Centre for Future Work

Working past 9 to 5: That's no way to make a living

Go Home on Time Day 2026 update

Fiona Macdonald, November 2026



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SECTION 1

Summary and key findings

This year marks the eighteenth annual *Go Home on Time Day,* an initiative that shines a spotlight on working time. Since 2009 the *Go Home on Time Day* survey has explored working hours, working hours preferences and unpaid overtime worked by Australians.[1]

Go Home on Time Day was established to highlight the uneven distribution of paid work time and the scale of unpaid overtime work being undertaken by Australian employees. Since 2009, the annual survey has been commissioned to investigate working time preferences as well as overwork, unpaid overtime, and other instances of time theft in Australia. This year's online poll of 1,000 employed people aged 18+ was conducted from 20 August to 8 September 2026 by YouGov Plc.[2]

In 2026, high living costs are putting many working people and their families under significant pressure. The current climate is one of concern about rising interest rates, threats of an economic slowdown and signs of job losses, with regular reporting over the year of large companies reducing the size of their workforces. Alongside an unemployment rate of 4.7%, the official estimate of underemployment is 6.3%.[3]

In this context, the 2026 *Go Home on Time Day* survey finding that around a third (32%) of employed people would prefer more paid work hours is perhaps not surprising. However, at the same time, the survey indicates that a majority of Australian employees are working extra unpaid hours just to get their jobs done.

Unpaid overtime

The 2026 survey found employees are working an average of 3.2 hours a week of unpaid overtime for their employers, often on top of full-time jobs. Key findings include:

- Full-time employees work the most hours of unpaid overtime, an average of 3.8 hours a week.
- Full-time employees are working, on average, one hour of unpaid overtime for every 10 hours of paid time they work.
- Part-time employees are working an average of 2 hours a week unpaid overtime, equivalent to one hour of unpaid overtime for every 12 hours of paid work.

[1] Prior to 2026 the annual *Go Home on Time Day* report was published by the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute. Previous years' reports can be found on the Centre for Future Work and Australia Institute websites.
[2] For details of the survey methodology and questions see the appendices to this report. All figures in this report, unless otherwise indicated, are from YouGov Plc. The survey was carried out online. The figures are representative of Australian workers by age, gender and region.
[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Australia, Sept 2026 (ABS, 2026).

- Unpaid overtime worked by employees in casual and fixed-term employment arrangements is on average 2.8 hours a week. As a proportion of these employees' average paid work hours unpaid overtime was higher than that worked by employees in permanent full-time and part-time jobs. Unpaid overtime reported by casual and temporary employees amounts to one hour for every six hours of paid work time (15.8%) on average.

There are signs that unpaid overtime is declining slowly

The phenomenon of unpaid overtime has persisted over the 18 years the *Go Home on Time Day* survey has been conducted. However, our survey findings suggest that in recent years unpaid overtime has been gradually declining.

- At 3.2 hours a week on average for all employees in 2026, unpaid overtime is very slightly lower than was reported in 2025 and in 2024: in both those years employees' average unpaid overtime hours were 3.6 hours a week. Prior to 2024 average hours of unpaid overtime were higher: 5.4 hours reported in the 2023 GHOTD survey, and in pre-pandemic years 4.6 hours in 2019, 6 hours in 2018 and 5.1 hours in 2017.[4]

Why do employees work unpaid overtime and outside scheduled work hours?

Employees are not working unpaid overtime because they want to. The most common reason given for working outside scheduled work hours is 'too much work', indicated by around four in every 10 workers (40%) in the 2026 survey.

'Fewer interruptions outside work hours' (28%) and 'staff shortages' (24%) were the next most common reasons for working outside scheduled hours, identified by between one in four and one in five workers surveyed.

While only one in four workers (28%) who worked unpaid overtime reported that, in their workplaces, performing unpaid overtime was either expected or encouraged, over half of workers (56%) performing unpaid overtime reported that this was often or sometimes necessary to meet the expectations of their employer.

Workers report negative social, health and work impacts of working outside of scheduled work hours

- The most common negative consequences of working outside scheduled work hours, experienced by around four in ten workers, were feeling mentally drained (45%) and physically tired (42%).
- Around a third reported stress or anxiety (32%) and interference with personal life/relationships (30%) as negative consequences and around one in four reported disrupted sleep (23%).
- Other negative consequences were for workers' performance, motivation and satisfaction at work including with around one in five people reporting reduced motivation to work (21%), and one in six reporting poor job satisfaction (17%).

[4] Previous years' *Go Home on Time Day* survey reports can be found on the Centre for Future Work and Australia Institute websites.

Disconnecting from work is very important for most workers

- Being able to mentally leave work behind was considered important by 95% of workers surveyed, including that it was very important for seven in ten workers (70%) and somewhat important for another 25% of workers.
- Not being interrupted while on leave was important for 94% (very important for 69% and somewhat important for 25%).
- Not being interrupted after hours and leaving work on time were important for 90% or more workers surveyed.
- Not needing to check emails etc, was important for 85% (44% very important and 41% somewhat important).

The financial costs of unpaid overtime

Based on our survey findings we estimate that unpaid overtime equals a collective loss of income by Australian workers of $97.93 billion in 2026.

An average employee loses $7,984 a year due to unpaid overtime.

Employees in all forms of employment lose significant income due to not receiving compensation for working overtime hours:

- In 2026, the average full-time employee in our survey works 3.8 hours of unpaid overtime per week. This translates into $9,623 in forgone wages over the year measured at the median full-time hourly wage.
- For permanent part-time employees, whose average unpaid overtime hours are 2 hours a week, lost wages per employee are worth $4,659 a year.
- Employees in casual full-time and part-time roles lose over $5,000 in income over the year due to performing unpaid work for their employers.

Preferences for paid work hours

About a half of (54%) of all workers surveyed consider their paid work hours to be ‘about right’ leaving another half of workers dissatisfied with their working hours. Most workers who preferred different work hours wanted more paid work hours: a third of all workers surveyed (32%) indicated they would like to work more hours and a smaller one in seven workers (14%) wanted to work fewer hours.

Preferences for more paid work hours were highest among younger people (aged 18-24 years), who were the age group with the shortest paid work hours:

- Half of all survey respondents aged 18 to 24 years (49%) responded that they would prefer to work more hours.
- Survey respondents aged 18 to 24 years were least likely to say their hours were about right (41%).
- Among workers aged 18 to 24 years five times as many workers wanted more paid work hours than wanted fewer paid work hours (49% wanted more hours and 10% wanted fewer hours).

Among surveyed workers aged from 25 to 59 years, between a quarter and a half preferred to work more hours:

- A third of survey respondents aged between 25 and 34 years (34%), and a third aged between 35 and 49 years (32%) preferred to work more hours.
- A quarter of workers aged between 50 and 64 years (25%) preferred to work more hours and one in five aged 65 years or over (21%) preferred to work more hours.

Survey respondents employed on a casual or temporary basis were least likely to consider their working hours to be about right. Six in ten employees in casual or temporary jobs would like more paid hours. Around one in four or five survey respondents in permanent full-time jobs preferred to work more hours (23%) and a third of part-time employees preferred more hours (35%).

Smaller proportions of workers preferred to have fewer hours of paid work, with full-time permanent employees the group most likely to prefer fewer hours (one in five, 19%), and one in ten or fewer workers in other forms of employment preferring fewer paid work hours.

SECTION 2

Employment type, paid work hours and preferences

Overview of employment and paid work hours

The employment arrangements and paid work time of the *Go Home on Time Day* survey sample broadly correspond with the ABS estimates for the entire Australian workforce.[5]

Employees in permanent full-time jobs made up 56% of the *Go Home on Time Day* survey sample. Another one in five survey respondents (21%) were employed in permanent part-time jobs, one in six (15%) were employed in a casual or temporary job and a smaller proportion of the sample were self-employed (8%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey sample, employment type and paid work hours

Type of employment	Permanent full-time	Permanent part-time	Casual or temporary	Self-employed
Percentage of all survey respondents	56%	21%	15%	8%
Average paid work hours a week*	37.8 hrs	23.2 hrs	17.8 hrs	21.6 hrs

*Hours based on respondents' answers to the survey question 'How many hours a week are you generally paid to work?'.

On average, survey respondents' paid work hours were 30.5 hours a week: 33.6 hours for males and 27.7 hours for females. This broadly corresponds with the national ABS estimate of 30.8 hours a week for non-managerial employees.[6]

As shown in Table 1, average paid work hours of workers in the survey sample were:

- 37.8 hours a week for permanent full-time employees
- 23.2 hours a week for permanent part-time employees
- 17.8 hours a week for employees in casual or temporary employment, and
- 21.6 hours for self-employed people.

Average paid working hours among survey respondents in 2026 were similar to average hours among 2025 *Go Home on Time Day* survey respondents.

[5] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, (ABS, 2026, ref: May 2025).
[6] ABS Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia. Note: the ABS does not include the category 'temporary'.

