Futureproofing
the world of work
2023

The Australian Workforce Survey 2023 offers an insight into how organisations can best plan for the future.

Collaboration Partners

APS | College of Organisational Psychologists
Psychology Put To Work

APS | Australian Psychological Society

Curtin University
FUTURE OF WORK INSTITUTE

Key Findings
What was interesting in the data?

01 Disposition Towards Future of Work

Contrary to popular belief, most respondents are not worried that their job would be replaced by automation.

02 Smaller and private organisations do better

Psychological safety is higher in privately funded and NFP organisations compared to publicly funded non-government and government organisations.
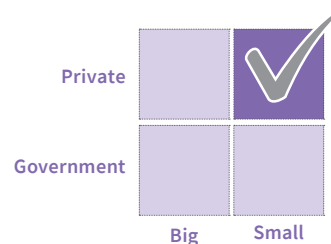
Satisfaction, psychological safety and concern for wellbeing was higher among smaller organisations (<9 employees) with larger organisations (>500 employees) reporting lower levels of psychological safety.

Private

Government

Big   Small

03 WFH has key benefits

Employees who have the option to work from home showed higher job satisfaction, psychological safety and concern for wellbeing.

Those who could work from home were more positive in relation to their line manager and more positive about their line managers support for work flexibility.

04 Learning, Development, Skills and Capabilities

78% of leaders perceive themselves to be preparing their employees well for the future of work (e.g. embracing new technology and work methods) but only 53% of employees agreed with this.
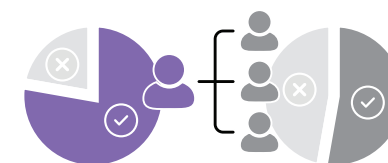
05 Workplace wellbeing needs
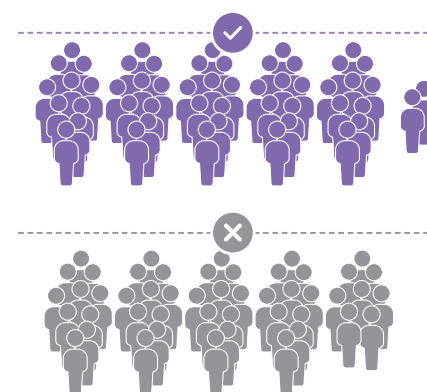
Only 52% felt their employers took care to ensure their workplace experiences contributed to their wellbeing.

06 There is a gap for LGBTIQ+ and people with disability

LGBTIQ+ and people with a disability were much less satisfied with their working environment.
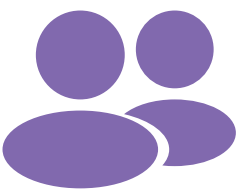
Table of Contents
2023 Workforce Survey report

Participants
Who was involved?

For this inaugural Australian Workforce Survey examining futureproofing the world of work, participants were recruited in partnership with market research company, Online Research Unit (ORU, www.theoru.com) who brought together a total of 2025 participants Australia-wide. An additional 169 participants were included in the study from a marketing campaign initiated by the College of Organisational Psychologists.

Demographics:
51% female; 49% male; drawn from states and territories, average age 43.2 years; 74% had at least one university qualification; 12% had a technical qualification; 11% identified as LGBTIQ+; 5% indicated they had a disability.

Cultural identity

White/Caucasian 73%; Southeast Asian 9%; European 7%; Mixed 6%; South Asian 3%; 8 African; 16 Middle Easterners; 5 Pacific Islanders and 28 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Largest industry groups included (participants could select more than one)
14% Professional and scientific services;
14% Healthcare and social assistance;
12% Education and training;
9% Financial and insurance services;
8% Public administration and safety;
55% privately funded organisations;
26% government organisations;
10% publicly funded non-government organisations;
7% not-for-profit organisations;
2% Other.

Executive Summary

Understanding the future of work has become increasingly important in today's rapidly changing and technologically driven world. As advancements in automation, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies reshape industries and transform job roles, it is essential to gain insights into the implications and opportunities that lie ahead. Proactively grasping the dynamics of the future of work enables individuals, organisations, and policymakers to navigate the transformative landscape, make informed decisions, and effectively prepare for the evolving workforce.

By exploring the future of work through this workforce survey of 2194 Australian employees across a range of industries, roles and levels within organisations, decision-makers can gain valuable insights into several key areas including: leadership, safety, organisational culture, learning and development and the importance of organisational systems for the future of work.

Our research shows that the successful workplace of the future belongs to those organisations that have leaders with a clear and confident vision of where their organisation is headed and who can communicate that vision to workers. They create safe, supportive and inclusive workplaces and are able to bring their people with them as the future unfolds. Notwithstanding this, the data shows that there is enormous potential for improvement in the workplace given only a small portion of survey respondents were 'very satisfied' in their jobs.

How would you assess your overall job satisfaction?

Legend:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Mostly Dissatisfied
- Slightly Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Slightly satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Very satisfied

$M = 5.23$
$SD = 1.49$

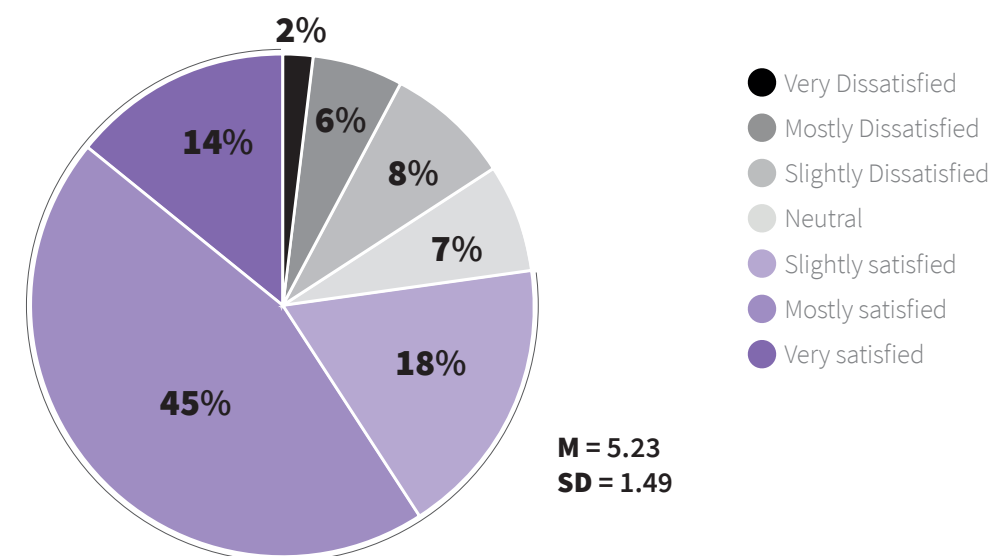Pie chart values: 2%, 6%, 8%, 7%, 18%, 45%, 14%

Fig 1. job satisfaction of all participants

After consulting more than 2000 people who work across a diverse range of industries nationally, it was clear that there were five key messages that business owners and managers need to hear:

1. **Leadership:** the majority of respondents want leaders who are able to project a clear plan about the organisation's future and confidence that that plan could be accomplished;
2. **Wellbeing and Safety:** the more you care about workers' wellbeing and safety, the more likely they are to support your endeavours;
3. **Learning and development:** While the majority (78%) of leaders thought they were preparing their people well by embracing new technologies and work methods, only 53% of employees agreed.
4. **Organisational systems:** 47% of survey respondents feel that they don't have what they need to help your business succeed;
5. **Culture:** the future looks bright for an organisation with great leaders who create supportive and safe working cultures

Leadership   Wellbeing and Safety   Learning and Development   Organisational Systems   Culture

APS Australian Psychological Society

Fig 2. Job Satisfaction, Psychological Safety, and Concern for Wellbeing by Organisation Size (Number of Employees). Whiskers represent 95% confidence intervals.

