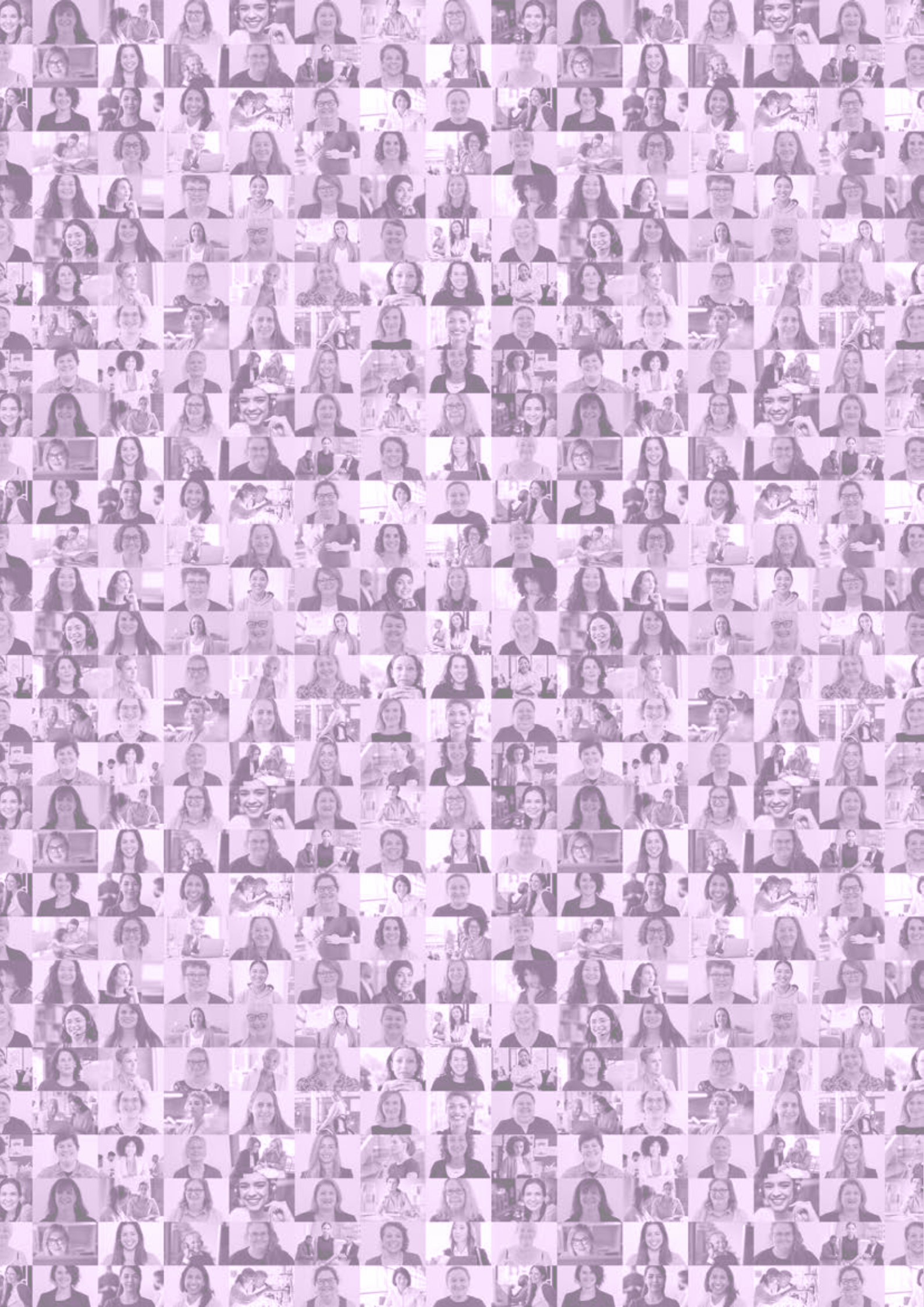




what women want

2024/25 SURVEY REPORT





WHAT WOMEN WANT 2024/25 SURVEY REPORT

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Community and Public Sector Union

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FOREWORD

I am excited to present the results of the Community and Public Sector Union's 12th *What Women Want* survey. This comprehensive survey gathers insights from women across various sectors, including the Commonwealth public sector, Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS), Australian Capital Territory Public Service (ACTPS), and parts of the private sector, addressing the key challenges they face in their careers.

The findings, drawn from women's responses nationwide, provide valuable insight into the critical issues that need attention in order to enhance the working lives of Australian women.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the dedicated workers from the Commonwealth public sector, ACTPS, NTPS, and the private sector who participated in the 2024 survey. Your input plays a crucial role in ensuring the CPSU continues to lead the way in advocating for the real needs of women in the workforce.

In solidarity,



Melissa Donnelly
National Secretary
Community and Public Sector Union



INTRODUCTION

The 12th What Women Want survey by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) continues to build a longitudinal picture of issues affecting the lives of women at work. This report, based on 2024 data, reflects women's experiences in the workplace and will be used to provide a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

In 2024, 4,993 women participated in the survey, an increase from 3,495 in 2021. Survey respondents worked in the Commonwealth public sector (including the Australian Public Service, Government Business Enterprises, Federal Parliament and Statutory Authorities), Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS), Australian Capital Territory Public Service (ACTPS) and in the private sector, including in companies such as Telstra. The methodology is outlined at the end of this report

This comprehensive survey seeks women's views on a range of issues that affect their working lives. The survey asks questions covering the following topics:

- Demographics
- Forms of employment and earnings
- Hours of work and overtime
- Caring responsibilities
- Flexible working arrangements
- The capacity to influence their work and their level of job satisfaction
- Job security
- Presenteeism
- The availability of training and career development
- Safety at work

A summary of findings from each topic area is provided at the beginning of each section.

The results of the *What Women Want* survey have informed the CPSU's policies, campaigns and industrial strategies.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Since the last *What Women Want* survey in 2021, a change in the federal government, a raft of changes to industrial relations laws and the first Australian Public Service (APS) service-wide bargain in decades has led to a significant improvement in the experiences of women in the workplace.

Industrial relations changes included the right to disconnect and prohibition on consecutive fixed-term employment contracts that total more than 2 years, including any extensions or renewals. The survey results suggest that these changes are having a positive impact for women in the workplace.

The current Labor Government's focus on rebuilding the capability of the Australian Public Service and shifting away from a previous approach of outsourcing by investing in ongoing public sector jobs and insourcing core work has led to a greater sense of job security. The Strategic Commissioning Framework is expected to build on the conversion of 8,816 roles to APS jobs as agencies are required to set targets in their corporate plans.¹

Service-wide bargaining for common pay and conditions across the APS for the first time since the 1990s delivered an expanded formal right to request flexible working arrangements to all employees with a bias towards granting the request, the removal of the cap on the amount of time employees can work from home and an increase in the quantum of paid parental leave to 18 weeks for each parent over the life of the enterprise agreement.

Working from home has become normalised, being the most frequently accessed flexible working arrangement and seen as important by working women. While working from home has a positive impact, the most common reason given for working while sick was "I was sick but I was working from home and could still work", indicating people are still working while sick because of workloads.



Though there have been many rights and conditions gained for working women over the past few years, the cost-of-living crisis has meant a further decline in satisfaction with pay due to the impact of inflation.

Customer aggression has remained steady overall, however, in Services Australia it has increased, likely reflective of increasing stresses and pressures that the community has felt as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

The 2024 survey results show:

- Flexible working arrangements continue to be important for women.
- With the introduction of enforceable rights, working from home is the most regularly accessed flexible working arrangement.
- Working from home is considered very important or important by nine in ten women.
- Women strongly support the introduction of paid and flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons.
- Consecutive contracts for non-ongoing roles or those not directly engaged are declining.
- Satisfaction with job security has increased and outsourcing and casualisation are less likely to be cited as reasons for concern about job security.
- Women in science are least likely to feel secure in their jobs.
- Nearly two-thirds of women work additional hours.
- More women are being compensated for additional hours worked.
- With the introduction of the right to disconnect, fewer women are being contacted outside of work hours, there has been a decline in the frequency of contact and women responding to contact.
- Women who are working while sick report that it is usually because they can work from home.
- There has been a noticeable increase over the last decade in women working while sick because they did not have enough paid sick leave.
- With cost-of-living pressures, satisfaction with pay has declined.
- Customer aggression at Services Australia has increased since 2021.

FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS

The perceived importance of flexible working arrangements increased across all types with working from home continuing to be the most regularly accessed flexible working arrangement. Working from home is considered very important or important by nine in ten (96.7%) women. Women who accessed work from home were more satisfied with their work-life balance.

The condition most women wanted to see progress on was the introduction of paid and flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons. Four in five (78.9%) support the introduction of paid leave and flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons.

There, however, continues to be a gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements (71.9%) and satisfaction with work/life balance (54.2%) that has not shrunk.

