



Select Committee on Work and Care

7 SEPTEMBER 2022

Select Committee on Work and Care
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Dear Committee Secretary

Select Committee on Work and Care

As the primary union representing Australian Public Service (APS), Australian Capital Territory Public Service (ACTPS) and Northern Territory Public Service (ACTPS) employees, the Community and Public Sector Union – PSU Group (CPSU) is committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

The CPSU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Select Committee on Work and Care. The impact that combining work and care responsibilities has on the wellbeing of workers, carers, and those they care for has been a key issue of concern for the CPSU for some time now.

The CPSU is of the view that the Commonwealth Government, through its actions as an employer, can demonstrate national leadership in advancing gender equity, with a focus on work and care. The CPSU welcomes key outcomes from the recent Jobs and Skills Summit including a commitment that the APS will lead by example by reporting to Workplace Gender Equality Agency and set targets to improve gender equity in the public service.¹

Our submission outlines recent research and happenings within the APS that have affected the ability to combine work and care. It covers the:

- 2021-22 What Women Want report,
- Australian Public Service Gender equality strategy,
- Working from Home,
- National Employment Standards requests for flexible working arrangements, and
- The impact of the “no enhancements” rule on genuine enterprise bargaining in the Australian Public Service.

¹ Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, *Women front and centre at jobs and skills summit [Media Release]*, 2 September 2022.
<https://www.financeminister.gov.au/media-release/2022/09/02/women-front-and-centre-jobs-and-skills-summit>

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2021-22 What Women Want report

The CPSU conducts a biennial survey of women entitled *What Women Want*. Our first report was in 2006 and has provided invaluable longitudinal data on the experiences and issues impacting on women working in our areas of coverage. The most recent report was published on International Women's Day 2022 and is attached as Attachment A.

The *What Women Want* report details the extent and nature of the combination of work and care across the Australian public sector, ACT Public Service and NT Public Service and its impact upon the well-being of public service employees, carers, and those they care for. It also explores the impact on work and care of different hours and conditions of work, job security, work flexibility and related workplace arrangements.

The 2021-22 report reflects women's experience of working from home and coping during a once in a century pandemic. Key findings were:

- Flexible work arrangements continue to be very important for women.
- Significant increases in the usage and importance of working from home arrangements (65.6% in 2019-20 vs 81.9% in 2021-22).
- Seven in ten (68.7%) women say better working from home arrangements would make it more attractive to stay in their current role.
- Full-time women with dual caring responsibilities, that is being the primary carer of children and having to care for others on a regular basis, are less satisfied with their current work/life balance and more likely to say working overtime or extra hours causes personal difficulties compared to all women (74.1% vs 64.1%).
- Two in five (44.4%) full-time women with dual caring responsibilities always feel rushed or pressed for time and are satisfied with their current work/life balance (38.8%).
- Only half (53.8%) of women agree current entitlements are sufficient to balance work and non-work commitments.
- Nearly half (46.0%) of women agree taking time out for family reasons will disadvantage career prospects.
- Women believe employees are more likely to agree that those who take work home (39.8%) or work long hours (44.9%) 'get ahead'.

Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy

Achieving greater gender equality is necessary for addressing power imbalances in workplaces and creating an environment where sexual harassment and discrimination is less likely to occur.

In December 2021, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) released the *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26*. There are a number of positive elements in the strategy, including:

- **Leadership** – with a focus on the role of leaders to set the standard and drive gender equality;
- **Respect at work** - recommending agencies adopt specific strategies to promote respectful workplaces and address and prevent workplace harassment;
- **Flexible work** - a focus on access to flexible work, including encouraging men to access flexible work (the report notes that flexible work is not the norm in all agencies);²

² *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26*, Australian Public Service Commission, December 2021, p. 12

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- **Gender bias in recruitment** – acknowledging there is work to be done in this area;
- **Promoting breastfeeding friendly workplaces** - including lactation breaks and facilities;
- **Gender pay gap** – a new requirement for agencies to collect data on Individual Flexibility Arrangement (IFA) use by gender and include this in their annual reports;³
- **Reporting on progress** – with requirements for agencies to report on progress against the strategy’s requirements.

The CPSU notes that at the time the strategy was released, there were some missed opportunities and gaps, which may be more capable of being addressed in the current environment. These include:

- **Gains through enterprise bargaining** - Previous gains in enterprise bargaining included the introduction of lactation breaks and facilities, flexible work, gender-neutral parental leave, and in some agencies, gains on family and domestic violence leave. The strategy overlooks the source of these past gains. However, it is positive that the new Government has committed to abolishing the “no-enhancements rule”,⁴ which will open up bargaining as a source of ongoing progress on gender equality.
- **Employee voice** – the strategy omitted opportunities for employees to contribute to strategies to achieve gender equality.
- **Flexible work** – while the commitment to flexible work is welcome, agency heads are not united in their support for flexible work, and employees have vastly different opportunities depending on the agency they work for.
- **Gender pay gap** – progress has been made on gender pay gap in the APS, however, while women continue to be overrepresented at lower classification levels and underrepresented at higher classification levels, the gender pay gap will continue to exist.
- **Individual Flexibility Arrangements** - reporting and transparency on individual flexibility agreements (IFAs) is a forward step, noting that use of IFAs tends to benefit men and contribute to the gender pay gap.⁵ However, the source of the issue needs to be addressed. IFAs are being used as a workaround because the government’s various pay caps constrain the ability of agencies to attract and retain, and because there are inadequate and inconsistent career paths for APS specialists and professionals, in particular.⁶

Working from Home

The CPSU has done significant work in the APS on access to flexible work, including working from home. This includes partnering with Professor Linda Colley, Central Queensland University, and Associate Professor Sue Williamson, UNSW Canberra, to gather data about the experience of public sector employees working from home. A copy of the CPSU’s analysis of their 2022 report *Working during the pandemic: The future of work is hybrid* is attached as Attachment B.

³ The CPSU raised IFA use as an issue of concern for the gender pay cap in its submission to the APS Hierarchy and Classification Review.

⁴ Government bargaining policies explicitly prohibited Australian Public Service (APS) and non-APS Australian Government entities from agreeing to any improvement in the conditions of employment without significant trade-offs.

⁵ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender pay equity in awards and enterprise agreements*, November 2017. Retrieved from https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pay_equity_and_awards.pdf

⁶ These issues were canvassed in detail in *APS Hierarchy and Classification Review, Submission by the CPSU*, June 2021, www.cpsu.org.au

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The CPSU has also been advocating with APS agencies to formalise changes in practices through the pandemic in new agency policies, and identifying best practice (through agency scorecards), and making this information available on its website.⁷

Despite the stated commitment to flexible work as a means to promote gender equality, the CPSU notes that there are very different attitudes to flexible work among agency heads. For example, although whole call centres were able to operate with employees working from home during the pandemic, agencies like Services Australia are now very reluctant to approve working from home requests for employees in the Network, even where they are not in front of house roles.

The Department of Treasury has recently taken a backwards step in its approach to flexible work, removing the “if not, why not” approach to working from home from its policy. CPSU delegates have made a detailed submission to agency management about the risk this poses to the attraction and retention of high-performing staff.

More positive approaches exist in agencies like Prime Minister and Cabinet, Finance, Attorney General’s Department, and IP Australia, where policies contain a presumption in favour of approving working from home requests.

A fragmented approach to flexible work in the APS presents the following risks:

- A two-tier workforce, where highly skilled workers with more power are able to work from home, and others are not;
- The potential to undermine the APS Gender Equality Strategy; and
- The undermining of APS capability and efforts to attract and retain skilled employees who may find some private sector employers more flexible.

National Employment Standards requests for Flexible Working Arrangements

Under Section 65 of the Fair Work Act, an employee may make a request to change their working arrangements because of a range of circumstances. These requests for flexible working arrangements form part of the National Employment Standards (NES).

The CPSU notes that these NES requests for more flexible working arrangements can be denied on “reasonable” business grounds and are excluded from the Fair Work Commission’s power to arbitrate unless an Enterprise Agreement specifically allows it. There have been issues in a number of APS agencies, where requests for working from home have been denied, even where there are clear grounds under Section 65, because the agency has a preference for office-based work or because the request is for more days than the cap the agency has placed on the number of days that can be worked from home.

There should be the ability to arbitrate when denials of requests for flexible working arrangements occur regardless of whether there is an Enterprise Agreement clause that enables it or not.

⁷ Community and Public Sector Union, *Your new normal*. 2022, https://www.cpsu.org.au/CPSU/Content/Campaigns/Your_new_normal.aspx

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The impact of the “no enhancement” rule on genuine enterprise bargaining

The previous Government’s APS bargaining arrangements undermined the quality of the employment offer the APS can make to existing and prospective employees. Agencies were not allowed to genuinely bargain, in good faith, without restrictions on enhancing employment conditions such as improving flexible working arrangements.

Under the Coalition Government, agencies were precluded from maintaining consultation clauses that facilitate input from employees and their unions *before* decisions are made. Taken together, the “no enhancements” rule⁸ and wages caps⁹ left little scope for agencies, employees, and unions to negotiate meaningfully. This workplace relations approach saw things done *to* employees rather than *with* them, cut off long-established channels for employees to have a voice in their working lives, and has weakened APS leaders’ capacity to engage and consult – simply because they have not been expected to do so.

This workplace relations approach has also undermined and run counter to efforts to improve diversity and gender equality. Enterprise bargaining has long been a source of reform, providing employees and unions an opportunity to work with agencies to introduce cultural and NAIDOC leave, paid parental leave for both parents or carers, support for breastfeeding, flexible work, and many more initiatives. The “no-enhancements” rule precluded further development in these areas, making it difficult for agencies to agree to sensible and much-needed provisions such as family and domestic violence leave clauses. As a result, enterprise agreements were effectively frozen in time, preventing innovation on workplace conditions.

The CPSU is happy to provide information on the matters raised in this submission and supplementary information on other relevant issues if needed.

For further information, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Melissa Donnelly
National Secretary

[REDACTED]

⁸ *Workplace Bargaining Policy 2018*, par. 49; *Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2020*, par. 49

⁹ Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment. *Impact of the Government's Workplace Bargaining Policy and approach to Commonwealth public sector bargaining, 2016*
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/APS_Bargaining/Report/c03

WHAT WOMEN WANT 2021-22

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SECTOR UNION



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INTRODUCTION

The eleventh 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 2021 data, reflects women's experience of working from home and coping during a once in a century pandemic.

The CPSU is committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates. Survey respondents worked in the Australian Public Service (APS), 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 Attachment A.

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

- 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
- Bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination
- Safety at work
- Superannuation

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

The results of the What Women Want survey informs the CPSU's policies, campaigns, and industrial strategies. The report also includes information about how the CPSU has used the findings of previous reports and outcomes we have achieved in areas of interest to women.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In a once in a century pandemic, it is not surprising to find that access to working from home arrangements was the issue that most women wanted the CPSU to focus on over the next twelve months. Flexible working arrangements and the pressures of trying to achieve work-life balance remain as key issues, but a desire to maintain at least some working from home arrangements was the dominant concern. Only two in five women said their agency actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements.

Pay increases were the second key issue that respondents thought the CPSU should be focusing on.

A hybrid home – workplace working model and real pay increases will be critical issues in bargaining and a key retention factor for women over the coming year.

While there has been a welcome decline in the overall proportion of women going to work while sick, working from home arrangements has led to many still working while sick because they are not in the office. Those in casual and non-directly employed roles report working while sick because they have inadequate sick leave.

The treatment of women in the workplace is also a growing issue, mirroring wider public debate. Dissatisfaction with how management in workplaces respond to sexual harassment has significantly increased compared to two years ago.

THE 2021 SURVEY RESULTS SHOW:

- Flexible work arrangements continue to be very important for women.
- Significant increases in the usage and importance of working from home arrangements.
- Women who do additional hours are working even longer additional hours, and only half report all those additional hours.
- Casualisation is increasingly a reason for concerns about job insecurity.
- Nearly half of women in non-ongoing roles or not directly employed (i.e., labour hire or contractors) had consecutive contracts, three in ten of those women with consecutive contracts having four or more.
- A third of women who are acting in higher duties have been doing so for more than a year.
- Declining satisfaction with pay.
- Declines in women going to work while still sick.
- Increased dissatisfaction with how management responds to sexual harassment.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

As in previous years, almost all women rated having flexible work hours and the ability to access leave as important or very important.

While access to flexible arrangements was important to almost all women, many women don't use these arrangements regularly. Two in five women only accessed leave once or twice in the last twelve months and one in five accessed flexible work hours only once or twice in the last twelve months.

The pressures of trying to balance work and life continue. Just over half of women were satisfied with their work/life balance and two thirds almost

always or often felt rushed or pressed for time. There continues to be a significant gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements and satisfaction with work/life balance.

It shows there is still significant change needed within the public service. Only two in five say their agency actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements and only half agree their current entitlements are sufficient to enable them to balance work and non-work commitments.

WORK FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS

Access to working from home arrangements was *the most* important issue for women in the next twelve months, a shift from access to flexible working arrangements in 2019. Four in five (81.9%) stated that working from home in normal work hours was important or very important, up from two thirds (65.6%) in 2019, which comes as no surprise due to the pandemic.

There has been a dramatic increase in working from home during normal hours. Only a third of women had working from home arrangements that were not due to pandemic restrictions. Two thirds said they worked from home during normal hours, up from a fifth in the last report.

