



# **WORK SHOULDN'T HURT**

**A survey on the state of  
work health and safety  
in Australia 2023**



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# Background

Work Shouldn't Hurt (WSH) is an annual, quantitative, longitudinal tracking program for Work Health and Safety (WHS)/Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), conducted by the ACTU Centre for Health and Safety.

This report summarises the results of the third wave of surveys, conducted in May – June 2023.

The long-term aim of this research program is to evaluate any shifts or stagnations in work health and safety issues, so the union movement can determine where best to deploy effort to create healthier and safer workplaces.

# Methodology

An external panel was used to survey a broadly representative sample of Australian workers, with quotas for age, gender, and state. There were 3,043 respondents who completed the survey in 2023.

In 2023, 17.9% of respondents were insecure workers compared with 22% in 2022.

The measure for statistical significance<sup>1</sup> was a p value of <0.05, using the Z score for 2 population comparisons.<sup>2</sup>

# Important note on Insecure Workers

Throughout the report, there will be references to insecure work and workers. For the purposes of this research, insecure work was defined as fixed-term contractors (including full-time and part-time), independent contractors, casuals, and gig workers. Permanent work refers to full-time and permanent part-time paid work.

	2021	2022	2023
Full time paid work (permanent)	65.7%	61.3%	61.8%
Part time paid work (permanent)	19.1%	17.8%	20.3%
Full time paid work (fixed term contract)	1.6%	2.5%	2.0%
Part time paid work (fixed term contract)	1.0%	2.6%	2.0%
Casual paid work	8.1%	10.6%	9.0%
Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%
Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc	4.0%	4.7%	4.9%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%

Table 1. 2023 Work status

1. Statistical significance refers to the claim that a result from data generated by testing or experimentation is likely to be attributable to a specific cause. A high degree of statistical significance indicates that an observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance.

2. Z Score Calculator for 2 population Proportions (socscistatistics.com)

## Industry and gender breakdowns

Throughout the report, some data is broken down by industry. In 2022 we featured six 'key' industries, in 2023 we are featuring five industries because these are the industries which had a large enough sample of respondents for the data to be statistically useful. Four out of five key industries in 2023 are the same as in 2022 and 2021, i.e. Administrative and professional services, Education, Health and social assistance and Retail. In 2023 the fifth industry featured is Hospitality, tourism and food services.

Data is also broken down by gender, with females and males compared. Data was captured for workers who identify as non-binary, but this sample was again too small for statistical comparison.



# Executive summary

## The Sample

The third annual ACTU Work Shouldn't Hurt survey builds upon the first snapshot of the health & safety (H&S) conditions in Australia's workplaces started in 2021. This year's sample was nearly double the size of previous years. This was done to accommodate extra questions relating to the impact of menopause/menstrual symptoms on work and a sub sample for those exposed to airborne contaminants. The Work Shouldn't Hurt survey continues to highlight the ongoing Health and Safety crisis in many Australian workplaces and shows that current efforts, particularly for psychosocial risk factors, are failing to protect Australian workers.

## Mental Health

The findings of the previous two years regarding mental health injuries are replicated in the 2023 WSH survey. Disturbingly there has been a statistically significant increase in those reporting mental health injuries from the 2022 to 2023 survey.

As in previous years females are more likely to report a mental health injury and the increase across the three years of the survey is statistically significant. There was no one industry that contributed disproportionately to this increase. As in previous surveys Health and social assistance and Education continue to have above 1 in 5 reporting mental health injuries.

Hospitality, tourism and food services were not a featured industry last year (2022), but also report a high level of mental health injuries.

This is an industry with a younger workforce who unfortunately report experiencing unfair practices by management and conflict with co-workers or management.

Another key exposure that is a risk factor for mental health injuries is exposure to traumatic events, distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients/customers. This increased significantly for females and was more pronounced in Retail than other industries.

Over one in three workers reported being exposed to stress at work. One in four workers disagreed with the statement that there were enough staff to do the job safely or that there was enough time. Both these are features of work intensification and well-known risk factors for psychological injury. Clearly workers are reporting they are being asked to do more with less.

The presence of HSRs meant that less workers reported staff shortages, lack of time and support and more workers reported that demands were realistic with appropriate rewards.

## Insecure Work

There has been a steady increase across the 3 years of the WSH survey in the physical and mental injuries reported by those in insecure work. Those in insecure work didn't take time off work when injured with an increased number of those workers reporting they couldn't afford to take time off or had no paid leave available. Secure workers were less likely to report that it was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when returning to work in 2023 than in 2022.

Of the 10 questions used to measure work empowerment and engagement, insecure workers were less likely to agree with the statements than secure workers. This included regular communication regarding health and safety issues, training and reporting of health and safety issues. These are all basic requirements of health and safety law, and these results clearly indicate that insecure workers are being treated differently.

## Selected Exposures

This year the survey posed extra questions regarding menopausal/menstrual symptoms and work and analysis of a subset of workers who were exposed to airborne contaminants.

For those that answered the menopause/menstrual symptoms question the most common symptoms that affected work were tiredness/fatigue, feeling more stressed and less able to concentrate/brain fog. Nearly half of respondents didn't raise any concerns with their employer. Encouragingly 17% reported changes to work schedule, 15% changes to work environment and 10% a change to work duties. However nearly 1 in 10 reported they needed easier access to toilets – this finding did not vary across the age groups. Access to toilet facilities is a basic requirement of health and safety laws.

The most common control measure used for airborne contaminants were open doors/overhead fans and respiratory protection. Both these control measures fall way short of controlling exposures at source and indicate that workplaces are failing to utilise higher order control measures. One in four workers indicated that air monitoring was only conducted occasionally and two in five that health monitoring was conducted occasionally. Without more detailed information it is difficult to draw conclusions on the quality and effectiveness of health and/or air monitoring.

## Compliance and Culture

There has been a statistically significant improvement on key compliance measures – regular communication, knowledge on how to report physical injuries and mental health issues and not being pressured to not raise health and safety issues. As previously noted there was a significant difference between secure and insecure workers – insecure work is increasingly being shown to be unhealthy and unsafe.

Over the three years of the survey there remains 10% of workers who do not know how to report a physical injury or safety issue and 15% who did not agree that all workers are trained on health and safety.

## Gendered Violence and Sexual Harassment

As in 2022, younger workers and female workers experienced more incidents of gendered violence and sexual harassment. One in five workers under 24 reported being exposed to crude or offensive behaviour, including inappropriate comments and just under one in five females had the same experience. Females were also way more likely to take no action than males – 42% and 26% respectively.

The gender difference was clearly expressed when explaining why no action was taken – females were more likely to say that the person was in their care/was my client or they didn't think it was serious enough. This contrasts with 33% of males responding that the behaviour didn't bother them vs only 16% of females who were not bothered by the behaviour.

If there was an HSR present in the workplace there were more respondents who reported no examples of gendered violence and sexual harassment.

Although the numbers are small – 24 respondents reported sexual assault at work – there were more reports of assault in Retail than in Construction – 17% and 13% respectively.

## Health and Safety Representatives

Consistent with previous years, over half of respondents said there was an HSR present in their workplace. It is hard to interpret this response, as in previous years, respondents answered that 2 in 5 HSRs were elected by management. Part 5 of the WHS Act allows for the election of HSRs, where workers are able to determine the process of election. Only 46% of respondents answered that workers or their union/union delegate conducted the election.

The presence of HSRs decreased the numbers of respondents answering yes to exposures to selected psychosocial risks and to incidents of gendered violence/sexual harassment. Despite how HSRs are elected, their presence has a positive influence on health and safety.

# Indices

## What are the indices?

Several indices were created to assess the overall state of workplace health and safety. All the indices are on a 5-point scale, where 4–5 is regarded as positive, 3–4 is neutral, and 1–3 is negative. Three key indices were calculated by taking an average score from several different modules:

- **Worker Engagement and Empowerment Index**
- **Employer Compliance and Culture Index**
- **Workplace Incidents Index**

These three index scores contribute to an overall **WHS Index**. This is the 'single number' which best reflects the overall results of the survey. The objective is to track and assess performance across the years.

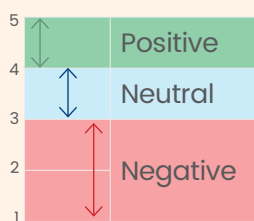


Figure 1. Interpretation for 5-point scale

In 2023 Indices were added for insecure work and mental health – these were additional and did not contribute to the overall WHS Index.

## WHS Index results

The overall WHS Index was in the 'neutral' range of between 3 and 4. This is comparable to the 2022 result of 3.6.

There was some variability in the overall indices for key industries, but all were still within the neutral range. Overall WHS indices for the three years of the survey have stayed within the neutral range of 3–4.

### WHS Indices 2021 – 2023

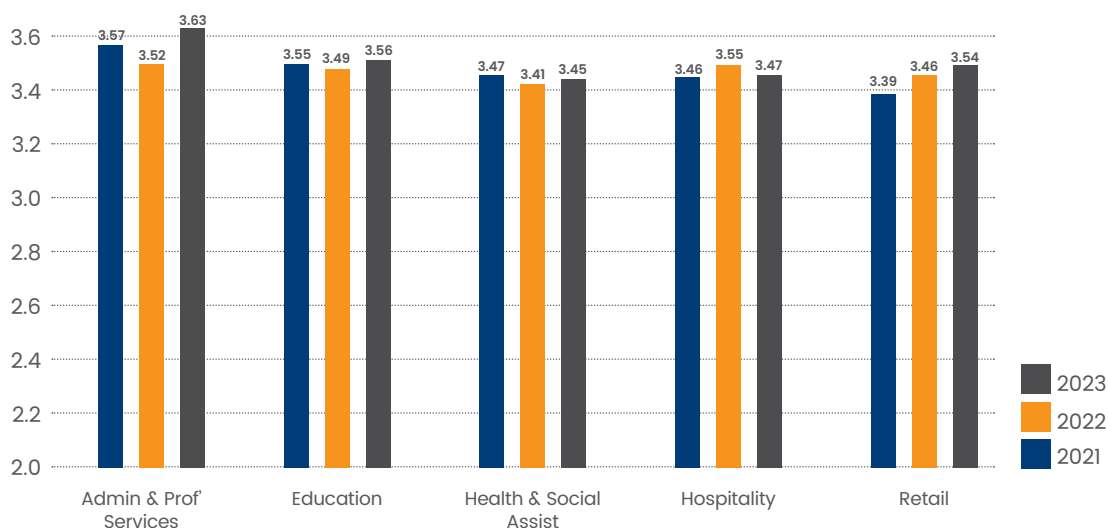


Figure 2. WHS indices 2021–2023 featured industries

The employer compliance and worker engagement indices were again within the neutral range. Across the age groups, employer compliance consistently outperforms engagement. This is consistent with the 2021 Survey.

The gender differences for the WHS indices and for the three that make up the overall index are not significant and don't show a consistent pattern.

Index	2021 Females	2021 Males	2022 Females	2022 Males	2023 Females	2023 Males
<b>WSH overall</b>	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6
<b>Incidents</b>	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.4
<b>Compliance</b>	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6
<b>Engagement</b>	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6

Table 2. Indices 2021–2022–2023

## Featured industries – compliance index

### Compliance index 2021-23

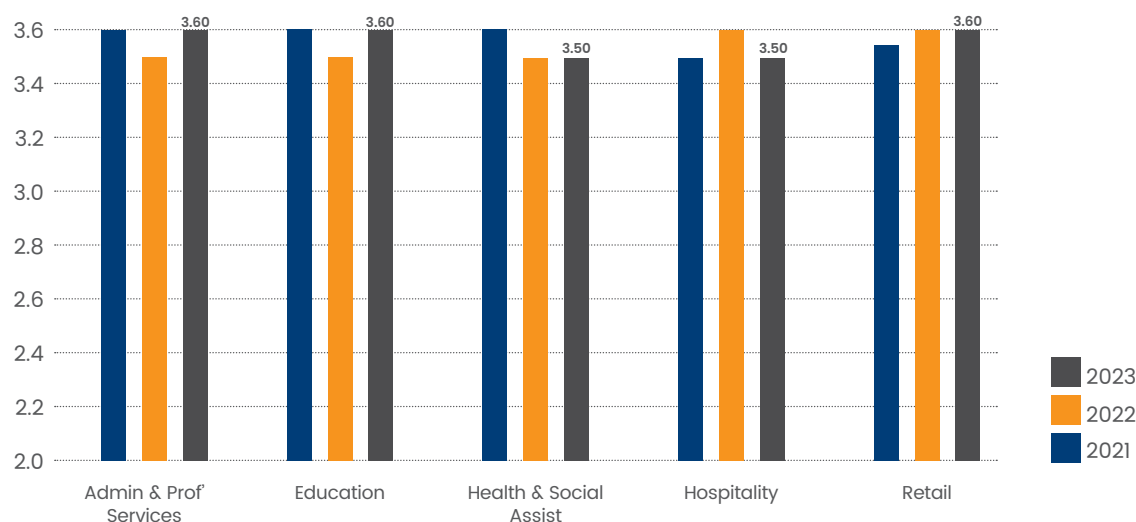


Figure 3. Compliance Index 2021-23; 2023 Featured industries

## Featured industries – engagement index

### Engagement Index 2021-23

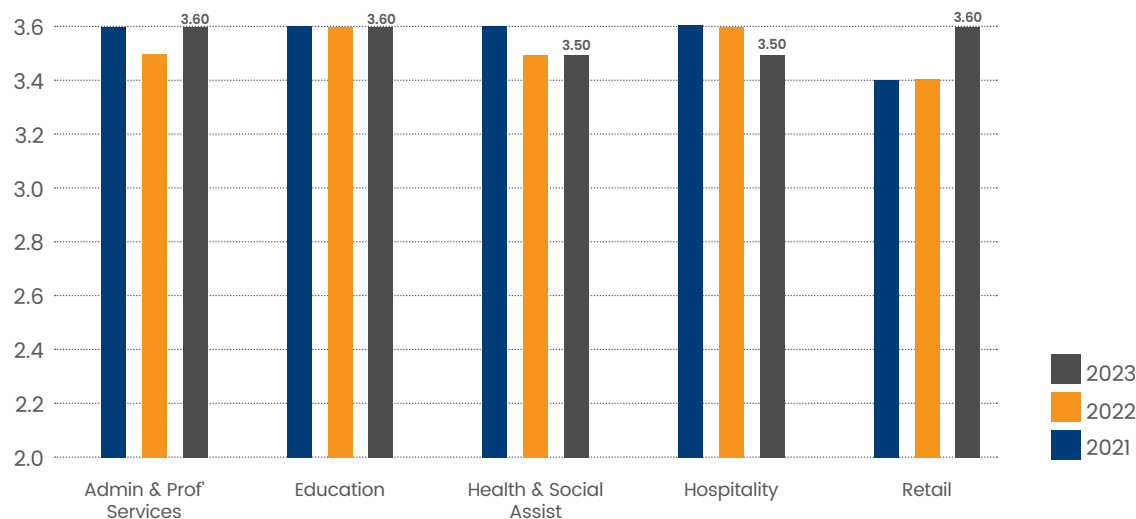


Figure 4. Engagement Indices 2021-23; 2023 Featured industries

As in previous years, whilst still in the neutral range, the incident index tends to be lower than compliance and engagement indices – for example for Health and social assistance the incident index is 3.2-3.4 across the three years of the survey which is lower than the compliance and engagement indices for that industry. There is a trend for the incident index to increase from 2021 to 2023.

## Incident Index 2021-23 Featured Industries

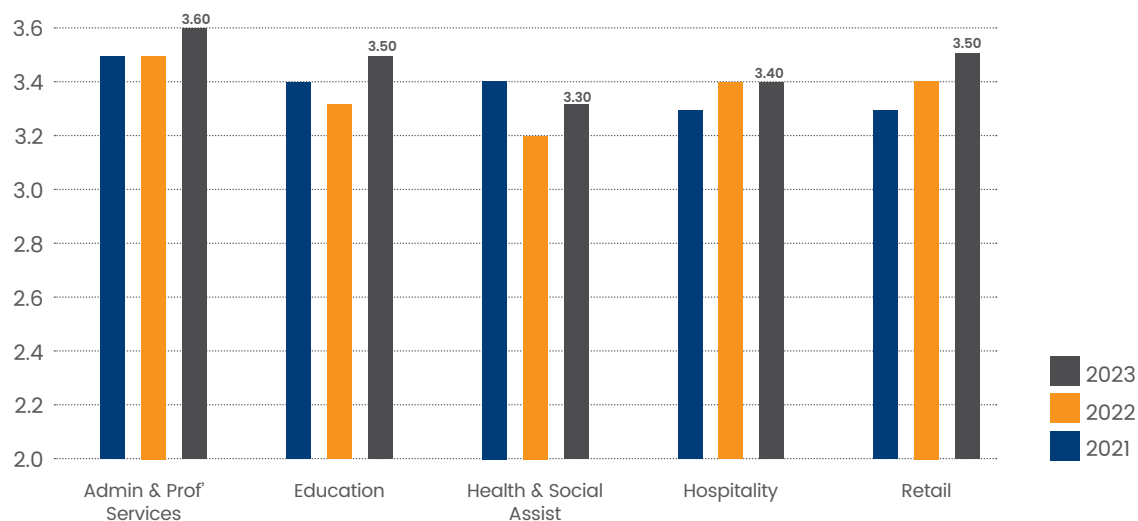


Figure 5. Incident Index 2021-23: 2023 Featured industries

In 2023 we calculated another index – mental health – in addition to the HSR and insecure work indices. These indices are excluded from the overall WHS index as the latter two apply to a subset of respondents, and the mental health index is a composite drawing on several different batteries of questions.

# HSR Index

An HSR index was calculated in 2022 and repeated in 2023. Across both years it was outside the neutral range for most featured industries.

The 2023 HSR Index overall was 2.6 which has decreased from 2.9 in 2022 (there was no difference between genders) with the gap between permanent workers and insecure workers narrowing.

In 2022 the index for permanent workers was 3.0 and insecure workers was 2.5. In 2023 the corresponding indices are 2.6 and 2.5.

The 2023 HSR Index was slightly higher for those 34 years and under than those 35 years and over – 2.7 vs 2.5.

Of the five featured industries only Retail and Education were in the neutral range of 3–4 in 2022, but both decreased in 2023. Health and social assistance and Administrative and professional services increased between 2022 and 2023.

HSR Index 2022–23 Featured Industries

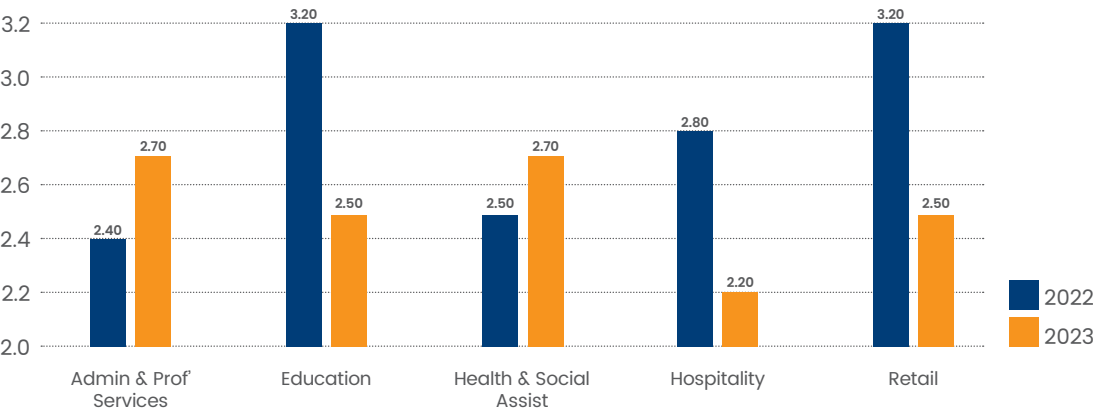


Figure 6. HSR Indices 2022–23: 2023 Featured industries

# Mental Health Index

The mental health index was in the neutral range across 3 years of the survey and the 2023 featured industries.

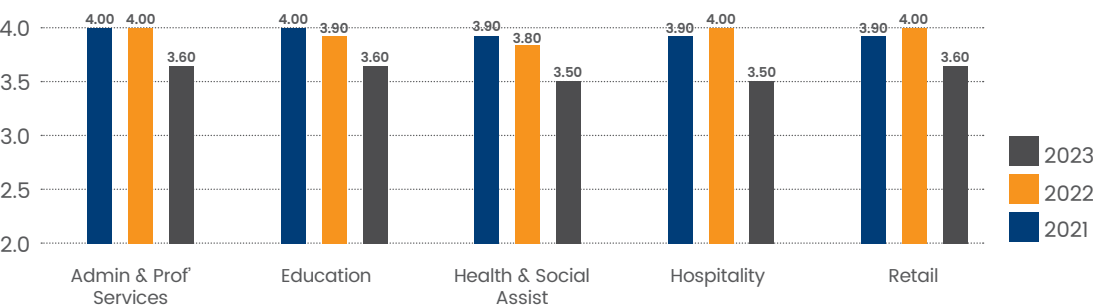


Figure 7. Mental Health Indices 2021–23; 2023 Featured industries



# Insecure Work Index

The Insecure work index was at the lower end or just outside of the neutral range.

