

2016 Snapshot of the Australian Workplace

Author: Dr Lindsay McMillan OAM



a future
that **works**



Reventure Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation designed as a think-tank to undertake research and stimulate public debate and solutions about workplace matters.



Converge International was established in Australia in the 1960s to provide a range of specialist human resource services.

Campaign contact

Australian Public Affairs, 02 9234 3888



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Executive Summary



Introduction

Nearly half of Australia's workforce is likely to be looking for a new job in the next 12 months – as workplaces across the country struggle to renew in time to cope with modern challenges.

This 2016 Snapshot of the Australian Workplace surveyed 1,001 Australians and has identified for the first time the key challenges in our workplaces:

1. Job satisfaction and true engagement through purpose and meaning.
2. The impact of technology which changes the way work is defined and accomplished.
3. Performance levels including the distractions and the enhancers.
4. Health and life challenges and the speed of the workplace to adapt.

Workplaces which have responded to these challenges have happier, healthier and more engaged staff with higher levels of commitment and productivity.

This is the key to Australia's future and a challenge to all leaders, employers, employees, contractors and consultants.

With this Snapshot, we are launching Australia's first campaign to renew workplaces – **a future that works**. Our vision is to undertake additional research, spark a national debate, and help lead the necessary renewal by amassing a critical audience that is inspired to drive change.

I hope that you will join us on this journey and, that as a nation, we can find a better way to generate engaging workplaces.

Dr Lindsay McMillan OAM



Dr Lindsay McMillan OAM

Dr Lindsay McMillan OAM is a leading Australian academic, thought leader and social commentator in the field of human resources and the complexities of the modern workplace.

As the Managing Director of Reventure Limited, Dr McMillan is charged with undertaking research, raising public debate, and helping to renew workplaces for the future.

He is a regular researcher, author and presenter in Australia and internationally.

For several decades, he has led social enterprises and an international human resources company, as well as serving in non-executive director and chair roles with boards. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

It is this practical experience in a range of leadership roles that drives Dr McMillan to work with CEOs and their workplaces to strive for greater job satisfaction, true meaning and purpose, and optimal performance.

Dr McMillan holds a Doctor of Health Services (Psychology), a Master of Education and a Bachelor of Health Administration.

He is a recipient of an OAM for services to Australians with disabilities through a range of health organisations and employee assistance programs. He is a Churchill Fellow and a recipient of a Rotary International Foundation Fellowship.

Overview

Job Satisfaction

44%

of Australian workers are **extremely / very satisfied** with their current job



49% of workers will likely **look for a new position** in the coming year

71% believe their **boss has vision and direction**

About a **third (35%)** of workers feel the **poor leadership** at work is the most **stressful** part of their job

72% are searching for **purpose and meaning** through their work

Productivity

43% of workers say they are **working at peak productivity** most of the time

Half

of Australian workers have experienced one or more serious incidences of conflict or other negative impacts at work



Impact of Technology

54% of **millennials** are experiencing **technology-related stress** with Gen X at 47% and Boomer at 37%



Over **40%** of workers are **relying on technology** to perform over **75%** of their work. Gen X claims the highest percentage of work done using technology

65% agree that the **impact of new and emerging technologies** is affecting the way their work is defined and accomplished.



Health

About **29%** of Australian workers feel a **high amount of stress** in relation to their job often or always. **44%** feel a **high amount of stress at work sometimes**



Survey Demographics

This study consists of a nationally representative survey of...

1,001 Australian employed adults

The survey was approximately 15 minutes in length and conducted online in **February 2016**.

The sample was balanced for gender and age and included full and part time workers:

- **57%** full time workers
- **33%** part time workers
- **10%** self-employed / independent

The sample encompassed a wide variety of workplace settings, including: 40% professional office workers, 12% working in a retail store, 11% working from home or a virtual office, 9% in a school or educational facility, 6% at a construction site, mine or agricultural environment, and 6% in a medical office, hospital or lab.

Additional details on respondent profiles can be found in the **appendix section** on pages 26 & 27.

Note: the age definitions for the generation names used throughout the report are as follows:

- Millennial: age 18-31
- Gen X: age 32-50
- Boomer: age 51-69



Job Satisfaction

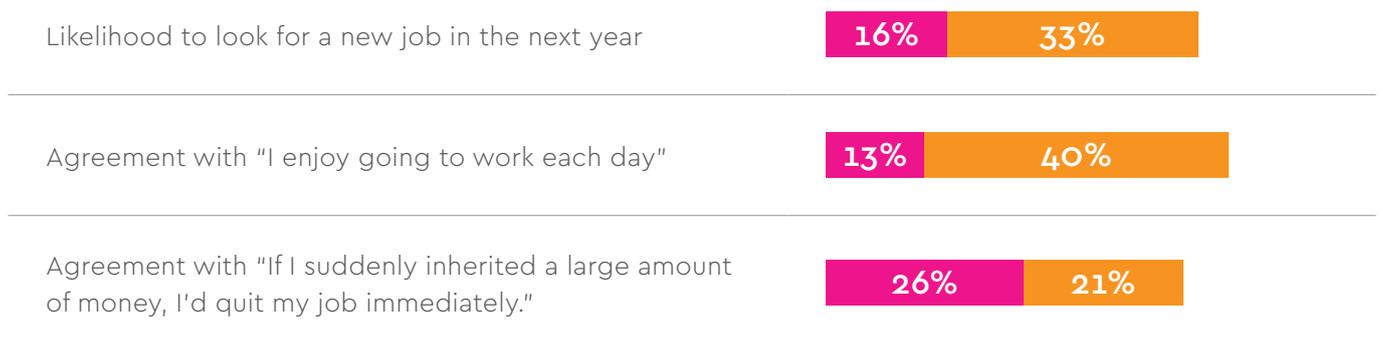
Current Job Satisfaction

- Nearly half of Australian workers (44%) are extremely/very satisfied with their current job. This is relatively flat across ages/generations, with a slight positive trend with the older age. A slightly higher percentage of workers (49%) claim they will definitely/probably look for a new job in the coming year.
- Millennials are the most likely to be looking for new employment in the near future (60%) as well as those who report frequent high stress levels at work (65%).

Satisfaction with current job



Key job satisfaction measures



Key ■ Strong / definite ■ Somewhat / possible



Support and rewards at work

- A majority (56%) of workers have someone they can ask for advice in their industry / workplace, with women much more likely to strongly agree to this statement. Younger workers are also much more likely to have this resource than older workers.
- Over half (52%) claim to have the training and resources they need for their job. However, about a third of workers (34%) are receiving the coaching and development they need to advance. For both statements, younger workers are more likely to agree vs. older and both also correlate with higher job satisfaction.
- Nearly half (47%) of workers say they regularly receive praise or recognition at work for a job well done; for those who do not – they are more likely to experience frequent high levels of stress at work.

Current work

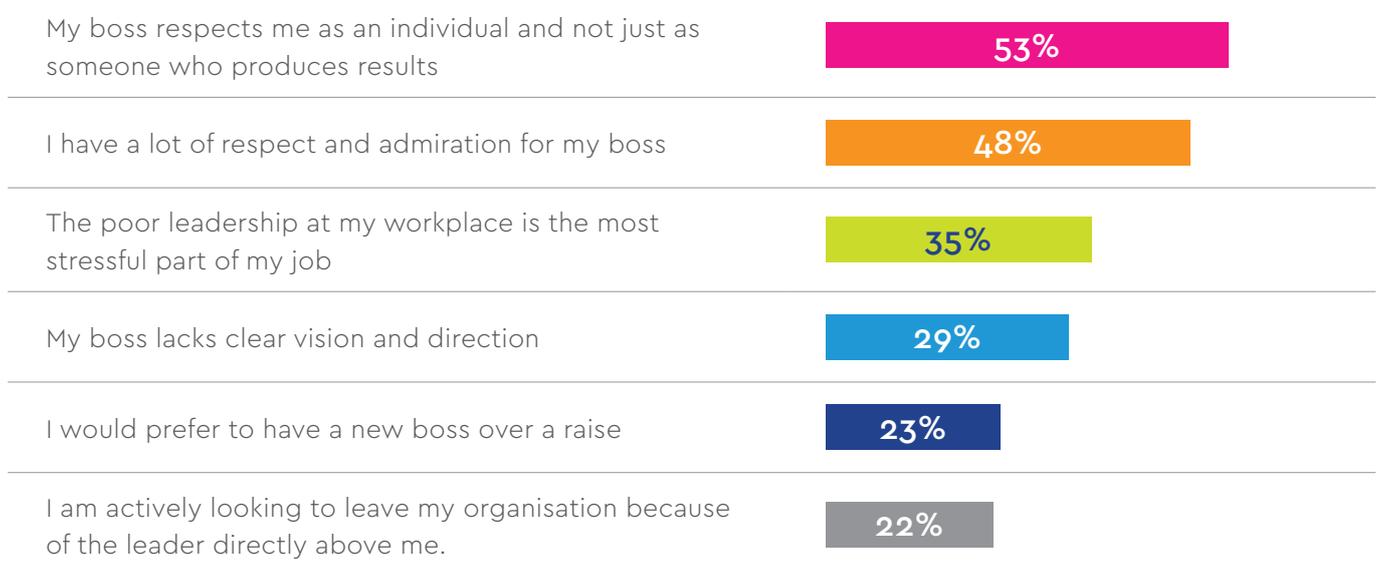
I have a personal friendship with someone in my industry / at work that I am comfortable going to for advice	56%
I have access to the training and resources I need to do my job effectively	52%
I regularly receive praise or recognition for work done well	47%
I am receiving the coaching and professional development need to advance	34%





Leaders at work

- **Mutual respect is a strong point for many employer-employee relationships and correlates with higher job satisfaction.** Older workers (age 50+) are more likely to feel respected by their boss and female workers are more likely to feel respect for their boss.
- The majority of workers think their boss has vision and direction (71%), especially female and older workers. Female and older workers are also more positive about staying with their current boss.
- However, for around a third of workers (35%), the poor leadership at work is the most stressful part of their job, especially for Millennials. For those who are experiencing frequent high work stress overall, the agreement with this statement rises to 57% (vs. 35% for all workers).