Many women want to keep these arrangements, seven in ten women saying better working from home arrangements would make it more attractive to stay in their current role.

EXPECTATIONS OF UNCOMPENSATED HOURS CONTINUES

Over 40 per cent of women working full time work more than an additional five hours per week and

less than half are fully compensated for those additional hours.

Women working full time who work additional hours are working even longer than they have in the past with two in five (41.4%) doing more than five hours additional work per week. In the last survey this was one in four (26.3%).

Women continue to be uncompensated for working additional hours. Two thirds (64.4%) of women work additional hours. Over half (52.4%) of those who work additional hours are not or only sometimes compensated.

The most common reason given by those who are not or only sometimes compensated continues to be payment or time off is only given in certain circumstances (28.4%). This, combined with an increase in women who say management expects uncompensated extra hours, indicates that the lack of compensation for additional hours is being influenced by discretionary decisions by management.

GROWING CONCERNS ABOUT CASUALISATION

Despite no significant change in the proportion of respondents in ongoing/permanent roles, there was a greater sense of job security which may reflect pandemic job losses in the rest of the community.

Among the reasons for feeling insecure, there has been a shift away from concern over budget cuts to casualisation. The size of the APS is now increasing after years of cuts; however, the growth is primarily in non-ongoing staff. Non-ongoing staffing levels increased by half (49.9%) since June 2013 while ongoing staffing levels declined by 10.2 per cent. As at June 2021, non-ongoing employees made up 13 per cent of APS headcount, up from 8.2 per cent in June 2013.¹ Non-ongoing staff make up a much

larger as a proportion of the APS than at any time since the 1990s.

Women in the NTPS were far less likely to feel secure in their jobs than women in the APS or ACTPS. This likely reflects the impact of budget cuts and staffing freezes by the NT Government.

While there was a greater sense of security, job security remains an issue for women. Of the 14 per cent of women who were in acting positions, a third (33.3%) had been doing so for more than a year, raising questions about how temporary those roles were.

Furthermore, of women in non-ongoing roles or who weren't directly engaged, nearly half (47.4%) were employed on consecutive temporary contracts in their current role. Three in ten (30.9%) of those had four or more consecutive contracts.

SATISFACTION WITH PAY DECLINES

Women are less satisfied with pay (56.0%) than they were in 2019 (59.0%). Overall, satisfaction remains below 2013 levels, likely explained by the Government's approach to bargaining, pay freezes, increased workloads during the pandemic and the explosion in the use of contractors and consultants who were often paid more than APS staff for doing the same core work.

PRESENTEEISM

There has been a welcome decline in the proportion of women who go to work while sick from 86.3 per cent to 76.1 per cent. This may come down to the wider societal expectation to not go to the workplace while sick. Many, however, have confirmed they continue to work from home while sick.

The most common reason that casuals and non-directly employed workers go to work while sick

is that they do not have enough, or any, sick leave. Given the lessons of the pandemic, this needs to be urgently addressed.

DISSATISFACTION WITH MANAGEMENT RESPONSES TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Only a quarter (26.3%) of women who experienced sexual harassment over the past twelve months reported the incident. Only one in ten (10%) of those who reported the incident were satisfied with the response.

There has been a notable shift in perspectives about how well workplaces address sexual harassment since 2019. Only three in ten (29.7%) agree complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly and appropriately by management, down from two in five (38.0%) in 2019.

A significantly larger proportion of women now disagree or strongly disagree that there is adequate training on sexual harassment (41.1% in 2021 versus 23.5% in 2019), that complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly (24.5% in 2021 versus 9.5% in 2019) and that management places importance on eliminating sexual harassment (29.8% in 2021 versus 13.8% in 2019).

The proportion of women who disagreed or strongly disagreed (41.1%) that there is adequate training on sexual harassment, that complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly (24.5%) and that management places importance on eliminating sexual harassment increased notably (29.8%).



GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

SUMMARY

- 3,495 women responded to the 2021 CPSU What Women Want survey.
- 86.4 per cent worked for the Australian Public Service.
- 55.0 per cent of the women who responded are aged between 35-54.
- 3.5 per cent identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- 19.5 per cent spoke a language other than English.
- 17.8 per cent were born overseas.
- 13.0 per cent identified as having a disability.
- 60.4 per cent have a bachelor's degree qualification or higher.
- A quarter described their work as service delivery.

The 2021 CPSU What Women Want survey had 3,495 respondents. This is a change of 2,892 or 54.7 per cent on the 6,387 women who responded to the survey in 2019. One factor was the reduction in the number of women contacted - the survey was emailed to a quarter (26.3%) less women than last time, mostly because of a lack of APS institutional support in distributing the survey. Survey fatigue is likely another big factor given the significant use of online surveys by the APS and other organisations, including the CPSU, to capture data during Work from Home during the pandemic.

The Australian Public Sector (APS), the CPSU's main area of membership, again comprised most survey respondents. Of those who participated in the survey:

- 86.4 per cent were employed in the APS (3019).
- 9.6 per cent were employed by ACT Government (297).
- 3.1 per cent were employed by the NT Government (107).
- 1.0 per cent were employed in private sector areas of CPSU membership (35).

Survey respondents were asked several demographic questions.

Of the respondents, 126 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (3.6%). This compared to the APSC figure of ATSI employees (3.5%).²

In the NTPS, 9.3 per cent of survey respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This compared to the service wide figure of 10.9 per cent.³

In the ACTPS, the figure was 1.7 per cent. This compared to the service wide figure of 2.0 per cent.⁴

For the first time, women were asked a series of questions about their cultural diversity. These questions were adapted from the Diversity Council of Australia’s Counting Culture 2021 report.⁵

Women were asked where they were born. One in five (17.8%) were born overseas and of those born overseas, three in five (60.5%) identified as having been born in a non-main English-speaking country.⁶

Women were also asked which languages they could have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in. One in five (19.5%) indicated they could in a language other than English. The 2020 APS Census removed questions about cultural diversity such as about whether respondents spoke a language other than English at home.⁷ The 2019 Census indicated 19 per cent did.⁸ The most recent APSC data indicated 14.7 per cent of APS employees identified as having a non-English speaking background.⁹

Women were also asked about their country of birth. 17.8 per cent were born in a country other than Australia, compared to 22.3 per cent across the APS.¹⁰

Of all respondents, 13.0 per cent identified as having a disability. This compared to 4.1 per cent across the APS.¹¹

Several questions were asked about respondents’ location. Women were asked what state or territory they resided in. Both the ACT and the NT had higher proportions of respondents, reflecting CPSU coverage of both federal and territory public sectors in those distributions. Reflecting the distribution of the APS, the largest number of APS responses came from the ACT.

Table 1: Respondents by jurisdiction

	ACT	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	Overseas
% of respondents	31.5	17.2	17.6	13.2	5.4	6.5	3.7	3.9	0.2
% of APS employees	38.2	17.6	16.9	11.8	4.7	6.4	2.5	1.2	0.8

Women were also asked if they lived in a capital city. 29.0 per cent of respondents were outside of capital cities. This compared to 13.8 per cent of the APS workforce.¹²

Women were asked about their age. The majority (55.0%) were aged between 35 and 54, reflecting the age distribution of the APS where 53.3 per cent were between 30 and 49.¹³

Respondents were asked how long they had worked for the same agency or employer. 48.3 per cent had worked for more than 10 years while 30.1 per cent had for less than five years.

12.4 per cent did not complete any post-secondary education. Most respondents (60.4%) had a Bachelors Degree or higher. This is higher than the Australian average for women (39.2%),¹⁴ but lower than the APS average for women (62.0%).¹⁵

Women were asked what job family best describes the work they do. Service delivery was the most common response (23.7%), followed by administration (13.6%) and portfolio, project and programme (10.4%).

Table 2: Job Family

	% Total
Accounting and Finance	3.0
Administration	13.6
Communications and Marketing	3.8
Compliance and Regulation	10.2
Data and Research	5.3
Engineering and Technical	0.6
Human Resources	2.7
ICT and Digital Solutions	4.5
Information and Knowledge Management	2.4
Intelligence	1.7
Legal and Parliamentary	4.4
Portfolio, Project and Programme	10.4
Research	3.7
Science and Health	3.7
Senior Executive	0.2
Service Delivery	23.7
Trades and Labour	0.2

When asked what description best described the type of work they did, a third of respondents (32.1%) stated service delivery. This was followed by 14.6 per cent who said program and project management, followed by 13.8 per cent who said administrative.

Table 3: Work Description

	% Total
Service Delivery	32.1
Program and Project Management	14.6
Administrative	13.8
Professional	9.9
Technical	9.2
Policy	9.2
Regulatory (e.g., vetting visa applications, seizing illegal goods on arrival in Australia, compliance and debt collection)	6.4
I prefer not to respond	2.6
Content Maker	2.4



FORM OF EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

SUMMARY

- 91.9 per cent of women were employed in an ongoing position.
- 74.7 per cent worked full-time.
- A third of women working full-time earn less than \$80,000. Which is less than average full-time ordinary time earnings for women.
- Women who worked part-time were more likely to be in service delivery roles.
- Nearly half of those employed on a temporary basis had more than one consecutive temporary engagement in their current position.

Consistent with previous surveys respondents are primarily employed on a permanent or ongoing basis. The survey response figure of 91.9 per cent reflects the APS, where 92.3 per cent of staff are ongoing, as APS staff make up the bulk of responses. Of those not employed on an ongoing basis, 4.5 per cent were employed on a temporary or non-ongoing basis and 1.9 per cent said they were casual. 1.1 per cent were not engaged directly by the APS.

Of those not engaged directly by the APS, 11.2 per cent were labour hire and 38.8 per cent were contractors.

Table 4: Form of employment (2013-2021) (%)

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

Respondents from the ACTPS and NTPS were also working predominantly in ongoing positions. The vast majority (88.2%) of respondents had permanent or ongoing employment in the ACTPS, higher than the 75.6 per cent according to the ACT State of the Service Report.¹⁶ Non-ongoing employment was 7.4 per cent among respondents working in the ACTPS compared to 16.7 per cent.¹⁷ Casual employment was 2.7 per cent among the ACTPS respondents versus 6.8 per cent.¹⁸

For NTPS respondents, ongoing employment was 91.6 per cent and non-ongoing employment was 7.5 per cent. This compared to 69.0 per cent ongoing, 26.7 per cent non-ongoing and 4.2 per cent casual for the NTPS according to the NTPS State of the Service Report.¹⁹

Most respondents worked full-time (74.7%). For APS respondents, 74.1per cent worked full time, similar to APSC employment data which shows 80.6per cent working full time. For ACTPS respondents, 75.4 per cent worked full time. For NTPS respondents, it was 90.7 per cent.

Women working part-time were more likely to earn less than those working full-time.

Table 5: Earnings by employment type

	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	All (%)
\$10,000 - \$24,999	0.0	1.8	0.5
\$25,000 - \$39,999	0.1	8.6	2.2
\$40,000 - \$59,999	2.3	23.3	7.5
\$60,000 - \$79,999	30.7	31.8	30.9
\$80,000 - \$99,999	32.8	19.5	29.4
\$100,000 - \$109,999	7.1	4.4	6.4
\$110,000 – 119,999	10.0	3.4	8.3
\$120,000 and higher	13.4	2.5	10.7
I prefer not to respond	3.7	4.7	4.0

The most recent ABS average weekly earnings data for May 2021 shows that full time average weekly ordinary time earnings for women equate to \$81,926 per annum.²⁰ A significant number of women working full time in the public sector are earning below or at the average weekly female earnings. A third of women working full-time (33.1%) reported their gross annual salary to be under \$80,000.

Women working part-time were more likely to be working in service delivery roles. 29.7 per cent of full-time respondents said they worked in service delivery, compared to 39.0 per cent of part time respondents.

Table 6: Work description by employment type

	Full Time	Part-Time
Administrative	14.0	13.2
Content Maker	2.5	2.3
Policy	9.6	7.6
Professional	9.5	11.1
Program and Project Management	15.7	11.2
Regulatory (e.g., vetting visa applications, seizing illegal goods on arrival in Australia, compliance and debt collection)	6.7	5.4
Service Delivery	29.7	39.0
Technical	9.8	7.5
I prefer not to respond	2.5	2.9

The growth of insecure working arrangements has been an issue across the community and the public sector is not exempt from it. Women who had non-ongoing roles or weren't directly engaged were asked if they were employed on consecutive temporary contracts in their current role. Nearly half (47.1%) said they had been. Of those:

- 36.1per cent had two consecutive contracts.
- 28.6per cent had three consecutive contracts.
- 30.9per cent had four or more consecutive contracts.

Women were also asked if they were acting in a higher position. 14 per cent said they were and, of those, 33.3 per cent had been doing so for more than a year. This raises questions as to whether they are temporary acting positions and shows that insecure working arrangements also impact on permanent staff.

HOURS OF WORK

SUMMARY

- Two thirds of women work additional hours.
- Women who work additional hours are working longer hours.
- Two in five full time women work more than four additional hours per week compared to a quarter in 2019.
- The most common reason for working additional hours was to get all their work done.
- The majority said they only sometimes or never receive compensation for working extra hours.
- Only half of the respondents who work additional hours report all those hours.
- The most common reason for not being compensated was payment or time off was only given in certain circumstances.
- A quarter say they are not compensated because management expects uncompensated hours.
- Two thirds said working additional hours caused or sometimes caused them personal difficulties.
- Two in five women were contacted outside of work hours for work related matters in the last 6 months.
- Three quarters of those contacted outside of work hours were not compensated.

