

Thematic Working Paper No.1

How flexible working arrangements shape workplace experience across genders in Australia

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Acknowledgement of Country

The authors and partners of this paper wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the nations across Australia and pay our respect to Elders past and present. We recognise that all Elders and mobs in locations across Australia have their own experiences with work. We hope this paper enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to keep telling their own stories.

The Working for Women Research Partnership is co-led by researchers at The University of Sydney, The University of Melbourne and The University of Technology Sydney, with support from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office for Women.

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Our Team

This working paper draws on research delivered as part of the first cycle of the Working for Women Research Partnership. The Partnership is delivered by an academic consortium led by the [Australian Centre for Gender Equality and Inclusion @ Work](#) at the University of Sydney, in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, and the Centre of Indigenous People and Work at the University of Technology Sydney. The Partnership is led by Consortia Leads Professor Rae Cooper AO, Professor Elizabeth Hill, Professor Nareen Young and Associate Professor Brendan Churchill.

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2. Executive Summary

This is the first thematic working paper of the Working for Women Research Partnership, a collaboration between the Australian Government Office of Women and researchers at the University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney and the University of Melbourne. It focuses on flexible work. Drawing on the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (AWGES), a nationally representative survey of Australian workers, the paper details how flexible work is accessed, supported and experienced across industries, the gendered composition of workplaces and specific demographic cohorts from a gendered lens. The paper examines whether workers have access to flexibility, and also the quality of that flexibility. We focus on two kinds of flexibility: temporal and spatial. Temporal flexibility refers to when and how working hours are organised, while spatial flexibility refers to where work takes place, capturing whether jobs are performed fully on-site, in hybrid patterns that combine home and workplace days, or in remote-first arrangements. The paper finds that flexible work in Australia is widespread but uneven. Gender is a key factor shaping whether workers experience "good flex", flexibility that expands choice and autonomy, or "bad flex", flexibility that limits control, reinforces insecurity or intensifies pressure.

From a gendered perspective, the findings show that gender inequalities in the workplace are not being addressed through the spread and uptake of flexible working arrangements and in some cases, new inequalities are emerging. Men are more likely to access high autonomy, well-supported hybrid and remote roles within secure, full-time jobs, while women and non-binary workers are more often channelled into flexibility that comes through reduced hours, casual work and tightly controlled schedules. For many women, particularly those in feminised frontline sectors, women with disabilities, migrant and language diverse women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, flexibility is still tied to lower pay, weaker security and fewer opportunities for progression and influence. Flexible work has become a new axis along which advantages and disadvantages are organised, with "good flex" concentrated among men and "bad flex" disproportionately borne by women and gender diverse workers. Addressing these patterns will be critical if flexible work is to support rather than undermine the gender equality ambitions of the Working for Women Strategy.

2.1 A gendered labour market shapes access to meaningful flexibility.

Women are far more likely than men to work part-time or casually and are concentrated in industries where flexibility is tied to reduced hours. Men more often work in full-time, permanent jobs with greater control over tasks and influence in workplace decision-making. Even within the same employment arrangements, women report lower job security, fewer opportunities for advancement and less say over workplace decisions. Industry and the gendered composition of workplaces reinforce these gender gaps. Women experience high underemployment in wholesale trade, construction and professional services, and women in female-dominated workplaces are the least likely to have the flexibility they need. Women's job quality also falls short of what they identify as essential for the future, particularly on pay, progression and influence.



2.2 Women rely more on temporal flexibility, particularly in feminised industries.

Women rely more on temporal flexibility, particularly in industries that are highly feminised. They use almost every form of temporal flexibility at higher rates than men, including changing start and finish times, swapping shifts and reducing hours. These patterns reflect the structure of frontline health, care and other service industries where women are concentrated, but they also highlight that many women depend on flexibility options that offer less autonomy. The gender gap in temporal flexibility widens in female-dominated workplaces and is most pronounced for women with disability, migrant and language-diverse women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. These groups frequently rely on temporal flexibility, often by reducing hours or moving to casual work, and encounter workplaces that are less supportive of these arrangements, increasing the risk that flexibility comes at the cost of security and progression.

2.3 Spatial flexibility is unevenly distributed across gender and industry.

Most workers still work fully on-site, and women are more likely than men to do so. Men more commonly access hybrid or remote work, especially in professional services and finance. Women's concentration in health care, education, retail and accommodation severely limits remote work opportunities. On-site roles are disproportionately located in female-dominated workplaces, while hybrid and remote roles are more common in gender-balanced and male-dominated workplaces. Access is lowest for many groups of women, including women with disabilities, migrant women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and diverse-language women.

2.4 Barriers to remote work are shaped by job design, workplace culture and gender.

Most workers who cannot work remotely say the job itself prevents it, especially in frontline industries where women are concentrated. Of those who report other reasons, men more often report managerial or equipment barriers to remote work. Women are slightly more likely than men to lack a suitable workspace at home. Barriers intensify for women with disabilities, migrant and language-diverse women and regional women, who face a combination of task-based limits and weaker managerial support.

2.5 Remote work delivers strong benefits for many women, but outcomes vary by setting.

Women are slightly more likely than men to say they are more productive, put in more effort and feel supported when working remotely. These benefits are strongest for women in finance and professional services. The gender composition of the workplace again shapes experience. Women in gender-balanced workplaces report the most positive outcomes, while women in male-dominated workplaces report the poorest outcomes. LGBTQ+ women, migrant women and some regional women describe strong benefits, although women with disabilities report lower perceived support from workplaces.



2.6 Return-to-office expectations differ across gender, industry and workplace type.

Most workers say their employer has not pushed a return to office policy or increased on-site attendance, and this is particularly true amongst women. White-collar industries more commonly have hybrid requirements rather than full-return mandates. Gender-balanced workplaces tend to have more formalised expectations about working on-site. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face comparatively high return-to-office pressures, while LGBTQ+ women and regional women often report lower employer pressure.

2.7 Control over work location remains uneven.

Managerial support does not always translate into autonomy. Men are more likely than women to decide where they work, while women more often report joint decision-making or employer control. Non-binary¹ workers report the lowest autonomy. Women have the most control in other services, health care, administration and education, but even then, often less than men. Autonomy is lowest for women in female-dominated workplaces and highest for men in male-dominated workplaces. Working parents, workers with disabilities, migrant women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women consistently report the least autonomy, signalling that the flexibility in the form of work location available to them is often constrained in practice.

2.8 Flexibility quality shapes wellbeing and retention.

Flexible environments reflect whether workers experience real choice and organisational backing, distinguishing between conditions that align with good flex and those that resemble bad flex. We identify four distinct flexibility environments – high-quality, conditional, constrained and low-quality – defined by the combination of autonomy and workplace support. Around three in ten workers are in high-quality environments, but a similar share are in low-quality settings; women and non-binary workers are more likely than men to be in constrained or low-quality environments. Workers in high-quality environments report the strongest self-rated health and the lowest work–life conflict. As flexibility becomes conditional or constrained, wellbeing declines. Women experience these pressures more acutely, particularly in health care, education and retail, where autonomy is limited. The poorest outcomes occur in environments lacking both control and support. Women in these settings report higher fatigue, greater difficulty balancing work and family, and more prolonged sick leave. These patterns are strongest among women with disabilities, migrant and language-diverse women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Retention follows a similar gradient. Workers who expect to stay in their job are concentrated in high-quality flexibility environments, while women who expect to leave are disproportionately located in low-quality environments. Improving flexibility quality is therefore a matter of both equity and a strategic imperative for workforce stability.

¹ Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that do not fit neatly within the binary categories of man and woman. It refers to people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, and may include identities such as genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, bigender, trans masculine, trans feminine, or other gender-diverse identities.



3. Introduction

Access to and uptake of flexible work is critical to addressing gender inequality in the workplace. Historically, Australian women have achieved ‘flexible’ work through a disproportionate uptake of part-time and casual work^{2,3}. This means many Australian women are employed in jobs that do not match their skills and experience⁴, limiting their access to career progression and training, and locking them into low-paying, poor-quality employment⁵ that yields lower retirement savings⁶. This practice of ‘flexible work’ is one of the key foundations of Australia’s deeply gendered labour market⁷. Over the past two decades, debates about flexible work have matured and opened up new frontiers in flexible working practices, leading to a more nuanced and sophisticated policy conversation.

Flexibility has many dimensions, operating through both working-time arrangements and the wider structure of employment. This working paper examines how flexibility is experienced across the gendered labour market, including in part-time and casual employment, followed by an analysis of specific forms of temporal and spatial flexible working arrangements.

Temporal flexibility refers to when and how working hours are organised, including changes to start and finish times, compressed weeks, shift swapping, and reduced hours or school-hours schedules. Spatial flexibility refers to where work takes place, capturing whether jobs are performed fully on-site, in hybrid patterns that combine home and workplace days, or in remote-first arrangements⁸. Together, these dimensions of flexibility influence how people align paid work with care, health and community responsibilities. They also affect job quality, autonomy, participation and progression, and do so in highly gendered ways.

We focus on flexible work because it is at the heart of the structural inequalities identified in *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*⁹. The Strategy highlights that women shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care, face barriers to economic security and experience persistent gaps in pay, leadership and safety. It emphasises that achieving gender equality requires reshaping the systems that govern work, care and resources so that all people have meaningful choices and the ability to participate fully in economic and community life. Flexible work is one key lever to deliver this shift. When flexible work is well designed and supported, it enables women, men and non-binary individuals to stay attached to employment, progress in their careers and manage care responsibilities without penalty. When flexible work

² Charlesworth, S., Strazdins, L., O'Brien, L. & Sims, S. (2011) Parents' jobs in Australia: Work hours polarisation and the consequences for job quality and gender equality, *Australian Journal of Labour Economics* 14(1):35–57.

³ Chalmers, J., Campbell, I., & Charlesworth, S. (2005) Part-time work and caring responsibilities in Australia: Towards an assessment of job quality, *Labour and Industry* 15(3):41–66.

⁴ Churchill, B. (2025) Underemployment and job quality among young Australians: A gendered analysis using the HILDA Survey (2009–2022), *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 1–12.

⁵ Cooper, R., Flanagan, F. & Foley, M. (2024) Flexible work policy: Building ‘good flex’ across the life course. In P.M. Baird, E. Hill & S. Colussi (Eds.) *At a Turning Point: Work, Care and Family Policies in Australia*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

⁶ Sheen, V. (2017) The implications of Australian women’s precarious employment for the later pension age, *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 28(1):3–19.

⁷ Baird, M., Cooper, R., Hill, E., Probyn, E. & Vromen, A. (2018) *Women and the Future of Work: Report 1 of the Australian Women’s Working Futures Project*. Sydney: University of Sydney.

⁸ We use the term ‘remote work’ in this report to refer home-based remote work. We recognize that ‘remote work’ can also refer to work (such as mining) carried out in locations remote from urban areas and employees’ homes. We do not consider that form of remote work here.

⁹ Commonwealth Government Office for Women. (2024). *Working for women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Canberra.



is poorly designed or unevenly available, it reinforces the very inequalities the Strategy seeks to dismantle.

This working paper draws on high-quality data from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (AWGES). This nationally representative survey includes booster samples for groups often missing from labour market data, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, people who speak languages other than English and people with disabilities. The dataset allows us to take an intersectional approach to understanding flexibility. Intersectionality acknowledges that people's multiple identities shape gendered experiences of work and that inequalities can intensify when gender intersects with Indigeneity, race, disability or sexuality¹⁰. This is a central principle of the Working for Women Strategy, which highlights that progress on gender equality depends on recognising and responding to the different barriers faced by diverse groups of women. AWGES provides the detail required to do this, enabling us to show which groups benefit from flexibility, who is being left out, and how policy and workplace design can better support those facing the greatest structural disadvantage.

This paper shows how flexible working arrangements shape opportunity, inclusion and productivity by gender. First, it outlines the dataset and establishes the gendered structure of the Australian labour market, including how women's concentration in part-time and casual work affects job quality. It then examines temporal and spatial flexibility, exploring differences across industries¹¹, workplace gender composition¹² and demographic groups to show how flexibility operates. The paper next analyses workplace flexibility environments, including autonomy, organisational support and perceived career risks. Finally, it brings these patterns together through a typology of flexibility environments, showing how autonomy and culture determine whether flexible work is meaningful, equitable and supports job quality.

¹⁰ Crenshaw, K. (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color, *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241–1299.

¹¹ Industry is operationalised using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 framework.

¹² Workplace gender composition is derived from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (2025) item asking respondents to indicate the gender distribution within their workplace. Workplaces are coded as women-dominated, gender-equal, or men-dominated using self-reported assessments of whether women constitute most workers, men constitute most workers, or neither group is in the majority.



4. Data

This working paper uses data from the **2025 Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (AWGES)**, a nationally representative survey of Australian employees, self-employed and unemployed aged between 18 and 70. The survey was administered by YouGov, a market research company, in October and September 2025. The survey included 5,000 Australians and booster samples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (n=500) and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (n=500) respondents. YouGov have provided population weights to ensure the survey data is representative of Australians in terms of age, sex, location, and labour force status. All data in this paper is weighted unless otherwise stated. Although non-binary respondents represent a small share of the AWGES sample (0.62% weighted) and an even smaller proportion of the Australian population (0.17% according to ABS estimates¹³), we report their results where feasible because the responses provide rare population-level insight into the workplace experiences of gender-diverse people, a group typically omitted from labour market statistics.

4.1 Design

A dedicated Quantitative Working Group within the Working for Women Research Partnership developed the survey.

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4.2 Indigenous data design and governance

AWGES was designed in accordance with established Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) principles¹⁴, which recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern the collection, ownership, access, interpretation and use of data about them. Grounded in IDS

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) 'Analysis of non-binary sex responses'. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/analysis-non-binary-sex-responses#:~:text=The%20non%2Dbinary%20sex%20option%20was%20marked%20on%20the%20Census,in%20'non%2Dbinary%20sex'>

¹⁴ Maïam nayri Wingara (2025). <https://www.maïamnayriwingara.org/>



frameworks, the survey prioritised Indigenous ownership by ensuring voluntary participation based on transparent consent and self-identification. The instrument used culturally safe language and constructs to reflect Indigenous worldviews and avoid deficit-based narratives. Consistent with IDS expectations of access, benefit, accountability and relationality, Indigenous governance and analysis were supervised by Professor Nareen Young to ensure Indigenous agency in presenting the findings.

