# AHRI PULSE

## AUG 2022 HEADLINE FINDINGS

The Australian HR Institute conducted a survey of 1,177 HR professionals across Australia to explore the employers' mindset on hybrid working, flexible working practices, and productivity in 2022.

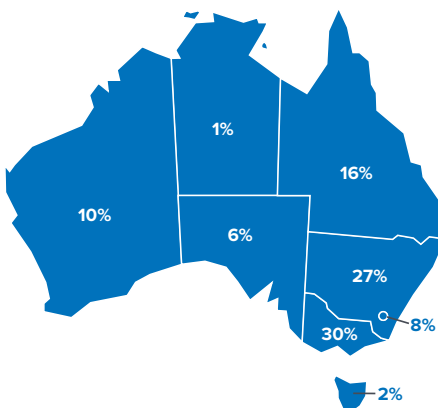*Fieldwork was undertaken between 07 July 2022 - 28 July 2022.*

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### Location

All States were represented with the majority of responses received from VIC (30%) and NSW (27%). 16% of responses were from QLD and 10% from WA.

Other respondents were from the ACT (8%), SA (6%), TAS (2%) and the NT (1%).

83% of respondents were based in metropolitan areas, 16% in regional areas and 1% in remote areas.



### HR role

44% of survey respondents identified as Mid-Level HR (client or business partner; HR manager; workplace relations manager; change manager; talent development manager).

37% identified as Senior Manager (Director; Managing Director; Head of Human Resources or Head of People & Culture).

14% identified themselves as an HR Advisor (recruitment/selection officer; workplace/employee relations; OHS; payroll).

5% were HR Administrators.

### Organisation size:

- 43% of respondents work in organisations with 500 or more employees

- 18% work in organisations of 200 to 499 employees

- 13% work in organisations of 100-199 employees

- 14% work in organisations with less than 50 employees

### Top 5 industries represented in the survey:

- Professional, scientific and technical services (13%)

- Health care and social assistance (13%)

- Education and training (11%)

- Government (10%)

- Financial and insurance services (6%).

### Organisation type:

- 28% of respondents were from Public (local, state or federal government, military)

- 50% from Private

- 16% from Not for Profit

- 4% from Academic (tertiary college, institute or university)

- 2% other

# SURVEY RESPONSES

**Before the pandemic, those surveyed reported that on average 23% of employees worked from home at least one day a week. This compares to nearly 6 out of 10 (58%) employees who work from home at least one day a week post-pandemic.**

In addition, the average proportion of employees working continuously from home increased from 5% before the pandemic to 18% after the pandemic.

**53% of HR professionals surveyed expect that working from home or remote working arrangements will remain the same over the next two years, while 25% predict that the rate of working from home and remote working will increase.**

17% believe that rates will decrease.

**58% of those surveyed state that their organisation is currently requiring employees to attend the office more often.**

39% of those surveyed tell us that their organisation has no requirement for employees to attend the office more often.

**7 out of 10 HR professionals surveyed (75%) nominated senior management as a source of pressure in requiring employees to attend the office more often. In comparison, only 9% say pressure to return to the office is coming from employees themselves.**

Sources of pressure to attend the office include*:

- Senior management (75%)
- The Board (22%)
- Line management (19%)
- Government (11%)
- Other (11%)
- Customers/clients (10%)
- Employees (9%)
- HR (7%)

*Respondents were asked to select all options that applied therefore percentages add to over 100%.*

**54% of those surveyed said that their organisations are offering incentives such as social events, free coffee or meals to encourage employees back to the office.**

- Less than 2% of those surveyed are applying disincentives (e.g. reduced pay and benefits when working from home) to encourage workers back to the office.
- Only 1.5% are introducing bonuses or increasing pay and benefits for those who do return to the office.

**Of those surveyed, only 4% of organisations required employees to work in the office for the full working week (5 days).**

- 34% had no minimum requirement, however employees were encouraged to attend the office.
- 28% of employers required employees to work a minimum of three days a week in the office.
- 16% of employers required employees to work a minimum of two days a week in the office.
- 7% of organisations allow employees to work continuously from home.
- 3% do not offer hybrid working or remote working as an option.