Job priorities

- Australian workers typically prioritise job security and competitive pay & benefits at the top of their list for a particular job. A sense of purpose / satisfaction and flexible working arrangements are also very important.
- Female workers rank all attributes higher than male workers, but are especially likely to find job purpose / meaning, security and flexibility to be of the highest importance.
- Competitive compensation and wellness programs are rated higher among full-time workers, while the inverse is true for flexible working arrangements which are more valued by part-time or self-employed workers.

How important are each of the following when it comes to finding or staying in a particular job? (% very important)	Total (n=1001)	Male Workers (n=535)	Female Workers (n=466)
A high level of job security	49%	37%	48%
Provides competitive pay and benefits	47%	44%	49%
Provides a sense of purpose or personal satisfaction.	42%	45%	53%
Allows for flexibility in working arrangements (e.g. flex-time, work from home)	41%	34%	49%
The company offers programs or resources to support employee wellness / wellbeing	29%	26%	33%
The company contributes to the greater good (e.g. socially or environmentally responsible, etc.)	33%	20%	25%

Why workers leave

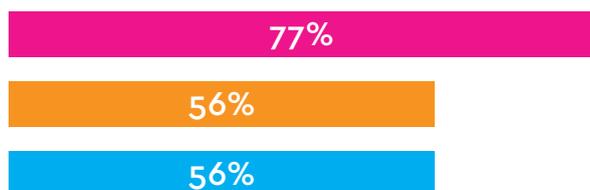
- Workers who are planning to look for a new job in the next year are less likely to feel that their job provides meaning and fully utilises their strengths. They are less likely to feel valued at work and enjoy going into work each day.
- Leaders at work are a big factor for those seeking new employment – poor leadership brings significant added stress and is an important reason to change jobs. Negative energy in the workplace also increases the likelihood of looking for a new job.

	Will look for a new job in the next year (486)	Will not look for a new job in the next year (515)
Agree "My job utilises my unique strengths, talents and capabilities".	53%	65%
Agree "I find purpose and meaning in the work I do".	52%	67%
Agree "I feel my contributions at work are valued".	49%	67%
Agree "I enjoy going to work each day".	47%	59%
Agree "The poor leadership at my workplace is the most stressful part of my job".	46%	25%
Agree "I feel a lot of negative energy in my workplace".	42%	25%
Agree "I'm actively looking to leave my organisation because of the leader directly above me".	36%	8%

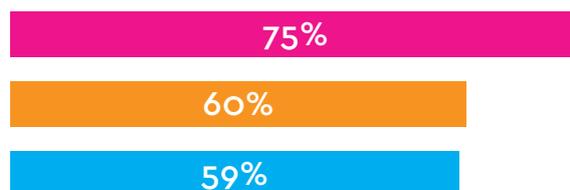
Purpose and meaning at work

- **There is a deep search for purpose and meaning especially through work.** Almost three quarters (72%) of Australian workers agree "I am looking for ways to live a more meaningful life". The younger the worker, the more likely they are to strongly agree with this statement.
- Agreement with this statement also appears to correlate with being less satisfied with their current job, more likely to be looking for a new job and more often experiencing high stress at work.
- 60% of workers agree that they do find purpose and meaning in their work and the older someone is, the more likely they are to find this true. The same is true for the 59% of workers who feel their contributions at work are valued. Unsurprisingly, agreement with both of these statements has a very strong correlation with job satisfaction.
- Younger workers are more likely to be seeking meaning and older workers are more likely to have realised meaningful work.

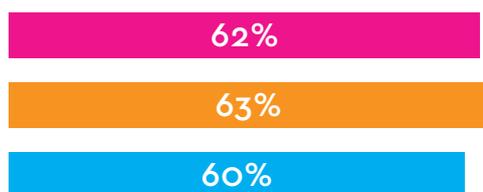
Millennials



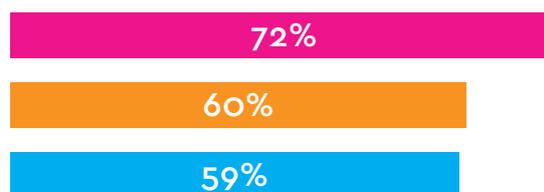
Gen X



Boomers



Total



Key

- I am looking for ways to live a more meaningful life.
- I find purpose and meaning in the work I do.
- I feel my contribution at work are valued.



Impact of Technology

Changes in the way we work

- The way work is conducted is changing – from the impact of an interconnected global economy to the ever-increasing rate of complexity.
- Over half of Australian workers agree with the reality of increasing change and complexity at work. Agreement with this statement is correlated with job dissatisfaction and more frequent high levels of stress at work.
- Over 40% of workers see the shift to a more connected global economy having a significant impact on the way they work. Agreement with this statement is also correlated with frequent high stress levels at work.

The shift to a more connected global economy has affected the way that I do my work.



At work, it seems as though things are becoming more complex and changing at a faster rate than ever before.



