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RESEARCH



Research report prepared for ACTU

Work and Welfare Perceptions Survey

March, 2013



Background to the research

Methodology and research design

Background to the project

Introduction

The ACTU's Wealth Inequality research in 2011 uncovered some fascinating misperceptions among the Australian public around the distribution of wealth. Understanding these misperceptions helps us understand how policy discussions may be re-framed to have more of an impact on Australians.

It may also be the case that similar misperceptions exist around welfare payments and insecure employment. The current research will explore these misperceptions and specifically examine Australians' attitudes and perceptions towards:

- The make up of the Australian workforce – what percentage do they assume are employed under casual employment arrangements? What industries do they think are more or less likely to have high proportions of casual workers?
- Access to benefits – what percentage do they assume have access to benefits such as paid sick leave, paid annual leave, OHS, Superannuation, etc.
- Attitudes to welfare payments – do Australians think that the welfare system is fair? Is this attitude based on inaccurate knowledge of the payments made to welfare recipients (i.e., do people overestimate how much someone on unemployment benefits actually receives?)
- The future of Australian industry – are people worried about issues such as income inequality? How do people think our industry landscape will change over the next 20 years – and does this make them concerned for job security?

We surveyed 1,013 Australians for this project – each participant took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete the survey. Fieldwork was completed via our online survey portal from 11-17th February 2013.

In the report we highlight any statistically significant differences as a function of age, gender, voting preferences, and whether the participants had ever received any welfare payments. Only statistically significant differences are described.

Sections of this report will be released in stages by the ACTU throughout 2013.





Summary

Workforce Perceptions

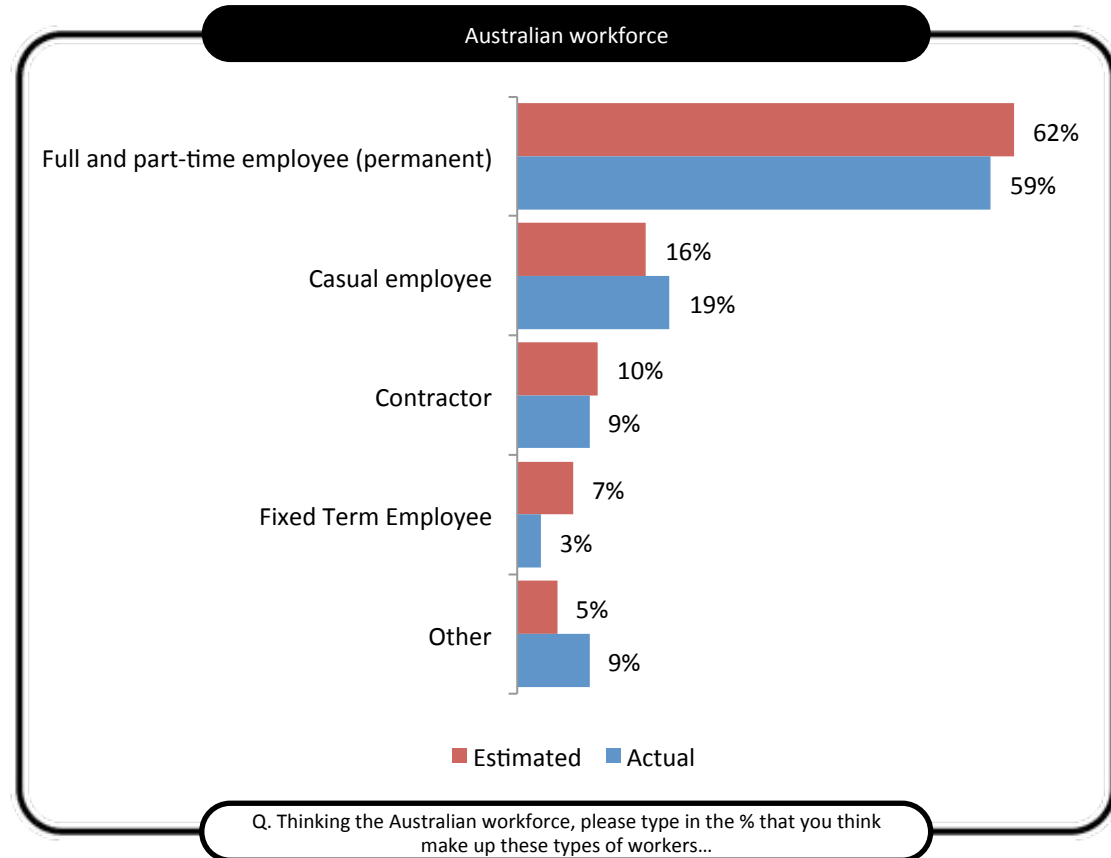
Workforce perceptions

When asked to estimate the percentage of various types of employment in the Australian workforce, participants in the survey suggested:

- Full and part-time (permanent) 62%
- Casual 16%
- Contractor 10%
- Fixed term 7%
- Other 5%

As shown in the chart at right, these estimates correspond closely with the actual distribution of employee types.

Source for 'actual': ABS, *Forms of Employment, November 2011* (Released April 2012), Cat. 6359.0



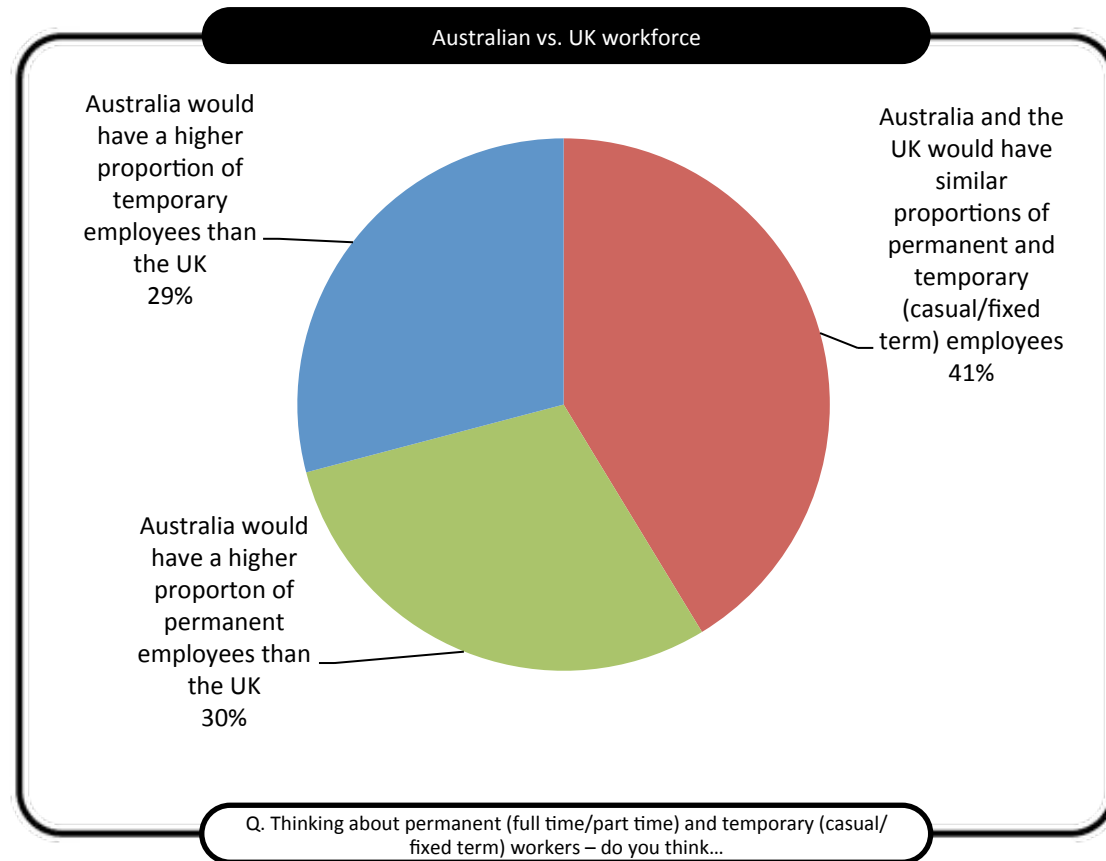
Workforce Perceptions *continued*

Australian vs. UK workforce

Australians are quite split on whether they think our workforce composition is similar or different to that of the UK. A large proportion (41%) think that the two nations would be quite similar in their workforce composition. However, 30% think that Australia would have a higher proportion of *permanent* employees than the UK, and 29% think that Australian would have a higher proportion of *temporary* employees than the UK.

In fact, the rate of temporary employment in Australia is **much** higher than in the UK – 28% compared to 6%.

Source for 'actual':
 ABS, Forms of Employment, November 2011 (Released April 2012), Cat. 6359.0
 OECD (2012) 'Statistical Annex' in OECD Employment Outlook 2012, Table F



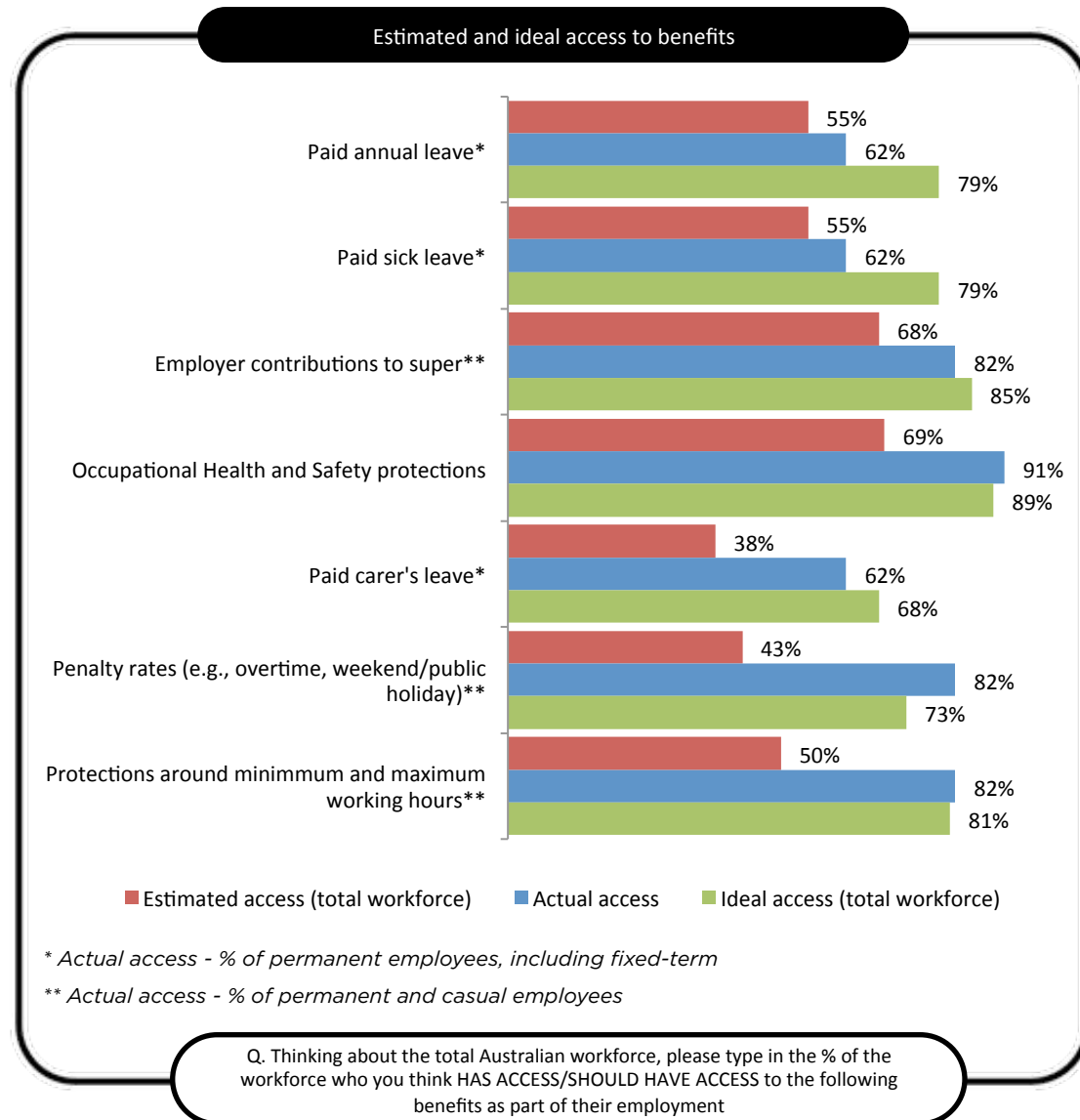
Workforce Perceptions *continued*

Access to benefits

As shown in the chart, for every employee benefit (paid annual leave, paid sick leave, OH&S, etc), there was a disparity between the estimated and the ideal levels with participants suggesting that more of the workforce should have access to each benefit than the estimate.

In all instances, the actual proportions with access to benefits was higher than the estimated proportion of the total Australian workforce. For OHS protections, penalty rates, and working hours protections, actual access is higher than ideal access.