Legend: Job Satisfaction | Psychological Safety | Concern for wellbeing (max. 5)

01. Future
Leadership in the future of work

80%
of respondents reported that they had a boss who was considered accessible, supportive, flexible and open to suggestions for improvements made by team members.

Most managers are seen in a positive light now, but the future presents a far more challenging environment.

The pandemic jolted the world out of a workplace rut. Most forward-thinking organisations had been gearing up to face change as digital disruption upended expectations. The future of work looked likely to see the loss of five million jobs over the next 20 years as automation took on the routine roles of jobs and professions in blue and white collar worlds.

But disruption came from an utterly unexpected direction, and it happened overnight with the World Health Organisation Declaration of Public Health Emergency Worldwide Pandemic as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) on 11 March 2020. Forced by COVID-19, organisations worked fast to make sure their people were safe and changes that experts thought would take years – remote working, online interactions, even re-imagining the meaning of work for those in it – happened in mere weeks.

The future of work made itself very clear: the old days were gone. Hierarchical structures, office-based workplaces, face-to-face interactions, even the understanding that people would remain in good jobs disappeared.

In mid 2023, the College of Organisational Psychologists, in collaboration with the Future of Work Institute at Curtin University, commissioned research to better understand people and the workplaces that would see them thrive. 2194 people across a wide range of industries, roles and levels within organisations were recruited, with the Australian Workforce Survey 2023 assessing what matters to workers now and how prepared they are for the future of work.

It shows that the successful workplace of the future belongs to those organisations who have leaders who have a clear and confident vision of where their organisation is headed and who can communicate that vision to workers. They create safe, supportive and inclusive workplaces and are able to bring their people with them as the future unfolds.

The Australian Workforce Survey 2023, which is available free and in full at www.psychology.org.au, takes an in-depth look at what workers value and offers guidance to management and government as to how to get the best outcomes.

The following report is just a snapshot of what we found.

### Great leaders make great workplaces

Key to the successful future of the Australian workplace is leadership. Not surprisingly, following the disruptions and uncertainties of the past few years, the majority of our respondents want leaders who are able to project a clear plan about the organisation's future and confidence that that plan could be accomplished.

A large percentage of our sample have line managers to whom they report, and the general perception of those managers was positive. Around 80% of respondents reported that they had a boss who was considered accessible, supportive, flexible and open to suggestions for improvements made by team members.

Less positive, but by no means in the majority, some thought that their line managers are better at adapting to change than anticipating it and taking steps to prepare for it. Similarly, while line managers appear to generally ensure the team has the necessary skills to do the work at hand, team members feel they often miss out on regular feedback and the possible development of their own leadership potential.

Still a guiding force in workplace satisfaction, safety is important and leaders who promote more supportive working environments, who can foster psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces have a more positive impact on workers' overall enjoyment of their roles. Job satisfaction rates vary among different types of organisations. Small organisations, privately funded organisations, and not-for-profit organisations that prioritise psychological safety tend to have higher job satisfaction rates compared to funded non-government and government organisations where psychological safety is less evident.
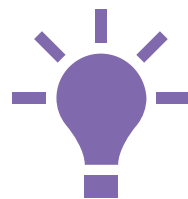
Worth noting

- Older workers tended to report higher rates of job satisfaction;
- There was very little difference between men and women when it came to job satisfaction rates;
- LGBTIQ+ and people with a disability were much less satisfied with their working environment;
- Those self-identifying as LGBTIQ+ and with a disability were "the least satisfied and most cynical" workers;
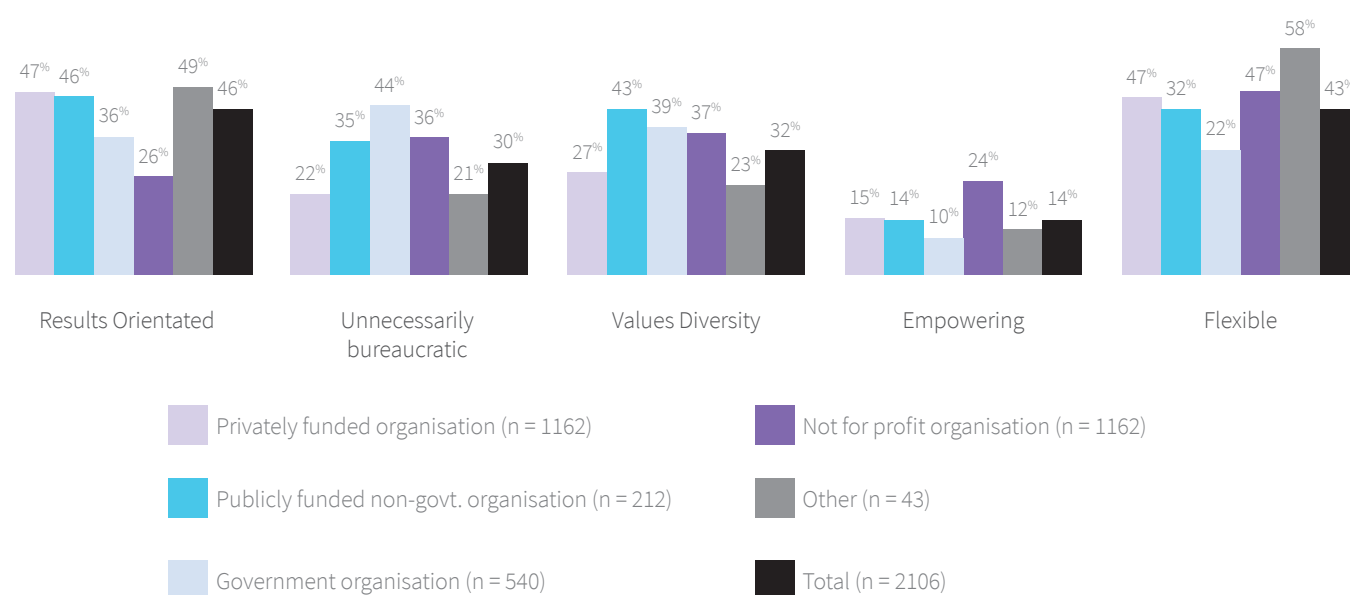- The most satisfied? Those who are self-employed and those who could work from home.