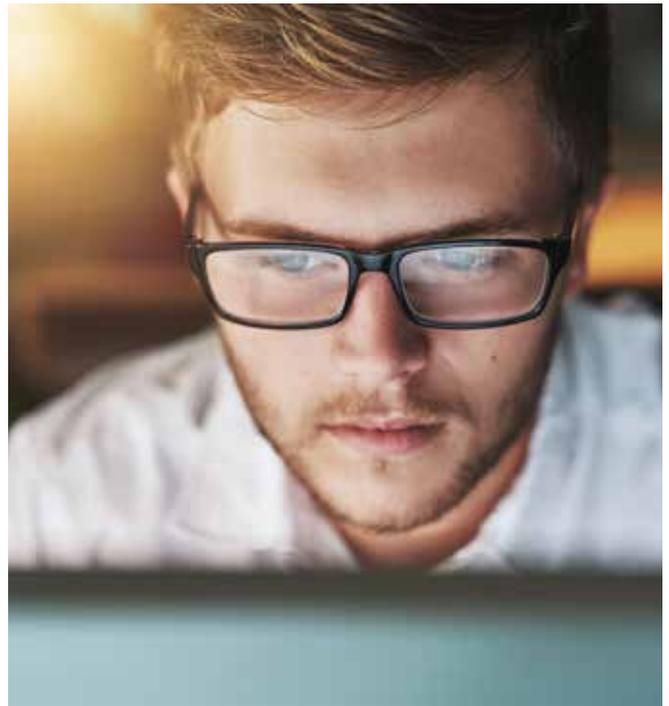
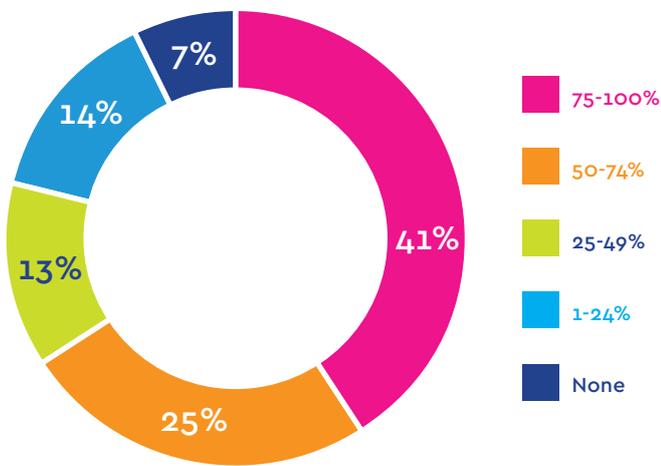
Key  Agree strongly  Agree somewhat



Impact of technology

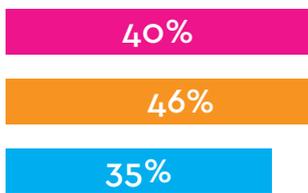
Emerging technologies are affecting how work is defined and accomplished. Over 40% of workers are relying on technology to perform over 75% of their work. Gen X-ers (age 32-50) claim the highest percent of work done using technology vs. the generations above and below them.

Percent of work done using technology

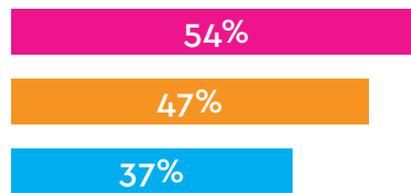


Generational split

Using technology for 75-100% of work



Agree "With technology, I feel like I'm 'always on' and cannot ever completely shut off from work."

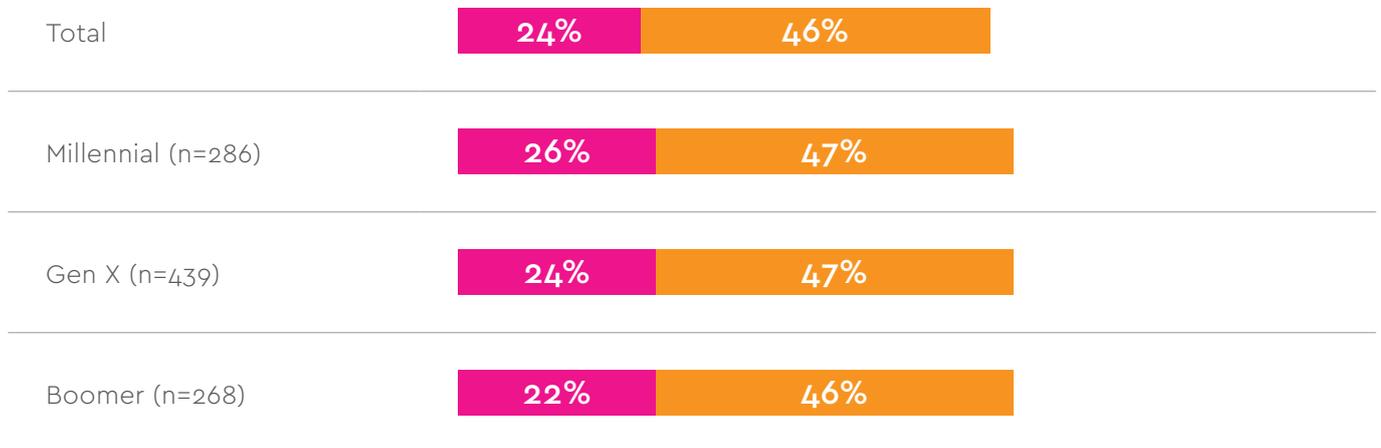


Key ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer

Working with technology

- 65% of Australian workers agree that "new and emerging technologies are impacting the way work is defined and accomplished. Agreement with this statement is correlated with frequent levels of high stress at work.
- Technology also brings with it the feeling of being 'always on' and unable to completely shut-off from work. 46% of workers agree with this sentiment and Millennials are especially susceptible (54% agree).