**Those surveyed believed the main benefit of remote working from an employer's perspective is a better work life balance for employees.**
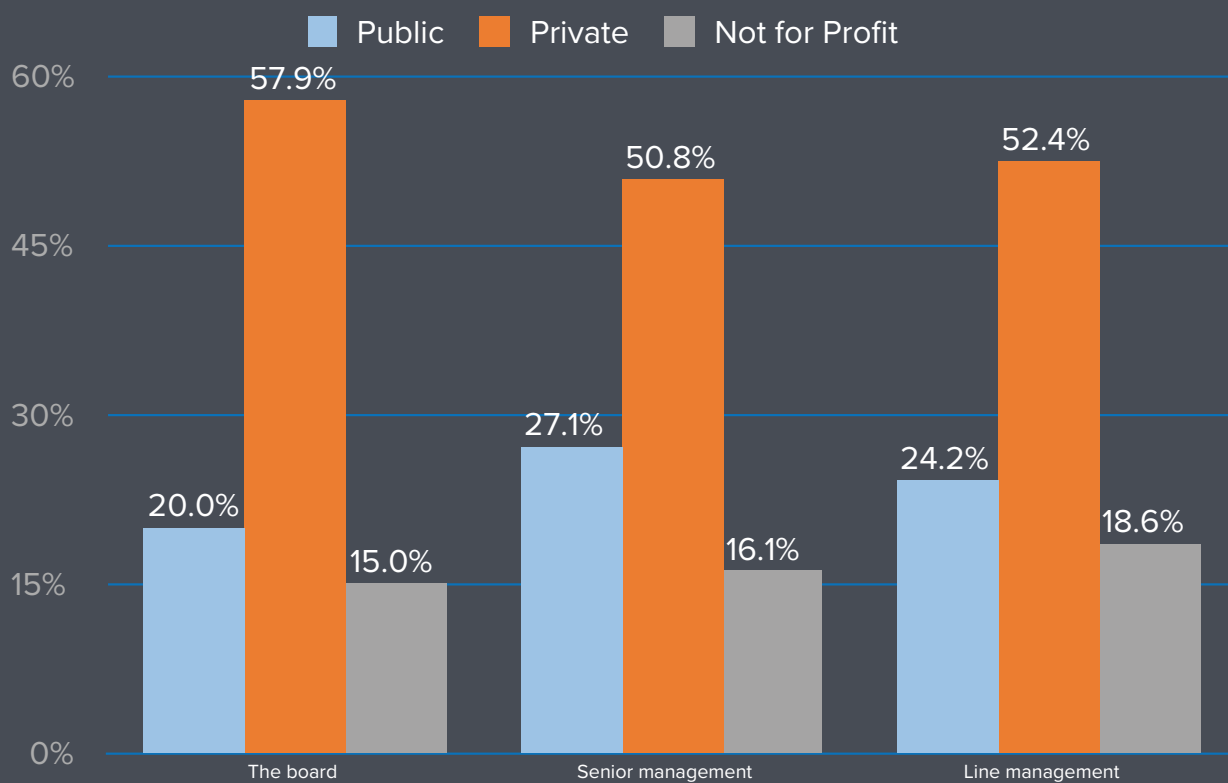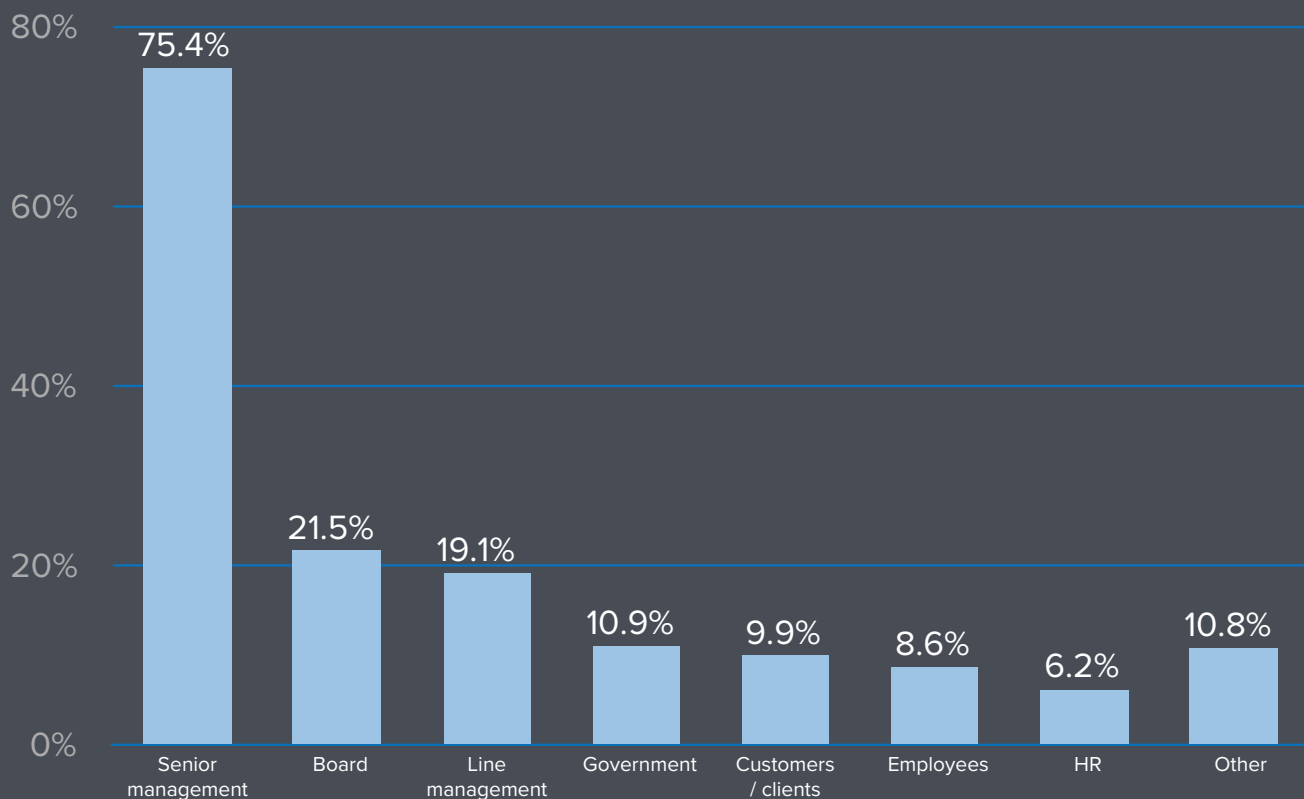
The top three benefits of remote working were given as*:

- Better work life balance (67%)
- The ability to focus / fewer distractions (41%)
- Attraction of new candidates (40%)

*Respondents were asked to select the top three benefits therefore percentages add to over 100%.*

## If your organisation is currently requiring employees to return to the office more often, where is the pressure coming from?

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Senior management | 75.4% |
| Board | 21.5% |
| Line management | 19.1% |
| Government | 10.9% |
| Customers / clients | 9.9% |
| Employees | 8.6% |
| HR | 6.2% |
| Other | 10.8% |

Legend: Public, Private, Not for Profit

| | Public | Private | Not for Profit |
|---|---|---|---|
| The board | 20.0% | 57.9% | 15.0% |
| Senior management | 27.1% | 50.8% | 16.1% |
| Line management | 24.2% | 52.4% | 18.6% |

**While the majority of HR professionals surveyed suggested that while a better work life balance for employees was a top benefit, 65% also said that one of the challenges of remote working is a feeling of disconnection between colleagues.**

The top challenges with remote working from an employer's perspective included*:

- A feeling of disconnection between colleagues (65%)

- Staff collaboration and cooperation (40%)

- Monitoring performance (25%)

- The unfairness of a two-tiered workforce (22%)

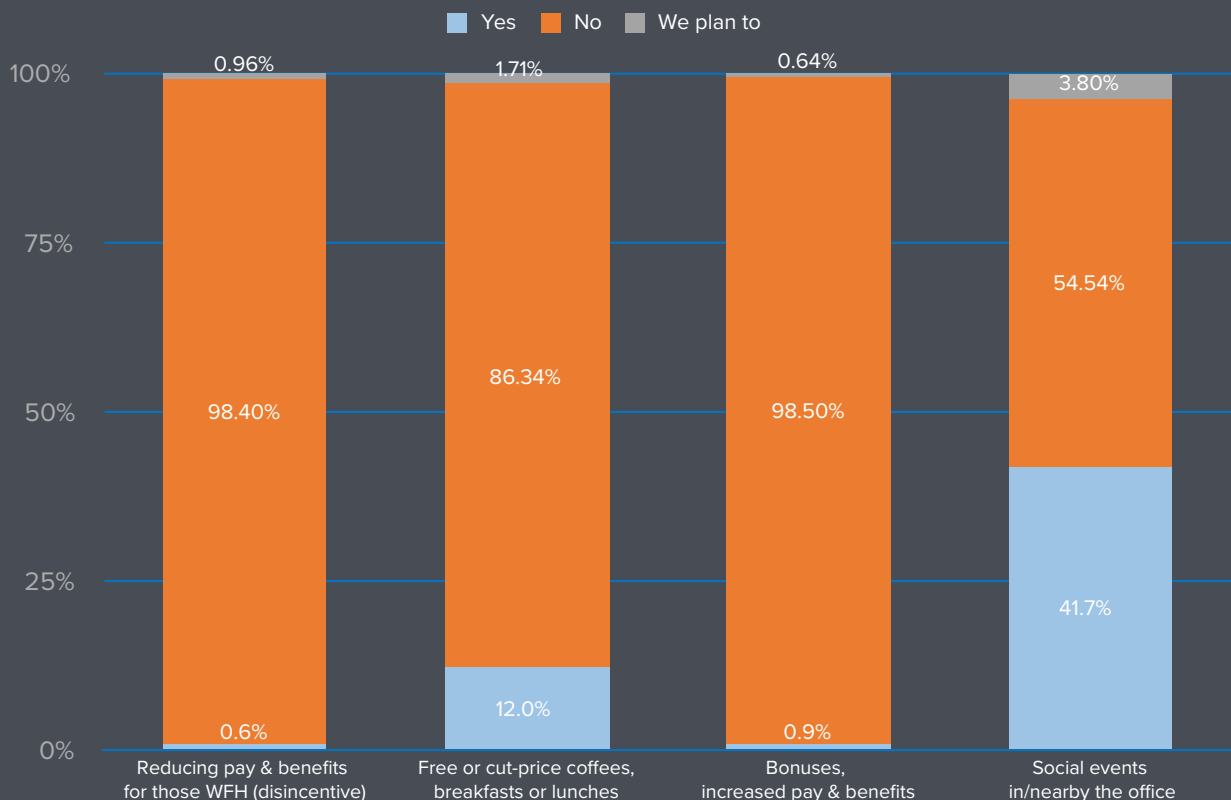- Home situation of some employees is not conducive for work (19%)

*Respondents were asked to select the top three benefits therefore percentages add to over 100%.*

**When asked about productivity levels when working from home or working in a hybrid way; nearly half of those surveyed (47%) thought that employees are more or much more productive, while 25% thought there was no difference in productivity.**

More detailed or other responses were:

- 34% said that they thought employees are more productive

- 13% thought employees were much more productive

- 7% believe employees are less or much less productive

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*Thinking about your organisation, are you offering any incentives or disincentives to encourage employees who work from home back to the office?*

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ We plan to

| | Reducing pay & benefits for those WFH (disincentive) | Free or cut-price coffees, breakfasts or lunches | Bonuses, increased pay & benefits | Social events in/nearby the office |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| We plan to | 0.96% | 1.71% | 0.64% | 3.80% |
| No | 98.40% | 86.34% | 98.50% | 54.54% |
| Yes | 0.6% | 12.0% | 0.9% | 41.7% |

**Part time working is the most common flexible working practice available to employees at 86% of surveyed organisations. This is followed by flexitime at 54%.**

Other flexible working practices offered by organisations included*:

- Career breaks or secondments (48%)
- Purchased leave (48%)
- Compressed work hours (e.g. four-day work week or nine-day fortnight) (46%)
- Job sharing (35%)

5% of respondents said that their organisation does not offer any flexible working arrangements.

*Respondents were asked to select all options that applied therefore percentages do not total 100%.*

**Our survey asked respondents what flexible working arrangements their organisations planned to expand in the future. Their top five answers were:**

