (16% agreement overall)

▶ 14% of Senior Managers or Associate Directors agreed;

▶ 9% of Managers or Assistant Directors agreed; and

▶ 10% of those in roles Below Manager agreed.

My annual salary takes into account additional hours' (18% agreement overall)

▶ 21% of Senior Managers or Associate Directors agreed;

▶ 11% of Managers or Assistant Directors agreed; and

▶ 8% of those in roles Below Manager agreed.

'I receive time in lieu for working over my contracted hours' (23% agreement overall)

▶ 16% of Senior Managers or Associate Directors agreed;

▶ 16% of Managers or Assistant Directors agreed; and

▶ 26% of those in roles Below Manager agreed.

5.5.2 What they told us

Partners have greater control over the amount of work they choose to do when compared to Senior and Associate Managers who are often assigned work with less control over the amount they do or the hours they work. Some Managers and Directors commented:

> I feel helpless in trying to manage workloads of more junior staff.

> I work 12-24 hours and then I am flogging my team.

Some participants felt that there was potential to address this in part through refreshing the approach to Time Off In Lieu (TOIL). However, participants also noted that the current arrangements for TOIL are poorly regarded because of the complexities involved in obtaining it and to whom it applies. Comments included:

> It'll be hard to shift this culture. But more push for formal TOIL process might help.

> In addition to the smaller jobs potentially creating busier/harder periods, this also means we may not qualify for TOIL because it may mean that we do some large days (10-12 hours), but don't qualify for the monthly TOIL. Can there be another calculation that accounts for this so we can take a break?

> Although employees do receive time in lieu – the policy is not adequate for the number of additional hours we are required to work. First an employee must work over 12% of their contracted hours to be entitled to any TOIL. It is only any additional time worked on top of the required additional 12% that result in TOIL. There are also TOIL restrictions/caps that once that is met, you cannot earn any additional TOIL for that quarter. Then there are blackout periods where employees are not allowed to take leave (3 months in Jan-March and 3 months from July-September) – therefore 6 months out of the year where we are unable to take any TOIL earnt. If the TOIL is not used, it is then paid out at a rate of 75%.

> The TOIL policy also does not cover the overtime work. The policy is heavily skewed in EY's favour with ridiculous requirements such as refreshing every month, confusing calculations that management always pushback on if you question it & limited timeframe to use it.

> While I enjoy my career at EY, as a manager the work hours and expectations are not commensurate with the remuneration of the position. After adjusting for the removal of TOIL as a manager, I have been consistently working 50-60 hour weeks, with no additional TOIL / leave opportunities to look forward to. My suggestion would be re-instate TOIL for managers and above to allow for additional leave to recharge (very important in the high stress positions of manager or above), or reduce the workload expectations in the audit division (less likely due to the nature of audit work).

> The TOIL policy is not 1:1, has arbitrary thresholds and is restricted to select ranks.

> The TOIL policy does not cater for all service lines. The toil policy should be consistent across all of EY and not service line specific.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

5.6 Drivers of overwork and long working hours

People shared several observations about the drivers of overwork and long working hours at EY, including the inaccuracy of hours recorded on timesheets, boundaryless work and expectations of presenteeism and the business model. The normalisation of overwork by individuals as an expected feature of work in the professional services sector also plays a role.

5.6.1 Inaccurate recording of hours

Survey insights

Just one quarter of EY staff and Partners (23%) reported that their timesheets are an accurate reflection of the number of hours they actually work.

> Approximately three in four EY Oceania staff and Partners (72%) reported that the hours recorded in their timesheets tend to underestimate the time they actually work (31% 'sometimes' and 41% 'usually'). Only 1% of EY people indicated their hours tend to be overestimated.

People were more likely to provide accurate timesheets (that is, indicate that they always reflect the number of hours they actually work) if they worked in an administrative role (34%) or below manager level (26%), or if they work in the Assurance (32%) or CBS (32%) service lines.

People at EY Oceania were more likely to indicate that their timesheets 'usually or sometimes underestimate' the number of hours they work if:

- Their role was as a Senior Manager or Associate Director (83%) or Manager or Assistant Director (77%);

- They work in Strategy and Transactions (83%), PAS (80%), Tax (81%) or Business Consulting (79%) Service Lines; and

- They work in client-facing roles (73%, compared to 64% of those in non-client facing roles).

What they told us

Many Review participants commented that they are discouraged from recording the actual hours they worked which served to obscure the actual hours worked. Comments included:

> *People go offline on their MS Teams so that they hide all the time they work to get the tasks done. They are still working but they can't charge their time and they don't want to show they are working as they will be blamed for being inefficient. In other organisations if I am working until 11pm and then on the weekends, I would be paid overtime.*

> *Everywhere in the world at EY they put in the hours they work. At EY Oceania its capped at 7.5 hours.*

> *The tone from leaders is that we don't want you to be burning out and make sure you record all your time so you are rewarded. But then there aren't the staff available to do the work. Managers are pushing staff to under record hours because they are being pressured by Partners. We are pressured to do the work in unrealistic timeframes.*

5.6.2 Boundaryless work and the culture of presenteeism

People in any workplace can at times be complicit in overwork, for example, exchanging long working hours for greater freedom or flexibility. This has been termed the 'autonomy paradox'[87] as autonomy or freedom is usually considered a job resource.

> While employees are given increased autonomy about **where** they work, they yield control over **when** they work which can lead to employees overworking.

This is frequently mediated by an overuse of organisational technology (e.g. email, video conferencing and mobile phones) provided by the employer.

The result of this can be that the employee works long into the evening with work becoming 'boundaryless'. The boundaries between work and leisure time become fuzzy. Being able to work 'anywhere/anytime' soon becomes 'everywhere/all the time'.[88] This is particularly the case following the pandemic.

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87 Mazmanian, M., Orlikowski, W. J., Yates, J. 2013 "The Autonomy Paradox: The Implications of Mobile Email Devices for Knowledge Professionals" *Organization Science* 24(5), 1337-57 at https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1287/orsc.1120.0806
88 Mazmanian, M., Orlikowski, W. J., Yates, J. 2013 "The Autonomy Paradox: The Implications of Mobile Email Devices for Knowledge Professionals" *Organization Science* 24(5), 1337-57 at https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1287/orsc.1120.0806

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

As well as the challenge of boundaryless work, organisations with a culture of presenteeism, where people feel obliged to be physically present in the workplace or present online for long hours regardless of actual productivity, may lead to a culture of overwork. Organisations are increasingly using monitoring software to measure the amount of time people remain online. An important aspect of this is the perception by individuals that there will be negative consequences including missed opportunities, stalled career progression or potential job losses if they are not seen to be putting in more hours than necessary. Productivity tracking software can be detrimental to teams as it reduces their sense of autonomy and can damage collective morale.

What they told us

The review heard several comments about the experience of boundaryless work, exacerbated since COVID-19 and with hybrid work. Comments included:

> *The issue has gotten worse in a post Covid world as now the expectation is you are contactable at all times of the day and night.*

> *Such a hard-working culture, the hybrid work environment is exhausting/multitasking. We need to get more formal with flexible work environments.*

> *But this work – 'it never stops' – and I can't switch off. I constantly see emails outside of work hours from seniors – as an impressionable person that creates expectations.*

Some participants observed that a culture of overwork was exacerbated by a culture of presenteeism, including tracking when people were online. Comments included:

> *The majority of people would not know that Sydney (Service Line office) work closely on reviewing hours worked by each person – it's monitoring.*

> *A senior manager would track online status in Teams and bully people about work hours late at night.*

Several people noted the pressure on individuals to set and maintain their own boundaries, and the complexity of navigating this:

> *You have to be intentional about working with people who respect your boundaries. No one will ever tell you not to work long hours.*

> *Unless you put up some boundaries on realistic work hours, you will be taken advantage of and work a long day. But if you do set boundaries, while they tend to be respected, you then start to miss out on being assigned to the attractive work and it is career limiting for you.*

> *For me I have firm boundaries, so the workload is ok. But I know of others who work many more hours than they should and this impacts their mental health. Definitely not the norm expected by everybody, but it's more prevalent than it should be.*

5.6.3   The business model

The business model within professional service firms like EY is a significant contributor to a culture of long working hours.[89] The business model prioritises billable hours and relies on staff being available 24/7 to clients. The problem with the business model as a driver for long working hours and a culture of overwork was raised by many people at EY during the interviews and written submissions.

Work of a transactional nature driven by clients can be difficult to predict and control. This can lead to symptoms of stress and burn-out, particularly when workloads are not effectively managed.

Research has found that management consultants generally do not call into work when sick but continue to work from home, particularly if meeting with clients.[90] While working when ill can be a way to cope with high workloads, the downside is that the lack of self-care may lead to a prolonged illness and a consequent loss in productivity.[91]

89 Empson, L. 2021 "Researching the Post-Pandemic Professional Service Firm: Challenging our Assumptions" *Journal of Management Studie*s 58(5), 1383-1388 at https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12697
90 Backlander, G., Rosengren, C., Kaulio, M. 2021 "Managing Intensity in Knowledge Work: Self-Leadership Practices Among Danish Management Consultants" *Journal of Management & Organization* 27(2), 342-60 at https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.64
91 Backlander, G., Rosengren, C., Kaulio, M. 2021 "Managing Intensity in Knowledge Work: Self-Leadership Practices Among Danish Management Consultants" *Journal of Management & Organization* 27(2), 342-60 at https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.64

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

Survey insights

A majority of EY staff and Partners agreed with a range of positive statements about how their workload was managed, with seven in ten (71%) agreeing ''I am supported to manage my workload when needed' and approximately two-thirds agreeing 'I feel comfortable raising concerns about my workload' (64%), and 'I can raise concerns about my workload without negative consequences' (61%).

However, perceptions of how well workload is able to be managed at EY Oceania were varied by role, and a trend was observed with Partners and Associate Partners more likely to agree with the range of positive statements about managing workload, while Senior Managers and Associate Directors and Managers and Assistant Directors were least likely to agree with statements, including:

If someone seems to have a great deal to do, there is always someone to help out (63% agree overall)

▶ 82% of Partner and Associate Partners agreed, compared to:

▶ 58% Senior Managers and Associate Directors; and

▶ 55% Managers and Assistant Directors.

I can raise concerns about my workload without negative consequences (61% agree overall)

▶ 82% of Partner and Associate Partners agreed, compared to:

▶ 61% Senior Managers and Associate Directors; and

▶ 58% Managers and Assistant Directors.

I am supported to manage my workload when needed (71%)

▶ 84% of Partner and Associate Partners agreed, compared to:

▶ 68% Senior Managers and Associate Directors; and

▶ 66% Managers and Assistant Directors.

Overall agreement was lowest for the statement **'The project team usually has the staffing resources and capability required to complete the contracted work'** with fewer than half of all staff and Partners agreeing (44%), and again, Partner and Associate Partners were most likely to agree:

▶ 75% of Partner and Associate Partners agreed, compared to:

▶ 39% Senior Managers and Associate Directors; and

▶ 40% Managers and Assistant Directors.

	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
My manager clearly defines the work that I am required to complete so I have clarity about what I need to do	69	68	58↓	61↓	67	73↑	76↑
If someone seems to have a great deal to do, there is always someone willing to help out	63	82↑	70	58↓	55↓	64	73↑
My manager/supervisor keeps me informed of the work plans and tasks for the day / week	68	64	59	60	65	75	64
The project team usually has the staffing resources and capability required to complete the contracted work	44	75↑	47	39↓	40↓	45	34↓
My manager strongly demands that I finish a task or project on time	53	44↓	52	55	57	56	24↓
I can raise concerns about my workload without negative consequences	61	82↑	69	61	58	57	72↑
I feel comfortable raising concerns about my workload	64	84↑	77↑	67	62	59	74
I am supported to manage my workload when needed	71	84	75	68	66	71	78

Figure 25: Management of workload by rank (% agree) *Q: Thinking about your work at EY Oceania, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements…? Base: All respondents* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

What they told us

People at EY shared that the transactional nature of their work means workloads are often high and difficult to predict or control. Comments included:

Usually there are peaks and troughs but the troughs are getting shorter and shorter. In COVID we lost so many people and people are getting burnt out and leaving and those remaining are bearing the brunt.

When we have peaks and troughs of intensity with clients, I always take, and try to encourage others to take, their foot off the gas a bit in the lulls so they don't feel resentful and have capacity when we are working to deadlines in the peak periods.

The last two years, there has been a relentless push to meet targets. It's extremely difficult when burn out is present across the team. We are running so lean on our team, if we have someone off sick we are screwed, and people are off sick every 2 weeks.

Participants also told the Review Team that long working hours were often a result of engagements not being sufficiently resourced, driven by a focus on meeting margin targets. Comments included:

We don't have enough staff to cover the work but that's part of the business model.

My leader won't let my team code the actual client hours. I have to put some of my hours on engagements down as learning and development.

If anything, I think the Partners and Senior Managers in my sub-service line mean well. But at the end of the day, client demands need to be met and budget margins are a metric for performance.

Everything is about utilisation and no one cares if you have to work long hours – a person will work 70 hours but only put 38 hours on the timesheet, which the business thinks is good because you get double the work for the price of one. But you burn people out. It wouldn't be uncommon for me to work from 10am to 5am every day for up to 5 months. EY does not care how long you are here for, as long as the work gets done according to the revenue targets.

We have a huge problem with resources. Chaos. We say yes to jobs we don't have the people for.

Seeing more of the conversations at a higher level opens your eyes. The whole business model requires using the bottom levels 110% so there is no time to understand the politics or be part of the conversations.

> The budgets are effectively set by Partners. To achieve their own targets and even when it's obvious there will be more work required than what is budgeted for, the Partner won't go back to the client to change the pricing because it will impact on the Partner's overall performance – so there's this pressure to work and not charge time accurately because it will blow the budget for the Partner and you don't want to do that.

Everyone is overworked and no one blinks putting in a 37-hour timesheet for a week where you've actually worked 60+ hours. This is consistently how it is.

5.6.4 Normalisation of overwork

There are a number of professional and societal expectations that drive individuals to work long hours, despite the organisation and its managers not expecting or supporting this. This was evident in the insights obtained from the team's interviews.

The Review Team observed that concept of the "ideal worker model" is well established at EY Oceania. This concept refers to the societal and workplace expectations and norms around the characteristics and behaviours of an "ideal" worker. The model suggests that an "ideal" worker is someone who is fully committed to their job, works long hours, prioritises work over personal life, and is always available to their employer.

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

This model assumes that individuals do not have significant caregiving responsibilities, such as caring for children or elderly relatives, and that they are able to prioritise their work above all else. It also assumes that people are able to work without interruption, such as not needing to take time off for illness or personal reasons.