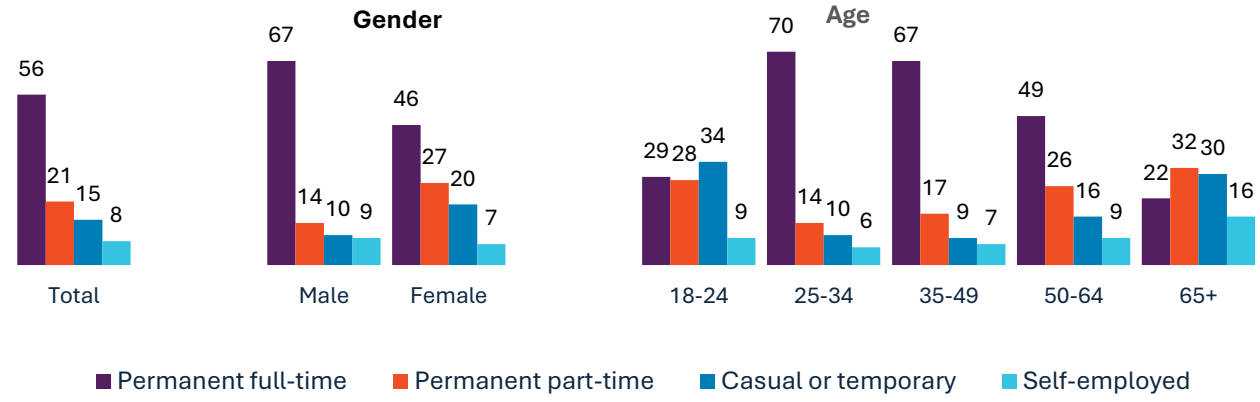
Employment type

Employment type by gender and age

Among the workers responding to the survey:

- Women were twice as likely as men to be employed in permanent part-time jobs (27% compared with 14%) and in casual or temporary jobs (20% compared with 10%).
- Men were more likely than women to be employed in permanent full-time jobs (67% compared with 46%).
- Younger and older workers were less likely to be employed in permanent full-time jobs than other workers, with higher proportions of younger (18-24 years) and older workers (50-64 years, 65+ years) in part-time, casual or temporary jobs. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Employment type by gender[a] and age (%)



Notes: [a] Survey respondents identifying their gender as 'other' are not included here due to their small number (14).

Employment type differs across industries and occupations

Employment in a permanent full-time job was the most common employment arrangement for workers in our survey sample in each of eight broad industry categories, as shown in Figure 2.[7]

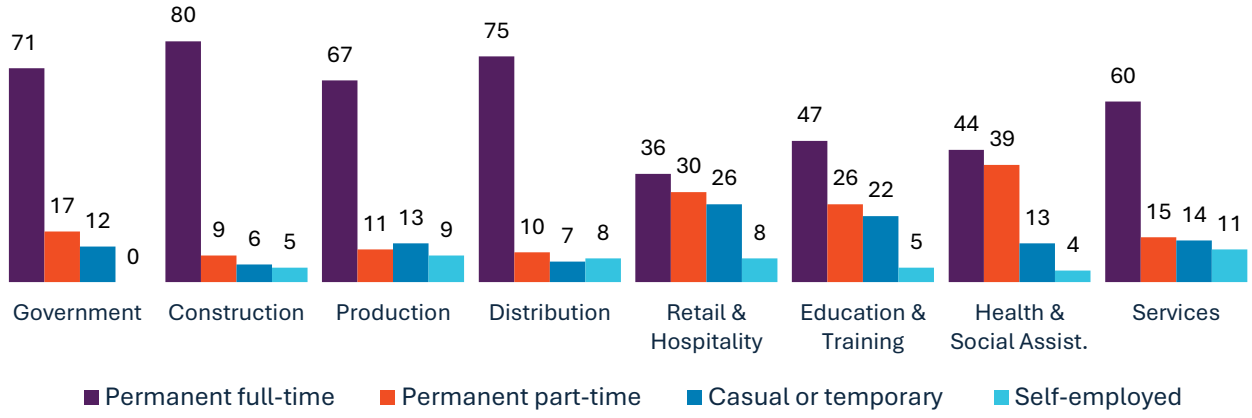
- In five of the eight broad industry categories, between two thirds and three quarters of survey respondents were in permanent full-time employment. These are Construction (80%), Distribution (75%), Government (71%), Production (67%), and Services (60%).
- Fewer than a half of the survey respondents employed in the other three industry groups were employed in permanent full-time jobs: *Education and Training* (47%), *Health Care and Social Assistance* (44%) and *Retail and Hospitality* (36%).
    - In each of these three industry groups from around a quarter to over a third of workers were in permanent part-time employment: 39% of workers employed in *Health Care and Social Assistance*, 30% of workers employed in *Retail and Hospitality* and 26% of

[7] Details of industry categories are provided in Appendix A.

workers employed in *Education and Training* were employed in permanent part-time jobs.

- *Retail and Hospitality (*26%) and *Education and Training* (22%) also had comparatively high proportions of workers employed in casual or fixed-term (temporary) jobs.

Figure 2: Employment type in each industry (% of industry employment)



In relation to workers' occupation, permanent full-time employment was most common among survey respondents employed as *Managers* (77%), *Professionals* (69%), and *Machinery Operators and Drivers* (70%), as shown in Figure 3.

There was also a majority of workers in permanent full-time employment among survey respondents working as *Technicians and Trades Workers* (55%) and *Clerical and Administrative Workers* (53%).

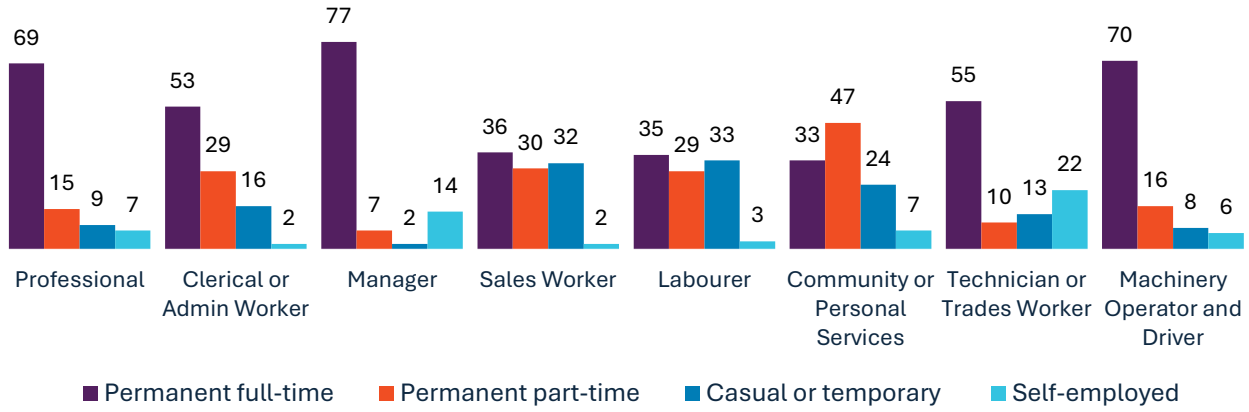
Survey respondents employed in the *Community and Personal Services Workers, Sales Workers and Labourers* occupations were dispersed more evenly across different employment arrangements. In these occupations around a third of workers were in permanent full-time jobs and the other two thirds were in permanent part-time or casual and temporary arrangements.

The occupations with the highest proportions of self-employed workers were *Managers* and *Technicians and Trades workers*.

The occupations with the highest proportions of permanent part-time and casual employment (combined) in our survey are the two largest occupations in the Australian economy: *Sales Assistants* and *Community and Personal Services Workers* (largely made up of aged care and disability support workers). Both occupations have a majority of female employees. Across the Australian workforce many young people are employed as sales assistants, and the median age of workers in this occupation is 23 years. The third largest occupation in the economy is *Registered Nurses*. In the *Go Home on Time Day* survey, these workers are included in the *Professio*nal occupation classification.[8]

[8] Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) *Occupation and Industry Profiles*, (JSA 2025).

Figure 3: Type of employment by occupation (% of employment in occupation)



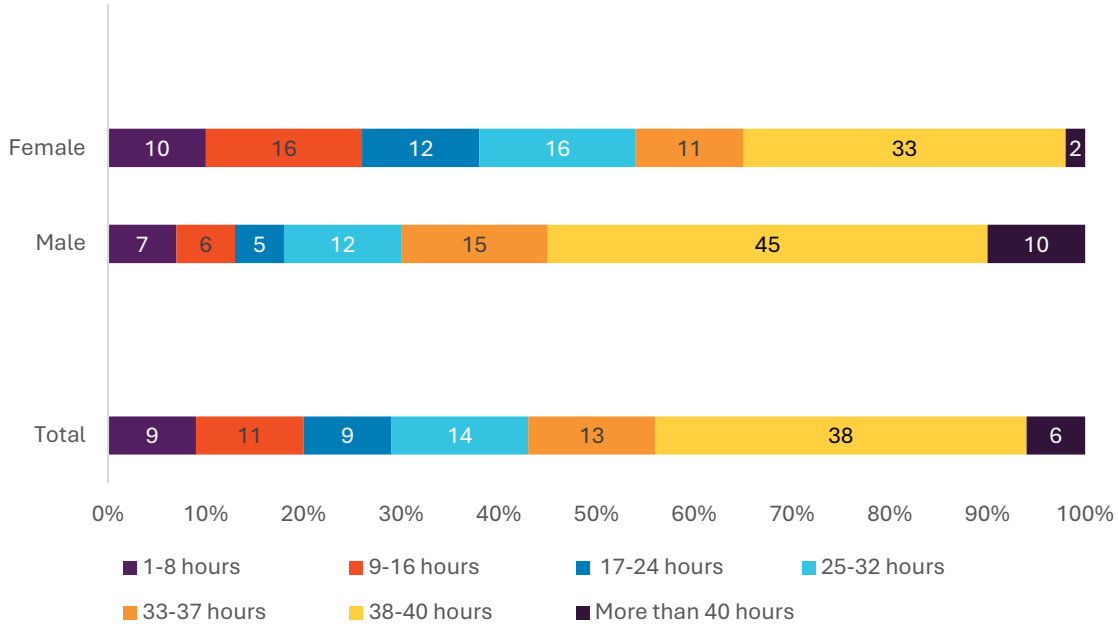
Paid work time and working time preferences

Paid work hours by gender and age

The most common paid work time of both male and female survey respondents was between 38 and 40 hours a week. Over a half of male survey respondents had paid work of 38 hours or more a week.

Fewer female survey respondents, about a third, worked 38 or more paid hours a week. Around one in four women (26%) had short-hours paid work of between one and 16 hours a week, including one in ten (10%) who were paid to work for eight or fewer hours a week, as shown in Figure 4.