5. Australia's Gendered Labour Market

5.1 Gendered differences in flexibility, working time and control

Table 5.1 reports key labour market indicators by gender, highlighting differences across men, women and non-binary respondents in access to flexible work, working time and control. Women and men both report that they have the flexibility they need at work (65.3% vs 67.6%), but women are more often concentrated in forms of flexibility tied to insecurity, such as casual contracts and have higher rates of part-time work (45.9% of women vs 22.2% of men).

These patterns suggest that the flexibility women encounter is more constrained and employer-driven, while men are more likely to experience flexibility linked to autonomy and control. Men are considerably more likely than women to report working more hours than they prefer (44.0% vs 32.1%), indicating greater pressure to meet long-hours expectations. Women's higher rates of part-time work in concert with similar rates of underemployment reflect not only reduced hours but also limited ability to secure the hours they want. Men and women experience time mismatch in opposite directions: men are pushed toward overwork; women are pulled toward restricted hours.

Women are consistently less likely than men to feel able to shape workplace decisions, express their opinions, or control how tasks are carried out. These constraints compound women's reduced access to meaningful flexibility and reinforce a broader pattern of lower job quality.



Table 5.1 Key labour market indicators by gender (%)

Employment indicators	Men	Women	Non-binary
Employment status			
Full-time (35 or more hours per week)	77.8	54.1	31.1
Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	22.2	45.9	67.9
Employment contract type			
Casual	17.8	24.5	49.4
Fixed term	12.7	9.08	14.3
Permanent	69.3	66.3	36.2
Has the flexibility they need	67.6	65.3	77.9
Underemployment (works fewer hours than preferred)¹⁵	26.7	25.3	27.5
Overemployment (works more hours than preferred)¹⁶	44.0	32.1	27.2

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Despite women having similar, or in some cases higher, job security and flexibility in full-time roles than men in full-time roles, Table 5.2 shows that women in part-time work have markedly poorer job quality than their male counterparts, particularly in task control, opportunities for advancement, and workplace influence.

Table 5.2 Job quality indicator by gender and employment status (%)

Job quality indicator	Men		Women	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
My job is secure	71.6	68.6	73.7	60.4
I have the flexibility I want	66.7	71.7	61.8	69.9
I can control how I undertake tasks	73.0	69.4	71.6	60.9
Opportunity to move to senior position	52.3	32.3	44.5	26.7
Comfortable expressing opinions	74.7	70.4	67.6	58.6
Ability to influence decisions	64.2	44.8	52.8	35.3

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 5.3 confirms this pattern across contract types, with women in casual and fixed-term employment facing a ‘double whammy’, reporting substantially lower job security, less control, and reduced influence compared with men on the same contract type, indicating that contractual precarity compounds existing gender disparities in job quality.

¹⁵ Underemployment is derived from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (AWGES) (2025) item asking respondents to indicate if they would prefer working more hours than they are currently employed, which is a proxy for underemployment.

¹⁶ Overemployment is derived from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Survey (AWGES) (2025) item asking respondents to indicate if they would prefer working more less than they are currently employed, which is a proxy for overemployment.



Table 5.3 Job quality indicator by gender and contract arrangements (%)

Job quality indicator	Men			Women		
	Casual	Fixed-term	Permanent	Casual	Fixed-term	Permanent
My job is secure	66.3	62.6	73.7	45.1	65.2	76.7
I have the flexibility I want	76.2	67.3	65.5	73.6	64.5	62.5
I can control how I undertake tasks	70.9	68.9	73.4	59.6	73.2	68.5
Opportunity to move to senior position	43.3	64.1	47.2	22.5	47.1	40.6
Comfortable expressing opinions	71.6	71.7	74.7	58.0	65.7	65.3
Ability to influence decisions	55.9	64.8	60.4	33.5	53.5	47.8

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 5.4 shows that women consistently face a less favourable alignment between their working conditions and preferences than men. Across some industries, women report lower access to the flexibility they want and substantially higher rates of underemployment, such as in wholesale trade (63.8% vs 34.2% for men) and construction (51.1% vs 27.1% for men). Men, by contrast, are more likely to be overworked, with markedly higher rates of excess hours in industries like electricity, gas and water (48.1% vs 36.5% for women) and transport (42.7% vs 40.6% for women). These patterns suggest that gender differences in flexibility are shaped not only by employment arrangements but by industry, where men tend to experience flexibility that enhances autonomy while women more often encounter forms of flexibility connected to limited or insecure hours.



Table 5.4 Key labour market characteristics by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men			Women		
	Has flexibility	Over-employed	Under-employed	Has flexibility	Over-employed	Under-employed
Agriculture, Forestry	66.9	29.9	39.6	59.5	19.6	33.2
Mining	64.3	25.3	42.4	71.3	34.6	52.4
Manufacturing	64.0	10.6	41.2	62.7	17.9	46.9
Electricity, Gas, Water	76.1	4.0	48.1	75.8	31.0	36.5
Construction	73.8	29.9	27.1	59.6	26.8	51.1
Wholesale Trade	87.0	29.6	34.2	61.6	30.4	63.8
Retail Trade	66.2	28.0	27.5	64.9	31.0	32.8
Accommodation & Food	64.6	47.9	22.4	60.9	33.2	44.5
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	51.7	18.2	42.7	60.7	8.0	40.6
Information, Media & Telecomms.	76.6	15.1	39.7	71.1	23.9	51.0
Financial & Insurance	70.2	25.9	38.0	83.3	44.0	57.0
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	61.4	0.8	37.5	64.5	29.3	39.5
Professional, Scientific & Technical	69.8	20.1	37.1	80.5	25.5	48.5
Administrative & Support Services	63.0	16.2	24.8	62.9	29.3	47.4
Public Administration	67.5	7.8	41.3	63.4	17.6	35.2
Education & Training	52.4	24.7	32.4	57.5	20.0	39.7
Health Care & Social Assistance	63.0	26.5	33.3	63.6	31.1	37.0
Arts & Recreation	74.9	45.3	20.4	99.4	50.2	32.0
Other Services	71.6	25.2	31.6	68.3	21.3	37.3

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 5.5 shows that women’s access to the flexibility they need remains consistently lower than men’s across workplace types. In women-dominated workplaces, only 55.8% of women have the flexibility they want compared with 62.5% of men, and there are similar gaps in men-majority workplaces (64.7% vs 67.3% for men). In gender-balanced workplaces, women have the flexibility that they desire, but higher rates of under- and over-employment. Women also experience sharper working-time mismatches, with higher underemployment in gender-balanced workplaces (30.6% vs 25.4% for men) and higher overemployment in women-majority workplaces (45.2% vs 29.6% for men), suggesting that gender-segregated workplaces amplify structural barriers that limit women’s ability to exercise meaningful control over their working time.



Table 5.5 Labour market characteristics by gender composition of workforce and gender (%)

Workplace gender composition	Men			Women		
	Has flexibility	Under-employed	Over-employed	Has flexibility	Under-employed	Over-employed
Women-dominated	62.5	29.8	29.6	55.8	26.7	45.2
Gender-balanced	67.6	25.4	33.8	70.7	30.6	42.2
Men-dominated	67.3	25.4	35.0	64.7	20.6	44.9

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

5.2 Gaps in current and future job quality by gender

This section highlights the difference between what workers *currently experience* in their jobs and what they believe a good job *should provide in the future* across 12 dimensions:

1	Hours fit	5	Work-care balance	9	Worker voice
2	Job security	6	Skill utilisation	10	Participation in dimensions at work
3	Adequate pay	7	Control over work	11	Respect
4	Flexible work	8	Career progression	12	General workplace gender equality

We measure each job quality gap as the percentage-point difference between the proportion of workers who say a job quality dimension is important for their future and the proportion who currently have that condition. In other words, for each dimension, we subtract the share who currently experience it from the share who consider it important. Positive values indicate shortfalls or unmet needs, with larger gaps signalling greater disadvantage or greater scope for improvement. Negative values indicate the opposite: workers currently have the condition at higher rates than they identify it as important, suggesting an oversupply relative to their preferences. This approach allows us to identify where job quality is most misaligned with workers' priorities.

Table 5.6 shows that across the workforce, substantial mismatches appear between the job quality workers have and the conditions they consider essential, particularly around job security, pay adequacy, work-care balance, skill utilisation, control over work, career progression, and workplace influence. Gender differences in these gaps are striking.

Women experience larger unmet needs than men across almost all dimensions, as shown by the gap values (the percentage-point shortfall between what workers consider important and what they currently have). For example, the gap in job security is 17.6% for women compared with 8.7% for men, and similar patterns appear for pay (20.3% vs 6.8%), control over work (11.6% vs 6.2%), career progression (16.9% vs 9.2%), and especially influence over decisions (30.1% vs 5.1%). Non-binary workers report the largest shortfalls overall, with exceptionally wide gaps in job security (26.9%), skills utilisation (27.2%), and career progression (40.0%),



indicating deep structural exclusion. Although men report the smallest gaps, they still face unmet needs in several areas, including work–care balance (14.3%) and skills utilisation (18.4%), demonstrating that job quality challenges are widespread even if unequally distributed.

Table 5.6 Gaps between current job and future needs by gender (percentage points)

	Job security	Enough pay	Manage work & care	Skills used	Control over work	Career progression	Has a say in decisions	Treated with respect	Gender equality at work
Men	8.7	6.8	14.3	18.4	6.2	9.2	5.1	0.5	-8.2
Women	17.6	20.3	14.4	14.9	11.6	16.9	30.1	10.4	2.3
Non-binary	26.9	18.3	17.9	27.2	17.0	40.0	30.5	1.7	15.5

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



6. What is flexible work?

Flexibility can either advance or undermine gender equality, depending on how it is structured. Some forms of flexibility genuinely support workers, and some shift risk onto workers. Flexibility can be distinguished between ‘good flex’ and ‘bad flex’¹⁷ as shown in Table 6.1. This framing is useful for policy and practice.

Good flex refers to worker-oriented arrangements that provide real choice and control over working hours, patterns and location. These arrangements enable employees to balance paid work with caring, cultural and community responsibilities without compromising job security or career progression. Good flex is embedded in secure employment, supported by constructive managerial practice, and available without stigma or penalty. It enables workers, particularly women who bear most unpaid care, to remain attached to the workforce throughout their life course. These arrangements can benefit employers too, allowing them to attract and retain skilled workers across life course transitions. **Bad flex**, by contrast, refers to employer-oriented flexibility where hours, scheduling and work organisation are primarily controlled by the employer, and where workers have limited scope to negotiate. This includes casualised and short-hours work, volatile rosters, dependent contracting and gig work. Such arrangements are characterised by unstable income, limited access to paid leave and constrained opportunities for training or career progression. Bad flex is concentrated in feminised and lower-paid industries, where women disproportionately rely on insecure roles to accommodate care responsibilities, often at high long-term economic cost.

This distinction is critical for understanding why increased flexibility does not automatically lead to improved outcomes. Access to flexibility is not the same as access to high-quality flexibility. Focusing on the underlying structure and quality of flexible work can help ensure policy and workplace practice do not unintentionally reinforce gendered and intersectional inequalities.

¹⁷ Cooper, R., Flanagan, F. & Foley, M. (2024) Flexible work policy: Building ‘good flex’ across the life course. In P.M. Baird, E. Hill & S. Colussi (Eds.) *At a Turning Point: Work, Care and Family Policies in Australia*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.



Table 6.7 Dimensions of 'good flex' and 'bad flex'

Dimension	Good flex	Bad flex
What is it?	Employer-controlled arrangements with limited worker choice over hours and scheduling, constraining capacity to meet care, cultural and community needs and reinforcing insecurity and pressure.	Mutually beneficial arrangements that provide real choice and control over hours, patterns and location, enabling people to meet paid work alongside care, cultural and community needs without compromising job quality, security or progression.
Who benefits?	Employer -oriented	Mutual benefit to workers and employers
Who chooses?	Employers have control and choice	Workers have control and choice
Job quality	Lower job quality	Higher job quality
Is it secure?	Insecure and uncertain	Secure and stable
Is there a link to career progression?	Limits or lacks clear progression pathways	Supports career progression
How are skills and qualifications used?	Underutilised or below qualification level	Well utilised and aligned with qualifications
How does this relate to wages?	Lower and/or unstable pay	Stable, professional wages
What's the impact on care?	Unpredictable arrangements that make care difficult	Predictable arrangements that support care
Are cultural nuances recognised?	Culturally uninformed policies, reinforces racism	Recognises culturally informed understandings of family, including Indigenous ways of caring
Link to retention and turnover	Drives workforce turnover and exit at key life points	Supports retention at key life points
What's in it for employers?	Lower labour costs through reduced pay or conditions	Productivity gains from retaining and effectively utilising skilled workers
Overall outcomes	Reinforces structural and gendered inequalities	Delivers mutual benefit and sustainable flexibility
What is it?	Employer-controlled arrangements with limited worker choice over hours and scheduling, constraining capacity to meet care, cultural and community needs and reinforcing insecurity and pressure.	Mutually beneficial arrangements that provide real choice and control over hours, patterns and location, enabling people to meet paid work alongside care, cultural and community needs without compromising job quality, security or progression.



7. What kinds of flexible work are available and who has access?

7.1 Overview

This section examines what kinds of flexible work are available in Australian workplaces, who has access to them, and whether those arrangements are ‘good flex’ or ‘bad flex’. We focus on two main dimensions of flexibility: temporal and spatial. **Temporal flexibility** refers to arrangements that change when and how long people work, such as variable start and finish times, compressed weeks, shift swaps, job sharing, school-hours schedules and reduced hours. **Spatial flexibility** refers to where work is done, including fully on-site roles, hybrid arrangements and remote-first roles¹⁸. These dimensions together show whether flexibility gives workers meaningful control over their hours and location, or whether it is largely determined by job design and employer preferences.