Source for 'actual': ABS, *Forms of Employment, November 2011* (Released April 2012), Cat. 6359.0



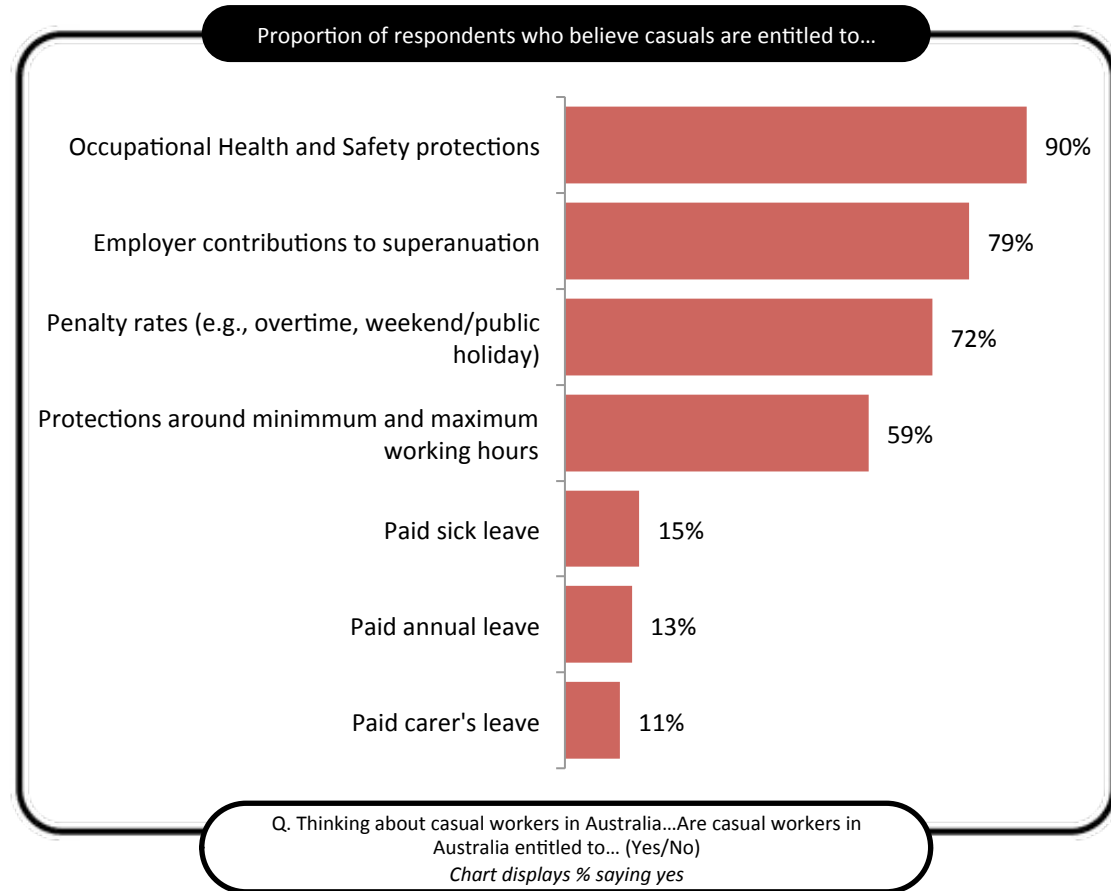
Workforce Perceptions *continued*

Perception of casual employee access to benefits

Participants were asked which employment benefits casual workers are entitled to in Australia.

Almost all respondents thought casuals are entitled to OHS protections (90%). Agreement was also high for superannuation contributions (79% said yes), penalty rates (72%) and working hours protections (59%).

Under Australian law, casual workers are in fact entitled to all four benefits, indicating that there is a marked level of misunderstanding of casual entitlements, particularly around penalty rates and working hours.



Workforce Perceptions *continued*

Perceived change in proportion of casual workers over time

Most participants (87%) thought that there would be a higher proportion of casual workers in the Australian workforce today compared to 20 years ago

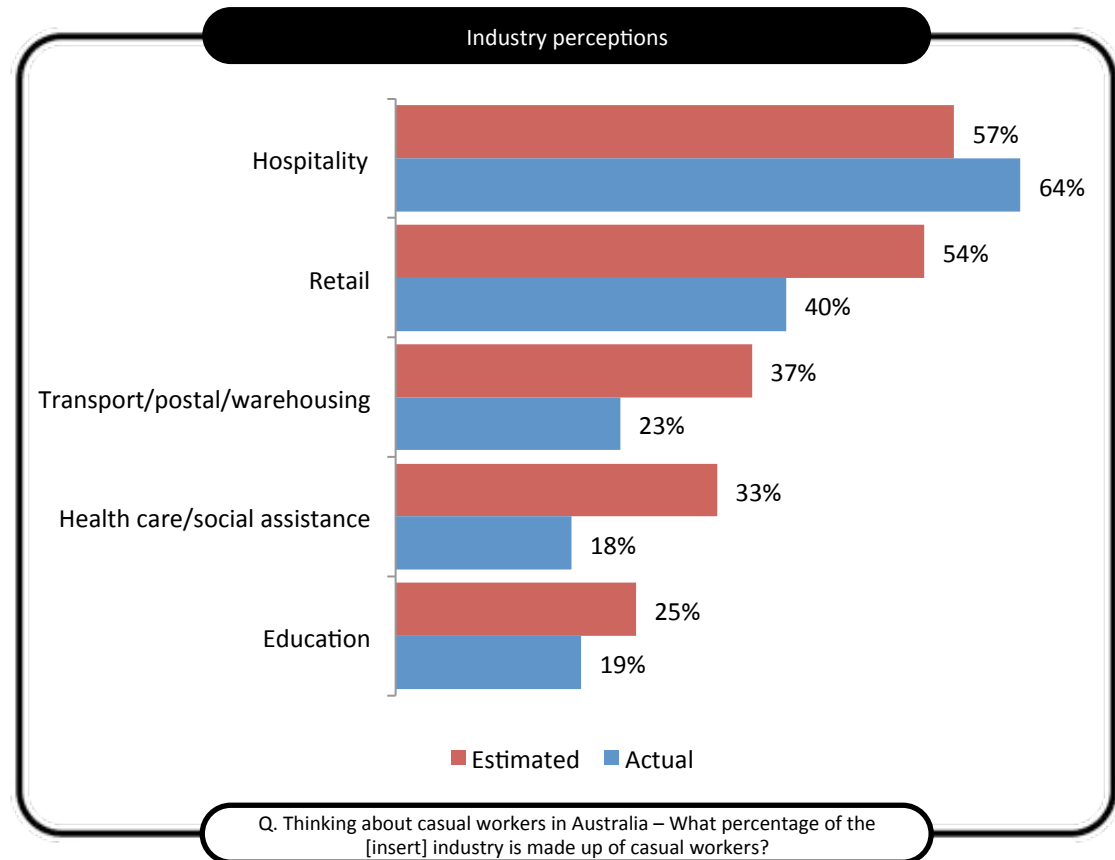
The stereotyped view of the casual employee

Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of employees who fit into certain demographic categories. The stereotyped view of the casual employee is someone who is female, aged under 25 years, without a post-school qualification and in their current job for more than a year.

Casual workers were most likely thought to work in hospitality and retail. The industry estimates are provided in the chart on this page. The proportion of the hospitality industry made up of casual workers was underestimated; the presence of casuals in the remaining industries was substantially overestimated.

Just over 50% of the respondents (51%) thought that casual workers hope to transition into permanent roles, but that this rarely happens. It was thought to be the “trap of the casual” rather than the bridge to permanent work.

Source for ‘actual’: ABS, *Forms of Employment, November 2011* (Released April 2012), Cat. 6359.0



Workforce Perceptions *continued*

Employee vs. employer control

When asked where the balance of power lies in today's workplaces, 69% of Australians thought that employers have the upper hand and that this power has increased over the last 20 years.

Welfare Perceptions

New Start perceptions

Australians overestimated the actual amount of New Start and think that it should be raised by almost \$70 per week.

- Actual: \$246.30
- Estimated: \$259.74
- Ideal: \$315.19

Welfare fraud perceptions

It was estimated that 17% of welfare recipients are prosecuted for welfare fraud in Australia. However, in 2009-10, only 3,461 cases of fraud were prosecuted – a prosecution rate of less than 1% of over 7 million customers.

Source for 'actual': Australian Institute of Criminology, *Welfare fraud in Australia: Dimensions and issues*, June 2011

Accessed at: <http://aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/421-440/tandi421.html>

Welfare comparisons

When asked how Australia compares to the US and the UK in terms of government welfare payments (as a proportion of total government budgets), 61% of Australians think we spend more than the US, and 31% think we spend more than the UK.

In 2009 (the last year for which there is complete data) Australian public spending on cash benefits accounted for 22% of total government expenditure – marginally **less** than the UK **and** the USA (both 23%).

Source for 'actual': *OECD Social Expenditure Database*

Societal and Industry Perceptions

Industry perceptions

When asked what proportion of Australia's GDP comes from mining, the average estimate was 38%. While there was some talk of the burst of the mining bubble, this proportion was expected to persist for the next 20 years (with an estimate of 39% of our GDP coming from mining in 20 years).

Other industries were also thought to remain relatively stable over the next 20 years:

- Manufacturing: 23% today, 20% in 20 years
- Services: 33% today, 35% in 20 years
- Construction: 24% today, 25% in 20 years

These were large overestimates of the share of Australia's GDP coming from mining, manufacturing and construction today. In 2011-12, the mining industry directly accounted for 10% of GDP, and manufacturing and construction for 7% each. The services industry (defined as all industries other than agriculture, mining, manufacturing and construction), contributed to 60% of GDP.

Source: ABS *Australian System of National Accounts, 2011-12*, Cat 5204.0

Concerns of Australians

A list of industry issues and challenges were given to survey participants and they were asked to rate the extent to which they were concerned about each. One of the items of highest concern was *Kids of today not having access to good jobs here in Australia when they grow up* (55% very/extremely concerned), followed by the *Growing number of 'working poor' (American style working poor who are stuck in low paid, insecure jobs)* (54% very/extremely concerned).



Demographics

Demographic profile of survey respondents

We surveyed 1013 people across Australia...

Gender (n=1013)	N	%
Male	518	51%
Female	495	49%

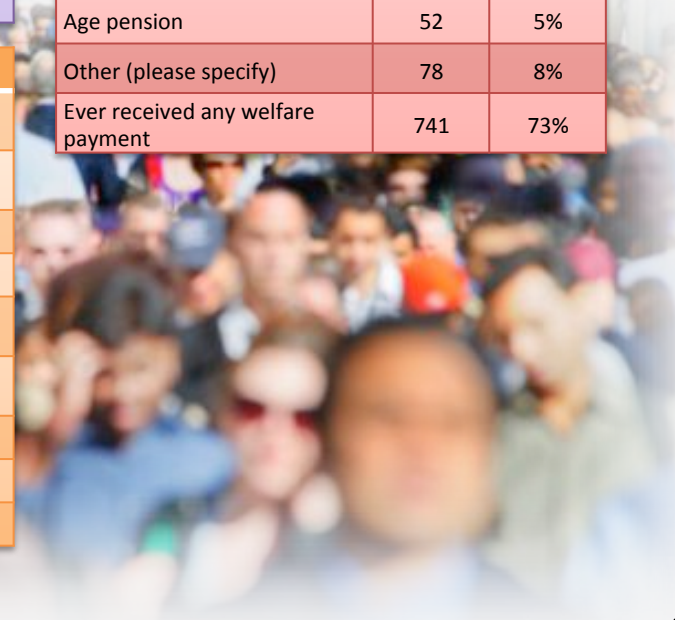
Age (n=1013)	N	%
18 – 24	127	12%
25 – 34	230	23%
35 – 44	198	20%
45 – 54	203	20%
55 – 64	206	20%
65 and over	49	5%

Voting preference (n=1013)	N	%
Typically vote Labor	297	29%
Typically vote Liberal	279	28%
Typically vote Greens	75	7%
Typically vote for another party	53	5%
I would prefer not to say	309	31%

Location (n=1013)	N	%
Queensland	207	20%
New South Wales	201	20%
Victoria	217	21%
South Australia	153	15%
Western Australia	102	10%
ACT	54	5%
Tasmania	51	5%
Northern Territory	28	3%

Employment (n=1013)	N	%
Employed full time (permanent)	380	38%
Employed part time (permanent)	110	11%
Employed as a casual	110	11%
Employed as a contractor	40	4%
Employed as a Fixed Term Employee	8	1%
Not employed but looking for work	58	6%
A home maker	83	8%
Retired	116	12%
Other	108	11%

Welfare ever received (n=1013)	N	%
Austudy	141	14%
Abstudy	18	2%
Youth Allowance	123	12%
New Start/Unemployment benefits	249	25%
Family Payments	270	27%
Single parent payments	75	7%
Disability pension	96	10%
Age pension	52	5%
Other (please specify)	78	8%
Ever received any welfare payment	741	73%





Detailed results

Detailed breakdown of results and differences between demographic groups.