In professional services firms, conformity to the 'ideal-worker' model is instilled through socialisation and supervision, and through the organisational culture. Leaders in particular play a role in setting such expectations.The belief is that ideal workers are rewarded with promotions and fatter paycheques while non-compliance may lead to serious career damage.

Identifying with the 'ideal worker' model can lead to significant conflict for employees as they struggle to manage who they are as opposed to who they have to be. In a study of a London professional service firm,[92] employees conveyed that although working long hours were not a mandatory requirement to become a skilled professional, it was essential to put in the necessary work due to demanding clients and their inability to delegate tasks.

Survey insights

When asked their agreement with a range of statements about their expectations of their role, EY people recognised certain demands as inherent to their roles, with almost nine in ten (88%) agreeing that 'working under tight deadlines is common in this job' and three quarters (74%) agreeing that 'responding to unpredictable events is a large part of my job'.

Partners and Associate Partners were consistently more likely to report agreement with positive expectations and conditions associated with their role, as well as agreeing there were demands expected of their role:

▸ 90% were happy to work above their contracted hours because they are eager to work on opportunities that present themselves (compared to 61% overall);

▸ 82% agree their annual salary takes into account additional hours worked (compared to 18% overall);

▸ 93% agreed that responding to unpredictable events is a large part of their job (compared to 74% overall); and

▸ 94% agreed that working under tight deadlines is common in this job (compared to 88% overall).

	Total	Partner/Associate Partner	Director/Executive Director	Senior Manager/Associate Director	Manager/Assistant Director	Below Manager	Admin
I work long hours to demonstrate my loyalty and commitment to EY	50	40↓	53	54	54	50	40
I am happy to work above my contracted hours because I am eager to work on opportunities that present themselves	61	90↑	81↑	64	56↓	57↓	58
I am remunerated for working over my contracted hours	16	71↑	33↑	14	9↓	10↓	17
I receive time in lieu for working over my contracted hours	23	36↑	23	16	16↓	26↑	29
My annual salary takes into account additional hours	18	82↑	43↑	21	11↓	8↓	22
I am expected to work long hours to meet client needs	64	73	67	75	69↑	63	18↓
There are expectations that I work long hours	50	55	64↑	56↑	54	48	18↓
Responding to unpredictable events is a large part of my job	74	93↑	91↑	84↑	79↑	65↓	72
Working under tight deadlines is common in this job	88	94↑	93	93↑	89	86↓	69↓

Figure 26: Role expectations and conditions by rank (% agree) *Q: Thinking about your work at EY Oceania, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements…? Base: All respondents (excludes Client Service Contractors due to low numbers)* ↑ ↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

92 Lupu, I., Ruiz-Castro, M., Leca, B. 2022 "Role Distancing and the Persistence of Long Work Hours in Professional Service Firms" *Organization Studies* 43(1), 7-33 at https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840620934064

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

Gender-based differences in perceptions of work hours for individuals were observed for some statements. Men were significantly more likely than women to agree with each of the following statements:

▶ 'I am expected to work long hours to meet client needs' (69% compared to 60% of women);

▶ 'I am happy to work above my contracted hours because I am eager to work on opportunities that present themselves' (65% compared to 58% of women); and

▶ 'There are expectations that I work long hours' (53% compared to 46% of women).

A significant number of EY Oceania staff and Partners held beliefs that support the ideal worker model, including the belief that those who are seen as highly competent are given the most work to do (76%), and that people who work long hours are viewed more favourably (56%). Slightly fewer than half reported the perception that they would be excluded from promotions or growth opportunities if they did not work above their contracted hours.

Agreement that those who are seen as highly competent are given the most work to do increased among Partners and Associate Partners (83%), Directors and Executive Directors (83%), and Senior Managers and Associate Directors (85%). While assigning work to those who are perceived as highly competent is appropriate in many circumstances, it may not be appropriate for more junior staff where people have little EY experience and have not worked previously with EY clients. With junior staff, capability should be similar and therefore it makes sense to assign work across the whole talent pool. This will prevent the occurrence where there is lots of work for some junior staff and under-utilisation of others.

The perceptions that longer hours are viewed favourably, and not working longer hours can limit career prospects, were more likely to be held by mid and lower level staff than by Partners. For example, agreement that people who work long hours are viewed more favourably was higher among Managers and Assistant Directors (61%) compared to people who work as Partners or Associate Partners (44%).
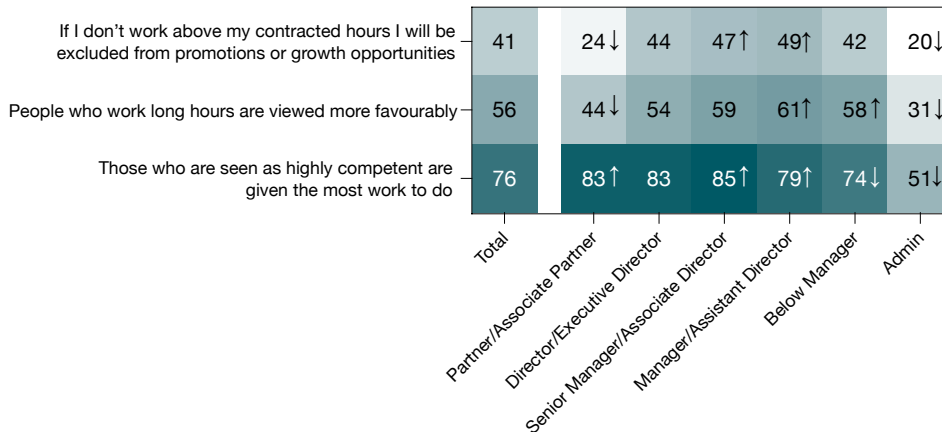

Figure 27: Beliefs held about working hours by rank (% agree) *Q: Thinking about your work at EY Oceania, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements…? Base: All respondents (excludes Client Service Contractors due to low numbers)* ↑ ↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

What they told us

Several participants told the Review Team that overwork is normalised and that there is pressure to conform to the 'ideal worker' model at EY. Comments included:

Much of the pressure that people feel, I believe, is self-inflicted or intimated by others. I say that as a Partner as I know that staff on my engagement often work long hours. I do not want them to work those hours and I do not believe they often need to work those hours. There seems however to be a culture that you must be seen to be working hard and it is a badge of honour to be sending emails out of hours. I liken it to what I witnessed ….. in the late 1980s, where the input is viewed as more valuable than the output. I don't support that view, but I feel it exists.

It's workaholics managing workaholics.

> " Most of our challenges come from a business model which is not fit for purpose today. Professional services firms tend to recruit highly conformist, highly achievement oriented, highly anxious people. If you put them into an environment where they can never reach the end, then they just work harder and harder. Where are the really rebellious people? "

The Review Team also heard that overwork is often rewarded and incentivised. People who are considered highly competent may be more likely to experience overwork with managers preferentially directing their work to these staff. These staff, often at junior levels, may have established higher expectations from their managers, colleagues and even themselves. This can then lead to pressure to consistently perform at a high level. In order to achieve this, they must work longer hours and rarely delegate tasks.

Comments included:

We have a lot of people who are underperforming, and it's not dealt with well. Only one person has been performance managed, when at least 10 people should be but they're not because it's so time consuming. I've raised so many issues about one employee, then they are talking about him getting a promotion. Impacts team [morale] because other team members need to pick up slack, then are unmotivated.

I'm unclear why different people have different expectations. But I feel high performers have higher expectations – we high performers are expected to stay late because we will deliver. This is an example of holding people to different standards. The constructive feedback culture is that effort is not put into poor performers, but high performers are expected to step up and progress.

There is a real lack of parity in the ranks and levels of who is doing what. I've been told the good people get overworked.

5.7 Conclusion

Addressing long working hours and a culture of overwork is a complex challenge requiring a multi-faceted response that addresses recognition and reward systems, project resourcing and leadership and management capability and mindsets.

Research demonstrates that despite extensive work-life programs implemented by employers, many highly-skilled knowledge workers still work between 60 and 80 hours per week. The results of implementing various work-life programs such as part-time work, teleworking or flexible and/or reduced hours have been disappointing, and most programs fail. Modest changes in working time arrangements often rebound on managers, increasing their workload at the expense of their lower-level colleagues. Initiatives such as free meals on the job, car services and childcare that are intended to improve work–life balance, can actually increase rather than decrease working hours.[93] In contrast, the Predictable Time Off strategy implemented at BCG demonstrated some work and work-life benefits.[94]

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93 Blagoev, B., Muhr, S. L., Ortlieb, R. and Schreyögg, G. 2018 "Organizational Working Time Regimes: Drivers, Consequences and Attempts to Change Patterns of Excessive Working Hours" *German Journal of Resource Management: Zeitschrift für Personalforschung* 32(3-4) at https://doi.org/10.1177/2397002218791408

94 Perlow, L. A. and Kelly, E. L. 2014 "Toward a Model of Work Redesign for Better Work and Better Life" Work and Occupations 41(1), 111-134 at https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888413516473

5. Culture of overwork including long working hours

The insights shared with EB&Co. via listening sessions, submissions and the survey suggest that some at EY Oceania – in particular Partners – are working long hours but do not feel adversely affected by those hours.

Others, however, are already experiencing significant negative impacts now, and anticipate further impacts into the future. For many, this is causing them to doubt their future at EY Oceania.

As part of this, there should be a further development of Key Performance Indicators for Partners, so that people leadership – including managing working hours and overwork – is a core focus for every leader across the firm.

This should be complemented by a re-examination of utilisation targets for staff, to ensure that they allow sufficient time for learning and contributing to the culture and development of the firm alongside client engagement.

EY Oceania currently has a range of mechanisms in place to address long working hours, including Time Off in Lieu. The Review heard that some of the existing mechanisms could be expanded to allow better uptake and a more substantive impact on working hours.

Likewise, EY Oceania has recently commenced a number of initiatives, including the "Work Harmonisation Sprint", which have been co-designed with staff and show potential in addressing working hours. Completing and evaluating these pilots will provide important insight into the levers for change in each service line and across the firm as a whole.

In many instances, addressing long working hours will require additional resources being made available for some engagements. Whilst this may reduce profit margins in the first instance, EY people believe that this upfront investment will then be repaid in greater staff wellbeing, improved retention and ultimately better performance.

Long working hours and overwork are difficult to shift and require courageous, bold, system-level approaches.

A culture of overwork is not unique to EY Oceania but is felt by people working across the entire professional services sector. There is real opportunity for EY Oceania to lead in this area.

6. Systems, policies and processes

6.1 Introduction

Strong systems, policies and processes play a critical role in creating safe, respectful and inclusive work environments. While systems and policies are often considered a requirement for legal compliance, they play a pivotal role in establishing behavioural standards, fostering awareness and understanding, shaping organisational culture, and providing guidance on accessing and utilising reporting and support mechanisms. A well implemented policy framework ensures consistency in addressing issues, fosters a supportive environment, and cultivates employee trust.

Organisations have typically focussed on addressing harmful behaviour through a formal complaints system including investigations but with a limited focus on early intervention and prevention. The harm to individuals commonly associated with formal investigations not only stops individuals from reporting and breaks confidence in the system, but also prevents the organisation from learning. A poor response to harmful behaviour ultimately undermines the ability to implement targeted prevention strategies.

Conversely, greater confidence in and use of well-designed systems and processes, as well as increased transparency of outcomes, underpinned by clear and accessible policies, sends a clear message that harmful behaviours are unacceptable and action will be taken. A reporting and response system that prioritises zero harm and supports wellbeing and healing, is not only more likely to increase trust and engagement, but also results in better outcomes for the individual, teams and the organisation. Such approaches also enable the organisation to continuously learn and improve.

This chapter shares insights about the experiences and views of people at EY Oceania regarding the reporting and complaints processes, and the support made available by EY Oceania. Some EY Oceania people shared very positive experiences of accessing the complaints process and had felt well supported by local leaders and/or staff in the People and Culture team. Others, however, expressed low trust in the reporting process. Those who had had poor experiences lacked confidence in the independence and confidentiality of the process, and felt that (as discussed in Chapter Three) accountability was variable depending on the rank and status of the alleged perpetrator. Concerningly, some also shared experiences of retribution for having made a complaint.

Concurrent to this Review, EY Oceania has undertaken significant work to strengthen immediate support for anyone who has experienced harmful behaviour or otherwise needs assistance. This includes contracting an external provider to strengthen clinical and other supports. This is to be commended and should be reviewed in time to ensure that the changed arrangements have indeed improved access to support.

This Chapter also provides a review of policies that directly relate to harmful behaviour as well as commenting on opportunities to strengthen broader policies.

At a glance:

▶ **A minority of those who had experienced a harmful behaviour in the last five years reported the incident either formally or informally within EY Oceania or to an independent or external party:**

36% reported bullying

Of those who had experienced bullying, approximately one third (36%) made a report

17% reported sexual harassment

Of those that experienced sexual harassment, one in six (17%) reported their experience

7% reported racism

Just over one in 20 (7%) reported their experience of racism

53% less likely to make a report to a person or group inside EY Oceania

▶ **People who had experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years** were also less likely to have confidence in making a report or complaint to a person or group inside EY Oceania (53%, compared to 70% overall).

6. Systems, policies and processes

6.2 Lived experience of reporting and resolution processes

Across all organisations – private sector and government alike – harmful behaviour remains significantly under-reported with poor outcomes for those who report. The high personal and professional cost of reporting frequently outweighs any benefits and many often believe that it is easier to remain quiet.

A lack of trust in formal reporting processes is not uncommon. Innovative approaches are needed to enable alternative reporting pathways to be developed, as well as to allow people to have more choice and confidence in processes and investigations. An effective reporting system is one that empowers workers to report any experiences of harmful behaviour and does not act as a deterrent or present obstacles to raising concerns. It should provide people access to appropriate support as a first response and ensure they feel confident that their report will be taken seriously. It should also provide a range of resolution options. A good reporting system should operate alongside an environment that encourages, supports and rewards people to speak up.

6.2.1 Survey insights

Perceptions of reporting

In the Review survey, staff and Partners were asked for their views on identifying, preventing, and responding to incidents involving workplace bullying, sexual harassment or racism at EY Oceania.

Almost all EY Oceania staff and Partners (97%) agreed that they could identify behaviour that is bullying, sexual harassment, or racism. These high levels of knowledge were consistent across gender, ethnicity, organisational roles, service lines and locations, with no significant differences in responses observed.

Three quarters of EY Oceania staff and Partners agreed that they feel safe and supported to speak up about incidents that happen to themselves (76%) or to others (77%). In both cases, men were more likely than women to report that they felt safe and supported (81% and 80% respectively, compared to 73% and 76% of women, respectively).