Go Deeper

Get deeper into the subject by reading:

- **The Role of Leadership in a Digitalized World** by Laura Cortellazzo, Elena Bruni and Rita Zampieri.
- Wietrak, E., Barends, E., and Rousseau, D. (2021). **Organisational identification: an evidence review.** Scientific summary. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Fig 3. Percentage of participants identifying adjectives as descriptive of their organisation's culture by organisation type.

Privately funded organisation (n = 1162)

Publicly funded non-govt. organisation (n = 212)

Government organisation (n = 540)

Not for profit organisation (n = 1162)

Other (n = 43)

Total (n = 2106)

Implications for employers

Studies indicate that employees identify with organisations when there is an alignment in values, feelings of support, and they feel trust in the organisation's leaders to make the right decisions.

However, the managers' role is so much greater now as the need to create relationships with multiple and scattered stakeholders and focus on enabling collaborative processes in complex settings while attending to pressing ethical concerns becomes more pronounced.

Recommendations

1.1 Develop strong leadership:

Good leadership is important and will play a pivotal role in the successful future of the Australian workplace with the rise of remote workers, generation gaps, and rapid globalisation. Now more than ever, as our results suggest, employees want leaders who can articulate a clear vision for the future, empower others to achieve this plan, anticipate future changes and prioritise the growth and development of those around them. To ensure leaders can effectively lead their teams in this way, employers should invest in leadership development across the organisation. For example, structured leadership development programs/ training, coaching, and mentoring or even shadowing opportunities. We know that companies with effective leadership management are 2.4 times more likely to achieve organisational performance targets. As noted in Hewitt's *Global Best Employers Study,* leadership development shouldn't be reserved for those at the top, with employees at all levels noting they want their development supported too.

1.2 Support adaptability:

While many leaders are currently viewed positively, it's expected that future work environments will be more nimble, complex, and collaborative than ever before. Some employees feel that their line managers are better at adapting to change, rather than anticipating or preparing for it. Adaptability is the critical success factor for organisations during periods of transformation and systemic change. Companies with strong cultures that emphasise adaptability turn in better financial performance, than those who do not. To build adaptability at scale employers should provide training and resources to support line leaders to not only adapt to change, but to anticipate it and take proactive steps to prepare their

"Great leaders are those who can create a vision for the future, are adaptive, empower others and prioritise feedback and the development of their teams."
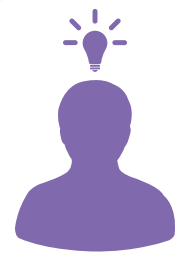
teams for future challenges. Research by McKinsey has found companies that provide short digital training modules of between 20-30 minutes on adaptability concepts see 2.7 times improvement in adaptability behaviours among employees (e.g. learning skills, empathy and compassion, fostering psychological safety and greater self-awareness), and 3 times the improvement in outcomes (performance, wellbeing, adapting to change and developing new skills).

mechanisms for regular feedback, and open communication between employees and managers. According to Gallup, managers who offer frequent and continuous feedback influence their employees to be 2.7 times more engaged at work. Further, some research has found a strong feedback culture can drive organisational financial success and lead to at least a doubling of net profit margins.

1.3 Prioritise feedback:

A significant portion of the sample held positive perceptions of their line managers, viewing them as accessible, supportive, flexible, and open to suggestions for improvement. However, employees felt they missed out on regular feedback from their leaders. As the future of work changes, it is essential organisations prioritise feedback, and encourage employees to share their ideas, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. One way organisations can do this is to ensure they provide training for managers to provide honest, effective performance feedback to employees. They should also establish

2. Culture
The importance of culture

The workplace that you create as leaders and managers can mean the difference between success and failure of an organisation.

Our respondents were given a list of 18 adjectives and were invited to attach five of them to their own organisation's efforts at the culture they were creating.

Unsurprisingly, people who viewed their organisations as supportive (45.6%) chose words like collaborative, flexible, open, rewarding and engaging to describe them. On the other hand, the 29.6% of people who thought their organisation was 'unnecessarily bureaucratic' also attached adjectives like change resistant, defensive, unsupportive and cautious.

The more you care about workers' wellbeing and safety, the more likely they are to support your endeavours.
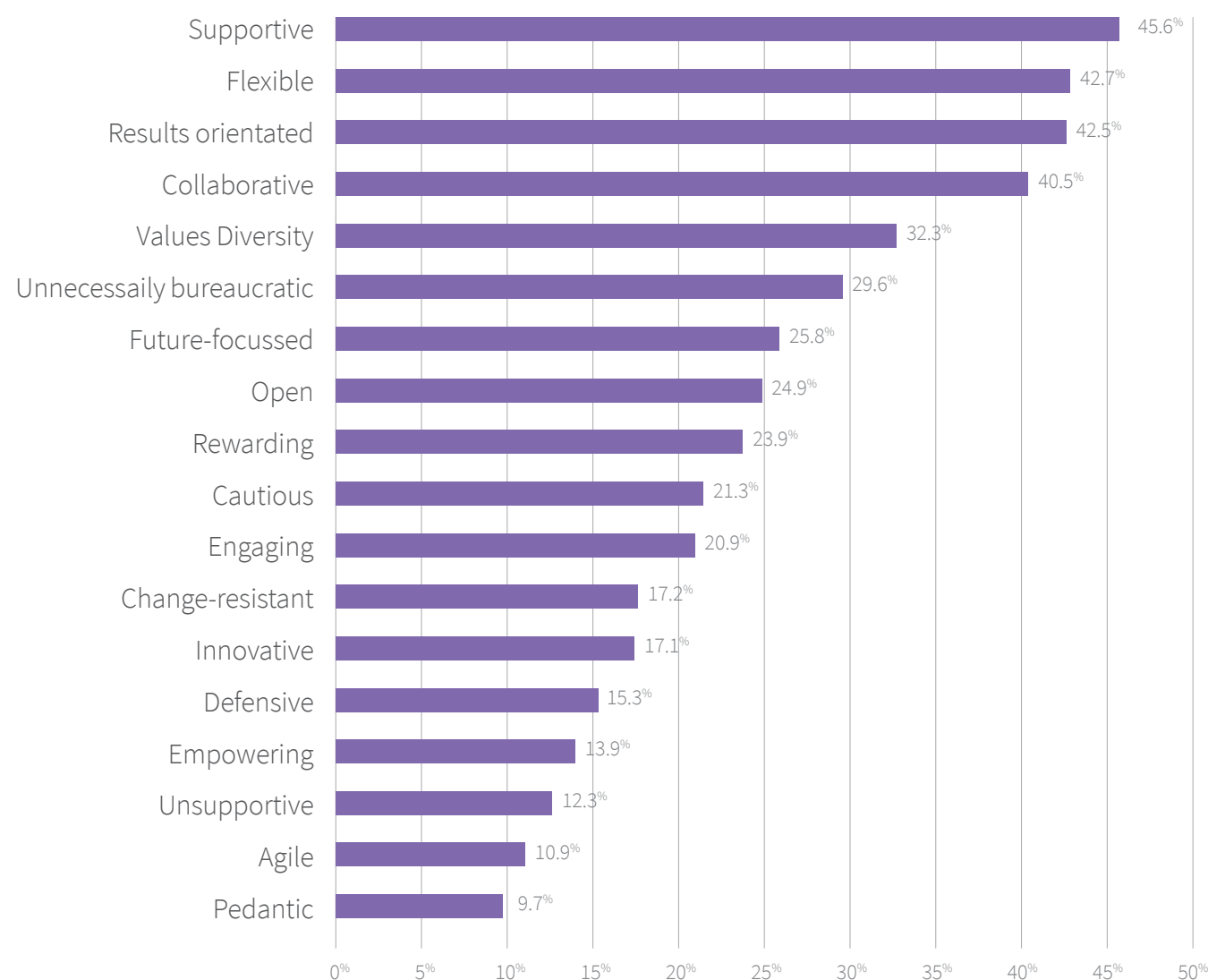
It was clear that the selection of each of the positive adjectives was correlated to three key outcomes: job satisfaction, psychological safety and concern for wellbeing, thus the more you care about workers' wellbeing and safety, the more likely they are to support your endeavours.