Workforce perceptions

Australian workforce perceptions

Gender

Females predicted that there were less full time employees (M=39.45%) than males (M=44.30%). Conversely, males predicted that there were less casual (M=15.31%) and fixed-term (M=6.03%) employees in the Australian workforce than females (M=17.01% and M=7.40% respectively)

Age

There was also a significant age difference, with those in the 45-54 and 55-64 age brackets predicting less people employed in fixed term employment (M=6.09% and M=5.95%) to those in the 18-24 and 25-34 age brackets (M=7.93% and M=7.58%).

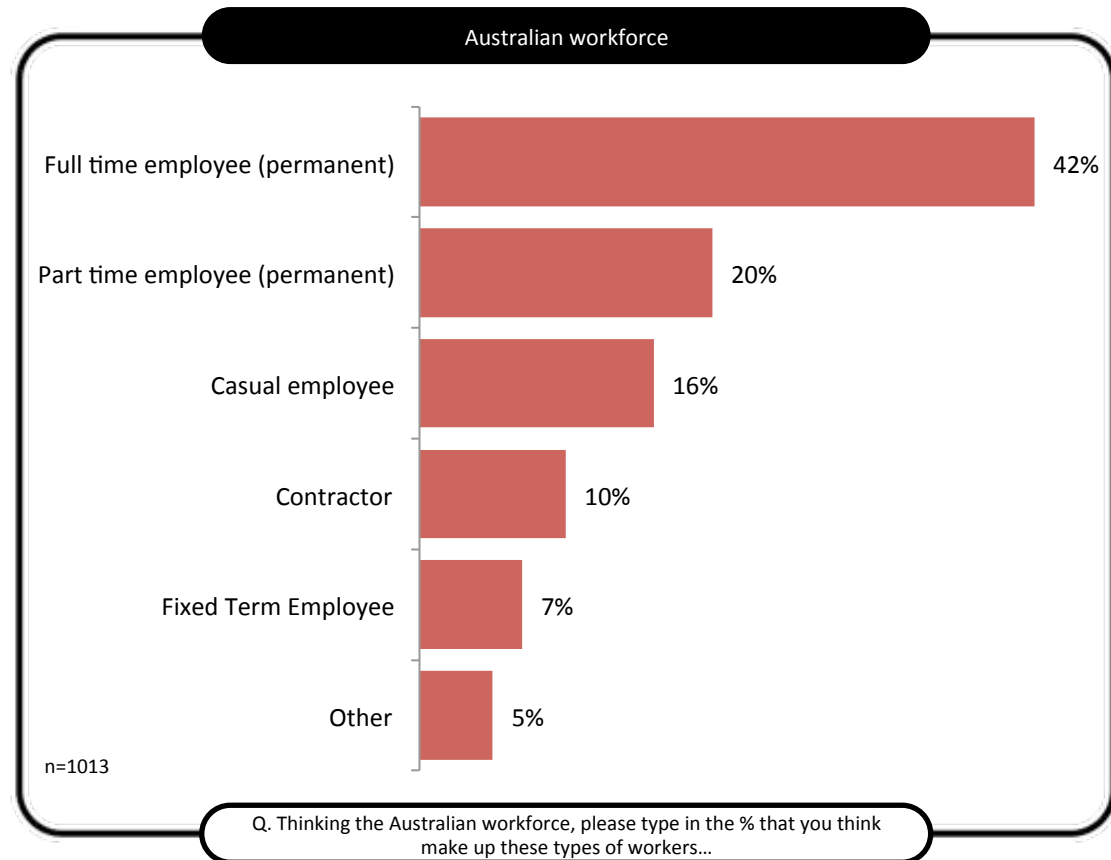
Participants aged 18-24 predicted a significantly lower percentage of employees in full-time employment (M=34.61%) compared to all other age brackets (25-34 M=40.46%, 35-44 M=43.2%, 45-54 M=44.48%, 55-64 M=43.05%, 65+ M=47.45%)

Voting preference

The only difference to emerge as a function of voting preference was that participants who typically vote Liberal predicted there were fewer employees in fixed-term positions in the Australian workforce (M=5.47%) compared to Labor, other, and not disclosed (Labor M=6.89%, other M=7.75%, not disclosed M=7.55%).

Welfare Payments

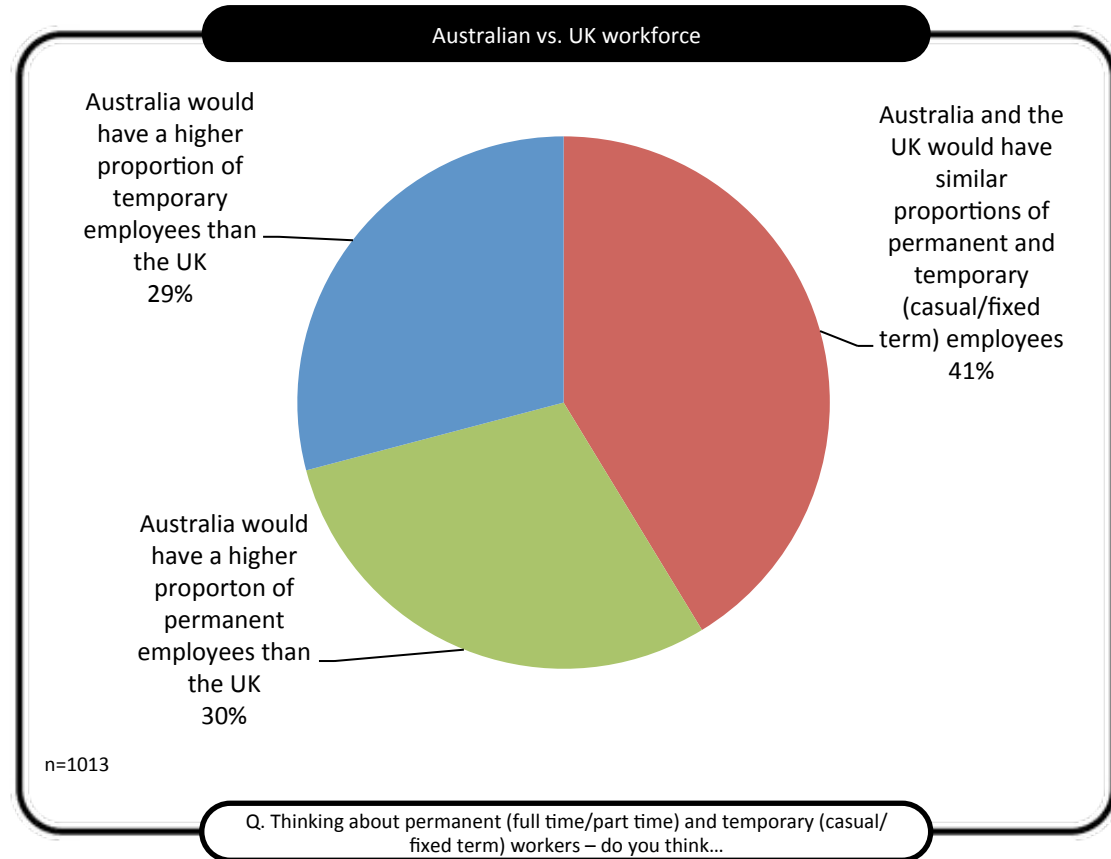
Participants who had never received any type of welfare payments predicted there were more full-time employees in the work force (M=44.54%), less casual (M=16.73%), and fewer people employed in other types of work (M=3.5%) than those who had received at least one type of welfare payment (M=40.97%, M=16.73% and M=4.94% respectively).



Australian versus UK workforce

There were no significant gender, voting preference, or welfare payment status differences in how people thought the Australian workforce compared to the UK.

However, there was a generational difference, with those in the 65+ age bracket thinking that Australia had a much higher proportion of temporary employment (47%) compared to those in the 18-24 (22%) and 25-34 age brackets (23%).

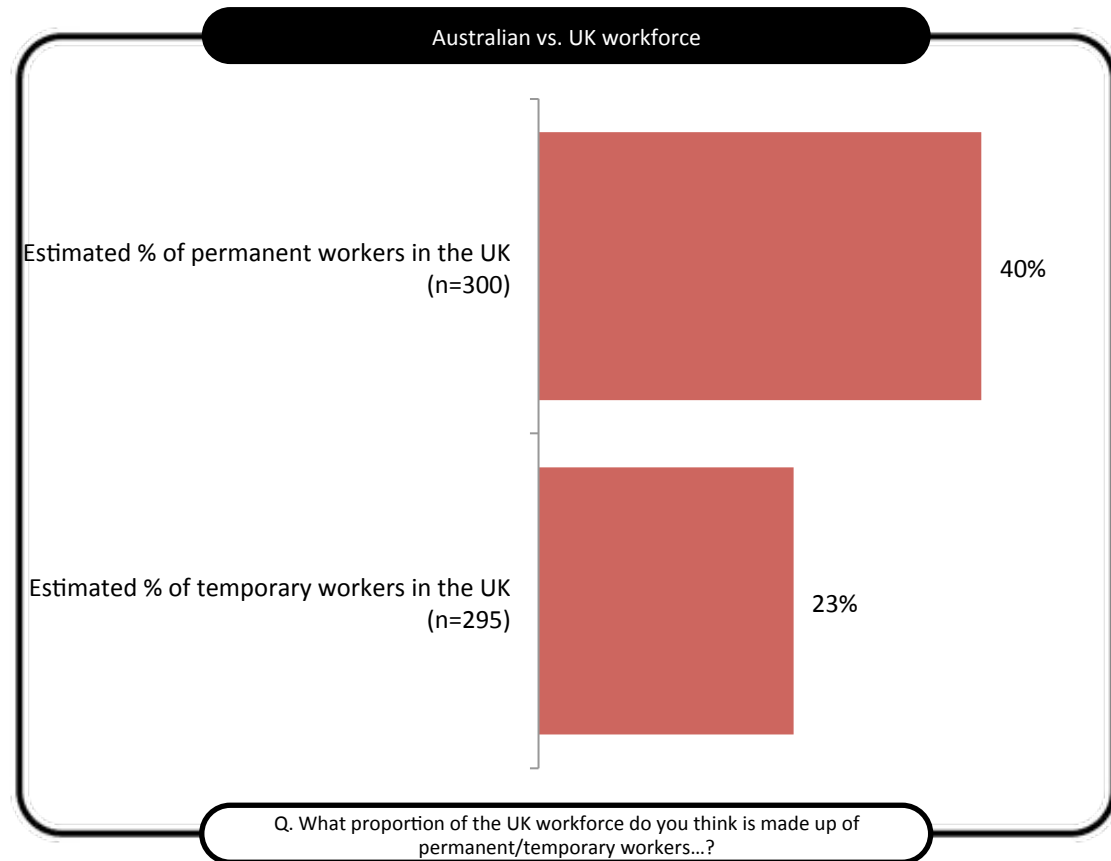


Australian versus UK workforce

Respondents who said there would be higher number of permanent or casual employees in the Australian workforce were then asked to estimate by how much. There were no significant differences by age, gender, or voting preferences in these responses.

For comparison, the estimated figures for the Australian workforce (from our earlier question) are:

- Permanent (full and part time): 62%
- Temporary (casual and fixed combined): 23% (16% for casual; 7% for fixed contractor).



Access to benefits: estimated and ideal

Gender

Female participants believed that less of the Australian workforce had access to paid annual leave (M=53.69%), paid sick leave (M=52.26%), occupational health and safety protections (M=65.63%), and protections around minimum and maximum working hours (M=45.48%) than males (M=56.94%, M=56.83%, M=71.92% and M=53.71% respectively). On the other hand, when asked what percentage *should* have access, females reported a higher percentage than males on all aspects except for occupational health and safety protections (which was similar between males M=87.64%, and females M=89.41%)

Age

Participants aged 18-24 provided lower estimates of the proportion of employees with access to paid annual leave than any other age bracket, and also gave lower estimates for access to paid sick leave (than 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+), employer contributions to superannuation (than 45-54 and 55-64), and occupational health and safety protections (45-54, 55-64, and 65+). When asked what percentage should have access, a similar pattern appeared.