Women make greater use of most temporal flexibility arrangements than men. Women are more likely to change their start and finish times, swap shifts, work during school hours and temporarily reduce their hours when needed. However, these forms of flexibility are heavily concentrated in service, care and other frontline roles where spatial flexibility remains limited and work typically has to be done on-site. For many women, particularly those in female-dominated industries, they largely achieve flexibility through adjusting hours within jobs that still require physical presence on-site. This pattern indicates high demand for flexibility, but limited scope to transform where work is done.

Men, by contrast, are more likely to access flexibility in higher-autonomy roles and industries where hybrid and remote work are more feasible. They report strong use of compressed weeks in some male-dominated industries and are more represented in hybrid arrangements that change where work is done, not just when. At the same time, large proportions of both women and men report that their job simply cannot be done from home, and many say their employer has no plans to allow future remote work. These job-based and organisational constraints, especially in lower-paid and frontline roles, are characteristic of ‘bad flex’: they restrict workers’ ability to negotiate hours or location, even when demand for flexibility is high.

Access to flexibility is further stratified across gender within key demographic groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, migrants, language-diverse workers, workers with disability, regional workers, and working parents of young children. Women in these groups frequently rely on temporal flexibility to manage care, health and community responsibilities, but often face stronger job-based barriers and weaker employer commitments to remote work than comparable men. Non-binary workers appear more likely to use both temporal and spatial flexibility, although small sample sizes require caution in interpreting these results.

¹⁸ We use the term ‘remote work’ in this report to refer home-based remote work. We recognize that ‘remote work’ can also refer to work (such as mining) carried out in locations remote from urban areas and employees’ homes. We do not consider that form of remote work here.



Overall, the findings show that flexible work is widespread but unevenly distributed by gender. Women and gender-diverse workers are clustered in forms of flexibility that help them ‘make do’ within constrained jobs and rigid service systems, while men more often access flexibility associated with higher-autonomy roles and structured hybrid models. The next sections explore these patterns in more detail, first examining temporal flexibility and spatial flexibility, then barriers, preferences and employer plans for future remote work.

7.2 Temporal flexibility in working arrangements

Temporal flexibility refers to arrangements that can change when and how long people work, including working long or shorter hours, varying start and finish times, working compressed weeks, swapping shifts, job sharing, working only during school hours, moving from full-time to part-time work or temporarily reducing hours.

7.2.1 Use of temporal flexibility arrangements by gender

Table 7.1 shows that women report higher use of nearly all types of flexible work than men. Nearly 6 in 10 women (59.5%) say they can change their start or finish times, compared with half of men (50.1%). Women are also more likely to swap shifts (50.7% vs 39.5% of men) and reduce their hours temporarily (35.9% vs 26.2% of men). The only area where men and women report similar participation is taking paid time off for appointments (around 62% each). Women are more likely to work during school hours (22.4% vs 17.8% of men). Non-binary respondents have good access to temporal flexibility, in some cases higher access than both men and women, although sample sizes are small.

Table 7.8 Access to temporal flexibility arrangements by gender (%)

Type of temporal flexibility arrangement	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
Change start/finish times	50.1	59.5	41.5	54.8
Work compressed week	24.3	25.2	54.8	24.8
Swap shifts	39.5	50.7	54.6	45.2
Job share	19.2	21.7	40.0	20.5
Work only during school hours	17.8	22.4	20.9	20.1
Take paid off to attend appointments	61.2	62.5	46.0	61.8
Change from full-time to part-time work	16.5	22.8	33.1	19.6
Reduce hours for a limited period	26.2	35.9	47.5	31.8

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.2.2 Use of temporal flexibility arrangements by industry

Tables 7.2 and 7.3 report the proportion of temporal flexibility arrangements used in each industry for men and women. Across industries, women consistently report higher access to, and use of, flexible work arrangements than men, particularly in industries like retail, accommodation and health, where shift-based flexibility is more common. In contrast, men are more likely to report access to compressed work weeks in traditionally male-dominated industries such as mining and electricity. Education and administrative services show especially pronounced gender differences, with women far more likely to use school-hours



schedules and transition to part-time work, reflecting the interplay between industry composition and caring responsibilities.

Table 7.9 Men’s use of temporal flexibility arrangements by industry (%)

Industry	Change start/finish time	Compressed week	Swap shifts	Job share	School hours only	Paid time off for appts	Change FT→PT	Reduce hours temporarily
Agriculture, Forestry	56.2	14.8	47.8	11.7	2.0	55.7	37.8	16.0
Mining	35.9	32.3	65.1	24.3	17.0	56.8	9.3	21.3
Manufacturing	46.9	23.8	30.4	12.1	14.6	67.6	9.5	16.6
Electricity, Gas, Water	53.5	16.8	34.5	21.6	15.8	81.4	4.8	27.7
Construction	54.5	23.7	24.9	20.8	20.0	57.6	22.1	33.2
Wholesale Trade	44.9	23.6	28.1	16.5	25.8	34.8	24.1	25.9
Retail Trade	54.3	17.0	52.9	17.8	15.1	59.1	19.7	25.3
Accommodation & Food	52.8	32.7	54.1	23.8	21.4	41.1	22.8	32.1
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	54.4	24.7	43.0	8.3	7.4	63.1	15.4	23.7
Information, Media & Telecomms.	59.4	43.5	33.0	20.0	24.3	62.5	15.5	39.4
Financial & Insurance	48.5	26.8	35.4	18.0	27.7	58.8	25.8	27.9
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	30.3	44.7	14.7	7.2	4.1	51.7	6.6	43.8
Professional, Scientific & Technical	57.1	26.1	33.9	12.8	17.5	63.3	13.0	28.6
Administrative & Support Services	55.3	37.9	37.4	25.6	12.3	75.3	19.1	33.0
Public Administration	54.5	26.0	28.2	14.2	9.2	72.6	8.5	19.6
Education & Training	43.4	11.8	22.2	16.8	36.2	73.0	18.0	30.2
Health Care & Social Assistance	53.6	26.8	56.8	25.5	11.5	51.0	21.7	32.3
Arts & Recreation	73.1	52.5	43.1	34.8	17.0	44.6	26.6	62.3
Other Services	56.2	27.0	37.3	19.4	13.7	57.9	21.5	40.5

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table 7.10 Women's use of temporal flexibility arrangements by industry (%)

Industry	Change start/finish time	Compressed week	Swap shifts	Job share	School hours only	Paid time off for appts	Change FT→PT	Reduce hours temporarily
Agriculture, Forestry	54.3	32.5	41.4	22.9	14.6	57.8	6.2	32.5
Mining	61.2	5.7	45.7	11.2	0.0	60.8	3.8	0.6
Manufacturing	60.4	37.0	39.3	30.7	22.5	61.7	25.9	44.9
Electricity, Gas, Water	60.6	9.7	0.0	1.9	1.9	74.3	0.0	7.5
Construction	57.3	27.4	32.2	13.8	22.3	63.4	27.0	44.4
Wholesale Trade	50.7	23.6	35.5	10.1	19.8	66.2	19.9	18.4
Retail Trade	69.1	25.6	64.0	21.9	20.3	62.0	18.5	41.3
Accommodation & Food	58.7	27.4	66.2	24.6	25.7	40.4	18.6	38.3
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	65.6	19.6	41.3	16.8	17.4	56.8	22.4	38.3
Information, Media & Telecomms.	73.1	47.8	38.3	21.7	19.8	59.6	35.6	52.6
Financial & Insurance	54.4	27.5	28.2	14.9	23.8	68.9	28.0	24.4
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	58.2	22.3	38.3	20.8	1.4	52.5	20.3	33.4
Professional, Scientific & Technical	62.3	36.7	45.3	22.9	13.9	71.2	15.3	31.9
Administrative & Support Services	71.8	30.6	39.3	23.1	25.7	62.7	42.3	36.9
Public Administration	53.3	15.9	31.3	13.9	16.3	70.1	29.1	26.1
Education & Training	50.7	17.8	43.7	26.2	40.9	68.8	30.1	34.7
Health Care & Social Assistance	60.5	28.2	63.9	26.7	22.1	61.8	24.7	42.6
Arts & Recreation	61.5	24.5	63.0	15.1	12.6	42.6	13.4	45.0
Other Services	60.7	27.5	49.4	18.3	25.4	58.9	20.5	40.1

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.2.3 Use of temporal flexible working arrangements by gender composition of the workplace

Tables 7.4 and 7.5 show men's and women's use of flexible arrangements by the gender composition of the workplace. Women make greater use of most temporal flexibility arrangements than men. For example, in women-dominated workplaces, 57% of women swap shifts compared with 47% of men, and 42% of women reduce their hours temporarily compared with 25% of men. These gender gaps tend to widen in women-dominated environments, indicating that women benefit disproportionately from flexible options when they work in settings where women make up most of the workforce.



Table 7.11 Men's use of temporal flexibility arrangements by gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Change start/finish	Compressed week	Swap shifts	Job share	School hours only	Paid time off	Change FT→PT	Reduce hours
Women-dominated	57.8	18.3	47.0	19.4	17.8	65.2	20.4	24.6
Gender-balanced	53.4	28.1	41.5	20.1	20.4	58.5	17.4	28.0
Men-dominated	53.4	25.2	30.5	16.6	14.1	59.8	21.8	35.2

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 7.12 Women's use of temporal flexibility arrangements by gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Change start/finish	Compressed week	Swap shifts	Job share	School hours only	Paid time off	Change FT→PT	Reduce hours
Women-dominated	65.5	27.8	57.1	24.1	27.1	57.0	23.2	41.8
Gender-balanced	57.5	27.7	46.6	21.7	21.9	63.0	26.1	36.5
Men-dominated	61.1	22.5	45.9	20.3	21.8	63.6	24.8	28.4

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.2.4 Gendered use of temporal flexible working arrangements amongst key demographic groups

Table 7.6 shows the use of temporal flexible arrangements by key demographic groups. Table A1 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 7.13 Use of temporal flexibility by key groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women make greater use of flexible work arrangements than the overall sample They rely more on arrangements that reduce or restructure hours, such as compressed weeks, job sharing, and reduced hours, indicating a consistently higher demand for flexibility than the broader workforce.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay and bisexual men generally use more schedule adjustments, paid time off, and shift swapping than heterosexual men, although gay men make less use of job sharing. Lesbian and bisexual women also exceed heterosexual women in their use of several forms of flexibility, particularly those involving adjusted schedules or restructured hours, with bisexual women showing especially high engagement.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian-born men and women tend to use a wider range of flexible arrangements than overseas-born workers. Overseas-born women are more likely than Australian-born women to adjust their start and finish times but make less use of most other arrangements, suggesting differing preferences or constraints in access to workplace flexibility.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers who speak a language other than English, particularly women, tend to use a broader mix of temporal flexible arrangements than English-only speakers. Language-diverse women make greater use of arrangements that alter hours or schedules, whereas English-only workers show slightly higher use of reduced-hours options.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers with disability make more extensive use of flexible arrangements than those without disability. Men with disability rely on multiple forms of flexibility at higher rates than the male baseline, while women with disability make greater use of arrangements that allow shift changes or reductions in hours compared with women without disability.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional workers display different flexibility patterns compared with urban workers. Regional men use shift swapping more often but engage less with school-hours arrangements, while regional women use shift swapping and reduced hours more frequently than their urban counterparts.
Parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men without children use a wider variety of flexibility options than fathers, particularly arrangements that adjust schedules or provide short-term leave. Fathers are more likely to swap shifts. Women without children have the highest overall use of many flexible arrangements, while mothers frequently adjust start and finish times and swap shifts but make less use of school-hours arrangements.



7.3 Spatial flexibility

Spatial flexibility refers to the ability of workers to perform their job across multiple locations rather than being tied to a single, fixed workspace like the traditional office or worksite. There are three types of spatial flexibility: fully on-site, hybrid and remote-first.

- **Fully on-site workers** are those who work at their workplace or work site 100% of the time.
- **Hybrid workers** are those who split their time between their workplace/worksite and home
- **Remote-first workers** are those who work from home or remotely most or all the time

Despite the expansion of hybrid and remote work during and in the years after the COVID-19 lockdowns (2020–2021), most Australian workers work fully on-site, and women are more likely to do so than men. Table 7.7 shows 61% of women and 57.6% of men work fully on-site. Around one-quarter of women (26.1%) and nearly one-third of men (31.6%) work in hybrid roles, while about 1 in 10 men (10%) and women (12%) work in remote-first and fully remote jobs. Non-binary respondents have a distinctive pattern: they are more likely than men and women to work fully on-site, but also more likely to report remote-first arrangements, and much less likely to be in hybrid roles. This suggests that gender-diverse workers may be accessing more flexible modes of work, although small sample sizes mean these results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 7.7 Work location arrangements by gender (%)

Work location	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
Fully on-site	57.6	61.0	75.8	59.4
Hybrid	31.6	26.1	4.2	29.6
Remote-first	10.0	12.0	20.0	11.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.3.1 Gendered differences in work location by industry

Table 7.8 shows that men working on-site are heavily concentrated in construction, while women working on-site are in health care and retail. For both men and women, remote work is most common in knowledge-based industries such as information media, professional services, and other services.