GROWING SATISFACTION WITH JOB SECURITY

Satisfaction with job security has increased to three-quarters (73.7%) of respondents, up from seven-in-ten (69.8%) in 2021 and three-in-five (62.5%) in 2019. There has also been a decrease in outsourcing and casualisation as reasons for concern about job security amongst those who feel insecure or very insecure. This would reflect the Commonwealth Government moving away from outsourcing core work through the use of contractors, consultants and labour hire as a result of scrapping the Average Staffing Level cap and its Strategic Commissioning Framework.

Changes to industrial relations that limit fixed-term contracts are also having an impact. Only a third (35.5%) of those in non-ongoing roles or not directly engaged are on consecutive contracts, down from nearly half (47.1%) in 2021.

While women are more satisfied with job security, women in science were least likely to feel secure or very secure in their current job, a likely reflection of Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) job cuts.



WORKING ADDITIONAL HOURS

Women are still working additional hours with nearly two-thirds (63.8%) of respondents saying they did, largely unchanged from 2021 where 64.4% of all women worked additional hours.

The proportion of women working additional hours remains relatively unchanged from 2021, however, they are more likely to say they are compensated for those additional hours with those not compensated declining to one-in-eight (13.4%) from 14.5% in 2021 and one-in-five (22.3%) in 2019.

THE IMPACT OF THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

The right to disconnect may already be having an impact. Fewer women are being contacted outside of work by phone or email for work in the previous 6 months, declining to 40.8% from 46.3% in 2021. There also has been a decline in the regularity of the frequency of contact outside of work hours with a quarter (23.0%) contacted at least weekly, compared to three-in-ten (30.8%) in 2021.

PRESENTEEISM

Presenteeism continues to be an issue as four-in-five (79.1%) women went to work while sick over the past 12 months. While working from home has improved work-life balance and improved flexibility, it has resulted in many women working while sick. When asked, the most common reason for working while sick was “I was sick but I was working from home and could still work” (61.7%).

Another factor may be inadequate sick leave. There has been a noticeable increase over the last decade in women working while sick because they did not have enough paid sick leave, up from 15.5% in 2013 to 23.6% in 2024.

SATISFACTION WITH PAY CONTINUES TO DECLINE

Satisfaction with pay has continued to decline with less than half (47.7%) of satisfied or very satisfied, a further decline since 2021 (56%). Declines occurred across all sectors, likely reflective of the impact of cost-of-living pressures being felt across the community, amplified by the fact that those who work in the public sector are often paid less than those working equivalent roles in the private sector.

INCREASED CUSTOMER AGGRESSION

While customer aggression was largely unchanged, three-in-five (61.8%) respondents from Services Australia reported a slight increase in the last 12 months, up from just over half (54.5%) in 2021. Customer aggression primarily took verbal form the phone or face-to-face or online via email. The implementation of the Security Risk Management Review’s recommendations will hopefully have an impact and reduce the frequency of aggression that staff experience.



GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

SUMMARY

- 4,993 women completed the survey
- Nine-in-ten were employed in the Commonwealth public sector
- 3.3% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 32.2% lived outside of capital cities
- 20% identified as having a disability
- Nearly three-in-five had a Bachelor's Degree or higher
- Three-in-ten described their job family as Service Delivery



The 2024–25 CPSU *What Women Want* survey received 4,993 responses, an increase of 1,498, or 42.9%, compared to the 3,495 women who participated in the 2021 survey. One contributing factor to this increase was the increased number of women contacted—in 2024, the survey was emailed to 123.5% more women. The previous decline, likely due to survey fatigue during the pandemic period, was also not a significant factor this time.

As in previous years, the majority of respondents were from the Commonwealth public sector, which is the CPSU's primary area of membership. It includes the Australian Public Service, non-Australian Public Service entities like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, CSIRO and Airservices Australia, Government Business Enterprises, Federal Parliament and Statutory Authorities. The breakdown of survey respondents is as follows:

- 90.1% were employed in the Commonwealth public sector (4,498 respondents)
- 4.7% were employed by the ACT Public Service (233 respondents)
- 3.5% were employed by the NT Public Service (173 respondents)
- 0.9% were employed in private sector areas covered by CPSU membership (43 respondents)

Respondents were also asked demographic questions. Of those who participated, 3.3% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The breakdown of survey respondents is as follows:

- 3.8% of Commonwealth public sector respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which is slightly above the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) figure of 3.5% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees.²
- In the NTPS, 7.5% of respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 11% service-wide.³
- In the ACTPS, 0.9% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 2.1% service-wide.⁴

Women were asked questions about their cultural diversity, based on the Diversity Council of Australia's *Counting Culture 2021* report.⁵ Seven-in-ten (68.8%) reported they were Australian (excluding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander), 2.0% New Zealander (excluding Maori) and 19.6% Anglo-European. Those who identified other as having other cultural backgrounds were a quarter (25.7%) of respondents,⁶ the same as the percentage who identified identify as culturally and linguistically diverse in the 2024 Australian Public Service Census (Census).⁶ Respondents were allowed to select multiple options.

The 2024 Census found that 67% of APS employees reported they were Australian (excluding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander), 1% stating New Zealander (excluding Maori) and 12% saying Anglo-European.⁷

Respondents that identified as having an Asian cultural background were underrepresented.[†] They were 8.3% of respondents, compared to 18% of employees in the APS Census. The broader issue of

* Other cultural background options included Southern and Central Asian, North American, South and Central American and Caribbean, North African and Middle Eastern, Sub-Saharan African, Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian and Polynesian, North-West European (excluding Anglo-European), Southern and Eastern European, South-East Asian and North-East-Asian

† 'Asian' here is defined as the Australian standard classification of countries 5101 to 7211, which would cover Southern and Central East, South-East Asia and North-East Asia.

Asian underrepresentation in the public service has received attention, with recent research using APS Employment Data suggesting that an Asian ‘penalty’ exists in the Australian Public Service.⁸

Women were also asked where they were born. One-in-five (18.0%) were born overseas compared to 24.8% of the APS workforce.⁹ Of those born overseas, over a third (36.5%) identified as having been born in Europe and nearly a third (31.4%) being born in Asia.

A third (32.2%) reported they worked in regional Australia. This compared to 12.3% of the APS workforce.¹⁰ The above average participation by Services Australia employees who were a fifth (21.7%) of all respondents may partially explain this.

Regarding disability, one-in-five (19.8%) respondents identified as having an ongoing disability. Of Commonwealth public sector respondents, 19.9% identified as having an ongoing disability, compared to only 5.4% of the APS workforce.¹¹ In the ACTPS, it was 22.7% of respondents compared to 3.1% of the ACTPS workforce. In the NTPS, it was 13.9% of respondents compared to 1.8% of the workforce. It should be noted that employees reported disability more often in the APS Employee Census than in HR systems with 12% identifying they had an ongoing disability in the 2024 APS Census. A similar phenomenon is likely in the ACTPS and NTPS.

When asked about their location (Table 1), women from the ACT (27.9%) and NT (4.8%) made up a higher proportion of respondents, reflecting CPSU’s coverage of both federal and territory public sectors. As expected, the highest number of Commonwealth public sector respondents came from the ACT, aligning with the distribution of the APS,¹² however, the proportion of respondents from the ACT was less than the 36.9% of the APS workforce located in Canberra.¹³

Table 1: Location of respondents

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Overseas	I prefer not to respond
Survey respondents	19.0%	16.4%	15.9%	5.4%	6.5%	3.2%	27.9%	4.8%	0.1%	0.8%
% of total Commonwealth public sector	20.7%	17.6%	17.3%	5.9%	7.1%	3.5%	25.5%	1.4%	0.2%	0.8%



Only one-in-ten (12.2%) had no post-secondary education. Nearly three-in-five (57.8%) had a bachelor’s degree qualification or higher. While higher than the Australian average of 26.3%,¹⁴ it is lower than the APS where two-thirds (67.8%) of respondents had a bachelor’s degree or higher.¹⁵

Over half (55.1%) were aged between 35 and 54, similar to broader APS results (54.1%). The overall age profile reflected the APS with one-in-five (21.6%) under 35, compared to a quarter (27.1%) of APS employees and 21.8% saying they were over 54, compared to 18.8% of the APS.¹⁶

When asked about how long they worked for their current employer, nearly half (47.4%) had worked for less than 5 years while a third (33.7%) had worked for 10 years or more.

Women were asked what job family best described their current occupation. Nearly three-in-ten (28.0%) described their occupation as Service Delivery. This was followed by Administration (11.7%), Project and Programme (9.8%), Strategic Policy (8.9%) and Compliance and Regulation (7.5%).