"New & emerging technologies are impacting the way work is defined and accomplished."



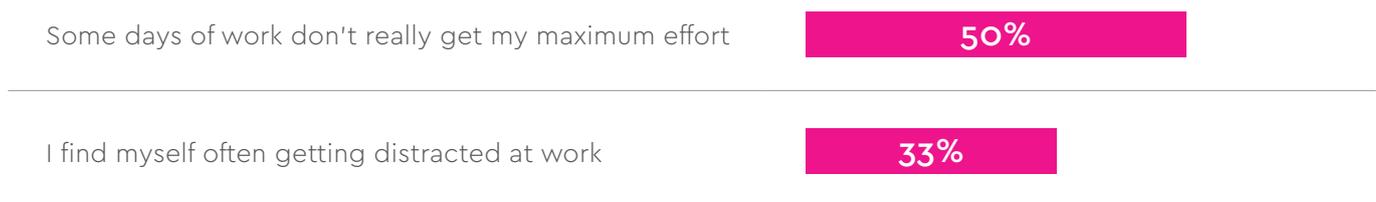


Performance

Performance

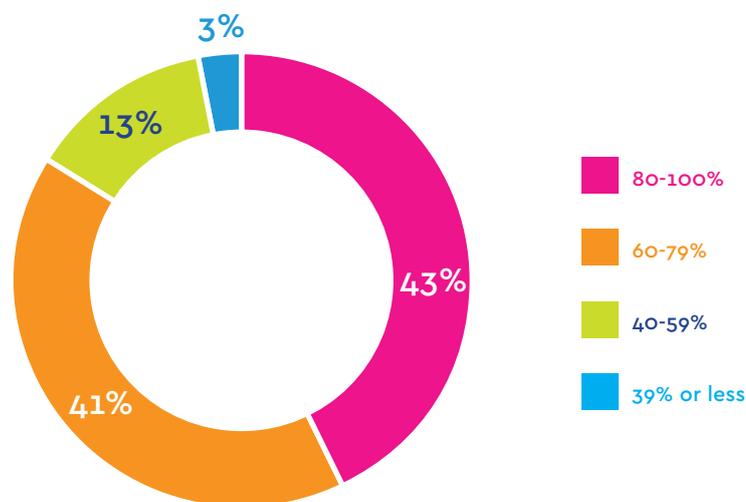
- Less than half (43%) of employed adults think they are working at their peak performance level most of the time (80-100% of the time).
- Women are more likely to report working at the highest performance level vs. men (48% vs. 39%)
- Boomers claim the highest performance level (55%) vs. the younger generations. Millennials claim the lowest time spent at maximum performance (35%)
- Half of workers admit that "some days of work don't really get my maximum effort", while a third find themselves often getting distracted at work.
- Younger workers are much more likely to agree with these two statements vs. older.

Statements relating to current work (n=1001)



Key  Agree (strongly / somewhat)

Time spent working at maximum productivity



Drivers of performance

Productive workers feel valued and that their contributions are meaningful. They respect and are respected by their leaders. They have access to the resources they need to be effective and to advance in their career. They understand the importance of setting aside time for relaxation and how to maximise their effectiveness at work with technology.

Measures among "High Productivity" workers (+/-pts vs. "Low Productivity")		High Productivity	+/- LP
Meaningful Work	Find purpose and meaning in their work	67%	+20
	Feel their job utilises their unique strengths, talents and capabilities	65%	+21
Feel Valued	Feel contributions at work are valued	64%	+20
	Receive praise and recognition at work	52%	+12
	Describe their work culture as: supportive	41%	+15
	Describe their work culture as: appreciative	33%	+10
Set Up for Success	Describe their work culture as: and healthy	34%	+10
	Have access to training and resources to do job effectively	56%	+21
	Receive coaching and development needed to advance	38%	+18
Effective Leadership	Boss respects as an individual	57%	+13
	Respect and admire boss	53%	+17
Maximise Time	Set aside time for relaxation	56%	+11
	Utilise technology more for work	44%	+8

Barriers to productivity

- Cynicism and negativity at work have a significant effect on job dissatisfaction and low productivity. Lack of positive interpersonal communication and a support network also take a toll.
- Stress, depression and anxiety are having a negative impact on productivity at work as well as missed days of work.

Measures among "Low Productivity" workers (+/-pts vs. "High Productivity")		Low Productivity	+/- HP
Relational breakdown	Have a personal friendship with someone at work/in their industry that they are comfortable going to for advice	44%	-19
	Have experienced high levels of negativity in interpersonal communication work in the past 6 months	29%	+11
Mental health & stress	Have missed work in the past year because of stress, depression or anxiety	20%	+9
	Rate their mental health as "excellent"	15%	-9
	Rate their mental health as "fair/poor"	30%	+12
Toxic workplaces	Negative energy in their workplace	37%	+5
	Describe their work culture as "cynical"	26%	+13
	Describe their work culture as "toxic"	18%	+6

High Productivity: spend 80-100% of time working at maximum productivity

Low Productivity: spend 0-59% of time working at maximum productivity (Moderate 60-79% not shown)

Conflict in the workplace

- Overall, half of Australian workers have experienced one or more serious incidences of conflict or other negative impacts from work. These experiences are highly correlated with job dissatisfaction.
- 1 in 4 workers have experienced inconsistent application of company policies.
- 1 in 5 workers have experienced major problems in communication with a co-worker or boss at work.