Table 7.8 Work location arrangements by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men			Women		
	On-site	Hybrid	Remote	On-site	Hybrid	Remote
Agriculture, Forestry	2.3	1.7	0.1	1.3	1.7	0.9
Mining	2.4	1.1	0.6	0.7	1.2	0.0
Manufacturing	7.1	5.1	2.0	3.3	2.8	2.2
Electricity, Gas, Water	1.4	2.3	3.2	0.2	0.9	0.7
Construction	13.3	13.2	5.4	2.0	5.0	3.9
Wholesale Trade	2.2	2.1	5.0	1.3	1.8	1.0
Retail Trade	13.2	4.0	4.9	16.5	5.6	7.5
Accommodation & Food	6.9	2.3	1.0	9.1	2.8	2.3
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	8.2	2.3	1.8	2.2	1.4	2.2
Information, Media & Telecomms	2.2	9.9	16.0	1.0	4.7	3.2
Financial & Insurance	5.3	11.9	11.0	2.7	11.3	9.2
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	1.0	2.9	0.5	0.7	1.2	1.6
Professional, Scientific & Technical	4.7	12.2	13.1	2.6	6.3	6.5
Administrative & Support Services	1.6	2.5	2.1	4.6	7.8	11.0
Public Administration	3.0	5.2	3.4	2.2	4.0	3.7
Education & Training	3.8	4.6	4.5	13.7	8.8	10.1
Health Care & Social Assistance	6.9	5.8	3.0	21.1	14.1	7.6
Arts & Recreation	0.9	3.0	4.8	2.0	3.0	3.6
Other Services	12.0	7.8	16.9	11.9	14.8	21.9`
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.3.2 Gendered differences in work location by gendered composition of the workplace

Table 7.9 shows how the gender composition of workplaces differs across work arrangements, indicating the proportion of men and women in environments that are dominated by women, about gender-balanced, or dominated by men. Nearly half of women working on-site (47.1%) are in workplaces that are almost entirely female, compared with only 10.6% of men, highlighting how women are much more concentrated in heavily female-dominated work environments than men.



Table 7.9 Work location arrangements by gender and gendered composition of workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Men			Women		
	On-site	Hybrid	Remote	On-site	Hybrid	Remote
Women-dominated	10.6	8.6	10.4	47.1	30.4	38.7
Gender-balanced	48.2	56.7	46.0	40.7	50.6	46.4
Men-dominated	41.2	34.6	43.4	12.0	18.8	14.8

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.3.3 Gendered differences in work location arrangements across key demographic groups

Table 7.10 shows the use of spatial flexible arrangements by key demographic groups. Table A2 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 7.10 Work location arrangements by gender and key demographic groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are less likely than men overall to work fully on-site and more likely to work in hybrid arrangements, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women also show a greater reliance on hybrid work than women overall. Both groups have comparatively low rates of remote work.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay men are less likely to work fully on-site and more likely to work remotely than heterosexual men, while bisexual men show similar patterns to men overall. Among women, lesbian women are more likely to work remotely, whereas bisexual women are more likely to be fully on-site compared with the women's baseline.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian-born men and women are more likely to work fully on-site than their overseas-born counterparts. Overseas-born men show much higher use of remote work than Australian-born men, and overseas-born women also have higher remote work rates than Australian-born women.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers who speak a language other than English, particularly men, are less likely to work fully on-site and more likely to work remotely or in hybrid arrangements than English-only speakers. Among women, language-diverse workers make slightly greater use of hybrid and remote work.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men and women with disability are less likely to work fully on-site and more likely to work remotely than those without disability. The shift toward remote work is especially pronounced among men with disability.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban men and women make greater use of hybrid and remote work than those in regional or remote areas. Regional men and women are more likely to work fully on-site, with regional men displaying particularly high on-site dependence.
Parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men without children are less likely to work fully on-site and more likely to work in hybrid roles than fathers, who are more often on-site. Women without children rely more on hybrid work, whereas mothers are more likely to work fully on-site, with similar levels of remote work across both groups.



7.4 Gendered barriers to access remote work

Table 7.11 shows that for employees who cannot work remotely, the main barrier is the job itself. Almost 76% of women and 73% of men say their work cannot be done from home. Other barriers show smaller gender gaps. Around 14% of both women and men say their manager does not allow working from home. Women are slightly more likely to lack the right equipment or technology (6.7% vs 5.5% of men). Men are more likely to prefer being in the workplace (17.1% vs 10.9% of women), suggesting different comfort levels with remote work. Non-binary workers report fewer managerial barriers (3.6%) but more issues with technology (10.3%). Although numbers are small, this points to different types of support needs for gender-diverse workers.

Table 7.14 Barriers to accessing spatial flexibility by gender (%)

Barrier	Men	Women	Non-binary
Job can't be done at home	72.6	75.8	68.2
Manager doesn't allow work from home	14.0	14.3	3.6
Doesn't have proper equipment / technology	5.5	6.7	10.3
Doesn't have adequate workspace	6.6	3.6	1.8
Prefer workplace	17.1	10.9	7.3

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.4.1 Reasons the job cannot be done remotely by gender and industry

Table 7.12 shows the reasons why jobs cannot be undertaken from home by men and women in different industries. There are clear gendered and industry-specific differences: women face the highest rates of constraints in retail, accommodation and food services, education and training and health care and social assistance, while men face the strongest managerial, equipment and workspace barriers in finance and insurance and other services, illustrating that barriers to remote work reflect industry structure, job design, equipment needs and gendered patterns in job tasks.



Table 7.15 Reasons why the job cannot be done remotely by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men					Women				
	Job can't be done	Boss does not allow WFH	No equipment	No workspace	Prefer workplace	Job can't be done	Boss does not allow WFH	No equipment	No workspace	Prefer workplace
Agriculture, Forestry	3.0	1.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	1.5	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.9
Mining	2.6	2.2	3.1	0.7	2.2	0.8	0.8	0.4	2.6	0.3
Manufacturing	7.5	7.9	7.1	3.4	3.6	2.8	6.8	7.3	9.4	4.1
Electricity, Gas, Water	1.1	4.5	1.7	0.0	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.5
Construction	15.1	6.5	7.5	8.2	8.6	1.9	3.3	1.1	0.9	3.4
Wholesale Trade	2.3	5.7	7.8	8.5	1.1	1.2	3.2	2.3	5.0	1.4
Retail Trade	16.3	10.5	3.6	5.7	5.5	17.9	15.5	12.9	9.0	5.2
Accommodation & Food	7.7	5.0	7.0	9.6	4.2	10.3	5.0	7.0	10.4	5.0
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	9.2	3.4	1.7	2.0	5.4	2.1	3.4	2.7	1.0	1.1
Information, Media & Telecomms.	1.3	2.2	8.2	2.4	6.2	0.8	0.6	3.5	0.3	3.3
Financial & Insurance	3.3	11.1	21.9	26.1	13.5	2.2	6.6	5.6	5.1	3.8
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.4	0.9	1.5	0.0	2.8
Professional, Scientific & Technical	2.7	5.0	0.3	3.4	13.2	1.1	3.3	8.1	3.0	8.1
Administrative & Support Services	1.2	2.2	1.4	2.2	2.8	3.8	6.4	6.3	4.2	6.9
Public Administration	2.1	5.1	7.0	4.9	7.1	2.0	3.6	1.2	0.6	4.1
Education & Training	4.0	5.6	0.3	1.1	1.6	14.6	11.6	11.2	20.3	17.6
Health Care & Social Assistance	7.3	6.4	0.8	4.2	10.7	22.4	15.3	14.8	6.5	11.1
Arts & Recreation	1.2	2.9	2.4	1.0	0.2	2.3	1.5	2.0	4.6	0.1
Other services	10.8	12.5	18.0	16.7	12.0	11.8	11.2	11.4	16.5	20.3

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.4.2 Gendered barriers to accessing spatial flexibility by key demographic groups

Table 7.13 shows gendered barriers to spatial flexible arrangements by key demographic groups. Table A3 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 7.16 Barriers to accessing spatial flexibility by key groups

Group	Narrative Summary (compared to baseline groups)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are less likely than men overall to say their job cannot be done from home but more likely to prefer working on-site. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely than women overall to report managerial barriers to working from home and are also more likely to prefer on-site work.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay men are less likely than heterosexual men to say their job cannot be done from home but more likely to report managerial barriers. Bisexual men are more likely to report that their job cannot be done remotely but are less likely to cite workspace or equipment issues. Among women, lesbian women are the most likely to report no conditions supporting WFH and strongly favour on-site work, while bisexual women are more likely than heterosexual women to report equipment issues but less likely to prefer the workplace.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas-born men are more likely than Australian-born men to report that their job cannot be done from home but less likely to prefer working on-site. Overseas-born women show similar levels of perceived managerial barriers to Australian-born women but express lower preference for on-site work and fewer workspace concerns.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men who speak a language other than English report more workspace and equipment constraints than English-only speakers but show slightly greater openness to on-site work. Among women, language-diverse workers are less likely than English-only women to prefer on-site work and report fewer workspace issues.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men with disability are slightly less likely to report managerial barriers than men without disability but more likely to rely on remote work due to workspace needs. Women with disability are more likely than women without disability to report equipment and workspace issues but are less likely to prefer the workplace.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional men are more likely than urban men to say their job cannot be done from home and are less likely to report equipment or workspace constraints. Regional women express similar barriers to urban women but show slightly lower preference for working on-site.
Parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men without children are less likely than fathers to say their job cannot be done from home but are more inclined to prefer on-site work. Women without children report more equipment issues and stronger preference for on-site work than mothers, while mothers report fewer workspace concerns overall.



7.4.3 Gendered interest in applying for job working from home or remotely

Table 7.14 shows interest in working from home or remote work varies strongly by gender. Almost half of women want to apply for a remote job in the future (44.7%) compared with 29.1% of men. Men are more likely to have no interest in a remote job (70.9% vs 55.3% of women). Non-binary respondents show the highest interest, with 65.5% wanting to apply for a remote job. Although based on a small group, this suggests that gender-diverse workers may look for more flexible work arrangements.

Table 7.17 Interest in applying for a remote job by gender (%)

Interest	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
No	70.9	55.3	34.5	62.7
Yes	29.1	44.7	65.5	37.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

7.4.4 Gendered interest in applying for a remote job across key demographic groups

Table 7.15 shows gendered barriers to spatial flexible arrangements by key demographic groups. Table A4 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 7.15 Interest in applying for a remote job by key groups

Group	Summary
<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are more likely than men overall to want additional flexibility, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are slightly less likely than women overall to seek more flexibility. Both groups show stronger interest in increased flexibility than would be expected from their on-site working patterns.
<p>LGBTQ+ status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay men and bisexual men express a stronger desire for more flexibility than heterosexual men, reflecting higher expectations or unmet needs around work arrangements. Among women, lesbian and bisexual workers are more likely than heterosexual women to want more flexibility, with lesbian women showing one of the strongest preferences for increased flexibility across all groups.
<p>Migrant status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas-born men are more likely than Australian-born men to want more flexibility. Overseas-born women also express a stronger appetite for increased flexibility than Australian-born women, suggesting different expectations or constraints related to migration and settlement experiences.
<p>Language status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men who speak a language other than English report a greater interest in more flexibility than English-only men. Language-diverse women also express stronger demand for additional flexibility than English-only women, indicating that linguistic and cultural factors may shape expectations around flexible work.
<p>Disability status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men with and without disability show similar levels of desire for more flexibility. Among women, those with disability are more likely than women without disability to want increased flexibility, reflecting additional needs for adaptable working conditions.
<p>Location</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban and regional men report similar levels of interest in more flexibility. Among women, regional workers express slightly greater desire for additional flexibility than urban workers, suggesting location-based differences in job structures or access to flexible options.
<p>Parenthood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men without children are more likely than fathers to want additional flexibility, whereas fathers express comparatively lower interest. Among women, mothers are less likely than women without children to seek more flexibility, possibly reflecting higher existing use of flexible work arrangements among mothers.



7.4.5 Employer plans for future remote jobs by gender

Table 7.16 shows most employees believe their employer does not have any intention for them to work full-time or part-time days at home in the future. Almost three-quarters of women report no remote work planned (74.7%) compared with 69.3% of men, which is consistent with proportion of respondents who said their role could not be done off-site. Only a small proportion expect regular remote days, usually 1 to 2 days per week. Men are slightly more likely to say their employer has not announced a plan (21.2% vs 18.1% of women). Non-binary respondents report the highest expectation of no future remote work at 80.6%.

Table 7.18 Employers' plans for future spatial flexibility by gender (%)

Plans	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
Never	69.3	74.7	80.63	72.2
About once or twice a month	2.1	2.2	0.0	2.1
1 day per week	2.5	1.5	1.80	2.0
2 days per week	2.8	1.7	0.0	2.2
3 days per week	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.6
4 days per week	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.2
5 or more days per week	1.2	1.0	0.0	1.1
My employer has not announced a policy	21.2	18.1	17.57	19.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



8. How is flexible work managed by employers and experienced by workers?

8.1 Overview

This section examines how flexible work is supported, managed and experienced across the workforce, and whether these arrangements operate as ‘good flex’ or ‘bad flex’ in practice. The quality of flexible work depends not only on access, but also on workplace culture: who shapes decisions about working arrangements, how supervisors and organisations respond, and whether employees feel safe using flexibility without harming their career prospects.

Patterns of organisational support and perceived career risk provide an initial indication of flexibility quality. Most employees report strong supervisor support for flexible work, yet women are less likely than men to say that their organisation actively encourages it. Men are more likely to worry that working flexibly will harm their career progression. Women report fewer concerns of this kind and are more likely to describe productivity gains from flexible work, particularly in female-dominated industries. These perceptions suggest that the same formal flexibility policies are interpreted and experienced differently depending on gender, organisational culture and job context.

Experiences of working from home further show how flexibility operates in practice. Remote-first employees generally report positive outcomes, with women consistently recording slightly higher perceived productivity, effort and employer support than men. For some men, remote work is integrated into higher-autonomy roles and aligns with forms of ‘good flex’ that are planned, supported and linked to career development rather than seen as a special concession.

Autonomy over work location is another key marker of high-quality flexibility. Only around one-third of women, and a slightly higher share of men, report that they alone decide where they work, while most workers describe shared decision-making with employers. Employer-determined arrangements remain common in health, education, retail and other service industries where women are concentrated and are required to work onsite, whereas men in professional, technical and higher-autonomy industries are more likely to determine their own work location. Gender-diverse workers report the lowest levels of autonomy, indicating that organisational norms and inclusion shape this dimension of flexibility as strongly as formal policies do.