Insecure Work Index 2021-23 Featured Industries

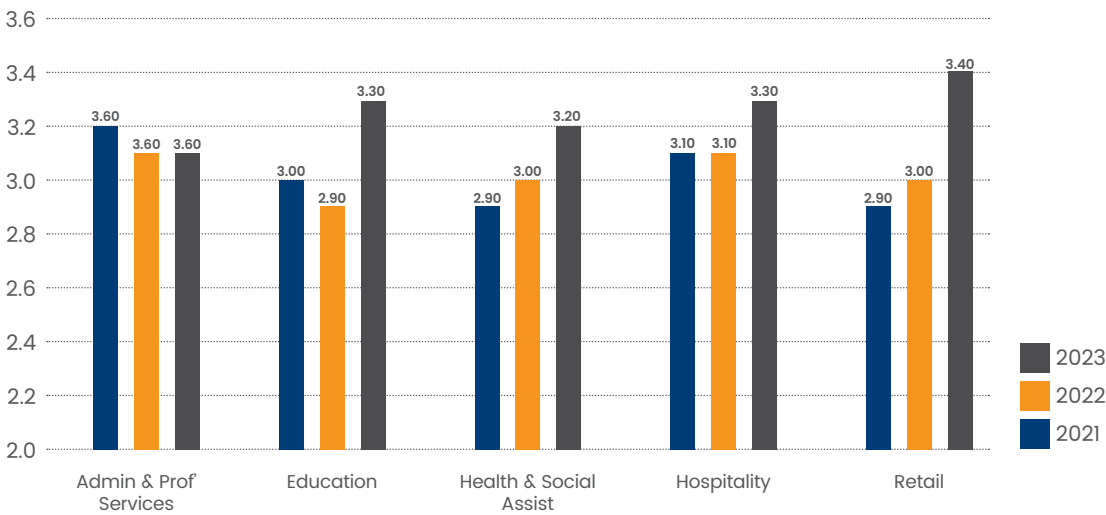


Figure 8. Insecure Work Indices 2021-23: 2023 Featured industries

# Gender

Between females and males, the HSR and Insecure work indices were comparable across the years. Although still in the neutral range the Mental Health Index dropped for both females and males. See the chapter on Mental Health for an exploration of these results.

Index	2021 Females	2021 Males	2022 Females	2022 Males	2023 Females	2023 Males
HSR index	-	-	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.7
Insecure work	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.1
Mental Health Index	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.0	3.5	3.6

Table 3. HSR, Insecure work and Mental health indices

# Workplace injuries and incidents

## Snapshot

As in previous years, more than one in four (29%) workers self-reported an injury or ailment due to work in the 12 months before the survey. In 2023, that included 8% who suffered a physical injury, 20% who had reported a mental health issue and 4% had both types.

There has been a statistically significant increase in those reporting a mental health issue between the 2022 and 2023 survey.

As in previous years there is a gender difference for the injury type, with females more likely to report a mental health injury and males a physical injury. For females the difference for mental health injuries between 2021 and 2023 is statistically significant and similarly for males for those experiencing physical injuries.

Mental injuries outnumber physical injuries in all the featured industries – by 4 to 1 in Health and social assistance and 7 to 1 in Administrative and professional services.

The change in injury type between 2022 and 2023 for the featured industries shows a statistically significant increase in mental injuries in Administrative and professional services and Hospitality, tourism and food services.

Consistent with 2022 WSH survey findings, those with mental injuries were more likely to report that they needed time off but didn't take the time off when compared with those with physical injuries.

The reasons given for not taking time off showed a similar pattern to that in 2022. There were differences between the years, but the only statistically significant difference was the reduction from 2022 to 2023 in the percentage of workers who felt *it was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when I came back*.

There were limited differences between 2022 and 2023 for the questions on workers' compensation – only 17% made a claim in 2023. The reasons for not making a claim were similar to 2022, although the reduction between 2022 and 2023 survey in those who reported that the injury was pre-existing or not serious enough is statistically significant.

# Injuries – persistence of mental health issues

As in previous years, more than one in four (29%) workers self-reported at least one injury or ailment due to work in the 12 months before the survey. In 2023, that included 8% who suffered a physical injury and 20% who had a mental health issue and 4% had both types.

There has been a statistically significant increase in those reporting a mental health issue between the 2022 and 2023 survey.

Injury Type 2021-23

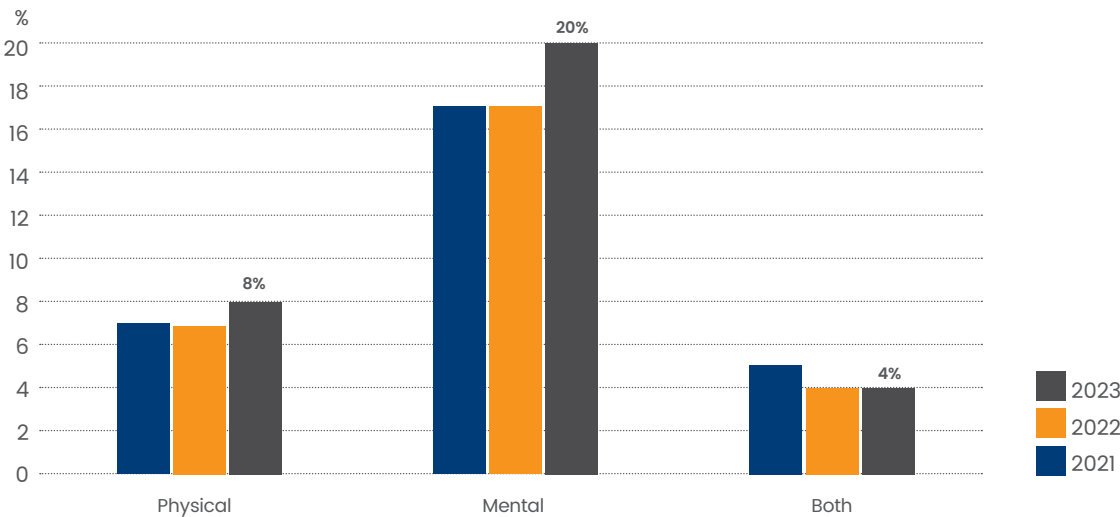


Figure 9. 2023 Injury type 2021 to 2023

For those that reported an injury in the last 12 months, the proportion of respondents reporting both injury types has gone down over time, whilst the proportion reporting physical injuries remains steady, and the proportion reporting mental injuries increases.

Respondents	2021	2022	2023
Physical	23%	24%	24%
Mental	60%	60%	63%
Both	18%	16%	13%
n=	442	416	975

Table 4. 2023 Those reporting injury – injury type

As in previous years there is a gender difference. When women and men are compared, a higher percentage of women experience a mental health issue, and a higher percentage of men experience a physical injury.

Injury type by gender and year

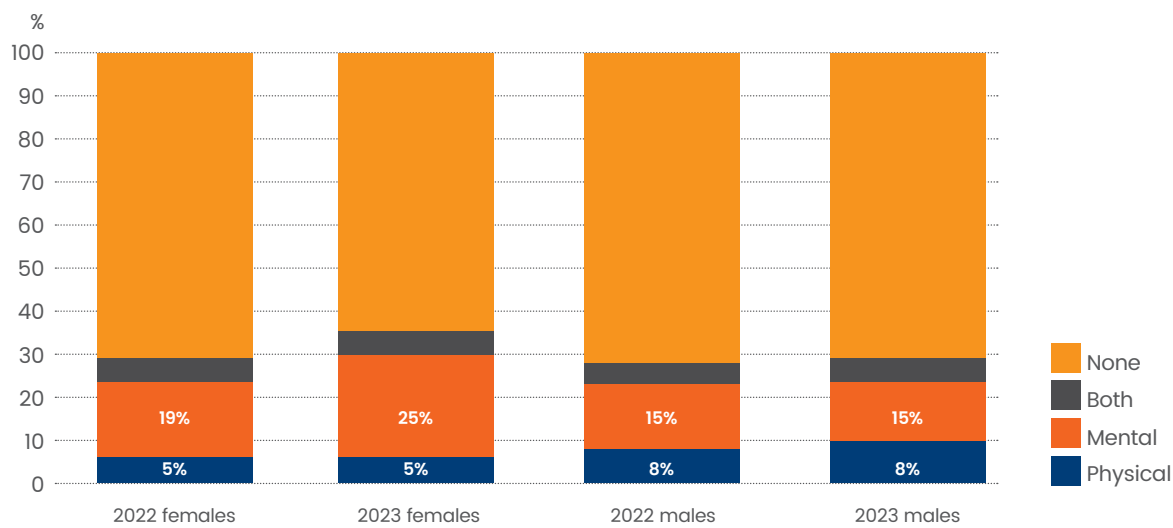


Figure 10. Injury type: 2022 to 2023 by gender

For females the difference for mental health injuries between 2021 and 2023 is statistically significant and similarly for males for those experiencing physical injuries.

Females

	2021	2023
Physical	5%	5%
Mental	20%	25%
Both	5%	5%
None	70%	65%

Table 5. 2021 – 2023 Injury type Females

Males

	2021	2023
Physical	8%	10%
Mental	14%	15%
Both	5%	4%
None	73%	71%

Table 6. 2021 – 2023 Injury type Males

# Injuries by Industry 2023

Health and social assistance and Education continue to have above 1 in 5 reporting mental health injuries. Hospitality, tourism and food services were not a featured industry in 2022, but also report a high level of mental health injuries. For three featured industries, around 1 in 3 workers experienced an injury (Education, Hospitality etc and Retail). Nearly 42% of Hospitality, tourism and food services workers reported an injury. This group had the highest level of physical and mental injuries.

2023	Physical	Mental	Both	None
Administration & professional services	3%	21%	2%	75%
Education	10%	21%	5%	65%
Health & social assistance	5%	23%	8%	64%
Hospitality, tourism & food services	14%	24%	4%	57%
Retail	9%	19%	5%	67%

Table 7. 2023 Featured industries by injury type

Mental injuries outnumber physical injuries in all the featured industries – by 4 to 1 in Health and social assistance and 7 to 1 in Administrative and professional services.

## 2023 Featured Industries Physical & Mental Injuries

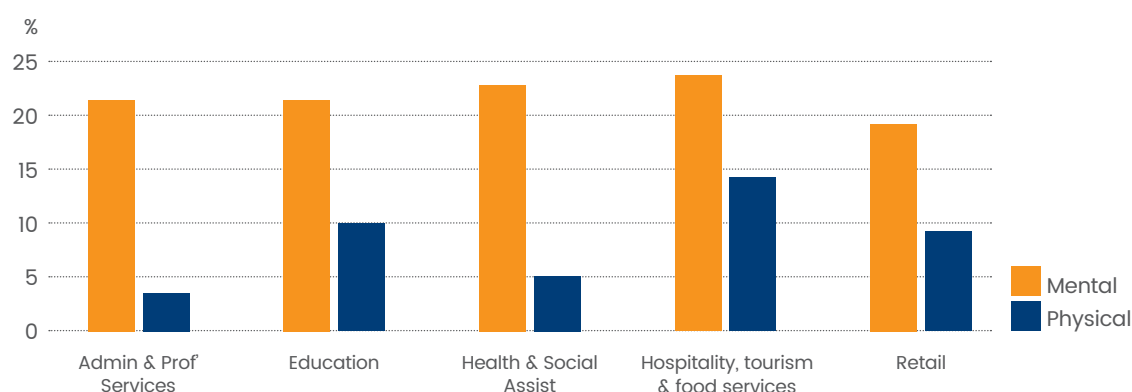


Figure 11. 2023 Featured industries Injury type

The change in injury type between 2022 and 2023 for the featured industries shows a statistically significant increase in mental injuries in Administrative and professional services and Hospitality, tourism and food services. No such difference was noted for mental health injuries in the other featured industries.

## Hospitality, tourism & food services 2022–2023

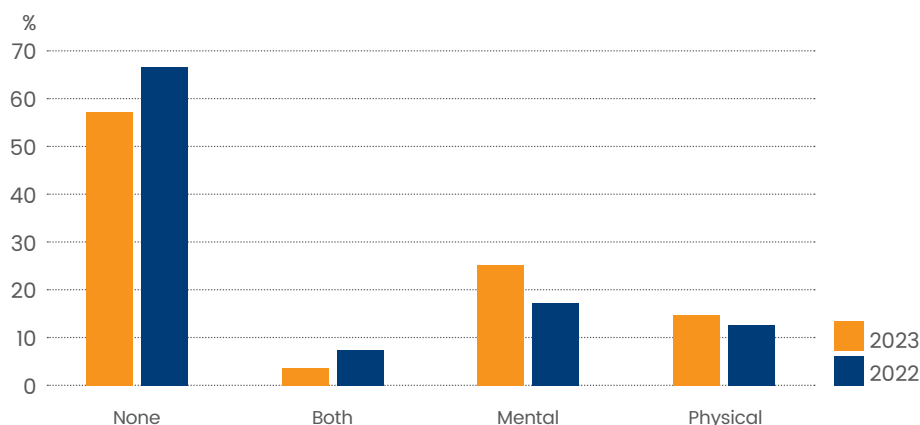


Figure 12. 2023 Injury type 2022 to 2023 hospitality, tourism & food services

### Admin & professional services 2022 – 2023

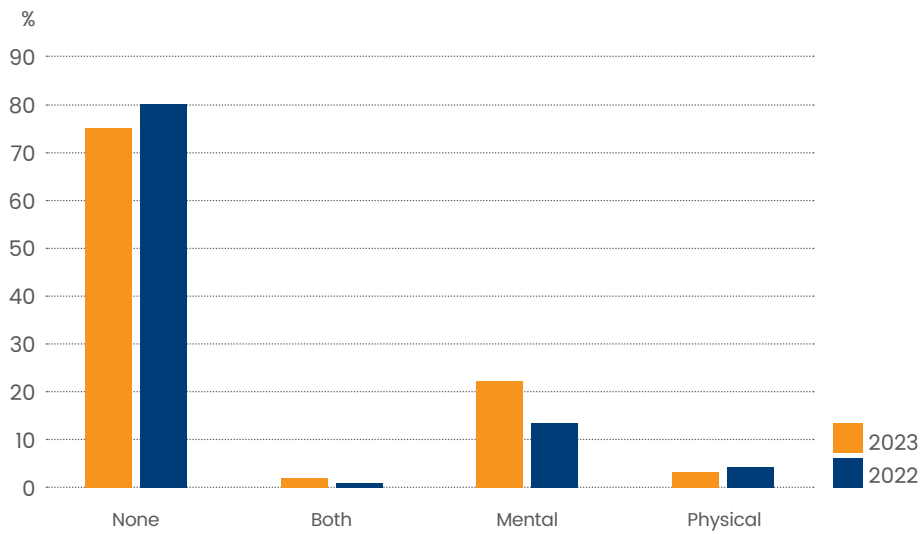


Figure 13. 2023 Injury type 2022 to 2023 Admin & Prof Services

There was a statistically significant difference for physical injuries in Retail.

### Retail 2022 – 2023

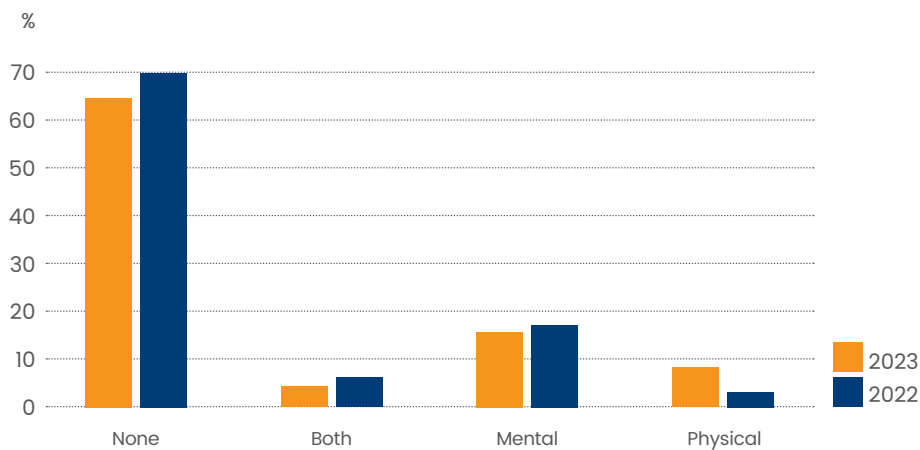


Figure 14. 2023 Injury type 2022 to 2023 Retail

## Age and Industry

The age distribution varies considerably between industries – this is more pronounced in 2023 as one of the featured industries is Hospitality, tourism and food services. 65% of workers in that industry were less than 34 years old; all other industries had less than 46% of their workers in that age group.

This is concerning as the Hospitality etc industry also had the highest percentage of workers reporting an injury (see above). Over 1 in 4 of these workers reported a mental health injury.

### Featured industries age distribution

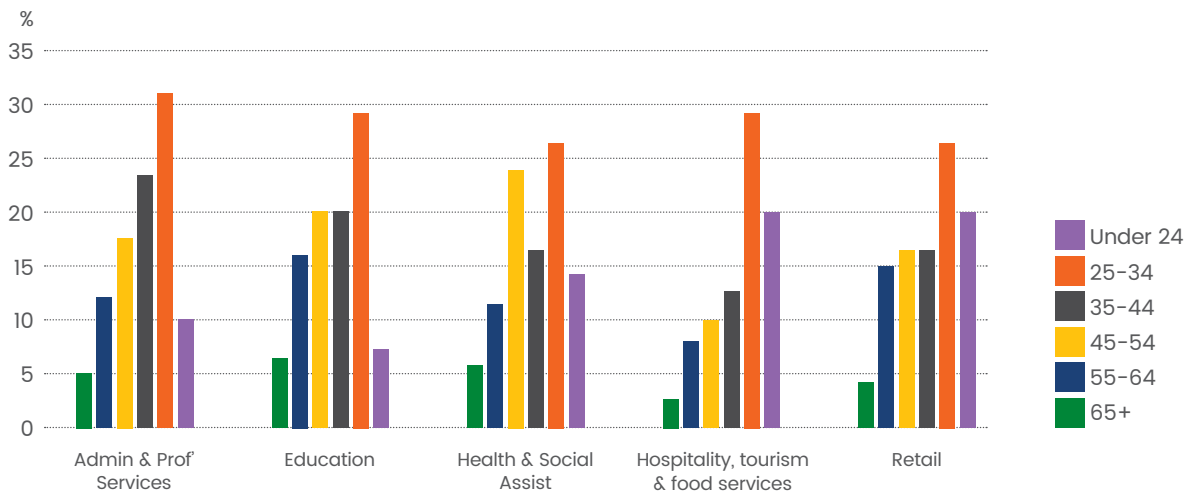


Figure 15. 2023 Age in featured industries

### 2023 Hospitality etc – age and injury type

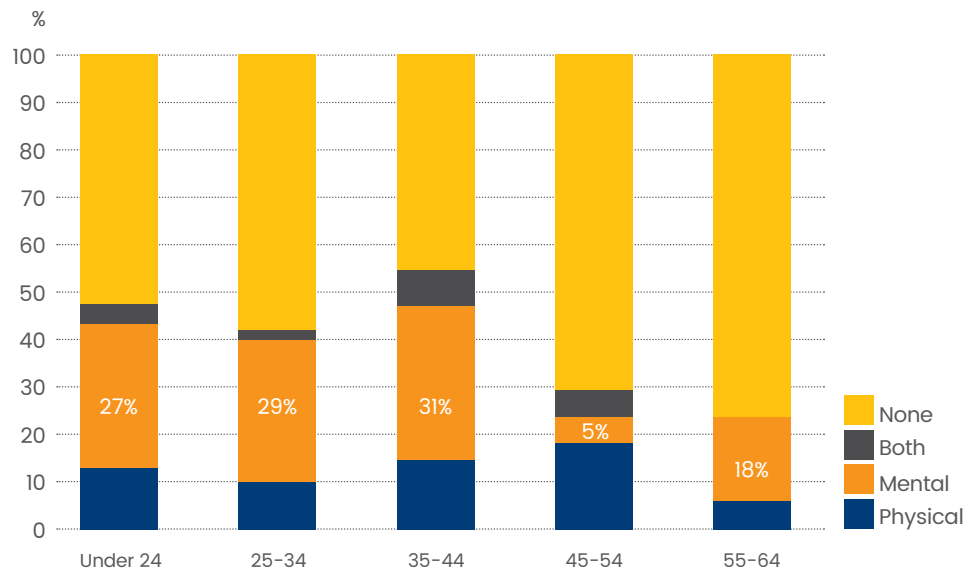


Figure 16. 2023 Hospitality, tourism and food services; Age and injury

# Response to Injuries

As in the previous years, 31% of workers did not take time off when injured. 42% took time off and 31% needed time off but did not take it. Again, those with mental injuries were more likely to report that they needed time off but didn't take the time off when compared with those with physical injuries. This is consistent with the 2022 survey findings.