In the past 6 months, which of the following, if any, have you personally experienced at work?

	Total (1001)	Job Satisfaction	
		Satisfied (441)	Unsatisfied (141)
Inconsistent application of company policies and procedures	25%	14%	49%
High levels of negativity in interpersonal communication	20%	12%	48%
Major problems in communication with a co-worker or boss	20%	10%	43%
Conflict with a manager / boss	18%	9%	39%
Conflict with a co-worker	16%	11%	31%
A mental or physical health decline as a direct result of your work	14%	6%	40%
Verbal abuse or bullying	10%	5%	24%
Conflict with a direct report / employee	9%	6%	21%
None of the above	50%	63%	19%

Workplace environment

- Most workers select one or more positive workplace attributes overall - supportive, healthy, trusting and appreciative are selected most often. The workplace environment has a significant impact on job satisfaction overall as well as productivity at work.
- In particular, work cultures that are supportive and appreciative seem to correlate highly with job satisfaction and productivity.
- In a related question, 34% of workers agreed, "I feel a lot of negative energy in my workplace" and this agreement is almost double (64%) among those who are dissatisfied with their job.

Which of the following words would you say fit with your current workplace environment or culture?

	Total (n=1001)
Supportive	38%
Healthy	30%
Trusting	30%
Appreciative	29%
Competitive	27%
Innovative	23%
Creative	22%
Cynical	16%
Toxic	14%

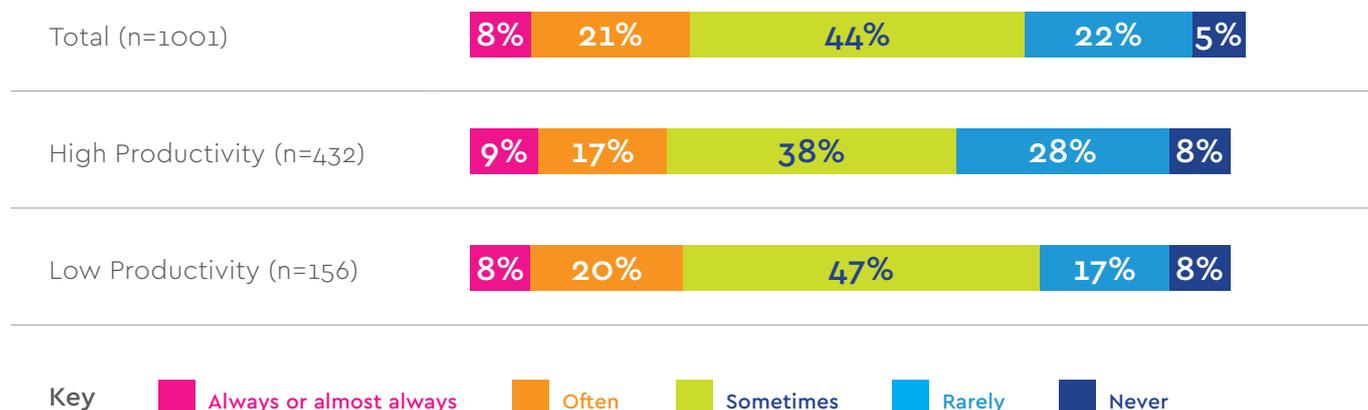


Health

Stress

- **About work, 29% of Australian workers feel a high amount of stress often or always at work.** The majority are the middle of the scale – 44% sometimes feel a high amount of stress related to work. Interestingly, the highest productivity workers are slightly less stressed than those with low productivity.
- Millennials claim to feel stress at work more often vs. older generations and those without children claim to experience less stress at work than those with 1-2 children at home.
- Full-time workers are more stressed than their part-time and self-employed counterparts and managers are more stressed than those without any direct reports at work.

In a typical week, how often do you feel a high amount of stress related to work?



High Productivity: spend 80-100% of time working at maximum productivity

Low Productivity: spend 0-59% of time working at maximum productivity (Moderate 60-79% not shown)

- Overall, 61% of workers are satisfied with the amount of stress they have in their lives (and 39% are dissatisfied).
- Men are slightly more satisfied with their stress levels than women while people in their 30s and 40s are least satisfied with stress levels.
- Satisfaction with overall stress levels correlates significantly with higher job satisfaction and lower frequency of high stress at work.
- Full-time workers are more stressed than their part-time and self-employed counterparts and managers of others are more stressed than those without any direct reports at work.

Mitigating stress

Engaging in any of the activities below is correlated with higher job satisfaction. This is especially true for physical exercise, relaxation time (overall, with friends or hobbies), and professional goal-setting. Most are also correlated with less frequent high stress levels at work.

Which of the following practices do you do on a regular basis?