Women continue to work additional hours, with 64.4 per cent of all women, working additional hours. It increased to 69.9 per cent for women who work full time. Women who earned more were more likely to say they worked additional hours, nine in ten (92.0%) of those earning \$120,000 and above saying they worked additional hours compared to half (54.4%) of those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999.

Those full-time women who said they worked additional hours were asked how many additional hours they worked.

- 26.8 per cent worked between one and less than three additional hours.
- 23.8 per cent worked between three to less than five additional hours.
- 25.6 per cent said they worked 10 or more additional hours.
- 9.3 per cent worked between five and 10 additional hours.

Full-time women who work additional hours are working longer with an increase in the number who work more than five hours to 41.4 per cent, the highest it has ever been. In 2019, it was 26.3 per cent. One explanation may be that working from home during the pandemic has meant the blurring between work and home and there being no commute time. Combined with workload pressures, women are working longer hours to get their work done.

Women were asked whether they reported all the hours they worked. Only half (50.9%) said they did. Three in ten (28.2%) did not and a fifth (20.9%) only did sometimes.

Table 7: Additional hours worked by full time women (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
< one additional hour	11.7	11	12.8	23.9	8.0
1 < 3 additional hours	35	34.2	34.7	29.5	26.8
3 < 5 additional hours	23.6	19	21.3	20.3	23.8
5 < 10 additional hours	20.7	21.4	20.6	16.4	25.6
10 < 15 additional hours	6.1	7	6.7	4.5	9.3
15+ additional hours	3	7.4	3.8	5.4	6.5

The more women earn, the more likely they are to be working longer hours. Those working full-time, earning \$120,000 or more were most likely to say they worked additional hours (92.0%). In contrast, only half (54.4%) of those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999 reported they worked additional hours.

Of those working full-time and earning \$120,000 or more, one in ten (12.7%) worked 15 hours or more additional hours per week, while only 4.1 per cent of those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999 reported working 15 hours or more additional hours.

Women working in policy roles are most likely to be working 15 or more additional hours (11.8%). This was followed by women in professional (9.5%) roles and service delivery (9.0%) roles. Women in technical (1.0%) and regulatory roles (4.3%) were the least like work 15 hours or more.

Women who worked additional hours were asked why they worked overtime or extra hours. The most common reasons provided were so I can get all my work done (49.6%), followed by so I can get all my work done on time (34.0%) and I want to build up my flex time/Accrued Day Off (28.6%).

COMPENSATION FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS

Women who worked additional hours were asked if they always received compensation for working additional hours. 45.8 per cent said they always did. Those who worked additional hours who did not (14.5%) or only sometimes received compensation (37.9%) were asked the reason why they did not receive compensation.

Women whose work description was policy (62.6%) were most likely to receive compensation for working additional hours. Those whose work description was administrative (49.4%) were least likely to.

Women who earned more were less likely to receive compensation for additional hours. Three in ten (29.0%) of those earning \$120,000 and higher were never compensated compared to one in ten (12.4%) of those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999. This likely reflects working at higher classifications where flextime or overtime may not be available.

The proportion who were not compensated for additional hours has declined from 2019 (22.3%), however, it remains notably higher than in 2013 when around one in twenty (5.2%) were not compensated for work they did. It increased dramatically to approximately one in five (22.3%) in 2015.

Women were asked the main reason why they were not always compensated for additional hours. Payment or time off is only given in certain circumstances continues to be the most common reason (28.4%). This, combined with an increase in women who say management expects uncompensated extra hours, indicates that the lack of compensation for additional hours is being influenced by discretionary decisions by management.

Table 8: Main reason why not always compensated – 2011-2021 (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
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
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
I have an informal arrangement with my supervisor/management	18.9	17.4	12.6	12.8	12.5	8.9
I don't tell my employer	16.7	14.7	13.1	13.2	14.7	16.5
My workplace cannot afford it	2.4	2.2	2	1.3	1.9	0.4
No compensation arrangements available	3.3	4	5.7	5.8	7.6	5.0
Management expects uncompensated extra hours	3.1	5.2	22.3	21.5	20.7	23.2
Workloads mean I cannot be compensated (e.g., take flextime)	-	-	-	-	-	2.6

DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY ADDITIONAL HOURS

Women who worked additional hours were asked if any personal difficulties were caused by them working additional hours. 12.2 per cent said it did, 52.0 per cent said it sometimes did and 34.8 per cent said it did not cause them personal difficulties.

Those who said that it caused or sometimes caused them difficulties were asked what the types of personal difficulties were.

The most common difficulty continues to be that they were already fatigued and overworked (58.3%), followed by having to reprioritize other non-work commitments is difficult (45.0%) and it takes a toll on personal relationships (42.7%). There has been a notable increase in the number of respondents selecting already being fatigued and overworked as a difficulty over the past decade. As a likely consequence of pandemic restrictions forcing people to work from home, fewer respondents identified commuting as a difficulty with additional hours.

Table 9: Types of personal difficulties working extra hours causes (%)

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

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

CONTACT OUTSIDE OF WORK HOURS

Women were asked whether they were required to be contactable outside of work hours as part of their job. One in ten (8.9%) said they were required to be contactable outside of work hours and one in five (18.3%) said sometimes.

While 71.9 per cent said it was not a requirement to be contactable outside of work hours, 52.4 per cent said they had been contacted outside of work by phone or email for work in the previous six months.

Table 10: Contact outside of work hours (%)

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

Of those women who said they were contacted outside of work hours, four in five (81.7%) responded and over one in ten (14.3%) said they sometimes responded.

Women who worked in content maker roles (65.9%) were most likely to be contacted outside of work hours, followed by professionals (63.5%). Those earning \$120,000 and above were more (81.5%) likely to say they had been contacted outside of work hours than those earning between \$60,000 and \$79,999 (36.3%).

Women who said they responded to being contacted outside of work hours were asked how frequently they were contacted. Three in ten (30.8%) said they responded at least weekly.

Table 11: Frequency of contact (%)

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

Women contacted outside of work hours were asked if they were paid, or given time off, for being contacted outside of work hours. One in ten (10.8%) were compensated and only 14.5 per cent were compensated sometimes. The vast majority (73.0%) were not paid or given time off.



CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

SUMMARY

- One third of women have dependent children for whom they are the primary carer.
- One third of women care for others on a regular basis, most likely parents/parents-in-law.
- A third of women had dual caring responsibilities, that is being the primary carer of children and having to care for others on a regular basis.
- Full-time women with dual caring responsibilities continue to feel much greater time pressures and far less satisfaction with work-life balance than women generally.

Women were asked if they had dependent children. A third (35.5%) reported they did. Most said they had one (40.0%) or two (47.5%) dependent children. When asked, nine in ten (87.7%) said they were their primary carer.

When asked if they had regular caring responsibilities for others, a third (31.2%) said they did. Women who said they had regular caring responsibilities mostly had responsibility for parents/parents-in-law (60.6%), followed by adult children (20.9%) and their partner (15.0%).

Three in ten (29.3%) women had dual caring responsibilities, that is women who have regular caring responsibilities for others but are also the primary carer of dependent children. Three in five (58.7%) of these women stated they worked full-time.

Women working full-time with dual caring responsibilities continue to be less satisfied with their current work/life balance and more likely to say working overtime or extra hours causes personal difficulties compared to all women. (Table 12). There was also an increase in the proportion of women who said they almost always feel rushed or pressed for time.

Table 12: 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	74.1	64.1
I almost always feel rushed or pressed for time	44.4	25.6
I often feel rushed or pressed for time	35.4	38.5
I am very satisfied with my current work life balance	10.1	11.8
I am satisfied with my current work life balance	38.8	44.9

The proportion of full-time women with dual caring responsibilities who feel working additional hours causes them personal difficulties had previously remained constant over many years. Two in five always feel rushed or pressed for time and less than half are satisfied with their current work/life balance. (Table 13).

Table 13: Full-time women with dual caring responsibilities (2013-21) (%)

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

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

- Access to working from home arrangements was identified by 25.7 per cent of women as the most important issue for them in the next twelve months.
- Only a third of women had working from home arrangements besides pandemic restrictions.
- Seven in ten women say better working from home arrangements would make it more attractive to stay in their current role.
- Three in ten say domestic duties were not evenly divided during lockdown.
- Almost all women rated having flexible work hours and the ability to access leave as important or very important.
- While access to flexible arrangements was important to almost all women, two in five women only accessed leave and one in five accessed flexible work hours once or twice in the last twelve months.
- Two thirds worked from home during normal hours, up from a fifth in 2019.
- 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 significant gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements and satisfaction with work/life balance.
- Half agreed or strongly agreed that their current entitlements are sufficient to enable them to balance work and non-work commitments.
- Only two in five say their agency actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements by all staff.

Women were asked what the most important issue was they thought the CPSU should focus on over the next 12 months. The most five most common response were:

- Access to working from home arrangements (25.6%)
- Pay increases (19.7%)
- Access to flexible working hours (13.5%)
- Career progression (10.8%)
- Superannuation (6.7%)

In 2019, the most important issue for women was access to flexible working hours (30.5%).

Women who worked part-time (31.3%), those with dependent children (30.5%) or caring responsibilities (27.8%) were more likely to identify access to working from home arrangements as the key issue.

PANDEMIC WORK FROM HOME

Women were asked a range of questions about working from home for the first time. At the peak of COVID-19 pandemic national restrictions in April 2020, 59 per cent of APS staff were working from home with one-fifth of all APS agencies reporting that all their employees were working from home.²¹

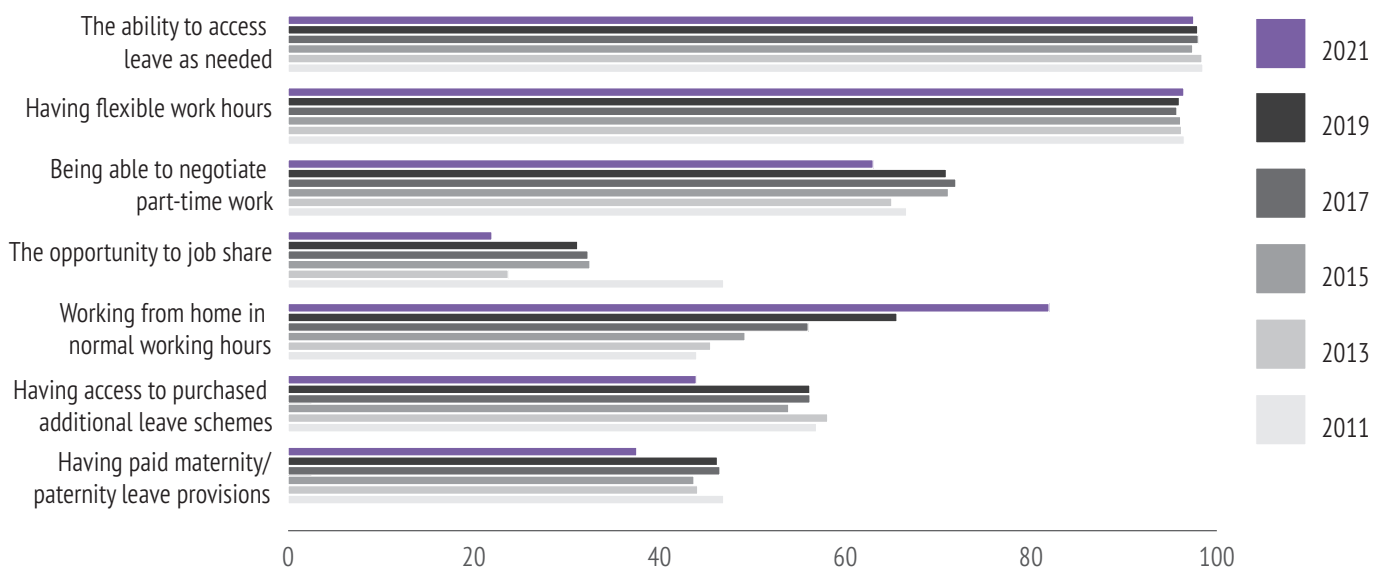
Three in four (79.4%) women said their employer had been more supportive of working from home arrangements. Aside from pandemic restrictions, only a third (32.4%) said they had regular work from home arrangements.

Women consider better working from home arrangements as good for staff retention. Seven in ten (68.7%) said it would make it more attractive to remain in their current role.

Pandemic restrictions on work and school also meant greater home/caring responsibilities, adding to existing pressures. Seven in ten (72.5%) said their supervisor was understanding of those responsibilities during those lockdowns, with only one in ten (11.6%) saying they were not. Despite that, there were still further pressures, with three in ten (30.9%) saying they did not consider that domestic duties were evenly divided during lockdown. Those who said it was not evenly divided (45.4%) were more likely to have dual caring responsibilities.

These results complement findings from a new study conducted by UNSW Canberra and CQUniversity, with support from the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) that found managers are becoming increasingly supportive of working from home arrangements and there is strong support for working from home or hybrid work arrangements with fewer than 10 per cent of employees wanting to spend all working hours in the workplace.²²

Chart 1: Importance of flexible work arrangements (%)



Women were asked about the importance of specific flexible working arrangements to them personally. Almost all (97.5%) believe the ability to access leave is important or very important. A similar number (96.5%) said having flexible work hours such as flextime was important or very important. Four in five (81.9%) stated that working from home in normal work hours was important or very important which comes as no surprise due to the pandemic.