FORM OF EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

SUMMARY

- Nine-in-ten worked in an ongoing or permanent role
- Four-in-five respondents worked full-time
- Service Delivery was the most common occupation for respondents
- A third of non-ongoing or not directly engaged respondents had consecutive contracts, down from nearly half in 2021
- One-in-ten are working in an acting in a higher position, down from nearly a quarter



Respondents were asked about their form of employment (Table 2). Over nine-in-ten (94.2%) respondents reported working in an ongoing or permanent role, similar to the Commonwealth public sector where 91.8% of employees were ongoing in June 2024. Four per cent (4.0%) of respondents were non-ongoing employees, 0.9% were casual and 0.7% were not directly engaged by the Commonwealth public sector. Of those not directly engaged, three-in-five (59.0%) were labour hire and three-in-ten (30.8%) were contractors.

Table 2: Form of employment (2013–2024) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Permanent/ongoing (either full time or part time)	96.2	92.7	93.5	91.4	91.9	93.4
Casual	0.6	2.2	1.6	1.6	2.0	0.9
Non-ongoing/temporary engagement (specified term/ fixed task)	3.0	4.6	4.3	5.9	4.8	4.2
Not directly engaged (i.e. contractor, consultant, labour hire)	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.9	1.1	0.8

Similar to the Commonwealth public sector, the majority of ACTPS and NTPS respondents were in ongoing or permanent roles. Both the ACTPS and NTPS, however, do not have as large a proportion of their workforce that is ongoing. Ninety-four per cent (94.0%) of ACTPS respondents, compared to 79% of the ACTPS workforce,¹⁷ while 89.6% of NTPS respondents, compared to 71.48% of the NTPS workforce.¹⁸

Most respondents (78.4%) worked full time.

- 77.9% of Commonwealth public sector respondents worked full time, compared to 84.7% of the APS workforce.¹⁹
- 79.8% of ACTPS respondents worked full-time, compared to 67.7% of the ACTPS workforce.²⁰
- 94.2% of NTPS respondents worked full-time compared to 91% of the NTPS workforce.²¹

Women were asked about how much they earned annually. Half of respondents (51.8%) earned between \$60,000 and \$99,999. The median base salary for APS employees on 31 December 2023 was \$95,323.²² As expected, those who worked full-time earned more than those who worked part-time (Table 3).

Table 3: Earnings by employment type

	Full time	Part time	All
\$10,000 – \$24,999	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
\$25,000 – \$39,999	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%
\$40,000 – \$59,999	0.4%	3.0%	3.4%
\$60,000 – \$79,999	14.2%	5.8%	20.1%
\$80,000 – \$99,999	26.4%	5.3%	31.7%
\$100,000 – \$109,999	11.0%	1.8%	12.9%
\$110,000 – \$119,999	4.7%	0.9%	5.6%
\$120,000 – \$129,999	7.3%	0.9%	8.3%
\$130,000 – \$139,999	5.1%	0.6%	5.8%
\$140,000 – \$149,999	1.9%	0.3%	2.2%
\$150,000 – \$159,999	1.8%	0.1%	1.9%
\$160,000 and higher	2.5%	0.3%	2.8%
I prefer not to respond	3.0%	0.8%	4.0%

Women were asked what job family best described their occupation (Table 4). Service Delivery (28.0%), Administration (11.7%) and Programme and Project (9.8%) were the most common. Women in part-time roles were more likely to work in Service Delivery roles (35.1%).

Table 4: Work description by employment type

	Full time	Part time	All
Accounting and Finance (Accounting, Budget, Costs, Travel, Procurement and Contracting)	2.6%	1.1%	2.3%
Administration (Asset Management, Corporate Support, Executive Support, Facilities and Property, General Administrative Support, Operational Support)	12.1%	10.6%	11.7%
Communications and Marketing (Creative Design, Marketing, Multimedia, Public Relations and Stakeholder Management, Writing and Editing)	3.1%	3.0%	3.1%
Compliance and Regulation (Enforcement, Inspection, Investigation, Maritime, regulation/Compliance)	7.7%	6.6%	7.5%
Development Programme	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%
Engineering and Technical (Engineering Professional, Examiners, Land and Asset Management, Technician)	0.8%	0.2%	0.6%
Health (Health and Allied Health Professionals, Health and Welfare Support Workers)	2.1%	2.9%	2.3%
Human Resources (Human Resource Operational, Human Resource Strategic, Organisational Design, Work Health and Safety)	3.0%	2.7%	3.0%
ICT (Business Change, IT Business Management, Service Delivery, Service Support, Solutions Development, Solutions Implementation)	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
Information and Knowledge Management (Information Governance and Knowledge, Librarians)	1.8%	1.3%	1.7%
Intelligence (Forensics, Governance and Policy, Intelligence Analysis, Security)	2.0%	1.2%	1.9%
Legal and Parliamentary (Judicial and Other Legal Professional, Lawyer/Legal Adviser, Legal and Court Officer, Legal Coordination, Legislation, Ministerial/Cabinet and Parliamentary Liaison)	3.6%	2.5%	3.4%
Monitoring and Audit (Audit, Risk)	2.0%	1.1%	1.8%
Organisation leadership (Board member, Chief Executive/Statutory Office Holder, Strategic Leadership)	0.8%	0.2%	0.6%
Project and Programme (Design, Programme, Project)	9.8%	9.5%	9.8%
Research (Evaluation, Research)	2.5%	4.5%	2.9%
Science (Earth Sciences, Life Sciences)	3.2%	1.8%	2.9%
Service Delivery (Customer Advice and Support, Education and Training, Gallery, Museum and Tour Guide/Tourist Information, Programme Delivery)	26.2%	35.1%	28.0%
Strategic Policy	9.2%	8.0%	8.9%
Trades and Labour (Animal Attendants and Trainers, Labourers, Trades, Transport and Logistics, Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance/Operation)	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
I prefer not to respond	3.2%	3.5%	3.3%

Insecure work has been an ongoing issue in the Australian labour market and the Australian public sector has been no exception. Previously in the Commonwealth public sector, the Average Staffing Level cap drove the use of insecure work, even when it cost more or had an impact on the capability of an agency.²³

The extensive use was subject to parliamentary inquiries including a Select Committee into Job Security and inquiry into APS capability that looked at the use of contractors, consultants and labour hire. An Audit of Employment done by the Department of Finance found an external APS labour force of 53,911 in 2021–22.²⁴

Since the change in government federally, the Average Staffing Level Cap has been abolished and there has been a focus on rebuilding the capability of the APS. This has included increasing ongoing employment in the APS, now at the proportionally highest it has been since December 2012,* and ensuring core work is done in-house through the introduction of a Strategic Commissioning Framework, which has driven increased job security.

Recent changes to the Fair Work Act have also meant that a fixed term contract cannot be for longer than 2 years, including any extensions or renewals. Limitations have also been placed on consecutive contracts.²⁵

Women who had non-ongoing roles or were not directly engaged were asked if they had been employed on consecutive temporary contracts in their current role. A third (35.5%) said they had been. Of those who said they did:

- 61.8% had two consecutive contracts.
- 22.5% had three consecutive contracts.
- 13.5% had four or more consecutive contracts.

The number of women employed on consecutive temporary contracts has decreased considerably since 2021 when nearly half (47.1%) said they were. Results from the previous decade indicate that between half and three-fifths of respondents had consistently been employed on consecutive contracts (Table 5).

Table 5: Percentage of non-ongoing or not directly engaged employees on consecutive contracts (2013–2024)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Consecutive contracts	57.0	51.4	62.0	51.0	47.1	35.5

Women were also asked if they were acting in a higher position. One-in-eight (12.7%) said they were, and of those, a quarter (23.6%) had been doing so for more than a year. While this is a decrease from a third (33.3%) in 2021, it highlights that many people are still working in temporary acting positions that may not actually be temporary roles.



* According to APS Employment Data, 91.82% of APS employees were ongoing in June 2024, the highest percentage since December 2013 when 92.03% were ongoing.

HOURS OF WORK

SUMMARY

- Nearly two-thirds of women work additional hours
- More than one-in-five of full-time women who worked additional hours, typically worked an additional 5 hours or more per week
- Only half report all the hours they work
- More women are being compensated for additional hours worked
- Fewer women are being contacted outside of work by phone or email for work in the previous 6 months
- There is a decline in the regularity of the frequency of contact outside of work hours and women responding to contact outside of work hours



Women are still working additional hours, with nearly two-thirds (63.8%) of respondents saying they did. Those who worked full-time were more likely (67.8%) to work additional hours than those who worked part-time (49.4%). These figures are largely unchanged from 2021, where 64.4% of all women worked additional hours and 69.9% of women who worked full-time.

Those earning more were also more likely to say they worked additional hours with four-in-five (81.0%) of those earning over \$120,000 working additional hours compared to only half (47.4%) of those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999.

Women who worked full-time and said they worked additional hours were asked how many additional hours they typically worked compared to the hours of work they are typically required to work.

- 34.2% typically worked between 1 to less than 5 additional hours (compared to 36.1% in 2021).
- 14.1% typically worked between 5 and 10 additional hours (compared to 15.3% in 2021).
- 7.3% typically said they worked 10 or more additional hours (compared to 7.7% in 2021).