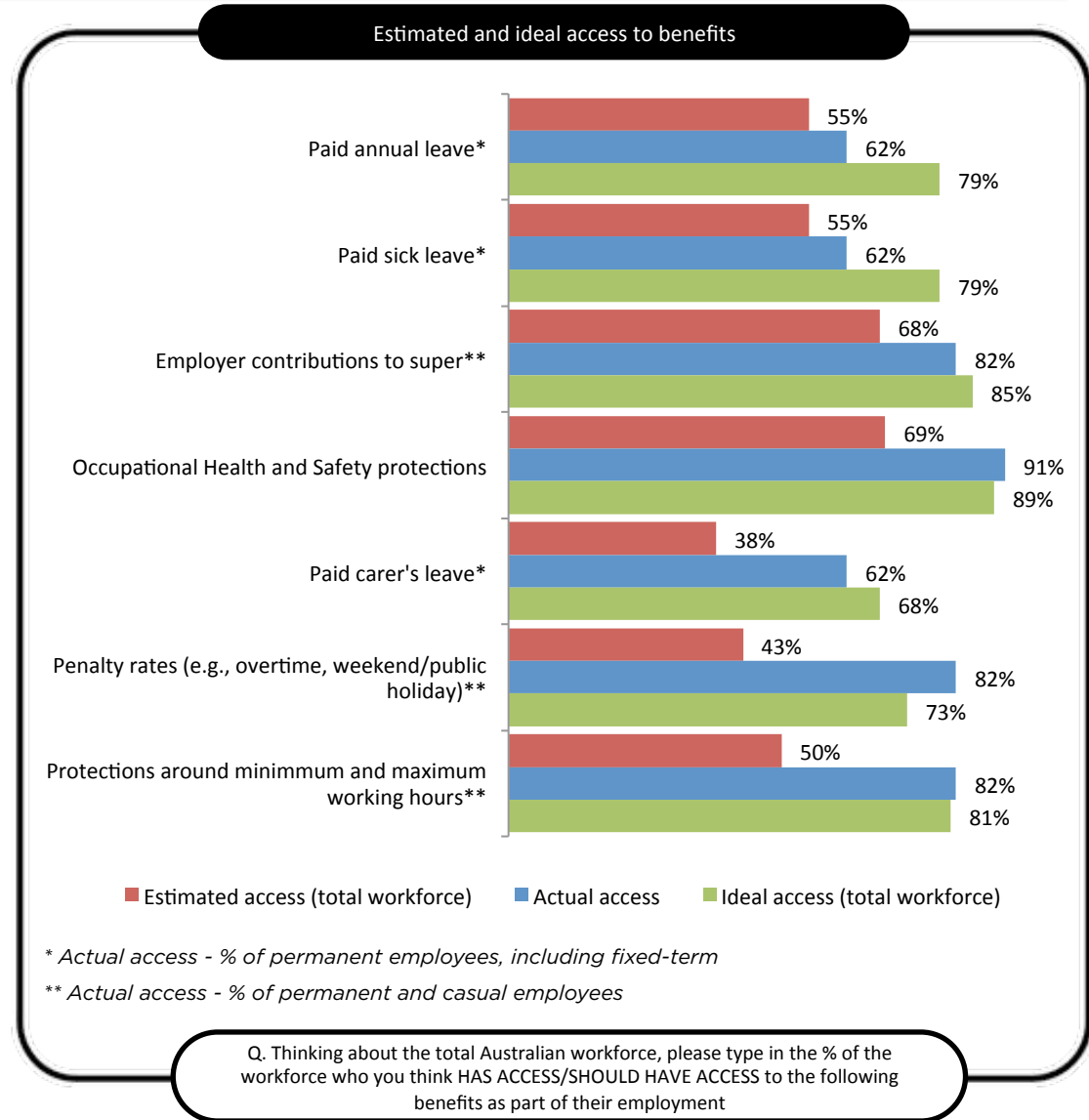
Participants aged 65+ felt that a smaller proportion of the workforce have access to paid carer's leave than those aged 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64. When asked what proportion should have access, this result is reversed with those in the 65+age bracket suggesting a significantly larger portion than those in the 35-44 and 45-54 brackets.

Voting preference

Participants who typically voted for Liberal tended to estimate a higher percentage of the workforce with access to various benefits than other voting types. There were no significant differences when asked what proportion should have access.

Welfare payments

Participants who had never accessed welfare payments predicted significantly higher access to all benefits (other than occupational health and safety protections and penalty rates) compared to those who had received at least one welfare payment. When asked what percentage should have access, no significant differences were found.

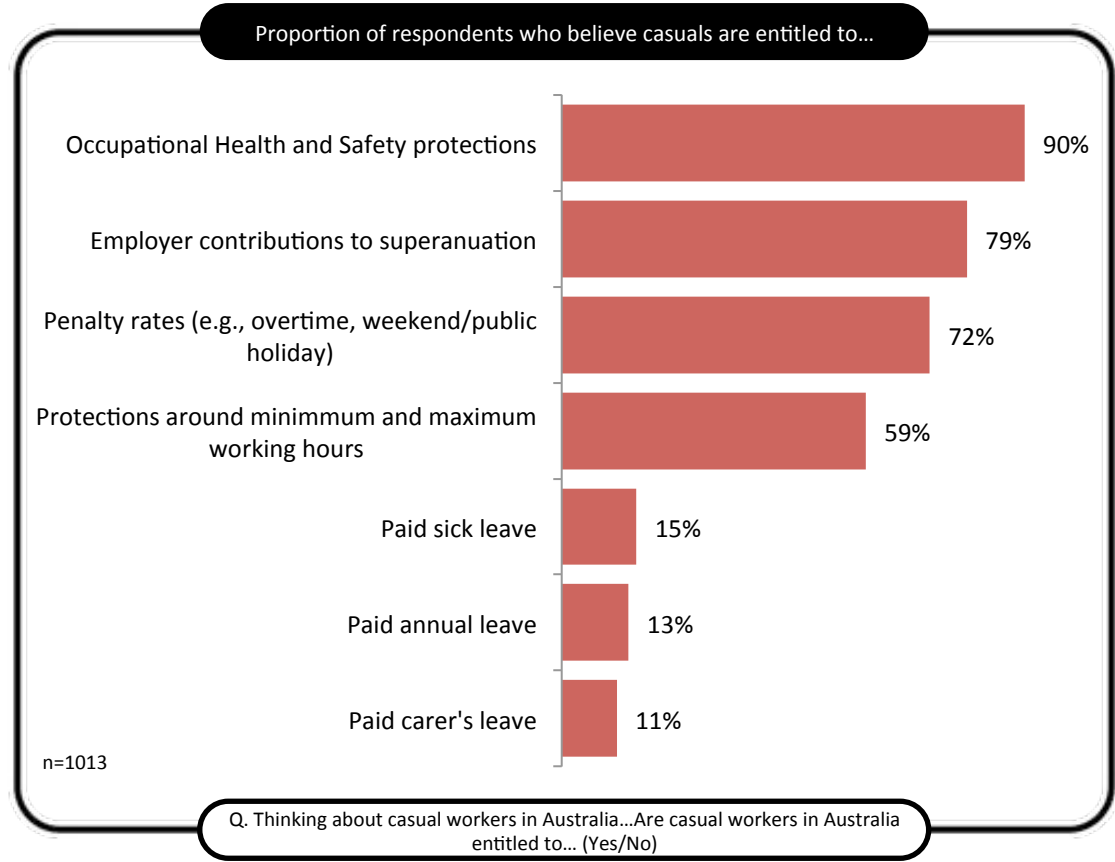


Casuals entitlements

There were no significant differences found in the estimation of casual employee entitlements between gender or political preferences.

However, age and welfare access played a significant role in the perception of some entitlements. Participants aged 55-64 were less likely to think that casual workers were entitled to penalty rates (58% yes) than those in the younger age brackets. In addition, participants in the 45-54 and 55-64 age brackets were more likely to say that casual workers were entitled to occupational health and safety protections (92% and 93% respectively), compared to those in the 18-23 (81%) and 25-34 (89%) age brackets.

Another significant difference occurred between those who have received at least one form of welfare payment and those who have not. Participants who have never received welfare payments were more inclined to believe that more casual workers are entitled to occupational health and safety protections (95%) than those who have (88%).

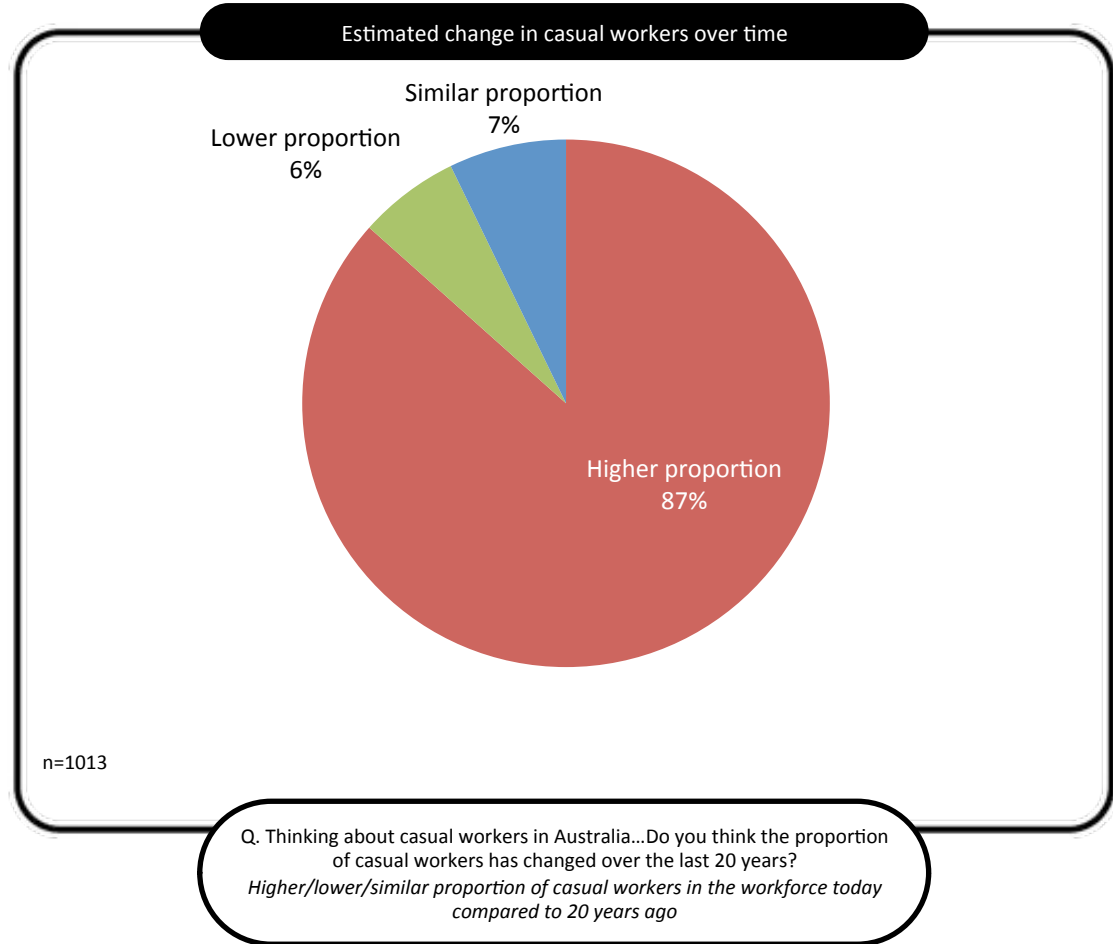


Estimated change in casual workers over time

Although the majority of respondents answered that they thought there is now a higher proportion of casual workers in the Australian workforce compared to 20 years ago, there were some generational differences in the responses.

Respondents in the younger age brackets (18-24, 25-34) were less likely to say that there was a higher proportion of casual workers in the workforce today than 20 years ago (80% and 81% respectively) compared to those in the 55-64 age bracket (93%).

Similarly, respondents in the younger age brackets (18-24, 25-34) were more likely to say that there were less casual workers in the workforce today (11%, 12%) than those aged 45-54 (4%) and 55-64 (1%).

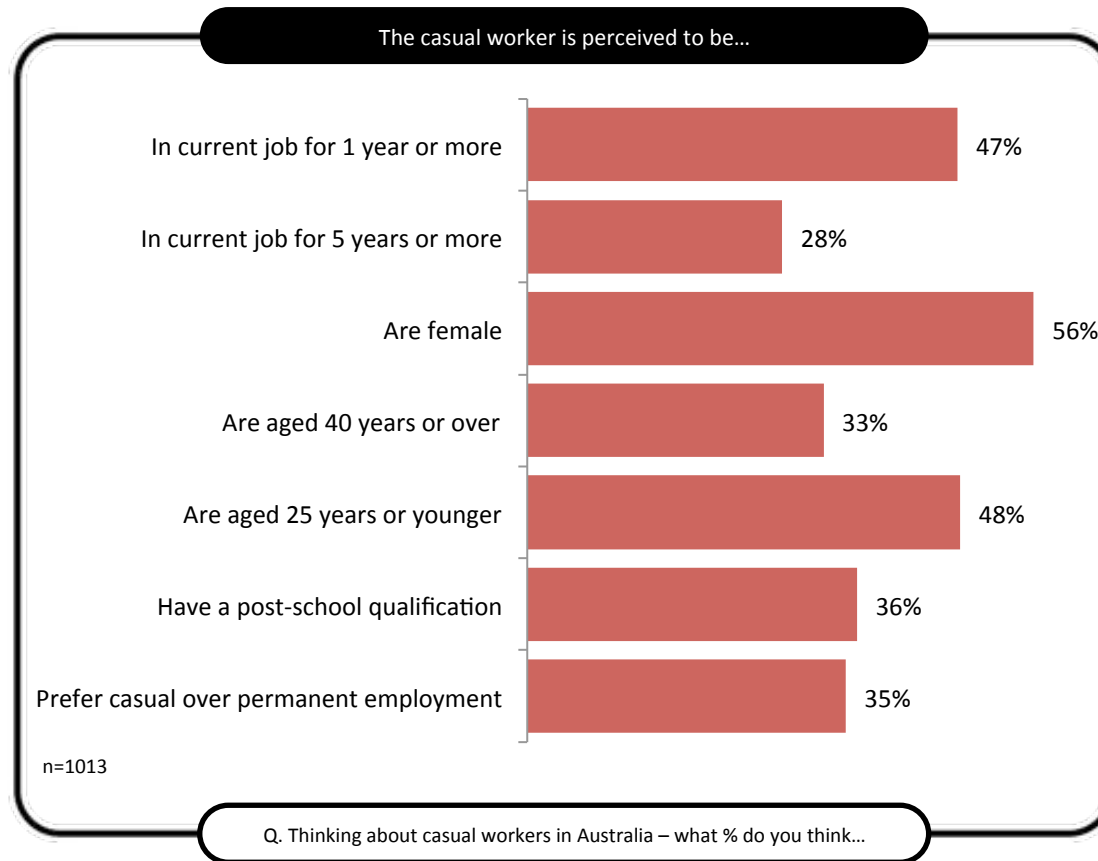


Casual worker perceptions

Males seem to consistently suggest that a lower proportion of the casual worker population fit into the various categories. Females gave higher estimates than males of the proportion of casual workers who have been in their current job for more than 5 years (females M=30.43%, males M=25.70%), are female (females M=58.07%, males M=53.29%), are 40 years or older (females M=35.00%, males M=30.19%), and have a post-school qualification (females M=38.42%, males M= 34.12%).