Women were also asked about their access to flexible working arrangements over the past twelve months. Two thirds (65.8%) said they requested access to flexible working arrangements in the last twelve months with nine in ten (88.9%) saying the request was approved. One in ten (11.1%) said working from home was rejected.

Those with approved flexible working arrangements were asked how they accessed this over the past twelve months (Table 14). As in previous years, accessing leave as needed (53.0%) and flexible work hours (41.9%) were among the most used flexible work arrangements. As expected, working from home increased significantly and was regularly used by two thirds (66.3%) of respondents.

Despite almost all women saying access to flexible working arrangements such as leave or flexible work hours are important, only two in five (43.2%) accessed leave and one in five (21.6%) flexible work hours only once or twice over the last twelve months.

The most common flexible work arrangement regularly accessed was working from home with two thirds (66.3%) of respondents accessing it. This is a notable, pandemic-driven shift since the last survey in 2019 when only one in five (20.9%) women were accessing these.

Anecdotal reports suggest the decline in accessing leave as needed and accessing flexible work hours may also be associated with pandemic related travel and border restrictions as people were reluctant to take leave and may have been less likely to take leave as they could not travel.

Table 14: Flexible work arrangements accessed in the last 12 months (%)

	Regularly	Once or twice	No	Not applicable
Accessed leave as needed	53.0	43.2	2.6	1.2
Accessed flexible work hours	41.9	21.6	7.4	3.3
Negotiated part-time work	18.1	16.4	36.8	28.7
Had the opportunity to job share	1.3	1.2	46.4	51.1
Worked from home during normal working hours	66.3	15.7	12.3	5.8
Purchased additional leave schemes	6.6	4.2	63.5	25.7
Accessed paid maternity/paternity leave provisions	3.5	1.4	39.5	55.6
Accessed employer provided childcare assistance	0.4	1.0	40.6	58.0

Table 15: Flexible work arrangements accessed in the last 12 months - regularly (2011-2021) (%)

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Accessed leave as needed	59.3	64.6	56.1	56.8	62.8	53.0
Accessed flexible work hours	59.7	63.1	54.2	57.5	59.4	41.9
Negotiated part-time work	35	19.4	20.9	22.3	22.7	18.1
Had the opportunity to job share	1.9	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3
Worked from home during normal working hours	7.9	6.6	8.0	12.7	20.9	66.3
Purchased additional leave schemes	9.2	12.7	7.6	8.5	10.4	6.6
Accessed paid maternity/paternity leave provisions	6.5	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.5
Accessed employer provided childcare assistance	1.5	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.8	0.4

Women who requested access to flexible working arrangements but had their request denied were asked for the main reason(s) for that refusal. The most common reasons were other operational reasons (26.2%), followed by staffing constraints (19.9%) and no reason given (15.6%). This is a considerable change from 2019 when staffing constraints (34.5%) was the most cited reason.

Women were asked about their satisfaction with their ability to access flexible working arrangements (that they were entitled to) over the past twelve months. Seven in ten (71.9%) women said they were satisfied or very satisfied.

Table 16: Satisfied with access to flexible working arrangements (2011-2021) (%)

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

Women were asked whether their current entitlements are sufficient to enable them to balance work and non-work commitments. Just over half (52.8%) agreed or strongly agreed. This compares to 54.8 per cent in 2019 and two thirds (64.5%) in 2015. The results strengthen the case to end the ‘no improvements’ rule for APS bargaining to ensure workers and their agency can negotiate modern arrangements.

Women were also asked about their satisfaction with their work/life balance. Just over half (56.7%) stated they were satisfied or very satisfied and a quarter (23.2%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Satisfaction with work/life balance decreased notably between 2013 (62.2%) and 2017 (51.9%) by 10.7 per cent. While there have been improvements since 2017, this remains an issue within agencies’ control to be resolved as it has not recovered.

Table 17: Satisfied with work/life balance (2011-2021) (%)

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

Women were also asked if they felt rushed or pressed for time. Two thirds (64.1%) said almost always or often while only 4.2 per cent said rarely or never. These figures have remained similar since 2011.

Table 18: Time pressure frequency (2011-2021) (%)

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

As in previous reports, the gap between satisfaction with access to flexible working arrangements and satisfaction with work/life balance continues to exist. Despite women being generally satisfied with access to flexible working arrangements, only around half (56.7%) of women are satisfied or very satisfied with their work/life balance.

The impact of budget and staffing cuts in the APS, resulting in increased workloads is a likely explanation for this. Tackling this ongoing gap will require more than enabling access to flexible working arrangements, more staffing and resources are needed to address contact outside of hours without compensation, and additional hours due to workload pressures. There also need to be wider cultural changes to address factors like time pressures and unpaid domestic work.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Women were asked a range of different statements on workplace culture and asked if they agreed or disagreed. Two new questions about whether agencies and supervisors support the use of flexible work arrangements were asked. The responses provided an insight into the aspects of workplace culture that are impacting on satisfaction with work/life balance.

Table 19: Workplace culture (%)

	Agree or strongly agree (%)	Disagree or strongly disagree (%)
Taking time out for family and personal reasons is frowned on	20.7	57.3
Current entitlements are sufficient to enable me to balance work and non-work commitments	53.8	22.4
Employees who 'get ahead' work long hours on a regular basis	44.9	26.5
Employees who 'get ahead' take work home on a regular basis	39.8	27.1
Unless you put work before family or personal matters, you do not get noticed by management	36.0	35.9
Other employees in their workplace resent people making use of flexible work arrangements to meet family responsibilities	28.6	43.0
Taking time out for family reasons will disadvantage an employee's career prospects	46.0	26.5
Employees without family responsibilities are often expected to make sacrifices for employees who have family	41.7	32.7
My workload is adjusted when necessary to take account of family or caring responsibilities	26.7	34.6

I feel comfortable taking the leave I am entitled to	60.6	10.6
Both male and female employees are given access to work and family balance leave arrangements	61.4	23.5
I am able to take annual leave when I want to	54.1	27.6
It is easy for all employees to combine career and family	15.3	54.4
My agency actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements by all staff	40.6	32.3
My supervisor actively supports the use of flexible working arrangements by all staff	60.6	18.6

Notable findings include that:

- Half (53.8%) agree current entitlements are sufficient to balance work and non-work commitments.
- Nearly half (46.0%) agree taking time out for family reasons will disadvantage career prospects.
- Employees are more likely to agree that those who take work home (39.8%) or work long hours (44.9%) 'get ahead'.
- Only half (54.1%) can take annual leave when they want to.
- Three in five (60.6%) agree their supervisors actively support the use of flexible work arrangements but only two in five (40.6%) agree their agencies do.

These results highlight that workplace cultures still discourage the accessing of flexible working arrangements, even when they are available.



AUTONOMY AT WORK AND JOB SATISFACTION

SUMMARY

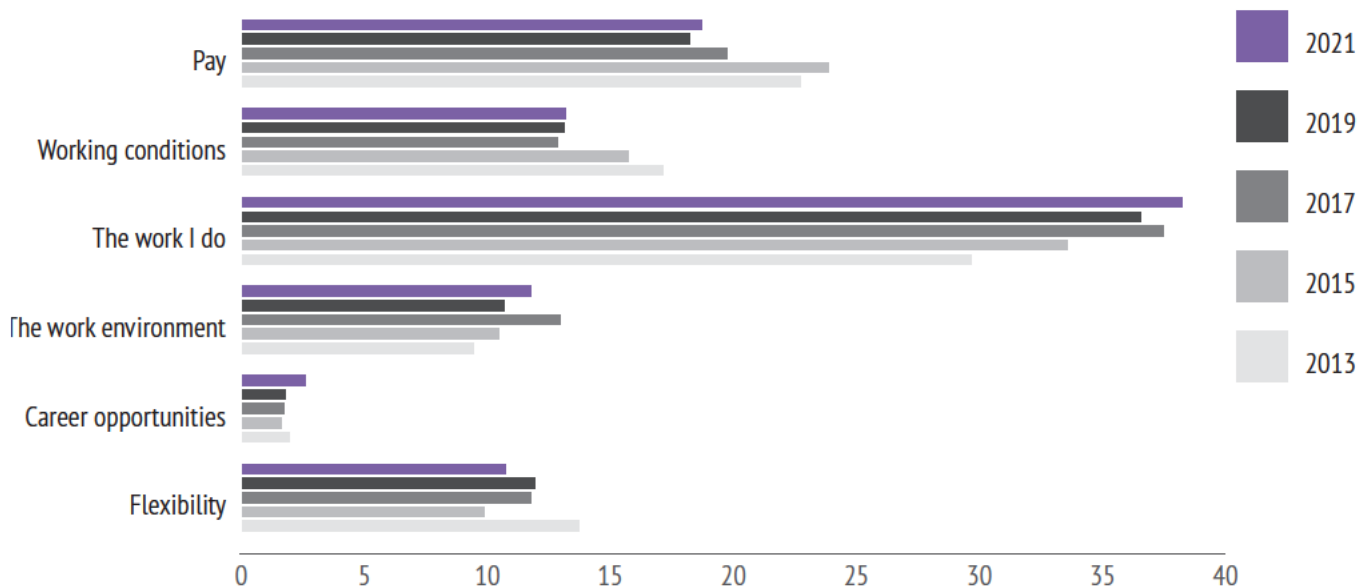
- Women enjoy the work they do regardless of their work description.
- Women’s influence and satisfaction with aspects of their work remains below 2013 levels.
- Women were most likely to be satisfied with how they did their work, and least likely to be satisfied with their workload.
- Satisfaction with the amount of pay has declined to 56 per cent in 2021 from 59 per cent in 2019. It remains significantly below 71 per cent in 2013.

Women were asked what they liked most about their job. The most common answer was the work I do (38.3%), followed by the pay (18.8%) and working conditions (13.2%). The work I do has been the most common response since 2013 and has increased since then.

Women were most likely to say the work I do across all work description types though there was some variation with professionals at the higher end (55.1%) and those in administrative roles (28.4%) at the lower end.

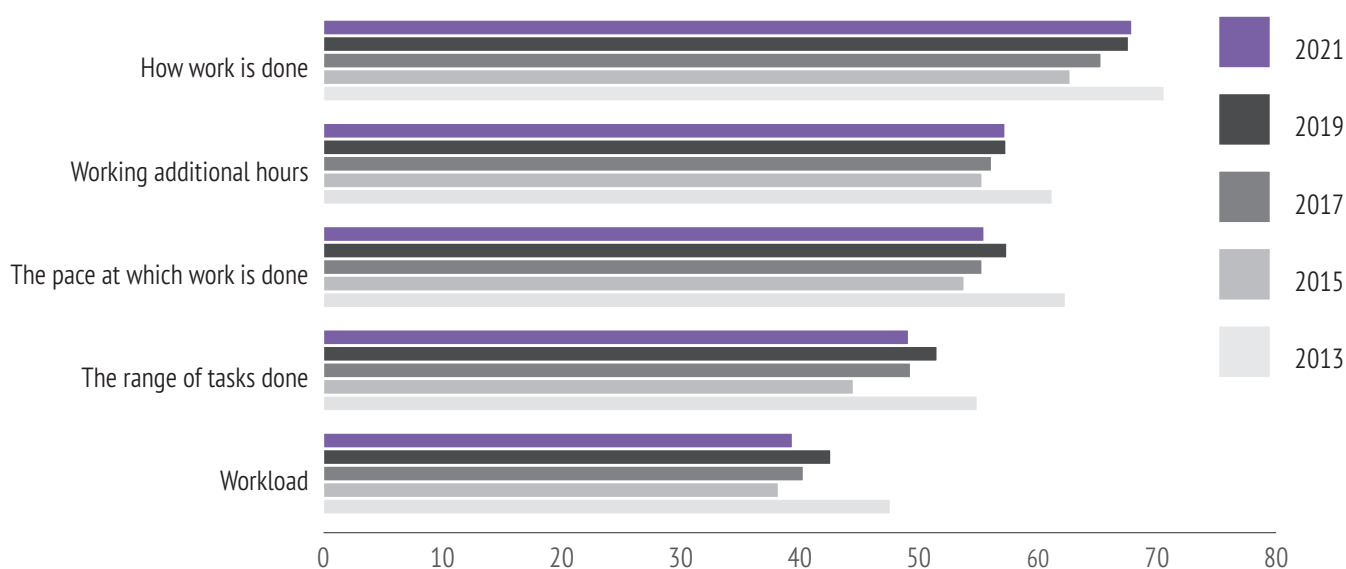
The work descriptions that were most likely to rate pay as the highlight of their job were service delivery (26.7%) and regulatory (19.3%).

Chart 2: Aspect of job enjoyed most (%)



Women were also asked about how much influence they felt they have over aspects of their work. Women continue to report having less influence in 2021 than they did in 2013, reflecting the different approach to the APS and the role of government under the Coalition (Chart 3). Unsurprisingly, workloads continue to be an issue with three in five (60.3%) saying they had little or no influence and nearly half (48.4%) having little or no influence over additional hours. How their work was done was the aspect they were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence over (67.9%).