Those workers reporting lower levels of psychological safety were more likely to describe their working cultures as pedantic and change resistant.

A culturally sensitive organisation, one which has the confidence of its workers and which works to create an agile, supportive environment, is better able to enlist the support of those workers to make the changes necessary to face the future.

Fig 4. Percentage of participants identifying adjectives as descriptive of their organisation's culture. Figures sum to more than 100 because participants could select up to five adjectives.

Adjective	Percentage
Supportive	45.6%
Flexible	42.7%
Results orientated	42.5%
Collaborative	40.5%
Values Diversity	32.3%
Unnecessaily bureaucratic	29.6%
Future-focussed	25.8%
Open	24.9%
Rewarding	23.9%
Cautious	21.3%
Engaging	20.9%
Change-resistant	17.2%
Innovative	17.1%
Defensive	15.3%
Empowering	13.9%
Unsupportive	12.3%
Agile	10.9%
Pedantic	9.7%

Worth noting

- The five most used adjectives were, in order; supportive, flexible, results-oriented, collaborative and diverse;
- There was a decrease at number six: 'unnecessarily bureaucratic' and that was linked to a raft of negative descriptions, including cautious, change resistant, unsupportive and pedantic;
- Only a quarter of the respondents thought their workplaces could be described by adjectives like future focussed, open and rewarding;
- Only 11 per cent of respondents thought their organisation was agile, while almost 10 per cent listed their workplace as pedantic.

Implications for employers

Recommendations

2.1 Cultivate a supportive culture:

The workplace culture, as shaped by leaders, significantly impacts the success or failure of an organisation. Through leaders, employers should foster a workplace culture that is supportive, collaborative, flexible, and open. Research has found creating collaborative work spaces, as well as the adoption of flexible work practices that provide employees with the flexibility to collaborate across workgroups and functions can increase collaborative and innovative behaviours. *Harvard Business Review* has found employees who feel supported by their employer are more likely to feel engaged and rewarded within their roles, and have higher intentions to stay at their company.

2.2 Reduce bureaucracy:

Organisations seen as 'unnecessarily bureaucratic' were linked to negative descriptors like change resistant, defensive, unsupportive, and cautious. Employers that look to identify and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy promote a culture that is less change-resistant and more agile. Establishing role clarity, and empowering employees to have the autonomy to make decisions within defined boundaries, can help accelerate decision-making and encourage innovation, as well as improve organisational accountability. Research has found organisations with high accountability scores have a 76% chance of achieving top-quartile organisational health – that's more than triple the expected rate. To further reduce bureaucracy, companies should also look towards leveraging new technologies to complete routine tasks. This can help streamline compliance processes and reduce administrative burdens – not to mention data and information can be shared and used intelligently across work functions. This can help generate buy-in by empowering employees to do their work more independently, and promote organisational accountability and performance.

2.3 Prioritise safety / wellbeing:

Unsurprisingly, caring for workers' well-being and safety correlated with high job satisfaction, psychological safety and perceptions of employers genuine concern for well-being. We know that creating an environment where employees feel safe to express their ideas and where there is true diversity and inclusion enables companies to innovate quickly, adapt well to change, and have better overall organisational health and performance. Research has found investing and scaling up leadership development programs can equip leaders at all levels to embody behaviours that help their employees thrive, and consequently cultivate psychological safety across the organisation. According to *Harvard Business Review*, other ways to cultivate psychological safety and promote wellbeing at work are to establish mental health policies and practices, and implement accountability mechanisms such as regular pulse surveys. Pulse surveys enable employers to conduct mental health check-ins with their employees, and evaluate and refine mental health interventions to better support employee wellbeing.

3. Learning, development, skills and capabilities: Do you have the right systems in place?

Perceptions of participants from non-government organisations were similar around infrastructure and organisational systems, but participants working in government organisations reported consistently lower scores for their access to technological infrastructure.

> **78%** of leaders thought they were preparing their employees well by embracing new technologies and work methods.
>
> Only **53%** of employees agreed.

A little more than half of the respondents thought they had what they need to help the business succeed. Conversely, almost half the workforce felt they were not ready for the future.

In terms of preparing their employees for the future, a majority (78%) of leaders thought they were preparing them well by embracing new technologies and work methods.

Only 53% of employees agreed.

The majority of respondents agreed 'just slightly' that they had the necessary resources

to carry out their current jobs effectively and that they had the necessary information to do their jobs well.

However, quality matters.

A little more than half of the respondents reported mixed experiences when it came to the quality of those resources, the extent that their organisations would adopt new technologies and they questioned the support they would receive from their organisations to use those new systems.