Across roles at EY Oceania, Partners and Associate Partners were more likely to agree that they felt safe and supported to speak up about incidents that happen to themselves (88%) or to others (92%).

Women were less likely than men to agree with the following statements:

▶ 'Complaints about bullying, sexual harassment and racism are taken seriously' (63% compared to 71% of men);

▶ 'Reasonable and swift action is taken against anyone who engages in bullying, sexual harassment or racism, regardless of their seniority or status' (44% compared to 52% of men); and

▶ 'My Direct Manager/Supervisor speaks openly about bullying, sexual harassment and racism to our team' (38% compared to 48% of men).

It is noted that the perceptions of non-binary staff and non-binary Partners has not been reported to protect the confidentiality of these people, due to low respondent numbers of these groups in the survey sample.

	Total	Men	Women
I can recognise when behaviour is bullying, sexual harassment or racism	97	97↑	96
I feel safe and supported to speak up about bullying, sexual harassment and racism if it's happening to someone else	77	80↑	76
I feel safe and supported to speak up about bullying, sexual harassment and racism if it happens to me	76	81↑	73↓
Reasonable and swift action is taken against anyone who engages in bullying, sexual harassment or racism, regardless of their seniority or status	48	52↑	44↓
Complaints about bullying, sexual harassment and racism are taken seriously	67	71↑	63↓
My direct manager/supervisor speaks openly about bullying, sexual harassment and racism to our team	43	48↑	38↓

Figure 28: Perceptions of reporting culture by gender (% agree)
Q: Thinking about your current experience at EY Oceania, to what extent do you agree or disagree that…? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say') ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

6. Systems, policies and processes

Partners and Associate Partners consistently recorded higher levels of agreement with positive statements about the reporting culture at EY Oceania related to bullying, sexual harassment and racism. Nine in ten Partners and Associate Partners (91%) agreed that complaints are taken seriously (compared to 67% overall) while 77% of Partners and Associate Partners agreed that 'reasonable and swift action is taken against anyone who engages in bullying, sexual harassment or racism, regardless of their seniority or status' (compared to 48% overall).

All EY Oceania people were asked to indicate how likely a series of outcomes would be if someone was to report or make a complaint about bullying, sexual harassment or racism to a more senior staff member or leader (such as a Partner) at EY Oceania. Around one in three EY Oceania people (29%) thought it was 'extremely likely' that a senior staff member or leader would take a report about bullying, sexual harassment or racism seriously, with a further 42% indicating this was 'very likely'.

Similarly, one in four staff and Partners (25%) thought it was 'extremely likely' that a senior staff member or leader would support the person making the report about bullying, sexual harassment or racism, with a further 42% indicating this was 'very likely'.

Seniority was again associated with greater likelihood to agree with positive attributes of reporting culture at EY, and men were more likely to agree than women at every level. For example, 94% of men who were Partners or Associate Partners felt it was likely (extremely like or very likely) a report would be taken seriously by a senior staff member or leader, compared to (87%) of women Partners/Associate Partners.

A small proportion of EY Oceania staff and Partners (4%) thought it was 'extremely likely' that the person making a report about bullying, sexual harassment or racism would be subjected to retaliation or victimisation, with a further 9% indicating this was 'very likely'. Two in five EY Oceania staff and Partners (39%) indicated this outcome was 'not at all likely'.

Knowledge of how to report or make a complaint

Almost twice as many EY people (63%) indicated that they do not know how to make a report or complaint about bullying, sexual harassment, or racism at EY Oceania as those who said they did know how to make a report (36%). However, the majority of those who were unaware were confident they could easily find out (59% compared to 4% who would not know how to find out).

	Total	Partner/Associate Partner Men	Partner/Associate Partner Women	Director/Executive Director Men	Director/Executive Director Women	Senior Manager/Associate Director Men	Senior Manager/Associate Director Women	Manager/Assistant Director Men	Manager/Assistant Director Women	Below Manager Men	Below Manager Women	ADMIN Women
The senior staff member or leader would support the person making the report	67	91↑	83↑	75	74	71	65	66	62	65	62	80
The senior staff member or leader would take the report seriously	71	94↑	87↑	87↑	77	78↑	68	72	68	71	66	80
The senior staff member or leader would protect the safety of the person making the report	65	89↑	81↑	81↑	67	68	61	69	60	64	59	78↑
The senior staff member or leader would take action to address factors that may have led to the bullying, sexual harassment or racism	60	84↑	73↑	75	61	65	57	63	54	59	54	74↑
Action would be taken against the person who engaged in the bullying, sexual harassment or racism	55	86↑	65	67	55	58	48	55	49	56	49	67↑
The person making the report or complaint would be subjected to retaliation or victimisation	13	10	9	14	9	12	11	16	15	16	14	8

Figure 29: Reporting beliefs by gender and rank (% extremely likely + very likely) *Q: If someone were to report or make a report or complaint about bullying, sexual harassment or racism to a more senior staff member or leader at EY Oceania, how likely is it that the senior staff member or leader would take action to address factors that may have led to the bullying, sexual harassment or racism? Base: All respondents. (NB: ADMIN men are not reported due to low sample size) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

6. Systems, policies and processes

When asked about who they would feel most confident in making a report to, EY Oceania staff and Partners were considerably more confident in making a report or complaint to a person or group inside or related to EY Oceania (70%) than a person or organisation outside or independent of EY (23%). There were minimal differences in internal or external reporting preferences between men and women, however those who did not disclose their gender were much less likely to have confidence in making an internal complaint (36%) compared to men (72%) or women (70%).

People who experienced bullying, sexual harassment or racism in the last five years were also less likely to have confidence in making a report or complaint to a person or group inside EY Oceania (53%, compared to 70% overall).

For those who indicated they would have the most confidence in making an internal report, two in three would be confident making a report to their direct manager or supervisor (66%). Approximately half would be confident making a report to a Counsellor (58%) or a Partner/Associate Partner/Executive Director/Director (52%).

Confidence in making a report to a Counsellor was significantly lower among Partners and Associate Partners (23%), Directors and Executive Directors (34%), Senior Managers and Associate Directors (49%) and those in administrative roles (44%) and higher among people in other roles below manager level (72%). Conversely, people in more senior roles were more confident in making a report

to the Talent Team/Talent Specialist Team (TST)/People Team, (55% among Partners and Associate Partners, 52% of Directors and Executive Directors and 39% of Senior Managers and Associate Directors) compared to people in roles below manager level (20%).

	Total	Men	Women
Your direct manager or supervisor	66	67	65
The project lead or person you report to on a project	21	24 ↑	19 ↓
A Partner/Associate Partner/Executive Director/Director	52	58 ↑	46 ↓
A Senior Manager/Associate Director/Manager/Assistant Director	22	25 ↑	19 ↓
A Senior/Senior Associate/Supervising Associate	8	9	7
Staff/Assistant /Associate	6	6	7
An intern or graduate	2	2	2
An Executive Assistant	3	2	4 ↑
A co-worker or colleague	18	15 ↓	20 ↑
A Counsellor	58	56	59
A Counselling family leader	25	27	23
The talent team/Talent Specialist Team (TST)/People Team	31	31	31
The ethics hotline	32	34	31
A workplace support service (e.g. EAP Welfare Contact Officer)	24	26	23
The Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) representative	14	17 ↑	11 ↓
Security	3	3	3
Partner Matters	5	6 ↑	3 ↓
Someone else associated with EY (please specify)	0	0	0
Unsure	1	1 ↑	0 ↓
Prefer not to say	0	0	0

	Total	Men	Women
A person or group inside or related to EY	70	72 ↑	70
A person or organisation outside or independent of EY	23	22	23
Unsure	6	5	6
Prefer not to say	1	1	0 ↓

Figure 30: Confidence in making a report or complaint by gender (% agree) *Q: Who would you have the most confidence in making a report or complaint to? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

Figure 31: Confidence in making a report or complaint inside EY Oceania by gender (%) *Q: Who is the person or group inside or related to EY you would have the most confidence making a complaint or report to? Base: All respondents. (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

6. Systems, policies and processes

Among the one in four people at EY Oceania who would be most confident in making a report or complaint to a person or group outside or independent of EY, people indicated that they would be most comfortable making a report or complaint to:

▶ A lawyer or legal service (42%);

▶ Safe Work Australia/Work Safe New Zealand or state or territory work health and safety authority (41%, higher among people in roles below manager level at 49%); and

▶ The Fair Work Commission or Fair Work Ombudsman (40% of women and higher among men at 47%).

Very few indicated they would make a report or complaint to a client (1%) or a client's organisation or management (1%).

Bullying

Of those people who had experienced bullying at EY Oceania, approximately one third (36%) had reported the incident, with the majority of these having made an informal report only (31%). Just 6% had made a formal report (or both formal and informal).

There were no notable differences in the types of report that were made across service lines or office locations. However, men were more likely not to have reported the incident (68%) than women (47%), suggesting that the range of drivers for not reporting (including concern it would damage their career or reputation, make the situation worse, that nothing would be done, or it was simply easier to not report) – all of which are discussed further in this chapter) were felt by a greater proportion of men.

The majority of those who had reported the most recent incident of bullying while working at EY Oceania had made the report to a group inside or related to EY (98%). Just 2% had made a report to an organisation outside of or independent of EY Oceania.

Among those who had internally reported their most recent incident of bullying, approximately half had made the report to a Partner, Associate Partner, Executive Director or Director (53%), with 40% making the report to their direct manager or supervisor and 36% to a Counsellor. None had reported the most recent incident to the Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) representative, Security or an intern or graduate (hence these have been excluded from the following table).

Just five people disclosed they had made a report to a person or group outside or independent of EY Oceania. This includes reports made to a lawyer or legal service, the Fair Work Commission or Fair Work Ombudsman, the Police and an external coach.

	Total	Men	Women
Your direct manager or supervisor	40	38	42
The project lead or person you report to on a project	12	6	15
A Partner/Associate Partner[93]/ Executive Director/Director	53	53	53
A Senior Manager/Associate Director/ Manager/Assistant Director	14	10	16
A Senior/Senior Associate/ Supervising Associate	1	0	2
Staff/Assistant/Associate	1	2	1
An intern or graduate	0	0	0
An Executive Assistant	1	0	2
A co-worker or colleague	9	8	9
A Counsellor	36	30	37
A counselling family leader	7	4	9
The talent team/ Talent Specialist Team (TST)/People Team	18	12	19
The ethics hotline	1	2	0
A workplace support service (e.g. EAP Welfare Contact Officer)	2	0	2
The Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) representative	0	0	0
Security	0	0	0
Partner Matters	2	2	1
Someone else associated with EY (please specify)	1	3	0
Unsure	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	1	0

Figure 32: Who the bullying was reported to by gender (%) *Q: Who was the person or group inside or related to EY you made a complaint or report to? Base: Reported bullying incident internally (n=235) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

93 The role of Associate Partner was presented as Principal in the survey.

6. Systems, policies and processes

Bullying report outcomes

Overall, fewer than half (47%) of those who had made a report or complaint regarding the most recent incident of bullying indicated that this had been finalised at the time of completing this survey.

Of those whose report or complaint had been finalised, over half (58%) indicated that it had been completed either within a day (27%) or in less than a month (31%). For 5%, it had taken over six months for the report to be finalised while a further 9% indicated it had taken four to six months.

When asked what happened to the person or people who had bullied the respondent, two in five (43%) reported that there had been no consequences for them or that no action had been taken. A further one in five were either unsure of the outcome (20%) or unwilling to provide a response (1%), while 10% had been informed that action was taken but the details had not been disclosed. The most common outcome for the person or people involved (as far as those making a report were aware) was that they were informally spoken to (24%).

Among those who had internally reported their most recent incident of bullying, 29% indicated that there had been no outcomes or consequences. For those who did experience a consequence of making a report or complaint, negative impacts were at least as commonly listed as positive impacts.

Positive outcomes for people who had reported a complaint included:

▶ The bullying stopped (17%); and

▶ They received positive feedback for making the complaint (14%).

Negative outcomes for people who had reported a complaint included:

▶ Your complaint/report was dismissed or not taken seriously (17%);

▶ You were ostracised, victimised or ignored by colleagues (11%);

▶ You were labelled a trouble-maker (10%); and

▶ You were denied workplace opportunities, such as being selected for certain client engagements, training or promotion (9%).

Among those who provided additional details explaining the other outcomes or consequences they experienced, a common response was that they were moved to another role or put on another portfolio or project.

All people who had reported or made a complaint regarding the most recent incident of bullying were asked how satisfied they were with the overall process. Half (50%) were dissatisfied with the process, with the remaining half being split between people who were satisfied (22%) or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (24%) with the overall process.

For those whose report or complaint had been finalised, EY people were more likely to be dissatisfied (44%) than satisfied (32%) with the action taken to address their complaint about bullying. Overall, approximately one in three (32%) indicated they were 'very dissatisfied' with the action taken.

The decision not to report bullying

Those who had not made a report or complaint about the most recent incident of bullying gave a range of reasons for not reporting. The most common reason was that people thought reporting the incident would not change things or nothing would be done (57%). This suggests a need to increase trust in the reporting process.

6. Systems, policies and processes

	Total	Men	Women
I was too scared or frightened	19	20	19
I thought I'd be blamed or people would treat me like the wrongdoer	26	28	22
I thought people would think I was over-reacting	49	49	49
I thought I would not be believed	17	16	17
I wasn't aware of how the complaint process worked or who to report to	17	19	16
My family or friends advised me not to make a report	4	4	3
My co-workers advised me not to make a report	6	5	7
I was directed or persuaded not to make a report by someone more senior than me	5	4	5
It was easier to keep quiet	54	55	50
I thought it would not change things or nothing would be done	57	53	60
I didn't think it was serious enough	37	35	41
I thought making a report would be embarrassing or difficult	25	25	25
I thought I would get fired	14	16	13
I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out	38	36	40
I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who bullied me	42	40	46
I thought my reputation or career would be damaged	53	57	51
I feared negative consequences for the person or people who bullied me	26	27	24
The person or people who bullied me were already being dealt with	3	3	4
I took care of the problem myself	20	20	19
I thought it would make the situation worse	55	55	54
Some other reason please (please specify)	4	3	7
Unsure	2	1	2
Prefer not to say	1	2	0

Some thought 'it was easier to keep quiet' (54%) or that 'making a report would be embarrassing or difficult' (25%). Other reasons for not reporting bullying that were given (by at least one in four EY Oceania staff and Partners suggest that they are concerned about negative consequences associated with reporting bullying:

► 'I thought it would make the situation worse' (55%);

► 'I thought my reputation or career would be damaged' (53%);

► 'I thought people would think I was over-reacting' (49%);

► 'I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who bullied me' (42%);

► 'I didn't think it was serious enough' (37%);

► 'I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out' (38%);

► 'I feared negative consequences for the person or people who bullied me' (26%); and

► 'I thought I'd be blamed or people would treat me like the wrongdoer' (26%).