	% Selected	Impact on Job Satisfaction	Impact on Reducing Work Stress Levels	Higher Likelihood Among
Set aside time for relaxation	52%	High positive impact	High positive impact	Older
Engage in physical exercise	51%	High positive impact	Moderate positive impact	Younger
Spend leisure time with close friends	49%	High positive impact	High positive impact	Women
Set aside time for personal hobbies	47%	High positive impact	High positive impact	Men
Say "no" to things that might cause too much stress	45%	Moderate positive impact	Moderate positive impact	Women
Plan/set personal goals	42%	Moderate positive impact	Moderate positive impact	Younger
Plan/set professional goals	28%	High positive impact	No positive impact	Men / Younger
Pray and/or meditate	17%	Moderate positive impact	No positive impact	Women
Plan/set spiritual/faith goals	13%	Moderate positive impact	No positive impact	Younger

Key ■ High positive impact ■ Moderate positive impact ■ No positive impact

Work / life balance

- Three-quarters (76%) of Australian workers claim to be satisfied with the balance they have between work and personal life.
- Millennial and Boomer workers are more satisfied than their Gen X counterparts.
- About half of workers feel their work/life balance has stayed the same over the past two years.
- Millennials are much more likely to claim it has improved (41%) vs. older generations (Gen X 26%, Boomers 20%).
- Feeling their work/life balance has improved is highly correlated with job satisfaction and lower frequency of high stress levels at work.

On average, has the balance between your work and personal life become better or worse in the past two years?



Overall, how satisfied are you in each of the following areas of your life?

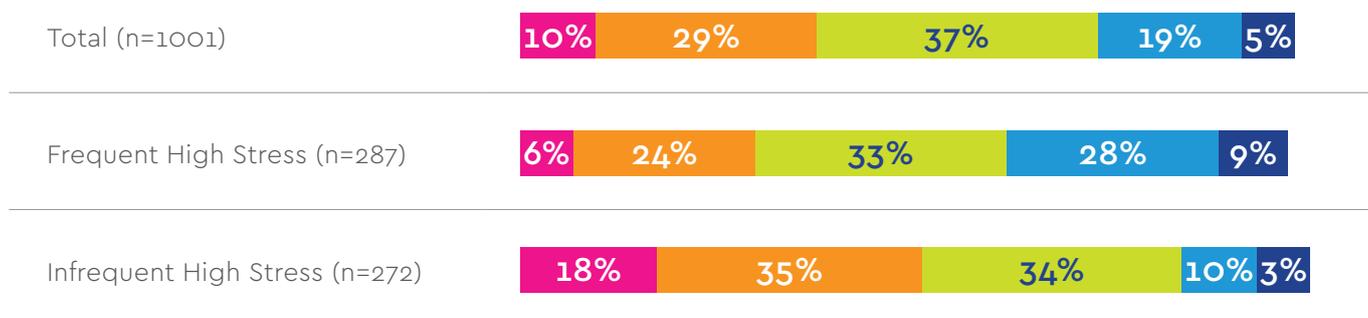
"The balance I have between my work and personal life."



Physical health

- **39% of Australian workers rate their physical health as excellent or very good.**
- In general, workers under frequent high stress have lower physical health ratings than those with infrequent levels of high stress at work.
- Directly related to health, **60% of workers are satisfied (very or somewhat) with the amount of sleep they get.** Men are slightly more likely to report that they are "very satisfied" with the amount of sleep they get vs. women.
- High satisfaction with amount of sleep also correlates strongly with job satisfaction and the frequency of high stress at work.

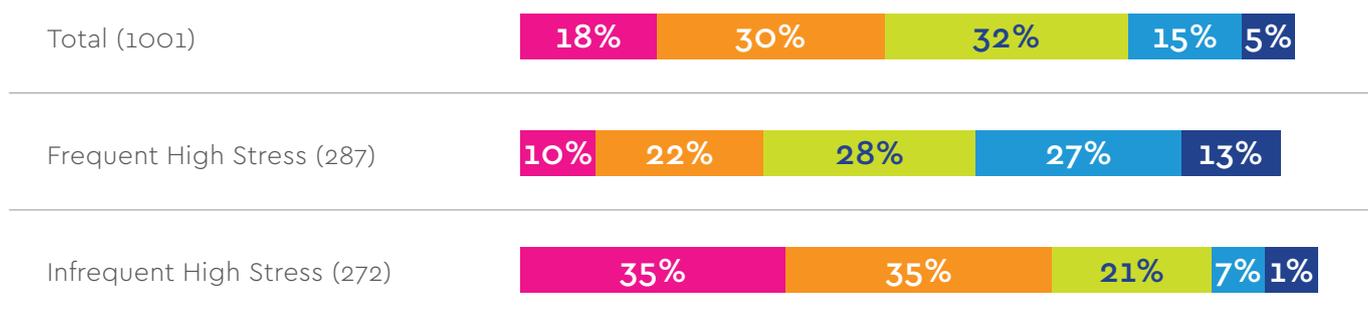
Physical Health Rating



Mental health

- **48% of Australian workers rate their mental health as excellent or very good.**
- In general, workers under frequent high stress have lower mental health ratings than those with infrequent levels of high stress at work.

