



NDIS workforce retention

Findings from the NDIS workforce survey

6.12.2022



BETA Insights

Increase retention of the NDIS workforce by boosting job engagement and decreasing burnout

Current challenge:

17-25%

NDIS workforce turnover per annum – which means **at least 45,900 workers leave** the NDIS workforce each year¹.

Why NDIS workers are leaving:

The four main reasons people intend to leave the NDIS workforce:

- High workload – **43% of workers feel burned out at least half the time in their job**
- Concerns about the service quality under the NDIS
- High volume of paperwork and NDIS procedures
- Negative workplace culture or management issues

How we can support workers to stay in the NDIS workforce:

1. Focus on boosting job engagement and decreasing burnout

Interventions designed to target one or more of the following four areas will have the greatest positive impact on burnout and job engagement:

- Managing workload and work hours
- Reducing administrative burden and red tape
- Improving workplace health and safety practices
- Increasing feelings of job value and committed at work

These areas were found to be more important in influencing intentions to stay, compared to pay conditions, career progression or job security.

2. Support unique needs of sole traders and casual workers

Sole traders more commonly experienced personally confronting situations, have increased paperwork, higher workloads and lower healthy work practices.

Casual workers felt less committed to their organisation, would prefer to work more hours and are concerned about rostering.

These workers may require a higher level of support or targeted assistance to stay in the sector.

3. Prioritise allied health and disability support workers

Interventions targeting workers in allied health and disability support roles may have the largest impact on retention.

Allied health professionals had higher levels of paperwork, more experiences of health and safety risk and greater workloads.

Disability support workers more commonly experienced health and safety risks, and were less likely to feel committed to their organisation.

Workers in these roles experience specific challenges that may require additional support.

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Executive summary

BETA conducted a survey to better understand why NDIS workforce turnover rates are high and explore what predicts intentions to leave the NDIS workforce

BETA surveyed 768 workers in the NDIS workforce from a range of demographic and organizational backgrounds.

Most respondents (58%) do not plan to leave their current job in the NDIS workforce. However, 21% plan to leave their current job in the next 12 months or sooner, and a further 21% plan to leave in the next 1 – 3 years.

Of the 42% (314 respondents) who do plan to leave their current job, almost half (48%) intend to leave the NDIS workforce (27% intend to stay and 25% are undecided).

Some of the main reasons people intend to leave the NDIS workforce included high workload, concerns about the service quality under the NDIS, and the high volume of paperwork or NDIS procedures.

Statistical modelling found that low levels of burnout and high levels of job engagement are significantly* associated with greater intentions to stay in the NDIS workforce.

Most respondents had high job engagement, with 65% agreeing they were satisfied with their job and 72% agreeing their job was enjoyable.

Yet 43% feel burned out at least half the time in their job, including 12% who feel burned out almost always.

 A spotlight analysis on the impact of COVID-19 found that 52% of respondents felt the pandemic made their work experience worse, but this did not translate into plans to leave the NDIS workforce.

Five barriers (job demands) were significantly associated with higher burnout and/or lower job engagement:

1. Facing personally confronting situations at work
2. Administrative burden and red tape
3. Experiencing health and safety risks
4. Having a workload above capacity
5. Working more than desired hours

Job insecurity, experience of discrimination and experience of workplace abuse were not significantly associated with burnout or engagement.

 A spotlight analysis found that most respondents were not concerned with rostering practices, such as their hours changing from week to week.

Three drivers (job resources) were significantly associated with lower burnout and/or higher job engagement:

1. Feeling that work was valuable to the community and personally fulfilling
2. Having healthy work practices, such as processes in place to take leave
3. Feeling committed to their organisation

A number of other measured resources, such as training satisfaction, opportunities for growth, pay or conditions, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and working at an organisation with high ethical standards, were not significantly associated with burnout or engagement.

Project context and design

What BETA did and why



Project context and scope

The Department of Social Services is interested in understanding the drivers and barriers to retain workers in the NDIS workforce

Policy background

The NDIS workforce has an annual turnover rate of 17-25%, based on taxation data from 2015-16 – 2017-18. This is notably high compared to the average turnover rate across all sectors (12%) and other similar sectors (e.g., 12% for retail, and 7% for health care and social assistance).

If this turnover rate continues, the NDIS will need **213,000 replacement workers by 2024**. In addition, the NDIS workforce will also need to **grow by at least an additional 83,000 workers by 2024** to support over 600,000 NDIS participants¹.

Research scope

BETA partnered with the Markets and Workforce Policy Branch in the Department of Social Services to **conduct qualitative and quantitative research on NDIS retention**.

The research seeks to understand why **worker turnover in the NDIS workforce is high and what predicts intentions to leave the NDIS workforce**.

This project explores the experience of workers in the NDIS workforce. The aim is to identify what factors are leading to job engagement or increasing burnout and how this relates to intentions to leave the NDIS workforce.

If behavioural in nature, BETA proposes using the insights from this work to **design and test interventions** to increase retention and positive experiences in the NDIS workforce.

Key research questions

The focus of our research is to answer the following questions:

1. Why are workers leaving the NDIS workforce? What influences intentions to leave the workforce, stay in the workforce or retire?
2. What are the barriers (job demands) and drivers (job resources) associated with retaining workers in the NDIS workforce?
3. What work characteristics are associated with higher intentions to leave the NDIS workforce?
4. What intervention/s could be implemented to reduce turnover? How can we support workers to stay in this workforce?

Research methodology

BETA gathered data from a desktop review, and qualitative and quantitative research



Desktop research

BETA conducted a literature review to identify common barriers and facilitators affecting worker decisions to remain in the NDIS workforce. The review highlighted key gaps in knowledge including:

- Past research asks about the work environment and intentions to leave, but often the 'why' is not clear.
- Little is known about the behavioural and motivational barriers impacting NDIS workforce retention.
- BETA has not found past evidence of a framed field experiment or randomized control trial (RCT) to increase retention in the NDIS workforce.

Delivered



Interviews

BETA interviewed NDIS care and support workers who had left the NDIS workforce. The time since leaving the NDIS workforce ranged from 'currently in the progress of leaving' to '12 months ago'.

The aim was to establish a foundational understanding of the NDIS and explore why workers were leaving the NDIS workforce. The most common reasons for leaving the NDIS workforce included:

- Complexity of the NDIS system
- Burnout
- Lack of training
- Work instabilities

Delivered



Survey

Drawing on the desktop and qualitative research, BETA designed an online survey to dig deeper into the experience of the NDIS workforce.

The survey had a particular focus on understanding job demands that might contribute to burnout and intentions to leave the NDIS workforce.

It also focused on understanding job resources that might boost job engagement and intentions to stay in the NDIS workforce.

See following slides for further details on our survey sample and the results.

Focus of this report



Intervention

Insights from the interviews and survey may be used to design and test intervention/s to better retain current NDIS workers.

The trial interventions will be scoped after the survey findings have been collated and distributed.

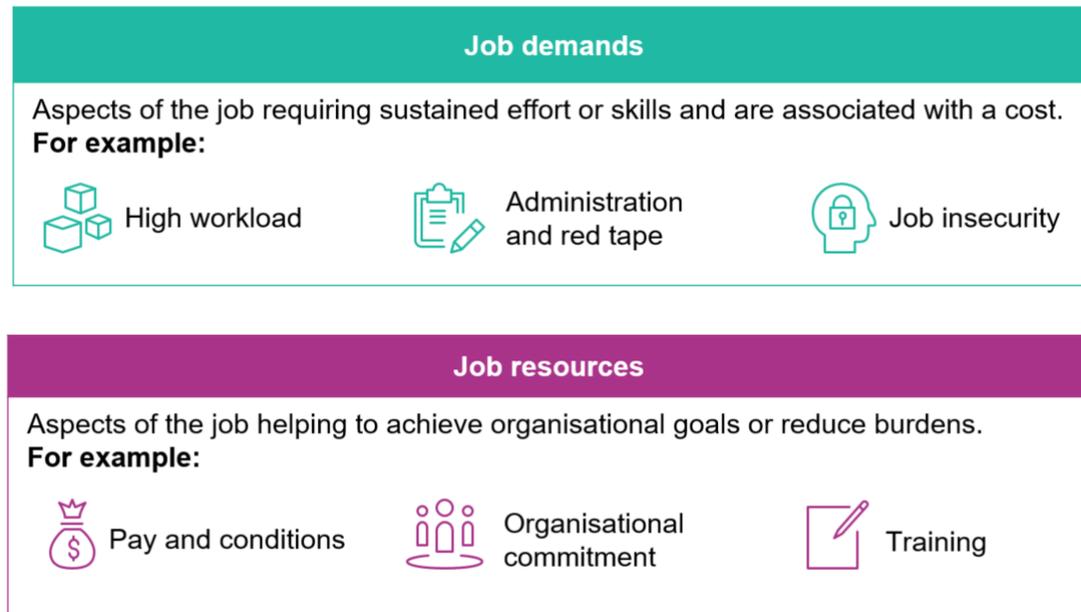
The intervention design will consider both the perspective of NDIS workers and providers.

Next steps

BETA applied an evidence-based model to survey design and analysis

The *Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R model)* is well established in organisational psychology¹. It suggests you can predict whether a worker is experiencing burnout or job engagement by understanding the balance between different physical, psychological, social and organisation factors.

These factors can be categorised into two themes:



Job demands are associated with higher levels of burnout and lower job engagement. Job resources protect against burnout and boost job engagement.

In turn, based on the level of burnout or job engagement, **this model predicts retention.**

That is, when burn out is high and engagement is low people are more likely to intend to leave the NDIS workforce. When burn out is low and engagement is high, people are more likely to intend to stay in the NDIS workforce

Our research:

1. Determines which job demands and job resources best predict burnout and job engagement in NDIS workers.
2. Explores if burnout or job engagement is a stronger predictor of intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce.
3. Considers how job demands and job resources are related to intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce.

BETA surveyed 768 workers in the NDIS workforce

Survey sample snapshot: Demographics



Age

<30 years	13%
30-39 years	21%
40-49 years	23%
50-59 years	30%
60+ years	13%



Gender

Female	73%
Male	25%
Non-binary	<1%



Country of birth

Australia	78%
Overseas	19%



Educational attainment

Year 10 and below	9%
Year 11/12	14%
Trade/Vocational training	30%
Undergraduate	25%
Postgraduate	18%



Main home language

English	92%
Other language	6%



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	4%
Not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	93%



Location



Regionality

Metro	35%
Regional	55%
Rural	7%
Remote/Very Remote	1%

NDIS workers came from a range of organisational backgrounds

Survey sample snapshot: Work characteristics



Main role*

Disability support worker	45%
Allied health professional	14%
Front line management	14%
Executive management	8%
Support coordinator	6%
Human resources	3%
Other	11%



Employment status

Full time	46%
Part time	33%
Fixed Contract	3%
Casual	11%
Sole trader	7%



Employment type

Employed at one organisation	87%
Employed at multiple organisations	6%
Self employed, or sole trader	7%



Time in disability sector

Less than 12 months	9%
1 – 5 years	39%
6 – 10 years	18%
11 – 20 years	18%
More than 20 years	16%



Organisation size

1 (I work alone)	3%
2 – 19	12%
20 – 49	6%
50 – 149	11%
150 – 500	22%
More than 500	30%
Unsure	16%



Organisation sector

Not-for-profit	64%
Profit	23%
Public, Government	3%
Self-employed	4%
Not sure/Other	7%



Main Setting*

Residential facility/ Specialist disability accommodation	30%	Day program	6%
In-home support	23%	Private practice	4%
Community based support	14%	Respite	2%
Support coordination/ Case management	8%	Early intervention	2%
		Outreach	1%

The survey sample does not have a representative portion of casual workers, sole traders or full-time workers.

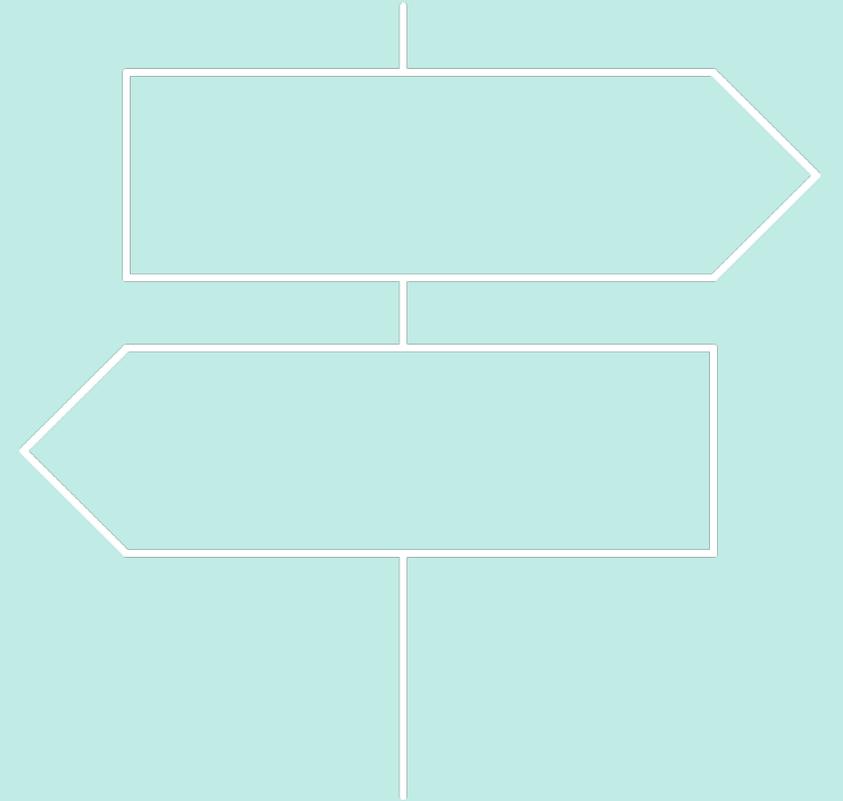
Please see the limitations section for further details.

Experience of the NDIS workforce

Survey findings exploring factors related to intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce



Intentions to stay or leave



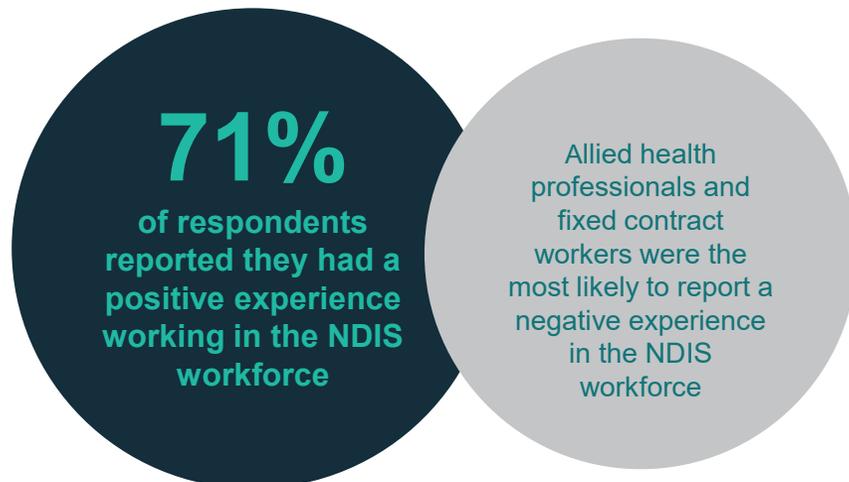
Most NDIS workers do not plan to leave their current job

And the overall experience of working in the NDIS workforce is positive

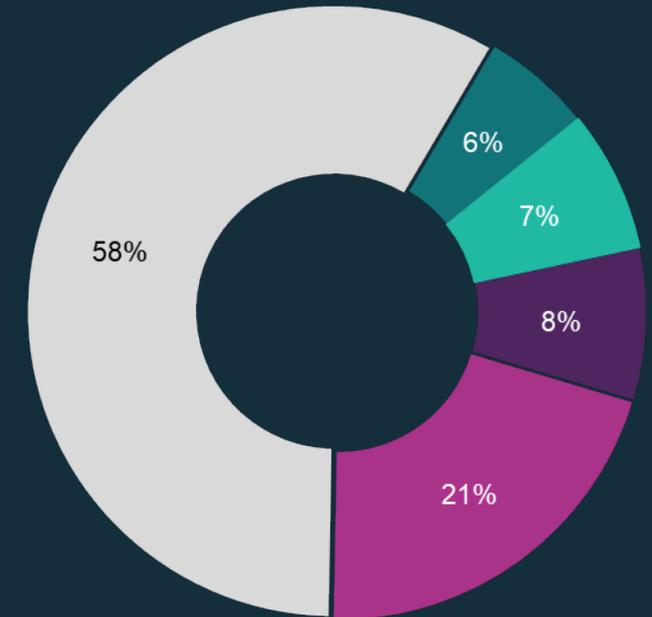
Of the 42% of respondents who do have plans to leave their current job, half plan to leave some time in the next 12 months (21%) and half plan to leave in the next 1 to 3 years (21%). An annual turnover rate of 21% is consistent with past estimates and is high compared to all sectors (12%) and other similar sectors (e.g., 7% for health care and social assistance)¹. However, a desire to change jobs around 3 years since commencing may reflect the general career cycle and tenure of workers, rather than issues with their current job. On average, Australian employees change jobs 12 times throughout their life and have an average tenure of 3.3 years.²

Allied health professionals were slightly more likely to have plans to leave their current job some time in the next 12 months (30%) compared to disability support workers (20%), executive management (13%) and front line management roles (21%).