## 2023 Time off by injury type

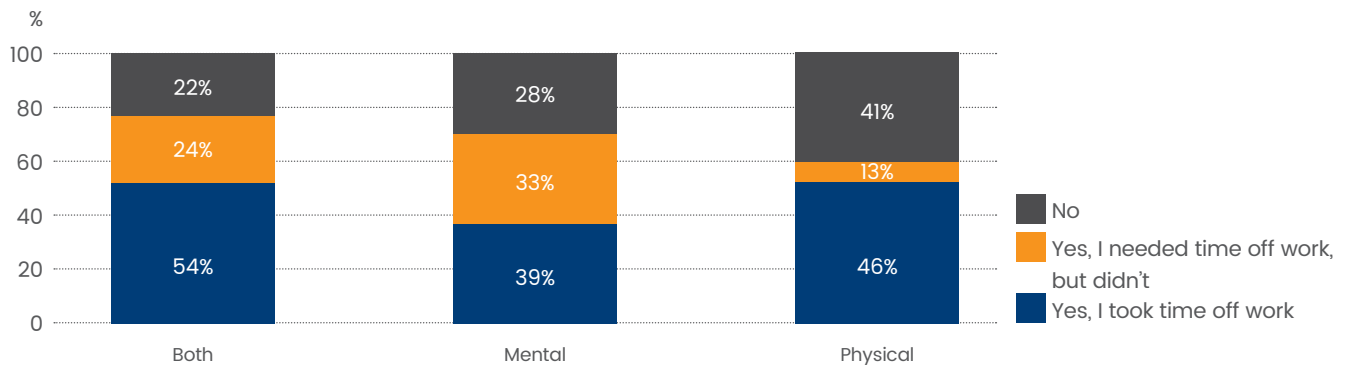


Figure 17. 2023 Time off by injury type

The five featured industries have a similar pattern to those last year. The differences between 2023 and 2022 are not statistically significant.

## 2023 Featured industries time off

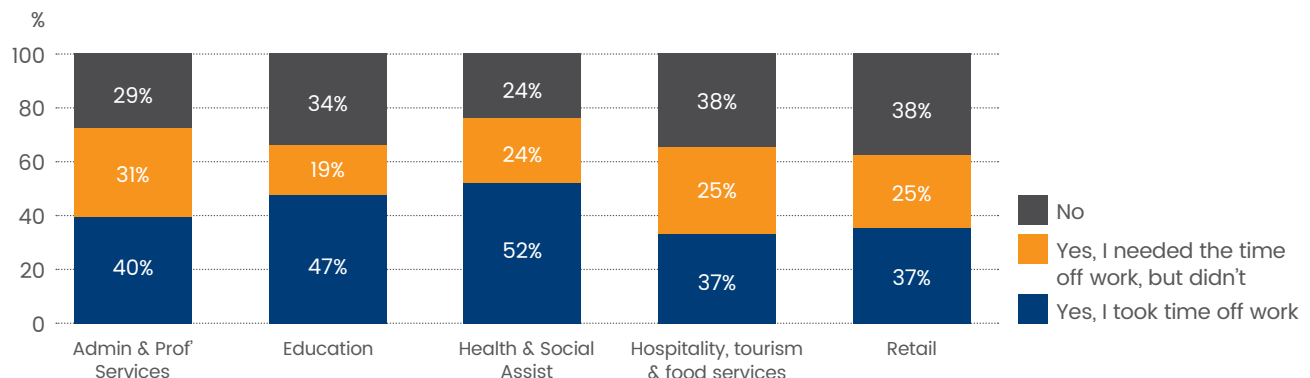


Figure 18. 2023 Featured industries time off

## 2022 Featured industries time off

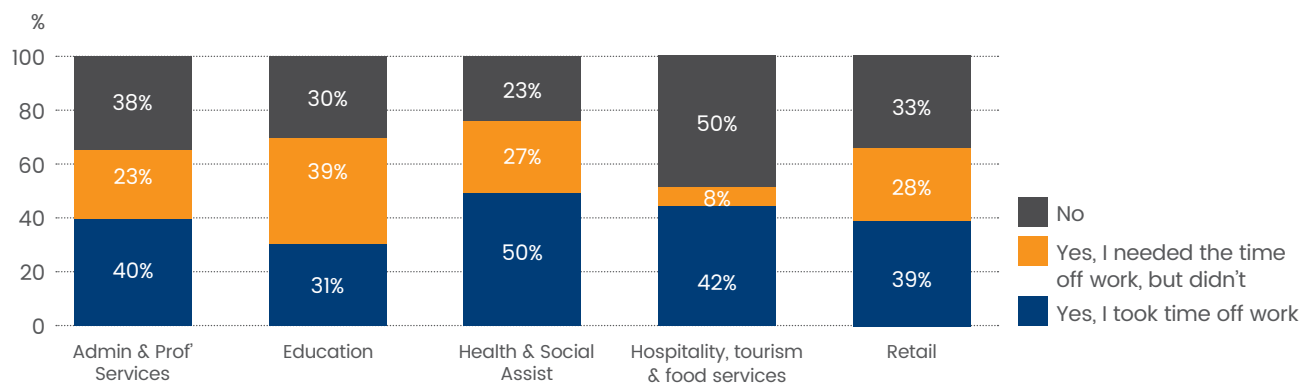


Figure 19. 2022 Featured industries time off

There is a difference between those respondents classified as secure and insecure workers – see the section on Insecure workers for discussion.



# Why no time off?

The reasons given for not taking time off showed a similar pattern to that in 2022. There were differences between the years, but the only statistically significant difference was the reduction from 2022 to 2023 in the percentage of workers who felt it was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when I came back.

	2022	2023
I had no paid leave available	28%	24%
I didn't want to be seen as a bad worker	31%	38%
I did not want to let people down or miss deadlines	36%	40%
Management pressured me to work/didn't accept my diagnosis	16%	14%
I was worried it would negatively affect my job, e.g. job loss, reduced hours, etc	50%	42%
It was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when I came back	40%	27%
My injury didn't affect my work	8%	10%
I couldn't afford to stop working	38%	42%
I was able to manage my injury/mental health problem and keep working	25%	28%
Other reason (please specify)	2%	1%
I left the job or took another type of leave	8%	7%

Table 8. 2022–2023 Why no time off

# Sought Medical Advice

Workers with an injury were asked if they had sought medical advice. Overall, 55% had done so. In 2022 only about 2 in 5 Education workers sought medical advice. That reversed in 2023 where just under 2 in 5 had not sought medical advice.

	Admin & prof services		Education		Health & social assistance		Hospitality, tourism & food services		Retail	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Yes	50%	51%	43%	63%	62%	62%	46%	48%	56%	52%
No	50%	49%	57%	37%	38%	38%	54%	52%	44%	48%

Table 9. 2022–2023 Sought medical advice Featured industries

## Workers' compensation claims

As in 2021, only 17% of workers who reported being injured in the last 12 months put in a workers' compensation claim. There was a difference across the featured industries where a higher percentage of workers in Administrative and professional services and Retail did not make a workers' compensation claim.

### 2023 Workers Compensation claim by industry

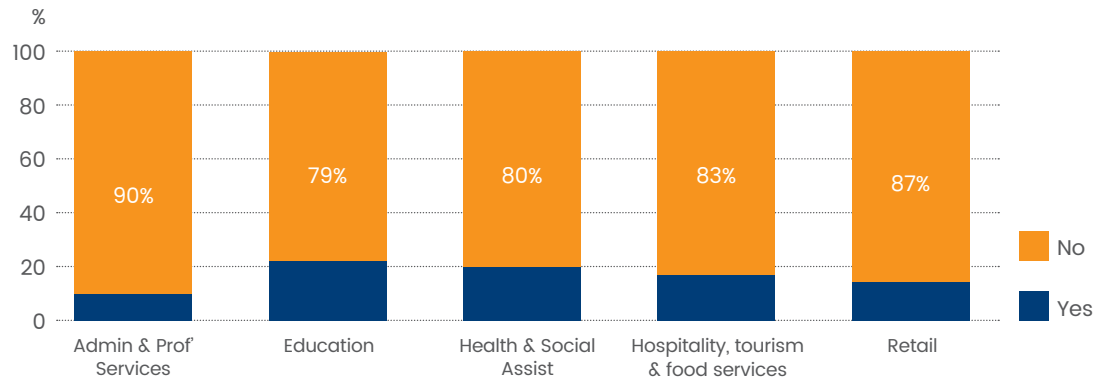


Figure 20. 2023 Workers' compensation in featured industry

The reasons for not making a claim were similar to 2022, although the reduction from 2022 to 2023 in those where the injury was pre-existing or not serious enough is statistically significant.

	2021 Survey	2022 Survey	2023 Survey
Injury was pre-existing or not serious enough	35%	23%	15%
I was able to manage injury/mental health problem and keep working	–	26%	29%
I didn't think my injury/mental health problem would be covered	28%	26%	25%
I used sick or other leave instead	26%	20%	22%
I didn't think I was entitled to a claim given my work status	–	17%	21%
I was embarrassed to make a claim	17%	18%	18%
I feared negative backlash from my workplace	30%	21%	19%
I didn't know how to	10%	14%	15%

Table 10. 2021, 2022, 2023 Reasons for not making a workers' compensation claim when injured

# No decrease in work related mental health issues

## Snapshot

There was a statistically significant increase between 2022 and 2023 in the numbers reporting regularly or always being exposed to stress at work. This increase was statistically significant for females. There was no particular industry that contributed to the increase.

Exposure to unfair practices by management was particularly evident for workers in Hospitality, tourism and food services; 14% reported regularly/always exposed to unfair practices. This was the only featured industry that showed a statistically significant increase between 2022 and 2023. Respondents in this industry also reported a statistically significant increase from 2022 to 2023 in those who were sometimes exposed to conflict with co-workers or management.

There has been a statistically significant increase in the percentage of respondents who reported sometimes being exposed to traumatic events, distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients/customers in the last 12 months. This increase was statistically significant for females. The gender difference existed in 2022, however it was not statistically significant. Although there was an increase in exposure to traumatic events in four of the five featured industries (not in Education), the increase was only statistically significant in Retail.

At least one in four workers disagreed that there was enough staff to do the job safely, there was adequate reward and recognition and there was enough time. These are well recognised risk factors, and little has changed over the years of the survey. Except for sufficient support and enough staff there was no significant change across the years.

The percentage of respondents reporting adequate staff has not changed significantly between 2022 and 2023. However, there has been a deterioration when compared with 2021. The decrease in those in agreement with the statement that there are enough staff is statistically significant.

Between 2021 and 2023 there was an increase in the percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement that there were enough staff. This change was statistically significant for Education.

Where respondents answered that there were HSRs present, more respondents agreed with the statements that there were enough staff, time, support, realistic demands and appropriate rewards.

# Psychosocial exposures

When asked about themselves or others being exposed to stress at work, 37% reported regularly/always, which is a statistically significant increase between 2022 and 2023. There was a slight increase between 2021 and 2022 but this was not statistically significant.

## Stress

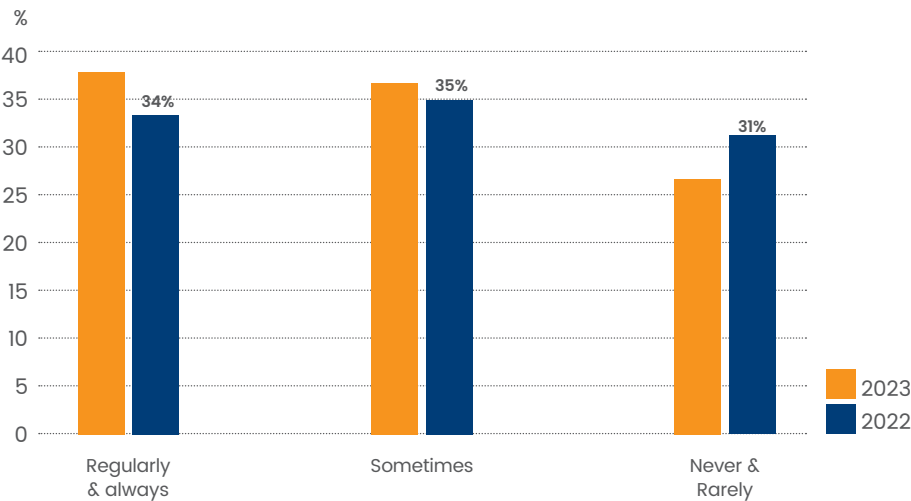


Figure 21. 2022–2023 Exposed to stress at work

Of the featured industries there was no specific industry which contributed more to this increase than others, but there was a gender difference, with both females and males reporting regular/always – an increase between 2021 and 2023. The increase for females was statistically significant; it wasn't for males.

	Females		Males	
	2021	2023	2021	2023
Never + Rarely	27%	22%	34%	31%
Sometimes	37%	35%	36%	37%
Regularly + Always	37%	43%	29%	32%

Table 11. 2021–2023 Exposed to stress and gender

# Unfair practices

As in previous years 12% of respondents reported being regularly/always exposed to unfair practices by management. This was particularly evident for workers in Hospitality, tourism and food services, where 14% reported being regularly/always exposed to unfair practices. This was the only featured industry that showed a statistically significant increase between 2022 and 2023.

Unfair practices by management	2022	2023
Never + Rarely	73%	69%
Sometimes	24%	17%
Regularly + Always	3%	14%

Table 12. 2022–2023 Hospitality, tourism and food services exposed to unfair management practice.

# Conflict

Respondents in Hospitality, tourism and food services reported a statistically significant increase from 2022 to 2023 in those who were sometimes exposed to conflict with co-workers or management. Overall, there was no change in the percentage of respondents reporting this exposure.

## Hospitality, tourism and food services – Conflict with co-workers or management

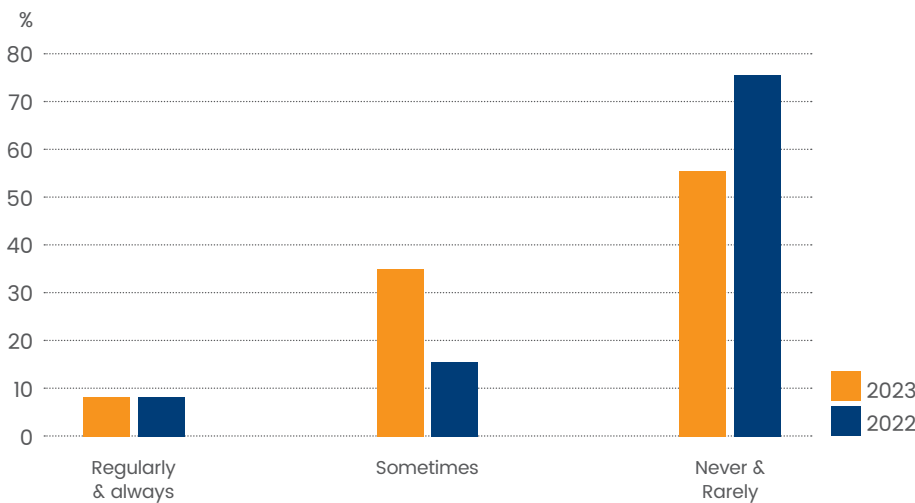


Figure 22. 2022–2023 Hospitality, tourism and food services exposed to conflict with co-workers or management

# Traumatic events

There has been a statistically significant increase in the percentage of respondents who reported sometimes being exposed to traumatic events, distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients/customers in the last 12 months. The decrease in those who have never/rarely been exposed is also statistically significant.

## Last 12 months exposure to traumatic events etc

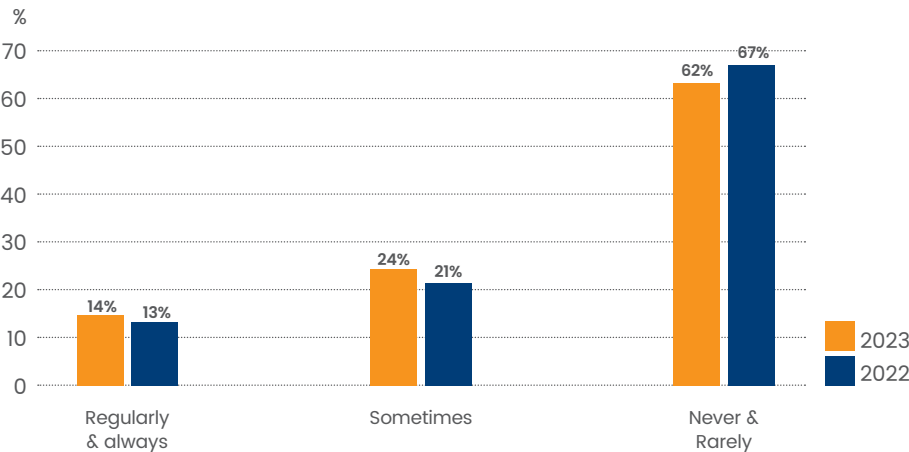


Figure 23. 2022–2023 Exposure to Traumatic events, distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients/customers in the last 12 months

In 2023 females were statistically more likely to be exposed to traumatic events (etc) when compared to males. The gender difference existed in 2022, however it was not statistically significant. The percentage of female respondents reporting exposure to traumatic events (etc) has increased significantly between 2022 and 2023. It is the sometimes category which has particularly changed.

2023		
Exposure to traumatic events	Female	Male
Never + Rarely	55%	69%
Sometimes	27%	20%
Regularly + Always	18%	11%

Table 13. Exposure to traumatic events etc by gender in 2023

Females – Exposure to traumatic events	2022	2023
Never + Rarely	64%	55%
Sometimes	22%	27%
Regularly + Always	14%	18%

Table 14. Female exposure to traumatic events etc in 2022 and 2023

Although there was an increase in exposure to traumatic events in all of the featured industries, except Education, the increase was only statistically significant in Retail.

## Retail – traumatic events etc 2022–2023

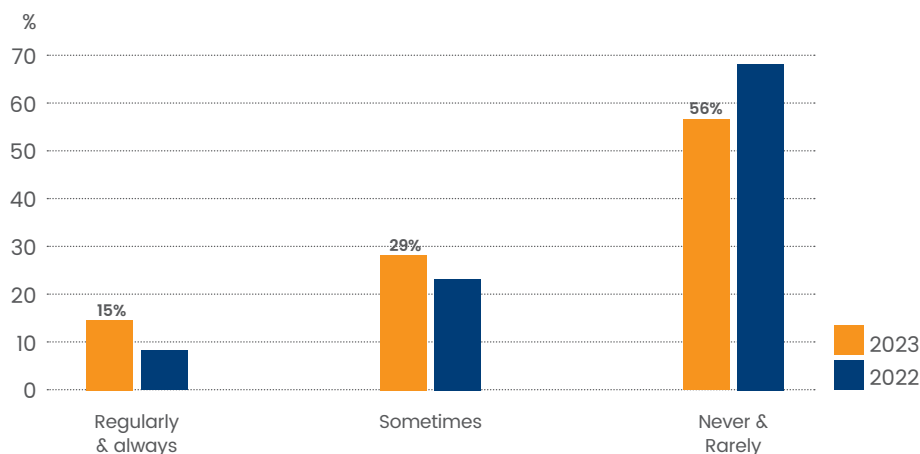


Figure 24. 2022–2023 Exposure to traumatic events, distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients/customers in the last 12 months in Retail

## Poorly managed change

Respondents were asked if changes at work were poorly managed. In 2023 28% said that this occurred sometimes and 19% said regularly/always. When compared between 2021 and 2023 there was a statistically significant increase in those reporting this sometimes and a decrease in those reporting never/rarely. The increase in reporting sometimes was evident in Education and the decrease in never/rarely was evident in Health and social assistance but neither of these were statistically significant. In Administrative and professional services there was an increase in those who never/rarely reported poorly managed changes.

### 2021–2023 Changes at work poorly managed

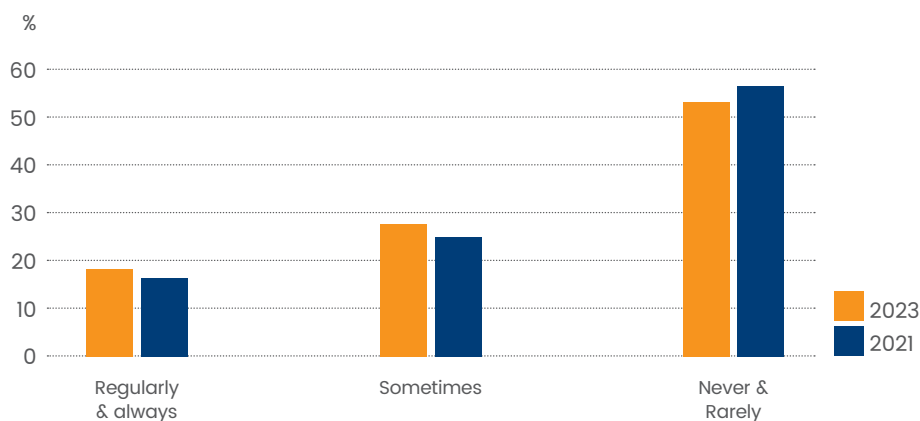


Figure 25. 2021–2023 Changes at work poorly managed in the last 12 months in all industries

# Employer compliance with known psychosocial risk factors

The WSH survey asks respondents to report exposures to known psychological risk factors. The key exposures reported upon last year were enough staff to perform work safely, sufficient support, realistic demands, adequate reward and enough time.

At least one in four workers disagreed that there was enough staff to do the job safely, there was adequate reward and recognition and there was enough time. These are well recognised risk factors and little has changed over the years of the survey. Except for sufficient support and enough staff there was no significant change across the years.