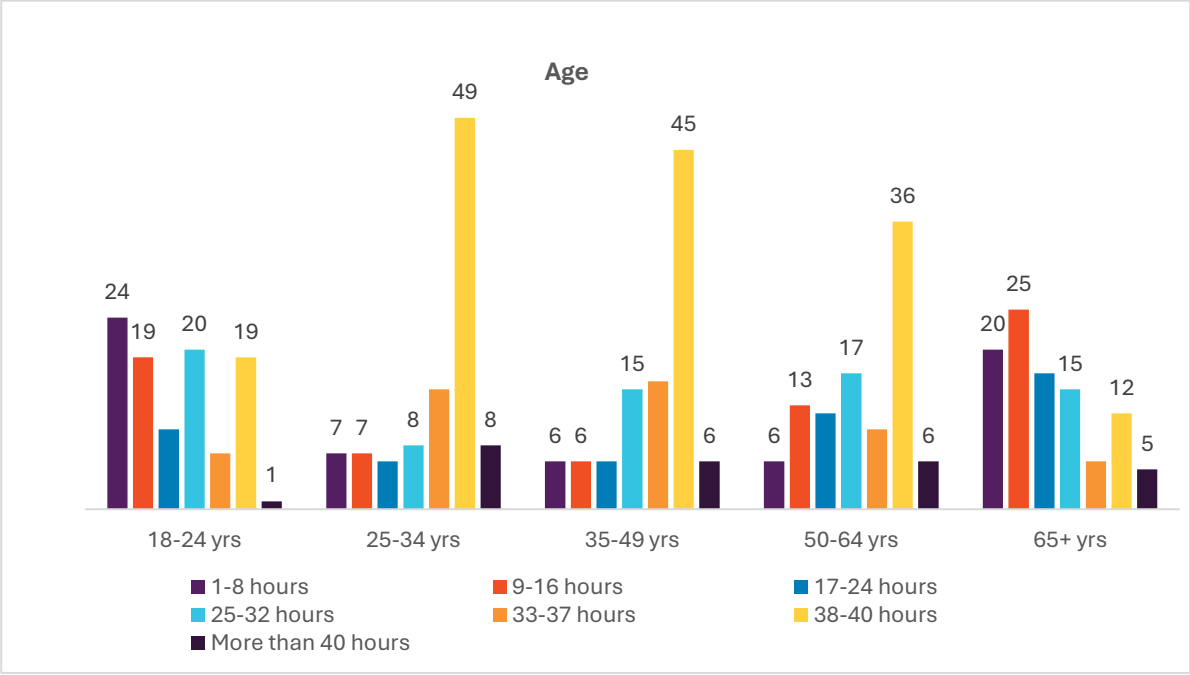
Figure 4: Weekly paid work hours, by gender (%)



In relation to age, the most common weekly paid work time among workers in the 'middle' age groups of 25-34 years, 35-49 years, and 50-64 years was between 38 and 40 hours a week, as shown in Figure 5.

Younger workers responding to the survey had shorter paid work time: among 18 to 24-year-olds, only one in five (20%) had paid work of 38 or more hours a week, while similar proportions (24%) had paid work hours from one to eight hours and nine to 16 paid hours a week (19%).

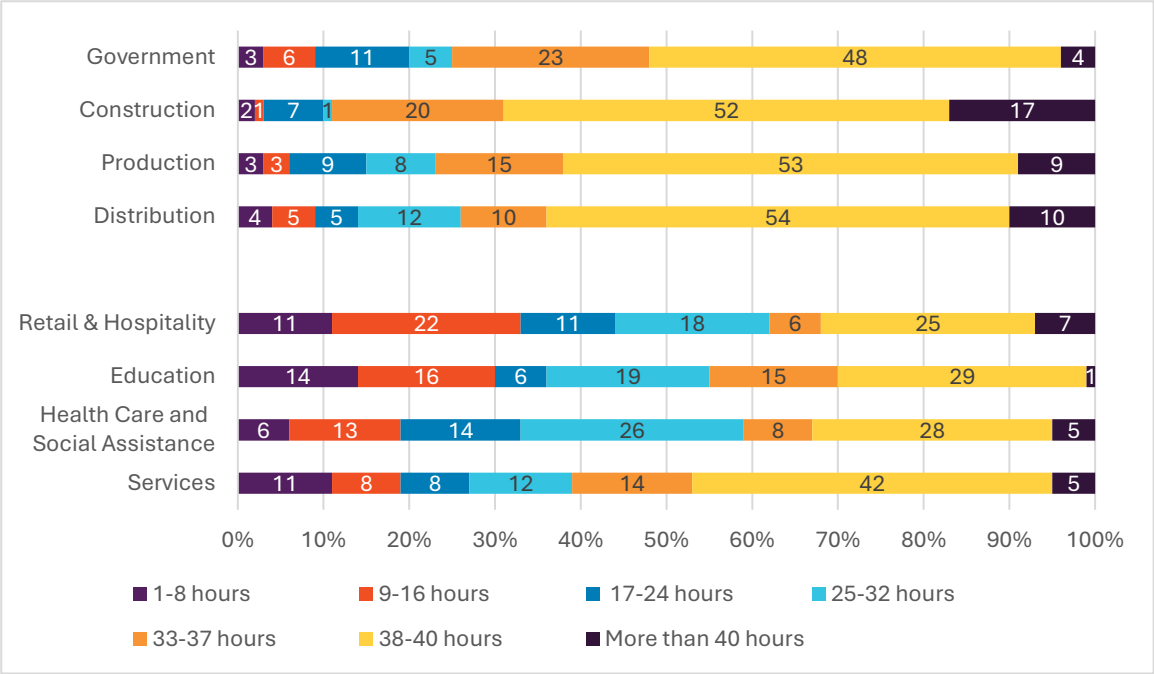
Figure 5: Weekly paid work hours, by age (%)



In each of four industry groups (*Government, Construction, Production* and *Distribution*) around half to two-thirds of workers had paid work of 38 hours or more a week, ranging from 52% of workers in *Government* to 69% in *Construction*. Fewer than one in ten survey respondents employed in these industries worked short hours (1-16 hours), as shown in Figure 6.

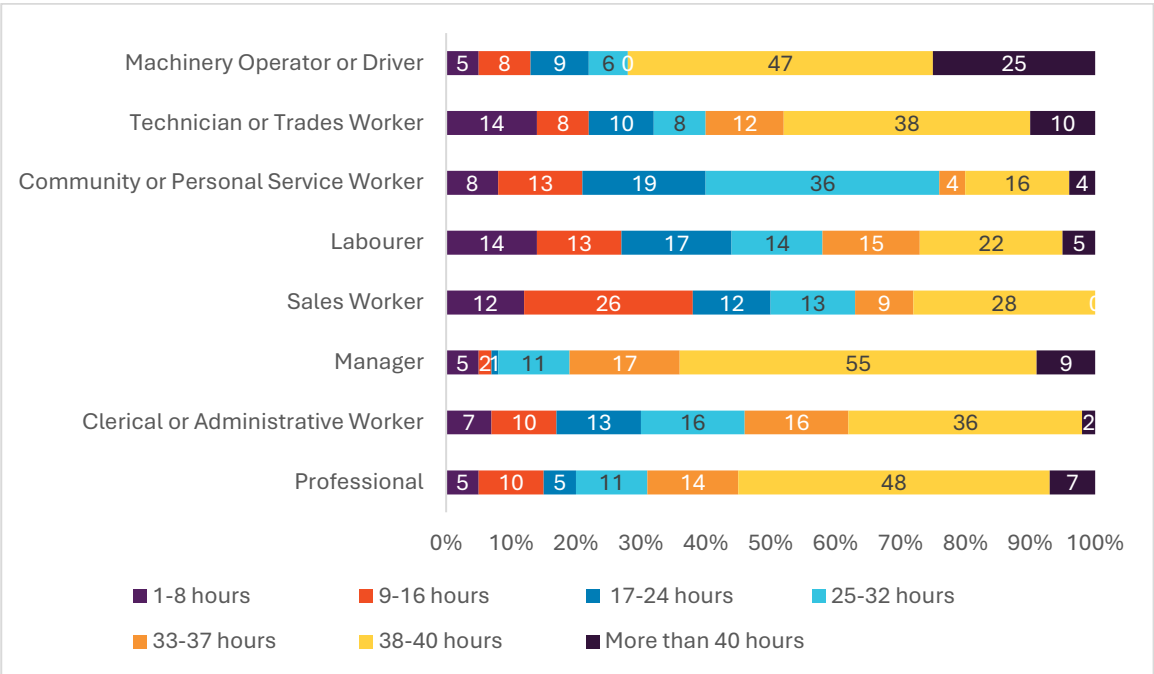
In each of the other four industry categories used in the survey there was a higher proportion of workers with part-time paid work hours, including from around one in four to one in three workers who had short hours paid work time: 33% in *Retail and Hospitality*, 30% in *Education and Training,* 19% in *Health Care and Social Assistance* and 19% in *Services* industry groups. Across the Australian workforce, a majority of workers in the first three of these industry categories are female.

Figure 6: Paid work hours by industry, % of employment in industry



As shown in Figure 7, the occupations with a high proportion of full-time paid work hours (38+ a week) in the survey sample were *Manager*, *Machinery Operator or Driver* and *Professional*. Full-time work (38+ hours) and long hours part-time work (33+ hours a week) were much less common among *Community and Personal Service workers* (24%), *Sales Workers* (37%) and *Labourers* (42%). Short hours work (1-16 hrs) was most common among *Sales Workers* (38%).

Figure 7: Paid work hours by occupation, % of employment in occupation



Working hours preferences

Over one in four *Go Home on Time Day* survey respondents (46%) were dissatisfied with their working hours – wanting either more or fewer hours. One in seven workers (14%) preferred fewer paid hours, 54% of workers indicated their hours were about right, and around a third of workers in the survey (32%) wanted more paid hours.