Fig 5. Mean responses to each item along with the percentage of the participants that responded with slightly agree, agree, or strongly agree to the corresponding item.
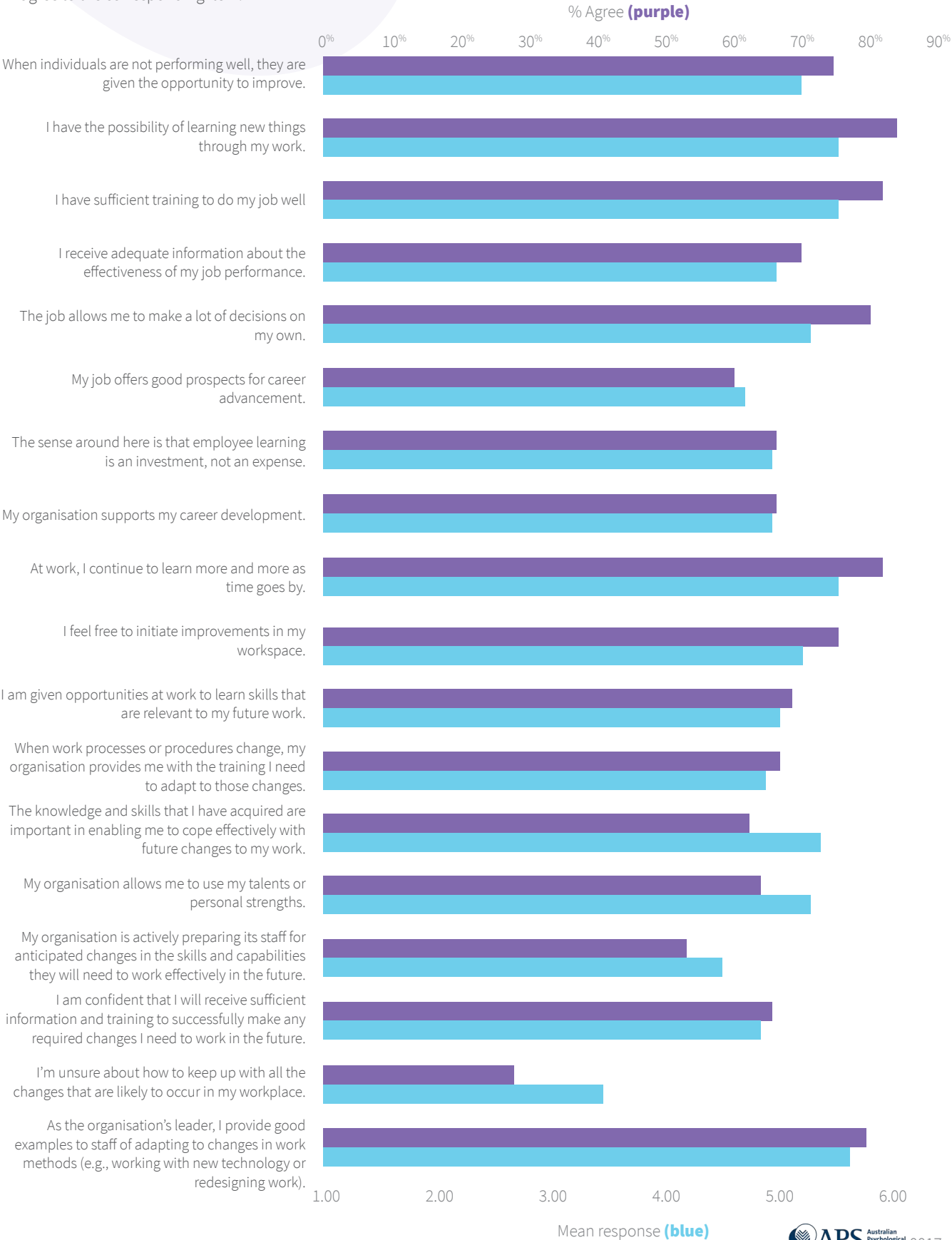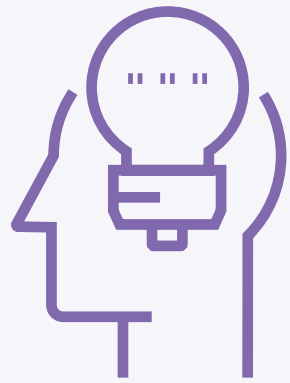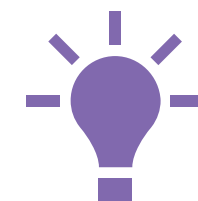
Demographic differences
Equitability

Those who are **self-employed** say their learning and development needs are met, whereas those in the **casual or gig economy** feel they have less training and development opportunities.

Worth noting

- **Older workers** are more likely to feel that they have enough training, decision-making autonomy and ability to cope with future changes at work;
- **Men** reported having higher levels of decision-making autonomy, whilst **women** felt they had more opportunities for continuous learning;
- Participants working in **agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining** and those in **professional scientific and technical services** reported more general learning opportunities, continuous learning and decision-making autonomy than those in retail or manufacturing industries;
- Most respondents said their organisations provided clear, planned goals and objectives, However;
    - **people with a disability** had less goal clarity, less access to relevant information and are less satisfied with access to resources to do their job;
    - they also feel that they have less support from their organisation in using new systems;
- Those **working from home** are much more satisfied with the learning and development opportunities and career advancement;
- Those who are **self-employed** say their learning and development needs are met, whereas those in the **casual or gig economy** feel they have less training and development opportunities.

Implications for employers

Recommendations

3.1 Employee feedback:

A significant proportion of the survey respondents (47%) feel they lack the necessary resources to help their organisations to succeed, highlighting a disconnect between employees and their employers. Employers should actively seek feedback from employees to understand their needs and concerns, and what resources they may need to support them in the future of work. This can be done through the adoption of employee engagement software, the establishment of regular one-on-one or team check-ins, and providing avenues for anonymous feedback. This is particularly pertinent, as we know from research, that the quality and effectiveness of resources and technology can impact employees' perceptions, and subsequently their performance and overall job satisfaction. As such, routinely seeking feedback from employees helps leaders encourage buy-in, spot problems early, and take appropriate action to ensure employees have adequate resources to contribute to the organisation's success.

3.2 Invest in employee development:

While 78% of leaders believe they are effectively preparing employees for the future by embracing new technologies and work methods, only 53% of employees share this belief. Skill sets for jobs have changed by around 25% since 2015, and by 2027 this number is expected to double. Hence, it is important employees are equipped with the necessary skills to adapt to new technologies and work methods. This may include providing comprehensive training, clear guidelines and responsive support for any technology-related challenge. *Deloitte's Human Capital Trends Report*, identified companies

that offer in-depth training programs have a 24% higher profit margin than those without formal training programs; they also see a 218% higher income per employee. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that a clear change management plan supports the adoption of any new technology with a focus on human-centred design principles.

3.3 Future proof your workforce:

It is important that organisations recognise and value employees' concerns about performance gaps, lack of resources, and technology adoption. Employers need to address these concerns proactively and make adjustments as required and in line with evolving technological trends to remain competitive and agile. Despite being intuitive, studies suggest only 35% of companies do this as a strategy for succession planning. The companies that do not, fall into the 69% of workplaces struggling to close the skills gap. By mapping employee ambitions onto needed skill sets, organisations can anticipate what learning is needed at an individual, team, or organisational level. In doing so, organisations can create a learning and development strategy that aligns business needs and skillsets required in the future of work. In doing so, organisations can ensure they have sufficient capability to sustain current and future business performance to remain ahead of the curve.

The differences between men and women were negligible, although women reported higher levels of safety than men, and men had stronger feelings that the demands of their work interfered with their home lives. But the differences were very small.

4. How safe are your employees?
Tracking the wellbeing of workers

The best news of all: overwhelmingly participants reported very high levels of meaningfulness at work. More than 80% of respondents felt they were undertaking work that had meaning and purpose. Most (72%) agreed that the WHS risks in their organisation were well understood and mitigated, however only approximately two-thirds felt management would take psychological safety issues seriously.

As noted earlier, the more you care about workers' wellbeing and safety, the more likely they are to support your endeavours. Yet, only about half (52%) of the participants felt that their employers took care to ensure that their work experiences contributed to their wellbeing, and 60% described their work as 'emotionally demanding'. Conflicting demands and work-home interference appeared to be relatively common and many did not feel they had time in their work to prepare for future work demands.