Respondents on part-time or casual contracts were more likely to have plans to leave their current job in the next 12 months (24% and 25% respectively), compared to sole traders (12%) and full-time workers (18%).



42% of NDIS workers plan to leave their current job some time within the next 3 years



- No plans to leave my current job within the next 3 years
- Plan to leave my current job as soon as possible
- Plan to leave my current job within the next 6 months
- Plan to leave my current job within the next 12 months
- Plan to leave my current job within the next 1 - 3 years

Of the NDIS workers who do plan to leave their current job, about 1 in 2 intend to leave the NDIS workforce

Only 25% of respondents who plan to leave their current job want to pursue another job in the NDIS workforce straight away

Respondents who intend to stay in the NDIS workforce were more likely to be currently employed full-time, whereas a greater number of respondents intending to leave the NDIS workforce were casual workers.

More than 1 in 4 (28%) respondents who had been in the NDIS workforce for less than 1 year are planning to leave the NDIS workforce. 2 in 5 (43%) respondents who had been working in the NDIS workforce for more than 20 years are planning to leave the sector, which includes people intending to retire. Half of the respondents aged 60 years and over intend to leave the NDIS workforce.

32% respondents in metro areas had plans to leave the NDIS workforce, compared to 38% of respondents in rural areas.



25% of respondents intending to leave their current job indicated that they have not yet decided what they will do after leaving. This could be a key cohort that can be *recaptured* into the NDIS workforce with the right intervention.

Intentions after leaving job

Leave the NDIS workforce	48%
Pursue a job outside the care and support sector	22%
Pursue a job in the wider care and support sector	11%
Retire	13%
Pursuing further education or temporarily leaving workforce e.g. maternity leave or travel (no intention to return to the sector)	2%
Stay in the NDIS workforce	27%
Pursue another job within the disability sector	25%
Pursuing further education or temporarily leaving workforce e.g. maternity leave or travel (with intention to return to the sector)	1%
Undecided	25%

Base n=314

The most common reason workers want to leave the NDIS workforce is high workload

Issues with NDIS service quality and procedures, negative workplace culture and low satisfaction with pay and/or benefits were also endorsed by more than 1 in 3 respondents as potential reasons for leaving the NDIS workforce

Respondents who plan to leave their job and either wanted to leave the NDIS workforce or were undecided, were asked to select all the main reasons why they would want to leave the NDIS workforce. The most commonly reported reason was high workload (42%), which could be related to the current workforce shortage and high demand for services.

Around 41% of respondents would leave the NDIS workforce due to concerns about the service quality under NDIS and due to the nature of the paperwork or NDIS procedures. Negative workplace culture or management issues were also indicated as a main reason for respondents wanting to leave the NDIS workforce.

As only 5% of respondents indicated that the one main reason for leaving was due to personal reasons, such as family responsibilities, it appears that turnover is more related to issues in the work environment than personal situations.

Respondents also wrote that burn out or stress, challenges with NDIS requirements, a lack of organisational professionalism or a lack of recognition were other reasons for wanting to leave the NDIS workforce.

“Not happy with how I've been treated, after giving my all for eleven years I think I deserve better.”

Potential reasons for leaving the NDIS workforce	Select all that apply	Select one
Workload is too high	42%	12%
Concerns about the service quality under NDIS	41%	13%
Paperwork or NDIS procedures	41%	11%
Negative workplace culture or management issues	32%	13%
The pay and/or benefits	31%	10%
Risk to my health, safety and/or wellbeing	29%	4%
Lack of learning or career progression opportunities	24%	6%
The rostering and/or work hours	20%	3%
Job insecurity	14%	3%
Personal reasons e.g. study, family responsibilities	13%	5%
Poor induction/ training experience	8%	1%
COVID-19 requirements (e.g. vaccination mandate, PPE, quarantine)	8%	2%
I saw the disability sector as a temporary career choice	5%	2%
Disability work is not what I thought it would be	4%	-
Other	17%	16%

Note: Total does not add to 100% as respondents may have mentioned multiple themes.
The sample includes workers who want to leave their job and a) plan to leave the NDIS workforce or b) are undecided about leaving the NDIS workforce.

Base: n=191

For those who want to stay in the NDIS workforce, the main reason is the nature of care and support work

Respondents mostly commonly reported that the nature of the work (65%) and positive impact it has on people or the community (63%) are key reasons for staying in the NDIS workforce

Established relationships with clients (53%) and the opportunity to build relationships and interact with people (42%) were also highly endorsed reasons to stay in the NDIS workforce.

Respondents also reported a number of reasons related to the organisation they work for. This included flexibility of work hours (36%), positive workplace culture (35%), learning and career progression (30%), pay and benefits (27%) and relationships with colleagues (20%).

Having already developed expertise in the field, career aspirations and wanting positive outcomes for participants were other reasons respondents wrote about.

"I am a specialist in my field and it is important that the community can access me and that I continue to grow my knowledge"

"I want to move up to management if the opportunity arises!!"

Reasons for staying in the NDIS workforce	Select all that apply	Select one
Nature of the work (e.g. interesting, enjoyable, challenging)	65%	21%
Positive impact on people or the community	63%	21%
Utilises my skills and knowledge	55%	8%
The relationship I have established with the clients	53%	12%
Opportunity to build relationships and interact with people	42%	3%
Flexibility of work hours (e.g. weekly rostering)	36%	4%
Positive workplace culture	35%	3%
Job security	34%	9%
Learning or career progression opportunities	30%	6%
The pay and/or benefits	27%	6%
Relationships with colleagues	20%	1%
There is a high demand for disability workers	19%	2%
Lack of suitable alternative job prospects	6%	2%
Other	3%	2%

Note: Total does not add to 100% as respondents may have mentioned multiple themes

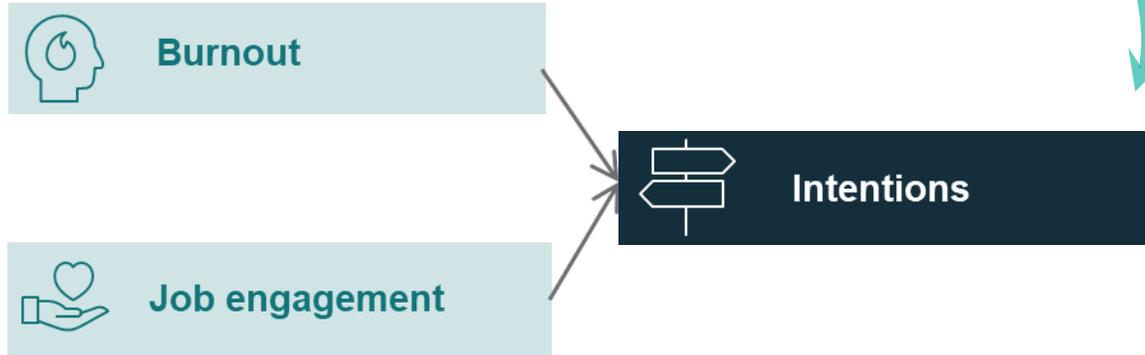
Base: n=512

Low levels of burnout and high job engagement are associated with intentions to stay in the NDIS workforce

Job Demands-Resources Model



BETA found that these job experiences were significantly associated with intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce:



Note: Intentions: 1 = intention to stay, 0 = intention to leave, retire or undecided



The modelling showed that **job engagement was the strongest predictor** of intentions to stay or leave in the NDIS workforce

Job engagement had a positive relationship with intentions, where greater engagement increased the likelihood that someone intends to stay in the NDIS workforce.

Burnout has a significant negative relationship with intentions, where higher levels of job burnout decreased the likelihood that someone will intend to stay in the NDIS workforce.

Most NDIS workers feel both burned out and engaged

43% of respondents feel burned out at least half the time, including 12% who feel burned out almost always

About one third of respondents indicated feeling emotionally drained (31%), physically exhausted (29%) and frustrated (29%) in their jobs most of the time or almost always. This highlights the demanding nature of roles in the NDIS workforce.

Allied health professionals reported the highest level of overall burnout and the lowest level of job engagement compared to other roles in the NDIS workforce.

Over 65% of respondents were satisfied with their job

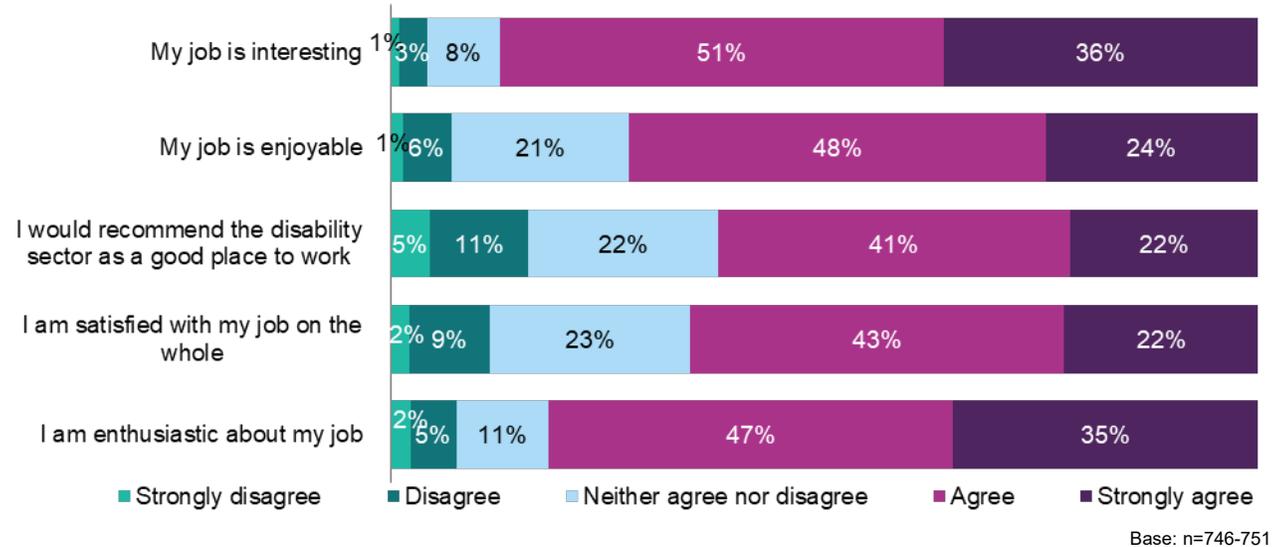
The majority of respondents reported they agreed or strongly agreed that their job was interesting (87%), they were enthusiastic about their job (82%) and their job was enjoyable (72%). People who work alone reported, on average, higher engagement than people who work with two or more people.

Yet 16% of respondents reported they would not recommend the NDIS workforce as a good place to work.

As burnout and job engagement have a moderate correlation, it is possible for NDIS workers to feel both simultaneously, or one but not the other



As high burnout and low job engagement are significantly related to intentions to leave the NDIS workforce, it might be necessary to target both in order to retain workers.

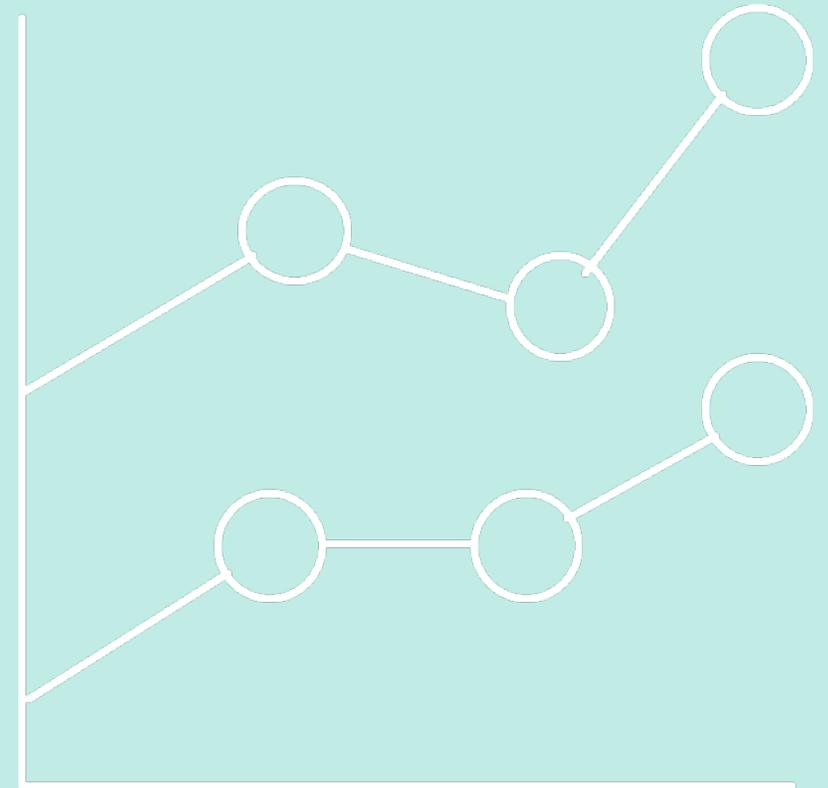


Job demands

Job demands are aspects of the job that require sustained effort or skills and are associated with a cost of some sort.

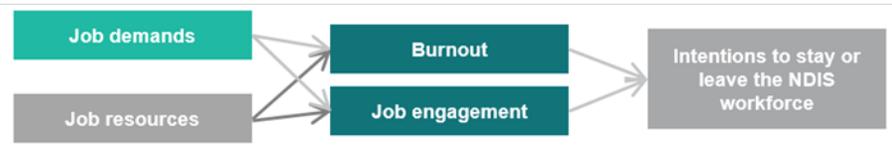
Here the report identifies 5 job demands associated with increased burnout and diminished job engagement in NDIS workers.

Then we discuss the prevalence of these different demands and how they relate to workers' intention to stay or leave the NDIS workforce.