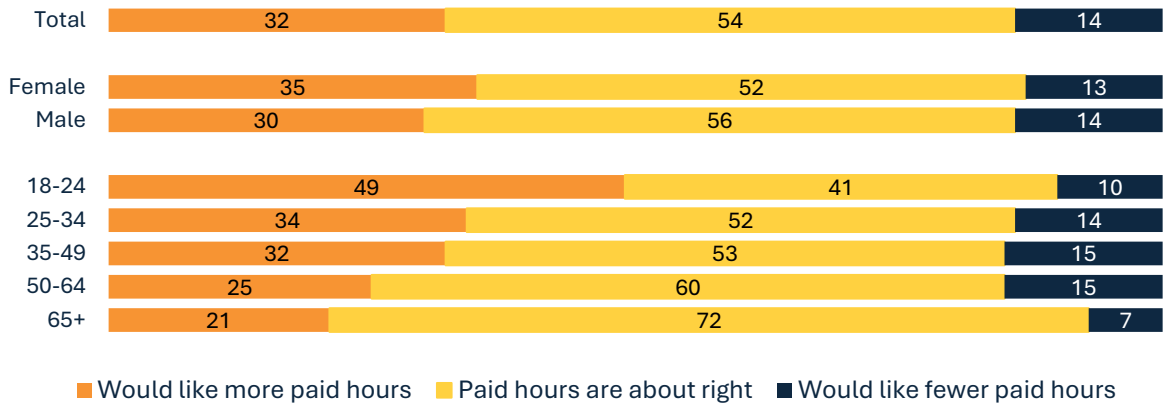
As shown in Figure 8, preferences for more work hours were highest among younger people (aged 18-24 years), who were the age group with the shortest paid work hours:

- Around half of all survey respondents aged 18 to 24 years (49%) indicated they would like to work more hours.
- Survey respondents aged 18 to 24 years were least likely to say their hours were about right (41%).
- Among workers aged 18 to 24 years, five times as many workers wanted more paid work hours than wanted fewer paid work hours (49% wanted more hours and 10% wanted fewer hours).

Among older survey respondents, aged from 25 to 59 years, between a quarter and a half preferred to work more hours:

- A third of survey respondents aged between 25 and 34 years (34%), and a third aged between 35 and 49 years (32%) preferred to work more hours.
- A quarter of workers aged between 50 and 64 years (25%) preferred to more work hours and one in five aged 65 years or over (21%) preferred to work more hours.

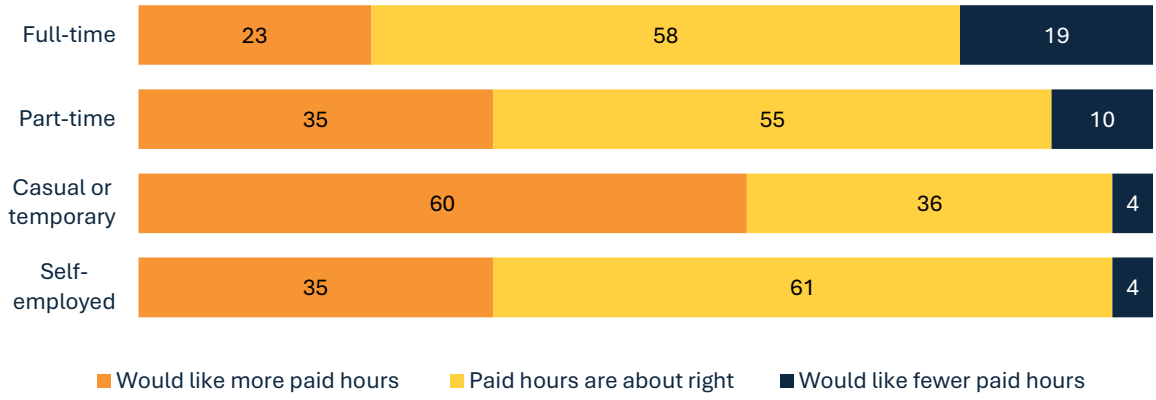
Figure 8: Working hours preferences, by gender and age



Survey respondents employed on a casual or temporary basis were least likely to consider their working hours to be about right, as shown in Figure 9.

- Six in ten employees in casual or temporary jobs wanted more paid hours.
- Around a fifth to a quarter of survey respondents in permanent full-time jobs (23%) and a third of part-time employees (35%) wanted more hours.
- Smaller proportions of workers preferred to have fewer hours of paid work, with around one in five full-time permanent employees (19%) preferring fewer work hours, while among workers in other forms of employment one in ten or fewer preferred fewer paid work hours.

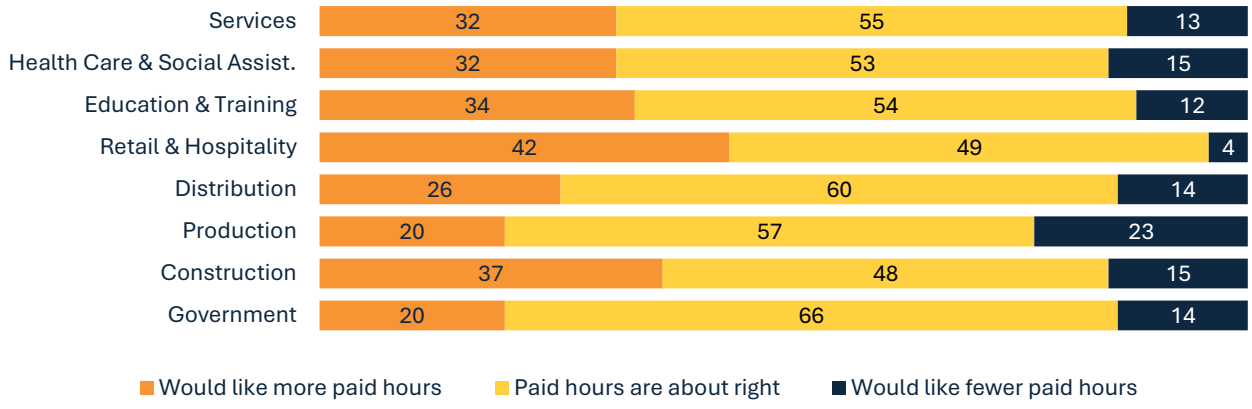
Figure 9: Working hours preferences, by form of employment (%)



Between a half and two thirds of survey respondents in each industry grouping considered their paid work hours to be 'about right', while a third to a half wanted either more or fewer hours, with most of them wanting more hours, as shown in Figure 10.

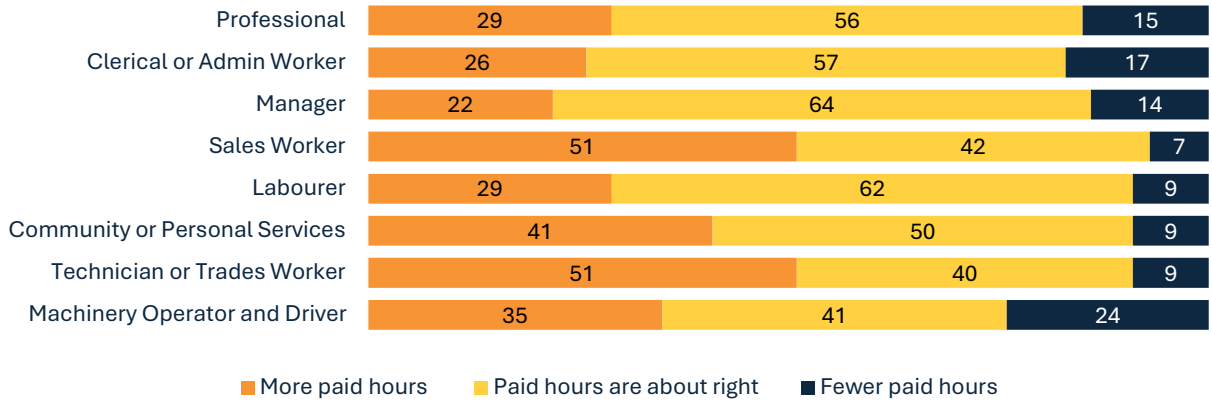
Preferences for more paid work hours were most common among workers in industries with comparatively high levels of part-time hours, including short hours part-time work. Preferences for more work hours were highest in *Retail and Hospitality* and lowest in *Production* and *Government* industry groups.

Figure 10: Working hours preferences, by industry of employment (%)



Occupations with the highest proportion of workers wanting more work hours in the survey sample were *Sales Worker* and *Technician or Trades Worker*, with half of all workers (51%) in these two occupations wanting more paid work hours. Among *Sales Workers* this is likely to be due to the high proportion of work that is short part-time hours work (see Figure 7), leaving people with inadequate work hours. The large proportion of *Technicians and Trades Workers* wanting more work hours may in part be due to the high proportion of self-employed *Technicians and Trades Workers* among survey respondents (22%).

Figure 11: Working hours preferences, by occupation



Change in working hours preferences over time

As measured by the *Go Home on Time Day* survey, working time preferences have changed little over the past decade. Consistently, there has been a high level of desire for more paid work hours among young workers, among workers in casual or temporary employment and among workers employed in industries and occupations which have a high proportion of part-time, especially short-hours, part-time work.[9]

[9] See previous Go Home on Time Day reports from 2017 to 2025 on the Centre for Future Work website.

SECTION 3

Unpaid overtime

Unpaid overtime hours

With an average of 3.8 hours of unpaid overtime per week worked in the week prior to the survey, permanent full-time employees had higher average hours of unpaid overtime than other employees: equivalent to one hour of unpaid overtime for every 10 hours of paid time (10%), as shown in Table 2.

Permanent part-time employees worked less unpaid overtime, working, on average, two hours unpaid overtime a week, equivalent to one hour of unpaid overtime for every 12 hours of paid work (8.4%).

Casual and fixed-term employees' unpaid overtime was, on average, 2.8 hours a week. As a proportion of paid work time this is higher than unpaid overtime for permanent full-time and part-time employees, amounting to one hour of unpaid overtime for every six hours of paid work time (15.8%).

Table 2: Unpaid overtime hours in the last 7 days, by employment type[10]

Form of employment	Full-time	Part-time	Casual or temporary	Self-employed	Total*
Average unpaid overtime	3.8 hours	2.0 hours	2.8 hours	4.0 hours	3.2 hours
Average hours of paid work	37.8 hours	23.2 hours	17.8 hours	21.6 hours	30.5 hours
Unpaid overtime as percentage of paid hours worked	10.0%	8.4%	15.8%	19.6%	10.8%

*Total excludes self-employed workers (see footnote 10).