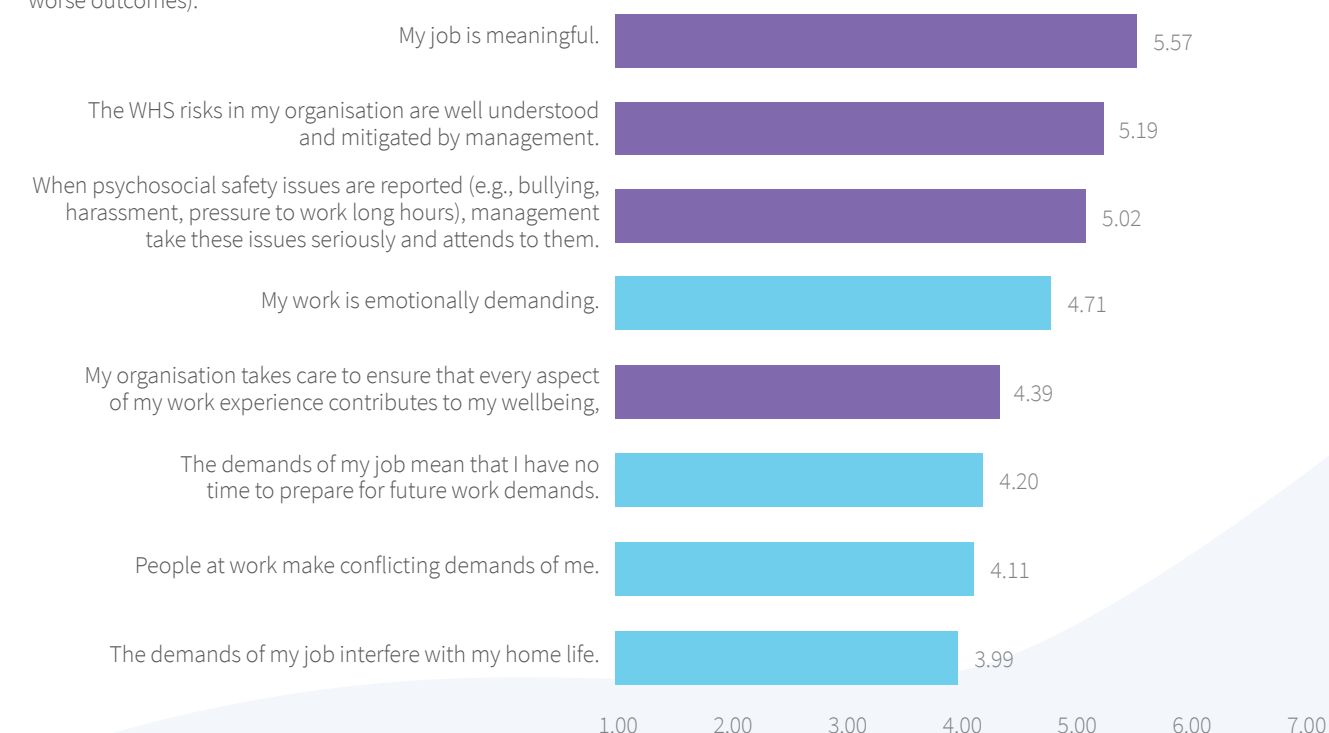## Many did not feel they had time in their work to prepare for future work demands.

People who identified as LGBTIQ+ found less meaning in their work but ranked with others on all other metrics. People with a disability reported high levels of concern that their organisation would take care to ensure that every aspect of their work contributed to their wellbeing.
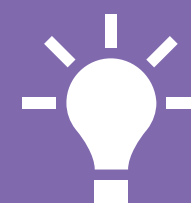
Worth noting

- Employees of government organisations reported on average a lower concern for wellbeing than employees of other types of organisations;
- People in construction, information media and telecommunications, education and training and financial and insurance services were more inclined to feel that their job demands prevented them from preparing for the future of work;
- Meaningfulness was scored lower by employees in accommodation and food services, retail and wholesale trade;
- The highest emotional demands were found in the health care and social assistance areas as well as education and training;
- The lowest levels of emotional demand were observed in mining and manufacturing.

Fig 6. Mean responses to questions about safety at work. The blue bars represent items with a negative valance (high scores represent worse outcomes).

Item	Score
My job is meaningful.	5.57
The WHS risks in my organisation are well understood and mitigated by management.	5.19
When psychosocial safety issues are reported (e.g., bullying, harassment, pressure to work long hours), management take these issues seriously and attends to them.	5.02
My work is emotionally demanding.	4.71
My organisation takes care to ensure that every aspect of my work experience contributes to my wellbeing,	4.39
The demands of my job mean that I have no time to prepare for future work demands.	4.20
People at work make conflicting demands of me.	4.11
The demands of my job interfere with my home life.	3.99

Implications for employers

Recommendations

4.1 Build mental health literacy:

Mental health is a vital occupational health factor, with four of five HR leaders around the world reporting mental health and wellbeing are now top priorities for their organisations. Leaders that value safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces set the tone for a supportive workplace culture by modelling positive behaviours, responding sensitively and appropriately to disclosures, and prioritising transparency to enhance learning and improvement. A pillar of an effective wellbeing strategy for an organisation needs to include support to build literacy around mental health concerns, stigma reduction, and ways to seek help and support. In particular, understanding the unique needs of different employee groups, such as those who identify as LGBTIQ+ and people with disabilities. Educating leaders in tailoring their management style to the needs of employees is the key to bridging the gap between employee mental health needs and resources available to address those needs. Leaders can take on the role of wellbeing champions to bring employees together to actively identify and address sources of stress and help mediate work-life conflicts. This has been shown to be associated with positive impacts on employee job satisfaction, physical health, and workplace productivity.

4.2 Enhancing wellbeing Initiatives:

Since the pandemic, 85% of workers report declining mental health, making it crucial for organisations to focus on improving mental health in the workplace. Employers should prioritise well-being initiatives and ensure that every aspect of work, from physical health to psychological safety, contributes to employee well-being. This requires employers to take an integrated approach to employee mental health and wellbeing, by understanding how to identify and address factors that can adversely affect the mental health of employees at both an individual and organisational level. However, organisations need to go beyond this by not only supporting those employees experiencing ill-health to get well again and return to the workplace, but also creating a work environment that promotes thriving. A thriving organisation protects employees against psychological harm, and fosters positive mental health and a sense of fulfilment. This has the benefit of making employees better able to respond to challenges, and recover quickly from the demands of work, which will become crucial in the future of work. Organisational strategies to build a thriving workforce include promoting purpose and growth through supporting career progression. Promote connection by valuing diversity and inclusion, and build high quality connections that are open, trustworthy, and fair, to promote meaningfulness at work. Finally, increasing personal resources by allowing employees to craft their roles – that is change the design of their job or environment to suit their needs –allows employees to undertake valuable work that enhances their personal growth. Together these organisational strategies can enhance individual and organisational performance, productivity, reduce turnover and absenteeism, and promote positive mental health in the workplace.