An interesting age divide was depicted in the results. The younger age brackets (18-24 and 25-34) estimated a higher proportion of the casual workforce aged 25 and under, whilst the older age brackets (35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+) estimated a higher percentage over the age of 40.

In general, respondents thought that there were more female than male casual workers (M=55.63%) in the Australian workforce. As well as females suggesting a significantly higher proportion of females in casual work than males, those in the age brackets 35-44 (M=57.39%), 45-54 (M=57.78%), and 55-64 (M=59.52%) estimated a higher proportion of females than those in the 18-24 (M=51.8%) and 25-34 (M=50.50%) age bracket.

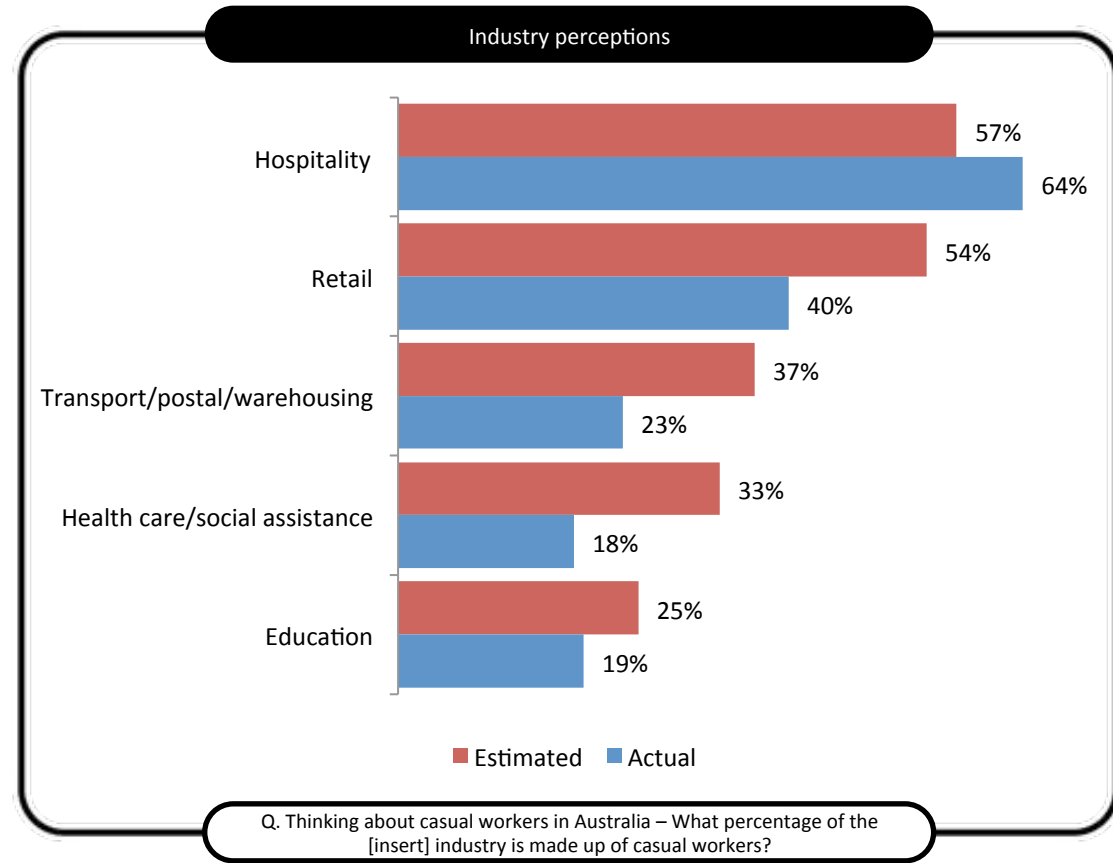


Casual worker industry perceptions

There were significant gender differences for every industry, with males estimating a significantly lower representation of casual workers in each industry than did females.

There were also differences between the age brackets. Those aged 18-24 (M=47.42%), 24-34 (M=53.77%), and 35-44 (M=55.21%) all estimated a lower proportion of casual workers in the hospitality industry compared to those in the 55-64 age bracket (M=66.10%). Moreover, those in the 18-24 (M=30.21%) and 25-34 (M=30.87%) age brackets estimated a lower percentage than those in the 55-64 age bracket (M=37.58%) in the health care/social assistance industry.

No significant differences were associated with political preference or welfare payments.



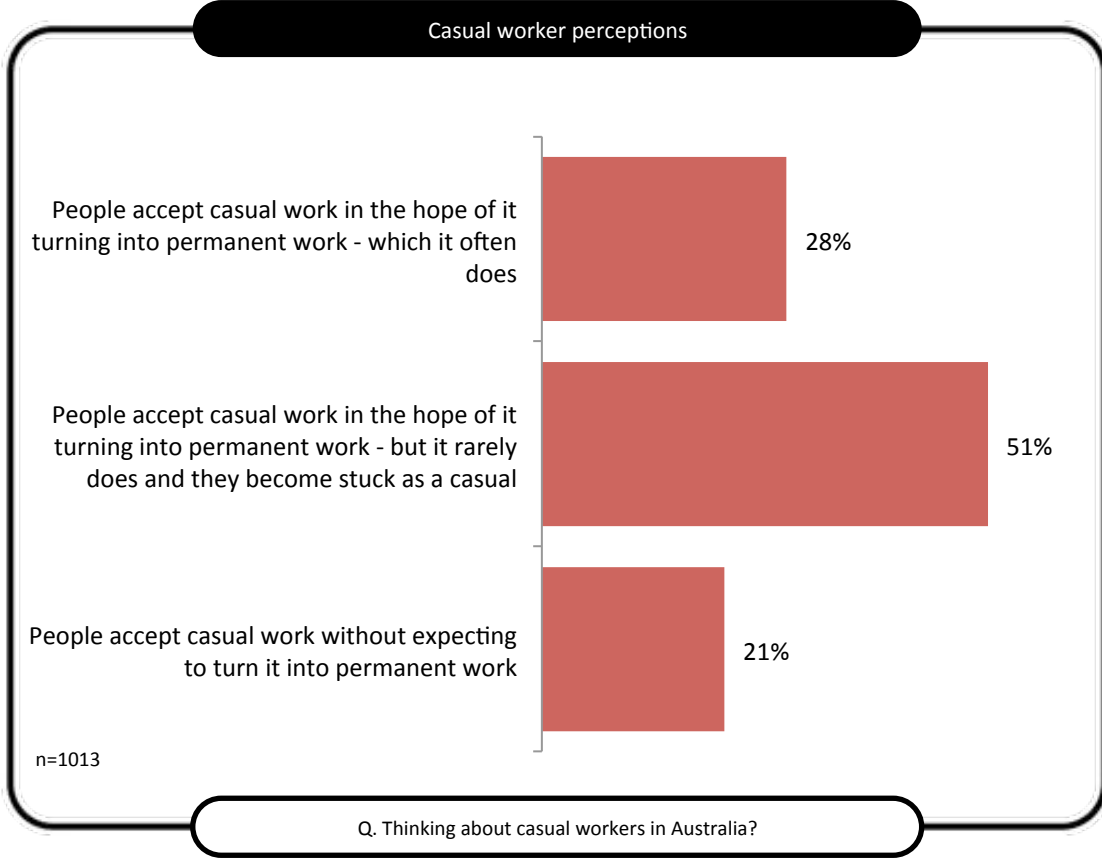
Casual worker perceptions

Respondents who have received one or more types of welfare payments were less likely to agree that those people in casual work are there because they prefer that type of work (34%) than were those who have never received welfare payment (39%).

A quarter of typical Liberal voters (26%) agreed that casual workers accept work without expecting it to become permanent, compared to 17% of those who did not disclose their voting preference.

Interestingly, males seem to have a more positive approach towards casual employment than females: 31% of males agreed that casual work often turns into permanent work, while a significantly smaller percentage of females (25%) felt the same.

A difference in age was also found, with respondents aged 35-44 significantly less likely to think that people accept casual work without expecting it to turn into permanent work (16%) compared to the 18-24 age bracket (31%)

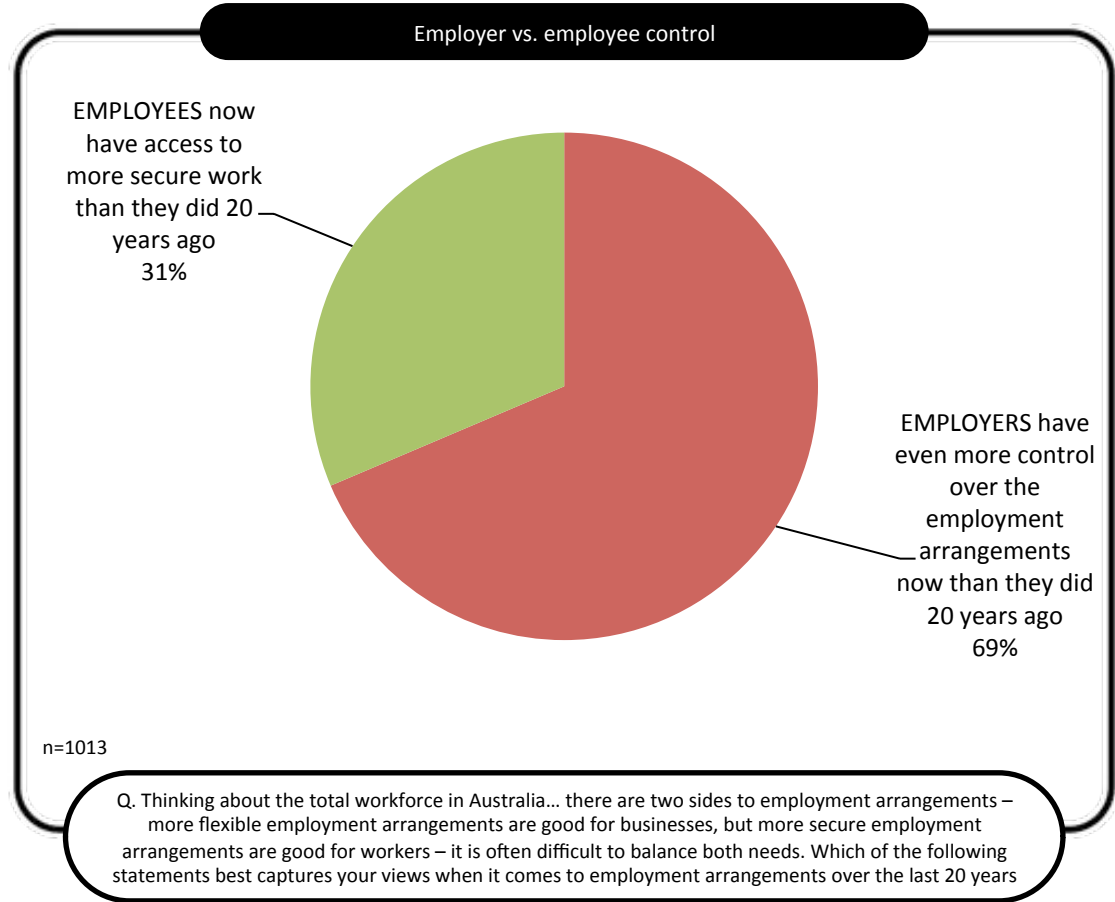


Employer vs. employee control

Results across the demographics tended to be quite similar, however there was a significant difference between respondents who voted Labor or Liberal.

Typical Labor voters were more likely than those who voted Liberal to say that employers have more control over the employee arrangements now that they did 20 years ago (72% compared to 60%).

In addition, respondents who voted Labor were less likely to say that employees now have access to more secure work than they did 20 years ago (28%), compared to those who voted Liberal (40%).