Chart 3: A lot or some influence over work (%)



Women felt most able to influence how they did their jobs and least able to influence their workload:

Women in content maker roles and professional roles were most likely to say they had a lot or some influence (62.3%) over the range of tasks done while those in service delivery were least likely to (36.4%).

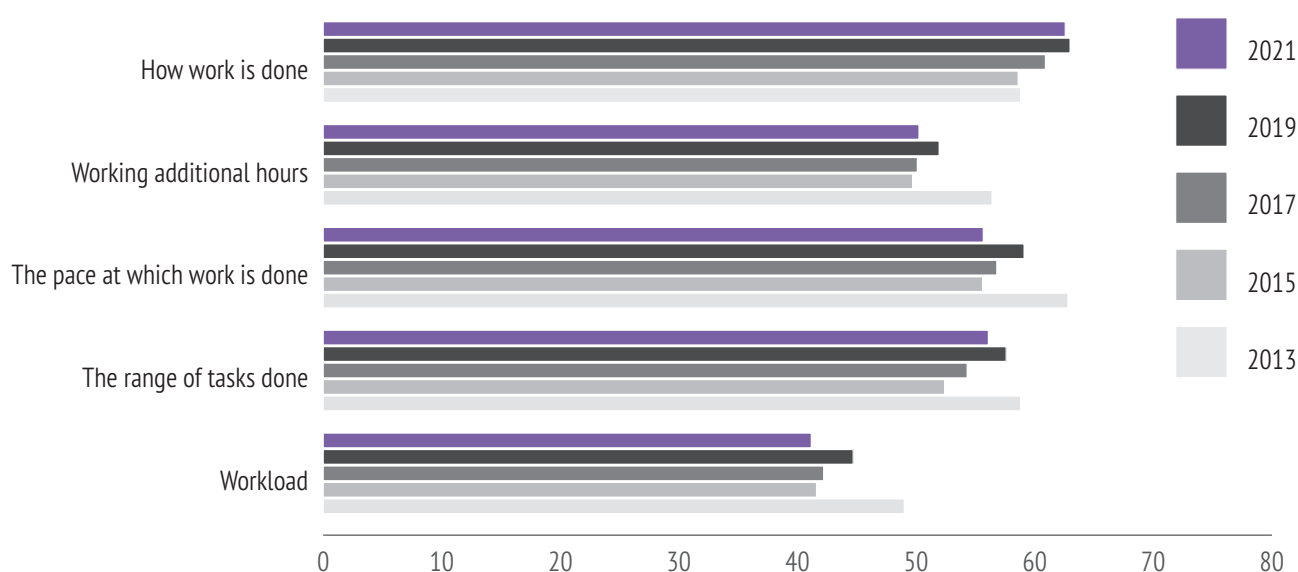
Those working in program or project management roles were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence (65.4%). Women in service delivery roles were most likely to say they had little or no influence (54.6%) over the pace at which they worked.

Women in content maker roles were most likely to say they had some or a lot of influence (82.4%) over how they did their work while those in service delivery were most likely to say they had had little or no influence (52.4%).

Women who worked in program and project management (46.5%) were most likely to say they had a lot or some influence over workload. Those in service delivery were most likely (73.5%) to say they have little or no influence.

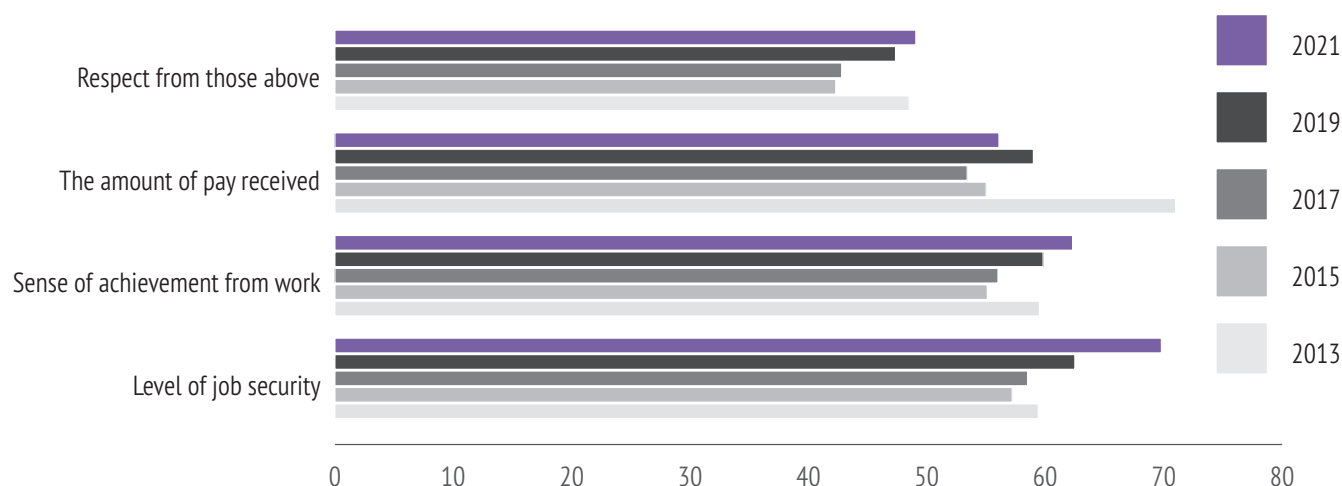
Those in technical roles were most likely to say they had a lot or some influence (68.0%) over working additional hours. Those in regulatory roles were least likely to say they had some or a lot (47.1%) of influence.

Chart 4: Satisfied or very satisfied with influence over aspects of work (%)



Women were also asked about their satisfaction with their influence over various aspects of their work. As in previous years, women were more likely to be satisfied with how they did their work and least likely to be satisfied with their workload.

Chart 5: Satisfied or very satisfied with aspects of work (%)



Satisfaction with influence over aspects of work continues to remain below 2013 levels except for how work is done (62.6%). The pressures of workloads and additional hours to get work done remains an issue.

- 50.2 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the ability to control working additional hours.
- 41.2 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the ability to control workloads.
- 55.7 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the pace at which work is done.
- 56.1 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the ability to control the range of tasks done.

The level of satisfaction with their influence also varied by work description.

Women in policy roles were most likely to say they were very satisfied or satisfied with influence (66.9%) over the range of tasks done while women in service delivery roles were least likely to (46.3%).

Those in service delivery roles were less likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence (48.4%) over the pace at which they worked. Women in technical roles were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence (66.8%).

Women in technical roles were most likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with their influence (71.5%) over how they did their work. Those in service delivery were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (53.6%).

Those who worked in technical (48.4%) roles were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their influence over workload. Women in service delivery were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied (35.4%) with their influence over workload.

Women in technical roles were most likely to be satisfied or very satisfied (56.5%) with their ability to control additional hours worked. Those in content maker (43.5%) roles were least likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied.

Women were also asked about their satisfaction with aspects of their job.

Satisfaction with the amount of pay is at 56 per cent. This is a decrease from 59 percent in 2019 but also continues to remain significantly below the 2013 level of 71 percent. This is likely to be from the cumulative effect of pay freezes, wages gaps, increased workloads and the growing use of expensive contractors and consultants to do core APS work.

Women in technical (67.4%) roles were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with the sense of achievement they got from their work while those in administrative roles were least likely to (57.5%).

Those in policy (60.4%) roles were most likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with the respect they get from those above them. Those in service delivery roles (43.9%) were least likely to be very satisfied or satisfied.

Women in policy roles were most likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their level of job security (79.2%). Those in administrative roles were least likely to be satisfied or very satisfied (64.5%).

JOB SECURITY

SUMMARY

- There is a greater sense of job security, reflective of job losses in the rest of the economy.
- Women in the NTPS are less likely to feel secure in their job than women in the APS or ACTPS.
- Women in service delivery roles were less likely to feel secure or very secure in their current job.
- The most common reason for concern about job security was organisational restructuring, followed by casualisation.

Women were asked about their level of satisfaction with their job security. Seven in ten (69.8%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job security. This compared with three in five (62.5%) in 2019. The improvement may be explained by the economic impact of the pandemic, resulting in widespread job losses in other sectors.

Those in insecure roles, however, generally felt dissatisfied with job security. Three quarters (75.7%) of casual respondents and two thirds (63.3%) of non-ongoing respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their level of job security.

When asked about how secure they felt in their job, two thirds (68.3%) felt secure or very secure. There was some variation based on where women worked. NTPS were least likely to feel very secure or secure (57.0%), reflective of the Territory Government's cuts and general austerity drive. APS respondents (68.8%) are on par with respondents in the ACTPS (70.3%) when it comes to whether they feel very secure or secure. Women in service delivery roles also were less likely to say they felt very secure or secure in their current jobs (64.6%).

The fifth (17.6%) of women who reported feeling insecure or very insecure in their current job were asked the reasons for their concerns. Organisational restructuring continues to be the most reported (41.0%) reason for feeling insecure, followed by casualisation (37.6%). Automation was an option for the first time with one in ten (9.6%) citing this as a reason.

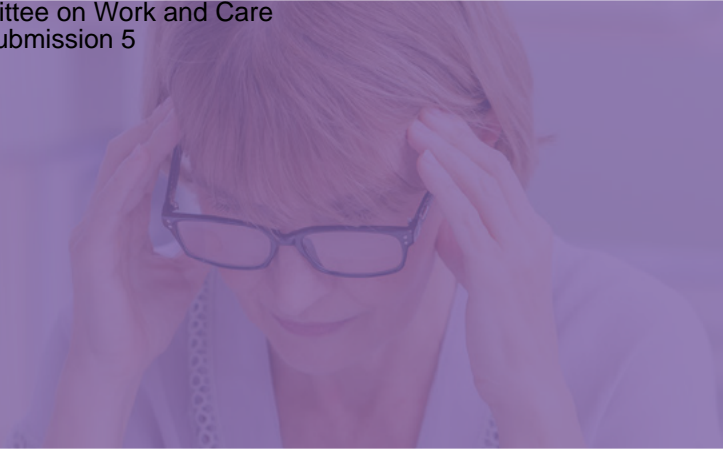
This is a shift from the previous years and the growing number citing casualisation likely reflects increases in, mainly non-ongoing, staffing levels since the pandemic began.

Table 20: Reasons for concern about job security (2013-2021) (%)

	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Budget cuts	71.8	44	42.4	37.6	22.9
Organisational restructuring	71	63.9	63.0	53.7	41.0
Outsourcing	17.5	22.3	34.1	29.8	19.7
Casualisation	17.7	29.4	24.3	27.5	37.6
Personal issues	16.9	15.7	14.6	12.6	15.4
Automation	-	-	-	-	9.6

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

The proportion of respondents who cited a specific reason varied depending on where women worked. Women in the ACTPS who felt insecure or very insecure most commonly cited casualisation (44.4%) and while women in the NTPS cited organisational restructuring (62.5%).



PRESENTEEISM

SUMMARY

- Three quarters of women have gone to work while sick in the last 12 months, down from over four in five in 2019.
- A fifth of women often to go to work while sick.
- Workload pressures and the belief they were not sick enough to stay at home and could work from home were the main reasons women went to work while sick.
- Not having enough paid sick leave was the most common reason for casual and not directly employed staff going to work while sick.

Women were asked if they had gone to work while sick over the past 12 months. Three quarters (76.1%) continued to work while sick at some point. One in five (22.1%) often did and over half (54.0%) did once or twice. Over one in ten (16.2%) always take sick leave and this is a big jump from 2019 and previous years. While this is a change from previous years and is likely explained by the pandemic, it is still concerning that it is still normalised to work while sick.

Table 21: Gone to work while sick (2013-2019) (%)

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

Women were asked the reason why they went to work while sick. For the first time, the option of being sick but working from home was included, reflecting work from home arrangements during the pandemic due to restrictions.

The most common reason provided was I was sick but I was working from home and could still work (56.2%), followed by workload pressures (49.4%) and I was sick but not sick enough to stay at home (27.3%).

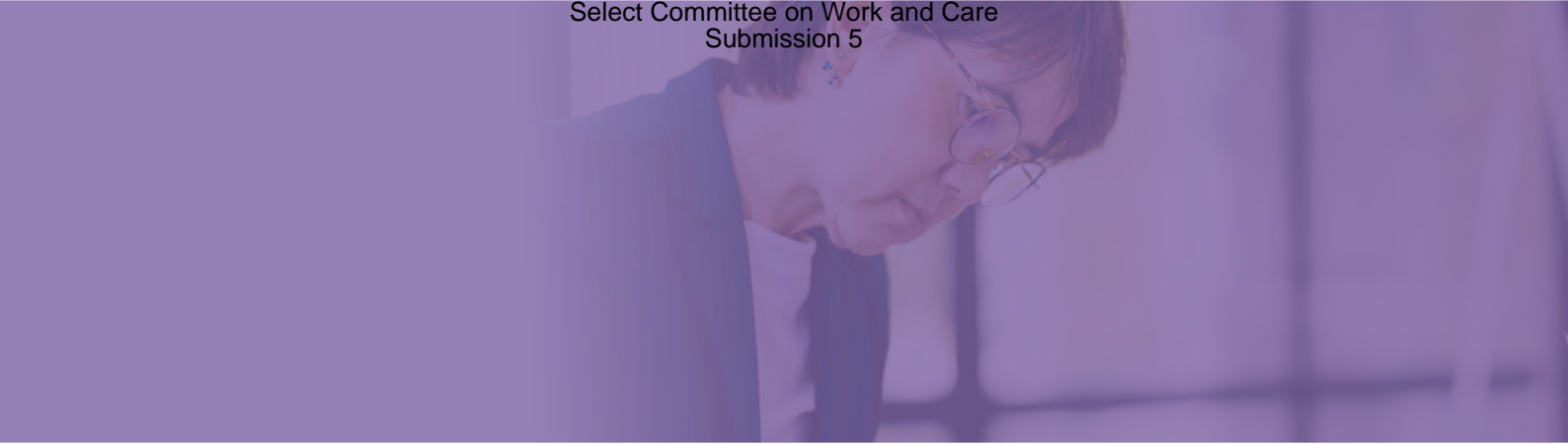
Table 22: Reasons for going to work while sick (2013-2021) (%)

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

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

For those who were casual or not directly employed, not enough paid sick days was the most common reason (53.3%) for going to work when sick. As casuals do not have sick leave, this was likely chosen due to their lack of sick leave.