## 2023 Employer compliance with key workplace needs

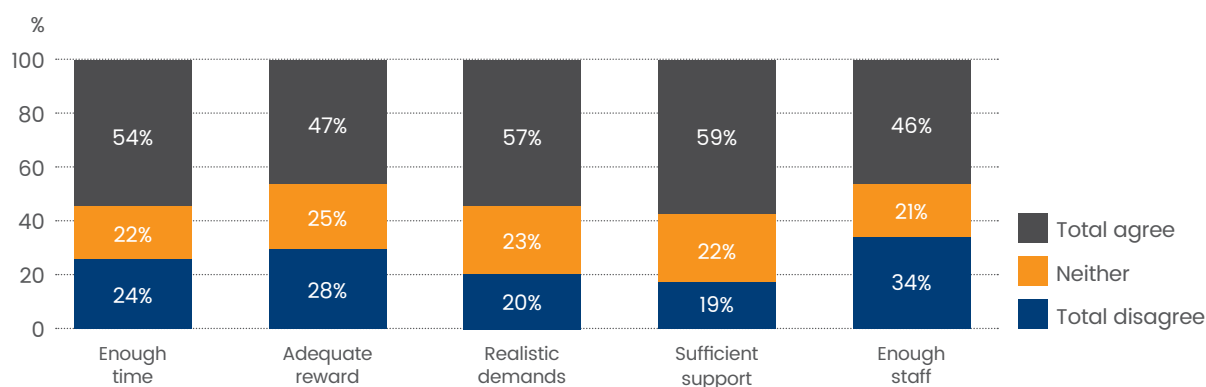


Figure 26. 2023 Employer compliance with key needs – all industries

For sufficient support there was a statistically significant decrease in those respondents reporting that they neither agreed/disagreed with the statement.

## 2022–2023 Sufficient support

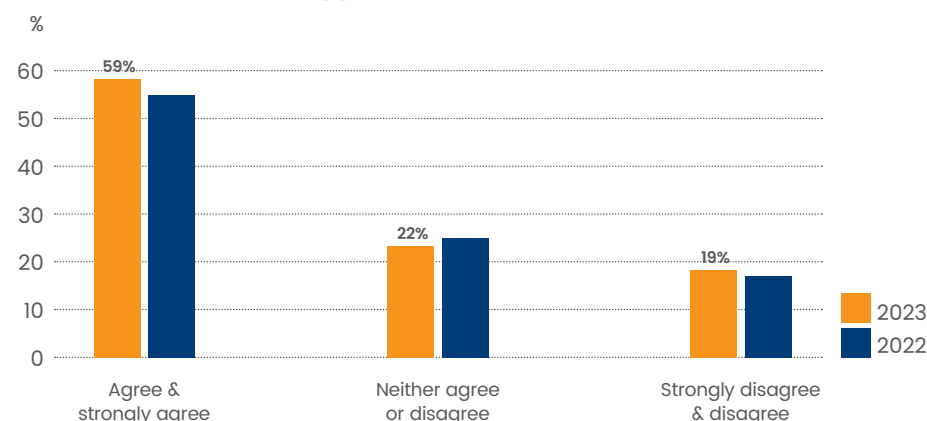


Figure 27. 2023 Employer compliance with sufficient support – all industries



The change in sufficient support was not statistically significant in any of the featured industries or when all featured industries were reported together.

2022–2023 Featured industries combined – sufficient support

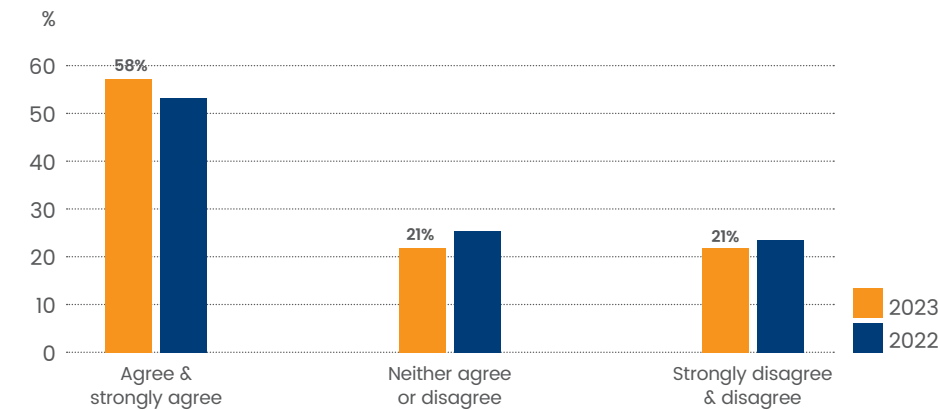


Figure 28. 2022–2023 Employer compliance with sufficient support – featured industries

The percentage of respondents reporting adequate staff has not changed significantly between 2022 and 2023. However, there has been a deterioration when compared with 2021. The decrease in those in agreement with the statement that there are enough staff is statistically significant.

Enough Staff – all industries	2021	2023
Total Disagree	29%	34%
Neither	22%	21%
Total Agree	49%	46%

Table 15. 2021–2023 Employer compliance with enough staff – all industries

For the five featured industries in 2023, there was no deterioration for Administrative and professional services, however for the other four – Education, Health and social assistance, Retail, Hospitality, tourism and food services – there was an increase in the percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement that there were enough staff. This change was statistically significant for Education.

2021–2023 Education – enough staff

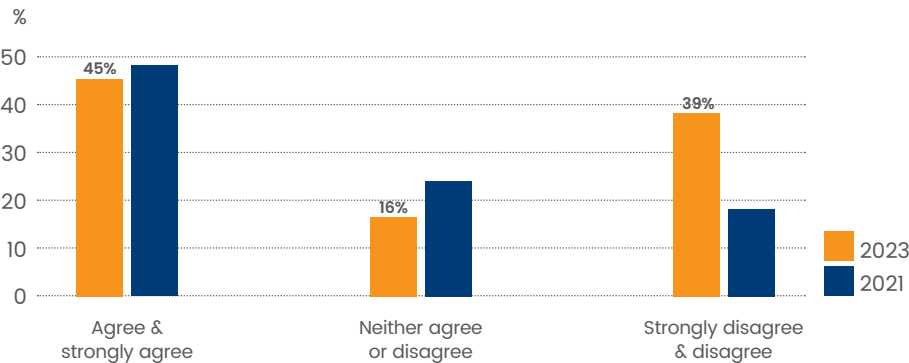


Figure 29. 2021–2023 Education – Employer compliance with enough staff

## Presence of HSRs and psychosocial risk factors

Where respondents answered that there were HSRs present, more respondents agreed with the statements that there were enough staff, time, support, realistic demands and appropriate rewards.

### 2023 HSR presence: Psychosocial risks – Total agree

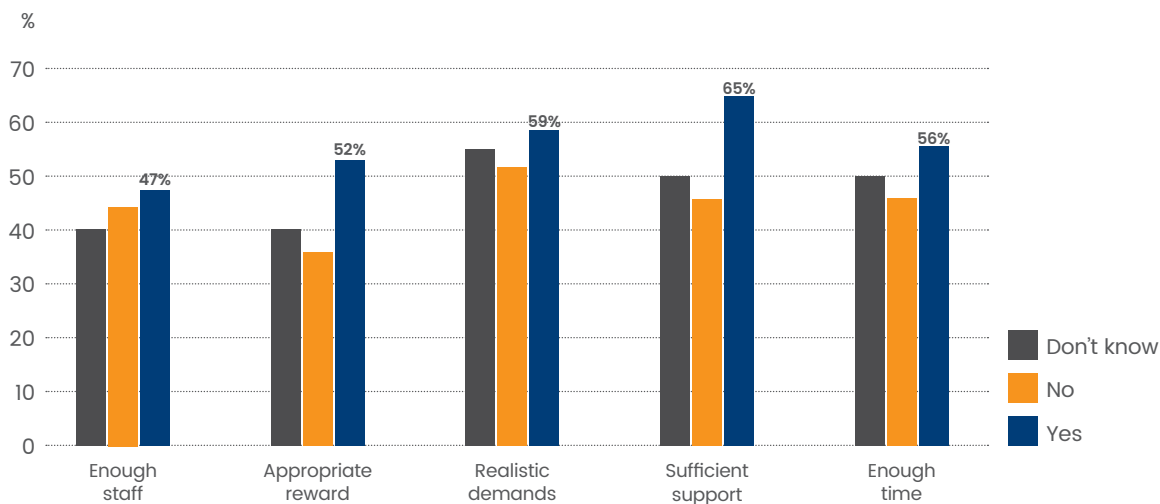


Figure 30. 2023 presence HSR and psychosocial risks – Total agree

# Insecure work

## Snapshot

There has been a statistically significant decrease in those classified as permanent full time paid workers – from 66% of respondents in 2021 to 62% in 2023.

Consistent with previous years, there is a statistically significant larger percentage of females employed in permanent part time work and casual work than males.

There has been a steady increase, across the years of the WSH survey, in the physical and mental injuries reported by those in insecure work. It is statistically significant.

As in previous years, the reasons for not taking time off work when injured differed between secure and insecure workers. The larger percentage of insecure workers who reported that they had no paid leave available was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . More insecure workers also reported that they couldn't afford to stop working – this difference was statistically significant at  $p < 0.1$ .

In 2023, there was an increase in the percentage of insecure workers who couldn't afford to stop working and who did not want to let people down or miss deadlines. For secure workers there was a statistically significant decrease from 2022 to 2023 for those who reported that it was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when returning to work.

## Comparison across 2021 and 2023

There has been a statistically significant decrease in those classified as permanent full time paid workers.

Work Status	2021	2023
Full time paid work (permanent)	66%	62%
Part time paid work (permanent)	19%	20%
Full time paid work (fixed term contract)	2%	2%
Part time paid work (fixed term contract)	1%	2%
Casual paid work	8%	9%
Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver	1%	0%
Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc	4%	5%

Table 16. Work Status 2021–2023 all industries

In the featured industries this change is not significant however, in Education and Hospitality, tourism and food services there has been a decline in permanent full-time work and an increase in casual paid work. These changes are not statistically significant which may be due to the small numbers as if the two industries are combined the change is significant.

<b>Hospitality, tourism and food services</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Full time paid work (permanent)</b>	46%	37%
<b>Part time paid work (permanent)</b>	28%	26%
<b>Full time paid work (fixed term contract)</b>	-	0%
<b>Part time paid work (fixed term contract)</b>	1%	3%
<b>Casual paid work</b>	22%	26%
<b>Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver</b>	-	0%
<b>Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc</b>	3%	6%

Table 17. Work Status Hospitality, tourism and food services 2021–2023

<b>Education</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Full time paid work (permanent)</b>	60%	51%
<b>Part time paid work (permanent)</b>	23%	26%
<b>Full time paid work (fixed term contract)</b>	5%	6%
<b>Part time paid work (fixed term contract)</b>	3%	5%
<b>Casual paid work</b>	7%	10%
<b>Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc</b>	1%	2%

Table 18. Work Status Education 2021–2023

## 2023 Insecure workers by industry

For seven of the industries over 20% of respondents were in insecure work in 2023.

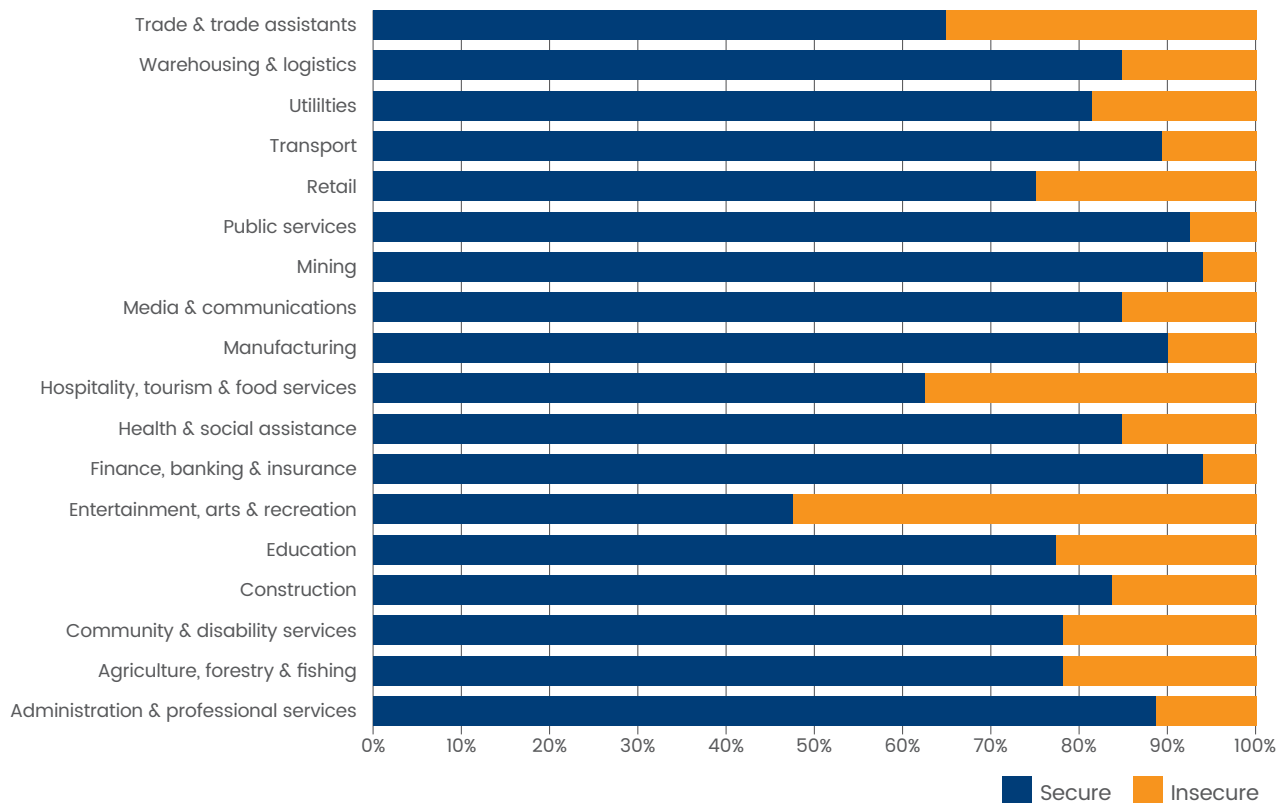


Figure 31. 2023 Insecure workers by industry

# Characteristics of Insecure workers

## 2023 Gender

Consistent with previous years, there is a statistically significant larger percentage of females employed in permanent part time work and casual work than males.

2023	Female	Male
Full time paid work (permanent)	50%	73%
Part time paid work (permanent)	29%	12%
Full time paid work (fixed term contract)	2%	2%
Part time paid work (fixed term contract)	3%	1%
Casual paid work	12%	7%
Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver	0%	0%
Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc	4%	5%

Table 19. 2023 Work Status Female and Male

Females continue to be concentrated in insecure work. There has been a statistically significant increase in insecure work for females across all three years surveyed. The difference between 2022 and 2023 is still significant.

Females	2021	2022	2023	Males	2021	2022	2023
Secure	83%	74%	79%	Secure	86%	84%	85%
Insecure	17%	26%	21%	Insecure	14%	16%	15%

Table 20. 2021, 2022, 2023 Work Status Female and Male

## 2023 Minorities

The situation for minority groups, as described in the WSH survey, has not changed significantly over the three years of the survey.

	Permanent		Insecure	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2%	3%	2%	2%
Person with a disability	3%	3%	8%	4%
LGBTIQA+	7%	8%	11%	9%
None of the above	89%	82%	82%	86%

Table 21. 2022–2023 Insecure workers identifying as ATSI, Person with disability, LGBTIQA+

# 2023 Age groups

2023 Work Status – age groups

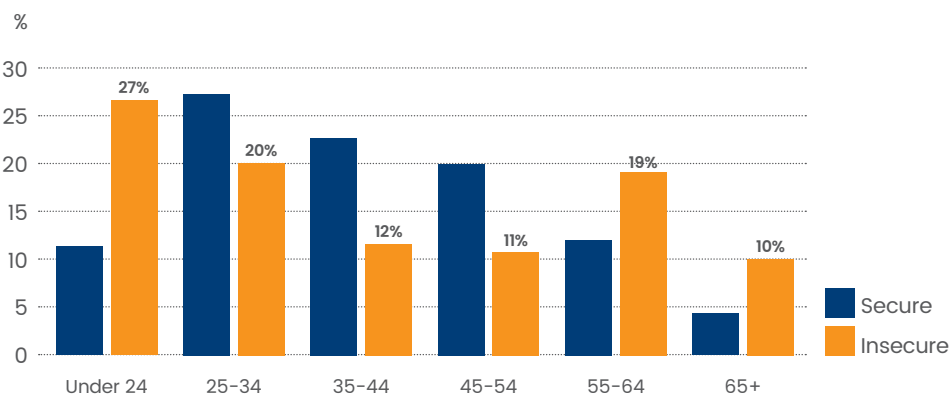


Figure 32. 2023 Work status age groups

## Insecure workers experience

2023 is the first year of the survey where there has been a statistically significant difference between those classified as secure and insecure workers reporting physical injuries.

2023	Secure workers	Insecure workers
Physical	7%	11%
Mental	20%	20%
Both	4%	5%
None	69%	64%

Table 22. 2023 Secure and insecure workers injury type

There has been a steady increase, across the years on the WSH survey, in physical and mental injuries reported by those in insecure work. It is statistically significant.

Insecure work	2021	2022	2023
Physical	6%	7%	11%
Mental	13%	16%	20%
Both	5%	4%	5%
None	76%	73%	64%

Table 23. 2021-2023 Insecure workers injury type

# Time off for work injury and work status

The difference between those respondents classified as secure and insecure workers in their responses to a work injury persists – more insecure workers didn't take time off in both 2022 and 2023. The differences do not reach statistical significance.

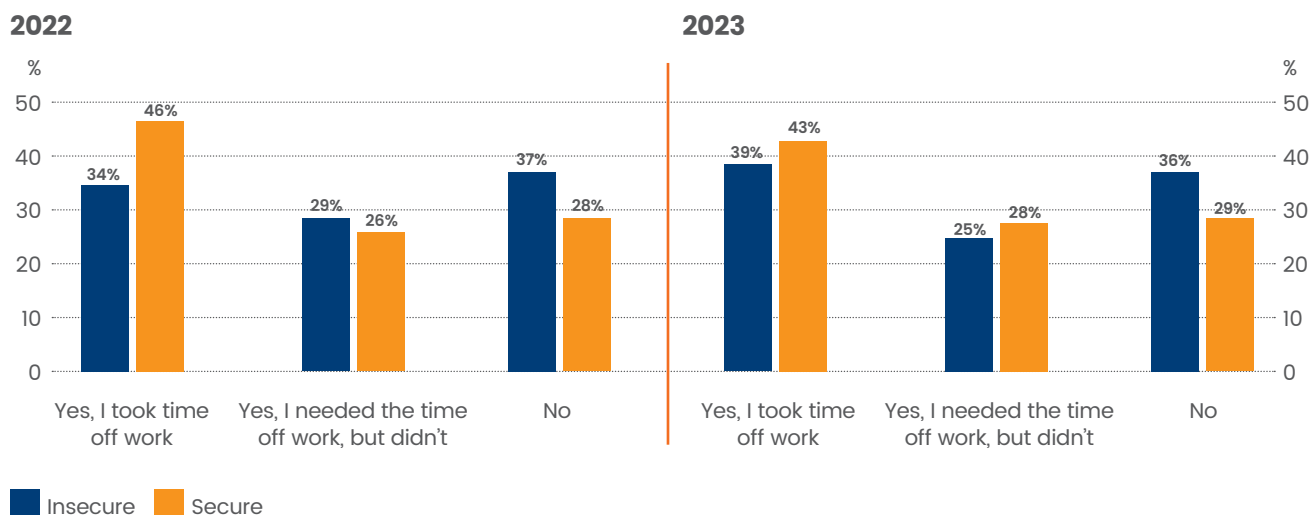


Figure 33. Time off work and work status

As in previous years, the reasons for not taking time off work differed between secure and insecure workers. The larger percentage of insecure workers who reported that they had no paid leave available was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . More insecure workers also reported that they couldn't afford to stop working – this difference was statistically significant at  $p < 0.1$ .