Welfare perceptions

“New Start” allowance perceptions

Actual: \$246.30

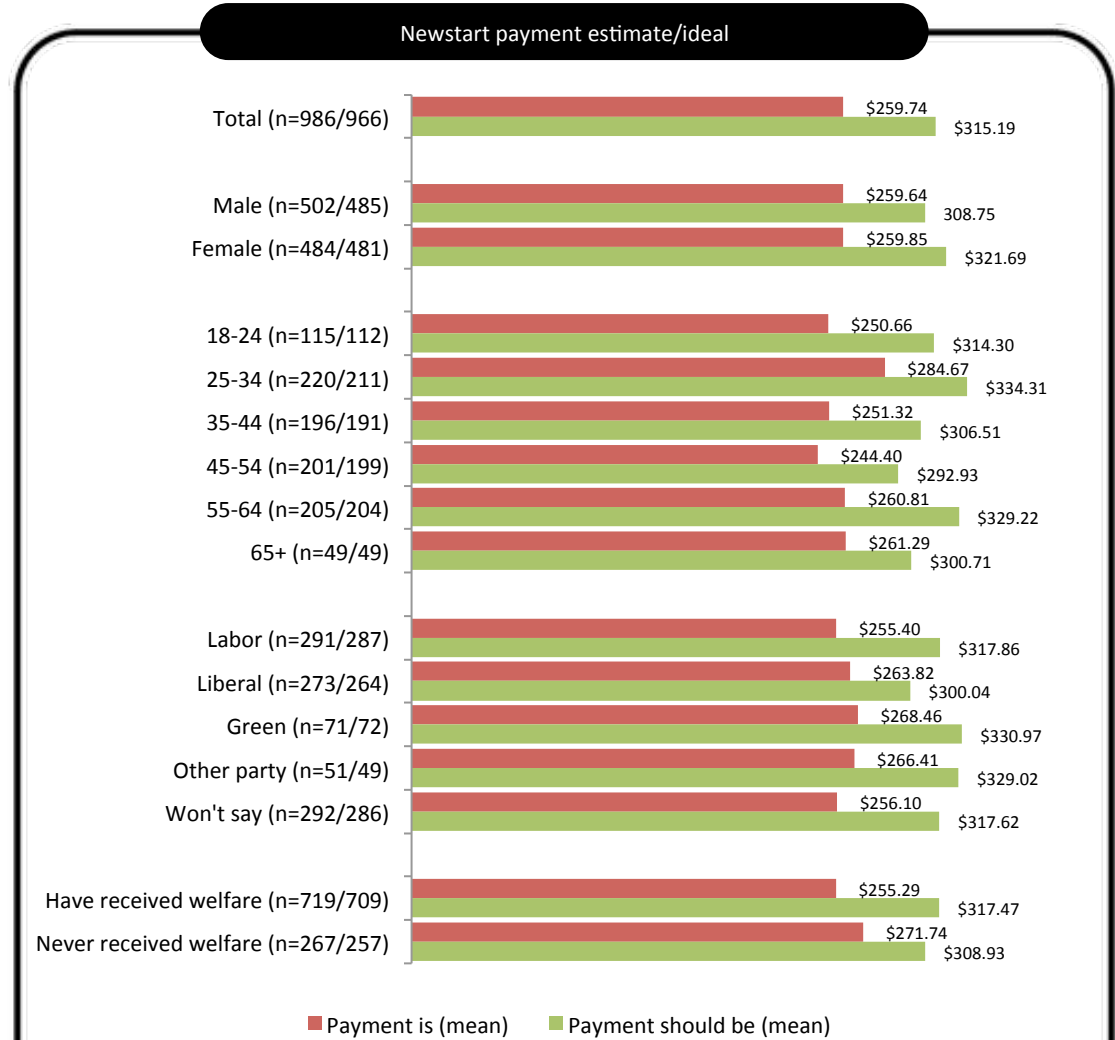
Estimated: \$259.74

Ideal: \$315.19

When asked to identify the weekly monetary amount paid by the “New Start” allowance, the overall estimate was slightly higher than the actual amount, while the overall ideal value of the weekly allowance was substantially higher than the actual value.

Differences in perceptions of the “New Start” allowance were generally associated with age. Those aged 25-35 provided a higher estimate of the allowance than those aged 35-44 or 45-54, and also provided a higher ideal estimate than those aged 45-54.

Experience of the welfare system also influenced estimates of the “New Start” allowance, with those who had ever received welfare making a significantly lower estimate than those who had not, bringing their estimate closer to the actual amount.

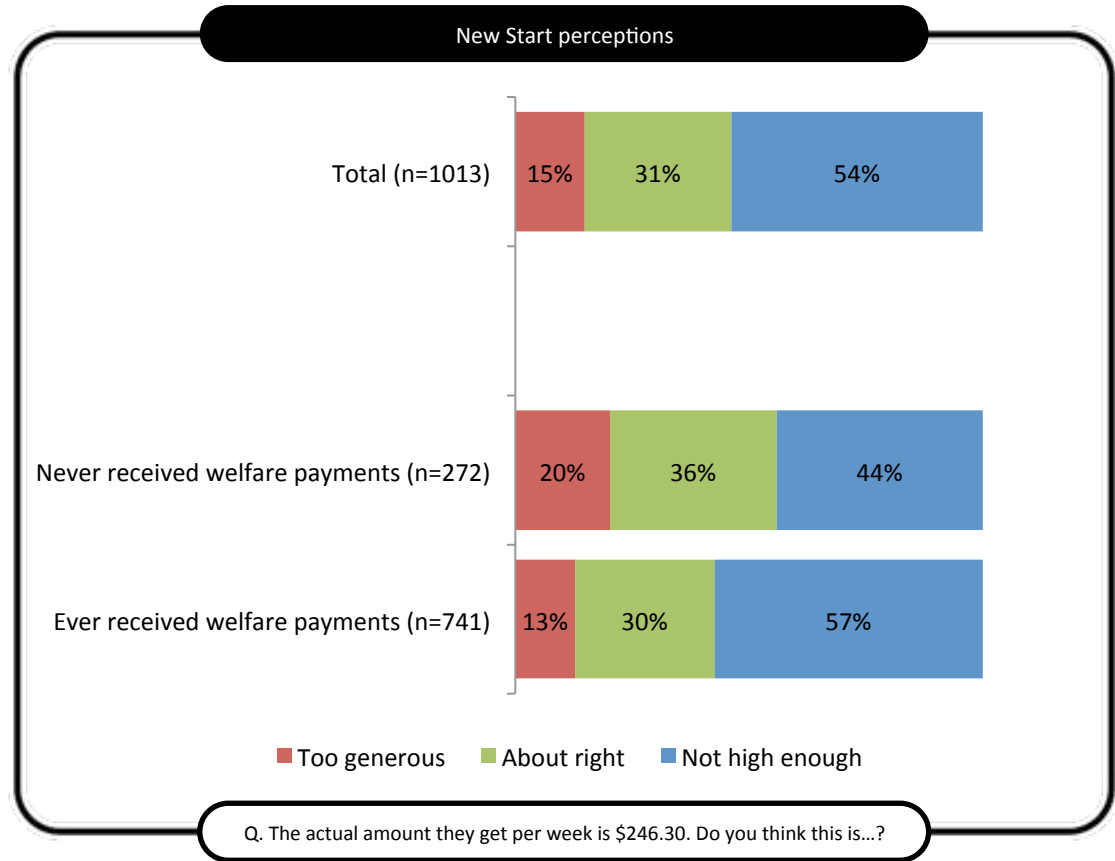


Thinking about a single person (no dependents) in Australia who is receiving the “New Start” allowance (this is the name of the federal unemployment benefit payments – other names you might know it by are the unemployment payment, the dole, etc...but it is the payment made to an unemployed person looking for work in Australia). How much do you think this payment IS/SHOULD BE per week?

“New Start” allowance perceptions

Respondents were then told that the actual weekly amount of the “New Start” allowance is \$246.30 per week, and asked if this value was too high, too low or about right. Differences in welfare payment status were found, with those never having received any kind of welfare payment more likely to indicate that \$246.30 was “too generous”, and those who had ever received any kind of welfare payment more likely to indicate this amount was “not high enough”.

The younger age bracket (18-24), when compared to the 55-64 age bracket, were more likely to say that the payment was “too generous” (23%, 10%).



“New Start” allowance perceptions

When asked how long they thought people typically stayed on the “New Start” allowance, there was a significant difference between those who had never received any kind of welfare payment and those who had.

People who had never received welfare payments were more likely to believe that people only stayed on the payment for less than 6 months (28%) compared to 21% of those who had received welfare.

Those who had received welfare payment were more likely to predict that people would stay on the allowance for two or more years (20%) compared to those who have never received welfare (14%).



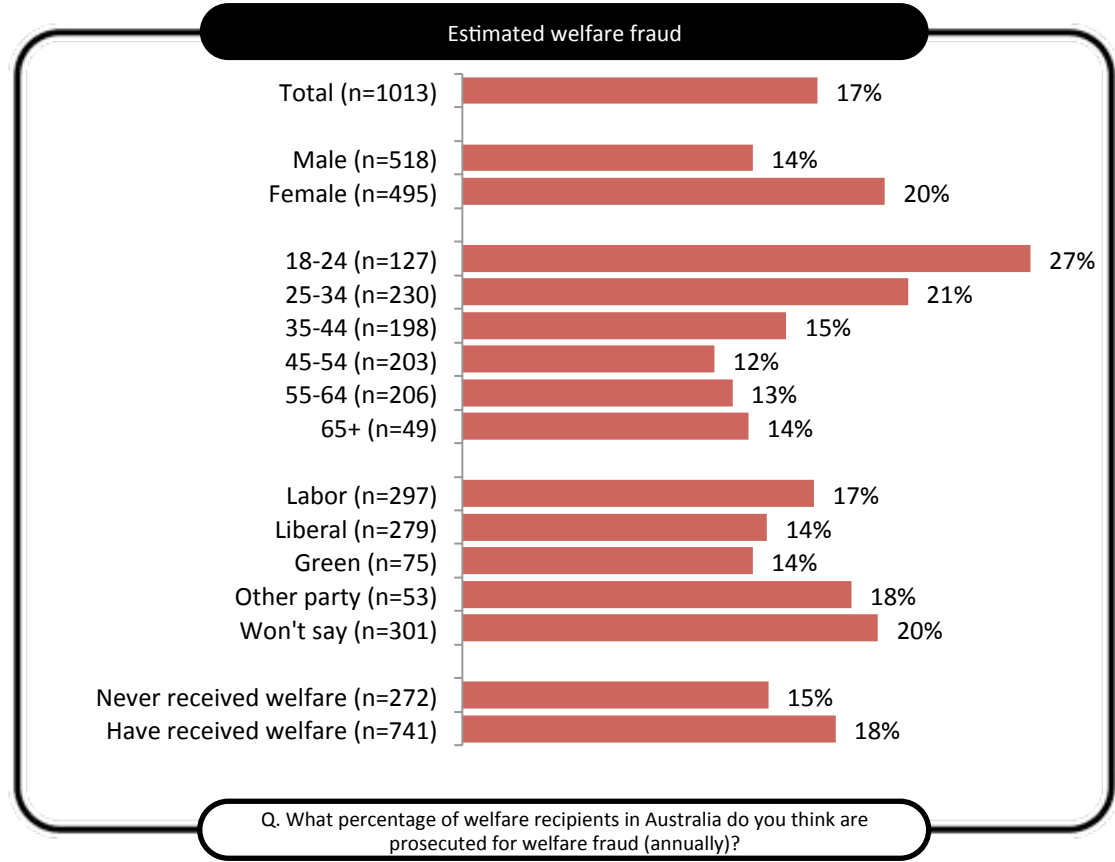
Welfare fraud perceptions



Females tended to predict that a higher percentage of people were prosecuted for welfare fraud each year (M=20.05%) than did males (M=13.78%).

In addition, those aged 18-24 and 25-34 also predicted a higher percentage of prosecutions (M=26.96% and M=21.14%) compared to the older age brackets (35-44 M=15.37%, 45-54 M=11.96%, 55-64 M=12.81%, 65+ M=13.57%).

Note: the difference between the 25-34 and 65+ age brackets are not significant, all other differences are significant.