BETA identified which job demands are associated with high burnout and low job engagement

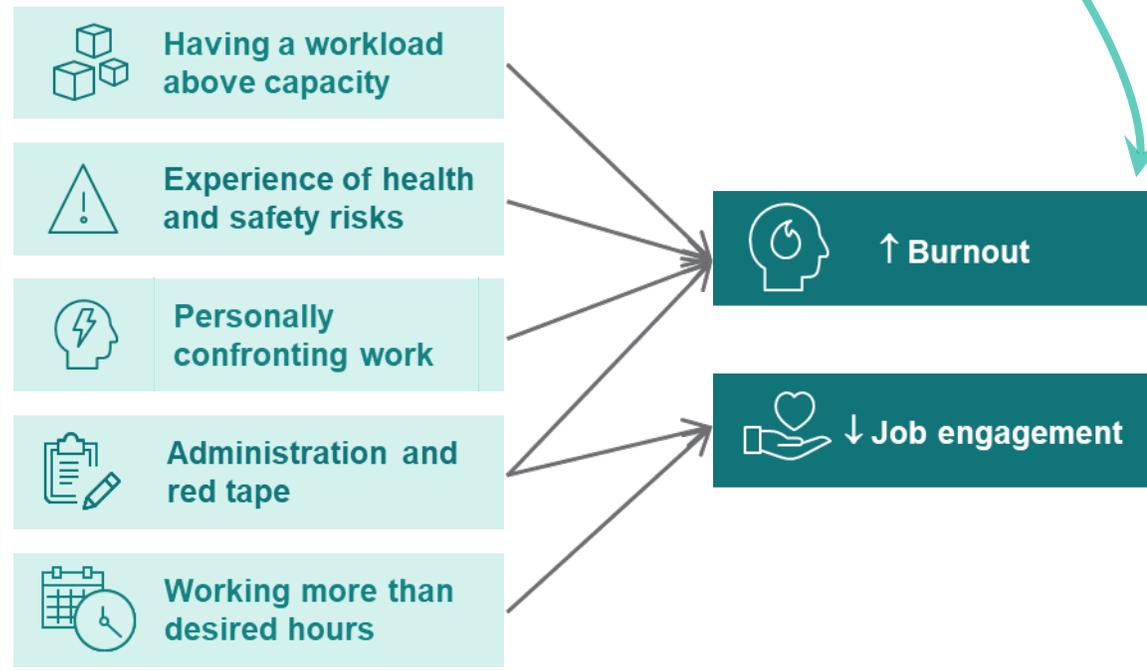
Job Demands-Resources Model



Job demands are aspects of the job that require sustained effort or skills and are associated with a cost of some sort.

BETA applied statistical modelling to understand which job demands are related to burnout and to job engagement.

BETA found these five job demands were associated with increased burnout, decreased job engagement, or both:



BETA **did not** find a statistically significant relationship between these three job demands and burnout/job engagement:



Next, the report uses descriptive statistics to explore the **prevalence** of job demands associated with burnout and/or decreased engagement, and the **workforce characteristics** of those most affected.

The emotional demands of NDIS work are high

Regularly experiencing personally confronting situations is linked to high levels of burnout



Personally confronting work

- Most respondents (86%) reported they are **confronted with things that affect them personally at work**, at least some of the time. This includes 12% who reported their work includes personally confronting situations most of the time or almost always.
- Out of all the job demands investigated, dealing with personally confronting situations had the strongest association with burnout.



Who is impacted?

- Casual workers were the **least likely** to report regularly being confronted with things that affect them personally: 23% reported 'never', compared to 14% of full-time workers, and 2% of sole traders.
- A quarter (25%) of sole traders reported experiencing personally confronting work most of the time or almost all the time. This is **2.3 times greater** than full-time, **2.8 times greater** than casual workers, and **1.8 times greater** than part-time workers.
- Around **one in five (19%) respondents working in a for profit organisation reported being confronted with things that affect them personally most of the time or almost all the time**, compared to only one in eleven (9%) respondents working in the not for profit sector.

Personally confronting work was a significant predictor of:



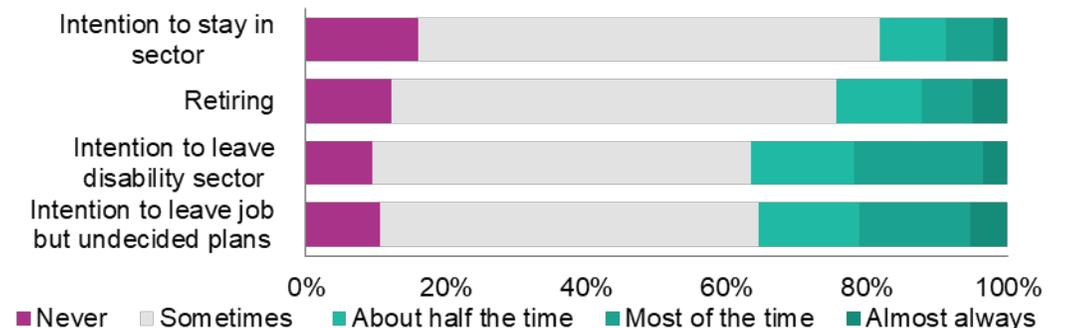
Burnout



Engagement

Regular experiences of personally confronting work is related to intentions to leave the NDIS workforce

- People who intend to leave the NDIS workforce report being confronted with things that affect them personally more than those that intend to stay.
- 37% of respondents who had intentions to leave the NDIS workforce reported being confronted with things that affect them personally about half the time or more frequently. This is compared to 18% of those who intend to stay in the NDIS workforce.



Personally confronting work by intention to leave the NDIS workforce

Base: n=716

Administrative burden is a common barrier

Many NDIS workers reported having too much paperwork or being blocked by red tape



Administration and red tape

- **1 in 2 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have too much paperwork.** Almost half (46%) of respondents reported that their ability to do a good job is blocked by red tape.
- Moreover, **31% of respondents report regularly not getting paid for doing administration or paperwork.**



Who is impacted?

- Three quarters of **sole traders reported having too much paperwork (75%),** and having their efforts blocked by red tape (77%). This is compared to 20% of casual workers who have too much paperwork and 28% who feel blocked by red tape.
- **Allied health professionals reported having the highest volume of paperwork (77%),** followed by executive management (67%). **Disability support workers (39%) and support coordinators (47%) reported the lowest levels of paperwork.**

Admin and red tape was a significant predictor of:



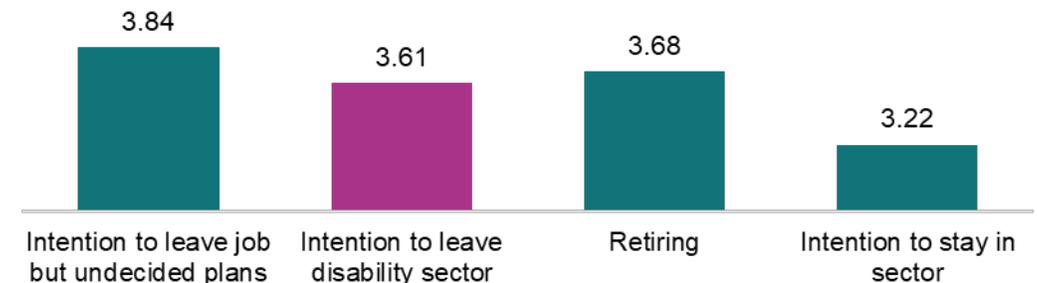
Burnout



Engagement

Greater administrative burden relates to higher burnout and lower engagement

- People who intend to leave the NDIS workforce reported having higher levels of administration and red tape in their jobs.
- Those who had plans to leave their job but are undecided about whether to leave the NDIS workforce reported the highest levels of administration, compared to those with intentions to stay.



Average administration and red tape mean score by intention to leave
(1 – Never, 5 – Almost always)

Base: n=704

NDIS workers feel their health and safety is sometimes at risk

More frequent feelings of risk to work health and safety are linked to higher levels of burnout



Experience of health and safety risks

- 3 in 4 respondents (73%) reported that their **health and safety is at risk** working in their job, at least some of the time.
- This includes 11% who reported their health and safety is at risk most of the time or almost always.



Who is impacted?

- A third of full-time NDIS workers reported **'never'** thinking their health and safety was at risk. This is compared to 25% of casuals, 19% of part-time respondents and 19% of sole-traders.
- Allied health professionals (26%) and disability support workers (27%) were **more likely to report their health and safety was at risk half the time or more.**
- 1 in 2 executive management workers reported **never experiencing risk to their health and safety.**
- There did not seem to be a notable difference in work health safety risk between private and not-for profit organisations.

Work health and safety was a significant predictor of:



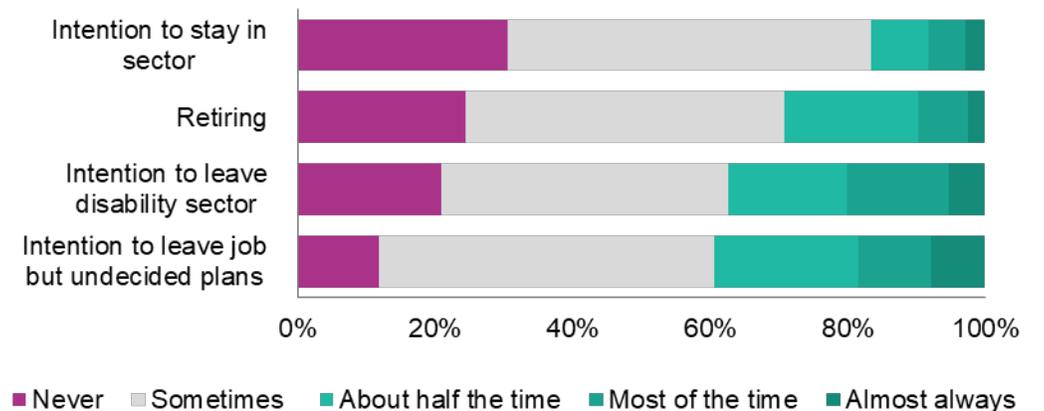
Burnout



Engagement

Risk to work health and safety was related to greater intention to leave the NDIS workforce

- More frequent feelings of WHS risk are linked to peoples' plans to leave the NDIS workforce.
- 31% of people who 'never' think their health and safety is at risk are intending to stay in the NDIS workforce, compared to 21% in those who intend to leave the NDIS workforce, and 12% planning to leave their job but with undecided plans.



Work health safety by intention to leave

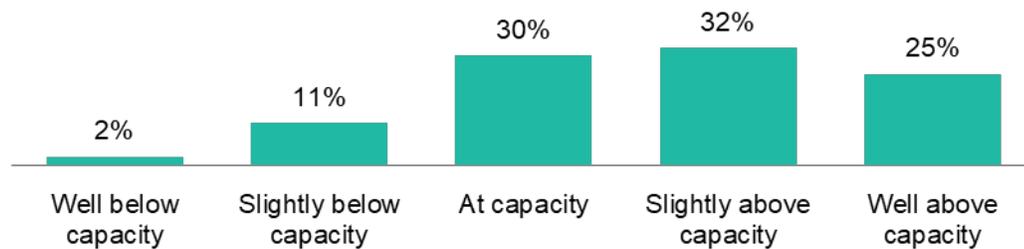
Base: n=717

Most respondents had a workload above their capacity



Having a workload above capacity

- **86% of respondents reported their workload was either at capacity or above capacity in their current roles.** This is associated with higher likelihood of burnout. Only 14% indicated they did not have enough work or were available for more work.
- Those who have plans to leave their current job but are undecided about leaving the NDIS workforce (65%), those retiring (61%), as well as those intending to leave the NDIS workforce (58%) were more likely to report being above capacity. This is compared to those who intend to stay in the NDIS workforce (54%).



What best describes your current workload?

Base: n=729

Workload was a significant predictor of:

Burnout

Engagement



Who is impacted?

- 84% of executive management, 83% frontline management and 71% of allied health professionals reported being above capacity.
- This is compared to 53% of support coordinators, and 38% of disability support workers who were above capacity.
- **There was variation in capacity between employment contracts:**

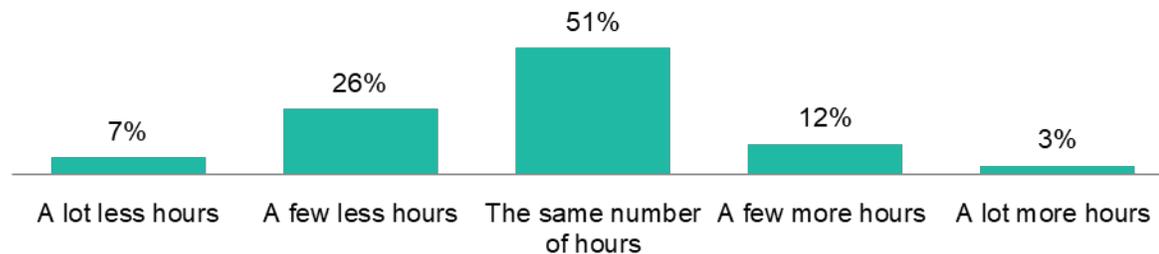
Full-time	71% ↑ are above capacity	5% ↓ are below capacity
Part-time	46% ↑ are above capacity	17% ↓ are below capacity
Casual	20% ↑ are above capacity	38% ↓ are below capacity
Sole trader	69% ↑ are above capacity	17% ↓ are below capacity

Most respondents are happy with the number of hours they work



Working more than desired hours

- Almost 1 in 2 respondents reported working between 36 to 45 paid hours a week (with a median of 37.5 paid hours).
- Most NDIS workers want the **same number of hours (51%)** they currently work.
- **Working more hours than you desire is associated with lower job engagement. A third (33%) of respondents would like a few less or a lot less hours than they currently work.**
- A larger proportion of respondents planning to leave their job (44%) or the NDIS workforce (42%) reported wanting to work less hours, compared to those intending to stay in the NDIS workforce (28%).



How many hours a week would you prefer to work in your main job?

Base: n=729

Working more hours than desired was a significant predictor of:



Burnout

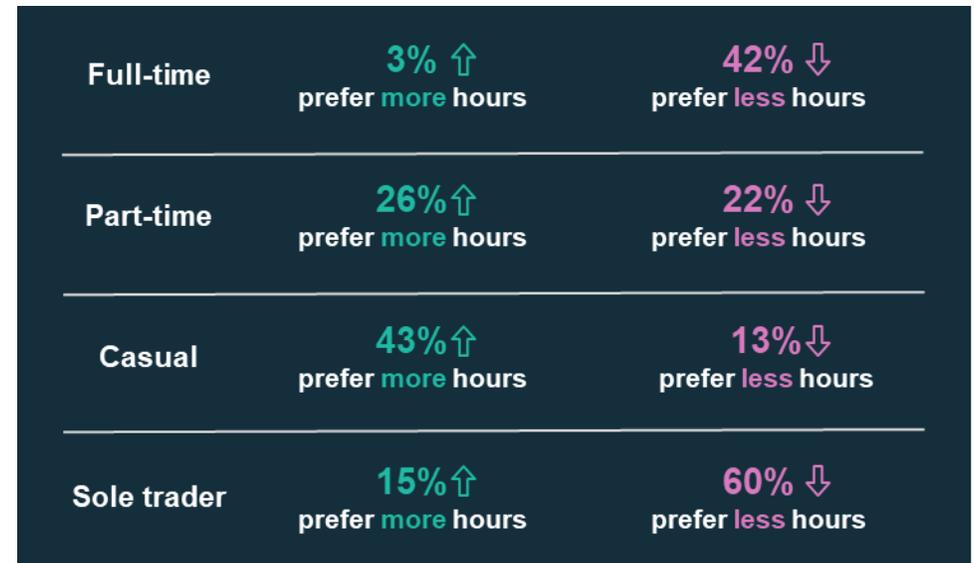


Engagement



Who is impacted?