## 2023 Why didn't take time off when injured

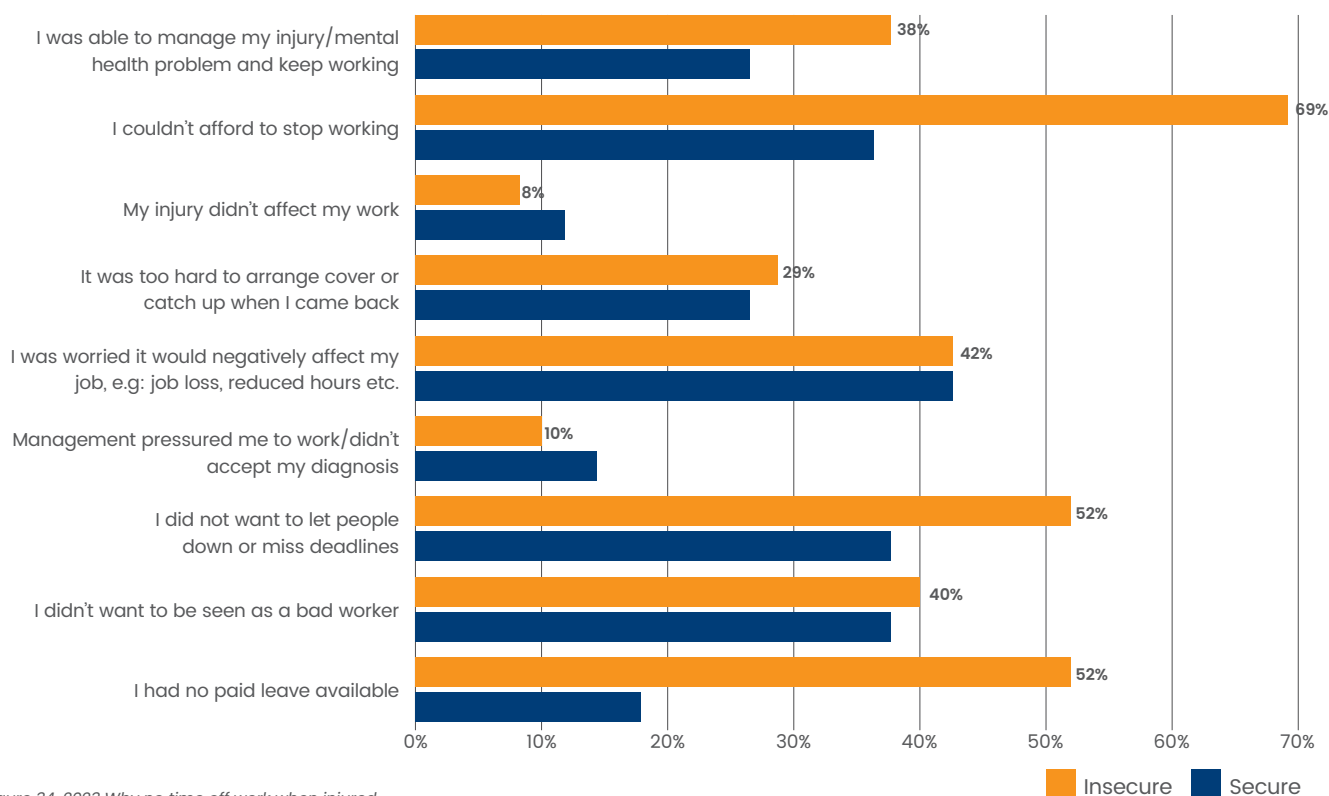


Figure 34. 2023 Why no time off work when injured



In 2023, there was an increase in the percentage of insecure workers who couldn't afford to stop working and who did not want to let people down or miss deadlines. For secure workers there was a statistically significant decrease from 2022 to 2023 for those who reported that it was too hard to arrange cover or catch up when returning to work.

### 2022-2023 Insecure workers – why didn't they take time off

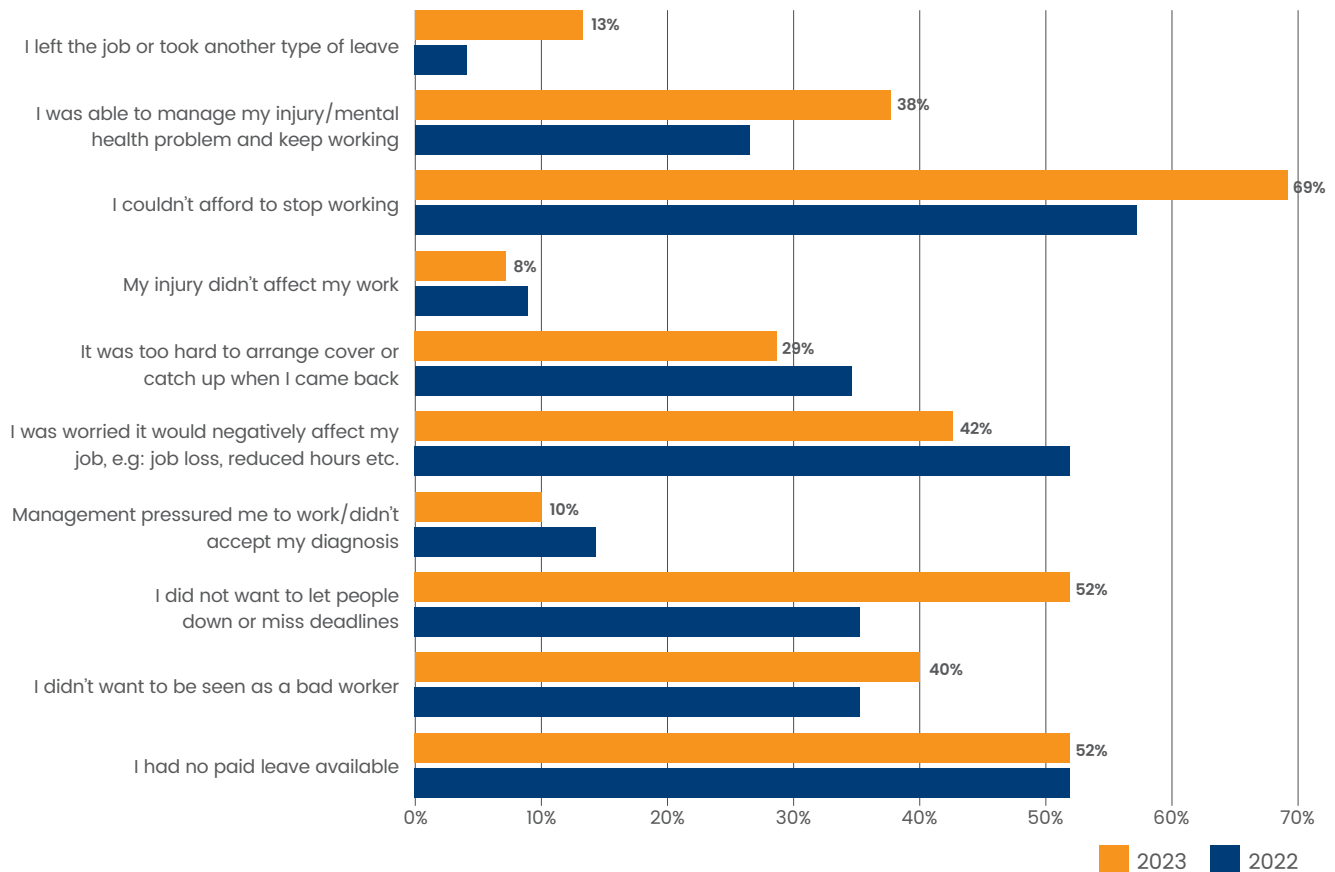


Figure 35. 2022-2023 Insecure workers – Why no time off work when injured

# Selected exposures

## Snapshot

In response to requests from unions, additional sets of questions were asked in 2023. These were about menopausal/menstrual symptoms and their effect on work and further questions about airborne contaminants.

For the menopausal/menstrual questions, the most common symptoms that workers said were affecting their work was tiredness and fatigue, feeling more stressed and less able to concentrate/brain fog, closely followed by being less patient with others.

Respondents were asked whether any changes were offered or made to assist with dealing with menopausal/menstrual symptoms. Encouragingly, 17% reported changes to work schedules, 15% reported changes to work environment and 10% reported changes to work duties.

Access to toilet facilities is a basic requirement of a workplace, but 9% of workers reported wanting easier access to toilets. Interestingly this was the only issue that was consistent across the age groups (8% -10% in each age cohort).

The other additional questions asked about airborne contaminants. Respondents were asked about the action their workplace takes to manage exposure to airborne contaminants. The most common response was opening of doors or overhead fans, closely followed by mandatory respiratory protection.

## Menopause/Menstrual Symptoms

In response to concerns raised by unions, the 2023 WSH survey asked a few questions regarding menopause/menstrual symptoms and how these may have impacted the worker's work. Most respondents (55%) said their symptoms didn't affect their work or the question was not applicable to them (no males responded to this question).

The most common symptoms that workers said were affecting their work was tiredness and fatigue, feeling more stressed and less able to concentrate/brain fog, closely followed by being less patient with others.

## Menopause/menstrual symptoms that affect your work

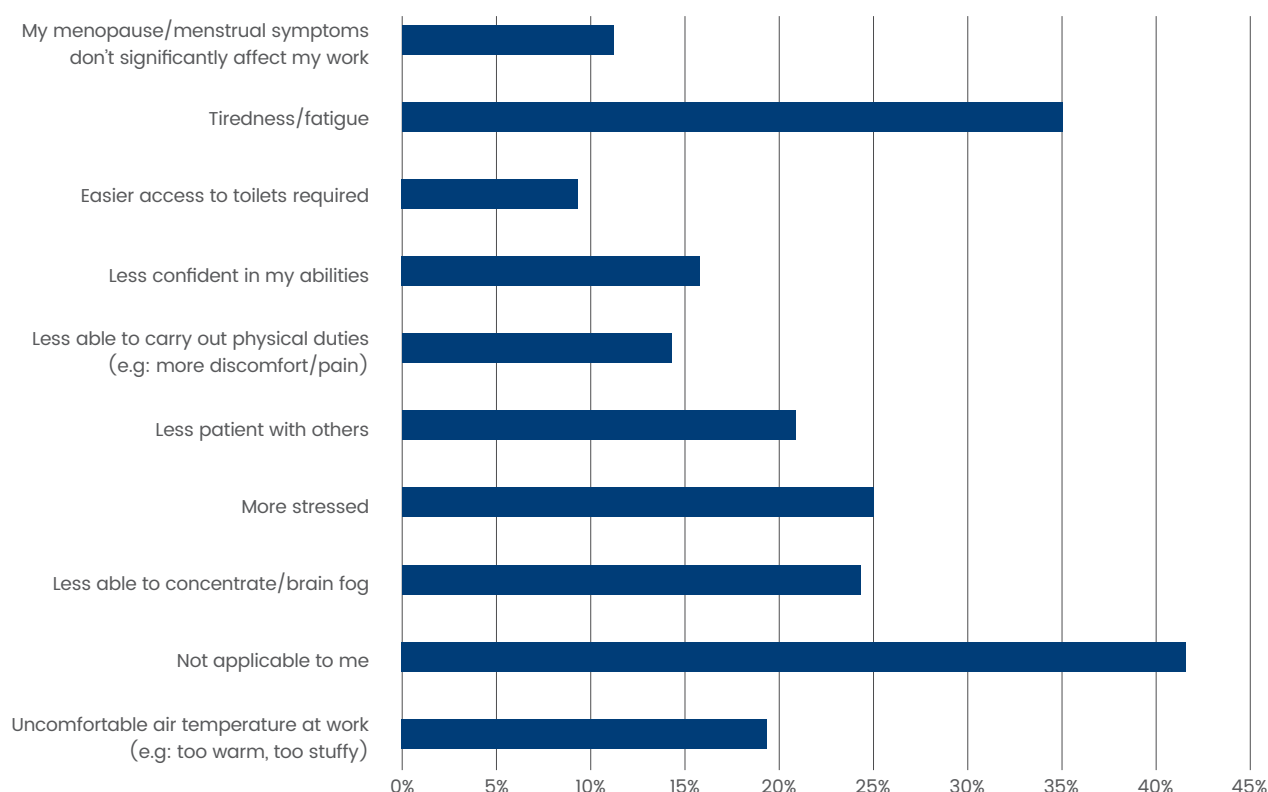


Figure 36. 2023 Menopause/menstrual symptoms that affect your work

The percentage of workers reporting tiredness and fatigue, feeling more stressed and less able to concentrate/brain fog were highest for the 50–59 age group – 54%, 37% and 39% respectively.

Respondents were asked whether any changes were offered or made to assist with dealing with menopausal symptoms. Encouragingly 17% reported changes to work schedules, 15% reported changes to work environment and 10% reported changes to work duties.

Given that access to toilet facilities is a basic requirement of a workplace, 9% of workers wanting easier access to toilets is concerning. Interestingly this was the only issue that was consistent across the age groups (8% –10% in each age cohort). Most people did not raise the issue or request any changes. Only 7% reported that their employer did not allow any changes.

Any changes made at work – menopause/menstrual symptoms

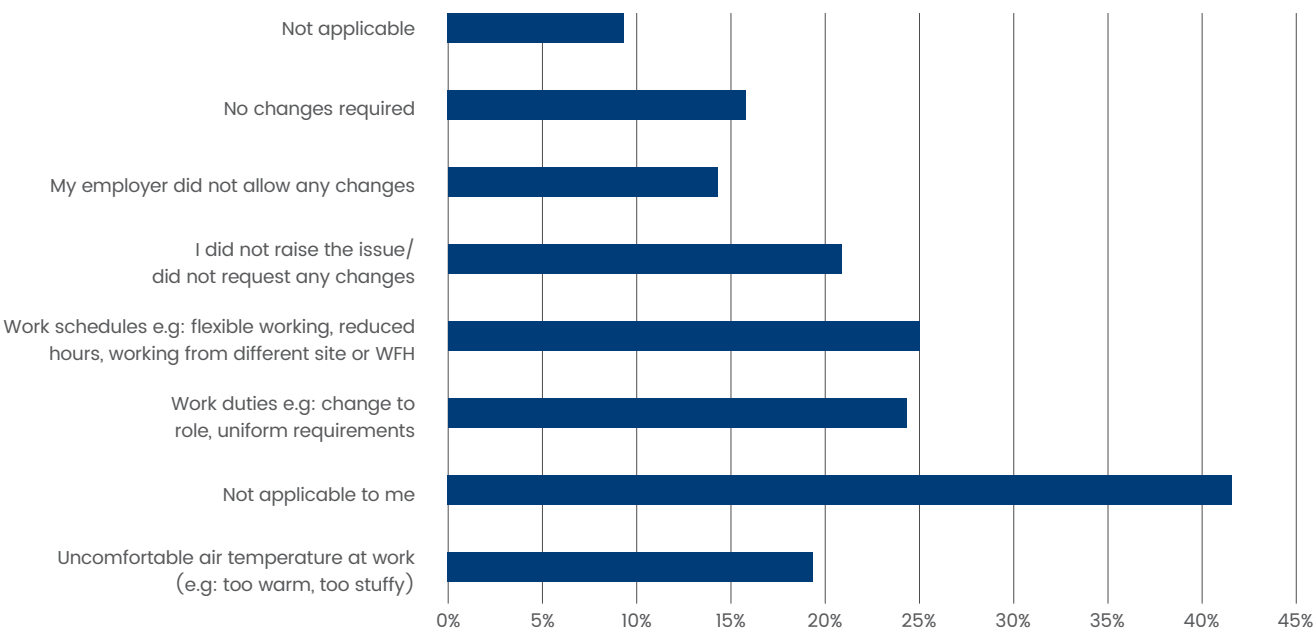


Figure 37 2023 Any changes made at work – menopause symptoms

Airborne Contaminants

As per the previous surveys respondents were asked about exposures in the last 12 months. 615 respondents reported sometimes/regular/always being exposed to harmful dusts/fumes/gases. This was consistent with the responses in 2022.

Last 12 months exposure to harmful dust/fumes/gases

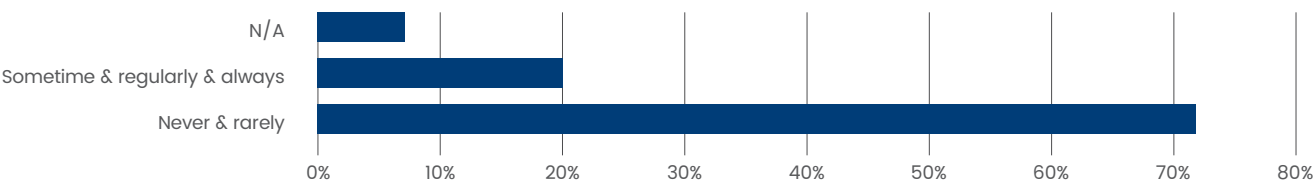


Figure 38. 2023 Last 12 months exposure to harmful dust/fumes/gases

In 2023, an additional group of questions were asked about airborne contaminants.

Respondents were asked about the action their workplace takes to manage exposure to airborne contaminants. The most common response was opening of doors or overhead fans, closely followed by mandatory respiratory protection.

**Workplace action to manage exposure to airborne contaminants**

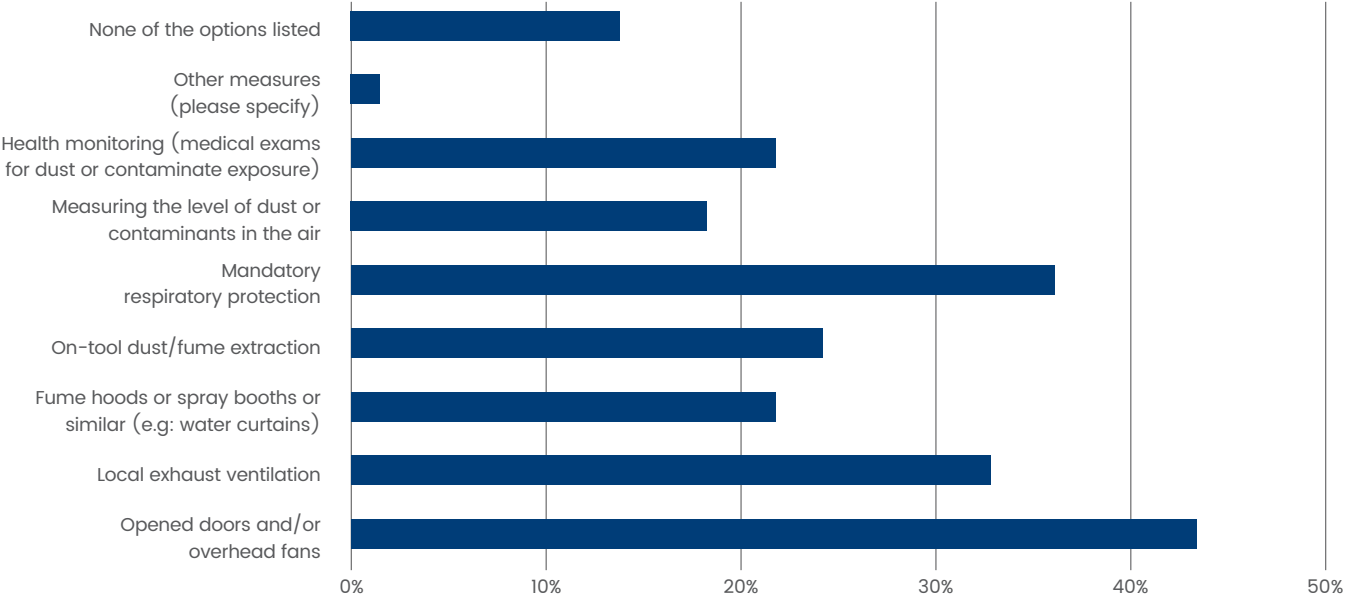


Figure 39. 2023 Workplace action for airborne contaminants

A small number of respondents answered the question about air monitoring – 27% of those who answered the question said the air was monitored continuously.

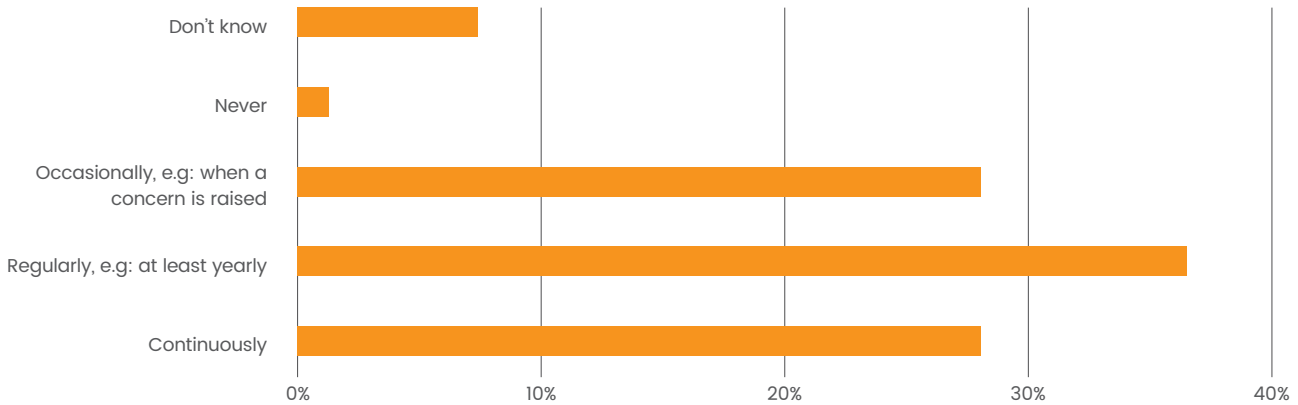


Figure 40. 2023 Workplace measurement of air contaminants

Likewise, a small number of respondents answered the question about health monitoring – 45% of those who answered the question said workers were sent for health monitoring every 2 years.