These findings indicate that even when people are sick that they still do work because of workload pressures. While working from home has given additional flexibility, staff are still working while sick. Though it helps to limit the spread of sickness, it still impacts productivity and the individual's health if they do not rest and recover from illness.



BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

SUMMARY

- One in five women experienced bullying or harassment in the past 12 months.
- 2.2 per cent of women experienced sexual harassment at work in the past 12 months and only a quarter of those women reported it.
- One in five per cent of women reported experiencing discrimination at work in the past 12 months.
- The most common form of discrimination was age discrimination.
- The most common form of discrimination for women who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was racial discrimination.

Women were asked if they had experienced bullying and harassment over the past twelve months with one in five (22.8%) women reporting they did. This compared to 12 per cent according to the APS Census.²³

Of those, only half (48.8%) reported the incident. Three in five (62.0%) were not satisfied with the response, with three in ten (29.1%) satisfied to some extent.

Table 23: Bullying and harassment (%)

	Agree or strongly agree (%)	Disagree or strongly disagree (%)
I am fully aware of bullying and harassment policies and procedures at my workplace	85.8	6.2
Complaints regarding bullying and harassment are dealt with quickly and appropriately by management	24.6	31.5
Adequate training on bullying and harassment is provided by my workplace	47.2	26.4
Management places importance on eliminating bullying and harassment from the workplace	45.1	27.4

Women were asked if they had experienced sexual harassment over the past twelve months. 2.2 per cent said they did and of those, only a quarter (26.3%) reported the incident. Only one in ten (10%) of those who reported the incident were satisfied with the response with four in ten (40%) only satisfied to some extent.

There has been a notable shift in attitudes since 2019. Only three in ten (29.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly and appropriately, down from two in five (38.0%) in 2019. The proportion of women who disagreed or strongly disagreed (41.1%) that there is adequate training on sexual harassment, that complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly (24.5%) and that management places importance on eliminating sexual harassment increased notably (29.8%).

Table 24: Sexual harassment (%)

	Agree or strongly agree (%)		Disagree or strongly disagree (%)	
	2019	2021	2019	2021
I am fully aware of sexual harassment policies and procedures at my workplace	81.8	81.0	8.0	15.3
Complaints regarding sexual harassment are dealt with quickly and appropriately by management	38.0	29.7	9.5	24.5
Adequate training on sexual harassment is provided by my workplace	46.7	47.2	23.5	41.1
Management places importance on eliminating sexual harassment from the workplace	50.4	50.3	13.8	29.8

One in five (21.4%) women said they had experienced discrimination at work over the past twelve months, up from just over one in ten (14.3%) in 2019. This compared to 11 per cent according to the APS Census.

Of those, a fifth (21.5%) reported the incident. Two thirds (67.1%) were not satisfied with the response to their report. One in five (23.0%) were satisfied to some extent but only 5.6 per cent were completely satisfied.

Women were asked about the type of discrimination they experienced. The most common response was age (39.3%), followed by family and caring responsibilities (28.2%), sex (24.2%), disability (17.7%) and race or ethnicity (16.1%). One in twenty (5.1%) said they experienced discrimination due to their trade union activity.

The 2021 APS Census found that gender (32%), age (27%) and caring responsibilities (23%) were the most common forms of discrimination experienced.²⁴

Women who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were more likely to say they had experienced discrimination (32.5%). Of those who did, the most common forms were on the basis of race (65.9%), followed by age (59.2%) then sex (40.7%).

Table 25: Discrimination (%)

	Agree or strongly agree (%)	Disagree or strongly disagree (%)
I am fully aware of discrimination policies and procedures at my workplace	77.4	7.5
Complaints regarding discrimination are dealt with quickly and appropriately by management	26.8	17.5
Adequate training on discrimination is provided by my workplace	49.0	21.5
Management places importance on eliminating discrimination from the workplace	46.9	17.4



SAFETY AT WORK

SUMMARY

- One in five women have safety concerns at work. COVID related concerns were the basis of nearly one third of these responses.
- Three in ten women have experienced customer aggression in the last 12 months.
- Women in service delivery roles were most likely to have experienced customer aggression, followed by those in regulatory roles.
- Verbal aggression over the telephone continues to be the most common form of customer aggression.

Respondents were asked if they had any safety concerns at work. One in five (19.2%) said they did and of those, three in five (60.0%) reported their safety concerns. Those who worked in service delivery roles were more likely to say they had safety concerns (21.3%).

Seven in ten (68.8%) women who reported concerns were not satisfied with their response with a quarter (23.6%) happy to some extent.

Pandemic related issues were raised by nearly one in three (29.6%) of the women who expressed concerns about safety at work. The most common issues raised were around the implementation of COVID-safe workplans and the potential risks of returning to the office. Inadequate social distancing measures, poor ventilation, the vaccination status of colleagues, concerns over hot desking, and the risk to people with underlying health conditions on return to the office, were some of the specific issues raised. Some women expressed concern about their working from home environment and lack of suitable equipment.

CUSTOMER AGGRESSION

Women were asked if they had experienced any customer aggression over the past twelve months. Three in ten (30.6%) reported experiencing customer aggression.

Those in service delivery roles (56.2%) were most likely to say they had experienced customer aggression, followed by those who work in regulatory roles (32.3%) and administrative roles (28.4%).

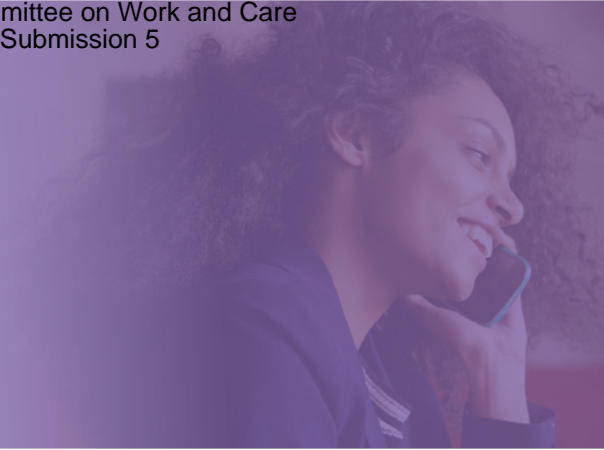
The most common form of customer aggression is verbal aggression over the telephone (75.0%), which has increased from previous year. This is followed by face-to-face aggression (33.4%), which declined as did physical aggression. The changes are likely to be explained by pandemic restrictions that have reduced face-to-face contact and pushed people to contact Services Australia via the telephone instead.

Table 26: Customer aggression experienced (2013-2021) (%)

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

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

Within the Australian Public Service, women who work at Services Australia were most likely to experience customer aggression. Over half (54.5%) of women at Services Australia experienced customer aggression, verbal aggression being the most common form (71.7%) as in previous years, up from two thirds (65.5%) in 2019.



TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

- Only two in five women are satisfied with their current career development opportunities.
- 13.7 per cent of women reported they had received no training and a further 12.0 per cent had received less than a day of training over the last 12 months.
- Women working in service delivery were more likely to receive training.
- 13.1 per cent of women applied for and were denied training.
- The most common reason for the denial of training was a decision of management.
- Higher positions and workplace mentoring are most important to women as part of career advancement.
- Non-financial factors such as their ability to interact with family and friends, the intellectual or professional enjoyment the role would provide and caring responsibilities are important for women when making career decisions.

There continues to be a gap between satisfaction with the availability of career development opportunities and the perceived attitude of management for women. When asked, four in five (79.6%) women believe management is supportive of training but only two in five (37.2%) say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their current career development opportunities. Women were also asked if they had access to training not directly related to their current position, only two in five (38.0%) saying they did.

The pandemic has meant a further reduction in training. In our 2019 What Women Want survey, 11.5 per cent said they received no training over the past year and a further 10.2 per cent said they received less than a day. This compares to 13.7 per cent who received no training and 12.0 per cent who received less than a day in 2021.

Women working in service delivery were more likely to more receive training. Nearly two in five (37.5%) received five or more days of training over the past twelve months. This could be training required to implement changed processes associated with the pandemic and/or an opportunity for online training for those unable to do their usual work from the office. Those least likely to receive five or more days training were those working in content maker roles (17.7%).

Women were asked if they applied for and were denied training. Just over one in ten (13.1%) said they were. This remains consistent with previous years. Of those who were denied training, over four in five (84.6%) said the training they applied for was relevant to their current role and over nine in ten (93.0%) said it was relevant to the development of their career.

Women who were denied training were asked for the main reason for that refusal. The most common reasons included it was a decision of management (37.6%), staffing constraints (30.7%), workload constraints (25.0%) and/or cost of training (22.8%).

Women were also asked about factors related to achieving career advancement and how important those factors were to them. As in previous years, having higher positions available within their organisation (74.0%) was the most important, followed by workplace mentoring (69.5%).

Women also consider non-financial factors when they make decisions about their career. Some of the key non-financial decision-making factors are:

- Their ability to interact with family (87.9% reported this as important) and friends (81.6%).
- The intellectual/professional enjoyment (90.2%) and social enjoyment (74.3%) provided by work was important.
- Caring responsibilities (62.8%) were also an important factor.
- For women who have dependent children, the availability of employer provided childcare assistance was important for some (37.8%).

SUPERANNUATION

SUMMARY

- Three in ten women do not know if their superannuation scheme is a defined benefit or accumulation plan.
- One in ten women do not know how much money they have in their superannuation account.
- Over two in five women said they made their own additional contributions to their superannuation.
- The most common reason for not putting in additional contributions continues to be that women could not afford to put extra money in.
- A quarter of women have more than one superannuation account, and mostly commonly this is by choice.
- Over half of women had never been to any superannuation information/training sessions.

Superannuation continues to be an important issue for women. It was one of the top five issues that women said the CPSU should focus on over the next twelve months.

A quarter (25.0%) said they were in a defined benefits scheme and a third (34.5%) said an accumulation fund. Three in ten (31.8%) were not sure.

As expected, younger women were much less likely to be members of a defined benefits scheme - only 2.3 per cent of those aged 25-34 were and were more likely to be unsure (48.1%) about their scheme. This compared to the two in five (37.0%) who were in defined benefits schemes and the quarter (27.0%) who were unsure in the 45-54 cohort. A factor in the difference between age cohorts was the closure of the last defined benefit scheme in the APS to new members in 30 June 2005.

When asked about how much superannuation they had, a sizeable proportion were unsure (11.5%). Again, there was an age divide, women under 35 being less likely to know the balance of their deferred wages.

Women were asked if they put their own money into superannuation, in addition to employer contributions. While two in five (42.9%) said they did, it should be noted that for some in defined benefit funds, contributions are required and there are incentives to ensure the best financial outcome. Only three in ten (29.1%) women in an accumulation fund contributed additional amounts compared to two in five (40.5%) women in a defined benefit fund.

Women who made extra contributions were asked how they did so. Two in five salary sacrificed (40.7%) and (43.0%) made post-tax contributions. Nearly one in ten (7.6%) made pre and post-tax contributions.

Just over half (53.5%) said they did not put their own money into superannuation. Those who did not put any of their own money into superannuation, in addition to employer contributions, were asked the reasons why.

The most common reason continues to be that they cannot afford to put extra money in (35.1%), followed by that they would rather pay off their mortgage (32.9%).

Table 27: Reasons for not putting own money into superannuation (%)

	2015	2017	2019	2021
I can't make extra contributions in my defined benefit fund	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.1
My employer contribution is enough	12.2	9.5	10.9	16.0
I would rather spend the money now	9.4	7.2	7.7	8.6
I would rather pay off my mortgage	35.7	34.6	33.6	32.9
I cannot afford to put extra money in	47.2	43.9	41.8	35.1
I would rather invest the money myself	5.8	4.9	5.3	4.7
It does not make financial sense	4.2	4.5	4.1	4.0
I don't know how to/it is complicated/difficult	10.3	15.9	14.4	12.1
I am planning to, but it is not a priority	21.6	16.9	19.2	17.0
I would rather pay off debts	-	18.5	17.6	11.8
I am saving for other things	-	15.2	17.5	16.3
I have never thought of it/don't know	-	-	-	5.6

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

Women were asked if they actively managed their own superannuation accounts. Three quarters (73.6%) said they did not and only a third (21.0%) said they did.