When asked if they reported all of the hours they worked, only half (52.0%) of respondents said they did. A quarter (25.8%) did not and a fifth (22.3%) only did sometimes.

Women who said they worked additional hours were asked why they worked overtime or extra hours. The most common reasons were so I can get all my work done (55.6%), so I can get all my work done on time (45.7%), and so I can get my work done to a proper standard (42.8%).

COMPENSATION FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS WORKED

Less than half (47.5%) said they were always compensated for additional hours. Just over a third (36.5%) said they sometimes were, and just over one-in-eight (13.4%) said they were never compensated.

The proportion of respondents who were not compensated for additional hours has continued to decline from 2019 (22.3%) and 2021 (14.5%). It still has not returned to 2013 levels where only 1-in-20 (5.2%) were not compensated for working additional hours.

Women were asked what the main reason was they were not always compensated for working additional hours (Table 6). The most common reason was payment or time off is only given in certain circumstances (21.8%) followed by management expects uncompensated extra hours (16.9%).

Of all EL1 and EL2 respondents from the Commonwealth public sector, nearly one-in-five (17.0%) said that they were an EL employee and their manager was not agreeing to TOIL, contravening the Enterprise Agreement.

Table 6: Main reason why not always compensated – 2011–2024 (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Payment or time off is only given in certain circumstances (e.g., if management agrees)	33.5	37.2	27.3	25.4	24.4	28.4	21.8
Payment or time off is capped (e.g., flextime accrual is capped at 37.5 hours)	10.5	10.4	8.8	9.8	9.6	8.4	5.4
I have an informal arrangement with my supervisor/management	18.9	17.4	12.6	12.8	12.5	8.9	12.5
I don't tell my employer	16.7	14.7	13.1	13.2	14.7	16.5	15.7
My workplace cannot afford it	2.4	2.2	2	1.3	1.9	0.4	0.8
No compensation arrangements available	3.3	4	5.7	5.8	7.6	5.0	2.4
Management expects uncompensated extra hours	3.1	5.2	22.3	21.5	20.7	23.2	16.9
I am an EL employee and my manager is not agreeing to TOIL in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.1
Other reason	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.6

DIFFICULTIES FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS WORKED

Women who worked additional hours were asked if it caused them any personal difficulties. One-in-eight (12.6%) said it did, just over half (53.5%) said sometimes and a third (32.7%) said it did not.

Those who said working additional hours did or sometimes caused them difficulties were asked what the difficulties were (Table 7). The most common responses were I am already fatigued and overworked (62.4%), having to reprioritise other non-work commitments is difficult (54.8%), and it takes a toll on personal relationships (45.8%).

Those who state that they are already fatigued and overworked continues to increase and remains at a much higher level than it was in 2011. The increase in those who say travel home early/late from work is difficult may reflect a return to the norm after the pandemic.



Table 7: Types of personal difficulties working extra hours causes (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
I am not given sufficient notice of additional hours	6.7	7.3	13.5	8.0	6.4	8.1	8.9
Travel home early/late from work is difficult	34.6	35.7	41.8	31.5	31.5	25.3	31.8
I am already fatigued and overworked	45.7	46.7	72.1	55.0	53.6	58.3	62.4
I only get TOIL/Flex for overtime and would rather be paid	11.3	11.6	13.9	12.3	12.4	12.4	16.2
Having to reprioritise other non-work commitments is difficult	47.5	48.6	56.7	43.8	45.1	45.0	54.8
It takes a toll on personal relationships	45.8	45.7	62.1	46.0	47.3	42.7	45.8
Caring responsibilities are difficult to organise	35.9	28.4	44.2	30.6	35.2	35.4	39.9

Note: multiple response question so columns do not sum to 100%

CONTACT OUTSIDE OF HOURS

Women were asked if they were required to be available for contact outside of work hours as part of their formal employment arrangements. One-in-twenty (6.1%) said they were required to be contactable outside of work hours and less than one-in-five (17.2%) said sometimes.

While three-quarters (75.9%) said it was not a requirement to be available for contact outside of work hours, two-in-five (40.8%) said they had been contacted outside of work by phone or email for work in the previous 6 months, a decline from 46.3% in 2021 (Table 8).

A possible explanation for the decrease may be the introduction of the right to disconnect which enabled eligible employees the right to refuse employer or third-party contact outside of working hours in some circumstances. The right to disconnect was legislated in February 2024 and began in August 2024 for most employees.²⁶

Table 8: Contact outside of work hours (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Yes	39.1	40.8	44.2	47.6	49.0	46.3	40.8
No	60.5	58.5	55	51.4	50.1	52.4	58.1

Women who said they were contacted outside of work hours were asked if they responded. Three-quarters (77.6%) said they responded, down from four-in-five (81.7%) in 2021. One-in-five (18.2%) said they sometimes responded, up from over one-in-ten (14.3%) in 2021.

Women who worked in organisation leadership roles (81.3%) were most likely to be contacted outside of work hours, followed by Science (67.1%) and Trades and Labour (66.7%). Those working in Service Delivery were the least likely to be contacted outside work hours (27.2%)

Those earning \$140,000 and above were most likely (80.2%) to say they had been contacted outside of work hours while those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999 were least likely (24.6%).

Women who responded to being contacted outside of work hours were asked how frequently they were contacted (Table 9). A quarter (23.0%) said they responded at least weekly, down from three-in-ten (30.8%) in 2021.

The decline in the regularity of the frequency of contact suggests that the right to disconnect is having an impact on contact outside of work hours, dissuading unnecessary contact.

Table 9: Frequency of contact (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Daily	4.2	3.5	3.6	4.5	5.3	3.9	3.0
Every couple of days	6.8	7.6	8.8	10.7	11.4	11.4	9.1
Weekly	11.2	11.5	13.4	14.7	16.7	15.5	14.9
Monthly	8.5	9.5	8.8	9.2	8.8	10.1	10.0
Occasionally	67.9	66.7	64.3	60.0	56.7	58.3	69.1



Women who were contacted outside of work hours were asked if they were compensated for being contacted. One-in-ten (9.4%) said they were compensated and only 12.5% said they were compensated sometimes. The vast majority (76.7%) continue to not be paid or given time off for contact outside of work hours.

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

SUMMARY

- One-in-three women had dependent children for whom they are the primary carer
- Over a third had dual caring responsibilities for others and dependent children
- Women with dual caring responsibilities who work full-time continue to feel much greater time pressures and far less satisfaction with work–life balance
- Women who accessed work from home were more satisfied with their work–life balance



Respondents were asked if they had any dependent children and over one-in-three (36.1%) reported they did. Nearly all (95.2%) of respondents said they were the primary carer for their dependent children.

A third (32.1%) said they had regular caring responsibilities for others including parents, adult children, partners, other relatives, friends or neighbours. Most commonly, women had caring responsibilities for parents/parents-in-law (58.3%), children under 18 (26.9%) and adult children (23.9%).

Over a third (36.2%) had dual caring responsibilities, that is they were the primary carer for dependent children and had caring responsibilities for others. Of those with dual caring responsibilities, seven-in-ten (69.8%) worked full-time.

Table 10: Full-time women with dual caring responsibilities (2013–24) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Working overtime or extra hours causes or sometimes causes personal difficulties	73.2	79.6	77.8	76.8	74.1	78.3
I almost always feel rushed or pressed for time	37	43.3	49.7	40.5	44.4	48.6
I am satisfied with my current work life balance	44.3	39.2	37	37.0	38.8	41.2

Women with dual caring responsibilities who worked full-time were asked about their work–life balance (Table 10). Nearly four-in-five (78.3%) felt working additional hours caused them personal difficulties. Half (48.6%) almost always feel rushed or pressed for time, which has increased from less than two in five (37%) in 2013 (Table 10). They continue to feel greater time pressures and have less satisfaction with work–life balance than women generally (Table 11).

Notably, women who access working from home were more likely to say they were very satisfied (16.7%) or satisfied (43.3%) with their work–life balance than women generally.

Table 11: Women with dual caring responsibilities and work life balance (%)

	Full-time women with dual caring responsibilities	All women
Working overtime or extra hours causes or sometimes causes personal difficulties	78.3	66.5
I almost always feel rushed or pressed for time	48.6	28.1
I often feel rushed or pressed for time	32.7	36.5
I am very satisfied with my current work life balance	9.9	13.9
I am satisfied with my current work life balance	41.2	40.3

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

- The condition that most women wanted to see progress on achieving in the next 12 months was paid leave and flexible working arrangements for reproductive health reasons
- Four-in-five support in the introduction of paid leave and flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons
- The importance of flexible working arrangements increased across all types
- Working from home continues to be the most regularly accessed flexible working arrangement
- While access to leave and flexible work hours was important to almost all women, a third of women only accessed leave and three-in-ten accessed flexible work hours once or twice in the last 12 months
- Two-thirds almost always or often felt rushed or pressed for time
- Only just over half of women were satisfied with their work–life balance
- There continues to be a gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements and satisfaction with work–life balance

Women were asked to identify what is the most important condition for the CPSU to focus on over the next 12 months. The five most common responses were:

- Paid leave and flexible work arrangements from reproductive health reasons, including menstruation and menopause (17.6%)
- Workload and work–life balance (17.1%)
- Ensuring newly won enterprise agreement conditions are followed in practice (including flexible work, EL TOIL, consultation) (14.7%)
- Access to flexible work (12.1%)
- Improvements to recruitment practices in the APS (8.3%)

When asked if they supported the introduction of specific paid leave and flexible work arrangements for reproductive health reasons, four-in-five did (78.9%). Less than one-in-ten (6.9%) did not support its introduction.