- Half of allied health workers, executive management and front line management would prefer to work less hours.
- Almost 3 in 10 disability support workers would prefer more hours.
- **Number of hours preferred differed depending on the employment contract:**

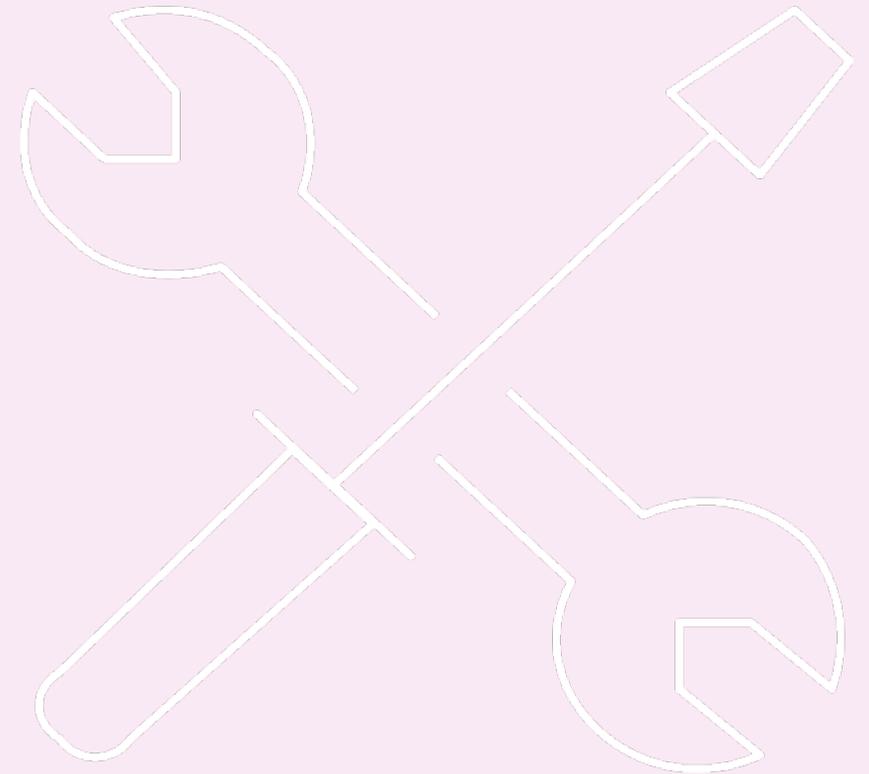


Job resources

Job resources are aspects of the job that help to achieve organisational goals or reduce burdens.

Here the report identifies 3 job resources associated with protecting against burnout and boosting job engagement in NDIS workers.

Then we discuss the prevalence of these different resources and how they relate to workers' intention to stay or leave the NDIS workforce.



BETA identified which job resources are associated with low burnout and high job engagement

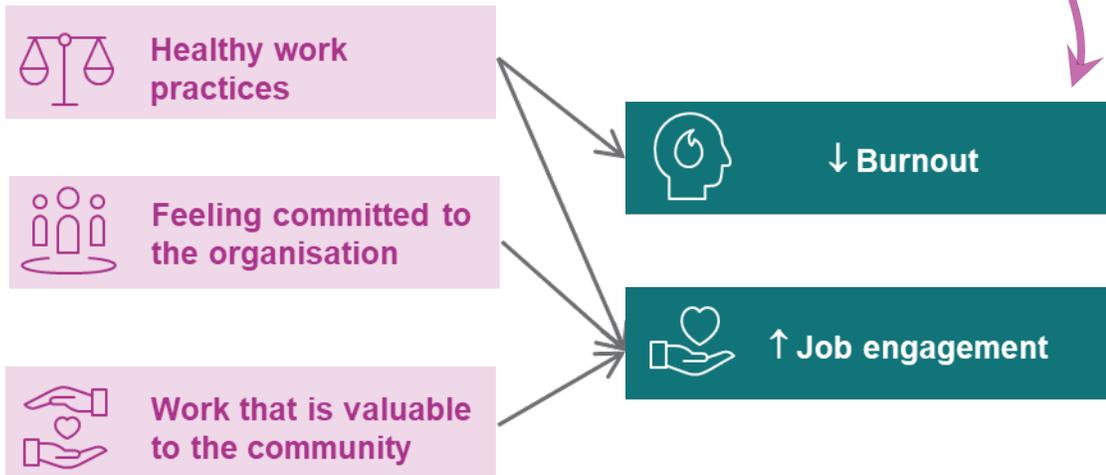
Job Demands-Resources Model



Job resources are aspects of the job that help to achieve organisational goals or reduce burdens.

BETA applied statistical modelling to understand which job resources are related to burnout and to job engagement

BETA found that these three job resources were significantly associated with lower burnout, higher job engagement, or both:



Next, the report uses descriptive statistics to explore the **prevalence** of these job resources associated with low burnout and/or boosted engagement and the **workforce characteristics** of those most affected

There were many job resources which **did not** have a statistically significant relationship with burnout or job engagement:

- Organisation's ethical standards
- Relationship with colleagues
- On boarding experience
- Relationship with supervisor
- Training satisfaction
- Inclusivity of work environment
- Opportunities for growth
- Sense of control over work
- Pay and conditions

Not all NDIS workers feel they have healthy work practices

Most NDIS workers are satisfied with their work life balance, but not all share the same experience



Healthy work practices

- 49% of respondents are satisfied with the **work practices in place to help manage mental and physical health**.
- However, many organisations do not appear to have adequate practices in place to satisfy their workers. A quarter (25%) of respondents disagreed that they were satisfied with the work practices in place to manage mental and physical wellbeing.
- 51% of respondents reported having a **healthy balance between work and personal life**, but 28% of respondents indicated that they did not.
- Similarly, 55% of respondents agreed that there are **processes in place so they can take leave**, but 22% disagreed.
- Having a combination of healthy work practices (organisational practices to manage mental and physical health, work life balance and processes to take leave) was related to lower levels of burnout and greater job engagement.

Healthy work practices was a significant predictor of:



Burnout



Engagement

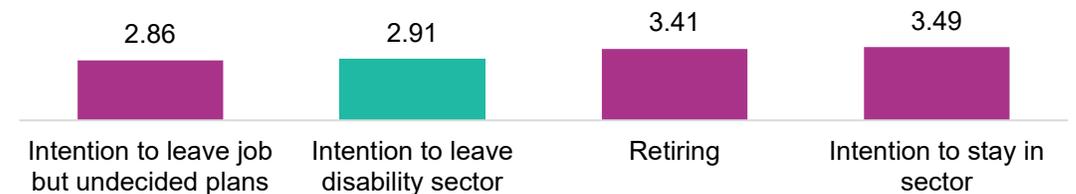


Who is impacted?

- Sole traders and those self employed reported **lower levels of healthy work practices**.
- Those working in executive management were the most likely to **disagree that they had a healthy work life balance** (42%), however, were most likely to agree that they were satisfied with the work practices in place to help manage mental and physical wellbeing (60%).
- Disability support workers and support coordinators report having a healthy balance between work and personal life, compared to other roles.

Healthy work practices varied by intentions to leave

- Respondents who intend to leave the NDIS workforce reported fewer healthy work practices.
- Respondents intending to retire had similar levels of healthy work practices compared to those with intentions to stay



Average healthy work practices score by intention to leave (1 – Never, 5 – Almost always)

Base: n=684

Most NDIS workers feel committed to their organisation

When NDIS workers have strong organisational commitment, intentions to stay are higher

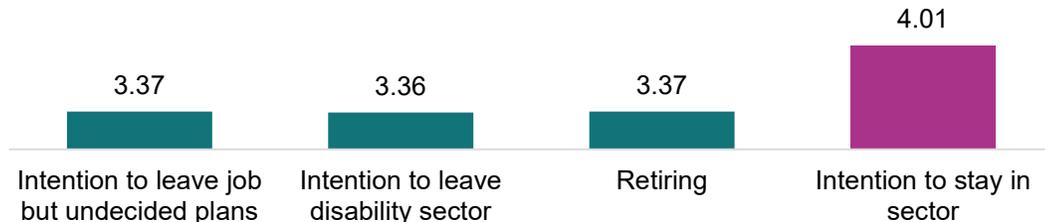


Feeling committed to the organisation

- 64% of respondents **feel committed to their organisation**, with only 15% of respondents indicating they disagree.
- When asked about the organisations values, 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the organisations they current work for has **values that aligned well with their own values**.
- This suggests that there is high organisational and personal fit in the current sample, as organisational values and personal values are well matched.

Organisational commitment is related to intentions to stay in the NDIS workforce

- Respondents who intend to leave the NDIS workforce or retire have lower levels of commitment to their organisation compared to those who intend to stay.



Average commitment to organisation score by intention to leave
(1 – Strongly disagree, 5 – Strongly agree)

Base: n=676



Who is impacted?

- Respondents on part-time or casual contracts were the **least likely to feel committed to their organisation**, or **agree that the organisations values align with their own**.
- Just over half (53%) of disability support workers feel committed to their organisation, compared to 69% of allied health workers or front line management, 84% of executive management and 78% of support coordinators.
- 60% of disability support workers agree their values align with their organisation. This is compared to 79% of allied health workers, 82% of executive or frontline management, and 85% of support coordinators.
- Not surprisingly, respondents who were **self-employed were more likely to strongly agree to feeling committed to their organisation**, compared to respondents employed in other organisation types.

Organisational
commitment
was a
significant
predictor of:



Burnout



Engagement

Job value in the NDIS workforce is very high

And when NDIS workers feel their jobs provide value, they intend to stay in the NDIS workforce



Work that is valuable to the community

- 88% agree that working in the NDIS workforce **provides a valuable contribution to the community**.
- 81% of respondents agree they find the work **personally fulfilling**.
- 80% are **proud to work in the NDIS workforce** and 83% believe their work makes a **difference for people living with disability**.
- While respondents see the significant value their job in the NDIS workforce adds to society, many respondents **do not** believe that this is recognised by the greater community.
- 30% of respondents **disagreed** with the statement 'I believe people think highly of disability support workers'. 32% neither agreed or disagreed with the statement.
- Out of all the job resources investigated, job value had the strongest association with job engagement.

Value placed on the job was a significant predictor of:



Burnout



Engagement

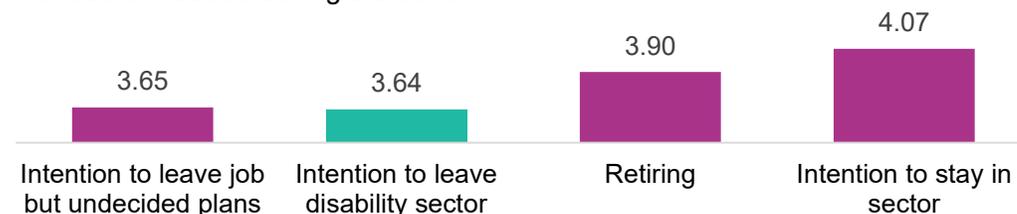


Who is impacted?

- Sole traders were more likely to agree that they find the work **personally fulfilling**, however were less likely to agree that people think highly of disability support workers compared to other employment types. There were no other notable differences across employment types.
- Support coordinators were also more likely to agree that **people think highly of disability support workers**, compared to other roles. Allied health professionals and executive management are more likely to disagree with this statement.

Greater value placed on the job seems to be related to intentions to stay

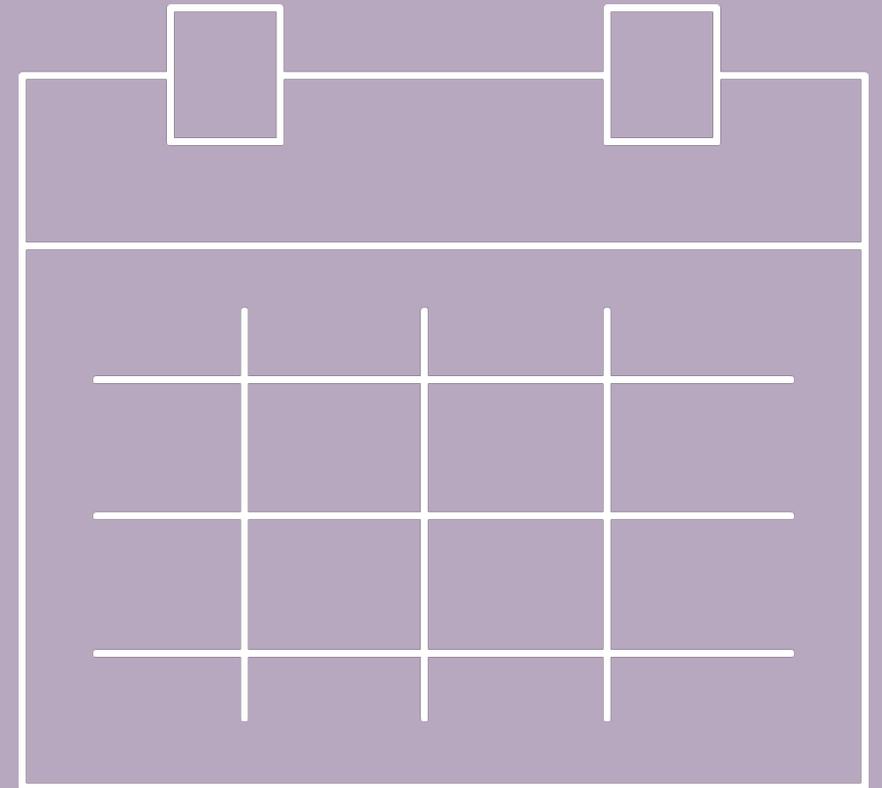
- Respondents who are planning to stay in the NDIS workforce reported much higher levels of value on their job, compared to those who intend to leave the NDIS workforce
- Not surprisingly, respondents intending to leave the NDIS workforce have the lowest levels of value placed on their job, followed by those leaving their job but undecided about leaving the sector.



Average job value score by intention to leave (1 – Very undervalued, 5 – Very valued)

Base: n=752

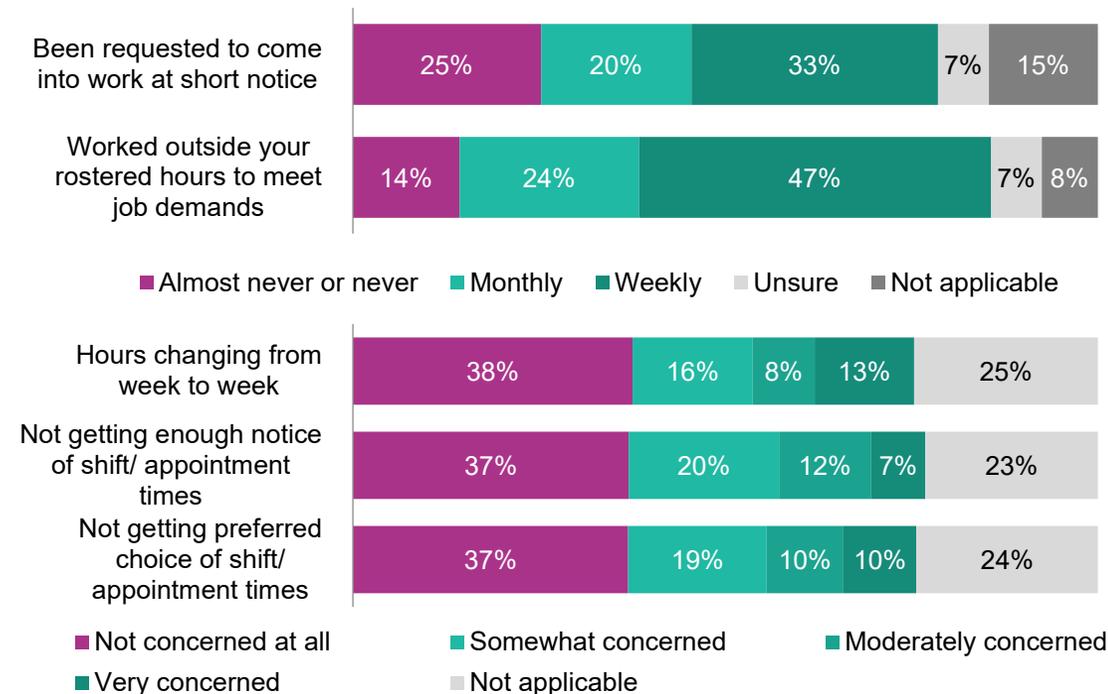
Spotlight: Rostering



In general, rostering issues were not a concern, but most people reported working outside their rostered hours

In general, respondents were not concerned with the rostering in their current jobs

BETA looked at part-time, casual, sole trader, self-employed and independent contractors' responses, to understand their rostering concerns. The analysis found that most respondents were not concerned with hours changing week to week, not getting enough notice of shift times, or not getting preferred shifts.