Changes in unpaid overtime hours

Overall, the average unpaid overtime worked by all employees in 2026 (3.2 hours a week) was slightly lower than in 2025 (3.6 hours a week). This was due to a lower amount of unpaid overtime reported by permanent part-time employees in 2026 than in 2025.[11]

[10] The total for all workers does not include self-employed workers. The concept of unpaid overtime is difficult to apply to self-employed workers (who may not be paid a formal wage and are compensated instead through the business's profit).
[11] The 2025 and earlier *Go Home on Time Day* reports can be found on the Centre for Future Work website.

There was no change in the amount of unpaid overtime worked by full-time employees or by casual and fixed-term employees:

- Average unpaid overtime among permanent full-time employees in 2026 was the same as for these employees in the 2025 survey. As with 2026, in 2025, full-time employees had an average of 3.8 hours unpaid overtime, equal to an hour of unpaid work for every 10 hours of paid work.
- There was no change in the hours of unpaid overtime being undertaken by employees in casual and fixed term jobs: In 2025, as in 2026, average unpaid overtime was 2.8 hours, equalling one hour of unpaid work for every six hours of paid work.
- The average amount of unpaid overtime worked by permanent part-time employees has changed. In 2025 average unpaid overtime was 3.7 hours a week for these workers, considerably higher than the average of 2.0 hours unpaid overtime in the 2026 survey.

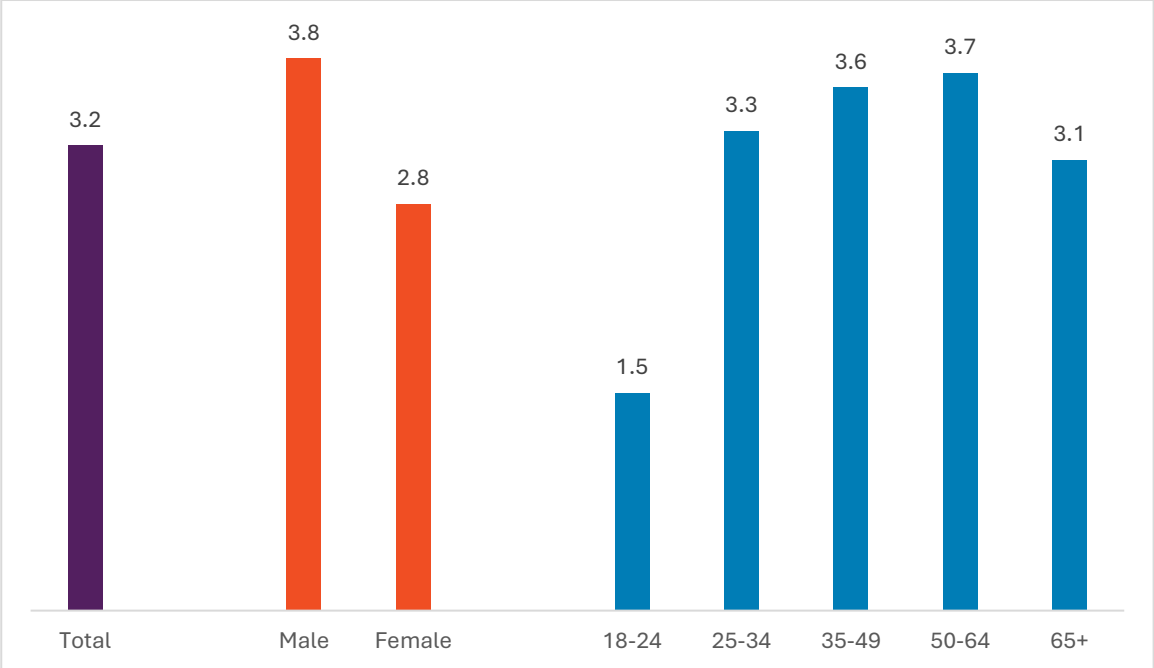
Differences in workers' unpaid overtime

Reported hours of unpaid overtime were highest for workers in the age ranges with the highest levels of permanent full-time employees, as shown in Figure 12.

Workers of all ages, with the exception of young workers aged 18 to 24 years, worked on average more than three hours of unpaid overtime in the week prior to the survey. Among 18- to 24-year-olds the average unpaid overtime hours worked in the previous week was much lower, at 1.5 hours. In 2026 young people's average unpaid overtime was much lower than was reported in the 2025 Go Home on Time Day survey, when it was over 4 hours a week.

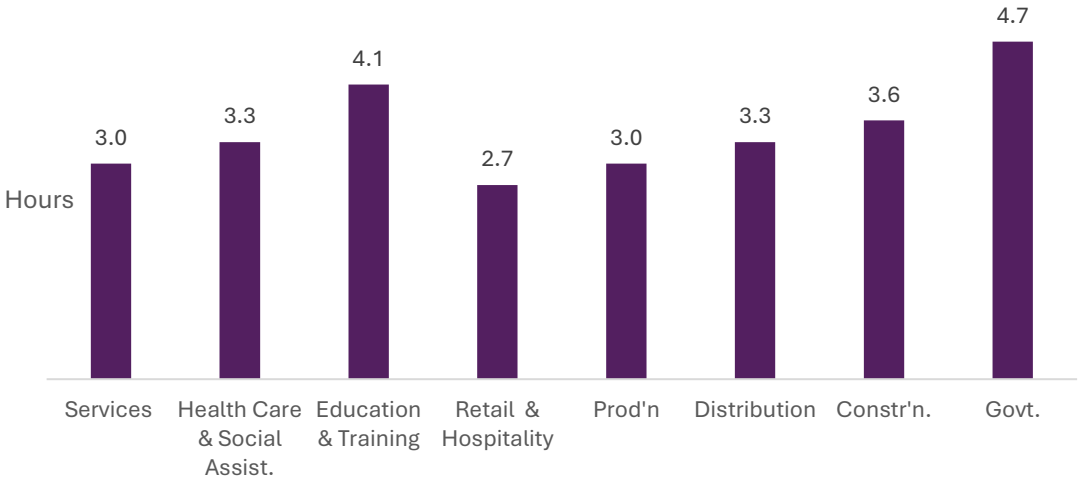
Men, who were more likely than women to be in permanent full-time employment, worked more unpaid overtime (3.8 hours) than women (2.8 hours), on average.

Figure 12: Unpaid overtime hours, by gender and age



Average unpaid overtime hours were highest among workers employed in *Government* (4.7 hours) and in *Education and Training* (4.1 hours), and lowest in *Retail and Hospitality* (2.7 hours a week) industries, as shown in Figure 13.

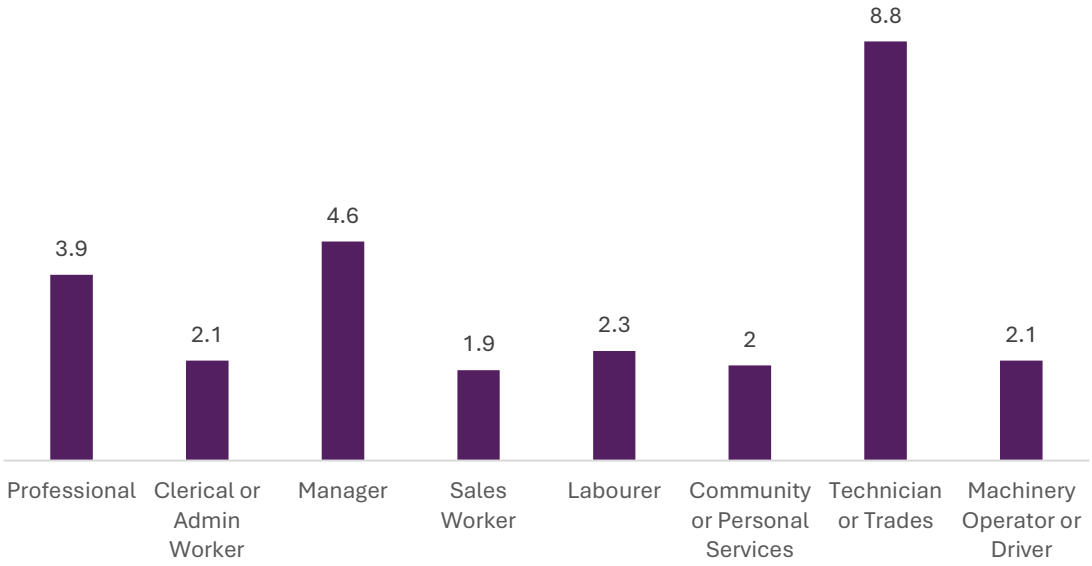
Figure 13: Average weekly unpaid overtime hours, by industry of employment



Unpaid overtime hours were highest among survey respondents employed as a *Technician or Trades Worker*, as shown in Figure 14. Among these workers average unpaid overtime was 8.8 hours a week. This may be due in part to the high proportion of self-employed people in the survey sample in this occupation and may also be related to current shortages of skilled tradespeople and technicians.

Other occupations with high average unpaid overtime hours were Managers and Professionals, both occupations with a relatively high proportion of full-time workers that have traditionally been sites of long hours full-time work and overwork.