When asked, a quarter (24.1%) of women said they had more than one superannuation account. Women with more than one account were asked for the main reason. The most common reason was because they choose to (27.2%), followed by not having a chance to combine funds (18.1%) and being unable to combine funds (17.8%)

Table 28: Main reasons for having more than one superannuation account (%)

	2015	2017	2019	2021
Because I have not had a chance to combine my funds	32.4	25.7	21.8	18.1
Because I want to be able to salary sacrifice	8.8	8.4	10.5	8.3
Because I have two jobs	3.1	4.7	4.6	4.5
Because I also have a self-managed fund	4.2	4.8	5.0	4.5
I choose to	14.8	20.8	21.1	27.2
Because I don't know how/it is too difficult/complicated to change	11.4	14.0	12.3	8.9
I am in the process of rolling over my funds	8.8	8.8	9.9	4.5
Unable to combine funds	-	7.3	10.3	17.8

Women were asked if they had been to any information/training sessions about superannuation. Over half (52.4%) said they had never been, and two thirds (66.9%) said they had never seen a financial planner about superannuation or retirement.

ATTACHMENT A

METHODOLOGY

The 2021 CPSU What Women Want Survey was launched online on 19 October 2021 and was open for participants to complete for 4 weeks, closing on 12 November 2021. The survey was hosted online by WebSurveyCreator.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent via email to all CPSU women members and other employees who have asked to receive CPSU material. The initial invitations were staged over the first three days of the survey.

The first invitations were sent out on 19 October 2021 to 20,241 members and 9,810 non-members.

Several reminders were sent out over the course of the survey. These included email reminders sent to all women members and non-members on 28 October 2021 and 12 November 2021, ACT Government also sent out an email to all staff and some agencies shared the survey through their intranet. Links to the survey were also posted on the CPSU social media accounts.

The total number of women the CPSU emailed and asked to participate in the CPSU What Women Want survey in 2021 was 30,051. This figure does not include emails sent out by agencies to their employees. A total of 3,495 responses to the survey were received, an overall response rate of 11.6 per cent.

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ENDNOTES

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6 Main English-speaking countries generally comprise the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa

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CPSU ANALYSIS

Working during the pandemic: The future of work is hybrid

FEBRUARY 2022

Community and Public Sector Union

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Introduction

Widescale access to working from home during COVID-19 has allowed the public sector to respond to the pandemic and support the Australian community. It has changed the world of work as we know it, opening up opportunities for flexible work that were previously less accessible.

In 2020, the CPSU collaborated with researchers Professor Linda Colley, Central Queensland University, and Associate Professor Sue Williamson, UNSW Canberra, to undertake a research project, *Working during the pandemic*, to gather data about the experience of public sector employees working during COVID-19. Drawing on 6,377 responses from employees in the federal public sector, Northern Territory Public Sector, and ACT Government, the union was able to use the results of that research to advocate with agencies to adopt new working from home policies, and ensure that working from home continues to be available to employees who want it.

In September 2021 we teamed up again, to see what had changed, and to ask employees about emerging issues. There is now a second year of evidence to reflect on, and a very rich data set of 5,489 responses, that forms the basis of the 2022 report *Working during the pandemic: The future of work is hybrid*.

94% of responses were from employees in the federal public sector. 28.81% of respondents had responsibility for supervising staff, a cohort that offered very useful insights into the experience of managing staff who have worked from home.

The following is the CPSU's analysis of the results, including further lessons that could be adopted by the public sector to benefit both employees and agencies. The CPSU thanks Professor Linda Colley and Associate Professor Sue Williamson for their insightful and timely research. The union also thanks all of the public sector employees who took the time to share their experiences.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Donnelly'.

Melissa Donnelly
National Secretary
Community and Public Sector Union

Employees who worked on site

The ability to work from home has not been available to everyone. There are many public sector employees who have been required to continue working at their usual workplace, at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 than employees who were able to work from home. These employees provided vital services to the Australian community; on the ground in Services Australia helping Australians in need to access payments, and at airports in the Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment and the Department of Home Affairs, and many other critical functions.

Summary

After two years working from home, employees have a depth of experience that is evident in the 2021 results. Supervisors have also reflected on the experience of employees with a diversity of personal circumstances, and there is a sense from supervisors that different arrangements will work for different employees. More so than in 2020, lockdown fatigue is evident in the 2021 responses. Employees overwhelmingly want ongoing access to working from home, but they had no control over what that flexibility looked like during restrictions, which presented very real challenges.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Employees overwhelmingly want ongoing access to working from home, and they are largely supported by their supervisors.
- Most employees want to access a mix of home and office-based work.
- The ability to work from home continues to offer benefits to employees and employers. Employees and their supervisors agree that productivity is the same or higher when employees work from home.
- Although most employees felt supported by their supervisor, where a supervisor took an overly rigid or restrictive approach, this had a negative impact on morale, a sense of fairness, and employees' well-being.
- Working from home is now seen as an essential element of an employee's package of conditions. Employers that don't offer flexibility will fall behind and will struggle to attract and retain staff.

- Employees report that they would consider leaving their agency or the public sector if working from home is not offered, and supervisors say agencies will struggle to attract and retain staff.
- Overwhelmingly, employees want their agency to engage in enterprise bargaining and include improved working from home provisions in enterprise agreements.
- There is low visibility of working from home policies among existing employees.
- Many supervisors want greater freedom to grant working from home requests than their agency's policy allows. Caps on the proportion of time spent working from home were seen as counterproductive.
- Employees' individual circumstances differ. The greatest benefits from flexibility arise when employees have autonomy over whether and how much to work from home.
- Some employees prefer to work from the office, and lockdowns that forced employees to work from home had a negative effect on some employees' mental health.
- Overall, employees perceive that agencies now support flexible working arrangements, including the ability to work from home.
- There is room for agencies to adopt a more rigorous approach to employees' workplace health and safety while they are working from home.

Overwhelming support for access to working from home

As in 2020, the 2021 results indicate that overwhelmingly, employees want continued access to working from home. Most employees want a mix of office and working from home time, with 73.70% of respondents indicating their preference is to combine the two.



74% said they want to access a mix of home and office-based work.

What is your preferred mix of office time and working from home time?

Answer	2020	2021
All hours spent in the workplace	6.53%	7.83%
Some hours worked from home on occasion	13.60%	10.18%
20% from home every week (e.g. 1 day if full time)	38.78%*	7.69%
40% from home every week		17.44%
60% from home every week	30.23%**	20.43%
80% from home every week	-	17.96%
All hours worked from home	10.86%	18.48%

*In 2020, respondents were given the option to indicate their preferred mix was “Some hours worked from home every week”.

**In 2020, the option was “Most hours worked from home”.

The responses show significant diversity in employee preferences, which reflect individual circumstances. The responses also indicate some firming up of employee preferences, with an increase in the percentage of employees who want to work all their hours from home, and a slight increase in the percentage of employees who want to spend all their hours in the office. With a number of jurisdictions experiencing periods of lockdown during 2020 and 2021, many employees now have had extensive periods of working from home and may be better placed to indicate what works best for them.

Benefits of working from home

Employees wanting ongoing access to working from home identified significant benefits for themselves, their families, and for their ability to get their work done. Respondents said they had more time for themselves and their family (87.61%), working from home assisted with caring responsibilities (55.76%), and they gained time from not commuting (87.72%). Respondents said they had more autonomy over when they did their work (61.09%), could get more done than when at the office (68.55%), and some indicated that working from home allowed them to undertake more complex work (43.52%).

Benefits identified by employees

Have more autonomy over when I do my work	61.09%
Get more work done than when at the office	68.55%
Undertake more complex work	43.52%
I could increase my part time work hours	18.23%
Gain time from not commuting	87.72%
Have more time for myself / my family	87.61%
Help with caring responsibilities	55.76%

Gender equality

Flexible work allows employees to better combine work and home life. As caring responsibilities are still disproportionately undertaken by women, women are better placed to forge meaningful careers in organisations that offer flexible work.

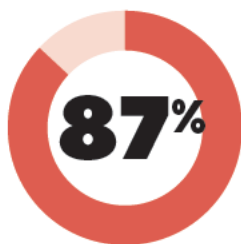
One supervisor said:

“Staff really value the flexibility of work from home in Canberra and further afield. Outside of lockdowns, it has improved mental and physical health and allowed talented staff with caring responsibilities to take on meaningful employment which would not have been possible if work from the office was mandatory.”

The ability to work from home, and its normalisation, may also facilitate men taking on more caring responsibilities, thereby supporting gender equality at home and in the workplace.

An essential part of the conditions package

After almost 2 years of widescale working from home in the public sector, employee and employer expectations have significantly shifted. The results indicate that employees overwhelmingly consider that the ability to work from home is emerging as a standard working condition that employees expect. 86.82% supported this proposition, with only 6.48% disagreeing.



87% said working from home is now a standard working condition that employees expect.

For me, working from home is emerging as a standard working condition/entitlement that employees expect.

Answer	2021
Agree	86.82%
Disagree	6.48%
Not sure	6.69%

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

The results also indicate that employers who do not offer working from home as part of the conditions package will fall behind, and will struggle to attract and retain employees. 44.84% of respondents indicated that they would consider leaving their agency or the public sector if their agency did not provide the option to work from home.



45% said they would consider leaving their agency or the public sector if their agency did not provide the option to work from home

Only 29.11% of respondents disagreed with that proposition. It is likely into the future that high performing employees will not be attracted to agencies that do not actively support working from home.

If my agency did not allow staff to work from home at all, I would consider changing agencies or leaving the public sector.

Answer	2021
Agree	44.84%
Disagree	29.11%
Not sure	26.05%

Supervisor respondents clearly indicated that access to working from home was important for attraction and retention.

In your view, does greater access to working from home arrangements contribute to your organisation’s ability to attract and retain staff? (Respondents to this question were supervisors).

Answer	2021
Yes	82.24%
No	4.59%
Not sure	13.17%



82% of supervisors said access to working from home helped their agency attract and retain staff.

Supervisors also indicated that limitations on their ability to allow staff to work from home decreases their organisation’s ability to attract and retain staff, with 54.46% agreeing with that proposition, 16.55% disagreeing, and 28.99% unsure.

WORKING FROM HOME PROVISIONS BELONG IN ENTERPRISE AGREEMENTS

The results indicate very strong sentiment that improved working from home provisions should be included in enterprise agreements (EAs). EAs are accessible to employees, they are negotiated, and matters arising under EAs are subject to dispute settlement provisions. 89.48% of respondents said that improved working from home provisions should be included in EAs.



89% said that working from home provisions belong in the enterprise agreement.

Should improved working from home conditions be included in your enterprise agreement when it is renegotiated?

Answer	2021
Yes	89.48%
No	2.69%
Not sure	7.83%

The “no enhancements rule” in the current bargaining policy¹ effectively freezes EA conditions in time, preventing them from adapting and improving on the non-monetary package available to Australian Public Service (APS) employees. Because of this rule, the APS is no longer innovating on the overall employment package through enterprise bargaining. It has foregone its natural advantage against the private sector, which is increasingly adopting flexible working arrangements and other measures to attract and retain and address gender equality in the workplace.

Agencies should not be constrained from negotiating improved working from home arrangements in enterprise bargaining. This undermines the ability of APS agencies to support the *APS Workforce Strategy 2025* objective of developing a “compelling employee value proposition that is well positioned to attract top Australian talent to choose a career with the APS”². The risk for employers that do not adapt to changing employee expectations is that they develop a reputation for inflexibility, devaluing the conditions package on offer to employees.

LOCATION OF ROLES

The continued availability of flexible working arrangements, access to working from home, and the ability to perform roles from a wider range of locations is important for attraction and retention of skilled employees. The adoption of strategies to make roles available in a wider range of locations expands the pool of skilled employees available to the APS, potentially easing labour market difficulties. This is particularly important where the APS has difficulty competing for skilled employees in tight labour markets, for example digital and data employees.

1 Public Sector Workplace Bargaining Policy 2020, par. 49

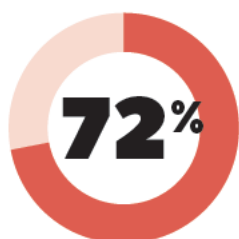
2 Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025, Commonwealth of Australia, 2021, p. 5

Supervisors were asked about whether working from home has allowed their agency to advertise roles in a broader range of locations. 24.81% had observed this change, 25.42% said they had not, and 49.76% were unsure. This suggests that there are further opportunities to be explored with the location of roles.

Employees who are able to perform their work from any location in Australia may be more likely to accept and remain in an APS role. With the widespread adoption of working from home arrangements during the COVID pandemic, the ability to work from any location is more likely to become an expectation of high performing, highly-skilled employees.

Supervisors' views about working from home

Employees with supervisory responsibilities comprised 28.81% of respondents, offering a very rich data set of supervisor perspectives. The results show that on the whole, supervisors have played a positive role facilitating working from home. Most respondents indicated that their supervisor supports them accessing the flexibility to work from home or the office when they choose, with 72.05% of respondents agreeing that proposition.



72% said their supervisor supports them working flexibly.

Only 17.07% of respondents said their supervisor did not support this flexibility. This is a good result that shows by and large, supervisors are supporting workplace flexibility, and critically for morale and staff engagement, are seen by their employees to be doing so.

My supervisor actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements by all staff.