Expectations to work outside rostered hours or come into work at short notice varied across employment type

1 in 2 (47%) respondents reported that their employers expect them to work outside of rostered hours to meet job demands on a weekly basis. A further 24% indicated that it occurred on a monthly basis.

Similarly, 69% of sole traders and 47% of part-time workers worked outside rostered hours to meet job demands on a weekly basis, compared to 35% of casual workers.

1 in 3 respondents were requested weekly to come into work at short notice, but 1 in 4 reported that this almost never or never happens.

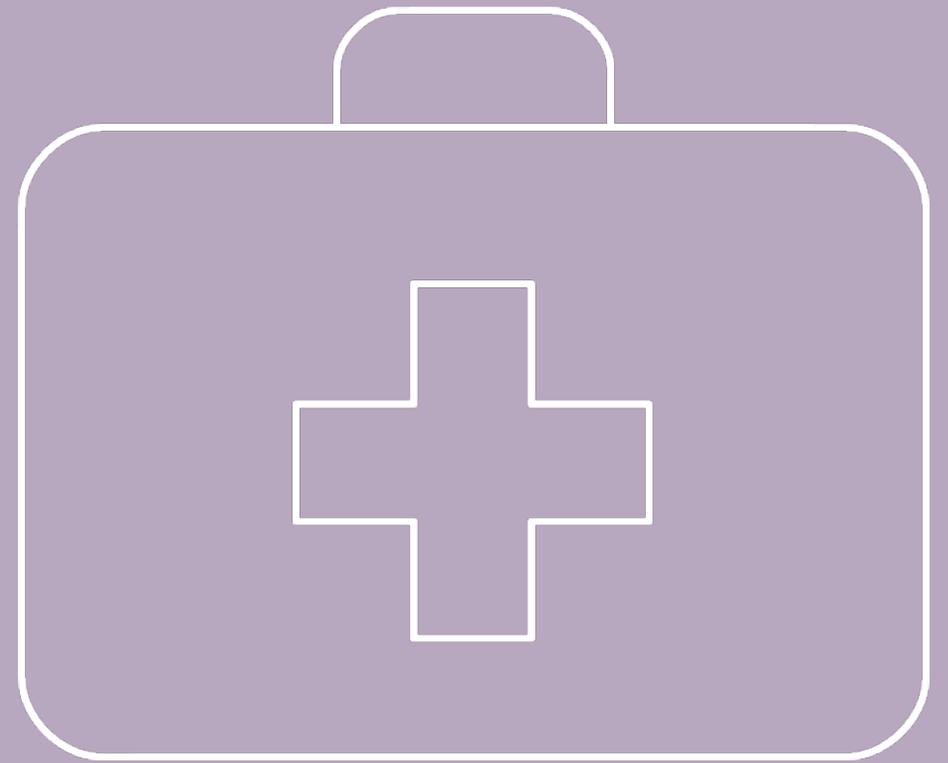
For casual workers, 44% reported requests to come into work at short notice on a weekly basis. In contrast, 30% of part time workers and 33% of sole traders were requested to come into work at short notice on a weekly basis.

Casual workers were more concerned about rostering. 1 in 3 casual worker respondents were moderately or very concerned about their hours changing week to week, compared to 1 in 5 part-time respondents. Similarly, 1 in 3 casual respondents reported not getting enough notice of shift changes compared to 1 in 6 part-time respondents.

Base: n=397, excludes full-time workers

Note: Excludes full-time workers

Spotlight: COVID-19



NDIS workers feel the pandemic negatively impacted their work

52% of respondents reported the COVID-19 pandemic made their work experience worse

The majority of respondents who reported the pandemic negatively impacted their work indicated that it created more stress (81%), made it more difficult to provide support to NDIS participants (67%), it increased their workload (66%) and complying with COVID-19 requirements was inconvenient (59%).

Other negative impacts commented by respondents include fears about being exposed to COVID-19, dealing with NDIS participants who were also experiencing negative impacts, and changes to NDIS procedures.



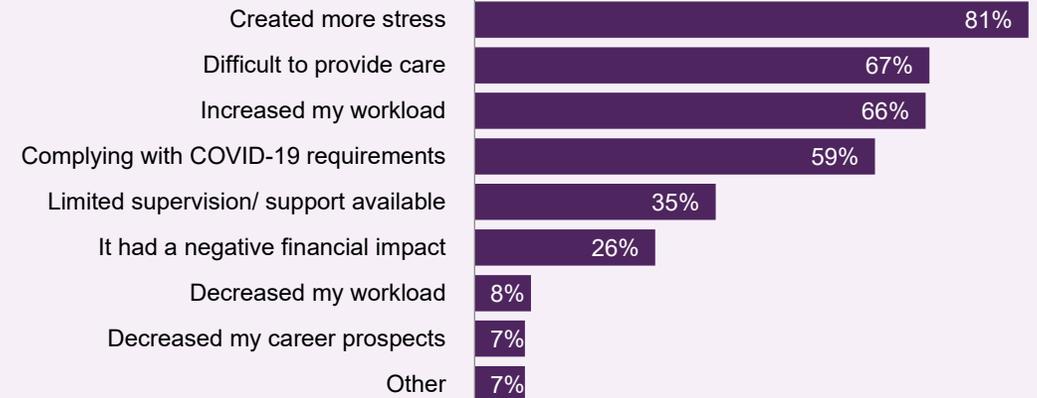
31% felt COVID-19 made *no difference* to their work experience

16% of respondents reported the COVID-19 pandemic made their work experience better

Of those who reported a better work experience, almost half indicated that it was due to strengthened relationships (46%). This could include relationships with colleagues, NDIS participants or the greater community. **41% of respondents reported that COVID-19 made their work experience better by increasing their workload, suggesting previous underutilisation.**

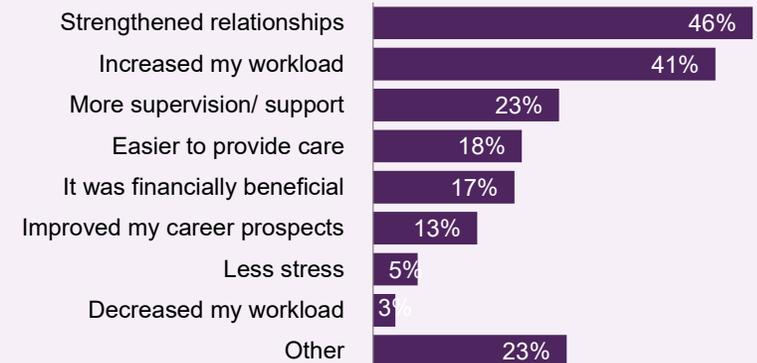
Other reasons why the pandemic made work better for survey respondents was due to the ability to work remotely, reduced travel commitments and other flexible working arrangements.

Reasons why COVID-19 made their work experience worse



Base: Respondents who had a worse work experience due to COVID-19, n=351

Reasons why COVID-19 made their work experience better



Base: Respondents who had a better work experience due to COVID-19, n=111

COVID-19 caused a range of concerns, but it did not translate into intentions to leave

Respondents were mostly concerned about transmitting COVID-19 to NDIS participants or colleagues

Due to COVID-19, many restrictions and guidelines were implemented including lockdowns, travel restrictions and health requirements. This resulted in many challenges for individuals, particularly those in the care and support sectors. 41% of respondents reported being moderately or very concerned about losing all or part of their income due to COVID-19.

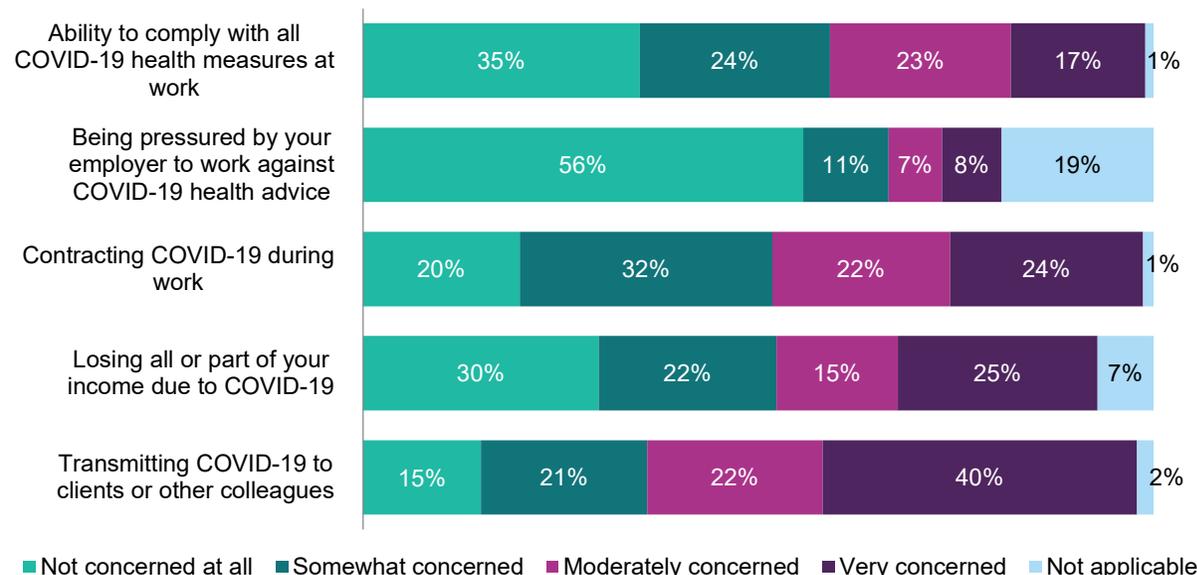
24% of respondents were very concerned about contracting COVID-19 during work, however 40% of respondents were very concerned about *transmitting* COVID-19 to NDIS participants or colleagues.

The broader health and care sector have also been subject to stricter health measures at work, such as PPE and vaccination compared to many other sectors. While many were not concerned about complying to these regulations, 40% were either moderately or very concerned. Being pressured by employers to work against health advice was not a common experience.

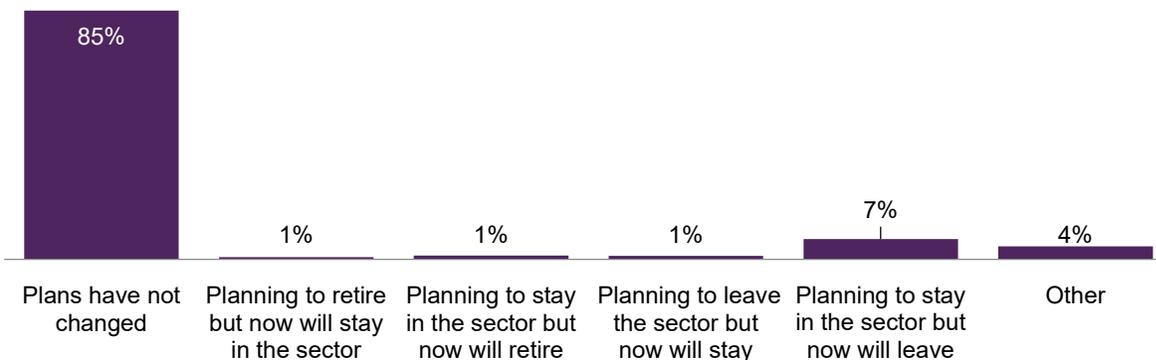
The pandemic has not impacted on intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce

For the majority of respondents (85%), COVID-19 has not impacted their intentions to stay or leave the NDIS workforce. Only 8% of respondents that were planning to stay in the NDIS workforce, reported they will now leave or retire. But 2% also reported they were intending to leave or retire, but will now stay in the NDIS workforce.

Some respondents mentioned they are undecided about whether they will stay or not, with a few commenting that if more vaccinations or boosters are required, they might leave the NDIS workforce.



Base: n=676-677



Base: n=669

Spotlight: NDIS specific challenges



The open ended response provides further insight into the challenges of working in the NDIS workforce

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any additional challenges of working in the NDIS workforce

The most commonly reported challenges related to the NDIS systems and funding, such as the complex nature of the program, administrative requirements and lack of funding (see next slide for details).

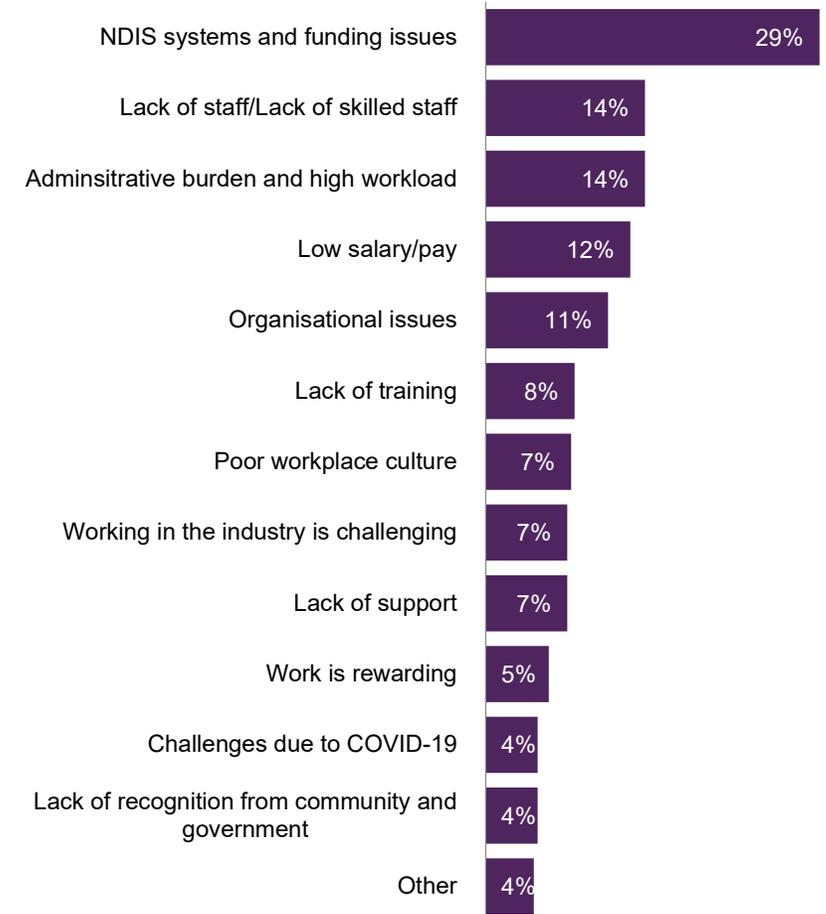
Staff shortages were a key challenge in the NDIS workforce. Respondents reflected on issues with recruiting workers with the appropriate skills and qualifications. This includes concerns with management staff not having a background in support services or understanding issues related to the NDIS workforce, causing problems within the organisation.

“Management with no disability experience. Being rostered on with clients with needs that I haven't trained in. Working with clients without proper training resulting in an injury with long term impacts.”