Return-to-office expectations also vary across gender and industry. Most employees report that their employer is not pushing them to return to the office. However, where employers are pushing for a return, men are more likely to face explicit full-return requirements or multi-day attendance expectations, particularly in construction, mining and structured hybrid white-collar industries.

Taken together, these findings show that the quality of flexible work, including who controls it, how safe it feels to use and whether it supports or constrains career development, is unevenly distributed across the workforce. Women and gender-diverse workers are more often clustered in forms of flexibility that help them manage competing demands within fixed job structures,



while men are more likely to access flexibility that is integrated into higher-autonomy roles and supported through structured hybrid models.

8.2 Gendered perceptions about use and impact of temporal flexible working arrangements

Table 8.1 shows that most employees see their supervisors and organisations as supportive of temporal flexibility. Two-thirds of men (66.5%) and a similar share of women (63.6%) say their supervisor supports flexible working. Women are less likely than men to feel their organisation encourages flexible work (50.2% vs 56.2% of men), suggesting culture may differ from direct supervisor support. Women are also less likely to worry that using flexibility will harm their career (24.5% vs 33.2% of men). Views on support are similar, with around 7 in 10 men (69.8%) and women (67.3%) agreeing that men are supported to use flexible work. Women are slightly more likely to report productivity gains from temporal flexibility (69.4% vs 65.5% of men).

Table 8.19 Perceptions about use and impact of temporal flexible working arrangements by gender (%)

Attitudes about flexible work	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
Supervisor/boss supports flexible work	66.5	63.6	77.7	65.0
Flexible work is encouraged	56.2	50.2	58.2	53.2
I worry that working flexible has a negative impact	33.2	24.5	27.4	28.7
Men are equally treated to take up flexible work	69.8	67.3	78.9	68.5
Senior roles in this org. can be performed flexibly	63.5	59.4	72.2	61.5
I am more productive when using flexible working	65.5	69.4	87.6	67.5

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.2.1 Perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements by gender and industry

Table 8.2 shows how many men and women agree with flexible work statements across different industries. Support for flexible work is strongest in education and training, health care and social assistance, other services, finance and insurance, professional and scientific services, construction and retail.

However, high rates of agreement about managerial support, productivity benefits and equal access to flexibility coincide with higher rates of concern about career harm. Industries with lower support for flexible working, such as rental and real estate, agriculture, and arts and recreation, also show low concern for career harm.

Across many industries, women report higher agreement than men on several flexible work measures, particularly around productivity and perceived encouragement, although there are notable exceptions in some male-dominated industries.



Table 8.20 Perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men					Women				
	Boss supports FW	Flex encouraged	Worry flex harms career	Men equally supported	More productive with flex	Boss supports FW	Flex encouraged	Worry flex harms career	Men equally supported	More productive with flex
Agriculture, Forestry	3.0	2.8	2.3	2.9	1.9	2.2	3.4	2.2	2.7	1.7
Mining	2.9	3.4	7.1	4.0	3.0	0.9	0.6	0.7	1.3	1.3
Manufacturing	10.5	10.7	13.3	11.0	12.4	6.3	6.9	2.9	5.6	6.0
Electricity, Gas, Water	6.1	5.0	2.8	5.2	4.5	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3
Construction	19.0	19.9	18.3	18.6	22.0	7.4	5.9	6.1	7.3	7.0
Wholesale Trade	6.5	6.2	7.2	6.5	6.6	2.3	2.7	3.5	2.9	2.6
Retail Trade	18.0	13.0	18.4	15.5	14.6	21.5	19.6	23.4	21.7	21.1
Accommodation & Food	7.0	7.2	6.7	7.4	7.8	10.9	12.3	13.7	10.6	10.4
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	8.4	8.8	7.2	9.3	7.5	3.6	2.6	4.4	3.8	3.9
Information Media & Telecoms	13.5	16.3	15.3	13.7	18.1	6.8	7.4	6.8	5.9	6.1
Financial & Insurance Services	25.1	25.5	29.1	21.0	21.8	15.8	13.8	17.5	13.3	15.2
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	1.6	1.8	0.9	2.4	1.4	1.9	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.4
Professional, Scientific & Technical	22.0	22.0	16.6	20.2	21.1	10.7	14.4	12.0	10.2	11.7
Administrative & Support Services	4.4	4.7	4.5	5.1	4.6	16.3	15.1	9.9	15.8	14.4
Public Administration & Safety	9.6	7.9	6.7	8.8	7.6	6.8	6.8	4.3	7.4	6.6
Education & Training	7.0	5.5	5.2	8.4	6.9	19.4	19.4	24.4	23.8	21.7
Health Care & Social Assistance	10.8	11.1	11.6	10.0	10.8	30.5	30.0	32.3	33.9	32.1
Arts & Recreation Services	5.1	6.0	7.2	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.8	6.7	3.8	5.0
Other Services	19.5	22.6	19.7	25.1	22.6	30.7	30.7	25.0	26.3	29.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



8.2.2 Perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements by gender and gender composition of the workplace

Table 8.3 shows how men and women perceive flexible working arrangements across workplaces with different gender compositions. Support for flexibility and beliefs about its productivity benefits are highest in gender-balanced workplaces, while workplaces dominated by either men or women show noticeably lower levels of encouragement and managerial support. Concern that using flexibility will harm one’s career is relatively consistent across industry gender compositions, though slightly lower in men dominated workplaces. Across all workplace gender compositions, women report higher agreement than men on most measures, especially the belief that flexible work boosts productivity; however, they also remain more alert to potential career risk.

Table 8.21 Perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements by gender and the gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Men					Women				
	Boss supports FWA	Flex encouraged	Worry flex harms career	Men equally supported	More productive with	Boss supports FWA	Flex encouraged	Worry flex harms career	Men equally supported	More productive with
Women-dominated	50.0	40.4	31.5	57.9	49.5	50.9	44.1	23.9	48.2	61.7
Gender-balanced	64.9	60.1	34.7	68.9	64.6	63.7	54.8	24.0	66.6	68.1
Men-dominated	50.2	44.2	24.0	50.1	59.0	55.5	40.4	25.9	56.1	72.1

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.2.3 Gendered perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements across key groups

Table 8.4 shows gendered perceptions about impact by key demographic groups. Table A5 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 8.22 Gendered perceptions about the use and impact of flexible working arrangements across key groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers—both men and women—report stronger perceptions of support for flexible work than the overall sample. They are more likely to feel that supervisors and senior leaders support flexibility, that flexibility is encouraged, and that it does not harm their careers. They also express higher confidence in being productive when using flexible arrangements.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay and bisexual men generally perceive more supportive flexible work cultures than heterosexual men, with fewer concerns that using flexibility harms careers. Among women, lesbian and bisexual workers tend to report less encouragement from supervisors and senior leaders but greater confidence in their productivity when using flexibility, especially among lesbian women.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian-born men and women generally perceive more supportive workplace cultures for flexibility than their overseas-born counterparts. Overseas-born workers, particularly women, report stronger confidence in their productivity with flexible work but lower perceptions of managerial and organisational support.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers who speak a language other than English—especially men—perceive higher levels of supervisory support, stronger organisational encouragement, and greater fairness in flexibility uptake compared with English-only speakers. Language-diverse women also report higher confidence in their productivity when using flexible work.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men with and without disability report broadly similar perceptions of support for flexible work. Among women, those with disability perceive less organisational encouragement and slightly weaker senior-role support than women without disability, though their confidence in their own productivity remains strong.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban workers, both men and women, generally perceive greater organisational support for flexible work than regional or remote workers. Regional workers tend to report lower encouragement and weaker perceptions of senior-role flexibility, although perceived productivity remains comparable across locations.
Parenthood status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers without children—both men and women—report stronger perceptions of supportive flexible work cultures than parents. They are more likely to feel that flexibility is encouraged, that using it does not harm careers, and that senior roles can be performed flexibly. Parents express comparatively weaker confidence in organisational support and lower perceived productivity when working flexibly.



8.3 Gendered experiences of working from home

Employees' experiences of working from home show workplace and manager support and flexibility in practice. Overall, both men and women express positive views about working from home, but women consistently report slightly higher levels of agreement across most measures.

Table 8.5 shows that nearly 7 in 10 women (69.8%) agree or strongly agree that they are more productive when working remotely, compared with 62.1% of men. Women are also somewhat more likely to report putting in greater effort (61.5%) compared with men (57.8%) and feeling supported by their employer (79.0%) compared with men (75.1%). Men and women show similar agreement that they meet formal performance requirements (around 88–90%), indicating high levels of confidence in job performance regardless of gender.

Table 8.23 Experiences of working from home by gender (%)

Experience	Men	Women
I am more productive when I work from home/remotely	62.1	69.8
I put in more effort when I work from home/remotely	57.8	61.5
I work more hours when I work from home/remotely	58.0	55.9
I meet all the performance requirements when I work from home	87.9	89.5
I feel supported by my employer when working from home	75.1	79.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.3.1 Gendered experiences of working from home by gender and industry

Table 8.6 shows the proportion of men and women who agree with remote-work outcome statements across industries. Agreement is highest for both genders in finance and insurance, administrative and support services and other services, and lowest in agriculture, mining, electricity, gas and water, accommodation and food services, and transport and postal services, reflecting the limited suitability of remote work in on-site industries.

Across several industries, women report higher perceived productivity from remote work than men, particularly in information media, finance and insurance, professional and scientific services, and retail, while also expressing greater concern about career harm in accommodation and food services, education and training, and health care and social assistance, suggesting that women feel stronger performance benefits from remote work yet worry more about its career consequences.



Table 8.24 Gendered experiences of working from home by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men					Women				
	Productive WFH	Effort WFH	Work more hours	Meet performance	Feel supported	Productive WFH	Effort WFH	Work more hours	Meet performance	Feel supported
Agriculture, Forestry	1.0	0.7	0.5	1.0	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.3	1.0	0.8
Mining	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.7
Manufacturing	2.6	4.2	3.7	3.8	5.1	4.5	3.2	3.7	2.9	3.2
Electricity, Gas, Water	0.9	2.8	2.9	2.6	3.3	3.2	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Construction	4.4	4.7	3.6	10.1	10.1	8.6	4.7	3.6	4.8	5.4
Wholesale Trade	1.5	1.3	1.9	3.4	2.9	3.4	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.1
Retail Trade	6.3	5.9	7.7	5.9	6.3	4.6	5.9	7.7	5.9	6.3
Accommodation & Food	2.6	2.6	3.4	2.6	2.1	1.6	2.6	3.4	2.6	2.1
Transport & Postal	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8
Information Media	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.6	12.5	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.6
Finance & Insurance	10.6	10.7	10.7	11.3	11.7	13.4	13.1	13.5	11.3	11.7
Rental & Real Estate	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.8	0.8	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.8
Professional & Scientific	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.8	7.2	11.9	6.6	6.1	6.8	7.2
Administrative & Support	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.9	9.4	3.2	9.0	8.8	9.9	9.4
Public Administration	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.0	5.1	4.0	3.7	4.4	4.0
Education & Training	9.4	9.3	9.4	8.9	9.1	4.8	9.5	9.2	8.9	9.1
Health Care & Social	11.8	11.9	11.6	11.8	11.9	5.6	10.4	8.4	11.8	11.9
Arts & Recreation	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2	1.8	3.6	3.4	3.2	2.9
Other Services	17.4	17.3	17.6	15.5	17.3	11.2	16.0	16.6	15.5	17.3
Total	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.	100.
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



8.3.2 Gendered experiences of working from home by gender and gender composition of the workplace

Table 8.7 shows how many men and women agree with remote-work outcome statements across workplaces with different gender compositions. Agreement is highest for both genders in gender-balanced workplaces, while women in female-dominated workplaces report stronger positive outcomes than men, and women in male-dominated workplaces report the weakest, indicating that perceptions of remote-work effectiveness and support vary systematically with workplace gender composition.

Table 8.25 Gendered experiences of working from home by gender and gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Men					Women				
	Productive WFH	Effort WFH	Work more hours	Meet performance	Feel supported	Productive WFH	Effort WFH	Work more hours	Meet performance	Feel supported
Women-dominated	9.1	8.4	8.8	9.5	8.3	33.9	34.1	35.4	33.3	31.8
Gender-balanced	55.3	57.7	57.3	54.6	53.8	49.2	49.0	46.2	48.6	51.3
Men-dominated	35.6	33.9	33.9	36.0	37.9	16.9	16.9	18.4	18.1	17.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.3.3 Gendered experiences of working from home across key groups

Table 8.8 shows gendered experiences of working from home by key demographic groups. Table A6 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 8.26 Attitudes towards working from home across key groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers report stronger experiences of support when working flexibly than the overall sample. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in particular report expending more effort and working longer hours when working flexibly, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women express higher confidence in meeting performance expectations and feeling supported than women overall.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay and bisexual men generally report similar or slightly stronger flexible-work experiences than heterosexual men, with fewer concerns about meeting performance expectations and greater feelings of support. Among women, lesbian and bisexual workers show more varied patterns: lesbian women express high confidence in meeting performance expectations but feel less supported overall, while bisexual women report a stronger sense of support than heterosexual women.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas-born men report somewhat stronger feelings of support and confidence in their productivity than Australian-born men, while Australian-born men report lower perceived effort and hours when working flexibly. Among women, Australian-born workers tend to report stronger productivity and support, whereas overseas-born women express slightly lower perceptions of organisational backing for flexible work.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers who speak a language other than English—particularly men—report stronger feelings of support and confidence in their productivity compared with English-only speakers. English-only workers are more likely to report increased effort and longer hours when working flexibly, suggesting different expectations or demands across language backgrounds.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men with disability report stronger feelings of support and somewhat greater confidence in their productivity than men without disability, although they also experience higher workload intensity when working flexibly. Women with disability report lower perceived support than women without disability but similar confidence in meeting performance expectations.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban and regional workers report broadly similar experiences of flexible work. Regional men express slightly stronger support and confidence in their productivity than urban men, while urban women are more likely than regional women to report feeling supported when working flexibly.
Parenthood status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fathers report higher productivity and stronger support when working flexibly than men without children, but also greater effort and longer hours. Mothers and women without children show similar levels of productivity and confidence in meeting expectations, though women without children typically feel more supported than mothers.