Some of the responses point to a need for greater education regarding what constitutes workplace bullying.

Figure 33: Reasons for not reporting bullying incident by gender (%) *Q: People decide not to make a complaint or report for many different reasons. Which, if any, of the following were reasons why you did not make a complaint or report the most recent incident of bullying at EY Oceania? Base: Did not report bullying incident. (n=355) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

6. Systems, policies and processes

Sexual Harassment

Among those who had experienced sexual harassment in the last five years at EY Oceania, less than one in five (17%) had reported the incident, and of these, a majority made an informal report only (10%). In relation to the most recent incident just (7%) had made a formal (including those who made both formal and informal) report or complaint. By comparison, the Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces found that 18% of those who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last 5 years made a formal report or complaint.[95]

There were no differences in the types of reports that were made across demographic categories or roles, however, this may be due to the small sample size of those who had reported an experience.

All EY Oceania staff and Partners people who made a complaint or report about the most recent incident of sexual harassment had reported this to a person or group inside or related to EY Oceania. Four people (6%) had also reported it to a person or organisation outside or independent of EY.

Among those who had made an internal report or complaint regarding sexual harassment, approximately half had made the report to a Partner, Associate Partner, Executive Director or Director (53%), while (41%) had made the report to their direct manager or supervisor and (27%) to The Talent Team/Talent Specialist Team (TST) People Team. Of the support outlets listed in the survey, no one reported the most recent incident to the Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) representative, a counselling family leader, a person in security, a person in the role of Senior, Senior Associate or Supervising Associate or to an intern or graduate (hence these have been excluded from the following table).

	Total	Men	Women
Your direct manager or supervisor	41	23	44
The project lead or person you report to on a project	14	23	13
A Partner/Associate Partner/ Executive Director/Director	53	36	55
A Senior Manager/Associate Director/ Manage /Assistant Director	11	14	11
A Senior/Senior Associate/ Supervising Associate	0	0	0
Staff/Assistant/Associate	1	0	2
An intern or graduate	0	0	0
An Executive Assistant	2	0	2
A co-worker or colleague	11	0	13
A Counsellor	12	0	14
A counselling family leader	0	0	0
The talent team/ Talent Specialist Team (TST)/ People Team	27	41	24
The ethics hotline	3	0	2
A workplace support service (e.g. EAP Welfare Contact Officer)	3	0	3
The Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) representative	0	0	0
Security	0	0	0
Partner Matters	1	9	0
Someone else associated with EY (please specify)	0	0	0
Unsure	1	0	1
Prefer not to say	0	0	0
Some other reason please (please specify)	4	3	7
Unsure	2	1	2
Prefer not to say	1	2	0

Figure 34: Who the sexual harassment was reported to at EY Oceania by gender (%) *Q: Who was the person or group inside or related to EY you made a complaint or report to? Base: Reported sexual harassment incident internally. (n=70) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

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95 Australian Human Rights Commission 2022 *Time for respect: Fifth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces* at https://humanrights.gov.au/time-for-respect-2022

6. Systems, policies and processes

Sexual harassment report outcomes

Among those who had reported the most recent incident of sexual harassment internally, approximately two in three (68%) had their complaint or report finalised at the time of the Survey.

Among the small number of people whose report had been finalised, approximately two in three (64%) indicated that it had been finalised within a month, with (15%) having had the matter finalised within a day of making the report or complaint. For a small portion (3%) the matter had taken longer than six months to be finalised.

For those who had made a complaint or report about sexual harassment, (26%) indicated that no action had been taken or there had been no consequences for the individual. A further (21%) indicated that they were unsure of the outcome or that the details were not disclosed to them. The most common outcomes people were aware of included the person being exited from the organisation (24%) and the individual or people being informally spoken to (22%). Around one in ten had received an apology (13%) or indicated that the individual had resigned (13%), was disciplined (9%) or was formally warned (8%).

Among the individuals who had reported an incident of sexual harassment, outcomes they had experienced included that the harassment had stopped (28%), they received positive feedback for making the complaint (22%) or EY Oceania apologised for failing to prevent the harassment (16%).

Around one in four people (28%) indicated that there had been no outcomes or consequences from their reporting. A similar proportion (26%) indicated that they had experienced negative consequences as a result of making a complaint or report. These included the report not being taken seriously (10%), being denied workplace opportunities (4%), being labelled a troublemaker (3%) and being ostracised, victimised or ignored by colleagues (1%). Among the other outcomes or consequences (7%) of respondents reported being transferred off a project, being asked to transfer but refusing, agreeing to minimise contact with the individual and being advised to take leave.

	Total	Men	Women
I was too scared or frightened	7	4	7
I thought I'd be blamed or people would treat me like the wrongdoer	9	13	7
I thought people would think I was over-reacting	37	34	39
I thought I would not be believed	9	10	8
I wasn't aware of how the complaint process worked or who to report to	10	10	11
My family or friends advised me not to make a report	1	1	0
My co-workers advised me not to make a report	1	0	1
I was directed or persuaded not to make a report by someone more senior than me	1	1	2
It was easier to keep quiet	31	35	29
I thought it would not change things or nothing would be done	21	12	25
I didn't think it was serious enough	59	55	62
I thought making a report would be embarrassing or difficult	19	23	17
I thought I would get fired	4	7	3
I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out	21	19	20
I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who harassed me	23	15	26
I thought my reputation or career would be damaged	21	15	24
I feared negative consequences for the person or people who harassed me	17	14	19
The person or people who harassed me were already being dealt with	2	0	3
I took care of the problem myself	19	21	19
I thought it would make the situation worse	19	12	23
Some other reason please (please specify)	2	1	3
Unsure	1	0	1
Prefer not to say	5	10	4

Figure 35: Reasons for not reporting sexual harassment incident by gender (%) *Q: People decide not to make a complaint or report for many different reasons. Which, if any, of the following were reasons why you did not make a complaint or report about the most recent incident of sexual harassment at EY Oceania? Base: Did not report sexual harassment incident (325) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑ ↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

6. Systems, policies and processes

All those who had reported or made a complaint regarding the most recent incident of sexual harassment were asked how satisfied they were with the overall process. A substantial minority each reported they were either satisfied (41%) or dissatisfied (31%) with the overall process. People were more likely to be satisfied (61%) than dissatisfied (20%) with the action taken to address their complaint about sexual harassment. Overall, approximately one in three (30%) indicated they were 'very satisfied' with the action taken.

The decision not to report sexual harassment

Those who had not made a report or complaint about the most recent incident of sexual harassment gave a range of reasons for not doing so. The main reason given was that people thought the incident was not serious enough (59%) while others thought that people would think they were over-reacting (37%). Some had not reported the incident as 'it was easier to keep quiet' (31%) or because they thought it would not change things or nothing would be done (21%).

Other reasons for not reporting the most recent incident of sexual harassment included:

- ▶ 'I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who harassed me' (23%);
- ▶ 'I thought my reputation or career would be damaged' (21%);
- ▶ 'I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out' (21%);
- ▶ 'I thought it would make the situation worse' (19%); and
- ▶ 'I thought making a report would be embarrassing or difficult' (19%).

Some of the responses point to a need for greater education regarding what constitutes sexual harassment.

Racism

Among those that had experienced racism at EY Oceania, few had gone on to make a report (7%). The majority of these reports had been informal (6%) rather than formal (1%). There were no significant differences by demographics or role among those who had made reports, and this may be due to the small sample size.

As only a very small number of people at EY had reported their most recent incident of racism (n=26) and an even smaller number had their report resolved (n=16), caution should be taken when interpreting these findings. These findings based on follow-up questions regarding the respondent's experience of making the report are reported for completeness and should be considered as indicative only.

Among the 26 individuals who had made a complaint or report, all had done so internally. The person or group they had made a complaint or report to was most often their direct manager or supervisor, a Partner, Associate Partner, Executive Director or Director or a Counsellor.

Racism report outcomes

Overall, more than half indicated their report had been finalised with all of these instances being finalised within three months.

In terms of consequences or outcomes for the person or people who had been racist towards the respondent, the most common outcome reported (for a large minority) was that they were informally spoken to. However, nearly half of those making a report were not aware of the outcome or said that no action had been taken or there had been no consequences. Most indicated that there had been no outcomes or consequences for them personally after making the complaint or report or that they were unaware of any. However, some indicated that their complaint or report had not been taken seriously.

When asked about satisfaction with the overall process of making the report, responses were fairly evenly split between those who were satisfied or dissatisfied, with approximately half indicating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

6. Systems, policies and processes

The decision not to report racism

Among those who had not reported the most recent incident of racism they had experienced, the main reasons for this were similar to those given by people who had not reported an incident of sexual harassment. That is, they either did not think it was serious enough (48%) or they thought others would think they were over-reacting (41%). The other main barriers to not making a report can be grouped by the following themes:

Choosing not to complicate or make things harder for themselves

- 'It was easier to keep quiet' (38%);
- 'I thought making a report would be embarrassing or difficult' (18%); and
- 'I was too scared or frightened' (9%).

Concerns about negative outcomes or repercussions

- 'I thought my reputation or career would be damaged' (34%);
- 'I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out' (21%); and
- 'I thought I would get fired' (10%).

Thinking it would not be beneficial or was not needed

- 'I thought it would not change things or nothing would be done' (35%); and
- 'I took care of the problem myself' (11%).

Concerns about the issue being amplified

- 'I thought it would make the situation worse' (26%);
- 'I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who were racist towards me' (18%); and
- 'I feared negative consequences for the person or people who harassed me' (17%).

Concerns about being judged or held responsible

- 'I thought I would not be believed' (14%); and
- 'I thought I'd be blamed or people would treat me like the wrongdoer' (13%).

A small number of people had not made a report due to a lack of knowledge of how the process worked or who to make the report to (10%), while others had been advised not to make a report by co-workers (2%), family or friends (2%) or were directed or persuaded not to make a report by someone in a more senior position (1%).

	Total	Men	Women
I was too scared or frightened	9	7	11
I thought I'd be blamed or people would treat me like the wrongdoer	13	18	10
I thought people would think I was over-reacting	41	39	47
I thought I would not be believed	14	16	12
I wasn't aware of how the complaint process worked or who to report to	10	12	10
My family or friends advised me not to make a report	2	1	2
My co-workers advised me not to make a report	2	0	3
I was directed or persuaded not to make a report by someone more senior than me	1	1	1
It was easier to keep quiet	38	42	38
I thought it would not change things or nothing would be done	35	35	36
I didn't think it was serious enough	48	51	52
I thought making a report would be embarrassing or difficult	18	17	19
I thought I would get fired	10	16	4
I was concerned about lack of confidentiality and how many people would find out	21	20	22
I was concerned it would get back to the person or people who harassed me	18	17	21
I thought my reputation or career would be damaged	34	36	33
I feared negative consequences for the person or people who harassed me	17	20	15
The person or people who harassed me were already being dealt with	0	0	1
I took care of the problem myself	11	14	9
I thought it would make the situation worse	26	26	27
Some other reason please (please specify)	4	6	3
Unsure	2	1	2
Prefer not to say	4	3	2

Figure 36: Reasons for not reporting racism incident by gender (%) *Q: People decide not to seek support or make a complaint for many different reasons. What are the reasons you did not report the racism? Base: Did not report sexual harassment incident (n=270) (Does not include non-binary respondents due to low numbers, and excludes those who 'prefer not to say')* ↑↓ indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.

6. Systems, policies and processes

6.2.2 What they told us

Throughout the listening sessions and written submissions, participants frequently spoke of the reporting process. A small number of participants stated that they would feel comfortable making a report of harmful conduct, or spoke about positive experiences of having made a report through an EY reporting avenue:

> I've raised issues with HR and a Partner, and I didn't feel any negative consequences. I had a good experience.

> I think people feel comfortable talking to their manager – maybe not a Partner.

> Your counsellor or Partner or who you feel comfortable with is the best reporting option [...] It's not a culture where there would be repercussions for reporting, because there is lack of tolerance for disrespectful behaviour.

> I have been in EY so long it carries weight when I say something. Earlier on it would have been too dangerous to say anything but now I feel I can.

In contrast to the above experiences, many participants spoke of having negative experiences of reporting harmful conduct, including feeling psychologically unsafe and experiencing distress:

> I told my manager [about bullying from a co-worker]. She said there had been a number of complaints about this woman, but I had to "suck it up".

> I had someone in my team disclose bullying from a colleague. I raised it with the accountable Partner, and it was not addressed. It was noted as 'not bullying' but "two strong personalities". But it had created significant distress.

> I have made complaints and then made complaints about the complaints process. I don't feel safe to make a complaint and I am a Partner.

> Nobody is comfortable speaking up. There's no psychological safety.

> **A lack of safety to speak out and raise issues is really a strong feature of the workplace culture.**

Many participants expressed reluctance to report a range of conduct including racism, sexual harassment and bullying. Participants expressed a view that it was "widely known and accepted" that if a report is made, nothing would be done to remedy the conduct, and that the person who made the report would suffer negative consequences, impacting their work, career and reputation:

> When I reported it, I got nothing for eight months. No projects. It was hell for me.

> People will leave over making a complaint because the repercussions on your career are huge.

> EY is a really hard environment to report something. When you report bullying it's not taken seriously. Your reputation is everything. If there is a risk you could burn a bridge with the person you are reporting or their friends – you are done. You will not be put on other projects. You need good feedback on engagements to support your promotion cases.

> [My Partner] was gaslighting and manipulating my career. I was too scared to make a complaint. Nothing would be done, and there would be blowback for me.

> **The key issue is that our organisation works like a series of small businesses so when you break it down, when you raise issues, it's not anonymous at all. Ramifications for reputation are large.**

> People don't speak out because of fear of retribution, nothing happens, and often poor leaders get rewarded.

> My confidential information is being spread around. This shows the lack of independence of the investigation team

> HR should be independent of the Partners but here it is under the partnership.

6. Systems, policies and processes

> ❝ The fear of reporting is driven by fear of repercussions. People are ambitious. Do I rock the boat? ❞

I wouldn't ever report. With the bully, nothing would be done. My expectation of action resulting in significant change would be minimal. Perpetrators are rewarded and promoted.

If you make a report against someone, they might stop referring work to you, so it is a detriment to your career.

Making a complaint is "how much do I want to fuck up my career?" We are unable to speak up because of the way promotions are handled with the 'roundtables'. There is no consistency in the way ratings are provided, yet your career progression depends on getting good feedback.

If I made an official complaint I would not survive.