- Compressed hours (28%)
- Career breaks or secondments (22%)
- Part time working (22%)
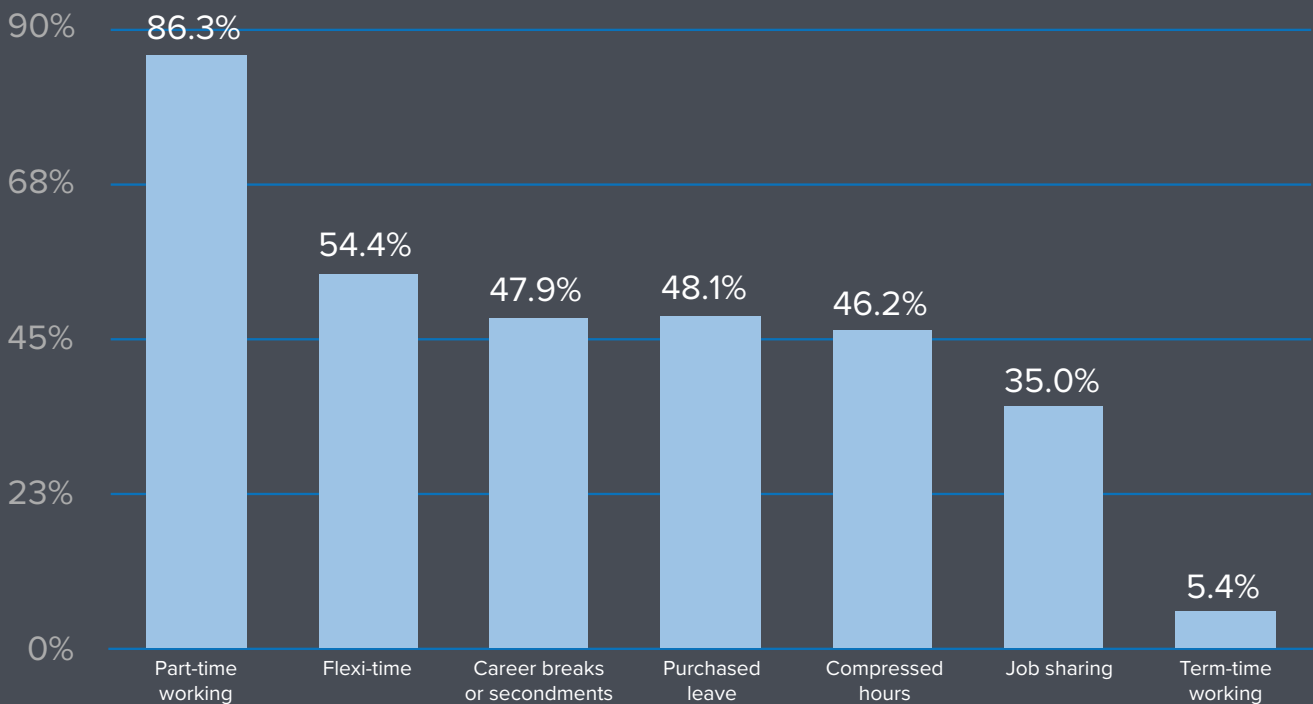- Purchased leave (20%)
- Flexi-time (19%)

For 13% of organisations in the survey, flexible working arrangements were not offered.

**7 in 10 (71%) organisations surveyed have consulted staff, either formally or informally, about their organisation's working arrangements.**

However:

- 21% of organisations have not consulted with staff
- 8% of respondents were unsure if consultations had taken place

*Apart from remote working, what other flexible working practices does your organisation offer?*

| Practice | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Part-time working | 86.3% |
| Flexi-time | 54.4% |
| Career breaks or secondments | 47.9% |
| Purchased leave | 48.1% |
| Compressed hours | 46.2% |
| Job sharing | 35.0% |
| Term-time working | 5.4% |

**Of the organisations surveyed that have consulted with their employees on hybrid working arrangements, they have done so by\*:**

- Direct employee feedback (70%)

- Staff surveys (67%)

- Line manager feedback (58%)

- Staff forums (28%)

- Union/employee representative feedback (15%)

*\*Respondents were asked to select all options that applied therefore percentages add to over 100%.*

**More than half of HR professionals surveyed (53%) said that their organisations have not provided training to line managers on how to manage hybrid or remote working. This is compared to:**

- 37% that say they have provided training

- 10% that said they were unsure if training was provided or not

**4 in 10 (43%) of HR professionals surveyed identified providing more line managers with training in managing and supporting remote workers as a measure their organisation plans to put in place in the future.**

Other measures to support hybrid and remote work that will be implemented in the future by organisations include\*:

- Agreeing minimum number of working from home days a week with employees (40%)
- Offering more online guidance (e.g. advice, organisational protocols, FAQs) for line managers in managing and supporting homeworkers (37%)
- Putting in place organisational policies to help managers support staff to work from home (35%)
- Making a greater investment in the quantity or quality of technology (34%)
- Changing formal organisation policies to embed remote working arrangements (32%)
- Adapting performance management systems (14%)
- Making employer contributions to working from home costs such as desk/equipment purchases, heating bills etc (11%)

*\*Respondents were asked to select all options that applied therefore percentages add to over 100%.*

Only 3% of HR professionals report that their organisation will install more or new surveillance software to monitor productivity.

## What flexible working arrangements does your organisation plan to expand in the future?

| Arrangement | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Part-time working | 21.7% |
| Flexi-time | 19.1% |
| Career breaks or secondments | 21.5% |
| Purchased leave | 20.9% |
| Compressed hours | 28.2% |
| Job sharing | 17.3% |
| Term-time working | 5.0% |