4.3 Address psychosocial hazards and risks:

Although psychosocial hazards aren't new, the awareness of them has intensified since the amendments to the Model WHS Regulations by Safe Work Australia requiring all 'persons conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU), to implement control measures for psychosocial risks from 1 April 2023. Employees' perception that WHS risks are currently well understood and mitigated is important for their well-being and overall job satisfaction.

Under the definition of 'health' was updated to describe both physical and psychological domains of health. Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking are now required, so far as reasonably practicable, to ensure the health and safety of workers and others is not put at risk. Under the new regulations employers, and organisations at large, have a duty to identify psychological hazards. This can be done through the consideration of the design and management of work, and analysis of data from psychosocial risk surveys and assessments (e.g. desktop reviews of organisational policies/procedures/job descriptions/organisational data, one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews with employees). Employers are also now required to consider the workers affected by the psychosocial hazards and the duration, frequency and severity of their exposure. Controls must then be implemented to eliminate or minimise risks so far as reasonably practicable. Controls should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective and working as intended, through consultation with workers. In the future of work, psychosocial risk strategy facilitation and development will become more important than ever with new technologies and ways of work being introduced, which may introduce greater job demands and increase the risk of stress and burnout for employees. It is essential organisations develop a strategic roadmap with achievable goals and actions for psychosocial risk management to ensure they create a workplace where employees can thrive. After all, psychosocial risk management is not a cost, but rather an investment. The return on investment per dollar invested into workplace health promotion interventions being ~$2.86 for small-medium enterprises, and $4.02 for large employers.

4.4 Design good work:

Over 80% of participants reported finding their work meaningful and purposeful, indicating a strong sense of job satisfaction in this regard. This is a strength that should be celebrated, and can be leveraged. On the other hand however, only 52% of participants feel that their employers ensure their work contributes to their well-being. With 60% describing their work as emotionally demanding, and many experiencing conflicting demands and work-home interference. Employers need to understand how to design work that is good for people, and consider the impact of job resources and demands on employee's wellbeing. To design meaningful work and promote wellbeing it is essential organisations reduce job demands (e.g. emotional demands, high workload and time pressure) which can result in impaired health and exhaustion, and promote job resources (e.g. autonomy, task variety) which can promote work-related engagement, to promote wellbeing. Research has indicated that various organisational interventions, such as employee participation in the planning of tasks, new protocols, task restructuring, and on-the-job training can reduce job demands and improve job resources (e.g. job autonomy), and lead to enhanced wellbeing,

Go Deeper

Get deeper into the subject by reading Montano, D; Reeske, A; Franke, F; and Hüffmeier, J. (2016). *Leadership, followers' mental health and job performance in organisations: A comprehensive meta-analysis from an occupational health perspective.* Journal of Organisational Behavior, 38 (3), 327-350.

5. Looking forward
What does the future look like?

The good news is that there was a significant number of participants who reported very high levels of meaningfulness at work and were confident about the future of their work.

However, some key industries did not have this positive outlook and warrant increased attention. Participants working in construction, information media and telecommunications, education and training and financial and insurance services were more inclined to feel that their job demands prevented them from preparing for the future of work.

> In terms of staying in their jobs, participants as a whole had relatively low levels of worry about the future of the work they were doing.
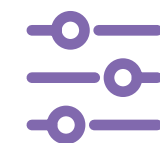
Participants were also asked whether they wished to remain in their current job, or leave. Those who felt they had less control over their ability to leave their current role had higher levels of worry about the future than those who felt that had better control over their choices. Financial security was a large concern along with their ability to search and find other work. Their attractiveness to other employers was also a consideration.

In terms of staying in their jobs, participants as a whole had relatively low levels of worry about the future of the work they were doing. Those who felt they had less control over their ability to leave their current role reported high levels of worry about future work than those who had more control.

In short, the future looks bright for an organisation with great leaders who create supportive, safe working cultures.

APS Australian Psychological Society 0027
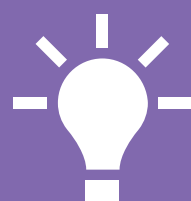
Worth noting

- Just under one-third (33%) were concerned about potential threats to their financial security;
- 34% worried about their attractiveness to future employers;
- 31% worried about their ability to search for, and find, a new job;
- The most common negative feeling about the future of work was "overwhelmed";
- Interestingly, very few worried that their jobs would be replaced by automation.

Fig 7. Mean reported worry in relation to changes to work (blue) and percentage of participants at least moderately worried (purple).

% at least moderately worried **(purple)**

Mean Responce **(blue)**

Will working from home
become an integral part of the future of work?
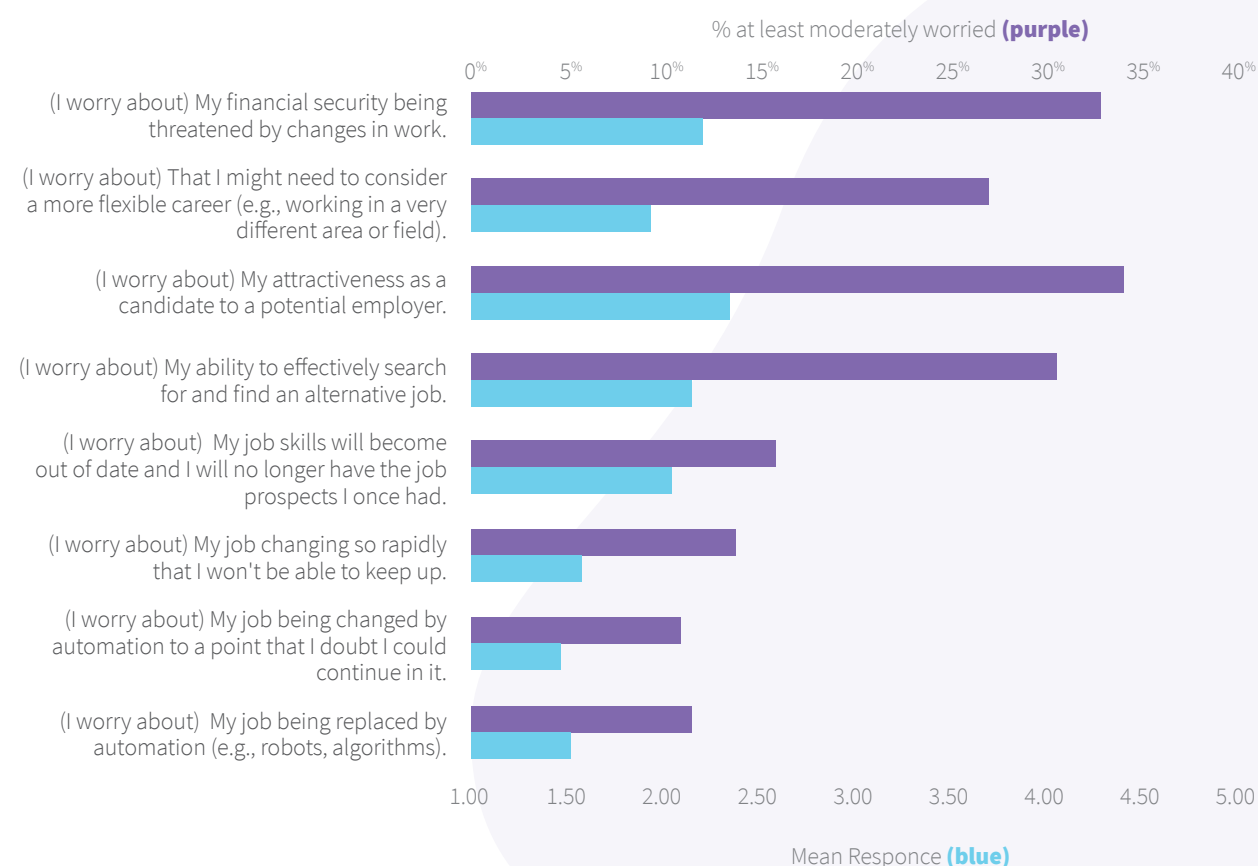
WFH