Women were asked about the importance of various types of flexible working arrangements (Figure 1). As in previous years, the ability to access leave as needed (98.1%) and having flexible work hours was important or very important (96.7%) to almost all respondents.

The importance of flexible working arrangements increased across all types of arrangements. For some types, there has been a substantial increase in importance over the past decade. For example, over nine-in-ten (96.7%) say working from home in normal hours is important or very important in 2024, compared to only around half in 2015 (49.2%). Women saying being able to negotiate part-time work is important or very important has increased from two-thirds (65%) in 2015 to three-quarters (75.5%) in 2024.



For the first time, women were asked about the importance of access to support and facilities for lactation and breastfeeding. Two-in-five (42.8%) said it was important or very important. Unsurprisingly, the importance is higher for younger women, three-in-five (59.6%) of those aged 25–34 rating it as very important or important while only three-in-ten (30.3%) of those aged 55–59 rated it as important or very important.

Women were also asked about whether they accessed different types of flexible working arrangements over the past 12 months (Table 12). Despite almost all women saying access to flexible

working arrangements such as leave or flexible work hours are important, many women did not access it regularly. A third of women (35.4%) accessed leave and three-in-ten women (30.9%) accessed flexible work hours only once or twice over the last 12 months. That said, there has been an increase in the regular access of leave and flexible working hours since 2021.

The most common flexible work arrangement regularly accessed continues to be working from home, with two-thirds (65.7%) of respondents accessing it regularly. Those who accessed working from home regularly were asked how many days per week they normally worked from home. Just under three-in-ten (28.7%) worked from home 3 days a week and just over a quarter (27.6%) worked 2 days per week from home. One-in-ten (11.8%) worked 5 or more days a week from home.

Figure 1: Importance of flexible workplace arrangements (2011–2024) (%)

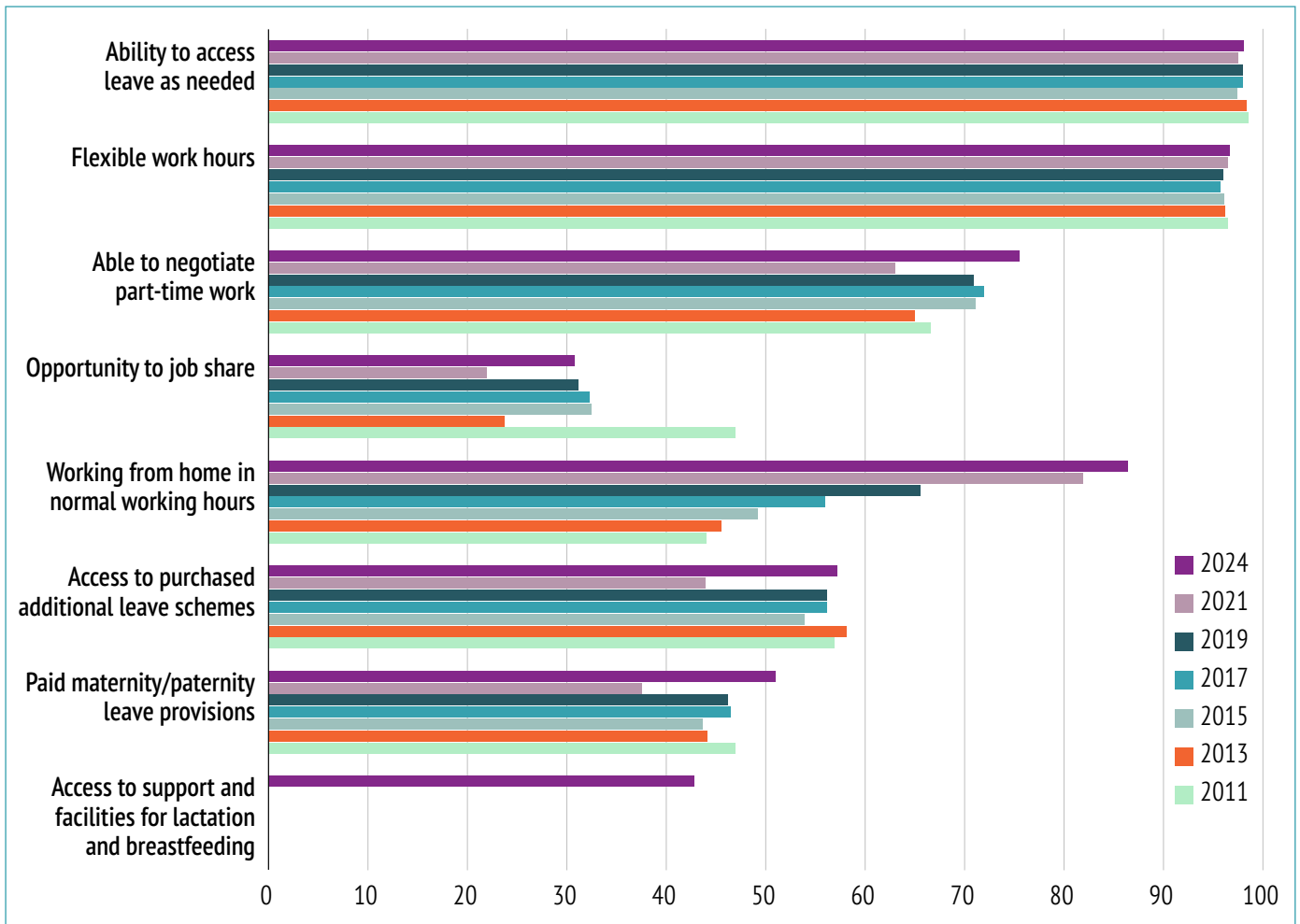


Table 12: Flexible work arrangements accessed in the last 12 months (%)

	Regularly	Once or twice (%)	No (%)	Not applicable (%)
Accessed leave as needed	59.4	35.4	3.4	1.8
Accessed flexible work hours	51.2	30.9	13.3	4.6
Negotiated part-time work	13.1	10.7	51.3	25.0
Had the opportunity to job share	0.8	1.1	54.5	43.6
Worked from home during normal working hours	65.7	14.9	14.5	4.9
Purchased additional leave schemes	4.4	5.3	75.3	14.9
Accessed paid maternity/paternity leave provisions	3.0	2.8	49.5	44.7
Accessed support and facilities for lactation and breastfeeding	1.0	0.6	48.0	50.4

While the importance of being able to negotiate part-time work has increased, there has been a steady decline in negotiated part-time work being accessed regularly since 2011 (Table 13). It is unclear what the reason is, but it may be influenced by cost-of-living factors and greater access to working from home and flexible work hours.

Table 13: Flexible work arrangements accessed in the last 12 months – regularly (2011–2024) (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Accessed leave as needed	59.3	64.6	56.1	56.8	62.8	53.0	59.4
Accessed flexible work hours	59.7	63.1	54.2	57.5	59.4	41.9	51.2
Negotiated part-time work	35	19.4	20.9	22.3	22.7	18.1	13.1
Had the opportunity to job share	1.9	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	0.8
Worked from home during normal working hours	7.9	6.6	8.0	12.7	20.9	66.3	65.7
Purchased additional leave schemes	9.2	12.7	7.6	8.5	10.4	6.6	4.4
Accessed paid maternity/paternity leave provisions	6.5	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.0

Respondents who identified as having an ongoing disability and those who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were asked specific questions about access to leave for the first time.

Those who reported they had an ongoing disability were asked if they accessed any employer provided support related to their ongoing disability such as paid leave or workplace adjustments. Less than half (43.3%) said they did.

Those who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were asked if they had accessed any leave for First Nations employees in the past 12 months, such as NAIDOC leave or ceremonial/cultural leave. Nearly half (48.9%) said they did.

Women were asked about whether they were satisfied with their ability to access flexible working arrangements (that they were entitled to) when they needed to over the past 12 months (Table 14). Seven-in-ten (71.9%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied. Women who worked full time and had dual caring responsibilities were only slightly less satisfied (69.2%).