Another common challenge was the high workload resulting in inefficiencies in their role. This included administrative requirements and regulatory burden of the work, where processes were not streamlined.

Some respondents had issues around pay. This included not getting an adequate hourly wage, not being reimbursed for travel time and feeling like responsibility outweighed financial incentives. In addition, some respondents also believe there is a lack of recognition from government around the value that disability support workers provide to the community. They reflected nurses and other frontline workers during COVID-19 received a bonus for their work, which was not extended to the NDIS workforce.

“In general the work force is under paid with high expectations and responsibilities from stakeholders.”



Base: n=314

Note: Total does not add to 100% as respondents may have mentioned multiple themes

Challenges around NDIS systems and funding was the most commonly mentioned issue

Responses about NDIS systems and funding can be grouped into three main themes

Difficulty navigating the NDIS system

Respondents commonly mentioned the challenges of navigating the NDIS system. This included **managing policy and pricing changes, restrictive practice and limitations of the guidelines, lack of transparency in the process and long approval times**. This can make it challenging for workers to support NDIS participants and manage their expectations.

“Constantly changing regulations and information makes it really hard to support people, and it gets frustrating for everyone not knowing whether they will be able to access the supports they need when required because the NDIS changes the parameters again.”

“Extremely frustrated with the current NDIS communication system.”

Insufficient funding and pricing changes

Respondents reported that the **NDIS does not provide enough funding** and has reducing funding, resulting in participants **needs not being fully met**. Respondents commented that worker salaries and compliance costs are increasing but NDIS funding is not.

Changes to price guides with limited communication and support has resulted in frustrations with workers.

“The insecurity of [them] constantly changing the price guide and rules is by far the most stressful part of my role.”

“The NDIS do not provide enough funds to support participants to achieve their goals - particularly in psychology. They disregard the impact of disability on someone's mental health.”

Systematic barriers affecting participant outcomes

The complicated NDIS environment has reportedly resulted in worse outcomes for participants due to the **regulatory requirements, limited funding and changing guidelines**. Some respondents perceive that since the introduction of the NDIS, the NDIS workforce has become billing focused rather than people focused.

Respondents commented that NDIS participants have been cut off from funding or are not able to receive support due to long response times.

“Too many times I've seen people slip [sic] through the cracks because of red tape bureaucracy and paper pushers waiting to the last minute. Causing severe [sic] mental health declines and attempts at life.”

“I feel the NDIS has changed the level of support and speed of getting provider services to clients. I feel there are more road blocks in providing quality, timely support to clients.”

Limitations and next steps



Limitations

BETA designed our survey to understand the factors leading to workers leaving the NDIS workforce. Like any research, our studies have limitations that should be considered when assessing the results.

Survey sample

The survey sample was recruited through Boosting the Local Care Workforce (BLCW) existing channels with NDIS providers.

In 2020, the NDIS workforce consisted of 270,000 workers¹. In total, the survey collected 768 responses. While this is a large, diverse sample, it is not truly representative of the NDIS workforce. In particular, it only includes people who are online and willing to participate.

The sample also had a low percentage of casual workers (11%) and sole traders (7%), and a high percentage of full time workers (33%) compared to the percentage of casual workers (34%)², sole traders (28%)³ and fulltime workers (13%)⁴ in the NDIS workforce. This may limit generalizability.

Number of predictors

As our model included a lot of job demand and job resource predictors, there were a large number of model parameters.

Although the parameter to sample size ratio was acceptable, it is possible the model was unable to detect smaller effects.

In order to increase our confidence in the significance testing, we used a backwards estimation method to arrive at the final model. This method can introduce statistical bias, such as inflated coefficients.

Future research could collect a larger sample so backwards elimination is not necessary.

Intention vs Action

The survey mostly assessed intentions. It is widely recognized that intentions alone do not necessarily lead to action – this is known as the ‘intention-action’ gap.

Nonetheless, intentions are a necessary precursor to action so the analysis typically assume that an increase in intentions will lead to some (smaller) increase in action.

In addition, the survey asked respondents to reflect on their experiences and attitudes about working in the NDIS workforce to better inform the drivers to intention.

Reliability of self reports

At several points in our surveys, respondents were asked about their experience of working in the NDIS workforce. While these ‘self-reports’ are often a useful guide, sometimes they may be misleading.

For example, when people are in a reflective state (as with a survey experiment) they often prefer more information and detail. In a busy, real-world setting, greater levels of details sometimes lead to inaction.

A follow-up survey will be launched in 2023 to measure how many respondents left the NDIS workforce since the initial survey.

This will allow us to measure if intention to leave was a good predictor of behaviour.

Around 3 in 5 respondents indicated they would like to participate in the follow-up survey.

Next steps: Intervention



Based on the qualitative and quantitative findings, BETA will design an intervention in partnership with DSS to address retention issues in the NDIS workforce.



BETA will present a preliminary intervention design at the NDIS Workforce Industry Reference Group, to gain insights from NDIS providers.



BETA will design, launch and analyse the follow-up survey findings.



Once BETA and DSS agree on an intervention, BETA will progress an ethics application and design intervention materials.



BETA will implement and evaluate the intervention and publish a report on the findings.

December 2022

Thank you

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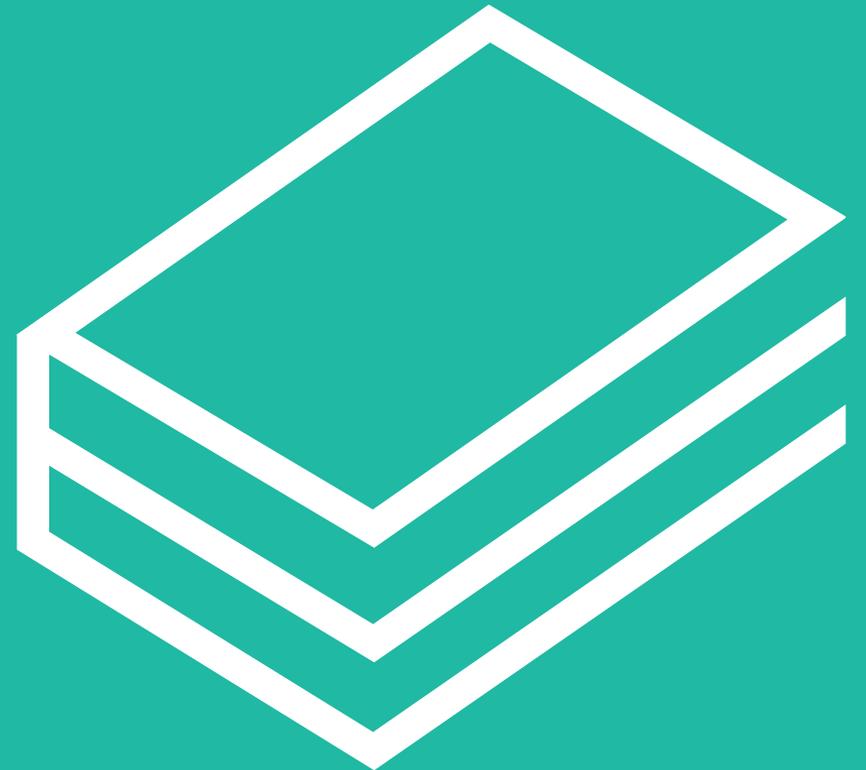
Media enquiries media@pmc.gov.au

Find out more pmc.gov.au/beta

Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government

Appendices

Full sample responses to all survey questions



Survey Demographics

Role (Select all that apply)*	
Disability support worker	48%
Support coordinator	9%
Human resources	4%
Front line management	16%
Executive management	10%
Allied health professional/assistant	16%
Other	12%

Base: n=767
Question: What is your role in the disability sector?

Time in current job	
Less than 1 month	1%
1 - 5 months	8%
6 - 11 months	9%
1 - 5 years	53%
6 - 10 years	16%
11 - 20 years	9%
More than 20 years	4%

Base n=764
Question: How long have you worked at your current place of employment?

Disability	
Yes	12%
No	85%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Base: n=669
Question: Do you have a disability?

Carer	
Yes	58%
No	40%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Base: n=669
Question: Do you have any caring responsibilities outside of work? (e.g., for children, person with disability, or elderly parents)

Setting (Select all that apply)*	
Residential facility/ Specialists Disability Accommodation/ Supported Independent Living facilities	41%
In-home support	44%
Day programs	22%
Community based support	38%
Support coordination/ Case management	14%
Outreach	5%
Respite	13%
Early intervention	10%
Private practice/ Outpatients clinics	8%
Hospitals	3%
Other	13%

Base: n=765
Question: In what setting/s do you perform your role?

Average hours per week			
No. of hours	Paid	Unpaid	
0	-	49%	
1-5	1%	24%	
6-10	3%	15%	
11-15	2%	5%	
16-25	14%	4%	
26-35	24%	1%	
36-45	49%	1%	
46-65	2%	1%	
66 +	4%	0%	

Base n=753
Question: In a typical week, how many paid and unpaid hours do you work in the disability sector?

Household income	
Under \$30,000	2%
\$30,000 to under \$60,000	17%
\$60,001 to under \$90,000	23%
\$90,001 to under \$120,000	16%
\$120,001 to under \$150,000	13%
More than \$150,000	16%
Prefer not to answer	13%

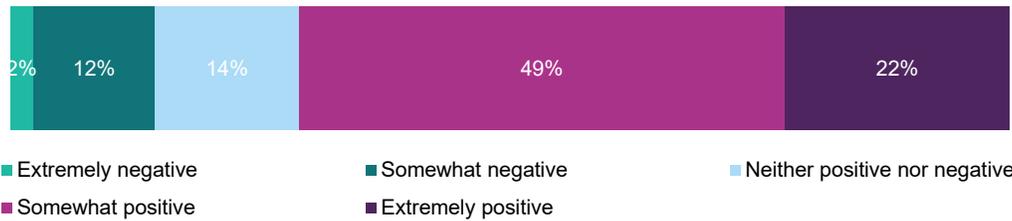
Base: n=669
Question: What is the total annual income of your household, before tax?

Qualifications*	
No	31%
Certificate III and/or IV	41%
Advanced diploma or diploma	18%
Undergraduate bachelor's degree	7%
Graduate diploma or Graduate certificate	5%
Masters Degree	5%
Doctoral Degree	1%
Other (please specify)	4%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Base: n=665
Question: Do you have any specific qualifications in disability?

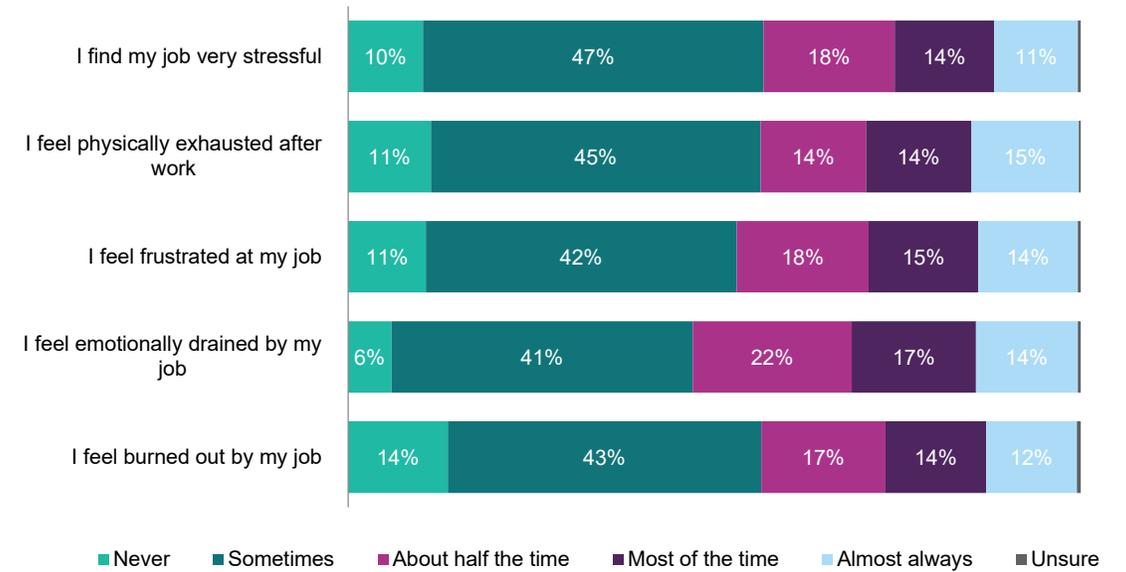
Experience and Burnout in the NDIS

Overall experience



Base: n=752
Question: In general, what is your experience of working in the disability sector?

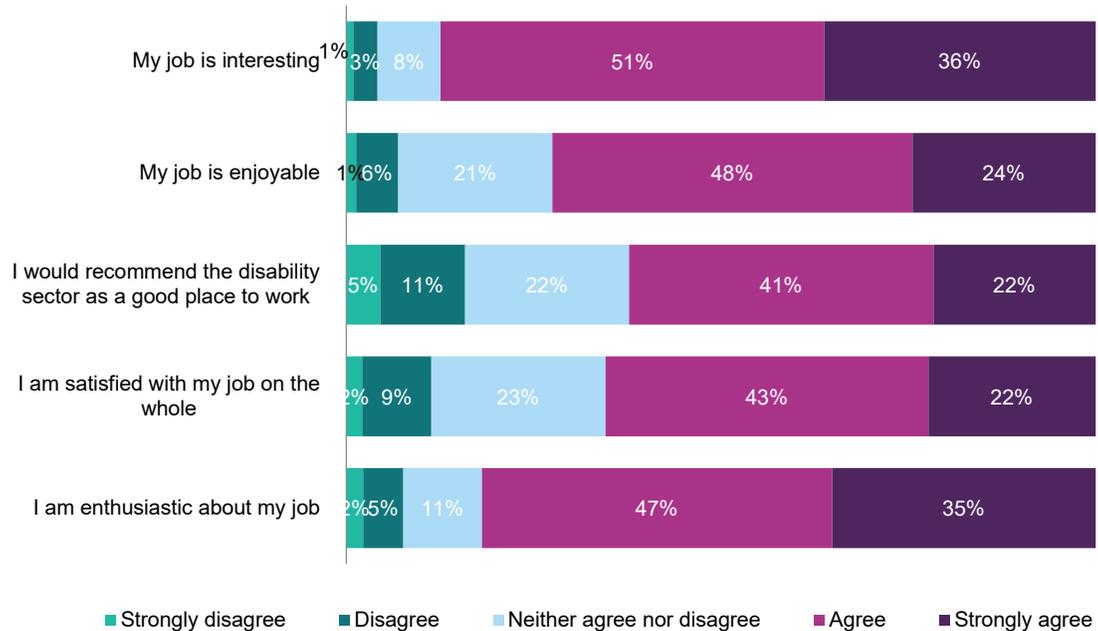
Burnout



Base: n=742-744
Question: Based on your experience in your current job, how often do you feel each of the following?