Figure 14: Unpaid overtime hours, by occupation

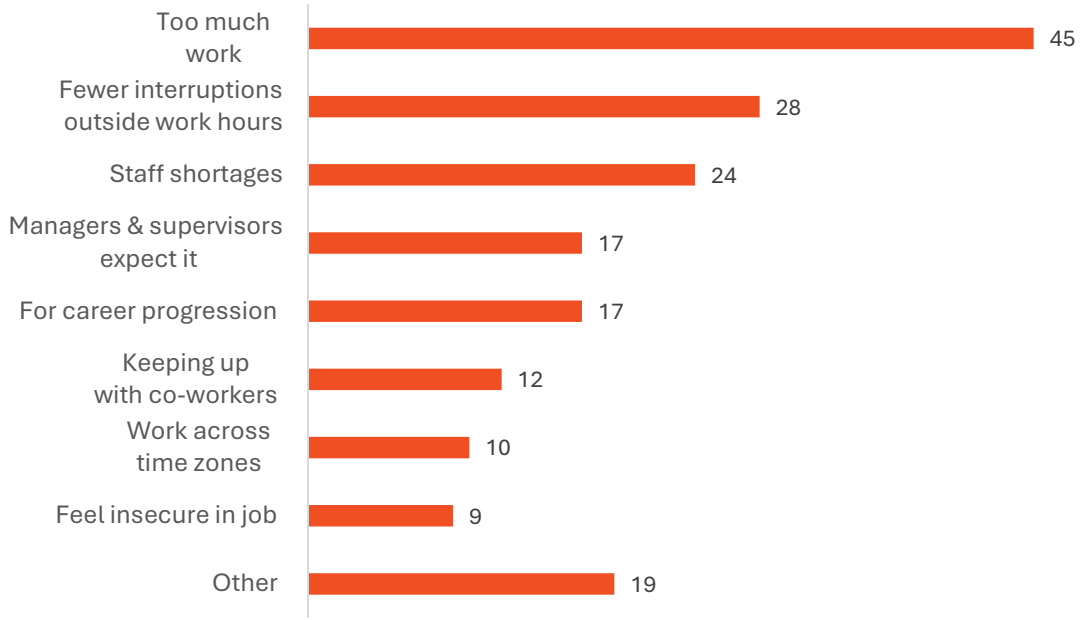


Why work outside scheduled work hours

Survey respondents who worked outside their scheduled work hours were asked to indicate which, if any, of several possible reasons for working outside of scheduled hours applied to them:

- The reason that applied most often to survey respondents working outside their scheduled work hours was 'too much work', indicated by around four in every 10 workers (40%).
- 'Fewer interruptions outside work hours' (28%) and 'staff shortages' (24%) were identified by between four and five in every ten respondents.
- Managers' and supervisors' expectations and 'for career progression' were each identified by around one in six workers (17%). See Figure 15.

Figure 15: Reasons for working outside scheduled work hours (% of those who worked outside scheduled work hours)

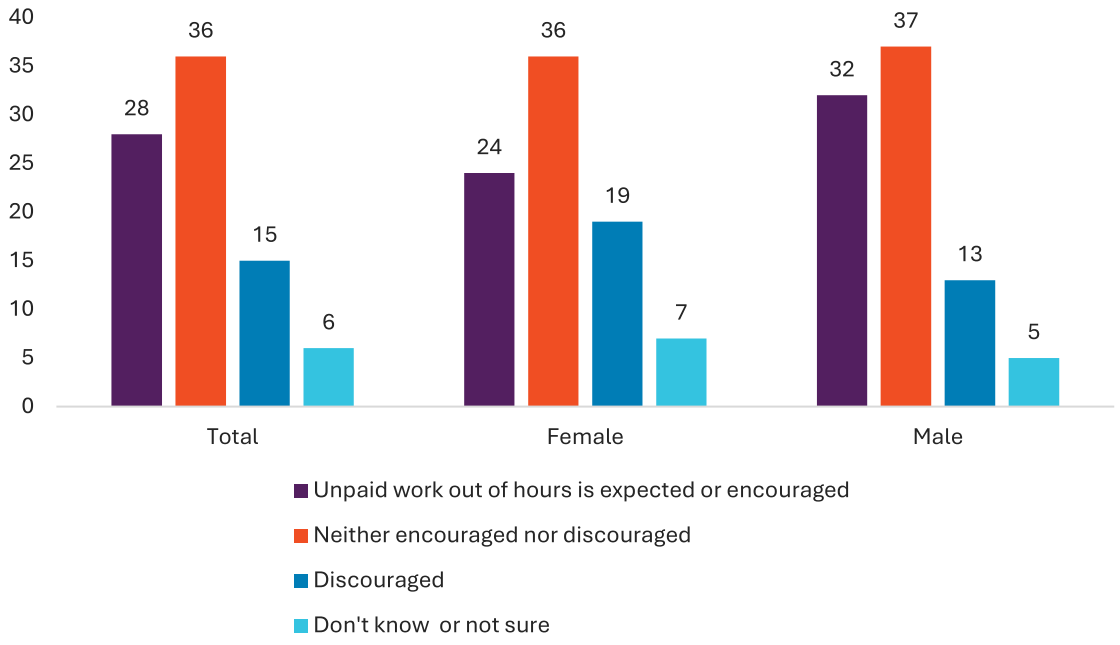


Workplace expectations of unpaid overtime

Over one in four workers (28%) who worked unpaid overtime in the previous week reported that, in their workplace, performing unpaid work outside scheduled work hours was either expected or encouraged, as shown in Figure 16. A much smaller proportion, (around one in seven, 15%) reported that work outside their scheduled work hours was discouraged. Three in ten (36%) reported it was neither encouraged nor discouraged.

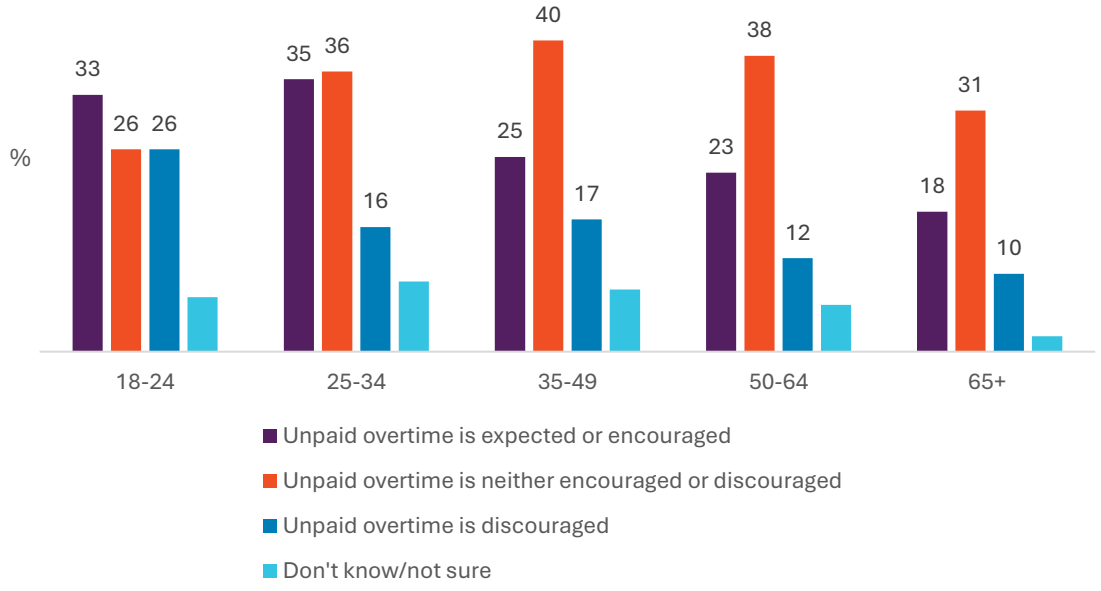
A greater proportion of men reported workplace expectations to perform work outside scheduled hours than women.

Figure 16: Workplace expectations of unpaid overtime, by gender



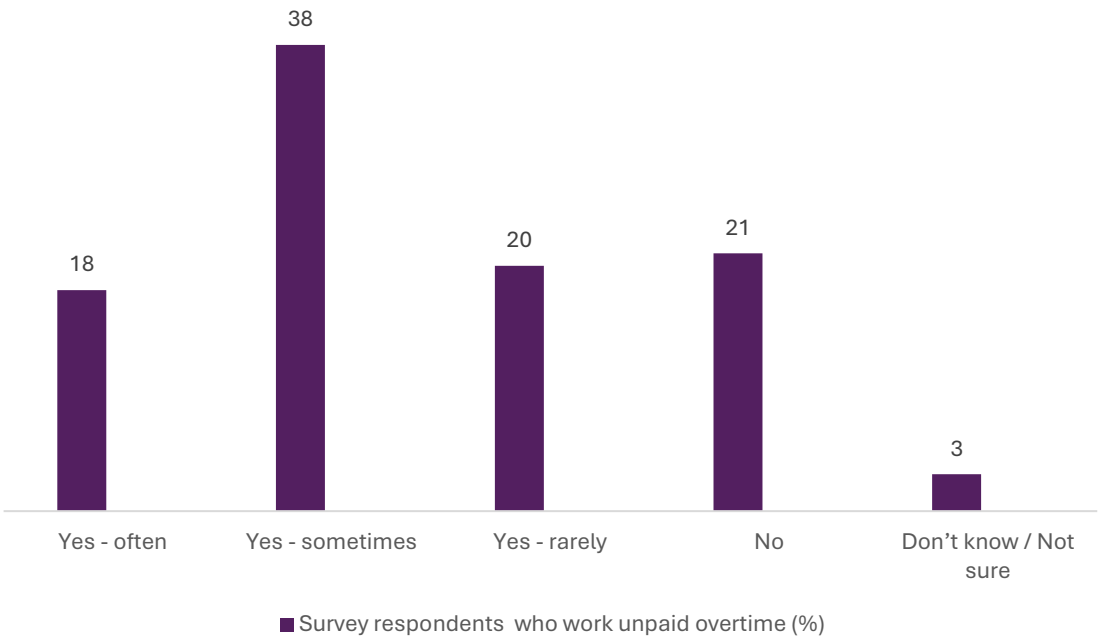
Workplace expectations or encouragement of unpaid overtime were reported more often by younger workers (18 to 24 years and 25 to 39 years) than by workers in older age groups, as shown in Figure 17. However, at the same time, discouragement of unpaid overtime was also reported more often by younger people (aged 18 to 24 years) with a quarter of this age group reporting this.

Figure 17: Workplace expectations of unpaid overtime by age



While unpaid overtime may not be explicitly encouraged or expected by managers, over half of workers (56%) performing unpaid work outside their regular work hours believe that working outside scheduled hours is either always or sometimes necessary to meet their employer's expectations. One in five (20%) reported that unpaid work outside scheduled hours was 'rarely' expected or encouraged and a similar proportion (21%) responded that working unpaid outside scheduled hours was not necessary to meet their employer's expectations. See Figure 18 below.