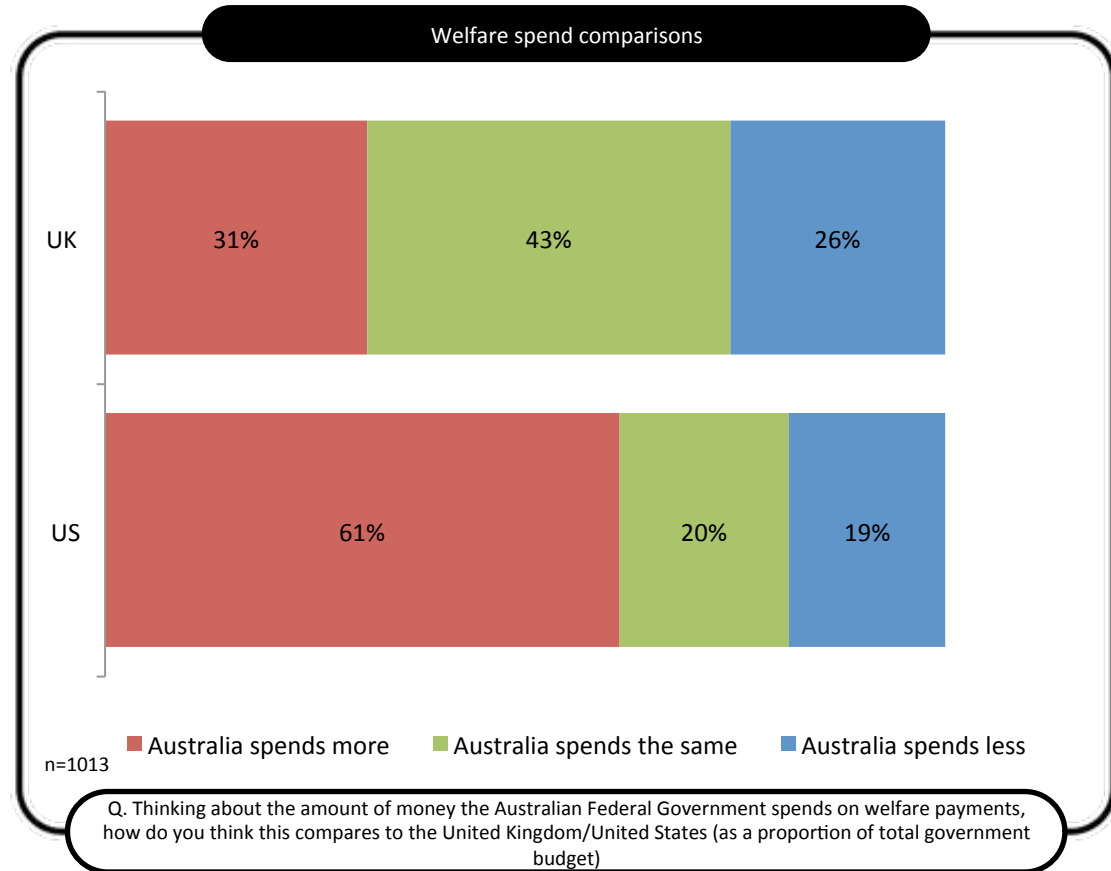
Australian welfare spend: comparisons to US and UK

When asked to compare the amount that the Australian Government spends on welfare to that of the UK, no significant differences were found across the demographics. However, when compared to the US, differences in perceptions appeared between gender and age.

Males were less likely to respond that the US and Australian Governments spent the same proportion on welfare (18%) than were females (23%).

Moreover, those aged 45-54 and 55-64 were also less likely to respond that they spend the same proportion (16% and 15% respectively) than the 18-24 age bracket (32%).

Another age difference was observed between those aged 35-44 and 45-54 and those aged 55-64. Respondents aged 35-44 (22%) and 45-54 (23%) were more likely than those aged 55-64 (11%) to believe that the Australian government spent a lower proportion on welfare than the US government.





Australian industry perceptions

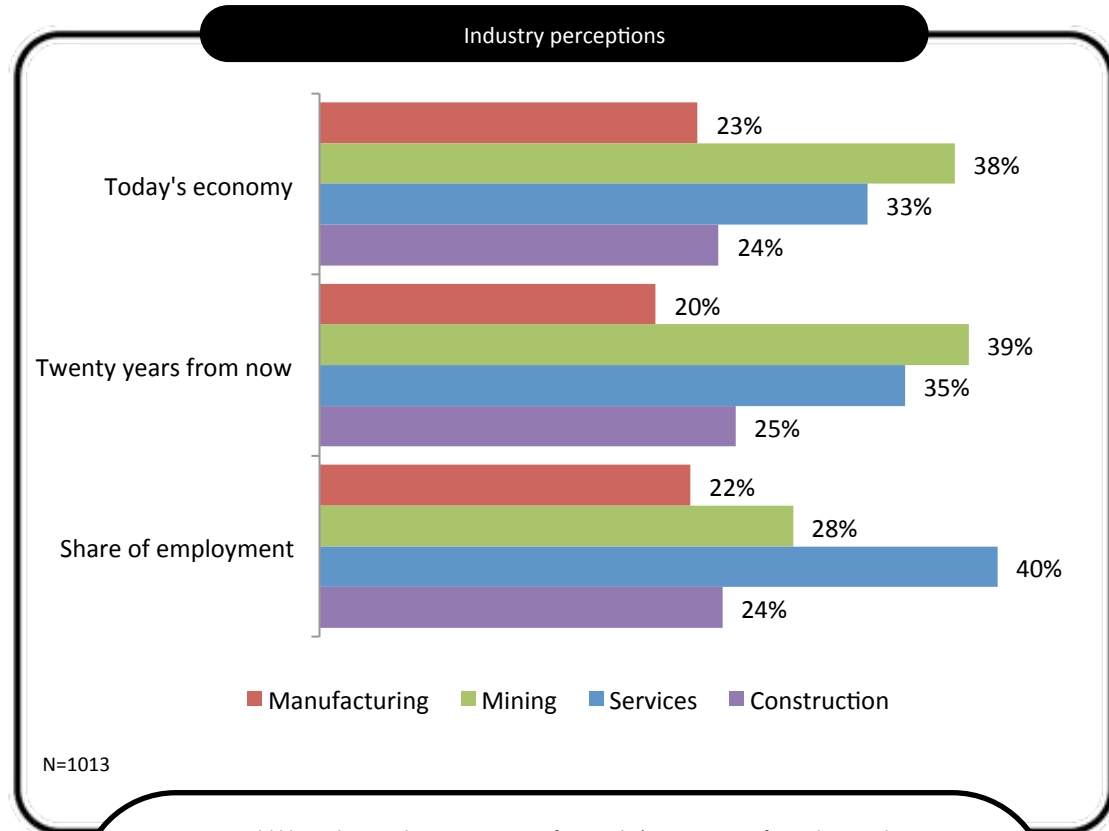
Perceived % of GDP (now/20 years) and perceived share of employment



Males predicted a significantly lower share of employment by each industry compared to females, and also predicted that each industry made up a lower portion of Australia's GDP today than females. When asked about 20 years from now, they continued to predict a lower proportion than females in manufacturing (males: M=17.89%, females: M=22.35%), services (males: M=32.20%, females: M=37.82%), and construction (males: M=21.74%, females: M=28.05%) in the make-up of Australia's GDP.

Respondents aged 18-24 tended to estimate a higher proportion of Australia's GDP and share of employment from the manufacturing industry (M=27.87% and M=29.46%) than the older age groups: 25-34 (M=23.16% and M=27.07%), 35-44 (M=20.98% and M=17.90%), 45-54 (M=21.58% and M=17.52%), 55-64 (M=21.55% and M=16.79%), 65+ (M=20.78% and M=14.71%).

Those who had received at least one type of welfare payment tended to estimate a larger proportion GDP coming from the construction industry today (M=24.89%), in 20 years (M=25.85%), and share of employment (M=24.71%), compared to those never having received welfare (M=20.92%, M=22.03% and M=22.22% respectively). Those who had received welfare also estimated a larger proportion of Australia's GDP coming from manufacturing today (M=23.47%) and in 20 years (M=21.03%) than those not having received welfare (M=20.11% and M=17.45% respectively).



Q. We would like to know what percentage of Australia's GDP comes from these industries in today's economy/twenty years from now: (note, this is not a full industry list, so your numbers do not need to add to 100).

Q. What share of employment do you think each of these industries has in Australia (i.e., what percentage of the workforce do you think is employed in each of these industries)?

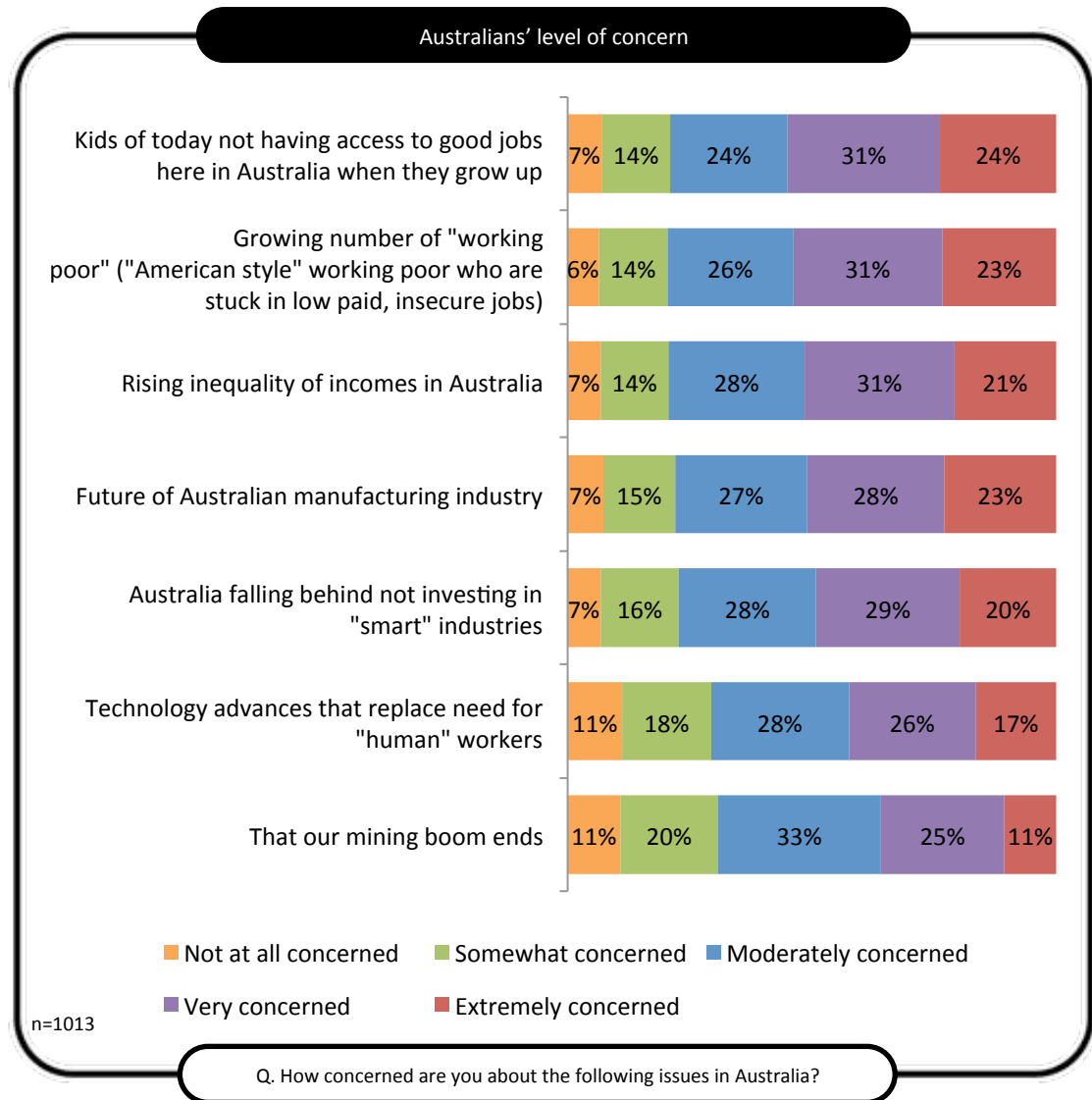
Australians' concerns...

Significant differences in Australians' concerns appeared across all demographics. Typically, men were less likely to be extremely concerned than females. The only items where this did not hold true were "smart industries" (males: 21% extremely concerned, females: 19% extremely concerned), the end of the mining boom (males, 11%, females: 10%) and the future of the manufacturing industry (males: 24%, females: 21%) - note that none of these differences were significant.

Younger generations tended to be less concerned than older generations across the board: significant differences included "smart industries" (18-24 very concerned 17%, 55-64 40%), kids not having good jobs in Australia when they grow up (18-24 extremely concerned 16%, 55-64 31%), and the future of the manufacturing industry (18-24 extremely concerned 12%, 55-64 37%).

Interestingly, those who typically vote Labor were significantly less likely to be "not at all concerned" with the possible end of our mining boom (9%) compared to those who voted for the Greens (21%).

Respondents who had never received welfare payments were less likely to be extremely concerned on all items, this difference was significant for all items except the future of the manufacturing industry.



Free response items...

In the final part of the survey, participants were randomly assigned to receive one of six free response questions:

- Do you think Australian workplaces reflect "Australian values"? What are these values and why do you think our workplaces do or don't reflect these values.
- How do you think the Australian workforce will change over the next 20 years? Does this worry you or excite you
- What do you worry about in your job? What's the one thing that would make your job better?
- What will our mix of industries/jobs look like in 20 years?
- Sometimes you hear politicians or employers talking about "productivity" - what do you think of when you hear this term?
- It is sometimes said that Australia just follows in the footsteps of the USA. Do you think this is true when it comes to our workplaces and work lives? And does this worry/excite you? Should we be trying to be like the US or trying to avoid being like the US?
- What do employers/politicians mean by the term "flexibility"?

On the following pages we summarise the responses to these questions.