> ❝ Māori experience racism on a regular basis. Reporting and addressing incidents of racist remarks and microaggressions that occur in day to day interactions is difficult. I find when we raise the issue with those involved, it is most likely to be met with a sense of offence and defensiveness. The response diminishes the experience of the victim, and implies that the victim is the one being difficult and overly sensitive. ❞

In addition to participants feeling that there would be negative consequences for them personally and professionally if they made a report, they also spoke of a lack of faith that the process would result in better outcomes.

The Review Team heard from several people that the reporting process is not one that is genuinely available to them. Many participants attributed this to a lack of trust about reporting mechanisms:

Report? You have to be joking. It would be career suicide. It would fall on deaf ears. The only recourse would go to the media.

HR is there to protect the company. It's not really a place for people to speak up.

People ask why didn't you report it? It's because we don't trust the leadership team. I don't feel it would have been handled well. Why would you report it when it is brushed under the rug? If you don't trust the leadership team and you feel they don't have your back what's the point?

I wouldn't report in my team. The leader wouldn't care. I don't have confidence that anyone in the business would care. The attitude is "you have to work it out yourself." Everything is on the individual to solve.

I actually have no idea who to escalate it to if there was a major issue, especially involving a Partner. You learn to just say yes and move on.

I think in general there are well-known processes in place, like with your counsellor, but people won't report about issues with the system, like the work hours for example, because there's really no point. It's just the way things are here - those who conform are rewarded, so you just get on with it.

I did speak to Partners about issues I was having with that Partner. They understood and listened, but nothing was done. No repercussion for that Partner who treated me poorly.

Some people also commented that some of these challenges reflect the decisions of the leadership team, including the staff capacity for responding to reports, rather than the skills and attitudes of individual staff in the People and Culture team.

6. Systems, policies and processes

Participants told the Review Team of the heavy individual burden of making a report, and the significant impact these processes had on mental health, general wellbeing, reputation, and working capacity. The Review team heard from various participants who spoke of the process being disempowering for victim/survivors and neither supportive nor trauma-informed:

The process was terrible. They had me write everything down like a personal diary entry. They never told me they were going to share it with the man. They said I couldn't see his statement. I said this was unfair and they finally let me see what he said. They made me sign a document that I couldn't talk about it with anyone or I could be fired. I asked why and they said they had to protect his brand. I wanted to know, what about my brand?

Decision-making around the perpetrator was placed back in the hands of the victim which is disempowering because you don't want to be responsible for his career. I was asked "what would you like to happen? Surely you don't want him to lose his job?"

People feel like they have to push [the reporting process] themselves. There is no regard for the person impacted […] It impacts on individuals, including the time it is taking to participate in an investigation, reliving the experience, getting in the way of doing the work and meeting the financial targets.

Undertaking a complaint impacts your mental capacity and your work capacity. How can you be expected to perform at full capacity and go through hours of interviews and the stress of the reporting? It is an unfair expectation.

When I was asked [about an incident after reporting] it was made clear to me it is not an interrogation, that they were just getting some details. But it felt very much like an interrogation.

Many participants also spoke of the power imbalances with senior staff and leadership in the reporting process. They described a lack of trust in a fair and transparent process if senior staff were the subject of a report. This was particularly acute in the case of 'high value' staff, where they felt the financial interests of the organisation are prioritised above all else:

I am not confident consequences will be imposed if you report. There are no consequences particularly for leadership.

If you bring in the revenue your behaviour is excused.

The general sentiment is that Partners are untouchable, and HR have limited power to do anything to hold them to account.

> " Revenue is king and there's no real way to address issues with people in senior positions who don't model the EY values but bring in the money. "

The Review also heard from some participants that there was a lack of awareness and understanding about reporting options and pathways for resolving issues, particularly of the formal processes:

> " We don't have the people capability to handle complaints. They focus on the process rather than caring about the person's individual needs. The focus is on not stepping outside our legal boundaries, so we lose sight of the people involved. "

6. Systems, policies and processes

After I was bullied, I was not aware that I had the option of taking leave for my mental health or that there was any support. No one outlined the options. I felt really let down. I should know these are the processes and pathways. I was told: "We get multiple cases per week of bullying and we can't take them all seriously because we don't have enough staff." I was shocked. We say we have zero tolerance for bullying and harassment but that's not true.

I think there might be a report line with HR but I'm not really sure. But I don't think I would use it because it seems they wouldn't really do much.

On our intranet page, the Ethics Hotline is right down the bottom. You need to have a reporting feature front and centre […] I don't know where the ethic hotline goes. I've heard it goes to the US.

When I tried to report [the incident] to my people Partner they said, "I don't think I am the best person to handle this." So then who do you report it too? It is really unclear who to report it to and the designated people person is not equipped to deal with the issues.

I don't know what the formal avenues are, other than your counsellor.

When these problems are raised, they say we have processes in place, and we have EAP but when incidents happen there are no clear guidelines for assisting victims.

The level of trust individuals place in the reporting and complaints processes is a strong indicator of the degree to which harmful conduct is tolerated and accepted within an organisation. An organisation's response to reported incidents of harmful behaviour has a significant impact not only on the person making the report, but also on the alleged perpetrator, and the trust in the system. Providing diverse options for reporting, including confidential and anonymous reporting channels, is essential for enabling individuals to feel supported and remain productive contributors to the business.

6.3 Experiences of support structures

Ensuring effective and appropriate support is important for building safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces. A good support system can ensure that individuals seek advice early leading to early intervention rather than escalation. The provision of trauma-informed support can also help individuals recover from experiences of harmful behaviour. Best practice approaches include providing trauma-informed support throughout the reporting and resolution process, starting when the initial report is made, continuing during the resolution process and following resolution to ensure that individuals and teams recover. Support that is trauma-informed is usually characterised as being safe, empowering, trustworthy and collaborative.

6.3.1 Survey insights

Of the range of supports provided by EY Oceania for those impacted by harmful behaviours, awareness amongst EY Oceania staff and Partners was highest for Counsellors (92%) and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (85%). Around two in three people were aware of the ethics hotline (69%) and the Talent and People Team or People Matters (63%).

Approximately one quarter (28%) were aware that support was provided by Health and Safety Representatives for their workgroup.

There were no notable differences in awareness of supports by gender. However, with the exception of Counsellors, young people aged 18 to 24 years were significantly less likely to have heard of each of the available forms of support. There were some differences in awareness based on office location and service line, described below for each of the supports (excluding Counsellor, for which no notable differences were observed).

People who work in a role below manager level (excluding administrative workers) were less likely than people in other roles to be aware of any of the supports. People who speak a language other than English were also less likely to be aware that support was available via the EAP (81%)). Awareness of the EAP was also lower amongst people who had joined EY Oceania in the last year (73%).

6. Systems, policies and processes

	Total	Executive/APAC Management	APAC SL CoE	Audit Assurance	Other Assurance	CBS AWS	CBS Other	Business Consulting	Technology Consulting	FSO Business Consulting	FSO Technology Consulting	FSO Other	PAS	Strategy and Transactions	Tax
Counsellor	92	95	89	94	91	92	94	92	95	91	86	92	95	89	92
Ethics Hotline	69	83↑	72	65	69	79	81↑	67	71	59↓	67	65	73	63	71
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	85	90	87	76↓	87	88	93↑	85	82	84	79	83	92↑	86	89
Health and Safety Representative for your workgroup	28	36	33	26	28	36	47↑	22↓	33	19↓	25	21	28	23	30
Talent and People team/ Partner Matters	63	75	64	60	62	76↑	81↑	56↓	64	56↓	54	60	60	64	66
Other services (please specify)	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
None of these	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Unsure	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	4↑	1	1	1	0
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	4↑	1	0	0	2

Figure 37: **Awareness of supports provided by EY Oceania by sub service line (%)** *Q Which of the following supports provided by EY Oceania for those affected by bullying, sexual harassment or racism are you aware of? Base: All respondents (excluding Other Consulting due to low numbers in the survey sample).* ↑↓ *indicates significantly higher or lower results (p≤0.05) compared to total.*

People who work in a role below manager level (excluding administrative workers) were less likely than people in other roles to be aware of any of the supports. People who speak a language other than English were also less likely to be aware that support was available via the EAP (81%). Awareness of the EAP was also lower amongst people who had joined EY Oceania in the last year (73%).

6.3.2 What they told us

The Review heard mixed responses from individuals who had accessed support systems through EY Oceania, particularly the EAP, with some participants sharing that there remains stigma in accessing support due to the perception that they were not able to perform:

I have mainly sought to use the EAP due to economic reasons. I came here knowing no one, with no family or friends. I wanted to speak to someone about my experiences around my cultural background and queer identity and how they were impacting my work. The EAP did really not (understand or) meet my needs.

There are mechanisms in place for reporting mental health issues but overall, I feel EY is very reactive in their approach, so it relies on people expressing they need help. That's quite hard when you are starting out or more junior because it's hard to build relationships and know who you can talk to about that stuff. The business makes all the right noises about mental health but I do think they struggle to understand it or have adequate education on it.

Most participants recognised the Counsellor system as the key support structure in the organisation, however there were mixed experiences of counsellors:

I feel like I can raise things with my Counsellor.

I've only had one Counsellor who has been great. She's been an anchor for me.

Counsellors can be hit and miss. There is no consistency. I've seen some really shitty and poor quality counselling.

6. Systems, policies and processes

> *The strength of EY is having counselling families but it is all a stroke of luck who you get. There needs to be more consistency among counsellors.*

I was on two projects which were not suited to my skill set. My counsellor disappeared. And she was then grumpy and shitty when I approached her.

Many people don't have a good relationship with their counsellor. It means they don't have anyone guiding them through the EY machine.

6.4   Policy review

As discussed earlier in this chapter, for people who experience harmful behaviour, there needs to be higher levels of trust and listening sessions and written submissions generated insights on reporting and complaints that show confidence in the protections, support and options available. As part of the Review, EB&Co. also analysed over twenty EY policy documents and strategy documents to assess the extent to which they align with best practice. From the review of policies, it is evident that there is an opportunity for the policy framework to be strengthened in several areas.

6.4.1   Current policy environment

EY has an extensive repository of policies encompassing various aspects of business conduct, offering pertinent information and guidance to a diverse and geographically dispersed workforce. Given EY's organisational structure and operating model, a combination of global and localised policies are in place. In the context of this Review, particular emphasis was placed on analysing policies and processes that underpin the cultivation of a secure, respectful, and inclusive EY culture.

The Review analysed the following global and local policies:

▶ Global Code of Conduct;

▶ Supplier Code of Conduct;

▶ Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy;

▶ Workplace Behaviour;

▶ Standards of Professional Behaviour;

▶ Global Confidentiality Policy;

▶ Inclusion and Non-Discriminatory Global Policy;

▶ Recruitment Policy;

▶ Oceania Compliance Screening Guidelines;

▶ Whistleblowing Policy; and

▶ Health & Safety Policy.

6.4.2   Survey insights

When EY Oceania staff and Partners were asked how knowledgeable they are about the policies, processes and practices at EY Oceania in relation to bullying, sexual harassment or racism, 27% of staff and Partners indicated that they 'know a lot about them', three in five (59%) indicated that they 'have some knowledge about them'. Only 9% indicated that they 'know very little about them'.

There were no notable differences amongst subgroups of workers in relation to those who 'know nothing' (1%) about the policies, processes and practices at EY Oceania in relation to bullying, sexual harassment or racism. The knowledge of policies, processes and practices increased with role seniority, with Partners and Associate Partners (71%), and Directors and Executive Directors (56%) and Senior Managers or Associate Directors (33%) more likely to know everything or to know a lot about the policies, processes and practices than those in other roles.

EY Oceania staff and Partners people were also asked about training and education. Overall, 98% of staff and Partners had received training and education on preventing and/or responding to workplace bullying, sexual harassment or racism. In terms of the different topics, the majority of workers recalled receiving training and education on workplace bullying (97%) and sexual harassment (93%). Around nine in ten workers (88%) recalled receiving training and education on racism, with fewer women (85%) than men (91%) recalling this training.

6. Systems, policies and processes

There were few differences by service line or office location, however staff and Partners in the Wellington office were less likely to have received training or education on racism (75%, compared to 88% overall).

While only a small number of staff and Partners (1%) indicated that they had not received training or education on any of these topics, this proportion was slightly higher amongst people who work in an Administrative role (3%).

The questions related to training and education were another area where people who preferred not to answer questions related to their demographics or work circumstances recorded significantly different results to others. In this case they were less likely to report having received training or education.

6.4.3   Assessment of policies addressing harmful behaviours

As part of the review, EB&Co. assessed the 'Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy' and 'Workplace Behaviour' policy against best practice criteria for policies addressing harmful behaviours. The criteria have been drawn from a review of relevant literature and recent workplace culture reviews completed by EB&Co., as well as from current leading policies and guidelines (see Appendix A for the criteria).[96]

The full assessment of the policies can be found at Appendix A. Key areas for strengthening policies include:

▶ Clear articulation of the leadership commitment to zero harm with respect to bullying, racism and sexual harassment;

▶ Focus on the prevention of harmful behaviour and the actions being taken by the organisation;

▶ Commitment to a person-centred and trauma-informed approach to support, reporting and the resolution of reports with clearly signposted pathways and options for individuals impacted by harmful behaviour;

▶ Clarity and commitment in policies to mandatory and ongoing training and education requirements for Partners, staff, contractors and suppliers; and

▶ Inclusion of a quick reference guide to the policy framework to make it easier for impacted individuals to quickly access information and support.

6.4.4   Broader considerations for strengthening the policy environment

In assessing the broader policy framework, EB&Co. has identified the need for the simplification of the policy framework with a focus on:

▶ Clarity of application between global and local policies;

▶ Clarity around the purpose of key policies and their specific objectives;

▶ Better signposting of the pathways within the organisation to seek support and advice in relation to policies and processes;

▶ Clarity of training requirements as they relate to each policy (discussed further below); and

▶ Clear review timeframes to ensure that policies are contemporary and represent best practice approaches.

In addition to simplifying the policy framework, EB&Co. has identified the opportunity for EY Oceania to explicitly apply a 'zero harm' approach across all policies, with a clear focus of eliminating all forms of harm and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all people.