8.4 Gendered differences in autonomy over work location

Having supportive supervisors and policies does not necessarily mean employees control their working arrangements. Decisions about where people work are a key indicator of autonomy. Table 8.9 shows just one-third (33.8%) of women and 37.0% of men report that they alone decide their work location. Decisions about work location are often made jointly with their employer (44.8% of women and 42.8% of men), reflecting a broadly collaborative approach to remote and hybrid working arrangements. However, the slightly lower rate of full autonomy among women may point to occupational distributions, and organisational hierarchies and norms that grant men greater discretion over when and where they work. Non-binary respondents were least likely to have full control over work location (18.7%) and most likely to report shared decision-making (51.2%), suggesting that gender-diverse workers may experience lower levels of autonomy overall.

Table 8.27 Autonomy over work location by gender (%)

Decision-maker over work location	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
Me	37.0	33.8	18.7	35.4
My employer/supervisor	20.2	21.3	30.1	20.8
Both myself and my employer	42.8	44.8	51.2	43.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.4.1 Gendered autonomy over work location across worker and workplace characteristics

Table 8.10 shows how worker autonomy to determine their work location arrangements differs by industry for men. Men working in ‘other services’ report the highest levels of self-determined spatial flexibility, followed by professional and scientific services, information media, and construction. These same industries also record comparatively high levels of employer-determined and jointly determined arrangements. The most collaborative approach to setting hybrid work for men is in finance and insurance, information media, and professional and scientific services. For women, worker autonomy is highest in other services, health care and social assistance, administrative and support services, and education and training. Employer-determined arrangements are most common in health care, education and finance and insurance that also provide the highest rates of collaborative decision making about hybrid work.



Table 8.28 Autonomy over work location by gender and industry (%)

Industry	Men			Women		
	Me	Employer	Both	Me	Employer	Both
Agriculture, Forestry	1.6	0.6	0.9	2.4	0.5	0.9
Mining	1.3	0.9	0.6	0.3	1.5	1.1
Manufacturing	3.9	3.9	4.6	2.4	0.8	3.7
Electricity, Gas, Water	0.7	0.4	6.5	0.6	1.4	0.9
Construction	11.0	11.7	9.7	4.5	3.8	5.3
Wholesale Trade	5.4	1.0	0.8	2.5	0.6	0.8
Retail Trade	3.2	5.3	5.4	8.1	7.0	4.0
Accommodation & Food	2.4	3.7	0.4	3.0	2.6	2.3
Transport & Postal	2.5	4.2	0.9	1.1	1.4	2.7
Information Media	11.3	12.1	12.7	2.2	7.4	4.9
Finance & Insurance	9.2	12.6	14.0	5.7	13.5	14.9
Rental & Real Estate	1.3	0.9	2.3	1.4	1.0	1.6
Professional & Scientific	12.2	15.2	12.7	6.0	5.6	7.4
Administrative & Support	3.1	3.0	1.3	9.4	9.3	8.5
Public Administration	2.9	5.2	7.0	3.6	5.4	3.6
Education & Training	3.7	5.6	5.4	9.3	13.7	7.3
Health Care & Social	4.0	4.3	6.6	9.5	14.8	13.0
Arts & Recreation	6.1	0.1	1.7	5.0	0.5	2.5
Other Services	14.3	9.5	6.4	23.2	9.4	14.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.4.2 Autonomy over work location by gender and gendered composition of the workplace

Table 8.11 shows how men’s ability to determine workplace arrangements differs according to the gender composition of their workplace. Men in gender-balanced workplaces are the most likely to report employer-determined or jointly determined arrangements and also the most likely to decide their work location themselves. Men in men-dominated workplaces report somewhat lower autonomy and shared decision making, and men in female-dominated workplaces report the lowest levels of all three, indicating that men’s control over work location is strongest in gender-balanced settings and weakest in workplaces that are women-dominated, which likely reflects industry characteristics, e.g. health care where jobs have to be done onsite.



Table 8.29 Autonomy over work location by gender and gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	Men			Women		
	Me	Employer	Both	Me	Employer	Both
Women-dominated	9.6	9.7	8.5	44.1	25.6	25.1
Gender-balanced	47.5	57.6	59.5	42.8	51.5	55.3
Men-dominated	42.9	32.7	32.1	13.1	23.0	19.6

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.4.3 Gendered autonomy over work location across key groups

Table 8.12 shows gendered experiences of working from home by key demographic groups. Table A7 in the Appendix provides more detail.



Table 8.30 Autonomy over work location by key groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are more likely than men overall to believe that responsibility for flexible work rests with themselves rather than jointly with their employer. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in contrast, are more likely than women overall to attribute responsibility to their employer, while still showing strong support for shared responsibility.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay and bisexual men are more likely than heterosexual men to believe that the responsibility for flexible work lies with themselves, with bisexual men showing a particularly strong self-driven orientation. Among women, lesbian and bisexual workers are more likely than heterosexual women to view flexible work as a shared responsibility between themselves and their employer.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas-born men are more likely than Australian-born men to see flexible work as their own responsibility rather than something driven by their employer. Among women, Australian-born and overseas-born workers express broadly similar views, although overseas-born women show a slightly stronger inclination toward shared responsibility.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men who speak a language other than English are more likely than English-only men to view flexible work as something they are personally responsible for initiating. Women from language-diverse backgrounds tend to place greater responsibility on employers or shared responsibility compared with English-only women.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men with disability are more likely than men without disability to attribute responsibility for flexible work to themselves rather than to their employer. Among women, those with disability are more likely than women without disability to feel personally responsible for securing flexibility, with comparatively lower expectation of employer-driven action.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional men are more likely than urban men to see flexible work as something they must initiate themselves. Among women, regional workers more often assign responsibility to themselves, while urban women tend to favour a shared responsibility model.
Parenthood status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fathers tend to distribute responsibility relatively evenly between themselves and their employers, whereas men without children lean more strongly toward self-responsibility (baseline data missing but implied). Among women, mothers are more inclined than women without children to see flexible work as a shared responsibility, while women without children more often view it as primarily their own initiative.



8.5 Return to office mandates across gender

Most employees report that their employer has *not* recently pushed for increased on-site attendance. Table 8.13 shows women are more likely than men to say that no return-to-office directive has been announced (73.0% vs 68.4%). Non-binary respondents report the highest rates of ‘no employer push’ (81.4%), suggesting that their workplaces may be maintaining more remote or hybrid arrangements.

Table 8.31 Employers’ push for in-person work by gender (%)

Employer requirement	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
No push	68.4	73.0	81.4	70.8
Full return to in-person work	11.8	10.8	3.4	11.3
≥4 days a week	6.2	3.9	1.4	5.0
≥3 days a week	8.7	7.6	2.7	8.1
≥2 days a week	3.6	3.1	11.1	3.3
≥1 day a week	1.3	1.6	0.0	1.5
Total	100	100	100	100

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.5.1 Return to office mandates by gender and industry

Table 8.14 shows that men in most industries report that no formal return-to-office policy has been announced, suggesting that organisation-wide directives remain limited. Where on-site requirements are in place, they are most pronounced in construction, mining, and rental and real estate, while white-collar industries such as information media, finance and insurance, and professional services more commonly adopt structured hybrid arrangements rather than full on-site mandates.



Table 8.32 Return to office mandates for men by industry (%)

Industry	No return to office policy announced	Yes, full return to office policy announced	Yes ≥4 days a week	Yes ≥3 days a week	Yes ≥2 days a week	Yes ≥1 day a week
Agriculture, Forestry	75.1	12.9	0.8	6.6	2.3	2.5
Mining	68.5	11.4	13.8	3.4	2.9	0.0
Manufacturing	78.3	12.1	5.6	2.9	0.6	0.5
Electricity, Gas, Water	69.5	7.5	2.8	6.9	11.5	1.9
Construction	56.9	18.6	11.2	11.5	1.4	0.4
Wholesale Trade	83.5	10.8	3.5	1.9	0.4	0.0
Retail Trade	84.5	7.1	1.7	6.2	0.4	0.2
Accommodation & Food	78.5	13.6	4.3	3.3	0.2	0.2
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	84.0	9.4	2.0	3.5	1.0	0.1
Information, Media & Telecomms.	47.0	15.6	8.0	18.6	9.3	1.5
Financial & Insurance	46.5	11.1	11.1	16.3	8.3	6.7
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	60.0	23.1	16.3	0.5	0.0	0.0
Professional, Scientific & Technical	64.6	9.0	5.6	12.4	6.0	2.5
Administrative & Support Services	64.4	8.9	8.7	13.3	3.0	1.7
Public Administration	67.9	9.2	2.7	10.0	10.0	0.1
Education & Training	70.1	10.5	8.0	9.2	2.3	0.0
Health Care & Social Assistance	73.0	11.7	5.9	6.8	2.2	0.5
Arts & Recreation	70.1	5.5	9.9	3.9	10.6	0.0
Other Services	72.0	14.1	4.2	6.9	1.8	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 8.15 shows that the majority of women across most industries report that no formal return-to-office policy has been announced, with the highest levels of ‘no policy’ in retail, and accommodation and food services. Full return-to-office policies are most likely to be reported by women in information media and rental and real estate.



Table 8.33 Return to office mandates for women by industry (%)

Industry	No return to office policy announced	Yes, full return to office policy announced	Yes ≥4 days a week	Yes ≥3 days a week	Yes ≥2 days a week	Yes ≥1 day a week
Agriculture, Forestry	68.7	21.2	2.9	3.4	0.0	3.8
Mining	71.4	12.0	2.8	13.8	0.0	0.0
Manufacturing	75.9	8.3	8.7	4.9	2.1	0.0
Electricity, Gas, Water	57.7	6.1	6.7	17.3	12.3	0.0
Construction	70.3	8.6	10.1	8.3	1.3	1.5
Wholesale Trade	69.9	13.1	3.0	11.2	0.0	2.7
Retail Trade	84.6	7.3	3.1	3.1	0.7	1.3
Accommodation & Food	84.6	7.2	4.0	3.7	0.4	0.0
Transport, Postal, Warehousing	77.0	9.1	0.3	13.6	0.0	0.0
Information, Media & Telecomms.	36.7	27.5	15.5	14.2	4.1	2.1
Financial & Insurance	43.4	8.1	2.3	28.5	10.0	7.6
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate	59.7	23.8	12.8	3.7	0.0	0.0
Professional, Scientific & Technical	56.4	15.4	6.0	14.8	3.4	4.1
Administrative & Support Services	70.8	10.9	4.4	6.9	5.7	1.3
Public Administration	66.6	18.1	1.3	8.1	5.9	0.0
Education & Training	77.3	9.8	3.2	5.7	2.9	1.1
Health Care & Social Assistance	80.9	11.6	2.2	3.2	1.8	0.4
Arts & Recreation	81.5	5.0	4.9	6.4	2.2	0.0
Other Services	72.7	11.0	3.6	6.0	1.2	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



8.5.2 Return to office mandates by gender and gender composition of the workplace

Table 8.16 and Table 8.17 show that men and women alike most commonly report the absence of a formal return-to-office mandate, particularly in workplaces dominated by women. However, gender-balanced workplaces are more likely to have announced some form of on-site requirement, including full return policies and structured hybrid models. Men in men-dominated workplaces report slightly higher rates of full return policies than men in women-dominated workplaces, while women in women-dominated workplaces report the *lowest* levels of mandated on-site days overall.

Across all workplace types, hybrid requirements of 2 to 4 days per week remain relatively uncommon, but they appear most frequently in gender-balanced settings. Taken together, the tables suggest that return-to-office expectations are weakest in predominantly female workplaces and become more formalised as the gender composition approaches parity.

Table 8.34 Return to office mandates for men by gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	No policy	Yes – full return	Yes ≥4 days a week	Yes ≥3 days a week	Yes ≥2 days a week	Yes ≥1 day a week
Women-dominated	78.9	4.0	6.4	8.3	2.3	0.2
Gender-balanced	64.3	12.1	7.3	10.0	4.5	1.9
Men-dominated	74.7	12.8	4.5	5.1	1.9	1.1

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 8.35 Return to office mandates for women by gender composition of the workplace (%)

Workplace gender composition	No policy	Yes – full return	Yes ≥4 days a week	Yes ≥3 days a week	Yes ≥2 days a week	Yes ≥1 day a week
Women-dominated	83.4	9.8	1.5	3.3	1.5	0.5
Gender-balanced	67.1	12.1	4.8	9.4	4.6	2.1
Men-dominated	71.7	12.3	5.8	7.5	1.1	1.6

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

8.5.3 Return to office mandates across key demographic groups

Table 8.18 shows return to office mandates by key demographic groups.