Job Engagement and Value in the NDIS

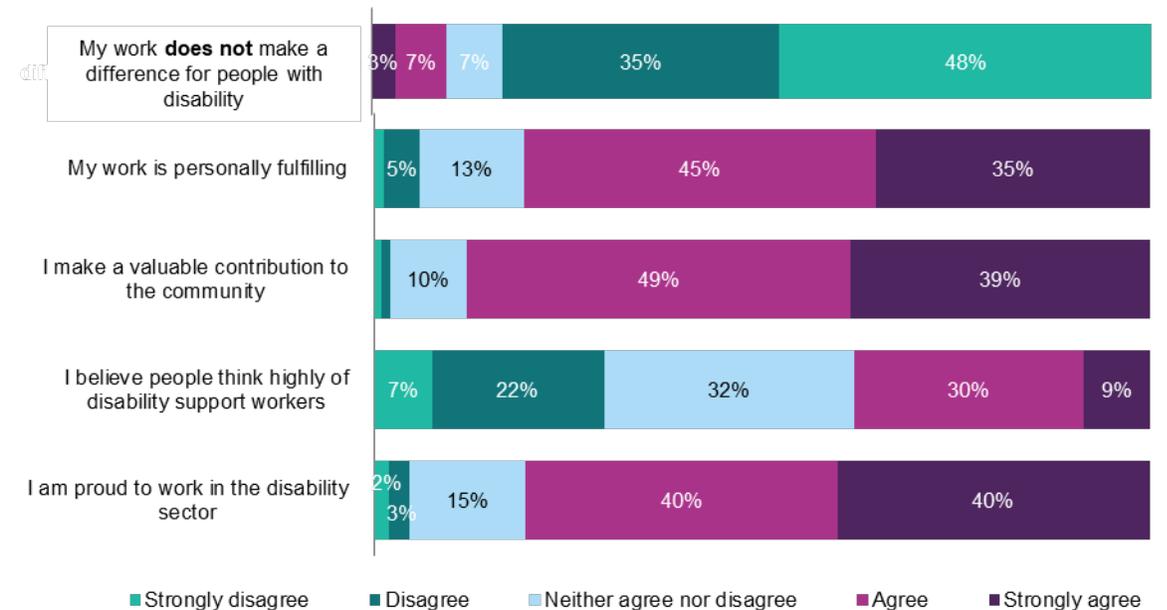
Job engagement



Base: n=746-751

Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements:

Job Value

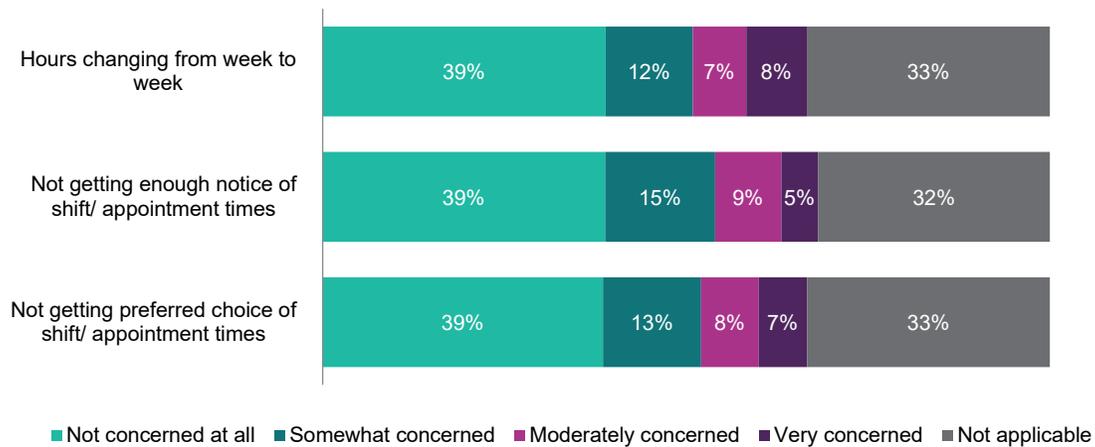


Base: n=751-752

Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements:

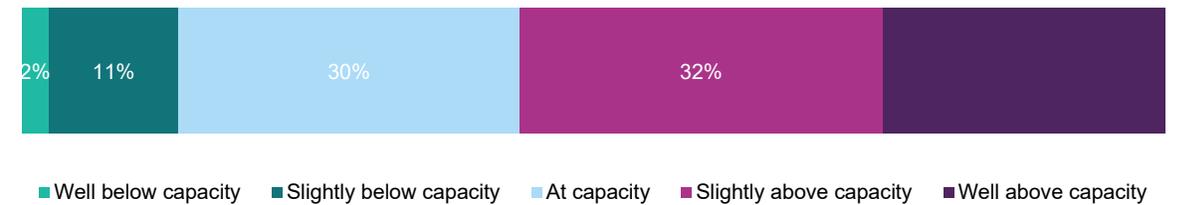
Job Demands in the NDIS

Rostering experiences



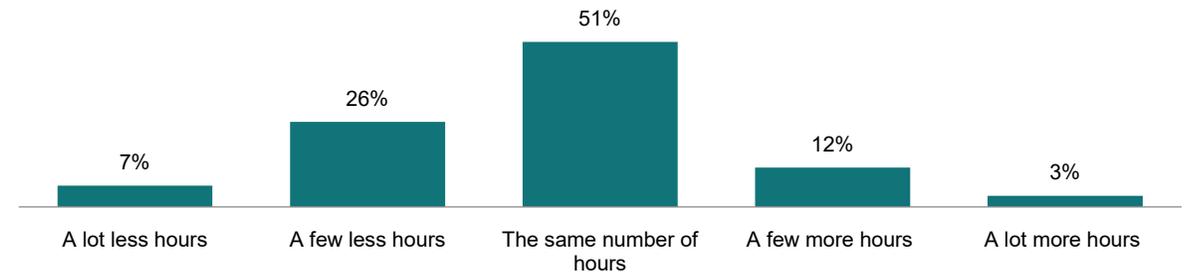
Base: n=733-734
Question: Over the last 6 months, how often have you...

Current workload



Base: n=729
Question: What best describes your current workload?

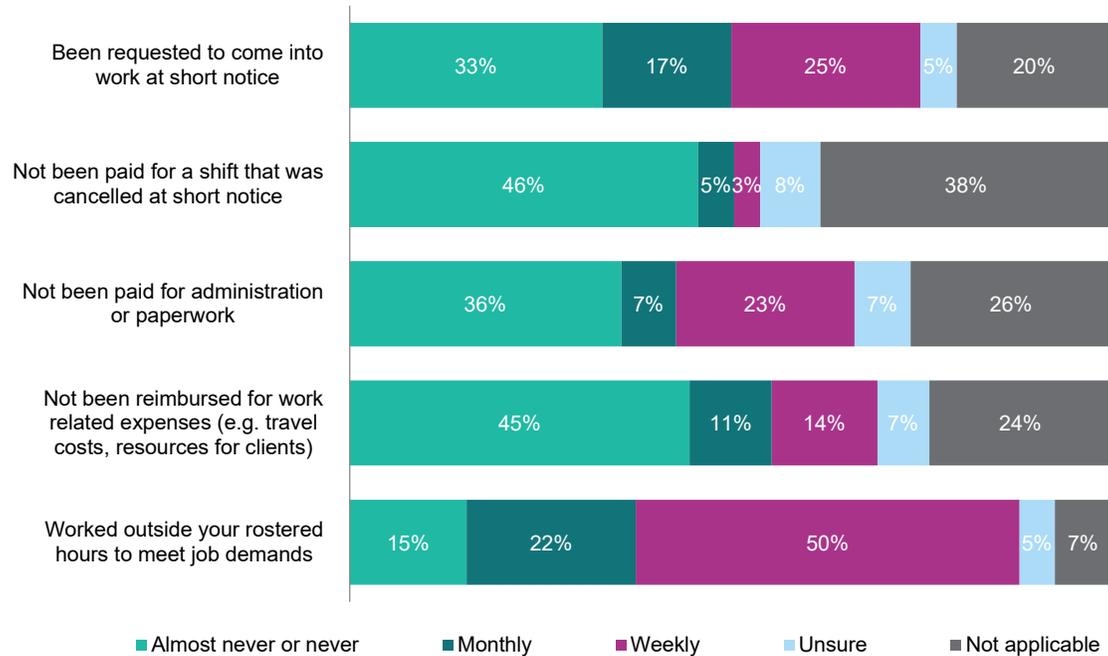
Hours desired



Base: n=729
Question: How many hours per week would you prefer to work in your main job?

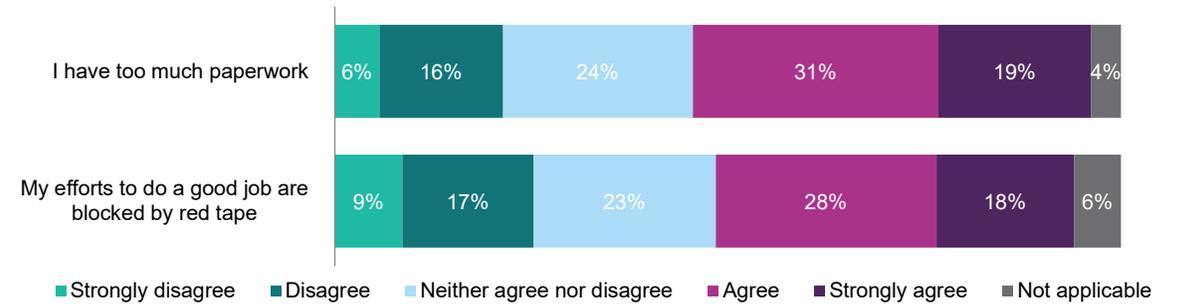
Job Demands in the NDIS

Job expectations



Base: n=733-735
Question: Over the last 6 months, how often have you...

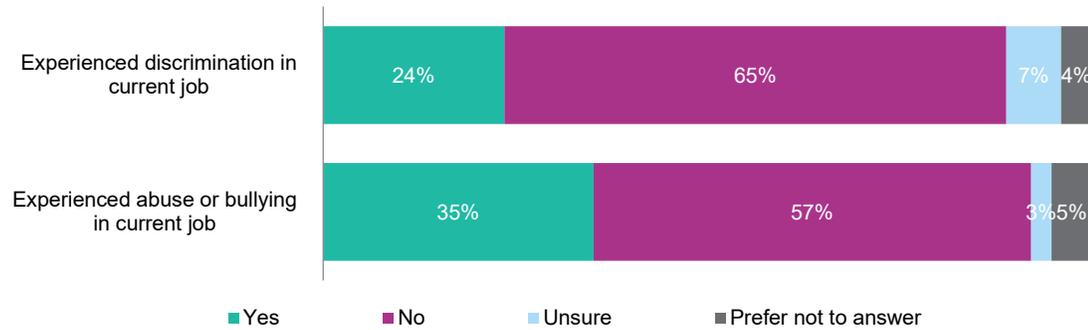
Administration and Red Tape



Base: n=720
Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements...

Job Demands in the NDIS

Discrimination and abuse/bullying



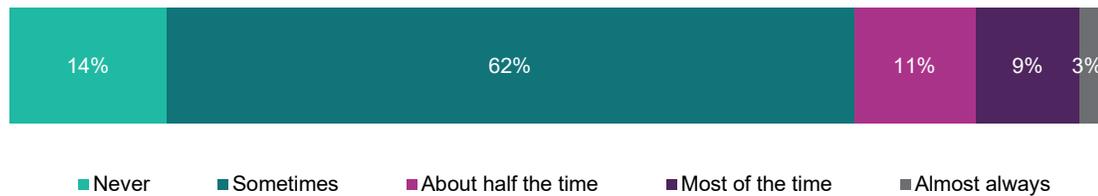
Base: n=717
 Question: Have you experienced discrimination in your current job? Have you experienced any abuse or bullying in your current job?

Workplace Health and Safety



Base: n=717
 Question: Do you think your health and safety is at risk working in your job?

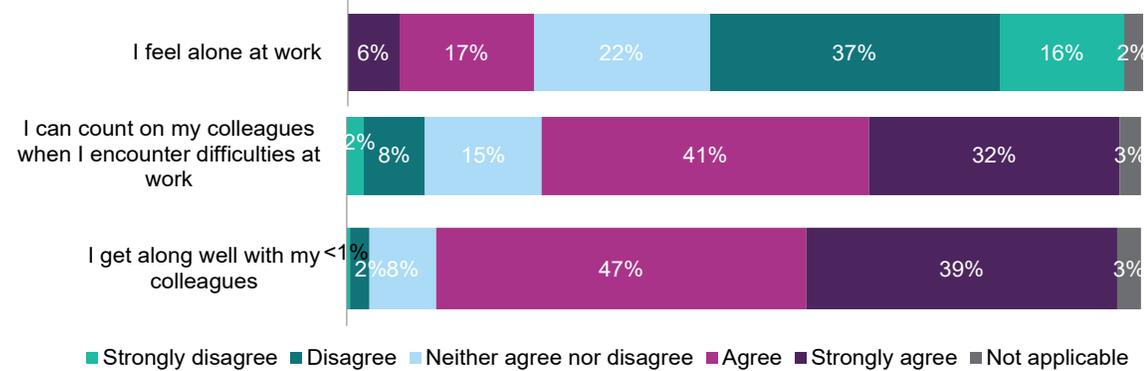
Personally confronting situations at work



Base: n=716
 Question: In your job, are you confronted with things that affect you personally?

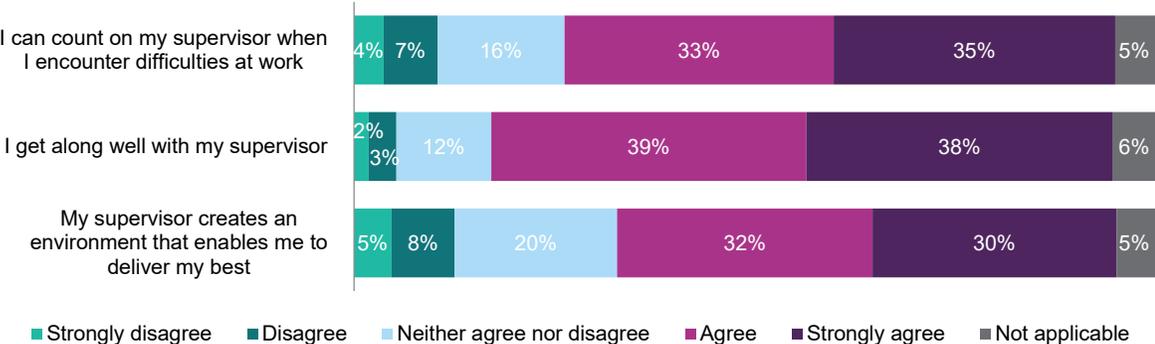
Job Resources in the NDIS

Relationship with colleagues



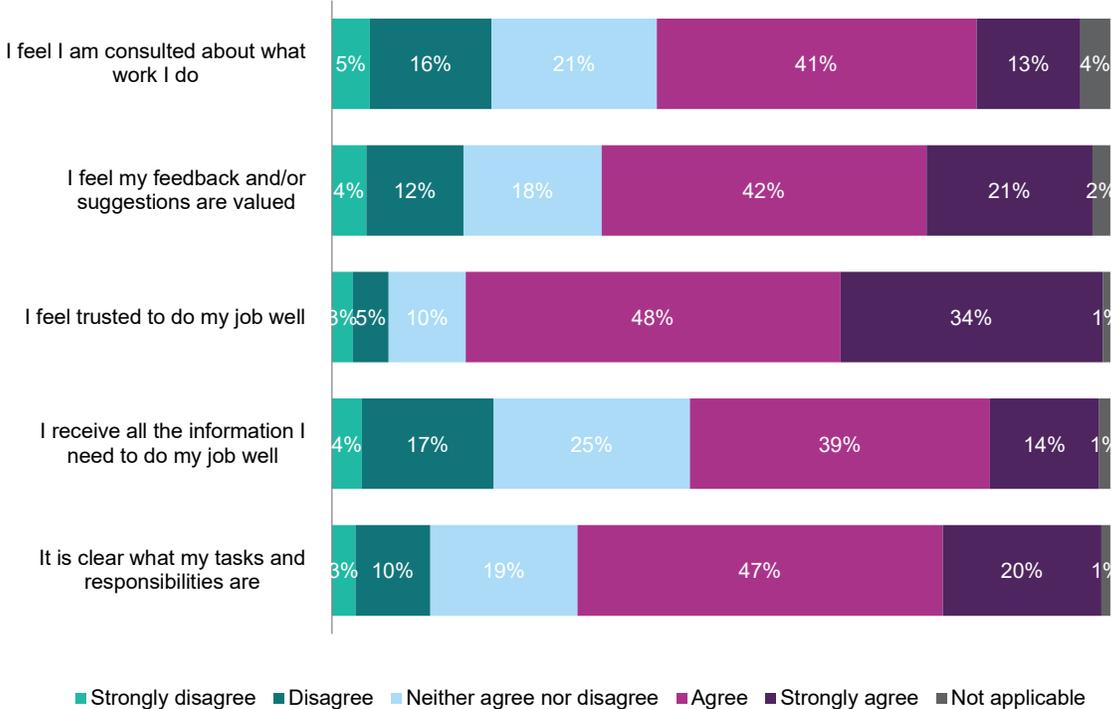
Base: n=701-702
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Relationship with supervisor