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96 Australian Human Rights Commission 2020 *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* at https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020; Australian Human Rights Commission 2021 *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* at https://humanrights.gov.au/set-standard-2021#:~:text=The%20report%20has%20been%20tabled,and%20others%20forms%20of%20support; Australian Institute of Company Directors 2021 *A director's guide to preventing and responding to sexual harassment at work* at https://www.aicd.com.au/organisational-culture/business-ethics/change/directors-guide-to-preventing-and-responding-to-sexual-harassment-at-work.html; Champions of Change Coalition 2020 *Disrupting the System: Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* at https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/disrupting-the-system/; Foster, S. *Review of the Parliamentary Workplace: Responding to Serious Incidents* Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet at https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/review-parliamentary-workplace-responding-serious-incidents-final.pdf; Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, West Australian Parliament 2022 *'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH': Sexual Harassment Against Women in the FIFO Mining Industry* at https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/(Report+Lookup+by+Com+ID)/EF1DF1A3F5DF74A848258869000E6B32/$file/20220621%20-Report%20No%202.pdf; Elizabeth Broderick & Co 2021 *Report into Workplace Culture at Rio Tinto* at https://www.riotinto.com/-/media/Content/Documents/Sustainability/People/RT-Everyday-respect-report.pdf; Safe Work Australia 2021 *Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment: National Guidance Material* at https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/Guide%20for%20preventing%20workplace%20sexual%20harassment.pdf; Safe Work SA "Sexual harassment, discrimination and violence in mines" at https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/industry/mining-and-quarrying/sexual-harassment,-discrimination-and-violence-in-mines#_ftn1; *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth); University of Melbourne 2022 *Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy* at https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1359/; Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission 2020 *Guideline: Preventing and Responding to Workplace Sexual Harassment* at https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/sexual-harassment-guideline/

6. Systems, policies and processes

The approach recognises that even one instance of harm is unacceptable and strives for continuous improvement to create a safe and healthy work environment.

EY is currently progressing a piece of work that will leverage its well-established Health & Safety Management System to address psychosocial hazards and risks associated with harmful behaviours as safety risks.[97] Just as physical risks are identified and controlled in the workplace, fostering psychological safety and encouraging staff to speak up becomes a crucial control mechanism against bullying, sexual harassment, racism and other forms of discrimination and harmful behaviour, as well as psychosocial hazards such as work-related stress, fatigue, work overload, conflict, and aggression.[98]

A further area to strengthen in the policy environment is the focus on training and education. While the survey data indicates a high recall of training and education, within EY's current policy framework, there are limited provisions addressing training and education. Training and education play a crucial role in preventing and responding to harmful behaviour by building understanding of harmful behaviour and its impacts, behavioural expectations and the obligations of each person in the workplace. Policies should guarantee that every Partner, employee and contractor receives the essential knowledge required to foster a culture anchored in respect, safety, inclusivity, and zero harm.

Best practice approaches incorporate multi-pronged and ongoing informal and formal approaches to training and education, rather than a once-off compliance-based approach. Training should be aligned to organisational values with a commitment to gender equality, inclusion, respect and safety and should focus on building skills and supporting employees to reflect on and change their attitudes and understanding of harmful behaviour and its impacts. This approach establishes a transparent commitment to continuous learning, empowering individuals to create a secure and healthy work environment.

6.5 Conclusion

The Review has found that for a number of EY Oceania staff and Partners, the internal reporting systems are useful and effective. However, for others, there are a range of cultural and practical barriers preventing them from reporting harmful behaviours such as bullying, sexual harassment and racism, the culture of overwork, and accessing support. These barriers are amplified by the absence of psychological safety and the lack of trust and confidence in reporting and response systems.

There is work to be done to build a truly person-centred, transparent and trusted reporting process. This should include diversifying pathways for reporting, strengthening the confidentiality of the reporting process, reducing time from complaint to resolution, and improving timely communication to all parties in a complaint.

There is a also a need to strengthen proportional outcomes for those against whom an adverse finding is made. It is particularly important to address the perception that accountability is variably applied and that profit margin or seniority protects people from consequences.

Finally, making it safe enough to make a report will also require systematically addressing retribution against complainants or their support people.

Strengthening the policy frameworks which both directly and indirectly shape the response to harmful behaviours is a vital part of the enabling environment, in signalling that harmful behaviours are not tolerated and that reports will be investigated and acted on appropriately.

Together, these approaches can build an effective reporting system as well as a culture where people feel safe enough to report and feel supported when they do make a report.

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97 EY's Health & Safety Management System is covered in its FP108 Health and Safety Policy.

98 Safe Work Australia "Psychosocial Hazards" at https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/managing-health-and-safety/mental-health/psychosocial-hazards
Respect@Work "Good Practice Education Strategy" at https://www.respectatwork.gov.au/organisation/prevention/organisational-knowledge/good-practice-education-strategy

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Findings

The Review found:

1. **A significant majority of people have a positive experience of EY Oceania.** They are proud of the firm's history and most consider it to be a safe and inclusive workplace, one where leaders contribute to that safety and inclusion.

2. **But this is not the experience of all, and on occasion negative experiences have had a harmful impact on individuals,** teams and the firm. Groups who experience systemic disadvantage in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand likewise experience lower levels of safety and inclusion in EY Oceania. These groups include:

   a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;

   b. Māori;

   c. Women;

   d. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;

   e. LGBTQI+ people; and

   f. People with disability.

3. **EY Oceania has a range of people leadership and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in place.** Many of these are evidence-based and highly regarded. However, engagement is largely voluntary and as such there is higher participation among those with lived experience and those who are already committed allies.

4. **Despite these efforts, bullying, sexual harassment, and racism continue to exist in the firm and cause significant human harm.** This indicates the need to scale up and diversify the approach, including strengthening investment in those initiatives, extending their reach, and strengthening accountability.

5. **The impact of racism is being carried more heavily by some groups than others.** Cohorts most at risk of racism include people of Chinese and Indian backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Māori.

6. **Long working hours and overwork are a critical issue.** For many people, long working hours and overwork create unsustainable ways of working and are having a negative effect on productivity, health, team cohesion and retention. In some cases, the impact on individuals is devastating.

7. **The impact of long working hours is also not being experienced equally,** with some of those who are working the longest hours not feeling overly negatively affected as they feel like they have enough agency and enough reward to manage those hours. Others, however, are working long hours and feeling like they don't have enough control or reward.

8. **EY Oceania's people believe that many of these issues** – in particular, long working hours and, to a lesser extent, bullying – have their origin in the firm's business model, which they perceive as driving a focus on profit over people.

9. **This focus on profit margin shapes resourcing decisions at an engagement and Service Line level,** such that teams may not have the staffing required to deliver on an engagement without working excessive hours. Addressing this will require a shift in both resourcing and mindsets.

10. **Leadership across the firm is variable, with some experiencing exceptional leadership and others experiencing sub-optimal leadership.** This has created the sense that each person's experience of EY is heavily shaped by the 'leadership lottery'. This is true in leadership relationships with Partners and Directors especially and also with Counsellors.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

11. **There is low trust in reporting mechanisms, which means that people are often seeking to resolve issues without access to specialist support or formal investigation.** Some people have experienced retribution, particularly loss of access to advancement opportunities, when they have either formally or informally reported harmful experiences.

12. **The vast majority of EY Oceania's people want change,** and they are keen to do what they can to accelerate cultural transformation.

13. **The strengthened focus on diversity and inclusion has also led to a perception that there will be 'winners' and 'losers',** with some Anglo-Celtic men, in particular, fearing that they may be losing opportunities, status and position in the organisation.

14. **Based on all the evidence gathered, the Framework for Action is a blueprint for action against five key principles,** all of which are necessary to create a safe, supportive and healthy culture:

Principle 1: Human dignity is integral to leadership, recognition, and reward systems.

Principle 2: Work is costed, resourced, and scheduled appropriately.

Principle 3: Harmful behaviours are eradicated, and people are safe and thriving at work.

Principle 4: Diversity is celebrated.

Principle 5: Cultural and organisational change is co-designed and transparently monitored.

The Framework includes 5 experiments that go to the heart of EY Oceania's business model. Each of these experiments should be **implemented at scale** and be supported with a comprehensive measurement, evaluation and learning framework to enable the firm to identify which elements of those experiments have been successful and can be scaled up and which have had negligible effect on worker and Partner experience.

Now is the time for EY Oceania to be brave, to experiment, and to press pause on strategies that are not delivering. The firm owes it to its people, its clients and to the people of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, who are ready to support EY Oceania *"build a better working world"* for all.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Principle 1: Human dignity is integral to leadership, recognition, and reward systems

Human dignity is central to belonging, to wellbeing, and to creating high-performing teams and organisations.

The Review Team heard there are many leaders across EY Oceania who create cultures and teams that nurture human dignity, and work assiduously to support staff wellbeing and development.

But context is important. It can either facilitate or impede the embedding of human dignity. In professional services firms, individual leaders operate in a broader context which prioritises profit over people. We were told this is what the business model requires and it is resistant to change.

There are many elements which create and sustain the emphasis on profit, including performance metrics for Partners which place more emphasis on profit margin than people leadership; and utilisation targets for staff which crowd out learning, development and contribution to other firm-wide initiatives.

Shifting this picture is a complex challenge, requiring a multi-faceted approach. As such, the Framework provides Two Experiments in this area, and a range of targeted recommendations.

Title	Elements of the Experiment	Participants	Assessment
Experiment 1: Margin Relief Pilot	For the duration of the pilot, participating Partners would be assessed on revenue measures but not on profit margin. This will enable Partners to allocate the resources required to complete an engagement within time and quality parameters and reduce the imperative for staff to work long additional hours.	Partners from across all Service Lines	Assessment of the pilot should consider the extent to which participation has impacted: ▶ Resources allocated to complete an engagement within time and quality parameters; ▶ Hours worked by staff on those engagements; ▶ Staff and Partner wellbeing; ▶ Staff retention; ▶ Client experience; and ▶ Client outcomes.
Experiment 2: Utilisation Relief Pilot	For the duration of the pilot, utilisation targets for each participant would be adjusted downward.	Staff from across all Service Lines	Assessment of the pilot should consider the extent to which participation has impacted: ▶ Staff productivity; ▶ Staff wellbeing; and ▶ Staff retention.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Accountability and reward systems	
Key Performance Indicators are an expression of the firm's priorities and form the basis for accountability, recognition and reward systems	1. Review and revise the full suite of **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to: ▶ Set an expectation that all leaders must achieve a certain level of capability in people leadership, including capability in leading diverse teams, to be eligible for progression; ▶ Strengthen the people leadership measures at Partner and Service Line level so that those KPIs have the same status as Risk Management KPIs. This could include: incorporating an objective assessment of people leadership measures into the annual performance review for Partners; and further strengthening the people leadership measures for all staff at Manager level and above; ▶ Recognise the contribution of our people to improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) and EY Oceania's culture overall; and ▶ Strengthen accountability mechanisms for DE&I targets, to create a culture of shared responsibility for achieving those targets.
Excessive staff turnover is associated with both human and financial costs and may be an indicator of low psychological safety and unsustainable work practices within a team/service line.	2. Increase **accountability for staff retention** by charging the costs of excessive staff turnover back to service line/sub service lines.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Leadership mindset and capability	

Partners play a central role in shaping culture and expectations within service lines and on specific projects, and in creating opportunities for individual growth and advancement.	**3. Further develop the firm-wide approach to leadership,** by offering further training, coaching and mentoring on people leadership, including awareness of the impact of a leader's style on those they work with. This could include:
	
	▶ Offering the Leadership Shadow to all Partners and Directors, to assist them to better understand the impact their leadership style has on those working with and for them;[99]
	
	▶ Building skill and capability in conducting courageous conversations, providing feedback, and creating the conditions for psychological safety, cultural safety and success in teams;
	
	▶ Promoting social equity through creating opportunities for EY Oceania people with diverse lived experience to share their stories with their peers and with EY Oceania Partners (purposeful storytelling). This should include specific strategies to support leaders to reflect on how power operates in the organisation and for hearing the lived experience of:
	
	  • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
	  • Māori
	  • Culturally and linguistically diverse people
	  • LGBTQI+ people
	  • People with disability
	
	▶ Expanding the existing Cultural Mentors Program;
	
	▶ Incentivising participation in those sessions, so that those sharing their lived experience are recognised for their contribution to the firm's culture and development, and those attending are recognised for their engagement in learning; and
	
	▶ Introducing additional connection points between Partners and diverse cohorts of staff, through reverse mentoring, and time analysis to assist Partners to identify which staff groups they have limited contact with and where new relationships may be required to be built and nurtured.

Counselling Family Leaders and counsellors play a central role in shaping employee experience and in creating opportunities for individual growth and advancement.	**4. Further develop the Counselling model** and strengthen consistency of practice between Counselling Families and individual counsellors through: ▶ Reviewing and refining the selection criteria for Counselling Family Leaders, with a focus on excellence in people leadership; and ▶ Capability building to support each Counsellor to provide high quality, consistent support to each counsellee.

99   The Leadership Shadow, developed by Champions of Change Coalition and Chief Executive Women, is a simple management model to reflect on personal leadership on inclusion across four quadrants: What I say; How I act; What I prioritise and; What I measure. See Champions of Change Coalition 2014 It Starts With Us: The Leadership Shadow at https://championsofchangecoalition.org/the-leadership-shadow/

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Principle 2: Work is costed, resourced, and scheduled appropriately

At present, there is a perfect storm in resourcing for engagement.

As outlined in Principle 1, EY Oceania's reward and recognition systems are perceived as weighted heavily toward profit margin and utilisation. This can lead to an under-estimation of the resources required to deliver an engagement. At the same time, client pressures, regulator deadlines and competition between firms creates pressure to generate proposals which are modestly resourced and delivered within tight timeframes.

Addressing this will also require action across multiple fronts. As such, the Framework includes Two Experiments, which will allow EY Oceania to test some new ways of working, as well as a range of targeted recommendations addressing key levers for change.