Table 8.36 Employers' push for in-person work by key groups

Group	Summary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers report stronger employer expectations to return fully on-site than the baseline for both men and women.• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women also experience notable expectations for reduced flexible arrangements, including structured multi-day on-site requirements, indicating more restrictive return conditions compared with women overall.
LGBTQ+ status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bisexual men experience stronger full-return pressures than heterosexual and gay men, while gay men are the most likely to report no employer pressure of any kind. =• Among women, lesbian and bisexual workers are the groups most likely to report no employer push to return on-site, with lesbian women showing particularly low exposure to full-return mandates.
Migrant status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian-born men face stronger return-to-office expectations than overseas-born men, including higher rates of mandated full returns. Among women, overseas-born workers are slightly more likely than Australian-born women to report structured multi-day return expectations, such as three-day on-site requirements.
Language status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English-only men report stronger return-to-office mandates than men who speak another language, including higher rates of full-return expectations. English-only women also experience greater employer pressure across both full-return and multi-day requirements than women who speak another language.
Disability status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men with disability experience slightly weaker pressure for full returns but stronger expectations for structured multi-day on-site requirements compared with men without disability.• Women with disability are the group most likely to report no employer pressure to return on-site, indicating comparatively greater autonomy or accommodation in their work arrangements.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional men report minimal employer pressure to return on-site compared with urban men. Regional women are also the group most likely among all women to report no employer push to return on-site, suggesting regional workplaces impose fewer return expectations overall.
Parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents—both men and women—are more likely than workers without children to report no employer pressure to return on-site,



9. Flexibility Environments

9.1 Overview

This section examines how the quality of workplace flexibility shapes workers' health, work–life balance and job stability, and how these effects differ for men, women and gender-diverse workers. Flexibility is not a single arrangement, but an environment shaped by both the degree of autonomy workers have over when, where and how they work, and the level of workplace support that legitimises and encourages the use of flexible options.

Together, these dimensions generate four distinct flexibility environments:

- high-quality flexibility (high autonomy and high support)
- conditional flexibility (high autonomy but low support)
- constrained flexibility (low autonomy but high support)
- low-quality flexibility (low autonomy and low support).

Workers are not evenly distributed across these environments. Men are more likely to work in high-quality settings, women more often work in constrained and low-quality environments, and non-binary workers are particularly concentrated in constrained settings.

Health outcomes show the consequences of these environments. In high-quality flexibility settings, men and women report the best self-rated health and the lowest levels of sick leave. As flexibility becomes more conditional or constrained, health ratings fall and sick days increase, with sharper declines for women. In low-quality environments, where workers lack both control and support, women's self-rated health is noticeably worse than men's, and women report more moderate and prolonged sick leave. These patterns indicate that poor-quality flexibility acts as a stressor that interacts with the broader gendered distribution of care and job insecurity.

Work–life conflict follows a similar gradient. Conflict is lowest when workers have meaningful control and strong organisational backing. As autonomy or support erodes, conflict rises steadily, particularly for women. In constrained and low-quality environments, women are substantially more likely than men to report high fatigue, frequent worry about work outside hours and difficulties finding time for family. For many women, these environments do not alleviate work–life strain; they intensify it.

Retention outcomes also diverge across flexibility environments. Workers in high-quality settings are the most likely to intend to stay with their employer, reflecting both the practical and relational benefits of supportive, autonomous flexibility. In low-quality environments, workers are far more likely to consider leaving or to be uncertain about their future. Women who anticipate leaving their employer are disproportionately concentrated in these low-quality environments, suggesting that poor flexibility contributes directly to destabilising women's employment. High-quality flexibility, in contrast, appears particularly protective for women, supporting attachment to work even when competing demands are high.



Taken together, the findings show that the quality of flexibility is central to understanding gendered patterns of wellbeing and stability. High-quality flexibility supports better health, lower conflict and stronger retention for all workers, while women benefit most from its protective effects. Low-quality flexibility is associated with poorer outcomes and greater worker turnover, and women are more likely to be in these environments. Flexibility is therefore not only about access to arrangements; it is about who receives high-quality flex, who is left with low-quality flex, and how that shapes their experience of work and life.

9.2 Flexibility environments

Workplace flexibility is now a common feature of employment, but its impact depends on how it is experienced. Flexible options improve wellbeing only when employees have real control over their work and when the workplace supports the use of flexibility without stigma or penalty. Treating flexibility as an *environment*, rather than a policy, helps reveal why some workers benefit while others, especially women, continue to face work–life conflict and poorer job quality despite having formal entitlements.

Two key dimensions shape the *quality* of workplace flexibility:

1. **Autonomy** – the degree of control employees have over how, when and where they work.
2. **Workplace support** – the extent to which flexible working is encouraged, accepted and viewed as legitimate by managers and colleagues.

Together, these dimensions create a typology of flexibility environments.

Box 9.1 Flexibility environments

Flexibility Environment	Description	Autonomy	Workplace Support
High-quality flexibility	Employees have meaningful control over their work and flexibility is normalised and supported.	High	High
Conditional flexibility	Employees may have technical control over their schedules, but weak workplace support means flexibility feels risky or may carry career penalties.	High	Low
Constrained flexibility	Workplaces are supportive, but the nature of the job limits employees’ ability to adjust hours or tasks in practice.	Low	High
Low-quality flexibility	Employees lack both control and support; flexibility is discouraged, inaccessible or associated with negative consequences.	Low	Low



This typology shifts attention from the existence of flexible work policies to their real quality and everyday usability. It shows that not all flexibility operates in the same way: in some environments, workers have genuine choice and organisational backing, creating the conditions often associated with positive, worker-centred flexibility; in others, flexibility is only partial, symbolic, or shaped in ways that primarily serve organisational needs.

At the lowest end, limited control and weak support mean that ‘flexibility’ can resemble the more precarious, employer-driven forms of arrangement that offer little real benefit to workers and may even deepen insecurity. These differences matter because they help explain why flexibility can be experienced as empowering for some but burdensome for others.

Table 9.1 highlights how this unevenness is patterned by gender, with women and non-binary workers more likely to be in environments where flexibility is constrained or of lower quality, mirroring broader concerns about who gains access to high-quality flexibility and who is pushed toward its more precarious forms.

Table 9.37 Flexibility environments by gender (%)

Flexibility environment	Men	Women	Non-binary	Total
High-quality flexibility	30.5	25.9	31.8	28.2
Conditional flexibility	18.0	16.5	20.0	17.2
Constrained flexibility	21.0	22.5	27.2	21.7
Low-quality flexibility	30.3	35.1	20.9	32.8
Total	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

9.3 Flexibility environments and health

9.3.1 Self-rated health and flexibility environments

Self-rated health varies clearly across flexibility environments, and the pattern is gendered. Employees in high-quality flexibility environments, where both autonomy and workplace support are strong, report the best outcomes. Table 9.2 shows 82% of men and 81% of women in these environments describe their health as very good or good.

Health declines as flexibility becomes harder to access or use, and this decline is more pronounced for women. In conditional flexibility environments where autonomy is present, but workplace support is weak, good health falls to 79% of men and 74% of women. In constrained flexibility environments the reverse situation, where autonomy is limited but support is strong—the proportions reporting ‘very good’ or ‘good’ health are almost identical to those in conditional flexibility (79% for men and 75% for women). The lowest levels of good health occur in low-quality flexibility environments, where employees lack both autonomy and support. Only 73% of men and 66% of women report very good or good health. The gap between the highest and lowest quality environments is 15 percentage points for women and 9 percentage points for men, indicating that poor flexibility conditions have a stronger negative impact on women’s wellbeing.



Table 9.38 Self-rated health as 'very good' or 'good' and flexibility environment by gender (%)

Workplace environment	Men	Women
High-quality flexibility	82.1	80.9
Conditional flexibility	78.9	73.6
Constrained flexibility	78.9	74.7
Low-quality flexibility	73.0	66.4

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

9.3.2 Reported sick days and flexible environments

Sick leave shows a clear gradient across flexibility environments as shown in Table 9.3: high-quality flexibility is associated with the lowest levels of sick leave, and low-quality flexibility with the highest. This pattern is gendered. Men consistently report fewer sick days than women in every setting. Across the four environments, 52–63% of men, compared with 43–52% of women, report taking only 0–2 sick days in the past year.

Moderate sick leave (3–10 days) becomes more common as flexibility quality declines. For men, rates rise from 33% in high-quality environments to 40% in constrained environments. For women, moderate leave peaks in constrained environments at 46%.

Gender gaps are widest for high sick leave (11+ days) and again follow the flexibility gradient. In high-quality environments, 7% of women and 4% of men report 11+ sick days; in low-quality environments, this increases to 12% and 8%, respectively.

Overall, women consistently report more moderate and high sick leave than men, and sick leave increases as flexibility quality declines.

Table 9.39 Sick days taken in the past year by flexibility environment and gender (%)

Flexibility environment	Men			Women		
	0–2 days	3–10 days	11+ days	0–2 days	3–10 days	11+ days
High-quality flexibility	62.9	32.8	3.5	49.8	40.8	7.4
Conditional flexibility	58.7	34.3	3.4	51.6	36.6	9.3
Constrained flexibility	52.5	40.2	4.2	42.6	45.8	8.9
Low-quality flexibility	51.9	34.7	8.1	46.3	38.4	11.7

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

9.4 Work–life conflict and the role of workplace flexibility

Work–life conflict varies strongly by the quality of workplace flexibility, and the effects are distinctly gendered. High conflict refers to employees who report experiencing the work–life issue ‘often’ or ‘always’, moderate conflict captures those who report it ‘sometimes’, and low conflict includes employees who report it ‘rarely’ or ‘never’. The three measures of conflict are worrying about work outside work hours, feeling too tired after work to do household tasks, and work preventing time with family. Employees in high-quality flexibility environments report the lowest levels of conflict across all three measures. Only 17% of men and 18% of women



frequently worry about work in these settings, and just 20% of men and 24% of women report high fatigue.

Conflict increases in conditional and constrained flexibility environments, where employees have only partial access to meaningful flexibility. In these settings, women experience significantly more fatigue than men. For example, in constrained flexibility environments, 34% of women report high fatigue compared with 23% of men, showing women’s greater fatigue when autonomy is limited.

The highest conflict levels occur in low-quality flexibility environments, where 41% of women and 32% of men report high fatigue, and nearly 30% of women and 24% of men frequently worry about work. These differences show that as flexibility declines, gender gaps widen sharply.

Table 9.40 Proportion of men and women who worry about job outside of work hours by flexibility environment (%)

Gender	Flexibility environment	High conflict	Moderate	Low conflict
Men	High-quality flexibility	16.6	28.2	55.3
	Conditional flexibility	17.1	29.1	53.9
	Constrained flexibility	20.5	32.1	47.3
	Low-quality flexibility	24.1	37.0	38.9
Women	High-quality flexibility	17.7	28.5	53.8
	Conditional flexibility	18.1	32.6	49.4
	Constrained flexibility	20.8	35.4	43.8
	Low-quality flexibility	29.1	40.3	30.6

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table 9.41 Proportion of men and women who report they are too tired to do housework by flexibility environment (%)

Gender	Flexibility environment	High conflict	Moderate	Low conflict
Men	High-quality flexibility	19.8	37.4	42.7
	Conditional flexibility	19.9	43.5	36.5
	Constrained flexibility	22.9	42.2	34.8
	Low-quality flexibility	31.9	39.6	28.6
Women	High-quality flexibility	24.4	44.3	31.3
	Conditional flexibility	29.6	50.2	20.3
	Constrained flexibility	34.1	44.6	21.3
	Low-quality flexibility	40.9	45.5	13.5

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table 9.42 Proportion of men and women whose job prevents time with family by flexibility environment (%)

Gender	Flexibility environment	High conflict	Moderate	Low conflict
Men	High-quality flexibility	13.5	21.1	65.4
	Conditional flexibility	14.6	31.7	53.7
	Constrained flexibility	19.5	32.2	48.3
	Low-quality flexibility	21.6	40.3	38.1
Women	High-quality flexibility	7.9	24.6	67.7
	Conditional flexibility	12.0	31.3	56.8
	Constrained flexibility	14.5	31.0	54.5
	Low-quality flexibility	19.0	42.1	39.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

9.5 Flexibility environments and worker retention

Table 9.7 shows women who expect to stay with their employer in the next 12 months are more likely to work in high-quality flexibility environments, but women who expect to leave or who feel uncertain are far more concentrated in low-quality flexibility environments than men. More than half of women who anticipate leaving are in the lowest-quality environments, compared with under half of men, and women are also more likely to be unsure about their future when flexibility is poor. These results indicate that low-quality flexibility has a greater destabilising effect on women’s employment, while high-quality flexibility plays an especially important role in supporting women’s retention.

Table 9.43 Flexibility environment by gender and retention expectation (%)

Flexibility Environment	Men			Women		
	Considered leaving in 12 months	Not considered leaving in 12 months	Don’t know	Considered leaving in 12 months	Not considered leaving in 12 months	Don’t know
High-quality flexibility	33.0	24.0	20.7	30.5	13.0	14.4
Conditional flexibility	18.3	18.1	16.0	16.6	16.8	15.7
Constrained flexibility	22.6	11.3	21.7	23.5	17.4	21.1
Low-quality flexibility	26.1	46.5	41.5	29.4	52.7	48.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



10. Appendices

Table A1. Use of temporal flexible working arrangements by key demographic groups (%)

