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PRESS RELEASE

MFA CENSUS REVEALS INDUSTRY HELD STRONG IN FACE OF COVID CRISIS

24 March 2021: The 2021 MFA Industry Census has revealed that while Covid-19 reduced the size of the industry population, media agencies held job losses to a 5.1% reduction despite a 15% drop in media agency bookings for 2020.

Conducted in September 2020, the 2021 Census recorded the first industry population decline in over a decade, a direct response to clients putting the breaks on ad spend at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The industry experienced a loss of \$1.1bn in media bookings for calendar year 2020, a decline of 15%, according to Standard Media Index (SMI).

The industry population settled at 3,703 media agency employees in 2020, a drop of 5.1% from 2019, but still higher than the 2018 population (3,684).

Staff turnover reduced by 3.9% points as people chose to stay in their current jobs in the face of Covid uncertainty, with regrettable loss at 23.3% (down from 27.2%).

A vacancy rate of 4.1%, registered in the latter half of the year, points to a potential recovery in 2021, backed up by increased media bookings and more positive sentiment among clients and agencies. 70% of the displaced media professionals who joined the MFA Support program, established to support media agency professionals who lost their job due to Covid-19, are now reemployed.

Additionally, the Census revealed a continuation of the trend towards greater

experience among agency employees and an increase in tenure, with 28% of media agency employees having more than 11 years' experience.

Overall, the average industry experience is now 8.7 years, up from 8.1 years the year prior. Agency tenure is 3.8 years (versus 3.4 years the year prior).

The number of women leaders remained the same as the previous Census, with 44% of all management roles held by women.

The representation of women in leadership positions within the industry is higher than the average in the Australian workplace as compared to [figures](#) by the Federal Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), which shows that women hold 32.5% of key management positions.

While the pay gap between men and women's average annual salary widened slightly to 3% from 0%, this is a reflection of the higher concentration of men in high-demand roles in the areas of SEO, and the smaller departments of Strategy and Creative Services – and a signal that we should invest in attracting more women in STEM roles. (SEO, SEM and Analytics are also the areas with the majority of vacancies.) Overall, pay parity for like-for-like roles remains a key achievement of our industry, in key contrast to the [Australian national pay gap](#) of 15%, as measured by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

View an infographic of the Census data on the [MFA website](#).

Peter Horgan, MFA Chair & CEO of Omnicom MediaGroup, said: “While we expected media agency population to contract in the wake of Covid-induced redundancies, it's encouraging to see that at a 5.1% drop we remain in a healthier position than other markets.

“This was due to our industry pulling together to reduce hours and salaries at the peak of the crisis in a bid to save as many jobs as possible. It's clear this approach worked. Even better, the vacancy rate indicates we're on the path to regain the majority of those lost jobs. Our industry focus remains on retention of talent and protecting our people.”

MFA CEO Sophie Madden added: “Despite recording the first population drop in

over a decade, other indicators of the health of our industry remained positive, including female representation in senior ranks, greater levels of experience and longer tenure. As a snapshot of the health of media agencies, the 2021 Census indicates that we're well positioned to rebound and grow over 2021."

The 2021 Media Communications Agency Industry Census is free to MFA members.

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ABOUT THE MFA

Established in 1997, the MFA is the peak body representing media communication agencies to government, industry, media owners and the general public. The MFA membership represents over 90% of all media agency placed media billings in Australia.

<https://www.mediafederation.org.au/>