Title	Elements of the Experiment	Participants	Assessment
Experiment 3: Enhanced Time Off In Lieu Pilot	This pilot would include: expanding access to Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) to staff across all Service Lines (including Managers and Directors); and increasing flexibility about how TOIL is generated and how it is accessed. Implementation of this pilot should include allocation of resources for additional staff capacity so as to avoid further creating cycles of work intensity.	Staff (Consultants, Managers, Directors) from across all Service Lines	Assessment of the pilot should consider the extent to which participation in the pilot has impacted; ▶ Total hours worked by staff, and capacity to manage periods of increased intensity; ▶ Staff wellbeing; ▶ Staff retention; and ▶ Staffing costs.
Experiment 4: Enhanced Project Management Support	This pilot would include increasing investment in project management and coordination, including: providing participating Managers and engagement teams with administrative support (e.g. a part-time Executive Assistant); and allocating a Financial Management Administrator to participating project teams.	Project teams from across all Service Lines	Assessment of the pilot should consider the extent to which participation in the pilot has impacted; ▶ Overall project delivery; ▶ Hours worked by Managers and Directors; ▶ Staff wellbeing; and ▶ Staff retention.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Quote realistically (cost appropriately) and quote realistic timeframes	
Projects need to be accurately scoped to secure sufficient resources for delivery.	5. Strengthen the firm-wide approach to **project scoping, resourcing and costings** including through increasing investment and capability in resourcing and work design (with a focus on planning and scoping skills) and optimising administrative and digital infrastructure.
Long working hours and the potential negative impacts on employee well-being is a shared challenge in many Professional Services Firms in Australia. There is potential for peer learning and a systemic shift if the Big Four work on this collaboratively.	6. EY Oceania to lead the development of an **industry-wide code of practice** for 'the Big Four', through the Australian Public Policy Committee, that: ▶ Sets a shared aspiration of healthy and safe workplaces in which people are thriving; ▶ Agrees on key elements to achieve healthy and safe workplaces, and to reduce overwork and long working hours; and ▶ Provides a mechanism for negotiating with regulators and with key clients on legislative, regulatory or practice issues (e.g. the timing of audit cycles) that may be driving overwork and long working hours.
Allocate the resources needed	
Ensure that the firm is engaging the capacity of all staff and that there is shared accountability for under-utilisation.	7. Pilot the **blind assignation of junior staff** (ie newly employed graduates and interns) to ensure a more equal distribution of work hours to the whole talent pool. This pilot should: ▶ Seek to build shared (rather than individual) accountability for under-utilisation; ▶ Include a governance role for the resource management team; and ▶ Be evaluated to assess the impact on work hours, duration of time on the Bench, and the extent to which it has generated new work opportunities for diverse cohorts.
Build on initiatives already underway in EY Oceania to more accurately capture hours worked and reduce long working hours and overwork.	8. Progress, implement and evaluate **pilots co-designed with staff and Partners,** namely: ▶ The "Work Pressure Sprint", the purpose of which is to test a range of solutions to long working hours and overwork; and ▶ The "Work Effort Harmonisation Sprint", an initiative designed to increase accurate completion of timesheets and to strengthen partner accountability for that accurate completion. This will: • provide a more accurate picture of the actual working hours of staff • address any cultural barriers to accurate completion of timesheets • assist the firm to cost engagements more accurately into the future

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Principle 3: Harmful behaviours are eradicated, and people are safe and thriving at work

EY has bold aspirations for workplaces across the globe, with a stated intent of creating "a better working world" for all.

There is some way to go for EY Oceania in achieving that purpose.

Too many people in EY Oceania have experienced harmful behaviours and have not felt confident accessing reporting or support systems. EY Oceania's staff and Partners believe there is also work to do to strengthen accountability across the firm.

Safety is foundational, but the true goal is a workplace in which each person can thrive. This will require strengthening wellbeing measures and creating a culture in which embedding respect and nurturing wellbeing is recognised as being good for the individual, good for the firm and good for clients.

Rationale	Recommendation
Leadership	
Leaders across the firm have a shared understanding of the impact of harmful behaviours and take visible action to address that harm and eradicate those behaviours.	9. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and all Partners should develop a signed **Statement of Acknowledgement** that: ▸ Commits to a safe and inclusive workplace, including addressing sexual harassment, bullying, racism and other forms of discrimination in the workplace; ▸ Commits to addressing the wellbeing impacts of long working hours; ▸ Acknowledges the harm that some people have experienced while working at EY Oceania; ▸ Outlines the case for change and EY Oceania's commitment to implement the recommendations in this report; and ▸ Is disseminated across the firm, with a commitment to ELT and Partners sharing their personal reflections on stories contained in this report as part of the communication strategy.
Awareness and capability	
Work with the Cultural Diversity Network to further understand and address the level and nature of racism experienced by staff and Partners within EY Oceania.	10. Given the higher prevalence of racism experienced by some groups within EY Oceania, introduce **human-centred design sprints with specific cohorts** to better understand and respond to the racism directed towards them.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Ensure that everyone is clear on EY Oceania's expectations of staff and Partners, and that each person understands the pathways for accessing reporting and support.	**11.** Strengthening **contemporary, evidence-based training** on bullying, sexual harassment, sexism, anti-racism and cultural capability for all staff and Partners, including all new recruits. This should include: ▶ Providing tailored training on bullying and sexual harassment to ensuring that all staff and Partners understand that creating inclusive and culturally safe workplaces is integral to EY Oceania's ability to deliver on its purpose, KPIs and client engagements; ▶ Providing tailored training on bullying and sexual harassment to those most likely to hear disclosures; ▶ Making cultural capability, cultural safety and racial literacy training mandatory for all Partners and a pre-requisite for those being considered for Partnership, for all Counselling Family Leaders, for anyone working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Māori accounts or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Māori stakeholders, and for anyone with an Indigenous Counsellee; ▶ Providing all people managers and Counsellees with targeted training on leading and managing people in culturally diverse teams; and ▶ Ensuring that EY Oceania has sufficient capability and capacity to deliver the training required.
Policies	
Strengthen the policy framework to embed people centricity throughout, including those policies regarding disrespect, performance management, complaints and reporting.	**12.** Streamline and simplify the **policy framework** to create a strong operational framework for prevention, early intervention, responding to harmful behaviours, and creating physically and psychologically safe workplaces.
Access to wellbeing leave and other measures	
Ensure that all staff and Partners have access to information about the measures currently available to them, and are able to access those measures.	**13.** Strengthen the firm-wide focus on wellbeing through: ▶ Aggregating and promoting suite of existing EY measures available to reduce working hours and support wellbeing (eg being able to use sick leave for wellbeing); and ▶ Building "recovery at work" into individual, engagement team and firm-wide resourcing decisions.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Reporting, investigation and resolution of reports	
Create a people-centred, transparent and trusted reporting process.	14. Optimise the **reporting process,** with a focus on: ▶ Increasing appropriate access to reporting options identifying opportunities for early intervention, including embedding prevention and early intervention into EY Oceania's existing suite of quality, and workplace safety and risk management infrastructure and tools; ▶ Triggering investigation of anonymous reports once a threshold has been achieved (such as 3 anonymous reports against the same person, or a certain level of seriousness); ▶ Improving communication to all parties in a report, to improve transparency and clarity around timeframes and the process; and ▶ Reducing the time from report to resolution.
There are proportional outcomes for substantiated breaches.	15. Strengthen **accountability arrangements,** so that leaders whose behaviour does not align with EY Oceania's purpose, values and Leadership Charter, are provided with feedback, an opportunity to learn and change; and to ensure proportional consequences for those whose behaviour remains inconsistent with EY Oceania's standards and expectations.
Protection from retribution is critical to a safe and accessible reporting system.	16. Strengthen mechanisms for **identifying when retribution is occurring** as a result of a complaint and implement proportional consequences for those who participate in this behaviour. This should include monitoring outcomes for people who report harmful behaviour over a three- six- and twelve-month period. 17. Track **outcomes for all parties in a report** (reporter, respondent, counsellor) over an eighteen-month period, to monitor the impact of the complaint and identify any areas where additional support may be required. The monitoring process should include quantitative and qualitative indicators, including retention, promotion/progression/remuneration outcomes as well as individual wellbeing and experience measures**.**
Build a shared understanding of action taken on substantiated reports.	18. Develop **new principles on confidentiality and transparency** to enable de-identified reporting on action taken on substantiated reports of bullying, sexual harassment, racism or other forms of discrimination; and embed those principles into the Partnership Agreement and Employee Agreement.
Support	
All people involved in a reported incident have access to tailored support.	19. Strengthen **support for all parties in a report,** given the significant potential mental health impacts for each party. This should include ensuring that support providers have diverse staff and capability in providing culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori and CALD staff, and could include creating a panel of external support people.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Principle 4: Diversity is celebrated

A diverse workforce, and a culture that celebrates and engages differences, is central to innovation and impact.

At present, EY Oceania has a relatively diverse workforce. However, that diversity is often under-valued across the firm, with people from diverse backgrounds – particularly people from culturally diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori and neurodiverse people – experiencing pressure to conform to dominant norms rather than bringing different ways of thinking and working to the fore.

The Review also heard that the pathway to promotion is significantly harder for those who do not fit with dominant organisational norms.

These dynamics cause significant individual cost, with diverse staff and Partners feeling under-valued and unsure about their future in the firm. These dynamics also represent a missed opportunity for the firm to learn, grow and innovate, and in doing so create new products and new markets.

Title	Elements of the Experiment	Participants	Assessment
Experiment 5: Measure and reward contributions to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) activities	This pilot would include contributions to firm-wide DE&I activities (such as participation in Diversity Networks, Māori Staff Network and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network and/or successful sponsorship of promotion for staff from diverse backgrounds) as a factor in annual performance appraisals. This could be achieved through a variety of means, including utilisation relief or establishing engagement codes to enable time spent on these activities to contribute to utilisation targets or otherwise contribute to the performance assessment of the individual.	Open to all staff and Partners with a particular focus on those currently active in DE&I initiatives in the first instance.	Assessment of the pilot should consider the extent to which participation in the pilot has: ▶ Increased participation in DE&I activities; ▶ Increased wellbeing and safety among those active in DE&I initiatives; and ▶ Impact on DE&I targets.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Opportunities	
Test whether changing the architecture of the promotions system to remove barriers for women, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Māori people increases opportunities.	**20. Establish a Working Group to explore the feasibility of piloting an opt-out promotion system.** ▶ This Working Group should include representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network, the Māori Staff Network, Pasifika Network, and the Diversity Networks, with a view to considering whether such a pilot would reduce intersectional and structural disadvantage.

EY Oceania has access to the full talent pool, and all staff and Partners have access to advancement opportunities.	**21. Continue to drive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, including diversifying the Executive Leadership Team and the Partnership Group, through:**
	
	▶ Reviewing and strengthening **sponsorship programs**, including expanding the Cultural Diversity mentoring program to include Senior Managers, Directors and New Partners and creating a Cultural Diversity Sponsorship program for high performers;
	
	▶ In consultation with the Diversity Networks, **reviewing and addressing structural barriers to progression** including promotion into the partnership. This should take an intersectional lens and include:
	  • The experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
	  • The experience of Māori staff and Partners
	  • The experiences of women, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (including Pasifika), LGBTQI+ people, and people with disability
	
	▶ Developing **targeted strategies to address the specific challenges** experienced by parents returning from parental leave, lateral hires, Directly Admitted Partners, and people on a working visa;
	
	▶ Increasing the profile of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Champions, including exploring opportunities for Champions to formally contribute to the promotions process; and
	
	▶ Increased focus on **implementation of targets** for the cultural diversity of Partners and Directors and pay parity for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including increased championing of the targets by senior leaders at both firm and service line levels, and increased resourcing of work to attain those targets.

Rationale	Recommendation

	22. In collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network, the Māori Staff Network, the Pasifika Network and the Diversity Networks and a panel of diverse leaders from outside the firm, review **current recruitment pathways and processes** for junior staff, lateral hires and Directly Appointed Partners, with a view to:
	
	▶ Expanding engagement with:
	   • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
	   • Māori
	   • people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Pasifika
	   • people with more diverse life experience
	
	▶ Strengthening the assessment of values alignment alongside technical competency; and
	
	▶ Strengthening the role of service lines in supporting new recruits.

All staff capability and all staff experience	
All staff have the skills and knowledge to create inclusive workplaces and to deliver on EY Oceania's purpose and engagements.	**23.** Strengthen **onboarding,** so that all new staff and Partners are actively welcomed into EY Oceania and have the opportunity to connect and succeed from commencement. This should include tailored support across the first year of engagement at EY Oceania and include peer support among new staff, lateral hires and Directly Appointed Partners.
Data	
Strategies are informed by evidence and appropriately targeted.	**24.** Strengthen the **collection, reporting and utilisation of data,** including: ▶ Working with each of the Diversity Networks to improve completeness of demographic data. This could include both introducing new, anonymised methods of data collection as well as strengthening safety to disclose; ▶ Developing a communication strategy to increase the profile of existing data and build shared understanding of the rationale for increased data collection into the future; and ▶ Interrogating retention and promotion data through an intersectional lens.[100]

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100 This should include, at a minimum, gender and cultural and racial background.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Rationale	Recommendation
Support	
Cultural support is central to creating a culturally safe workplace for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori staff and building the capability for EY Oceania to deliver on engagements working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Māori people	25. **Strengthen, expand, and resource approaches to embed cultural support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori staff.** This should be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Māori, staff in each country but could include: ▶ Establishing a pool of (external) Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori coaches and mentors available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Māori staff and provide cultural guidance to EY Oceania; ▶ Providing the option of working on country for a period of time each year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; ▶ Strengthening support for and investment in Māori staff cultural support networks, including cultural retreats; and ▶ Resourcing Māori staff to maintain and strengthen cultural connection, cultural knowledge and cultural skills (eg through Māori language classes, cultural education programs, and attendance at culturally important events).
Social events	
Improve access to workplace social events.	26. **Create safe and inclusive social events by:** ▶ Diversifying the approach to social events to reduce the prominence of alcohol, and ensuring a mix of events which both include and exclude alcohol; and ▶ Ensuring all staff and Partners are aware that social events are optional and that non-attendance will not disadvantage them in relation to advancement.

7. Conclusion and Framework for Action

Principle 5: Cultural and organisational change is co-designed and transparently monitored

Strengthening EY Oceania's culture will require shifts in mindsets, power dynamics, processes and systems across the firm. This Framework for Action has drawn heavily on the lived experience of EY Oceania's staff and Partners, and it is imperative that the implementation of this Framework is co-designed and creates opportunities for people across the firm to contribute to the change.

Central to maintaining engagement and confidence in the change process is a commitment to transparent monitoring and evaluation. This will enable the firm to identify where implementation is on track, with activities underway and shifts in impact and outcomes, and where progress has stalled. Re-administering the survey developed for this Review every two to three years through an independent provider and tracking key indicators of progress will assist in this over the medium term.

Rationale	Recommendation
Leadership	
Ensure effective implementation and embedding of the recommendations across the organisation.	27. Establish a high-level **Implementation Taskforce** to oversee the implementation of all recommendations. That Taskforce should be co-chaired by the Managing Partner and a Senior Partner, with gender equal co-leadership, and include representatives of the Executive Leadership Team, the Diversity Networks, Partners, and the Leadership Advisory Forum; and should be resourced to: ▶ Lead, coordinate and inform the response to this Review, including implementation of recommendations and evaluation and reporting; ▶ Commission the development of a Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework to monitor implementation, impact and outcomes. This should include development of a dashboard which is shared with Partners and staff on a regular basis to enable concurrent monitoring of implementation and impact; and ▶ Commission an independent evaluation three years after the completion of this Review to assess progress.