Figure 18: Necessity of unpaid work outside scheduled work hours to meet employer's expectations (% of respondents who work unpaid overtime)

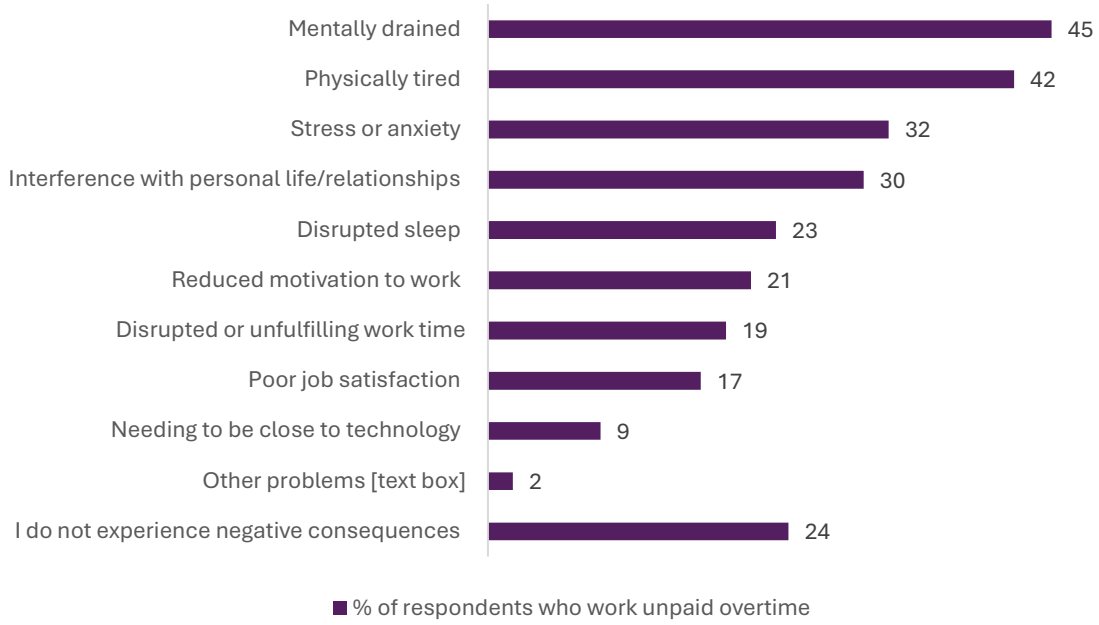


Personal and social costs of working outside scheduled hours

Multiple negative consequences of working outside of scheduled work hours were identified by survey respondents who worked unpaid overtime, as shown in Figure 19.

- Most common negative consequences experienced by around four in ten workers were feeling mentally drained (45%) and feeling physically tired (42%).
- Other common negative consequences, experienced by around a third of people, were stress or anxiety (32%) and interference with personal life/relationships (30%), and for around one in four, disrupted sleep (23%).
- Unpaid overtime also had negative consequences for people's performance, motivation and satisfaction at work, with one in five people reporting reduced motivation to work (21%), and one in six reporting poor job satisfaction (17%).

Figure 19: Negative consequences of working outside scheduled hours



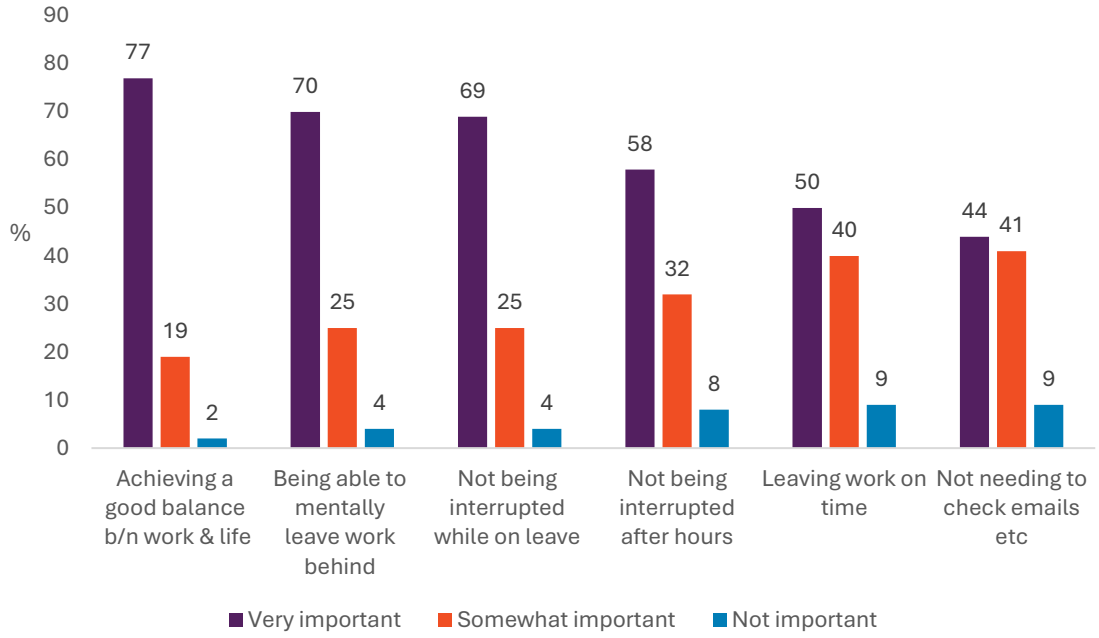
Disconnecting from work

Almost all workers (97%) responding to the survey indicated it was important to achieve a good balance between work and life, with most (77%) responding that this was very important and a smaller proportion (19%) that this was somewhat important, as shown in Figure 20.

Disconnecting from work plays a big role in this:

- Being able to mentally leave work behind was important for almost all survey respondents (95%), with this being very important for most (70%) and somewhat important for another 25% of respondents.
- Not being interrupted while on leave was important for 94% (very important for 69% and somewhat important for 25%).
- Not being interrupted after hours was important for 90% (very important for 58% and somewhat important)
- Leaving work on time was important for 90% (50% very important and 40% somewhat important for 40%)
- Not needing to check emails etc, was important for 85% (44% very important and 41% somewhat important).

Figure 20: Importance of disconnecting from work outside scheduled work hours



Financial costs of time theft

Unpaid overtime represents a collective loss of income by Australian workers of $97.93 billion in 2026.

Employees in all forms of employment lose significant income over a year due to not receiving compensation for overtime, as shown in Table 3:

- Overall, on average, employees lose $7,984 a year due to unpaid overtime.
- In 2026 the average full-time employee in our survey works 3.8 hours of unpaid overtime per week. This translates into $9,623 in forgone wages a year measured at the median full-time hourly wage.
- For permanent part-time employees in our survey, whose average unpaid overtime hours are fewer, at 2.0 hours a week, the lost wages are worth $4,569 a year.
- Employees in casual roles lose over $5,000 per year in income due to performing unpaid work for their employers.

Table 3: Aggregate value of employees' unpaid overtime, 2026[12]

Form of employment	No. of employees (million)	Median wage ($/hr)[a]	Average unpaid overtime (hrs/wk)	Value of lost wages per worker ($/year)	Total value of lost wages (billion/yr)
Permanent					
Full-time	7.89	$48.70	3.8	$9,623	$75.90
Part-time	1.99	$44.80*	2.0	$4,659	$9.28
Casual					
Full-time	0.57	$35.80	2.8	$5,212	$3.00
Part-time	1.80	$36.96*	2.8	$5,381	$9.75
Total	12.27		**3.2**	$7,984	$97.93

[a] Sources: ABS, Characteristics of Employment, September 2025 (ABS 2025); ABS, Employee Earnings, 2025.
*Includes superannuation contributions for part-time permanent and casual employees

Calculating the financial costs of unpaid overtime

Costs of unpaid overtime have been calculated by estimating the income that would have been received by workers if their unpaid labour had been paid. The ABS estimates the total number of Australian employees working in each of four main forms of waged employment, and median hourly earnings for employees in each of those arrangements. These data have been used to estimate the total income lost to employees not being paid by their employers for the overtime hours worked.

It has been assumed that unpaid overtime hours would have been paid at the rate of median earnings. This is conservative as overtime (especially for full-time workers) should pay a higher hourly rate. For part-time and casual employees, the value of forgone employer superannuation contributions, at the current rate of 12% of wages, is also included. Superannuation is not included for full-time employees as employer superannuation contributions are not required on overtime hours for these employees.

[12] totals may not equal sum of figures in columns due to rounding.

SECTION 4

Conclusion

In 2026, the *Go Home on Time Day* survey has again drawn attention to persistent and significant problems in Australia's distribution of paid work. Survey findings show that, while substantial numbers of employees are performing unpaid overtime on top of their paid work time just to get their work done, others are dissatisfied with their paid work time in part-time hours jobs, many of which offer short-hours paid work only.

Unpaid overtime is primarily driven by workplace demands: employees work unpaid overtime because they believe they must do so to get their work done. Unpaid overtime has multiple negative impacts on individuals' health, on work-life balance and on relationships. It has large financial costs for workers.

While workplaces may gain through this misappropriation of workers' time and labour, they are also likely to bear some costs of unpaid overtime. Workers report reduced motivation at work, unfulfilling work time and reduced job satisfaction as consequences of additional work, all of which are likely to contribute to reduced performance at work.

There are indications in the 2026 *Go Home on Time Day* survey findings that there is a decline in employers' expectations that employees work unpaid overtime, including that there has been a small decline in average unpaid overtime in 2026 compared with 2025 that has followed an earlier decline in unpaid overtime in 2024.

The recent introduction of Right to Disconnect laws in 2024 and the commencement of these laws in small businesses in August 2025 may be contributing to reductions in workplace expectations, through reducing the acceptability of unpaid overtime, as awareness of the issues has grown among both employees and managers. A possible influence of the *Right to Disconnect* laws in lowering unpaid overtime is suggested by the fact that the most recent declines in unpaid overtime seen in the 2026 *Go Home on Time Day* survey are declines in unpaid overtime being worked by younger workers, part-time workers and workers in retail and hospitality industries, industries which include many small businesses that employ many younger workers in part-time jobs.