Table 14: Satisfied with access to flexible working arrangements (2011–2024) (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Very satisfied	32.6	40.8	30.6	31.1	33.0	29.1	32.0
Satisfied	43.1	40.4	43.8	41.7	42.4	42.7	39.9
Neutral	9.6	8.1	10.9	10.7	10.5	12.2	13.6
Dissatisfied	9.5	7	10	10.2	8.3	11.0	9.1
Very dissatisfied	5	3.6	4.5	6.3	5.6	4.7	3.9
Don't know	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	1.6

Respondents were also asked to rate their employer’s support for flexible working arrangements. Two-in-four (38.1%) said it improved and nearly half (47.5%) said it stayed the same. Those working in the Commonwealth Public Sector were most likely to say it improved (39.7%) with only one-in-five (21.0%) of ACTPS respondents, three-in-ten (28.9%) of NTPS respondents and one-in-five (20.5%) of private sector respondents saying it had improved. This is likely to reflect the improvements to conditions won in the recent round of APS-wide bargaining which included improved parental leave and significant flexible work rights, with no cuts to existing conditions.

Women were asked if they had a request for flexible working arrangements refused in the past 12 months. Four-in-five (82.6%) did not have a request denied, showing the importance of provisions negotiated in enterprise agreements. The recent round of service-wide bargaining entrenched the right of all Australian Public Service employees to make a request for flexible working



arrangements. Agencies are required to lean towards approving requests and can refuse in certain circumstances only. Protections and independent umpire oversight.

Of the one-in-five (17.4%) who said they had a request denied, over half (53.8%) said they had a request to work from home denied. Respondents were asked to identify the main reason for the denial. One-in-five (18.5%) said operational grounds and one-in-six (15.9%) said a cap on the number of days they can work from home. One-in-five (19.0%) said some other reason for the denial.

Women were also asked about their satisfaction with their work–life balance (Table 15). Just over half (54.2%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their work–life balance. While satisfaction remains above the 2017 low, this remains an issue for agencies to resolve as it has not recovered to 2013 levels (62.2%).



Table 15: Satisfied with work/life balance (2011–2024) (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Very satisfied	10.4	14.3	10.2	10.3	12.2	11.8	13.9
Satisfied	47.0	47.9	44.4	41.6	41.6	44.9	40.3
Neutral	20.8	18.5	21.1	21.7	21.8	19.8	21.9
Dissatisfied	17.6	15.7	18.8	19.8	18.3	18.0	18.1
Very dissatisfied	4.0	3.3	5.1	6.4	5.6	5.2	5.4
Don't know	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4

Women were also asked if they felt rushed or pressed for time (Table 16). Two-thirds (64.6%) said they almost always or often felt pressed for time. These results have remained fairly consistent since the question was first asked in 2011. This suggests that time pressures have an impact on satisfaction with work–life balance

Table 16: Time pressure frequency (2011–2024) (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Almost always	27.2	24.7	29.4	30.3	28.7	25.6	28.1
Often	40	38.7	39.5	39.1	39.4	38.5	36.5
Sometimes	28.3	31.9	26.6	26.3	27.4	31.6	30.2
Rarely	4	3.9	3.8	3.7	4.1	3.9	4.3
Never	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5
I prefer not to respond	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5

There continues to be a gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements and satisfaction with work–life balance. While women are generally satisfied with access to flexible working arrangements (71.9%), only around half (54.2%) of women are satisfied or very satisfied with their work–life balance. A broader factor behind this may be the impact of increasing workloads.

It is clear more needs to be done. This goes beyond the workplace and requires wider cultural changes to address factors like time pressures and unpaid domestic work that are the product of structural barriers and societal expectations on women.

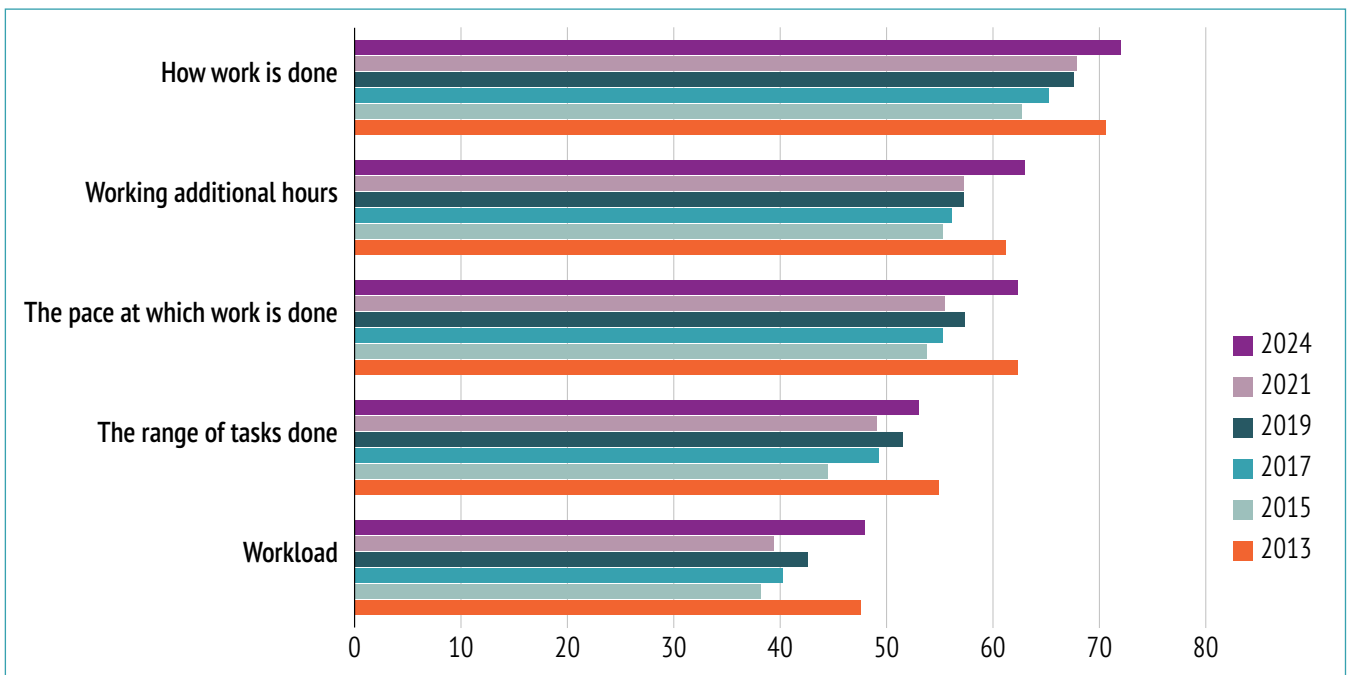
AUTONOMY IN WORK AND JOB SATISFACTION

SUMMARY

- The majority of women said they had some control over how their work was done, with three-quarters of women saying they had some or a lot of influence
- However, women had less influence over their workloads, and this was a cause of some dissatisfaction at work
- Less than half of women are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of pay they receive, a further decline from 2021
- At the same time, satisfaction with job security has increased

Women were asked about how much influence they felt they had over aspects of their work (Figure 2). How their work was done continues to be the aspect they were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over (72.0%). Like in previous years, workloads continue to be an issue with more people saying they had little or no influence (51.3%) than a lot or some influence (47.9%). There has however been an improvement, with more women saying they had a lot or some influence than in 2021 (39.4%).

Figure 2: A lot of or some influence over work (2013–2024) (%)



The type of work women were engaged in had a significant impact on the influence on the tasks they undertook.

Women in organisation leadership roles were most likely to say they had a lot or some influence (71.9%) over the range of tasks they do in their job. Those who worked in Service Delivery roles were least likely to say they had a lot or some influence (37.0%).

Women who worked in Intelligence were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence (64.2%) over workloads. Those working in Service Delivery were least likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over their workloads (38.4%). Three-in-five (60.8%) of those working in Service Delivery said they had little or no influence over their workload.

Those in engineering (84.4%) were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over the pace at which they worked, while those in Service Delivery roles were least likely (50.6%).

Those working in Science (79.7%) were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over how they are able to do their work, while those in Trades and Labour roles (50.0%) were least likely.

Those in Monitoring and Audit (76.4%) were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over whether they worked additional hours, while those in Trades and Labour roles (50.0%) were least likely to.

Women were also asked how satisfied they were with their influence over various aspects of their work (Figure 3).

Women were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with the ability to influence their workload (41.1%). They were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their ability to influence how work is done (60.7%).

Women in Science were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (71.3%) with their ability to influence the range of tasks they do in their job. Those who worked in Service Delivery were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (44.6%).

Women who worked in the development programme job family were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence over workloads (53.2%), while those working in Trades and Labour were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (25.0%).