Policy Assessment – Harmful Behaviour Policies

Key to assessment:

- Yes - the policy dimension meets the criteria
- Partial - the policy dimension partly meets the criteria
- No - the policy dimension does not meet the criteria

Criteria	Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy (Global)	FP 107 Workplace Behaviour Policy (Aus & NZ)
Policy objectives and application		
1. Does the policy apply broadly to all workplace participants including employees, contractors, clients and customers?	▶ The policy applies globally but needs to clarify application when a local policy in place. Ideally, the local policy would link and cascade from the global policy. ▶ Policy mentions Canadian worksites and supports, which may cause confusion with who this policy applies to.	▶ The policy applies to all partners, staff members and contractors located in EY Oceania offices (in any work-related context) in both Australia and New Zealand.
2. Is there a stand-alone policy or policies on bullying, racism and sexual harassment that is easily accessible to employees, at all levels and from a variety of access points? i.e. Is it written in 'plain English' or local language/s and tailored to employees who may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment? ▶ Is there a quick guide people can access for immediate advice?	▶ The one policy attempts to deal with multiple serious workplace issues. ▶ Accessibility of the policy is unclear. ▶ It is recommended to redraft in plain language to provide clear definitions of each harmful behaviour.	▶ This is not a stand-alone policy. More detailed prevention and response strategies for each harmful behaviour is recommended, alongside a quick guide designed to support a person who may need immediate advice and support. It is recommended that policy be called 'Harmful Behaviours Policy' with separate sections. ▶ Accessibility of the policy is unclear. ▶ Policy is written in plain language, but redrafting in person-centred language is recommended.
3. Does the policy include a company-wide leadership statement communicating zero harm in relation to bullying, racism and sexual harassment, and a leadership statement committing to the elimination of bullying, racism and sexual harassment within the company? ▶ Are these statements communicated across multiple, accessible platforms? ▶ Provide an explanation of zero harm and consistent messaging on the company's stance on sexual harassment. ▶ Include a leadership statement committing to the elimination of sexual harassment and everyday sexism. ▶ Include a leadership statement committing to the elimination and prevention of any form of harassment.	▶ The policy states that EY Oceania is committed to providing a professional business environment. It is recommended that policy is redrafted to include a strong leadership statement communicating zero harm in relation to harmful behaviours. ▶ Communicate statements widely across the company and ensure accessibility in different languages.	▶ Provide an explanation of zero harm and consistent messaging on the company's stance on different forms of harmful behaviours.

Criteria	Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy (Global)	FP 107 Workplace Behaviour Policy (Aus & NZ)
▸ Communicate such statements widely and across multiple platforms. ▸ Include a leadership statement committing to the elimination and prevention of any form of racism. ▸ Include a leadership statement on zero harm in relation to harmful behaviour	▸ Redrafting in language that is more person-centred and aligned with the Global Code of Conduct is recommended, also including a zero harm statement within the Code.	▸ Include a leadership statement committing to the elimination of sexual harassment and everyday sexism, and the elimination and prevention of bullying, harassment and racism.
4. Does the policy define bullying, racism and sexual harassment clearly and in line with the relevant laws (if applicable) and state that bullying, racism and sexual harassment are both unacceptable and unlawful? ▸ Is there reference to international standards and human rights, including the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention that upholds the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment?	▸ Include reference to international standards or human rights. ▸ Clearly link global policy to local policy in each jurisdiction. ▸ Strengthen statement that bullying, racism and sexual harassment are unlawful.	▸ Policy currently manages different countries laws (Aust & NZ) within one policy. It is recommended that policy is redrafted for each country, making specific reference to legislation (and specific country external support contacts). ▸ Strengthen statement that sexual harassment is unlawful.
Prevention		
5. Does the policy provide concrete and relevant examples to demonstrate, e.g. examples to demonstrate the range of behaviours that may: a) constitute bullying, racism and sexual harassment; b) who can experience these behaviours; and c) the contextual factors and circumstances in which these behaviours may occur in the workplace?	▸ Promote through the global policy an understanding of the drivers of sexual harassment (i.e. gender inequality), alongside explanations of how power dynamics and contextual factors contribute to the risk of sexual harassment.	▸ **Sexual harassment and everyday sexism:** include context and specific examples of sexual harassment to increase relatability and recognition of sexual harassment in the workplace. Provide an understanding of the drivers of sexual harassment (i.e. gender inequality). Include and explanation of how power dynamics and contextual factors contribute to the risk of sexual harassment. ▸ **Harassment:** Include reference to the fact that bullying and harassment can affect anyone, alongside an understanding on the drivers of harassment (i.e. stereotypes and social norms, unequal power dynamics). It is recommended to include or clearly link (so it is readily accessible) to FP100 Standards of Professional Behaviour that describes expected standards of behaviour and provides guidance on personal relationships in the workplace. ▸ **Racism:** Include context and specific examples of racism. Provide an understanding of the drivers of racism.

Key to assessment:

Yes - the policy dimension meets the criteria

Partial - the policy dimension partly meets the criteria

No - the policy dimension does not meet the criteria

Criteria	Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy (Global)	FP 107 Workplace Behaviour Policy (Aus & NZ)
6. Does the policy set out actions being taken by the company to prevent bullying, racism and sexual harassment, as well as racial and gender inequality more broadly? Does the company clearly state its stance that everyday disrespect and sexism will not be tolerated?	▸ Include a statement covering EY Oceania's stance on everyday sexism, disrespect and casual racism.	▸ Include practical actions being taken on prevention of harmful behaviours.
7. Does the policy mandate compulsory training on bullying, racism and sexual harassment for leadership, management, and all employees?	▸ The policies are unclear on education and training initiatives. At a minimum, ensure mandatory attendance at training of all partners, staff and contractors. Uphold additional training requirements for managers and leaders. ▸ Include awareness and education on expected standards of workplace behaviour as part of any respectful behaviour training, ensuring attendance is mandated for all new and existing employees.	
Support and reporting		
8. Is there clear and specific information on where individuals who experience bullying, racism and sexual harassment can get help, support and advice, that is culturally safe and inclusive, both internally and externally (support should be available and provided regardless of whether someone chooses to pursue a formal report or complaint)?	▸ Clarify and link to local supports in global policy.	▸ Include additional options for specialist services and external support as needed. ▸ Provide a list of internal and external options for seeking help, support and advice to ensure cultural safety. ▸ Provide training for all employees on cultural competency, and person-centred and trauma-informed care and responses.
9. Does the policy explain the multiple access points for formal, informal and anonymous reporting? Is reporting from bystanders encouraged and supported? ▸ Does the policy make provision for historical complaints?	Global policy not assessed for this dimension.	▸ Expand information on the 'how to' for bystanders wanting to report harmful behaviour. Include information on support that is provided for bystanders reporting harmful behaviour. ▸ Clarify what criteria is used to determine whether or not a complaint falls under the terms of the policy. ▸ Include options to appoint an external mediator, rather than an employee of the company. ▸ Provide avenues for making historical reports.

Criteria	Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy (Global)	FP 107 Workplace Behaviour Policy (Aus & NZ)
Response		
10. Does the policy set out and provide guidance on the responsibility of managers and leaders on: a) prevention and early intervention of bullying, racism and sexual harassment? b) responding to disclosures of bullying, racism and sexual harassment in culturally safe and appropriate ways? c) Being an active bystander?	Global policy not assessed for this dimension.	▶ Provide guidance, training and education for managers on creating safe, respectful and inclusive cultures to encourage prevention and early intervention of behaviours that lead to harassment, racism, bullying and sexual harassment. Training should be mandated and include regular refresher training and skill development coaching. ▶ Provide guidance on responses to ensure cultural safety. ▶ Provide training for employees to provide knowledge and tools to intervene appropriately when witnessing harmful behaviour.
11. Does the policy clearly explain: a) the options for dealing with sexual harassment? b) that, as far as possible, the company will prioritise the wishes of the person impacted, rather than company legal risk mitigation? c) the circumstances in which the company will be obliged to act even if the person impacted does not want to act?	Global policy not assessed for this dimension.	▶ Use person-centred language, expressly stating that the wishes of the person impacted will be prioritised as far as possible, and ongoing support provided, regardless of their decision to make a report or not. ▶ Include an explanation of the circumstances in which EY Oceania would be obliged to act even if the person impacted does not want to act.
12. Does the policy clearly set out the following: a) expectations with regards to timeliness of responses to complaint and process updates for both parties? b) principles of procedural fairness and natural justice to be met during the complaint/investigation process? c) that vexatious complaints are prohibited, though are rarely made? d) potential outcomes of a complaint? e) potential consequences if the policy is breached, ranging in implication and severity? f) steps that will be taken to respond to offenders? g) that victimisation of parties involved in the complaint or investigation process is prohibited, including disciplinary consequences for anyone engaging in such behaviour?	Global policy not assessed for this dimension.	▶ Include a provision of process updates for parties involved in investigations. ▶ Include reference to the application of principles of procedural fairness and natural justice. ▶ Clearly set out the steps taken to respond to offenders.

Key to assessment:

Yes - the policy dimension meets the criteria

Partial - the policy dimension partly meets the criteria

No - the policy dimension does not meet the criteria

Criteria	Discrimination, Harassment and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy (Global)	FP 107 Workplace Behaviour Policy (Aus & NZ)
Resolution		
13. Does the policy articulate the following: a) expectations on all parties to keep details of the complaint confidential during the investigation (with the exception of accessing support services)? b) commitment to protect the identity and privacy of those impacted? c) the company's commitment to transparency, including providing de-identified examples of complaint outcomes, and where appropriate, disclosure of details of the rank or position of high-profile offenders?	Global policy not assessed for this dimension.	▶ Include that all parties should keep details of complaint confidential during the investigation process with the exception of accessing support ▶ Strengthen the commitment to protect the identity and privacy of those individual impacted. ▶ Redraft policy to include EY Oceania's commitment to transparency and prevention of harmful behaviour by providing on a regular basis de-identified examples of complaint outcomes, and where appropriate, disclosure of details of the rank or position of high-profile offenders.
14. Does the policy provide reasons or circumstances where the company may not be able to investigate or resolve a complaint? Does it outline options to seek redress externally in this circumstance? Does it make clear that ongoing support will be provided to all persons who make a report?		▶ Include reasons or circumstances where EY Oceania may not be able to investigate or resolve a complaint. ▶ Include external avenues for redress of complaints. ▶ Clarify that EY Oceania will provide ongoing support to all individuals who make a report.
15. Does the policy provide a timeline for review to ensure relevant and leading approaches are considered?	Include review date for the policy.	Include review date for the policy.

Policy Assessment – Diversity and inclusion policies

Key to assessment:
- Yes - the policy dimension meets the criteria
- Partial - the policy dimension partly meets the criteria
- No - the policy dimension does not meet the criteria

Criteria	Inclusion and Non-Discrimnatory Global Policy
Policy objectives, application and commitment	
1. Does the policy apply broadly to all workplace participants including employees, contractors, clients and customers?	▶ The policy applies to all personnel. Expand to include clients and customers.
2. Is there a stand-alone policy on diversity and inclusion that is easily accessible to employees, at all levels and from a variety of access points? i.e. Is it written in 'plain English' or local language/s and tailored to employees more likely to experience exclusion or discrimination?	▶ The Inclusion and Non-Discriminatory Global Policy is a brief document, written in plain language so it is easily accessible to all employees. Accessibility of the policy is unclear.
3. Does the policy include a clear statement/s setting out the purpose, principles, and objectives of the policy? Does the policy refer to non-discrimination and equitable approaches for groups that may be disadvantaged? Are other relevant, support and/or aligned company policies listed?	▶ The policy includes the basic principles of maintaining a professional business environment. There is currently no purpose or objectives sections of the policy. ▶ Provide information on relevant support and aligned company policies. ▶ Expand the focus of the policy to include diversity and include elements and actions for creating an inclusive working environment.
4. Does the policy clearly set out or define what diversity and inclusion means to the company, including the company's commitment to supporting and ensuring an inclusive work environment and how this aligns with company values?	▶ Expand the commitment statement to create further clarity. ▶ Provide a statement outlining how policy objectives can enable the delivery of the company's objectives.
5. Does the policy set out actions being taken by the company to enable and ensure a diverse and inclusive work environment? Is there reference to any guidelines or processes in place to ensure diversity and inclusion at every level of the company (e.g. recruitment and promotional practices)?	▶ Rewrite policy to include actions being taken by EY Oceania to ensure a diverse and inclusive work environment. ▶ Include a reference to any specific and relevant policies and processes (broader than the Code of Conduct) in relation to diversity and inclusion.
6. Does the policy set out specific leadership actions to foster diversity and inclusion in the work environment? Is there mandatory training for leaders on how to eliminate systemic bias in talent management and other decision-making processes?	▶ Include specific leadership actions (Board, CEO, Partners) to ensure diversity and inclusion is prioritised at all levels and drives meaningful outcomes.
7. Does the policy mandate ongoing training and skill development coaching on awareness, inclusive and respectful behaviour for all employees, managers and leaders??	▶ Training should be mandatory for all leaders, managers, and employees. ▶ Ensure that training covers awareness, inclusion and respectful behaviours, alongside harmful behaviours.

Appendix A: Analysis of key EY Oceania policies

Criteria	Inclusion and Non-Discrimnatory Global Policy
Implementation and measurement	
8. Does the policy set out responsibility for implementation of a diversity and inclusion plan and initiatives to a specialised team working in a people, culture and wellbeing capacity?	▸ Assign responsibility for development and implementation of a plan and initiatives to a specific team working in a people, culture and wellbeing capacity.
9. Does the policy make provision for establishing measurable targets and key priorities in relation to diversity and inclusion, including: a) leadership accountability/KPIs? b) monitoring progress on established targets (e.g. regular engagement and culture surveys)? c) regular reporting of progress both internally (e.g. to the Board) and publicly (e.g. in annual reports)?	▸ Establish leadership accountability and KPIs in relation to diversity and inclusion ▸ Include regular engagement and culture surveys in monitoring systems to develop or improve diversity and inclusion policy, plans and initiatives. ▸ Report progress against a diversity and inclusion plan.
10. Does the policy set out and provide guidance on the accountability of: a) employees to contribute to and maintain an inclusive and diverse workplace, including demonstrating inclusion; respecting the diversity of others; and identifying and addressing exclusion? b) managers and people leaders to practice inclusive leadership; to set clear and measurable targets for teams and hold them accountable; and to assess and report on key priorities and targets? c) the CEO and senior executives to champion, role model and demonstrate inclusive leadership; and actively drive improvement and monitor progress against targets?	▸ Expand guidance on accountabilities to include the setting of clear and measurable targets for partners, staff, and contractors. ▸ Provide specific guideless for employees focussed on reducing bias and creating psychological safety and inclusion. ▸ Include guidance on the setting of clear and measurable targets for partners, staff, and contractors.
Review	
11. Does the policy provide a timeline for review to ensure relevant and leading approaches to diversity and inclusion are considered?	▸ Specify a timeline and responsibility for review of the policy, noting current policy has current effective date of 1 February 2018.

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