## Workers sent for health monitoring

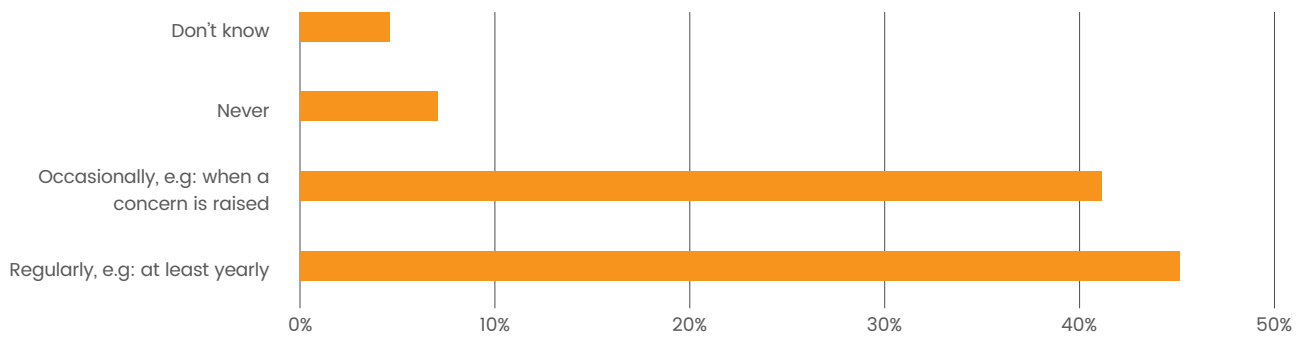


Figure 41. 2023 Workers sent for health monitoring

# 2023 Employer compliance and worker engagement and empowerment

## Snapshot

The compliance of employers with general health and safety measures has not changed significantly over the three years of the survey. Whilst the percentages who disagreed with the statements are generally between 10 and 20 percent, those that agreed vary between 50 and 70 percent.

As reported in the previous surveys about 1 in 5 workers reported poor performance by their employer for 5 of those measures. However, there was still 10% of workers who did not know how to report a physical injury or safety issue and 15% disagreed with the statement that all workers were trained on health and safety matters.

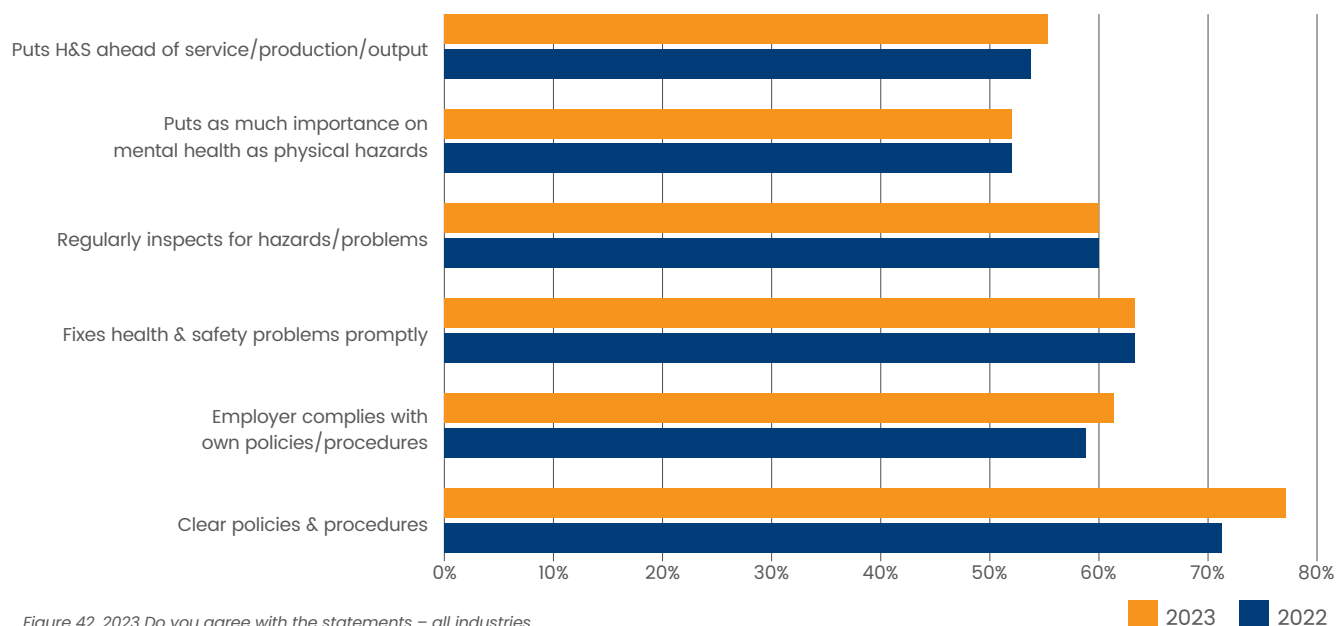
There were statistically significant changes for regular communication, how to report physical and mental health issues, not being pressured to not raise health and safety matters and not intimidated to not raise health and safety issues. These have all improved since 2022. However, this was not the case for insecure workers who were statistically more likely to say they disagree that there is regular communication regarding health and safety issues.

Regarding the statement that workers are not intimidated or bullied by management as a result of raising health and safety issues, there are proportionally more secure than insecure workers who disagree with this statement. This difference is statistically significant.

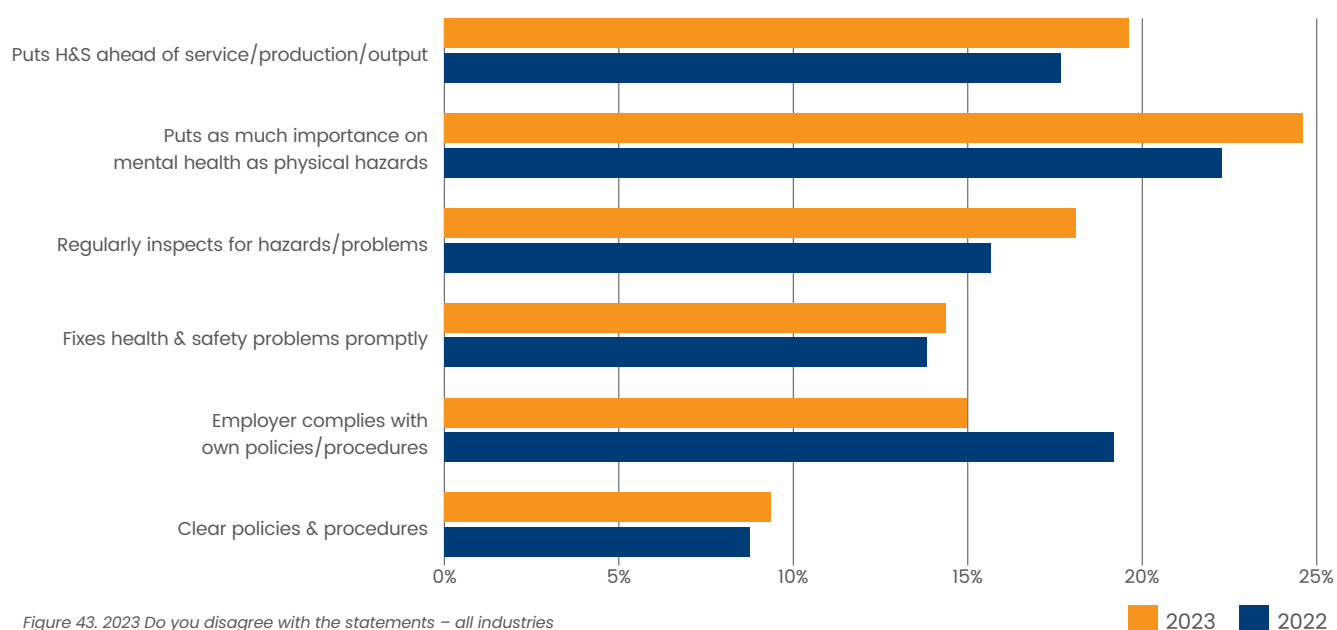
# Compliance with general health and safety measures

The compliance of employers with general health and safety measures has not changed significantly over the three years of the survey. Whilst the percentages who disagreed with the statements are generally between 10 and 20 percent, those that agreed vary between 50 and 70 percent.

## Total agree – employer general compliance



## Total disagree – employer general compliance





## 2023 Worker engagement and empowerment

As reported in the previous surveys about 1 in 5 workers reported poor performance by their employer for 5 of those measures. However, there was still 10% of workers who did not know how to report a physical injury or safety issue and 15% disagreed with the statement that all workers were trained on health and safety matters.

### 2023 Worker engagement- all industries

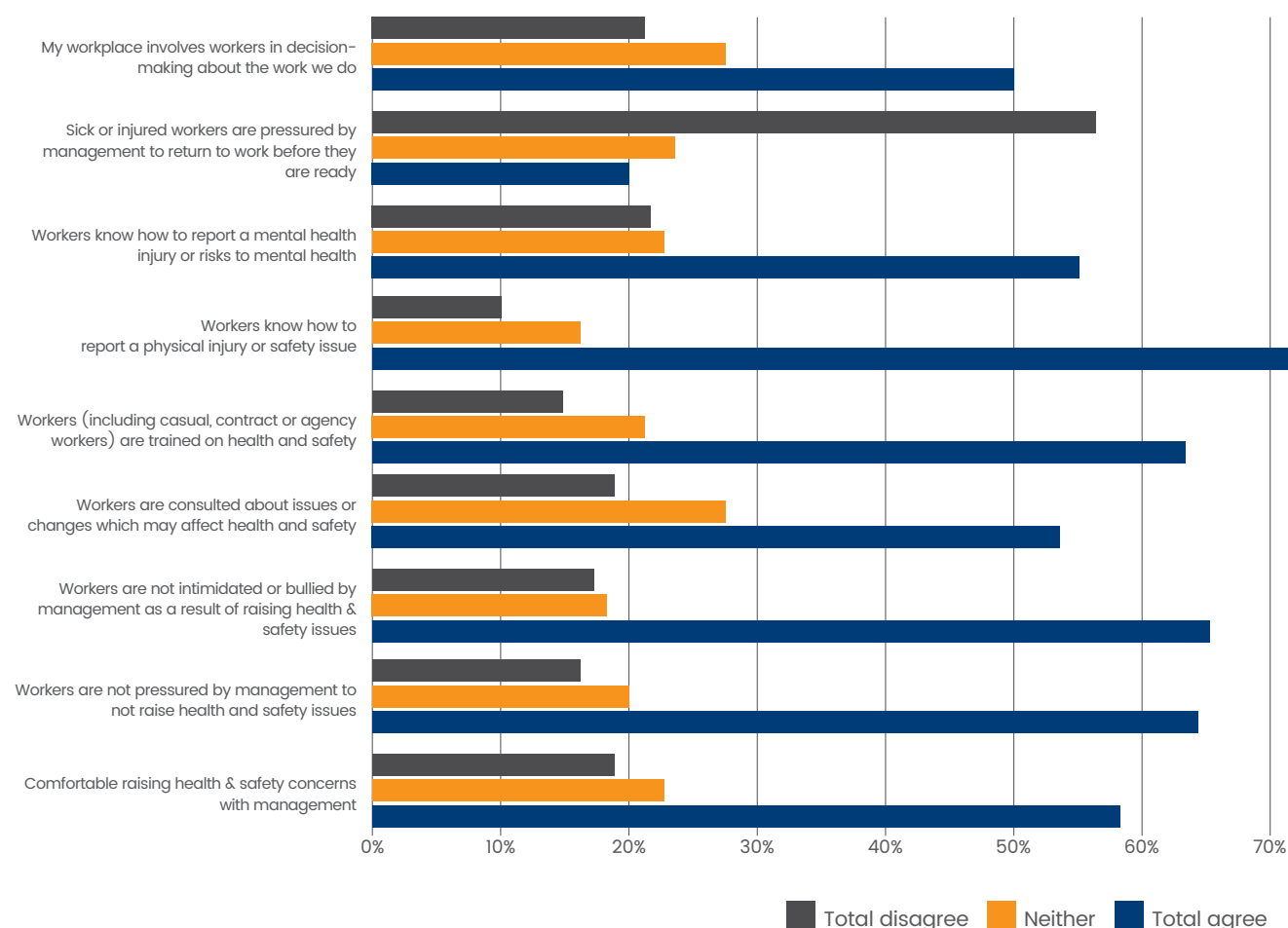


Figure 44. 2023 Worker empowerment questions

When compared with the 2022 responses, there was no significant change for the statements relating to raising health and safety issues with management, being consulted, involvement in training or sick and injured workers being pressured by management to return to work (RTW).

There were however statistically significant changes for regular communication, how to report physical and mental health issues, not being pressured to not raise health and safety matters and not intimidated to not raise health and safety issues. These have all improved since 2022.

## 2022-2023 Total agree with statement

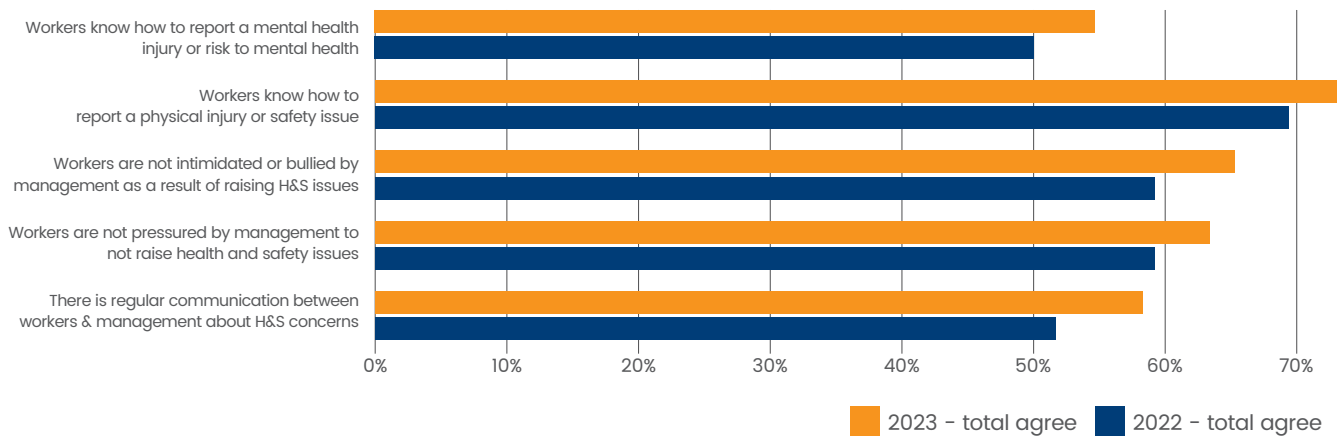


Figure 45. 2022-2023 Worker empowerment questions with statistically significant change

## Insecure workers worker engagement and empowerment

For six of the 10 questions asked to get a measure of worker empowerment and engagement, there was a statistically significant difference between respondents who were classified as secure and insecure.

Insecure workers are statistically more likely to say they disagree that there is regular communication regarding health and safety issues.

### 2023 Regular communication between workers & management on H&S issues

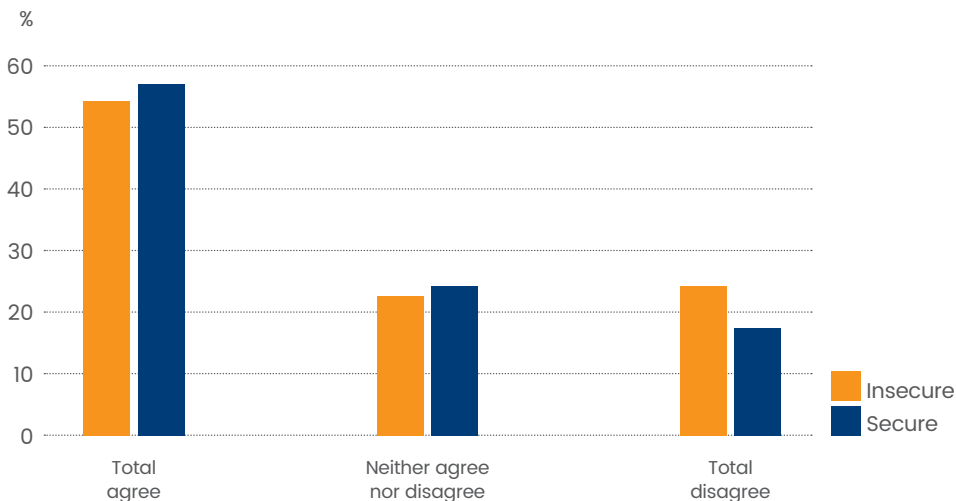


Figure 46. 2023 Regular communication between workers and management on H&S issues

Insecure workers were statistically less likely to be in agreement with statements regarding training and reporting of physical or mental health issues.

2023 Total agree with statement

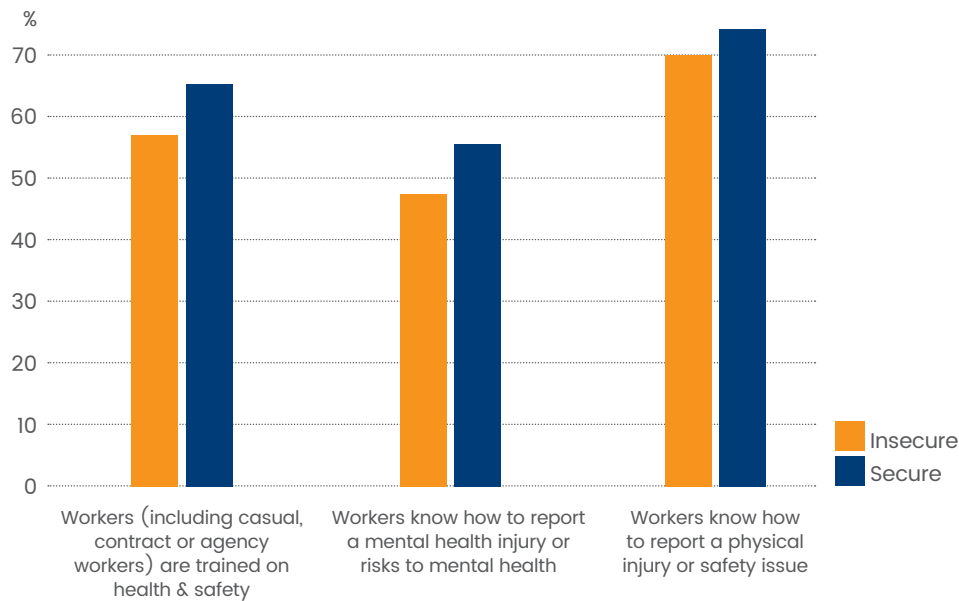


Figure 47. 2023 Secure and insecure workers in agreement re selected statements on worker engagement

Insecure workers were less likely to disagree with the statement that workers are not pressured by management to not raise health and safety issues.

2023 Workers are not pressured by management to not raise H&S issues

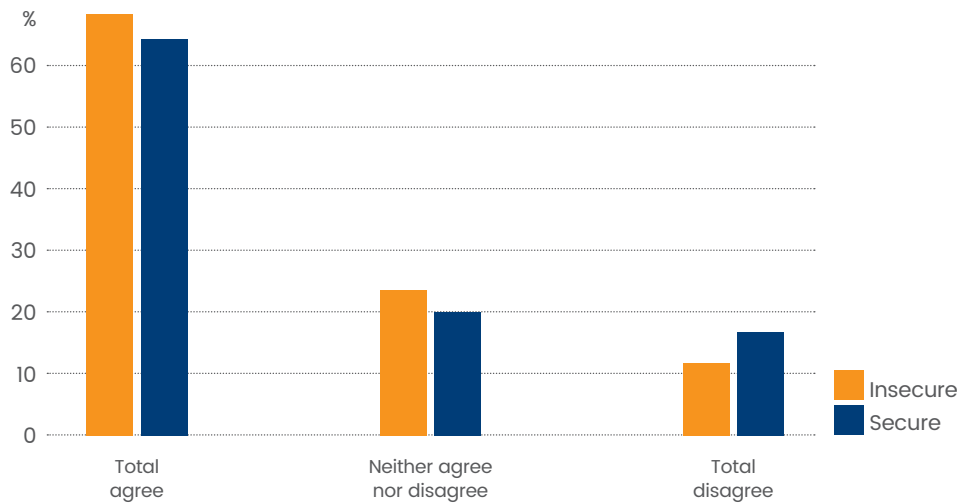


Figure 48. 2023 Secure and insecure workers – not pressured to not raise health and safety issues

Regarding the statement that workers are not intimidated or bullied by management as a result of raising health and safety issues, there are proportionally more secure than insecure workers who disagree with this statement. This difference is statistically significant.