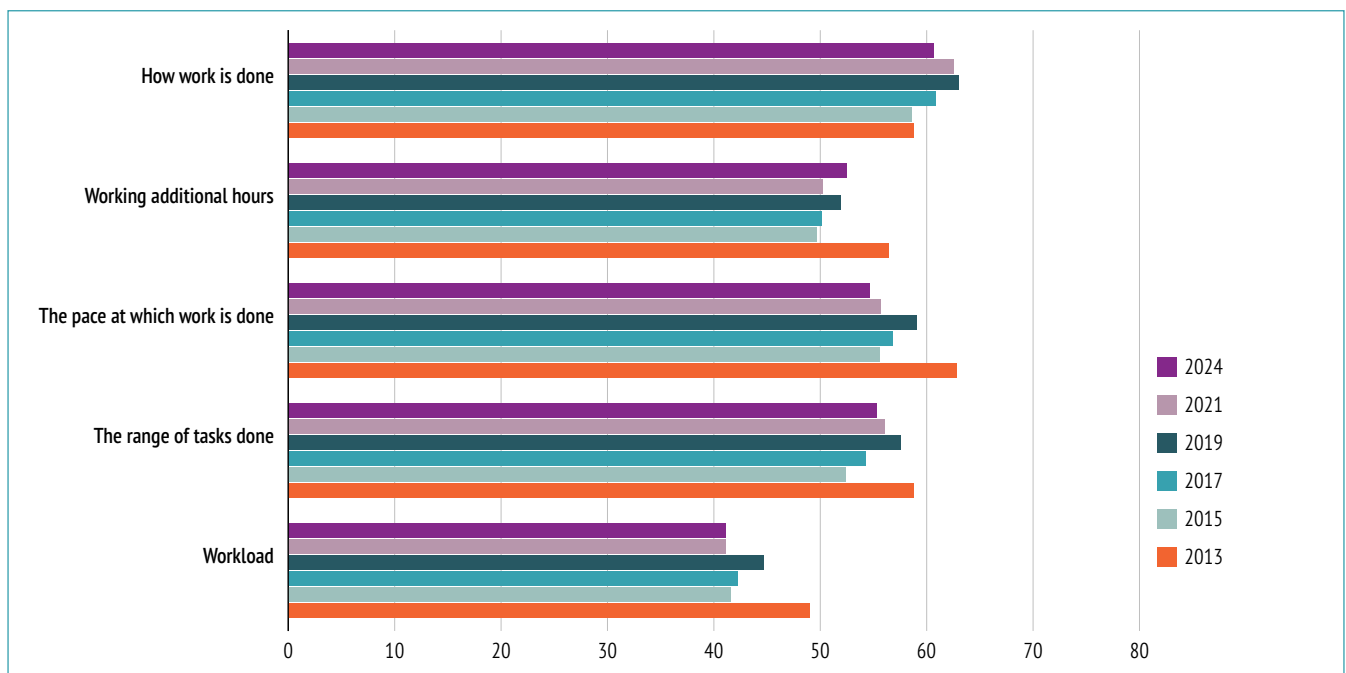
Those in the Information and Knowledge Management job family (63.9%) were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence over the pace at which they worked, while those in Health were least likely to (44.3%).

Those working in Science (79.7%) were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence over how they are able to do their work while, those in Trades and Labour (50.0%) were least likely to.

Women in Monitoring and Audit (67.4%) are most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence over whether they worked additional hours, while those in Organisation Leadership (37.5%) were least likely to.



Figure 3: Satisfied or very satisfied with influence over aspects of work (2013–2024) (%)



Women were also asked about their satisfaction with aspects of their job (Figure 4).

Less than half of women (47.7%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of pay they receive. This is a decline from over half (56%) in 2021 and a significant decline since 2013 (71%). The decline in satisfaction can be linked to increased cost-of-living pressures women are facing.

Those working in the ACTPS (57.1%) and private sector (56.8%) were more likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their amount of pay than those in the Commonwealth Public Sector (47.2%) and NTPS (45.1%).

Satisfaction with job security has improved to three-quarters (73.7%). This is a significant improvement since 2015 (57.2%) and likely reflects the current government's commitment to rebuilding the public service by investing in new jobs to meet workloads and converting insecure roles to ongoing jobs.

Women working in Strategic Policy (84.5%) were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job security while those in Science (54.6%) were least likely to. Job cuts at the CSIRO may be the reason why women working in science are least likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with job security.²⁷

Those working in organisation leadership (68.8%) roles were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their sense of achievement with work, while those in ICT (49.1%) were least likely to.

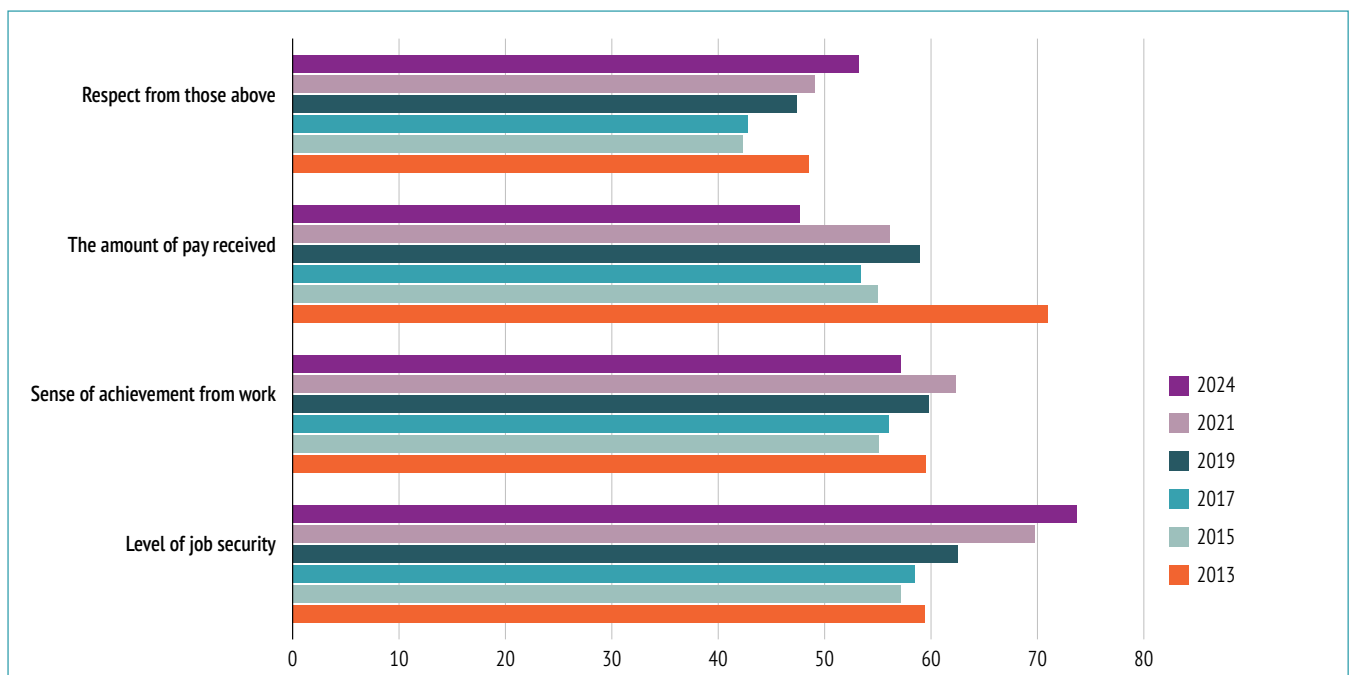
Those in Strategic Policy (64.1%) were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of pay they received while those in Trades and Labour were least likely to (25.0%).

Women in Service Delivery, Health, Engineering and Technical, and Trades and Labour were more likely to say they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of pay they received than satisfied or very satisfied. The results for these job families may reflect lower pay than the public sector average for some staff in Service Delivery and lower pay than market competitors for skilled staff in other areas.

Women who worked in Project and Programme were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with the respect they received from above (60.4%) while those working in Engineering and Technical were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (37.6%).



Figure 4: Satisfied or very satisfied with aspects of work (2013–2024) (%)



JOB SECURITY

SUMMARY

- Three-quarters are very satisfied or satisfied with job security
- Satisfaction with job security has increased since 2021
- However unsurprisingly, two-in-three of those in insecure jobs are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied
- Two-thirds felt secure or very secure in their current job
- Women in science were least likely to feel secure or very secure in their current job
- Decrease in outsourcing and casualisation as reasons for concern about job security



Women were asked about the level of job security they had. Three-quarters (73.7%) were very satisfied or satisfied. This compared to seven-in-ten (69.8%) in 2021 and three-in-five (62.5%) in 2019. This likely reflects the greater investment in Commonwealth public sector jobs and the insourcing agenda of the Federal Government. As part of the Strategic Commissioning Framework, agencies were required to include targets for insourcing in their 2024–25 Corporate Plans.²⁸

Unsurprisingly, two-in-three of those in insecure jobs such as non-ongoing roles, casual or not directly engaged were likely to say they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied (64.5%).