Answer	2021
Strongly agree	45.03%
Somewhat agree	27.02%
Neither agree nor disagree	10.88%
Somewhat disagree	9.37%
Strongly disagree	7.70%

Supervisors were asked about the proportion of their team that are now working from home, other than during lockdowns. 54.29% said all of their team worked from home in 2021 (other than during lockdowns), and 16.76% said more than half, and 8.11% saying about half.

Most supervisors (65.67%) indicated that that was their preferred arrangement, with 34.33% indicating it was not, for various reasons, including wanting to offer more flexibility than the cap on the percentage of time worked from home in their agency’s policy allowed, or wanting to see their employees once a week, for example.

Here’s what supervisors said, in their own words:

“I wish that all staff who can do their role from home had the ability to work from home as many hours as they prefer, without a cap.”

“Would prefer that more time allowed to work from home is offered.”

“I would like to see the team in person, where possible, at least once per week.”

“All staff should be allowed to work from home if desired.”

“I would like to enable the team to work the way they want with the flexibility they need. The current policy makes this hard...”

“Having people manage and balance their lives is better than presenteeism”

“Staff want to work from home but feel unable to ask for it.”

“I prefer staff in the office as it is more practical for training and team development.”

“Prefer staff be able to WFH if they wish as it demonstrates I trust them and allows them to balance work and family which is necessary for good mental health.”

Supervisors were asked about whether their views on working from home had shifted as a result of the pandemic. As in 2020, supervisors reported a significant shift in attitude, with 69.68% in 2021 saying they were now somewhat more or much more supportive of staff working from home.



70% of supervisors said as a result of the pandemic, they were more supportive of their staff working from home.

After another year managing staff working from home, even more supervisor respondents indicated being “much more” supportive of their staff working from home (44.36%, up from 37.34%).

Think about your views on working from home before the pandemic restrictions, and more recently. Are you more supportive or less supportive of your staff working at home at least some of the time?

Answer	2020	2021
Much more	37.34%	44.36%
Somewhat more	26.88%	25.32%
About the same	33.13%	27.48%
Somewhat less	1.29%	1.76%
Much less	1.36%	1.08%

Agencies support working from home

Respondents were also asked about the attitude of their agency. The results show that most employees consider that their agency actively supports flexible work, with 57.23% of respondents agreeing with that proposition. It is interesting that this support was perceived to be weaker than the support exhibited by supervisors. This suggests that agencies are adopting a more cautious or conservative approach to flexible work than their supervisors are happy to manage.

There are also a small number of agencies that have adopted a stance against working from home, usually due to the particular inclinations of the agency head. These agencies run the risk of being left behind other agencies when competing for dedicated and skilled employees.

My agency actively supports the use of flexible work arrangements by all staff

Answer	2021
Strongly agree	21.33%
Somewhat agree	35.90%
Neither agree nor disagree	9.94%
Somewhat disagree	18.24%
Strongly disagree	14.59%

New working from home policies

In 2020 the CPSU developed a model working from home policy, and wrote to agencies to commence discussions on improved arrangements. Many agencies moved to develop new working from home policies, some implementing new arrangements as a pilot. Many of these policies include a strong presumption that working from home requests will be approved, which is a positive first step towards providing public sector employees with ongoing access to working from home.

Respondents indicated that their supervisors overwhelmingly followed the working from home policy, with 47.19% agreeing, only 6.17% disagreeing. 46.64% were unsure if their supervisor followed the policy.

Although a majority of respondents indicated that their agency actively supports flexible work, there was a low level of awareness and visibility of agency policies, with 68.04% of respondents unaware of whether their agency had a new policy. Working from home arrangements are better placed in enterprise agreements, where they are more visible and accessible to current and prospective employees. The research shows overwhelming employee support for including working from home provisions in enterprise agreements (89.48% of respondents).

45.82% of respondents indicated that their agency's working from home policy included a cap on the percentage of time employees could work from home. 39.26% were unsure. The potential negative impacts of prescriptive approaches to working from home are explored below.

Approval of working from home arrangements

A sizeable proportion of respondents had not yet asked for their working from home request to be approved because they were still working from home due to lockdowns (24.03%). It is positive that over a quarter of respondents had their preferred arrangement approved (27.24%).

However, there is a cohort that did not ask for their preferred arrangement because they believed it would not have been approved (13.33%), and those who did not ask for other reasons (16.91%), which typically included employees who cited the cap on time worked

from home in the agency’s policy, a belief their arrangement would not be approved, and the attitude of the manager or agency. This suggests that there is a section of the workforce that is not accessing working from home that otherwise could, and there is room improvement in some supervisors’ approaches.

Approval of requests. Which statement most resembles your experience:

Answer	2021
I asked for my preferred arrangement and it was approved in full	27.24%
I asked for my preferred arrangement and it was approved in part	7.49%
I asked for my preferred arrangement and I am awaiting a decision	1.77%
I asked for my preferred arrangement and the request was declined	9.23%
I have not asked as I am still working from home	24.03%
I have not asked for other reasons (tell us more)	16.91%
My arrangement was approved but I did not ask for my preferred arrangement because I don’t think that would have been approved	13.33%

Productivity

As with the 2020 research, in 2021 responses showed there was no perceived drop in productivity while employees worked from home. 91.72% of supervisors said their employees’ productivity was the same or higher working from home. Only 8.28% of supervisors said their employees were less productive.



92% of supervisors said their staff were as productive or more productive when working from home.

Other than during lockdowns, how does your team perform when working from home compared to when at the workplace?

Answer	2020	2021
Higher	34.21%	25.71%
About the same	56.63%	66.01%
Lower	9.16%	8.28%

The results for employees were similar, with 90.33% of employee respondents indicating that their productivity was the same or higher working from home.

What do you estimate your productivity is when working from home compared to the office?

Answer	2020	2021
Higher	55.86%	58.02%
About the same	36.22%	32.31%
Lower	7.92%	9.68%

Interestingly, the percentage of employee respondents who indicated higher productivity has slightly increased since the 2020 results (58.02% up from 55.86%), and the percentage indicating lower productivity has slightly increased (9.68% up from 7.92%).

Reasons employee respondents gave for productivity being higher working from home included:

- Fewer distractions, especially for employees who usually work in open plan;
- Less commuting time;
- Less need to use sick leave; and
- Fewer meetings.

For the small proportion of employee respondents who indicated their productivity was lower working from home, the free-text responses indicate that some employees struggled with the challenges of lockdown. Respondents indicated the following negative impacts on productivity:

- Caring for children and homeschooling;
- Slow internet;

- Less support to do their work;
- Distraction;
- Isolation; and
- Negative impacts on mental health.

Although the respondents who identified these negative impacts on productivity was a small cohort, these circumstances are very real for employees. It underlines the importance of employees themselves determining what the right mix of home and office-based work is, and that if an employee wants to spend all of their time in the office, this should be facilitated by the employer.

Professional relationships and collaboration

Although a majority of respondents indicated that their productivity working at home was the same or higher, some respondents identified limitations to working from home, and benefits of being in the office. These included:

- 28.51% indicating they were less able to manage/mentor/coach others;
- 25.21% saying they were less able to maintain professional networks; and
- 24.09% saying they were less able to contact or collaborate with colleagues as needed.

As with the 2020 results, these findings indicate that there are aspects of a positive working environment that can be difficult to replicate working from home, particularly as it relates to relationships and supporting and mentoring others. Employees may have these considerations in mind when indicating a preference for a mix of office and home-based work, so that they can access flexibility when they need and want it, at the same time as fostering relationships and collaboration in the office.

Flexibility should sit with employees

A number of the findings above indicate that if the benefits of flexible work are to be realised, then flexibility needs to sit with employees, and mandating particular approaches can have negative consequences for employees' mental health and productivity.

For example, respondents who indicated that they were less productive at home often cited factors linked to being forced to work from home during lockdown. For other employees, their agency did not allow them to work from home the preferred amount, and their agency exhibited less support for employees working from home than their supervisor.

Employers need to recognise that home is not a safe place for every employee. The CPSU would caution against approaches that require employees to work from home where this is not safe or preferred. For example, the office can and should be a safe and supportive place for employees experiencing family and domestic violence.

Whether and how much to work from home, and the potential benefits of working from home, hinges on an individual employee's circumstances. The results show that employees themselves are well-placed to consider what works for them, and that their supervisors are largely supportive of employees possessing this flexibility. It is interesting that the overwhelming majority (73.70%) of respondents indicated that they want to adopt a mix of office and home-based work, suggesting that employees can make judgement calls about tasks that are better performed at home or in the office.

Policies that mandate a particular approach, either to work from home all the time (unavoidable during lockdowns), or imposing a cap on the time spent working from home, run the risk of undermining the benefits of flexibility and can negatively impact on employees and productivity.

Workplace Health and Safety

PHYSICAL INJURIES

The majority of respondents did not experience physical workplace injuries while working from home (90.69%). However, 6.94% said they had, with the free text responses indicating injuries related to the ergonomic set up of their workstation at home.

63.15% respondents said their agency does raise workplace health and safety (WHS) issues while establishing working from home, however, 18.96% of respondents said their agency does not, and 17.88% weren't sure. This is a poorer result than would be expected for the public sector. A more systematic approach to WHS, and ensuring an adequate ergonomic set up, may go a long way to preventing physical injuries.

Supervisor responses may indicate an area for improvement. 55.58% of supervisor respondents said the agency/supervisor highlighted the policy, and allowed staff to ensure their workspace complied. 28.54% took a more active approach, saying that the agency/supervisor highlighted the policy, and followed up with evidence requirements (such as photographs).

PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURIES

85.74% of respondents said they had not experienced psychological injuries working from home, however 9.11% said they had. Free text responses indicate that these injuries stemmed from:

- Being isolated at home
- Less support
- The pressures of lockdown (depression, stress, homeschooling, strained family relationships)
- Less support from colleagues when feeling their supervisor's conduct was unsupportive or intimidating

These results again emphasise the importance of employees being able to choose the right blend of home and office-based work (outside of lockdowns), based on appropriateness for their circumstances.

Supervisors had very interesting insights into their employees' health and safety while working from home. 55.43% of supervisors observed effects on their employees' physical and psychological health. These effects were both positive and negative. Negative effects mostly related to the pressures of lockdown. Positive effects related to a positive impact on mental health with the ability to better balance work and home life. The free text responses show that by and large, supervisors are attuned to the diversity of experiences of their employees, and recognise that different individual circumstances will shape employee preferences.

In their own words, supervisors observed the following of their teams:

“Positive improvement in psychological health.”

“They seem much less stressed due to no time squeeze from commuting.”

“Whilst WFH has been hugely beneficial, my team has endured significant lockdowns and the resultant 100% WFH. Not having any days in the office with colleagues has been psychologically harmful for many.”

“Some thrive, some prefer office-based.”

“Team members seem happier and healthier.”

“Mixed effects, some seem happier and are taking advantage of the lack of commute, another staff member is feeling more drained and is missing interactions with others.”

“Good effects - generally much happier people.”

“My staff appreciate the fact I trust them to work from home (this is in the context of a department that does NOT trust its staff to work from home except when there is a formal lockdown).”

“Not directly caused by working from home... but the inability to leave homes outside of work is starting to get to some people... but that's more about the lockdowns than working from home.”

“Working from home all of the time during lockdown does not suit some staff. They enjoy going to the office to collaborate with others, to participate in ‘hallway’ conversations, to have a clear distinction between work and home life.”

“Everyone is generally happier, less stressed, more productive. Team relationships seem stronger (as when we are in the office everyone makes more effort to interact).”

HOURS OF WORK

The results show that during the pandemic restrictions, most employees continued working their usual hours (62.84%). However over a third of respondents worked more hours (32.66%). We know that for some, there was an urgent need to complete tasks relating to the pandemic response. For others, less time commuting allowed the employee to dedicate some of their freed-up time to work tasks.

These results again underline the importance of supervisors and agencies taking steps to ensure that employees do not work excessive hours when working from home.

The survey asked about when employees performed their duties, and if there was a difference while working from home. 70.22% chose to work their normal hours. 11.90% chose to work outside their normal hours, and 12.04% were required to work complete work outside their normal hours due to management expectations or workloads. It is positive that 83.20% of respondents said that they have the option to switch off at the end of the work day most of the time.

These findings suggest that there is not a strong appetite to combine working from home with changes to hours of work. Existing public sector bandwidths appear to be flexible enough to accommodate additional flexibility that comes with working from home.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Every agency should proactively adopt a positive stance on working from home, to support the attraction and retention of staff.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Agencies should work with employees and unions to include improved working from home provisions in enterprise agreements as they are negotiated. This will also make the offer of flexibility more visible to prospective employees.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Government should abandon the “no-enhancements rule”, which freezes enterprise agreements in time, and makes it difficult to innovate on flexible work provisions in enterprise agreements.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Agencies should remove restrictions on the ability of supervisors to approve working from home requests (such as caps).

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Employees’ individual circumstances should guide the mix of office and home-based work, and there should be a presumption that working from home requests will be approved.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Agencies should provide education to supervisors about the benefits of flexible work, and how to manage and engage staff who work remotely.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Agencies should adopt a more active approach to ergonomic assessments, require supervisors to talk with employees about the safety of arrangements, and arrange for adequate equipment if necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Agencies should consider advertising a wider range of roles as capable of being performed from any location, particularly as part of a strategy to recruit employees with skills and experience in high demand.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Supervisors should take steps to ensure that employees working from home do not work excessive hours.