**2023 Workers are not intimidated or bullied by management as a result of raising health and safety issues**

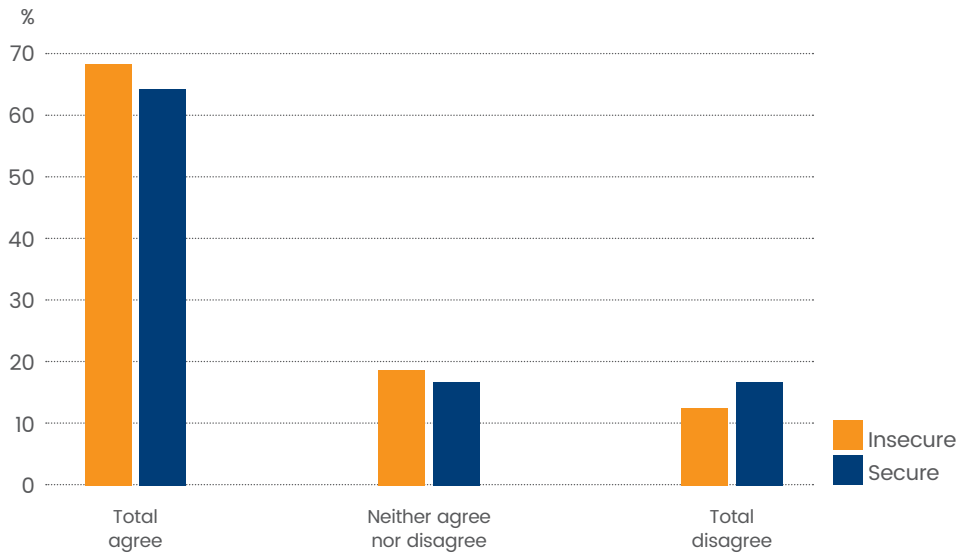


Figure 49. 2023 Secure and insecure workers – workers not intimidated as a result of raising health and safety issues

# 2023 Health and Safety Representatives

## Snapshot

In 2023, 59% of respondents said they had an HSR at their work, 20% responded no and 21% did not know. The presence of HSRs was lowest in Retail and Hospitality, tourism and food services. Not unexpectedly secure workers were more likely to respond that there was an HSR present in their workplace. The responses are similar to the previous WSH surveys.

Consistent with the 2022 WSH Survey, 2 in 5 HSRs are elected by management – it is not possible to determine if this is inconsistent with Part 5 of the WHS Act, as section 61 provides that workers are to determine the process of election – however only 46% of respondents answered that workers or their union/union delegate elected the HSR.

A statistically significant higher percentage of respondents without an HSR or who didn't know if they had an HSR had a mental health injury.

The presence of HSRs was linked to a higher percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements on worker engagement. The differences were statistically significant between those with an HSR and those without, and those with and those who didn't know. Again, the results are like those in the 2022 WSH survey.

## HSRs

In 2023, 59% of respondents said they had an HSR at their work, 20% responded no and 21% did not know. The presence of HSRs was lowest in Retail and Hospitality, tourism and food services. Not unexpectedly secure workers were more likely to respond that there was an HSR present in their workplace. The responses are similar to the previous WSH surveys.

### 2023 HSR Featured Industries

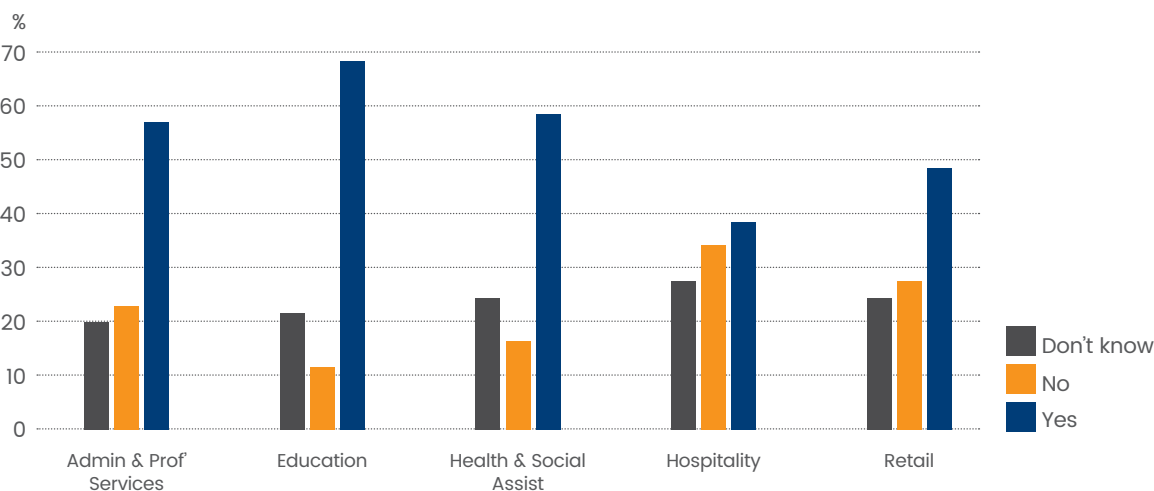


Figure 50. 2023 HSR featured industries

	Secure	Insecure
<b>Yes</b>	62%	44%
<b>No</b>	19%	27%
<b>Don't know</b>	19%	29%

Table 24. 2023 HSR presence work status

## Health and Safety Representative election processes

The WSH survey asks respondents about the election of HSRs – 40% responded that the HSRs are elected (this is a requirement under the WHS Act).

	2022	2023
<b>Yes</b>	40%	40%
<b>No</b>	29%	28%
<b>Don't know</b>	31%	32%

Table 25. 2022–2023 HSR elected.

Consistent with the 2022 WSH Survey, 2 in 5 HSRs are elected by management – it is not possible to determine if this is inconsistent with Part 5 of the WHS Act, as section 61 provides that workers are to determine the process of election – however only 46% of respondents answered that workers or their union/union delegate elected the HSR.

HSR elections	2022	2023
<b>Management</b>	42%	43%
<b>The union/union delegate</b>	11%	10%
<b>The workers</b>	35%	36%
<b>Others</b>	2%	1%
<b>Don't know</b>	10%	10%

Table 26. 2022–2023 HSR election process

## Impact of presence of HSRs – Injury type

A statistically significant higher percentage of respondents without an HSR or who didn't know if they had an HSR had a mental health injury. The difference to those with an HSR was not significant for physical injuries. Overall, those with an HSR reported a statistically higher percentage of those with no injury.

### 2023 HSR present injury type

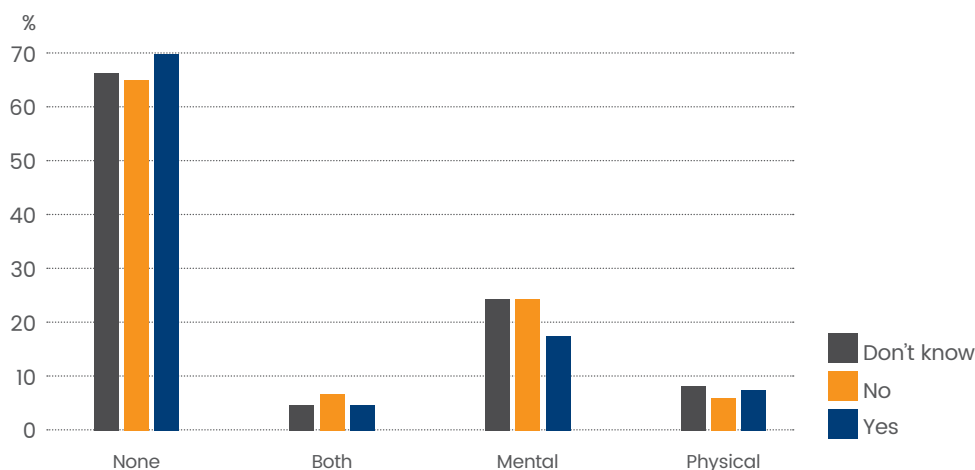


Figure 51. 2023 HSR presence and injury type

## HSR presence and employer compliance

The presence of HSRs has a clear positive link with employer compliance for some key compliance measures. The presence of an HSR influenced the number of respondents who agreed that their employer was taking action – see below. These responses are like the 2022 WSH survey.

### 2023 HSR presence and employer compliance – Total agree

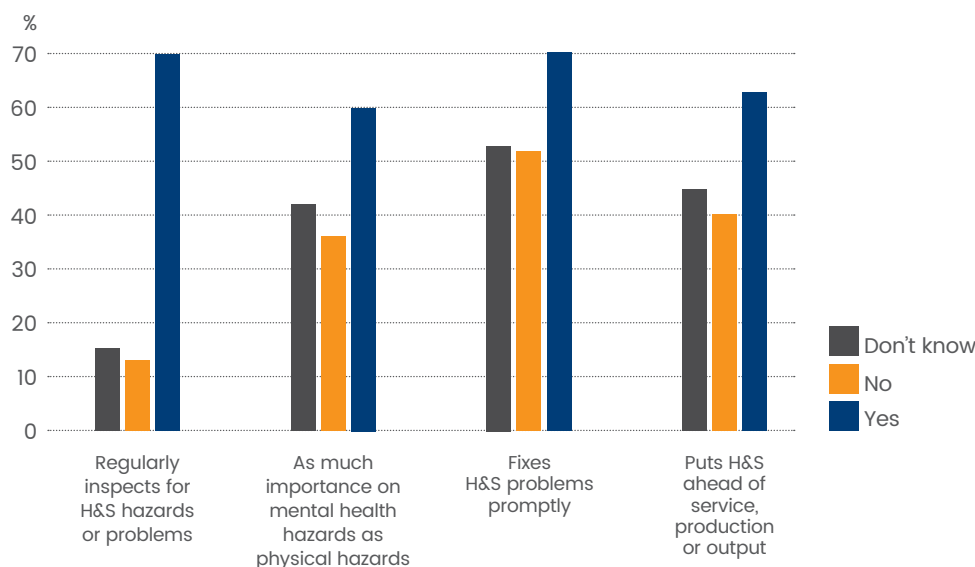


Figure 52. 2023 HSR presence and employer compliance – total agree

The presence of HSRs was linked to a higher percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements on worker engagement. The differences were statistically significant between those with an HSR and those without, and those with and those who didn't know. Again, the results are like those in the 2022 WSH survey.

2023 HSR presence and worker engagement

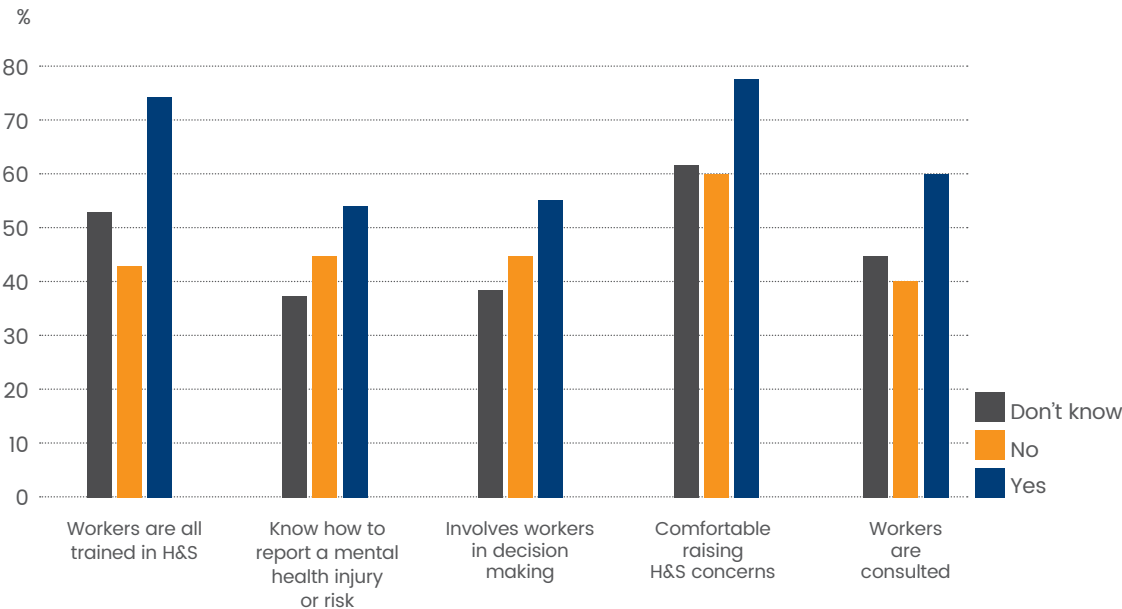


Figure 53. 2023 HSR presence and worker engagement – total agree

Key H&S personnel in Featured industries

2023 Presence H&S personnel in Featured industries

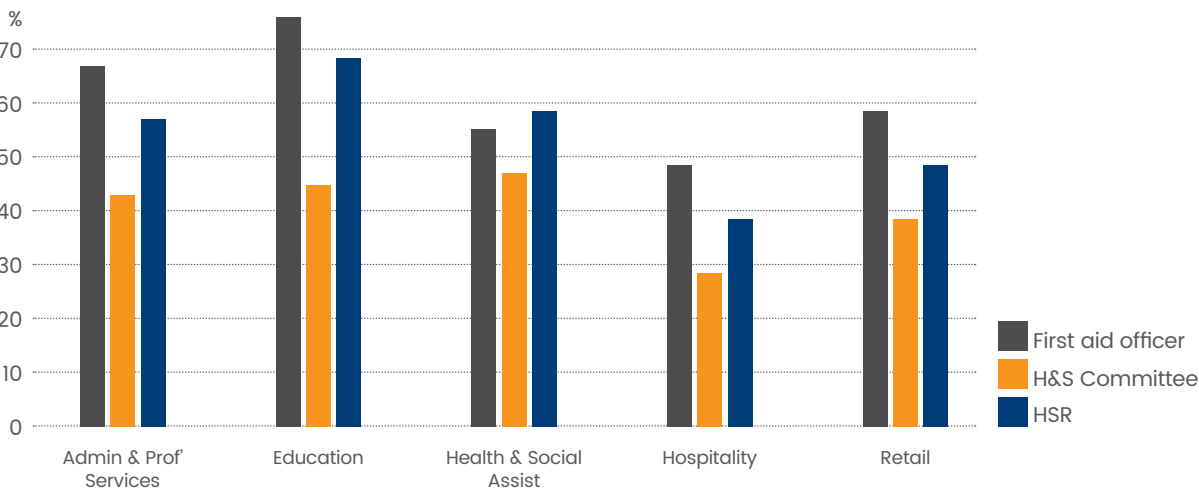


Figure 54. 2023 Presence H&S personnel in Featured industries



# 2023 Gendered violence and sexual harassment

## Snapshot

There was a similar pattern to the experience of sexual harassment in 2023 as in previous waves of the WSH survey. Once again younger workers and female workers experienced more incidents.

There is a statistically significant difference between females and males for “the behaviour didn’t bother me”, “the person was in my care” and “I didn’t think it serious enough”.

In 2023 the trend continued with a statistically significant increase in the percentage of respondents answering that their employer recognised sexual harassment as a risk to health and safety and there was a clear way to make complaints. Again, there was a difference in the response between females and males.

If there was an HSR present, there were more respondents who reported “none of these” to the question regarding experience of sexual harassment in the last 12 months. The difference to those without an HSR was statistically significant, as were the fewer reports of crude or offensive behaviour for those who had an HSR compared to those without an HSR.

## Experience of gendered violence or harassment

A similar pattern to that of 2022 occurred for those who had experienced gendered violence or harassment.

### 2023 – Experienced gendered violence etc

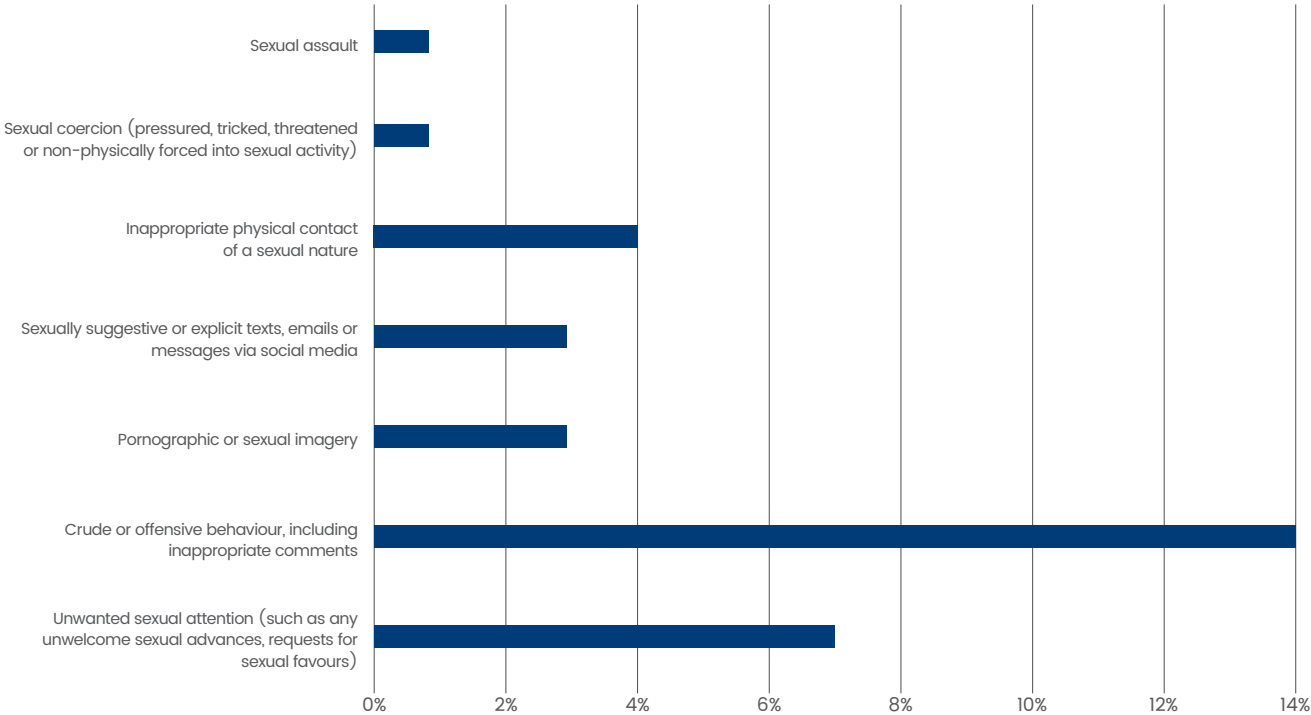


Figure 55. 2023 Personally experienced gendered violence or harassment in the last 12 months

And the same pattern was evident of a higher proportion of younger respondents reporting an experience of gendered violence or harassment in the previous 12 months.

	Under 24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Unwanted sexual attention (such as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours)	15%	9%	6%	4%	3%	1%
Crude or offensive behaviour, including inappropriate comments	21%	17%	16%	11%	7%	3%
Pornographic or sexual imagery	3%	3%	4%	1%	2%	1%
Sexually suggestive or explicit texts, emails or messages via social media	6%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Inappropriate physical contact of a sexual nature	8%	5%	4%	2%	1%	1%
Sexual coercion (pressured, tricked, threatened or non-physically forced into sexual activity)	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	–
Sexual assault	3%	1%	1%	0%	0%	–

Table 27. 2023 Experience of gendered violence and sexual harassment by age

## 2023 Gendered violence & harassment

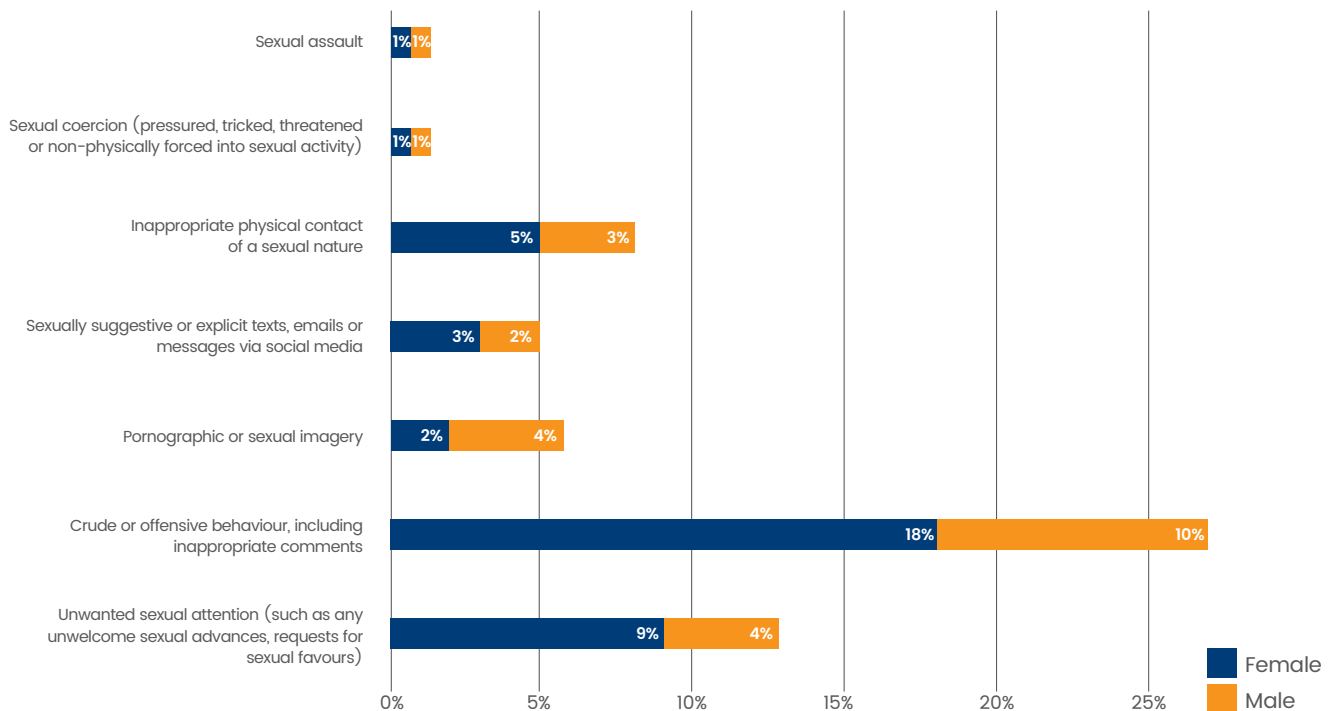


Figure 56. 2023 Selected forms of sexual harassment by gender

Although the numbers are small – 24 respondents reported sexual assault at work – there were more reports of assault in Retail than in Construction – 17% and 13% respectively.

