

Government workers in Australia prioritize well-being over pay

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Swinburne Edge's Center for the New Workforce and Deloitte's Workplace Integrity Practice have surveyed more than 2,000 Australian workers about hybrid work, their experiences of work during the

pandemic and the importance of flexibility.

Their latest industry insights briefing zooms in on government workers.

Well-being over salary

The researchers found that government workers rate physical, mental and emotional well-being as the most important work factor, ahead of pay. Compared to workers in other sectors, well-being was more important relative to pay for the government sector.

In fact, three in five workers said they would be willing to forgo a pay rise to achieve flexibility—with the most common choice being between 1–3% of their salary.

Partner, Risk Advisory and lead of the national Workplace Integrity Practice at Deloitte, Justin Giuliano, says we've seen a shift in priorities since the pandemic.

"Given what has happened over the last couple of years, flexibility and well-being are key aspects of work that seem to have soared in importance instead of a steady evolution, particularly for government workers who responded to our survey earlier this year," he says.

Preferred type of work

Eighty percent of government workers chose hybrid or home as their preferred location of work, which puts government in the top two sectors where workers chose hybrid or home.

This is particularly so for women. Eighty-eight percent of women chose hybrid or home as the ideal location of work, compared with 71% of

men.

"This is a great opportunity for government organizations to reflect on what they can do to better align their processes, systems and organizational behaviors with worker flexibility," Giuliano adds.

More flexible hours

Director of Swinburne Edge's Center for the New Workforce, Dr. Sean Gallagher, says the benefits of flexible working are recognized by workers, but there are downsides.

"Flexible working allows for better work life-balance, less time commuting, improved [mental health](#), more [physical activity](#) and greater contribution to domestic duties; but it can also lead to employees working more hours than they would in the office. Yet 20% of government workers say they are not being compensated for working outside their standard hours, with workload being the main reason."

One in three workers are working more hours since the pandemic. Although it is the lowest result per sector, almost 50% of government workers are regularly working outside their standard hours.

Government workers generally take time off in lieu as compensation for working outside standard hours. However, 20% of [government](#) workers said they are not compensated for time worked outside their standard hours.

While this is lower than the other sectors, this raises compliance risks—particularly given [government workers](#) are generally covered by an industrial agreement which provides compensation for time worked outside standard hours.

"This research should act as a word of caution for governments as FlexWork becomes the norm," says Dr. Gallagher.

"Government organizations should be aware of their employees' work patterns when they're working remotely. It's a simple equation. Either workloads need to be reduced or workers get some form of compensation for overtime, including time off in lieu. And both will lead to better well-being outcomes."

More information: FlexWork is an opportunity for government to embrace the future of work. hdl.handle.net/1959.3/468665

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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