Mental Health Rating



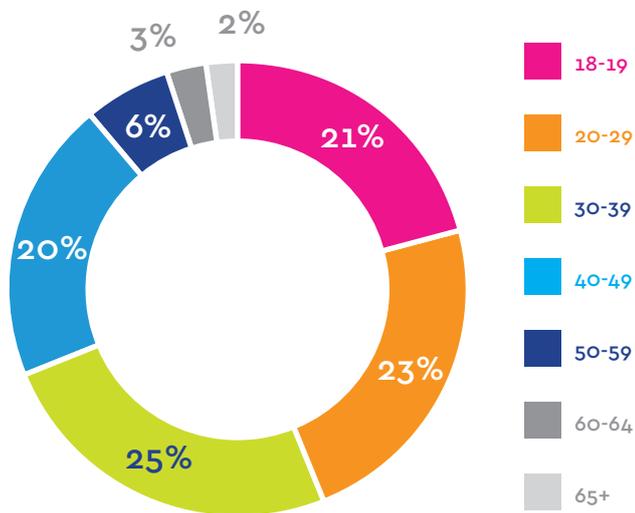
Key ■ Excellent ■ Very good ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor



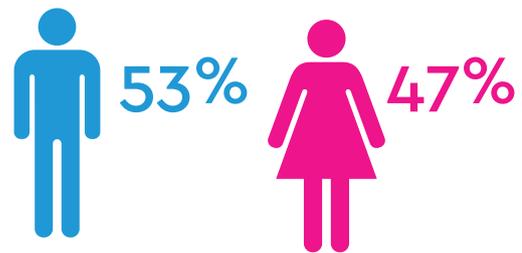
Appendix

Respondent profile

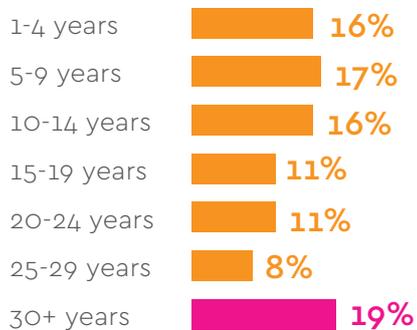
Age



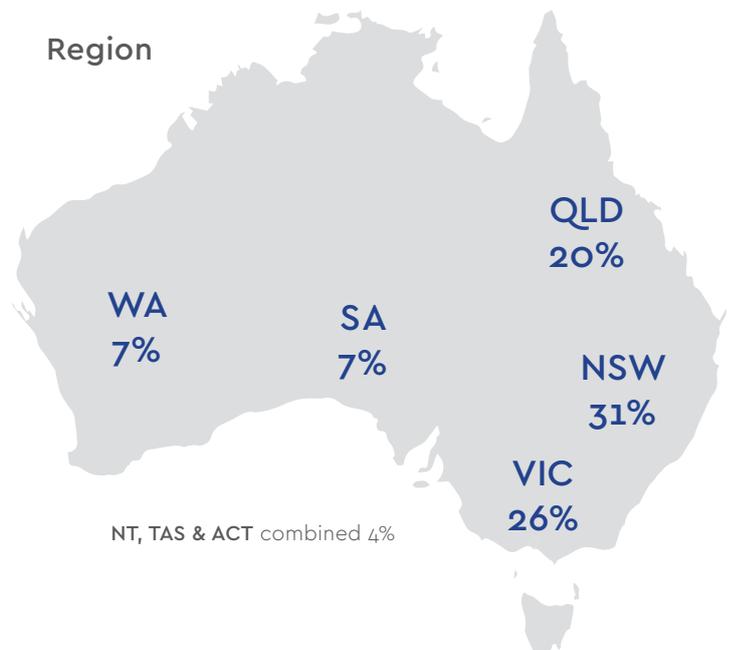
Gender



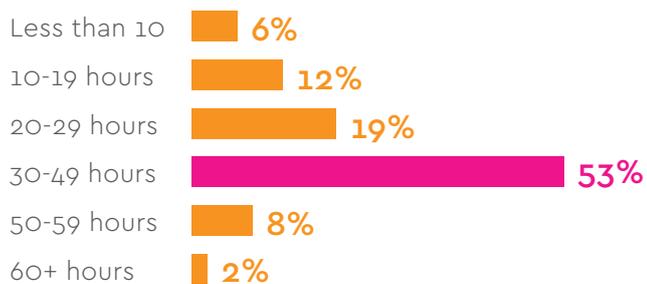
Years of Professional Experience



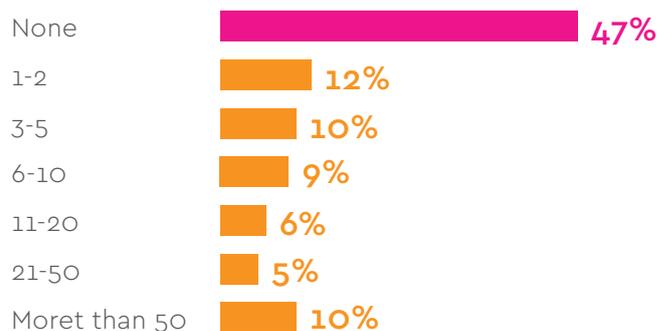
Region



Hours Worked in a Typical Week



Number of Direct Reports



- Men are more likely to work longer hours vs. women
- Age 30-49 work the longest hours overall, on average



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