Women were asked about how secure they felt in their current job. Over two-third (68.4%) felt secure or very secure and less than one-in-five (15.7%) felt insecure or very insecure. The level of job security felt varied by workplace:

- 69.4% of Commonwealth public sector respondents felt secure or very secure
- 63.1% of ACTPS respondents felt secure or very secure
- 59.5% of NTPS respondents felt secure or very secure
- 54.6% of private sector respondents felt secure or very secure

Those working in Strategic Policy were most likely to say they felt secure or very secure (73.8%) while those working in Science were least likely to (51.8%). Three-in-ten (29.4%) of those working in Science felt insecure or very insecure. This would likely reflect job security concerns at the CSIRO due to planned cuts as two-in-five (39.4%) of those in Science occupations felt insecure or very insecure.

Those who felt insecure or very insecure (15.7%) were asked why they were concerned about job security (Table 17). The most common reason cited was organisational restructuring (49.0%). Notably, outsourcing and casualisation has decreased significantly as reasons since 2021, likely reflecting the Federal Government’s insourcing of jobs and shift towards more ongoing APS employment.

Table 17: Reasons for concern about job security (2013–2024) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Budget cuts	71.8	44.0	42.4	37.6	22.9	29.0
Organisational restructuring	71.0	63.9	63.0	53.7	41.0	49.0
Outsourcing	17.5	22.3	34.1	29.8	19.7	8.7
Casualisation	17.7	29.4	24.3	27.5	37.6	10.3
Personal issues	16.9	15.7	14.6	12.6	15.4	18.2
Automation	–	–	–	–	9.6	9.7
Other reason	–	–	–	–	–	43.6

Note: multiple response question so columns do not sum to 100%

PRESENTEEISM

SUMMARY

- Four-in-five went to work while sick over the past 12 months
- The most common reason for working while sick was I was sick but I was working from home and could still work
- Pressure from management not to take sick leave continues to decline
- Women with dual caring responsibilities who work full-time are more likely to say they worked while sick because taking sick leave could adversely affect their career
- There has been a notable increase over the last decade in women working while sick because they did not have enough paid sick leave



Women were asked whether they went to work while they were sick over the past 12 months (Table 18). A quarter (24.1%) said often and three-in-five (58.0%) said once or twice. Only one-in-seven (14.3%) said they had not gone to work while sick.

Those who had dependent children were more likely to say they often went to work while sick (28.7%) than those who did not have dependent children (21.2%).

Table 18: Gone to work while sick (2013–2024) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Yes, often	21.4	26.1	25.8	25.1	22.1	24.1
Yes, once or twice	65.1	61.5	60.1	61.2	54.0	58.0
No, never, I always take sick leave	9.4	8.5	10.4	10.2	16.9	14.3
I have not been sick in the last 12 months	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.0	6.3	2.6

Women were asked why they went to work while they were sick (Table 19). The most common reason provided was I was sick but I was working from home and could still work (61.7%), followed by workload pressures (48.7%), and I was sick but not sick enough to stay at home (24.8%). Positively, those citing pressure in management not to take sick leave continues to decline, likely a reflection of changing attitudes after the pandemic.

Notably, women with dual caring responsibilities who worked full-time were more likely to say they believed taking sick leave would adversely affect their career (19.4%)

While there is often significant focus on absenteeism in the public service, those saying they had not enough paid sick days remaining has increased notably over the past decade from 15.5% in 2013 to 23.6% in 2024.

Table 19: Reasons for going to work while sick (2013–2024) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Workload pressures	51.8	50.4	52.1	52.7	49.4	48.7
Not enough paid sick days remaining	15.5	14.5	19.8	21.6	18.0	23.6
Pressure from management not to take sick leave	21.4	26.2	22.8	19.2	16.6	10.0
Pressure from colleagues not to take sick leave	5.0	5.7	5.6	4.7	4.6	3.7
Taking sick leave will adversely affect their career	12.0	12.3	15.4	15.9	14.5	14.2
Onerous medical certificate requirements	18.7	21.3	23.3	25.0	19.3	23.2
I was sick but not sick enough to stay at home	–	51.5	52.6	54.8	27.3	24.8
I was sick but I was working from home and could still work	–	–	–	–	56.2	61.7

Note: multiple response question so columns do not sum to 100%

These results indicate that people are still working while sick because of workloads. Further examination of the quantum of personal leave days may also be required. Finally, the flexibility of working from home has meant that people are still working while sick because they can limit the spread of sickness to colleagues. This may affect the speed of their recovery and affect their overall productivity.

SAFETY AT WORK

SUMMARY

- Two-thirds of respondents said that their employer’s approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment had stayed the same over the past year
- One-in-five had safety concerns at work
- Three-in-ten had experienced customer aggression in the last 12 months
- Verbal aggression over the phone was the most common form of customer aggression
- Customer aggression towards Services Australia respondents increased in the last 12 months



Respondents were asked to rate their employer’s approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination over the past 12 months. Two-thirds (66.5%) said it has stayed the same while just over one-in-ten (13.3%) said it had declined and one-in-six (16.1%) said it had improved.

Women were asked if they had any safety concerns at work. One-in-five (21.1%) said they did and of those, two-in-three (63.8%) reported their safety concerns. The majority (60.9%), however, were not happy with the response, with only 1-in-20 (4.5%) being happy and a third (32.8%) somewhat.

When asked about how safe they felt at work, a quarter said extremely safe (23.0%) and half said very safe (51.2%). Just over 1-in-20 (6.8%) said they felt unsure and 1.5% said not safe at all.

Women were also asked if they had experienced customer aggression at work in the previous 12 months (Table 20). Three-in-ten (31.2%) said that they had, little change from 2021 (30.6%). Those who experienced customer aggression were asked what form it took, the most common being verbal aggression over the phone (74.1%), followed by verbal aggression in person (36.3%).

Table 20: Customer aggression experienced (2013–2024) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Verbal (telephonic)	74.9	72.1	69.4	69.9	75.0	74.1
Verbal (face-to-face)	38.8	41.3	45.6	45.5	33.4	36.3
Online, email	--	15.4	19.1	20.6	18.3	25.9
Written	2.7	8.3	7.1	7.9	5.3	7.9
Physical	3.3	3.2	4.9	5.5	2.0	3.6

Note: multiple response question so columns do not sum to 100%

Within the Commonwealth public sector, three-in-five respondents who worked at Services Australia experienced customer aggression (61.8%), an increased on the over half (54.5%) of women at Services Australia who experienced customer aggression in 2021. The most common form of customer aggression towards Services Australia staff was verbal over the phone (74.7%).

The legislating of stronger criminal penalties to protect Commonwealth frontline workers from violence and aggression and funding for all recommendations from the Services Australia Security Risk Management Review will hopefully lead to better safety outcomes for workers and a decline in customer aggression.²⁹

TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

- Less than two-in-five were satisfied or very satisfied with career development opportunities
- One-in-ten received no training over the last 12 months
- One-in-ten applied for and were denied training
- The most common reasons for a denial of training were the decision of management and cost of training

Women were asked about their satisfaction with career development opportunities. Just under two-in-five (37.2%) were satisfied or very satisfied while a third (33.1%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

When asked about how much training provided by their employer (at no cost) they have received over the last 12 months, one-in-ten (12.2%) said none and a further one-in-ten (10.2%) said less than a day. Women who worked in the ACT Public Service were more likely to receive no training with one-in-six (16.7%) saying they received no training over the past year.

Those who worked in Service Delivery occupations were more likely to receive training with nearly half (45.6%) receiving 5 days or more. Respondents working in Communications and Marketing were least likely to receive 5 days of training or more (11.6%).

When asked if they applied for and were denied training in the past 12 months, one-in-ten (12.7%) said they had been. Of those, nine-in-ten (91.8%) said it was training relevant to their current job and a further nine-in-ten (92.0%) said it was relevant for the development of their careers.

When asked about the reason for the training being denied, the most common reason was decision of management (40.5%), followed by cost of training (31.8%). There were differences between workplaces, with the cost of training (43.6%) being the most common reason for denial according to ACTPS respondents. For NTPS respondents, decision of management (70.8%) and cost of training (41.7%) were more likely to be cited.



METHODOLOGY

The 2024–25 CPSU *What Women Want Survey* was launched online on 23 October 2024 and was open for participants to complete for 4 weeks, closing on 24 November 2024. The survey was hosted online by HumanListening.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent via email to all CPSU women members and other employees who have asked to receive CPSU material.

Invitations were sent out to all (non-male) members and non-members on the 23 October. A total of 67,170 emails were sent out.

In addition to email invitations, a number of reminders were sent out over the course of the survey. These included an APS-wide email, an all member e-news story and a stand alone reminder. CPSU delegates were also asked to send out emails to all staff in their workplaces on 25 October. Links to the survey were also posted on the CPSU social media accounts.

The total number the CPSU emailed and asked to participate in the CPSU *What Women Want* survey in 2024 was 67,170. This figure does not include emails sent out by delegates to colleagues in their workplaces. A total of 4,993 responses to the survey were received, an overall response rate of 7.4%.

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