Australian work and Australian values

It is clear that Australians value fairness and teamwork. At the core of Australian culture is a willingness to lend a helping hand to those in need. This teamwork and respect for the underdog is represented by the power of work unions and the critical role they have played in establishing fair pay and hour regulations for workers throughout Australian history.

Australians expressed an importance of hard work, a value system that is juxtaposed to their appreciation for holidays and life enjoyment. This paradigm of work and holiday values is in line with the Australian value of balance.

For an employer, the ideal employee is a good-hearted team player that works for the betterment of their workplace. The over-achiever, motivated by individual pursuits of success, does not thrive in the Australian workforce. These values are reciprocated from the employee side, where employees expect a supportive workplace that facilitates fair practices and security.

Diversity is an on-going issue as Australians adjust to the ever-diversifying workplace and evolve out of discriminatory practices.

Hard Work
"Compromises will have to be made to sustain the more important Australian values."

Fairness
"Employees have relatively secure jobs and high paid entitlements, including sick, careers and annual leave."

Racism
"To me Australian values are fairness, equality of opportunities and low discrimination. Australian workplaces generally reflect these values but there is an underlying current of discrimination against other races and cultures which is hidden and not openly expressed."

Family
"We are also taking away the public holidays by opening shops and making people work on days that were set aside for spending time with family and friends and relieving stress from the everyday grind. I don't think that either of these issues reflect Australian Values."

Over-Achievers are not Rewarded
"Reward for hard work, investment and innovation - generally yes although there is an element of the politics of envy at play"

People are Lazy
"People feel they are "entitled" to a job and all the benefits without the need to earn it."

Off-shoring Work
"Failure to adapt (to an increased work schedule) will mean the loss of more jobs in manufacturing and services to overseas workers who will work for less when required."

Australian workforce change over the next 20 years?

Australians express skepticism in the longevity of of Australia's economic stability and booming market. Australians were left feeling concerned after witnessing the decline in manufacturing during the GFC, and remain wary of Australia's ability to be a self-sufficient economy. A shared concern was that businesses aspire to be global and therefore more reliant on foreign countries for success.

A second concern was directed at the off shoring of labour. Many see the departure of Australian jobs to countries with cheaper labour as a major threat to Australian employment in the future. A related issue was that of imported goods from abroad. Respondents voiced their concern with fair-trade practices and expressed uncertainty with the delegation of import taxes and tariffs on behalf of the government.

Australians are fearful that technological advances may dislodge employees and expressed doubt with Australians ability to cope with the new advances of innovation and worldly demands of an international market. Some Aussies foresee a weakening of the mining and manufacturing industries and express unease with the world market's instability and the impact it may have on Australia. The issue of most concern is the aging population, as the baby boomers leave the workforce in great numbers; fewer younger workers are entering the workforce to replace them.

These issues of technological advances and foreign influence have raised questions regarding Australia's ability to cope and evolve as a nation, as well as to address domestic issues of superannuation and diversity.

Off-shore investment
"There will be fewer jobs in manufacturing as our \$ remains high and 3rd world costs remain low."

Evolve & Educate
"Mining, if properly managed can become the new 'sheep's back'"

Tariffs/imported goods
"Australia will ultimately become susceptible to cheaper global suppliers unless we do something drastic like re-impose tariffs."

Technology Jobs
"Technology is slowly eliminating jobs in Industry. Prefab products in building and construction... How long before you get served your beer by a robot?"

International influence
"locals can't pay and can't get jobs in field because too many foreign recruitment agencies have the foot in the door."

Aging Workforce
"unfortunately the baby boomers will have to work longer to support the welfare society we are creating by paying unemployed and welfare families to have children who may grow to have the same values as their parent that welfare is the way to go"

Decline of mining & manufacturing
"Manufacturing will die a natural death as Australia cannot compete effectively."

Job Security
"As a parent I am very worried that my children will not be able to get a permanent job in the field that they choose and that they will not be able to save for a house or become financially independent"

Education
"The workforce will become better educated/trained and any young person who does not have a good education will find it hard to get a job"

What do you worry about in your job?

Respondents' concerns tended to revolve around job security. Whether it was security from offshoring, injury, the nature of casual work, sexual discrimination, technological advances, or something else.

"The lack of confidence in Australia and not buying Australian products."

"Being Casual is a concern, Not knowing when your time is up and not able to redundancy holiday pay etc."

"I work in retail and have fears that due to the ridiculous amount of importing cheap crap products Australian manufacturing and retail is about to crumble"

"I worry about losing penalty rates in my job. I work permanent part-time and rely heavily on penalty rates as i am a single parent"

"Government regulatory burden. Unions should be outlawed and their officials and past officials all sent to jail unless they can show they have not been involved in corruption."

"threat of being off-shored."

"That I will get bored out of my brains and quit or go crazy! Keeping me involved, busy and interested"

"Insecurity of work and lack of monetary reward. The ability to sue for unpaid work would make my job better as I would then be paid for work actually done."

"the best thing that would make jobs better would be equality for women. It does not exist yet"

"security but it does not really exist anymore in any job"

"It's a small engineering firm relying on many sectors that if the economy slumps will significantly impact my hours"

"I am in agriculture and the worry is that a lot of farms are becoming too large and been taken over by other countries interests"

"We are manipulated by the elite families that own the corporations that rule us. People are not stupid, just ignorant of what is really going on."

"Increases in cost of living and interest rates meaning less money circulating in the population. Decreased spending and a flat economy"

The prospect of being privatised. Job security without compromise to safety and benefits."

What will our mix of industries/jobs look like in 20 years?

The loudest concern for Australia's mix in 20 years was the manufacturing industry shrinking dramatically to the point where the employees have very low confidence in future job sustainability (despite the survey results showing only an estimate 3% difference in manufacturing now and in 20 years). This concern was extended to fear for foreign companies buying out our businesses and more of our production being outsourced as well as our high dependency on foreign trade. There was both concern and confidence in the mining sector as the industry was perceived as stable in 20 years for most, but not inexhaustible and one that we can't rely on. The issue of slowing of industry within Australia was expressed mostly with reference to a large influx of people into universities met by a bottleneck of jobs available to support them when finishing their studies. In line with this, more spending on education was a solution to support our future to keep up with other nations. It was suggested that skilled and educated people will have a "far better chance" at finding jobs than those who are unskilled. It was suggested that trade work will see much less demand. A shared concern was that jobs will become more temporary and casual as industries will look to "increase their profits". Population control was raised as an issue by some, and disparity in pay in 20 years time.

Both a concern and an excitement was the build up of technology. The fear factor was that "machines will do more than humans" and the pull factor was that there will be many new innovative and often technical job opportunities. Further excitement in the mix of industries and jobs in 20 years include job flexibility such as working from home and "internet type businesses", the hope for Australia to switch to more renewable energies and the jobs created around this. But mostly, the positive responses came down to 'Australia knuckling down', with our leaders helping to keep job employment rates high, working conditions high, and remaining adaptable and open to change as a nation.

Dependency on other nations
"We are basically China's quarry."

Moving away from manufacturing
"Fair Trade is what we need NOT Free Trade."

New innovative job opportunities
"In 20 years there will be jobs that are not in existence today (like the internet and associated jobs in the 90s)"

Australia knuckling down
"Hopefully, we will be less dependent on mining and agriculture, and have a stronger foothold in R+D, manufacturing, education and services. If this happens, it bodes well for the Australian economy."

Disparity of wages/salaries
"Pay gap between rich and poor and men and women will also increase"

Switch to renewable energy
"We will have more jobs to do with environmental things, and that would be good for the economy and the environment"

Population growth/control
"Parents should have only minimum children and not over populate Australia. Immigration should be cut, as there are too many people here. I am struggling in my 40's to obtain full time employment, yet foreigners can get employed. It's not fair to Australians"

Industry/market slowing
"Other industries will continue to slow, there will be a higher percentage of young adults completing uni looking for work, than there are available jobs in chosen industries over the next 5 years...slow market, not much job availability, platter of prospective candidates - employers will have more choice/employees less choice"

Trades falling behind
"We need to have more labourers, tradies and 'real' workers instead of paper pushers. There are too many decisions made by people in offices about issues they only have a theoretical knowledge of."

Job flexibility
"More working from home, internet type businesses. Less travel to city type areas for work"

What does “productivity” mean?

How much “bang for your buck” is the best phrase to summarise the responses. However, unique responses of interest can be divided into various umbrella angles.

Dictionary definition responses were those that contained no opinion and revolved around the core meaning of “producing more at less cost”.

Some responses reflected a feeling of being jaded such as “more work for same money”.

The responses with the most emotion came under the label of political sceptic and expressed their disapproval of the government to whom they connect the word “productivity” as a political “buzz word”.

Some respondents went for the comparative and competitive approach whereby productivity is a measure against others of “efficient and effective use of materials”.

Much of the responses were referring to the material production such as “making the best of what resources you have available” while other responses were referring to the lack of productivity “slowed by red tape and short-sighted decisions by federal and state decision mater”.

The finance umbrella was also a common angle response that highlighted profit, growing investment and the economic benefit in Australia of productivity.

Achievement was another umbrella term where “working hard” was a common theme, and “best results” was the outcome.



- Production (Physical)**
"Increased output for the same input. ie more efficient use of human and other resources."
- Achievement**
"The amount of hours put into a job, the output in those hours - what a worker is able to achieve in his/her working day"
- Comparative/competitive angle**
"I think of what a company produces, and what an how it measures against others."
- Finance**
"Our workforce being able to produce goods and services that we can sell to ourselves and other countries for a profit. Not pricing ourselves out of the international markets by labour costs becoming too high so that jobs and manufacturing continue to be sent offshore."
- The political skeptic**
"Buzz words. "Politicians know very little that has nothing to do with anything except being elected"
- Lack of productivity**
"There are numbers that can be created to suit a situation, and then there is reality. Too often productivity is slowed by red tape and short sighted decisions by federal and state decision makers."
- Dictionary definitions**
"Producing more at less cost"
- Feeling Jaded**
"How to make people work more for less and how to justify sacking people - this usually results in well educated people also do the mundane, trivial administration work as well as their professional work in order to cut costs."

Is/should Australia follow in US footsteps?



There was a strong push towards avoiding becoming like the USA due to the beliefs that Australia has a better welfare system, more benefits, better wages, Australia should be liaising more with our Asian neighbours rather than the USA, and that the USA is in serious financial trouble.

Respondents who were positive about following the USA suggested that Australia should follow their lead in terms of technological innovation and workplace flexibility.

Yes - is/should

"I think we learn a lot and use the good and the bad to mould ourselves on"

"The USA is a place of great technical innovation we should follow that."

"They are the world leader but a lot of the time we should take our own path"

"As far as workplace issues go we should be more like the USA, less union influence, less welfare, greater willingness of workers to relocate for jobs, less government red tape, greater workplace flexibility."

No - isn't/shouldn't

"We are following USA footsteps, it does worry me and we should avoid doing this"

"Manufacturing should, where possible, be kept in Australia."

"Australia should create its own methods and standards when it comes to our workplaces and work lives"

"It's also a place where workers are poorly treated and that should be avoided. Likewise the hopelessly inept bureaucracy of US management and government."

"Since the US economy has crashed I think we really should stop trying to follow in their footsteps"

"We have a better health & welfare system"

"We should be influenced more by our close neighbors in the Asia Pacific region."

"We might as well be just another state of the USA the way the politicians are toadying up to them."

What do employers/politicians mean by “flexibility”?

There was some consensus on the definition of “flexibility” being the flexibility of working hours that benefits both the employer and the employee. It allows the employee to choose their hours, as long as they make up their minimum, benefits the employers through greater productivity. Most respondents were very positive towards “flexibility” saying that it benefited both the employer and employee. However, there were a similar number of participants who thought that it only benefited the employer, only the employee, or neither. Of those who did support the idea, most said that although it was of benefit to both, it could also be harmful to both if not implemented with care.

"it means giving corporations the right to treat people like cattle. Nobody is buying this anymore!"

"I never listen to what politicians say"

"there is so much going on in the political arena that we do not know. They are trying to keep the people confident while the world situation has crept up to our door"

"I think it is rubbish, the only flexibility that is available is to create jobs for those who are from overseas rather than helping those who need it here"

"Flexibility can be good for both, but probably is of greater advantage to workers. Workers gain advantage in being able to work more around their family needs. Employers may gain happier workers and workers that take less time off and "sickies" to cover family needs and therefore productivity may increase."

"I believe this to be a benefit to both employee and employer, as this allows people such as working parents to work in a place of employment and look after children. For employers, flexibility in employment should see more productivity from employees as they see it as a fair deal and will more likely stay with the same employer."

"they are expecting both employer and employee to make sacrifices in order for business to proceed"

"They are talking about giving workers more flexible hours. It can be very good for couples with children as it can allow both to work and take care of the kids. It can be good for them and the employer as the employer is not obliged to pay full time wages. I think it is a bit of a double edge sword personally."

"The word is used when either side needs an excuse"

"They are making up excuses why this county is failing big time?????"

"Political spin to achieve a political outcome, of no benefit to anyone but themselves"

"It's always good for the employer not actually the employee"



Thank you