## Action taken

Females were more likely to take no action and men were more likely to look for information – both these differences are statistically significant.

	Female	Male
<b>Asked for assistance</b>	25%	26%
<b>Looked for information</b>	14%	40%
<b>Made an informal complaint to management</b>	34%	30%
<b>Made a formal report to management</b>	20%	19%
<b>Made an external report (e.g. to the police or an NGO)</b>	3%	4%
<b>Took no action</b>	42%	26%

Table 28. 2023 Took action after experiencing sexual harassment incident

	Admin & professional services	Education	Health and social assistance	Hospitality, tourism & food services	Retail
<b>Asked for assistance</b>	21%	20%	13%	29%	24%
<b>Looked for information</b>	14%	40%	4%	5%	24%
<b>Made an informal complaint to management</b>	7%	30%	21%	43%	36%
<b>Made a formal report to management</b>	36%	20%	21%	19%	6%
<b>Made an external report (e.g. to the police or an NGO)</b>	–	10%	–	–	–
<b>Took no action</b>	43%	30%	50%	43%	36%

Table 29. 2023 Took action after experiencing sexual harassment incident and industry

## Why no action taken

The gender difference is again shown, where there is a statistically significant difference between females and males for “the behaviour didn’t bother me”, “the person was in my care” and “I didn’t think it serious enough”.

	Female	Male
No faith in the processes	30%	35%
I didn’t want to cause any trouble at work	37%	35%
I didn’t realise it was harassment until later	14%	9%
The behaviour didn’t bother me	16%	33%
Other, please specify	1%	5%
The person was in my care/was my client	16%	5%
Not aware of how the reporting or complaints process worked	9%	6%
I feared negative consequences for me	32%	29%
It was already dealt with/I dealt with it directly	18%	18%
I had left the workplace	2%	2%
I didn’t think it was serious enough	52%	32%
The time limits for making a complaint were too short	1%	1%
No confidence that the complaints process would be confidential	28%	17%
I didn’t feel I had enough support	20%	13%

Table 30. 2023 Why no action after experiencing sexual harassment incident and gender

The gender differences persist when respondents were asked if they agreed or not to statements about their workplace. Females had a statistically lower level of total agreement with the statements except for Gendered violence and harassment being recognised as a health and safety risk.

In 2023 the trend continued with a statistically significant increase in the percentage of respondents answering that their employer recognised sexual harassment as a risk to health and safety and a clear way to make complaints.

### 2023 Employer response – total agree

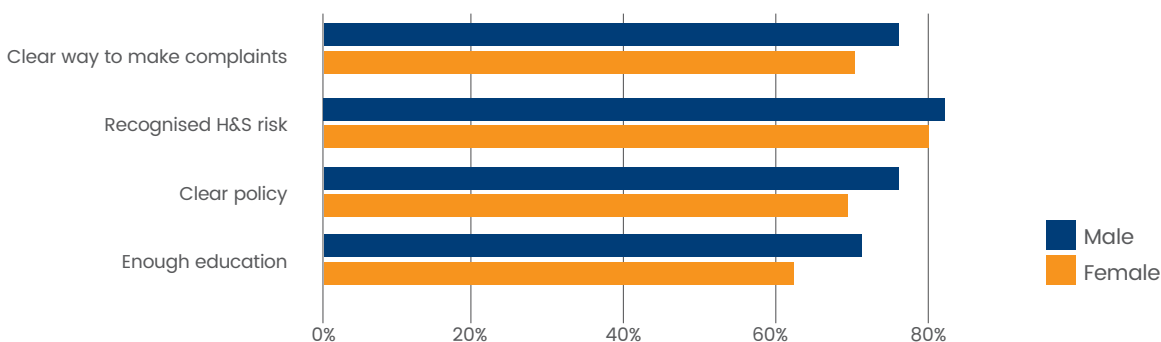


Figure 57. 2023 Employer response – total agree

### Employer response — 2022 to 2023 — total agree

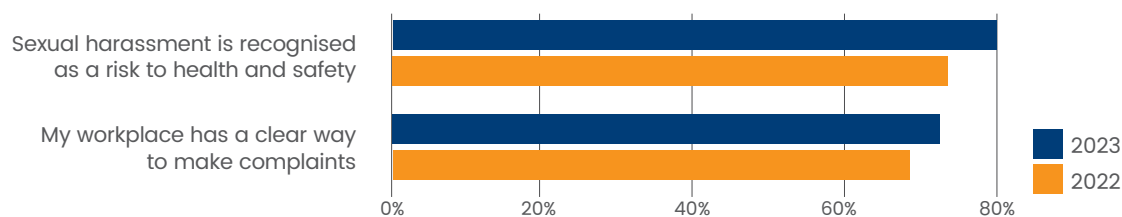


Figure 58. 2022–2023 Employer response – total agree

## 2023 HSR presence and experience of sexual harassment

If there was an HSR present, there were more respondents who reported “none of these” to the question regarding experience of sexual harassment in the last 12 months. The difference to those without an HSR was statistically significant, as were the fewer reports of crude or offensive behaviour for those who had an HSR compared to those without an HSR.

Health and Safety Representative Presence	Yes	No	Don't know
Unwanted sexual attention (such as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours)	6%	7%	9%
Don't know	1%	1%	3%
None of these	81%	76%	75%
Crude or offensive behaviour, including inappropriate comments	13%	17%	16%
Pornographic or sexual imagery	2%	5%	3%
Sexually suggestive or explicit texts, emails or messages via social media	3%	3%	3%
Inappropriate physical contact of a sexual nature	3%	4%	5%
Sexual coercion (pressured, tricked, threatened or non-physically forced into sexual activity)	1%	1%	1%
Sexual assault	1%	1%	1%
Other sexual harassments (please specify)	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	1%	0%	2%

Table 31. 2023 Presence of HSR and reporting of sexual harassment in the last 12 months

# 2023 Profile of Respondents

Characteristic	ABS	WSH 2023 sample	WSH 2022 sample
Age (median)	38 <sup>1</sup>	40	39.9
Gender (female)	47.8 <sup>2</sup>	48%	48%
Personal income (median)	\$1,432.60p/w <sup>3</sup>	\$75,520	\$74,909
Union member	12.6 <sup>4</sup>	22%	24%
Insecure worker	31.2 <sup>4a</sup>	18%	21%
Australian citizen	83.8 <sup>5</sup>	90%	90.3%
Born in Australia	66.9 <sup>5</sup>	76%	74.2%
LOTE at home	22.3 <sup>5</sup>	12%	9%
Person with a disability	17.7 <sup>6</sup>	3%	4.3%
LGBTQIA+	– <sup>7</sup>	8%	8.4%
Labour hire	1.3 <sup>4</sup>	10%	10.9%

Table 32. 2023 Demographic comparison of Work Shouldn't Hurt sample with ABS benchmark

## Personal Income

	Percentage of sample		
	2023	2022	2021
Up to \$15,599	4	4	5
\$15,600 – \$31,199	9	11	9
\$31,200 – \$51,999	17	17	16
\$52,000 – \$77,999	25	22	24
\$78,000 – \$103,999	20	19	21
\$104,000 – \$129,999	11	13	12
\$130,000 – \$159,999	7	7	6
\$160,000 – \$199,999	4	4	4
\$200,000 – \$249,999	1	1	2
More than \$250,000	–	2	1

Table 33. Income of samples in 2021, 2022, 2023

<sup>1</sup> Census of Population and Housing: Population data summary, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Labour Force, Australia, March 2024 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

<sup>3</sup> Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2023 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

<sup>4</sup> Characteristics of Employment, Australia, August 2023 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

<sup>4a</sup> Characteristics of Employment: sum of Casual employees, Independent Contractors and employed through Labour hire

<sup>5</sup> 2021 Census – Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au)

<sup>6</sup> Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

<sup>7</sup> ABS did not collect this data in the 2021 Census

## 2023 Industry sector

The industry profile is very similar to that of 2022, except for a reduction in the percentage of respondents in transport and the addition of the Trades and trade assistants category.

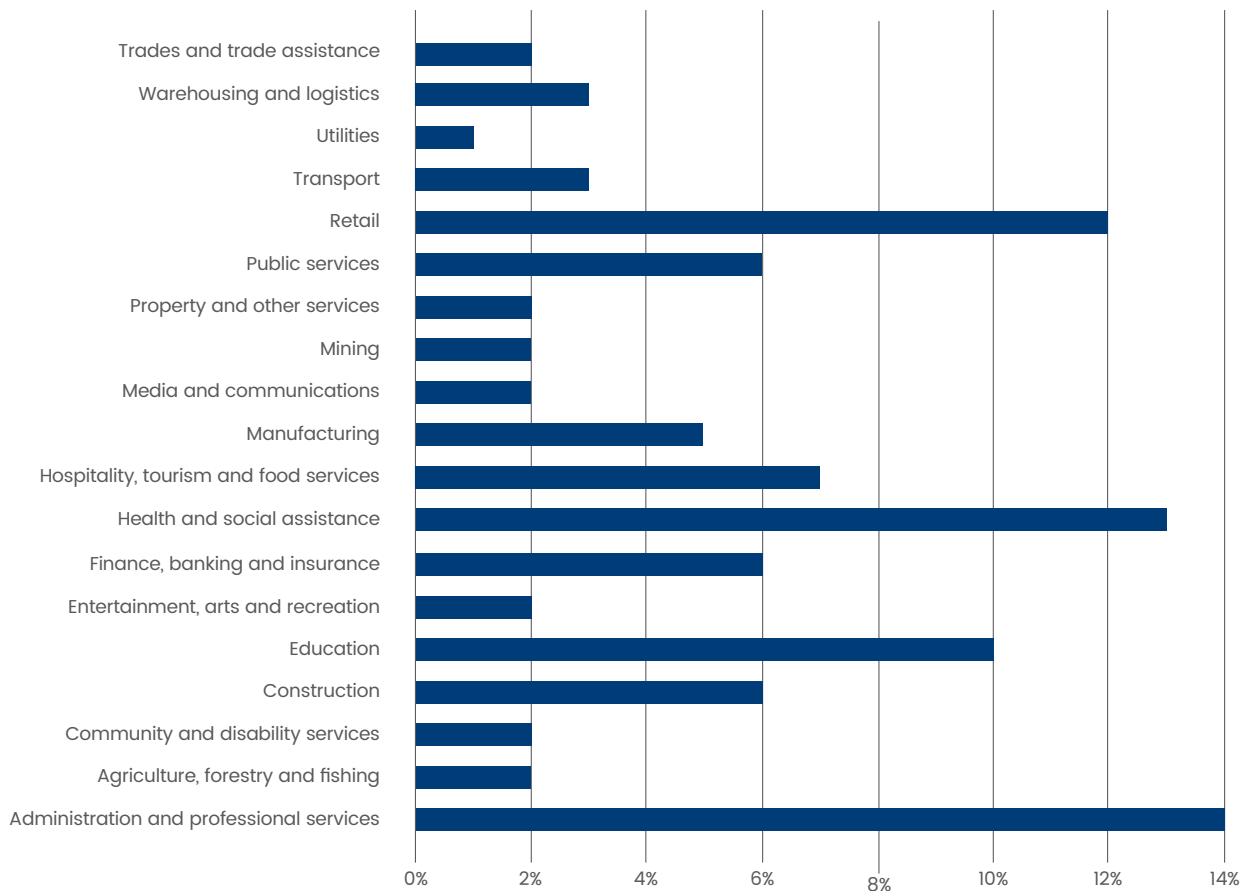


Figure 59. 2023 Work Shouldn't Hurt sample by Industry sector

## Work Status

	2021	2022	2023
Full time paid work (permanent)	66%	61%	62%
Part time paid work (permanent)	19%	18%	20%
Full time paid work (fixed term contract)	2%	2%	2%
Part time paid work (fixed term contract)	1%	3%	2%
Casual paid work	8%	11%	9%
Gig worker, e.g. Uber driver	1%	1%	0%
Independent contractor e.g. with ABN, sole trader, freelancer, etc	4%	5%	5%

Table 34. Work Shouldn't Hurt samples by work status

## Hours worked

Hours worked in week – How many hours of paid work do you work in a typical week?	2021	2022	2023
Less than 20	9%	14%	9%
20 to less than 30	12%	13%	13%
30 to less than 40	43%	42%	45%
40 to 48	24%	24%	21%
More than 48	5%	3%	3%

Hours worked in week – How many hours of unpaid work do you do in a typical week (above and beyond your paid hours)?	2021	2022	2023
None	58%	52%	54%
Less than 20	36%	41%	41%
20 to less than 40	2%	2%	2%
More than 40	1%	0%	0%

Total hours worked in week	2021	2022	2023
Less than 20	7%	13%	7%
20 to less than 30	11%	12%	13%
30 to less than 40	29%	27%	31%
40 to 48	33%	33%	32%
More than 48	12%	9%	8%

Table 35, 36, 37. Hours worked Work Shouldn't Hurt samples 2021, 2022, 2023



## Average unpaid hours worked

For the average number of unpaid hours, there's a significant proportion who say they don't do any unpaid hours, so this measure is reported as including and excluding those without any unpaid hours.

	2021	2022	2023
<b>Average unpaid hours</b>	–	–	–
<b>Including unpaid hours</b>	3.81	3.82	3.17
<b>Excluding unpaid hours</b>	9.14	7.98	6.91

Table 38. Unpaid Hours worked 2021, 2022, 2023

## Workplace size

For the WSH survey samples there was no significant difference in the workplace size distribution between 2022 and 2023. Table 40 is the ABS data, which is not directly comparable as the categorisation of numbers of workers in the WSH survey does not replicate the ABS categories.

	2022	2023
<b>1–10 workers</b>	17%	15%
<b>11–20</b>	9%	10%
<b>21–50</b>	14%	11%
<b>51–100</b>	11%	12%
<b>101–500</b>	15%	18%
<b>500+</b>	27%	30%
<b>Don't know</b>	6%	4%

Table 39. 2022–2023 Workplace size

Size of employer	Percentage of employees
<b>Under 20 employees</b>	22%
<b>20 – 49 employees</b>	11.5%
<b>50 – 99 employees</b>	9%
<b>100 – 999 employees</b>	26.5%
<b>1,000 and over employees</b>	31%

Table 40. ABS data Employer size 2023<sup>3</sup>

3. Source: ABS Employee earnings and hours May 2023, Datacube 1, Table 14

## Union Membership

In the 2023 WSH survey, there has been a statistically significant increase in the number of respondents who used to be union members and as in 2022, those who are currently a union member is higher than the Australian labour force.

	2021	2022	2023
<b>I am currently a member of a union</b>	17%	24%	22%
<b>I used to be a member of a union, but am not now</b>	24%	26%	32%
<b>I have never been a member of a union</b>	58%	50%	47%

Table 41. Union membership 2021, 2022 and 2023

2023 Industry and union membership	Currently a member	Used to be a member, not now	Never been a member
<b>Administration and professional services</b>	12%	29%	59%
<b>Agriculture, forestry &amp; fishing</b>	11%	38%	51%
<b>Community &amp; disability services</b>	22%	47%	31%
<b>Construction</b>	21%	39%	40%
<b>Education</b>	33%	30%	37%
<b>Entertainment, arts &amp; recreation</b>	22%	28%	50%
<b>Finance, banking &amp; insurance</b>	16%	31%	53%
<b>Health and social assistance</b>	33%	31%	36%
<b>Hospitality, tourism &amp; food services</b>	9%	23%	68%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	25%	34%	42%
<b>Media &amp; communications</b>	7%	28%	65%
<b>Mining</b>	33%	26%	41%
<b>Property &amp; other services</b>	6%	35%	58%
<b>Public services</b>	34%	24%	42%
<b>Retail</b>	17%	33%	50%
<b>Transport</b>	31%	44%	25%
<b>Utilities</b>	19%	42%	39%
<b>Warehousing &amp; logistics</b>	23%	39%	39%
<b>Trades &amp; trade assistants</b>	8%	39%	53%

Table 42. Industry and Union membership 2023

## Age profile and job status

	2021	2022	2023
<b>Under 30</b>	23%	26%	26%
<b>30-39</b>	26%	24%	24%
<b>40-49</b>	22%	21%	21%
<b>50-59</b>	19%	17%	18%
<b>60+</b>	11%	12%	11%

Table 43. 2021, 2022, 2023 Work Shouldn't Hurt sample by age group

### 2023 WSH sample by work status and age group

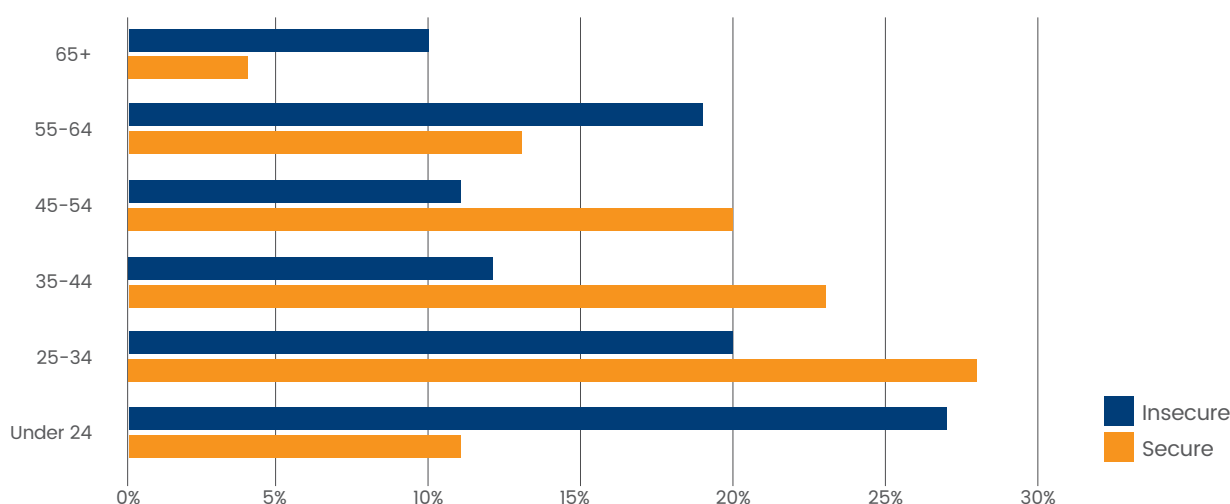


Figure 60. 2023 Work Shouldn't Hurt sample by work status and age group

### Featured industries age distribution

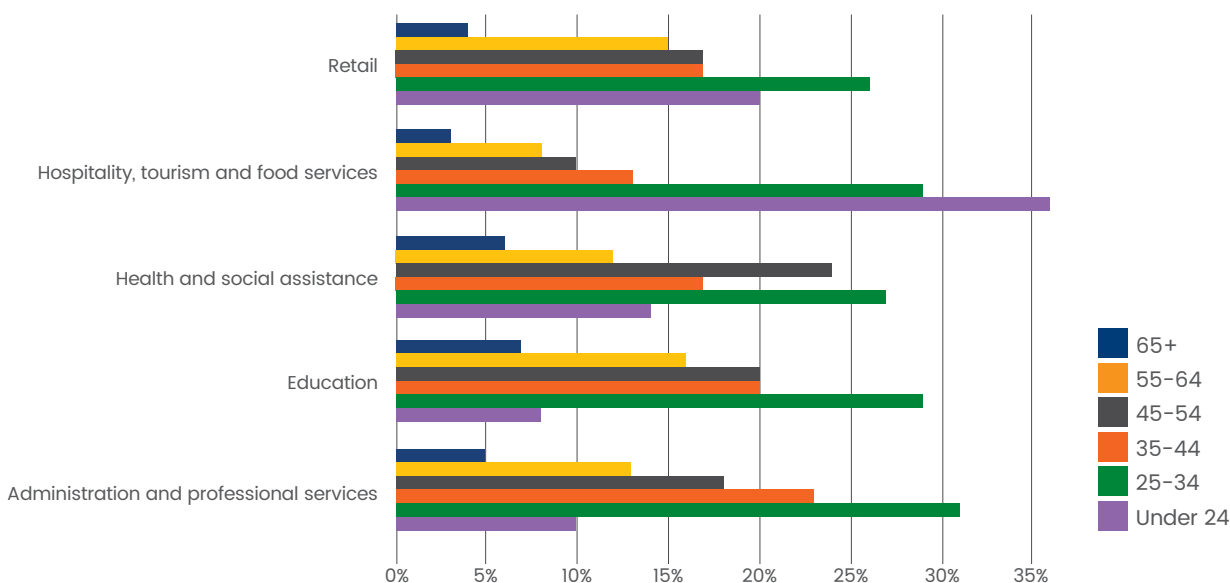


Figure 61. 2023 Work Shouldn't Hurt sample featured industries and age group