Workers who were allowed to work from home reported more opportunities for training and career advancement than workers who did not have that freedom. Employees who had the option to work from home reported higher mean levels of job satisfaction (M = 5.31 vs. 5.09), psychological safety (M = 5.50 vs. 5.00), and concern for wellbeing (M = 3.71 vs. 3.32). Both groups however reported similar levels of uncertainty about adapting to future change in their work.

Implications for employers

Organisations are facing uncertainty, and volatility in the ever-changing work landscape. Introducing and integrating new technologies has resulted in a range of organisational shifts that have significant implications for structures, processes, and people. How organisations, leaders, and teams respond to these shifts will play a large role in determining whether their organisation thrives in the coming years.

To remain competitive in the modern workforce, organisations will need to consider adopting agile organisational structures and processes that enable quick responses to changing circumstances. By embracing change, fostering a culture of continuous learning and prioritising the wellbeing of employees, organisations can position themselves ahead of the curve.

found companies that provide employees with greater work-life balance create an environment conducive to long-term productivity and retention. Emerging grey literature (informally published or unpublished research) suggests the future of work is hybrid, with employers, leaders, and employees expecting to work in hybrid working arrangements. Although the flexibility of remote work allows for greater autonomy and wellbeing, which today's workers highly prize, a key challenge is managing employee expectations and preferences to work in a hybrid arrangement. As more employees expect remote or hybrid working options, organisations need to invest in the technology and systems needed to support working from home. Organisations need to ensure appropriate policies, programs, and safety nets are in place to manage and mitigate the risks of remote work, to support and foster connectivity and collaboration. Gallup research suggests that top-down hybrid rules are potentially dangerous for engagement and retention. Instead, employees need to be involved in setting expectations of when, where, and how they work.

rates can save organisations the costs and efforts associated with employee turnover. It is essential organisations provide adequate rewards and recognition for top-performers, such as financial incentives, promotions, and public recognition for their contribution. To retain top-talent organisations need to set clear goals and provide a clear path for career advancement. Employers with high value or business critical employees need to consider offering employee retention benefits such as career advancement bonuses, professional development budgets, and the opportunities for sabbaticals and secondments.

Recommendations

5.1 Leverage new technologies:

Participants working in construction, information media and telecommunications, education and training and financial and insurance services were more inclined to feel that their job demands prevented them from preparing for the future of work. As such, employers need to acknowledge that different industries perceive the future of work differently. Employers need to proactively identify the specific job demands and technological advancements impacting their industry, and upskill employees in areas that are most relevant to their sector. According to Ernst and Young, data-driven insights will become paramount in helping organisations identify trends, anticipate challenges, and make informed choices in the future of work.

Organisations need to offer agile, adaptable offerings so that continuous, on-demand, and self-directed learning becomes the new normal through the use of e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and other digital resources. Organisations should allocate time for learning in the working week, to reinforce the priority the organisation gives to skill development and to break down the time constraints people report as the main barrier in preparing for the future of work.

5.2 Provide flexibility:

Enabling employees to work from home often created more opportunities for training and career advancement, higher job satisfaction and psychological safety. Research has

5.3 Prioritise succession planning:

Just under one-third (33%) of participants were concerned about potential threats to their financial security, and 34% worried about their attractiveness to future employers. With the war on talent, it is essential employers invest in the career development of their employees. Employees who find meaning in their work and have confidence in their future with the organisation are more likely to feel valued, and less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. A recent Gallup analysis found that engaged employees required a 31% pay increase to consider taking a job with a different organisation. Higher retention

Acknowledgements
The people behind the research

The Australian Workforce Survey 2023 was commissioned by the College of Organisational Psychology.

The APS College of Organisational Psychologists provides support to Organisational Psychologists throughout Australia, promotes Organisational Psychology as a professional discipline and supports the training and practice of organisational psychologists.

The College:

- Promotes the many ways that organisational psychologists add value to businesses and their people through the media and various publications.

- Provides professional development activities to keep organisational psychologists up to date with the latest advances in scientific research and practice.

- Provides access to research, information and tools which build the credibility and expertise of College members.

- Provides networking opportunities to organisational psychologists to help them accelerate their careers, enhance their practice, and build a more interconnected organisational psychology community.

- Promotes advances in the scientific study of organisational psychology by encouraging research, and fostering closer relationships between academics and practitioners.

- Promotes high standards of professional ethics and practice among College members.

- Acts as a contact point for queries about the profession of organisational psychology.

Key people and contributors
to the report

Patrick Dunlop
Principal Research Lead
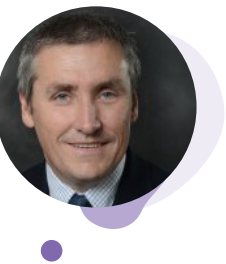Associate Professor, Future of Work Institute, Curtin University

Hayden Fricke
Chair, College of Organisational Psychologists, APS.
Managing Director, Steople

Shannon Butcher
Organisational Psychologist, University of Western Australia

Phil Slade
Behavioural Economist, Psychologist
Founder Switch4Schools & Decida Digital

Mark Wiggins
Professor of Organisational Psychology, Macquarie University

David Heap
Former Chair, College of Organisational Psychologists, APS.
Partner, Corporate Psychology Australia

Mark Douglas
Former Chair, College of Organisational Psychologists, APS.

Hayley Moore
Research Assistant, Future of Work Institute

Laura Bennett
Research Associate, University of Western Australia

Thank you!

Thank you to the Australian Psychological Society team and the volunteer National Committee of the College of Organisational Psychologists for their support, encouragement and contributions throughout the development, implementation and launch of this project.

AWS Project Team

Contact Us:

To enquire about services and advice from the APS College of Organisational Psychologists, or to hire an organisational Psychologist for your organisation, contact on LinkedIn at:

www.linkedin.com/company/college-of-organisational-psychologists-aps/

College of Organisational Psychologists.

Psychology put to work.

www.linkedin.com/company/college-of-organisational-psychologists-aps/

groups.psychology.org.au/cop/

The Australian Workforce Survey 2023
Futureproofing the world of work