SECTION 5

Appendices

Appendix A: Method[13]

Short disclosure statement

Research company	YouGov Plc
Client commissioning the research	Centre for Future Work Limited
Fieldwork dates	20 August 2026 to 8 September 2026
Mode of data collection	Online recruited from research panel (100%)
Target population	Australian workers aged 18+
Sample size	1,000
Australian Polling Council compliant	Yes
Voting intention published	No

Industry classifications

Industry Classification	Industry (ANZSIC)
Services	Information Media and Telecommunications
Services	Financial and Insurance Services
Services	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
Services	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
Services	Administrative and Support Services
Services	Arts and Recreation Services
Services	Other Services
Health Care & Social Assistance	Health Care and Social Assistance
Education & Training	Education and Training
Retail & Hospitality	Retail Trade
Retail & Hospitality	Accommodation and Food Services
Distribution	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
Distribution	Wholesale Trade
Distribution	Transport, Postal and Warehousing
Production	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
Production	Mining
Production	Manufacturing
Construction	Construction
Government	Public Administration and Safety

[13] The survey Long Disclosure Statement and Detailed Results can be found on the Centre for Future Work website.

Appendix B: Survey questions

Full text of survey questions

Q1. How do you describe your gender?

Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be different to what is indicated on legal documents. Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Man or male
2. Woman or female
3. Non-binary
4. I use a different term
5. Prefer not to answer

Q2. What is your age?

ASK ALL, NUMERIC

1. _____ (Range 18-99)

Q3. Please provide your postcode.

ASK ALL, NUMERIC

1. _____

Q5. What is the highest level of **education** you have completed?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Bachelor or above (university qualification)
2. Diploma (TAFE, college, university) or Certificate III/IV
3. Higher School Certificate/Year 12
4. School Certificate/Year 10
5. Some high school/primary school
6. None of these

Q6. Which of these categories best describes your **annual household income** before tax? Please make your best estimate.

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. $20,000 or less
2. $20,001 - $40,000

3. $40,001 - $60,000
4. $60,001 - $80,000
5. $80,001 - $100,000
6. $100,001 - $150,000
7. $150,001 - $200,000
8. More than $200,000
9. Not sure/Rather not say

Q7a. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which of the following parties would you vote for in the House of Representatives (lower house)?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

10. Labor [SKIP to GHOTD1]
11. Liberal [SKIP to GHOTD1]
12. Greens [SKIP to GHOTD1]
13. Nationals [SKIP to GHOTD1]
14. Pauline Hanson's One Nation [SKIP to GHOTD1]
15. Independent / Other [SKIP to GHOTD1]
16. Don't know / Not sure [GO TO Q7b]

Q7b. If you're not sure, to which of the following do you have a leaning?

Please select one response only

ASK IF PREVIOUS="Don't know / Not sure", SR

17. Labor
18. Liberal
19. Greens
20. Nationals
21. Pauline Hanson's One Nation
22. Independent / Other

CORE GHOTD QUESTIONS

GHOTD1. Are you currently in paid work?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Yes, permanent full time
2. Yes, permanent part time
3. Yes, casual or temporary
4. Yes, self-employed
5. No [TERMINATE]

GHOTD2. What best describes the industry you work in?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
2. Mining
3. Manufacturing
4. Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
5. Construction
6. Wholesale Trade
7. Retail Trade
8. Accommodation and Food Services
9. Transport, Postal and Warehousing
10. Information Media and Telecommunications
11. Financial and Insurance Services
12. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
13. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
14. Administrative and Support Services
15. Public Administration and Safety
16. Education and Training
17. Health Care and Social Assistance
18. Arts and Recreation Services
19. Other Services
20. Don't know / Not sure

GHOTD3. Which of the following best describes the kind of work you do?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Manager
2. Professional
3. Technician or Trades Worker
4. Community or Personal Service Worker
5. Clerical or Administrative Worker
6. Sales Worker
7. Machinery Operator and Driver
8. Labourer
9. Don't know / Not sure

GHOTD4. Are you a member of a union?

Please select one response only

ASK ALL, SR

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know / Not sure

GHOTD5. How many hours a week are you generally paid to work?

ASK ALL, SR

[NUMBER Open answer] __ hours

GHOTD6. Would you like to work…?

ASK ALL, SR

Please select one response only

1. More paid hours
2. Fewer paid hours
3. My paid hours are about right

GHOTD7. Unpaid work may include things like arriving early, staying late, working through lunch or breaks, working at home beyond paid hours, responding to phone calls and emails out of hours, and so on.

How many unpaid hours of extra work did you perform for your employer in the last 7 days (i.e. unpaid overtime)?

ASK ALL, SR

[NUMBER Open answer] __ hours

GHOTD8. In your workplace, is performing unpaid work outside of scheduled working hours…?

ASK ALL, SR

Please select one response only

- Expected
- Not expected, but encouraged
- Neither encouraged nor discouraged
- Discouraged
- Not applicable
- Don't know/Not sure

GHOTD9. Do you ever perform work outside of your scheduled working hours?

Please select one response only

ASK IF ALL, SR

1. Yes
2. No **[SKIP GHOTD10 - GHOTD12]**

GHOTD10. Do you feel that it is necessary to work outside of scheduled work hours in order to meet the expectations of your employer?

ASK IF GHOTD = 1, SR

Please select one response only

1. Yes – often
2. Yes – sometimes
3. Yes – rarely
4. No
5. Don't know/Not sure

GHOTD11. Why do you complete work outside of your scheduled working hours?

ASK IF GHOTD = 1, MR; RANDOMISE 1-8; #10=EXCLUSIVE

Please select all that apply

1. Too much work
2. Staff shortage for example due to illness, parental leave
3. Managers and supervisors expect work outside of hours
4. Work across time zones
5. For career progression
6. Keeping up with co-workers
7. Feel insecure in job
8. Less interruptions working outside of hours
9. Other [text box]
10. I don't complete any work outside scheduled hours **[SKIP to GHOTD13]**

GHOTD12. What negative consequences do you experience due to working outside of your scheduled hours, if any?

ASK IF GHOTD = 1, MR; RANDOMISE 1-9; #11=EXCLUSIVE

Please select all that apply

1. Disrupted sleep
2. Mentally drained
3. Physically tired
4. Stress or anxiety
5. Disrupted or unfulfilling non-work time
6. Needing to be close to technology
7. Reduced motivation to work
8. Interference with personal life/relationships
9. Poor job satisfaction
10. Other problems [text box]
11. I do not experience negative consequences

GHOTD13. How important are the following to you?

ASK ALL, SR

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know/Not sure
Leaving work on time				
Not being interrupted by work while on leave (for example annual leave)				
Not being interrupted by work after hours or on weekends				
Being able to mentally leave work behind at the end of the day				
Not needing to check work correspondence				
Achieving a good balance between paid work and				

family/community/leisure goals				

No preceding questions in the poll are expected to have influenced the results of the questions published here. The questions, and the response options for each question, are as follows:

Are you currently in paid work?

1. Yes, permanent full time
2. Yes, permanent part time
3. Yes, casual or temporary
4. Yes, self-employed
5. No

Those who selected any of the 'Yes' options were then asked the following questions:

What best describes the industry you work in?
Response options were presented in random order.

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- Information Media and Telecommunications
- Financial and Insurance Services
- Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Public Administration and Safety
- Education and Training
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Arts and Recreation Services
- Other Services
- Don't know / Not sure

Which of the following best describes the kind of work you do?
Response options were presented in random order.

- Manager
- Professional
- Technician or Trades Worker
- Community or Personal Service Worker
- Clerical or Administrative Worker
- Sales Worker
- Machinery Operator and Driver
- Labourer
- Don’t know / Not sure

Are you a member of a union?

- Yes
- No
- Don’t know / Not sure

How many hours a week are you generally paid to work?

- [NUMBER Open answer] __ hours

Would you like to work…?

- More paid hours
- Fewer paid hours
- My paid hours are about right

Unpaid work may include things like arriving early, staying late, working through lunch or breaks, working at home beyond paid hours, responding to phone calls and emails out of hours, and so on.

How many unpaid hours of extra work did you perform for your employer in the last 7 days (i.e. unpaid overtime)?

- [NUMBER Open answer] __ hours

In your workplace, is performing unpaid work outside of scheduled working hours…?

- Expected
- Not expected, but encouraged
- Neither encouraged nor discouraged
- Discouraged
- Not applicable
- Don't know / Not sure

Do you ever perform work outside of your scheduled working hours?

- Yes
- No

Respondents who selected 'Yes' to the above question were asked the following questions:

Do you feel that it is necessary to work outside of scheduled work hours in order to meet the expectations of your employer?

- Yes – often
- Yes – sometimes
- Yes – rarely
- No
- Don't know/Not sure

Why do you complete work outside of your scheduled working hours?
Response options were presented in random order.

- Too much work
- Staff shortage for example due to illness, parental leave
- Managers and supervisors expect work outside of hours
- Work across time zones
- For career progression
- Keeping up with co-workers
- Feel insecure in job
- Less interruptions working outside of hours
- Other [text box]
- I don't complete any work outside scheduled hours

Respondents who selected any of the above responses other than "I don't complete any work outside scheduled hours" were then asked the following question:

What negative consequences do you experience due to working outside of your scheduled hours, if any?
Response options were presented in random order.

- Disrupted sleep
- Mentally drained
- Physically tired
- Stress or anxiety
- Disrupted or unfulfilling non-work time
- Needing to be close to technology
- Reduced motivation to work
- Interference with personal life/relationships
- Poor job satisfaction
- Other problems [text box]
- I do not experience negative consequences

All respondents were asked the following question:

How important are the following to you?

Very important Somewhat important Not important Don't know/Not sure

- Leaving work on time
- Not being interrupted by work while on leave (for example annual leave)
- Not being interrupted by work after hours or on weekends
- Being able to mentally leave work behind at the end of the day
- Not needing to check work correspondence
- Achieving a good balance between paid work and family/community/leisure goals

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