Group	Change start/finish	Compressed week	Swap shifts	Job share	School hours only	Paid time off (appts)	FT → PT	Reduce hours
Gender								
Men	50.1	24.3	39.5	19.2	17.8	61.2	16.5	26.2
Women	59.5	25.2	50.7	21.7	22.4	62.5	22.8	35.9
Non-binary	41.5	54.8	54.6	40.0	20.9	46.0	33.1	47.5
Indigenous status								
Indigenous men	48.6	46.2	43.0	41.1	30.1	62.4	29.9	48.6
Indigenous women	48.8	37.0	40.5	35.6	25.2	65.9	16.0	49.0
Sexuality (men)								
Heterosexual men	46.3	21.2	32.3	16.6	14.9	56.2	14.5	23.6
Gay men	59.1	24.5	34.4	9.7	8.4	68.5	10.1	22.4
Bisexual men	51.8	23.1	41.0	11.2	14.4	62.3	13.4	27.3
Sexuality (women)								
Heterosexual women	53.9	20.3	40.5	17.3	17.6	55.5	18.8	30.9
Lesbian women	57.5	26.4	44.9	16.2	15.2	54.3	21.2	38.2
Bisexual women	66.6	23.4	54.7	11.2	21.8	55.2	14.8	36.0
Migrant status								
Men – Australian-born	53.1	28.9	40.1	19.4	19.0	59.1	21.0	33.6
Men – Overseas-born	53.1	20.9	33.4	15.2	14.6	61.0	13.4	23.8
Women – Australian-born	59.4	28.8	52.8	23.1	23.9	62.9	24.3	41.7
Women – Overseas-born	63.2	22.9	46.6	19.6	23.6	59.9	24.1	30.4
Language status								
Men – other language	49.1	29.5	37.8	21.9	22.4	58.8	17.3	30.1
Men – English-only	54.6	25.2	38.3	16.7	15.9	60.0	19.0	30.6
Women – other language	61.3	30.2	48.9	28.2	26.3	60.8	25.4	35.6
Women – English-only	60.5	25.5	51.3	19.6	22.9	62.2	23.8	38.4
Disability status								
Men – no disability	50.8	25.2	35.2	17.4	17.9	58.1	16.8	28.6
Men – disability	61.9	31.1	49.9	20.7	16.8	65.8	25.6	37.3
Women – no disability	59.6	28.6	48.0	22.5	23.9	60.4	23.1	35.8
Women – disability	64.1	21.0	58.7	20.0	23.5	66.2	27.6	43.6
Location								
Men – urban	51.5	27.2	36.7	19.6	19.0	58.5	18.3	32.3
Men – regional/remote	56.9	24.5	41.3	14.7	14.8	62.6	19.0	26.1
Women – urban	60.9	27.0	48.2	22.3	22.9	62.5	24.3	36.1
Women – regional/remote	60.4	26.1	56.0	21.0	25.8	60.3	24.0	41.1
Parenthood status								
Men – without children	53.4	26.9	36.1	23.8	25.9	66.1	17.6	30.9
Men – with children	52.9	26.0	39.7	14.0	11.7	55.2	19.3	30.1
Women – without children	63.1	27.9	48.7	24.0	37.5	66.5	33.8	43.6



Women – with children | 59.5 26.0 51.7 20.5 14.9 59.1 18.3 34.4

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

Table A2. Differences in work location arrangements by key demographic groups (%)

Group	Fully on-site	Hybrid	Remote
Gender			
Men	57.6	31.6	10.0
Women	61.0	26.1	12.0
Non-binary	75.8	4.2	20.0
Indigenous status			
Indigenous men	44.7	47.7	7.6
Indigenous women	57.0	38.9	4.1
Sexuality (men)			
Heterosexual men	57.6	32.4	9.8
Gay men	47.8	36.1	15.9
Bisexual men	59.5	33.3	7.4
Sexuality (women)			
Heterosexual women	60.7	27.2	12.1
Lesbian women	61.2	20.2	18.6
Bisexual women	70.4	22.6	7.0
Migrant status			
Men – Australian-born	54.9	34.5	10.6
Men – Overseas-born	52.0	23.5	24.5
Women – Australian-born	59.1	27.4	13.5
Women – Overseas-born	53.0	27.5	19.5
Language status			
Men – other language	49.0	35.0	16.0
Men – English-only	55.7	19.5	14.8
Women – other language	54.7	28.7	16.6
Women – English-only	57.7	27.0	15.3
Disability status			
Men – no disability	54.8	31.58	13.5
Men – disability	50.5	28.7	20.6
Women – no disability	57.6	28.2	14.1
Women – disability	55.1	25.0	19.8
Location			
Men – urban	52.5	34.5	13.0
Men – regional/remote	57.5	22.5	20.0
Women – urban	54.2	29.6	16.2
Women – regional/remote	63.3	22.2	14.5
Parenthood status			
Men – without children	45.0	40.8	14.1
Men – with children	59.8	24.5	15.7
Women – without children	47.1	37.4	15.5
Women – with children	62.2	22.0	15.8

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table A3. Barriers to accessing spatial flexibility by key demographic groups (%)

Group	Job can't be done at home	Manager doesn't allow WFH	No proper equipment / tech	No adequate workspace	Prefer workplace / office
Gender					
Men	72.6	14.0	5.5	6.6	17.1
Women	75.8	14.3	6.7	3.6	10.9
Non-binary	68.2	3.6	10.3	1.8	7.3
Indigenous status					
Indigenous men	55.9	11.7	5.7	9.6	35.0
Indigenous women	62.1	22.8	8.3	9.2	21.2
Sexuality (men)					
Heterosexual men	73.8	12.6	5.0	6.6	15.9
Gay men	62.4	24.9	5.7	4.3	18.5
Bisexual men	81.5	9.7	2.8	1.4	8.9
Sexuality (women)					
Heterosexual women	75.8	13.9	6.6	3.9	11.2
Lesbian women	97.1	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bisexual women	82.1	13.1	7.2	0.0	7.3
Migrant status					
Men – Australian-born	71.1	13.4	5.3	8.0	18.7
Men – Overseas-born	79.4	11.1	4.1	3.4	9.8
Women – Australian-born	76.0	13.8	7.2	4.6	12.9
Women – Overseas-born	76.1	13.8	5.5	2.1	6.7
Language status					
Men – other language	70.8	14.6	9.6	11.7	18.3
Men – English-only	74.6	12.0	3.5	4.9	15.1
Women – other language	68.3	14.6	7.2	3.7	12.7
Women – English-only	78.5	13.5	6.4	3.8	10.3
Disability status					
Men – no disability	73.9	13.6	5.1	6.4	16.7
Men – disability	73.0	8.8	4.6	7.1	12.5
Women – no disability	74.2	14.5	5.3	3.2	11.4
Women – disability	81.4	11.8	10.3	5.6	9.4
Location					
Men – urban	71.6	13.1	5.7	7.7	17.3
Men – regional/remote	78.2	11.6	3.5	4.0	12.8
Women – urban	75.8	12.8	7.3	3.8	11.3
Women – regional/remote	76.4	15.9	5.3	3.8	10.1
Parenthood status					
Men – without children	66.7	15.9	4.0	4.5	22.0
Men – with children	77.1	10.9	5.4	7.5	12.8
Women – without children	69.1	14.9	7.5	3.2	15.5
Women – with children	78.8	13.3	6.2	4.0	8.9

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table A4. Interest in applying for a remote job by key demographic groups (%)

Group	No	Yes
Gender		
Men	70.9	29.1
Women	55.3	44.7
Non-binary	34.5	65.5
Indigenous status		
Indigenous men	55.7	44.4
Indigenous women	59.7	40.3
Sexuality (men)		
Heterosexual men	70.6	29.4
Gay men	55.2	44.8
Bisexual men	70.1	42.3
Sexuality (women)		
Heterosexual women	56.0	44.0
Lesbian women	35.8	64.2
Bisexual women	44.6	55.4
Migrant status		
Men – Australian-born	71.9	28.1
Men – Overseas-born	66.1	33.9
Women – Australian-born	58.8	41.2
Women – Overseas-born	48.1	51.9
Language status		
Men – other language	65.9	34.1
Men – English-only	71.5	28.6
Women – other language	49.9	50.1
Women – English-only	57.0	43.0
Disability status		
Men – no disability	70.1	29.9
Men – disability	70.2	29.8
Women – no disability	56.2	43.9
Women – disability	52.7	47.3
Location		
Men – urban	69.4	30.6
Men – regional/remote	71.6	28.4
Women – urban	55.9	44.1
Women – regional/remote	54.1	45.9
Parenthood status		
Men – without children	49.0	57.8
Men – with children	51.0	42.2
Women – without children	69.4	30.6
Women – with children	71.6	28.4

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table A5. Perceptions about use and impact of flexible working arrangements by key demographic groups (%)

Group	Supervisor supports FW	FW encouraged	Worry harms career	Men equally supported	Senior roles flexible	More productive with FW
Gender						
Men	66.5	56.2	33.2	69.8	63.5	65.5
Women	63.6	50.2	24.5	67.3	59.4	69.4
Non-binary	77.7	58.2	27.4	78.9	72.2	87.6
Indigenous status						
Indigenous men	74.3	75.2	57.1	75.5	78.3	75.6
Indigenous women	72.4	63.8	44.7	74.3	74.3	74.7
Sexuality (men)						
Heterosexual men	58.7	53.5	30.5	62.6	60.3	62.4
Gay men	60.9	54.6	24.6	61.3	63.4	66.6
Bisexual men	51.1	43.5	21.2	57.1	52.3	65.7
Sexuality (women)						
Heterosexual women	57.8	48.9	23.4	60.1	55.7	65.6
Lesbian women	59.6	39.6	24.9	52.2	51.0	73.3
Bisexual women	55.3	40.8	30.8	57.4	51.7	68.5
Migrant status						
Men – Australian-born	60.5	56.4	33.9	63.7	61.0	61.7
Men – Overseas-born	54.4	47.0	23.0	59.8	58.5	64.0
Women – Australian-born	56.6	48.5	25.5	60.7	55.3	62.3
Women – Overseas-born	59.8	48.6	20.1	58.3	55.9	72.0
Language status						
Men – other language	64.3	58.6	39.7	68.4	66.7	69.9
Men – English-only	56.4	51.4	26.9	60.2	57.8	59.8
Women – other language	58.1	49.3	26.0	58.8	55.7	70.4
Women – English-only	57.6	48.3	22.8	56.2	55.5	64.1
Disability status						
Men – no disability	58.5	53.7	31.6	63.7	61.1	62.5
Men – disability	58.7	52.0	25.6	57.9	56.7	62.4
Women – no disability	59.2	49.3	24.6	60.7	56.3	66.7
Women – disability	53.8	46.6	20.9	57.4	53.4	62.9
Location						
Men – urban	60.5	56.3	33.3	64.2	61.8	62.4
Men – regional/remote	54.0	46.5	23.5	58.4	56.5	62.6
Women – urban	57.3	49.1	24.2	58.8	56.6	66.4
Women – regional/remote	58.8	47.3	22.4	62.1	53.1	64.1
Parenthood status						
Men – without children	66.1	59.0	38.2	69.8	67.4	67.1
Men – with children	53.6	49.7	25.1	57.6	55.4	59.4
Women – without children	65.2	55.2	28.1	64.3	61.6	74.9
Women – with children	53.8	45.0	21.2	57.5	52.3	60.8

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table A6. Experiences of working from home by key demographic groups (%)

Group	More productive	More effort	More hours	Meet performance	Feel supported
Gender					
Men	62.1	57.8	58.0	87.9	75.1
Women	69.8	61.5	55.9	89.5	79.0
Non-binary					
Indigenous status	68.2	68.8	64.5	86.0	80.3
Indigenous men	62.9	71.8	68.2	81.7	81.8
Indigenous women					
Sexuality (men)	62.1	57.7	58.3	87.8	76.4
Heterosexual men	61.9	61.9	50.7	91.6	75.5
Gay men	61.1	57.7	50.4	87.5	83.6
Bisexual men					
Sexuality (women)	70.2	61.8	55.9	89.5	79.4
Heterosexual women	65.1	60.5	63.5	80.0	85.4
Lesbian women	53.4	48.5	55.4	95.6	74.2
Bisexual women					
Migrant status	63.3	58.0	59.8	86.4	76.6
Men – Australian-born	64.4	58.9	52.1	87.8	64.3
Men – Overseas-born	66.7	60.0	55.8	86.0	76.9
Women – Australian-born	73.0	65.7	60.8	91.2	73.2
Women – Overseas-born					
Language status	67.2	65.7	68.7	88.7	71.0
Men – other language	61.8	55.2	52.2	86.1	73.0
Men – English-only	64.3	60.9	60.0	83.2	67.9
Women – other language	70.9	58.3	57.3	89.8	72.5
Women – English-only					
Disability status	63.7	58.1	57.6	86.9	73.3
Men – no disability	63.5	59.2	55.6	86.6	69.6
Men – disability	70.2	62.3	59.8	87.9	77.9
Women – no disability	66.2	61.6	52.3	88.4	69.1
Women – disability					
Location	61.8	56.0	56.2	85.8	72.9
Men – urban	68.6	64.4	59.8	89.6	71.1
Men – regional/remote	69.3	63.3	59.3	88.6	74.2
Women – urban	68.7	58.8	53.3	86.4	79.0
Women – regional/remote					
Parenthood status	66.1	62.9	64.5	88.9	77.7
Men – without children	62.7	55.3	52.4	88.5	69.9
Men – with children	72.3	66.7	63.7	87.3	79.4
Women – without children	62.1	57.8	58.0	87.9	75.1

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).



Table A7. Autonomy over work location by key demographic groups (%)

Group	Me	My employer	Both
Gender			
Men	37.0	20.2	42.8
Women	33.8	21.3	44.8
Non-binary	18.7	30.1	51.2
Indigenous status			
Indigenous men	40.7	30.1	29.2
Indigenous women	20.9	37.0	42.1
Sexuality (men)			
Heterosexual men	36.6	20.3	43.1
Gay men	46.1	14.7	39.1
Bisexual men	47.7	28.7	23.6
Sexuality (women)			
Heterosexual women	33.7	21.5	44.8
Lesbian women	37.7	12.2	50.1
Bisexual women	35.8	15.2	49.1
Migrant status			
Men – Australian-born	47.4	17.7	34.9
Men – Overseas-born	53.8	12.0	34.2
Women – Australian-born	44.0	18.0	38.1
Women – Overseas-born	43.8	18.0	38.3
Language status			
Men – other language	50.3	17.6	32.1
Men – English-only	49.2	15.0	35.8
Women – other language	38.6	22.2	39.2
Women – English-only	45.9	16.4	37.8
Disability status			
Men – no disability	46.8	17.0	36.2
Men – disability	58.6	11.7	29.7
Women – no disability	40.0	18.3	41.8
Women – disability	54.2	17.4	28.4
Location			
Men – urban	43.5	190.1	37.4
Men – regional/remote	65.1	7.1	27.8
Women – urban	42.1	19.2	38.7
Women – regional/remote	49.1	14.3	36.6
Parenthood status			
Men – without children			
Men – with children	40.4	20.0	39.6
Women – without children	57.7	12.0	30.3
Women – with children	36.5	18.0	45.5
Gender	49.4	17.9	32.7

Note: Weighted data; Source: Working for Women Research Partnership Dataset (2025).