Base: n=702
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

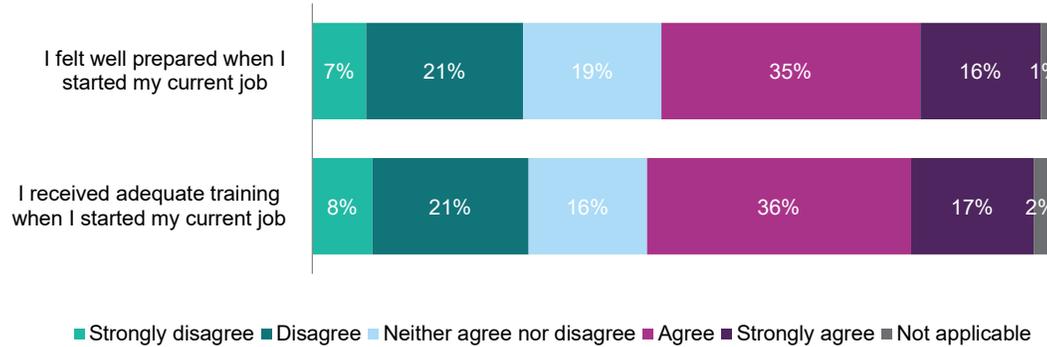
Job control



Base: n=697-698
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

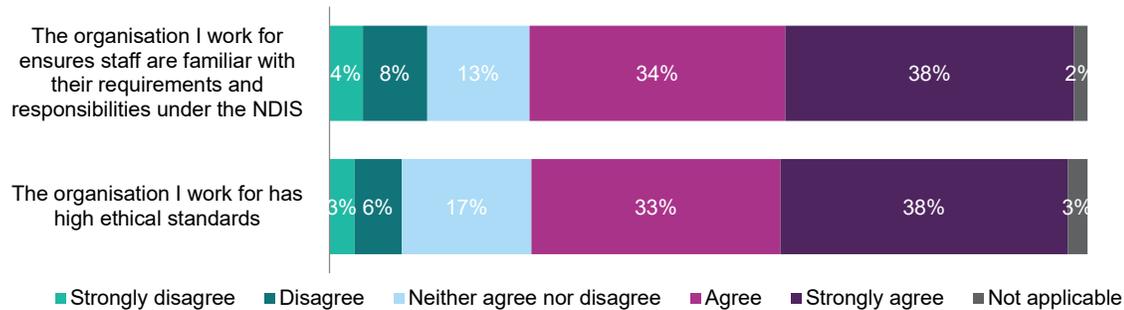
Job Resources in the NDIS

On boarding



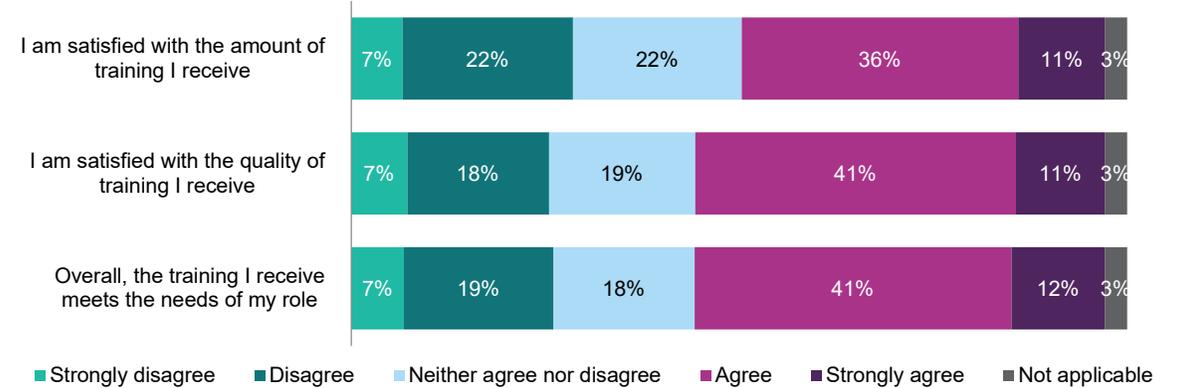
Base: n=708
Question: Thinking back to when you first started your current job, please respond to the following statements...

Organisations ethical standards



Base: n=720-721
Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements...

Training Satisfaction



Base: n=705-707
Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements:

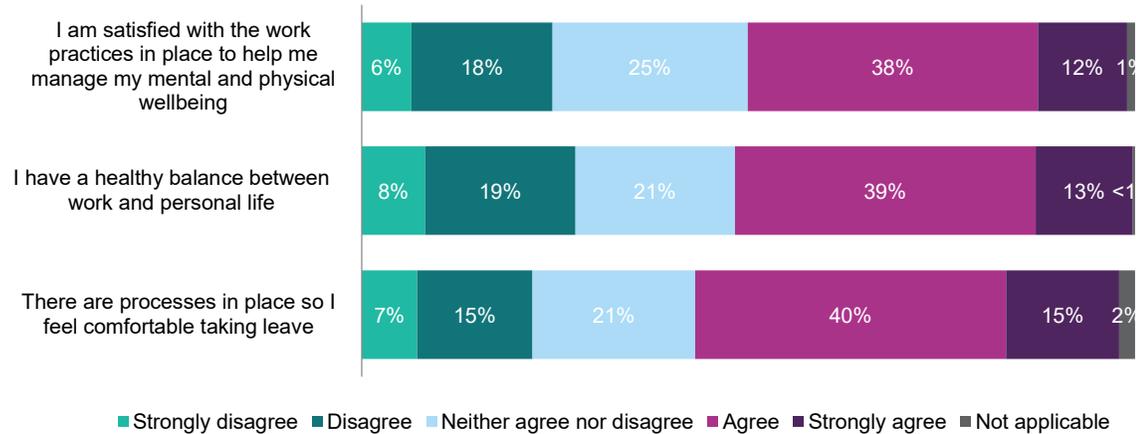
Training Opportunities



Base: n=705-707
Question: Since starting your current job, how often have you undergone the following types of training?

Job Resources in the NDIS

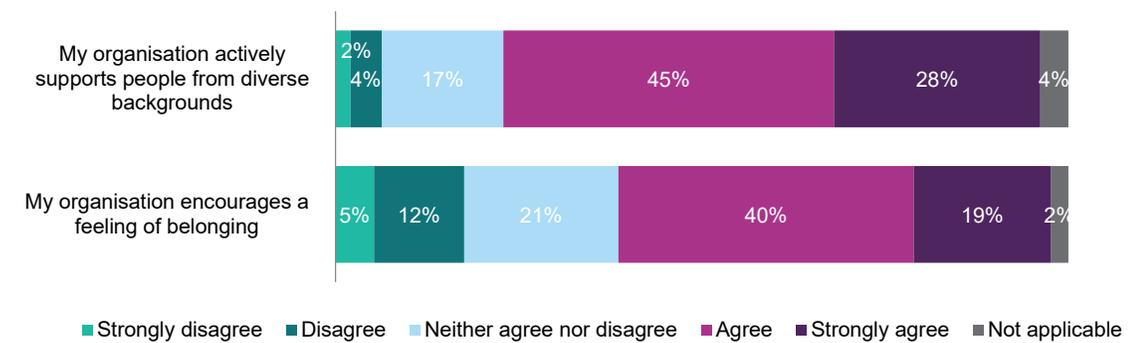
Healthy work practices



Base: n=684-685

Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements...

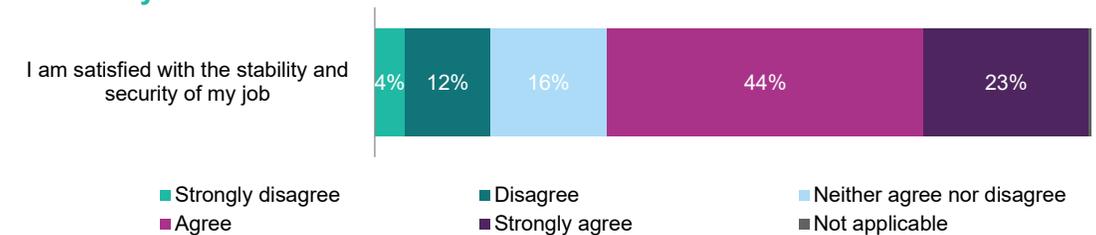
Inclusive culture



Base: n=684-685

Question: Thinking about your current job, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following

Job security

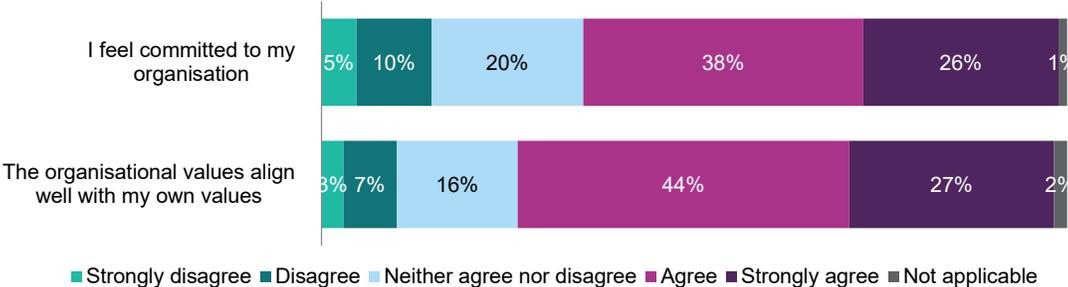


Base: n=683

Question: Based on your experience in your current job, please respond to the following statements...

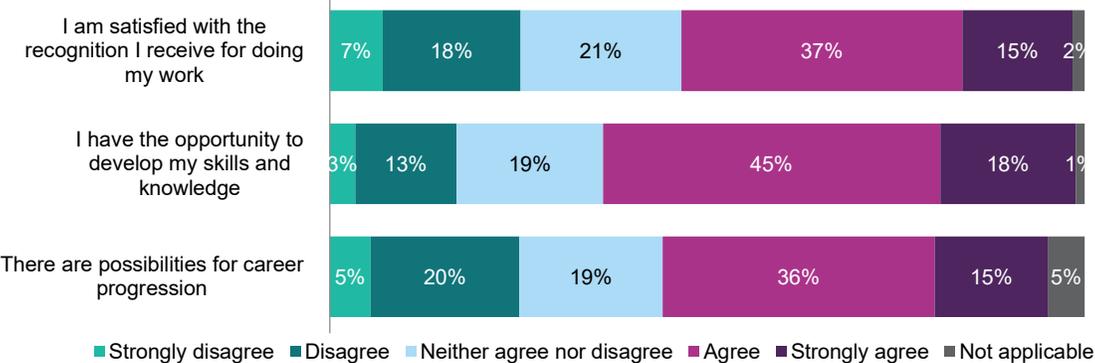
Job Resources in the NDIS

Organisational commitment



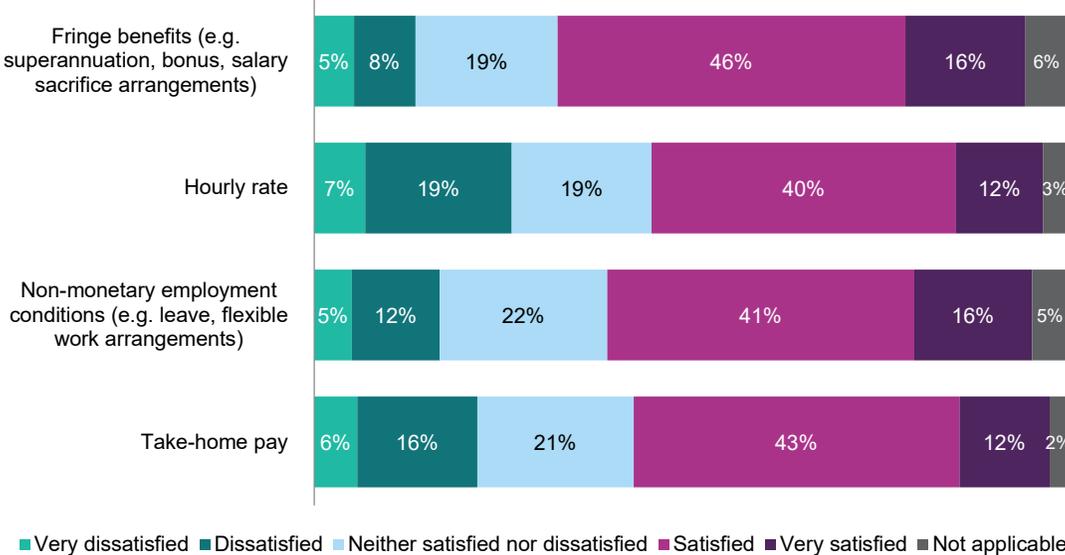
Base: n=684
Question: Thinking about your current job, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following

Growth and recognition



Base: n=685
Question: Thinking about your current job, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following

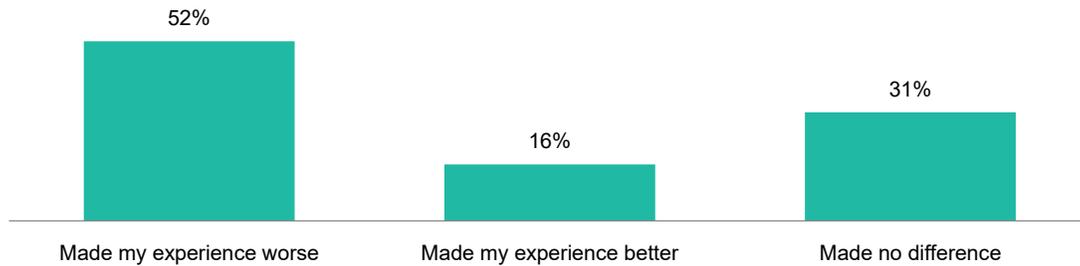
Pay conditions



Base: n=684-685
Question: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your:

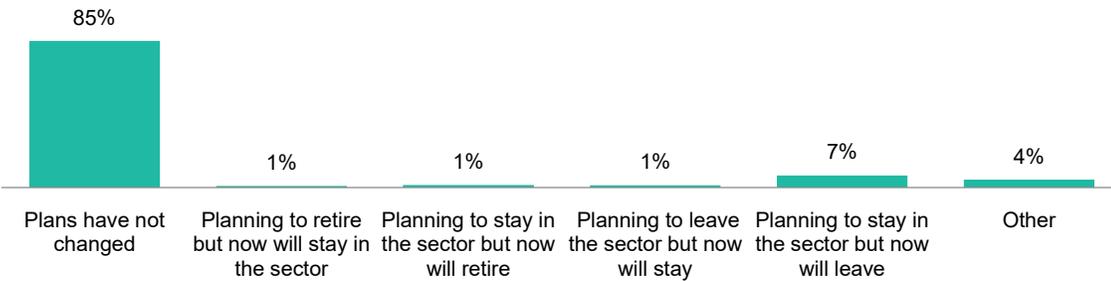
COVID-19 and the NDIS workforce

Impact of COVID-19



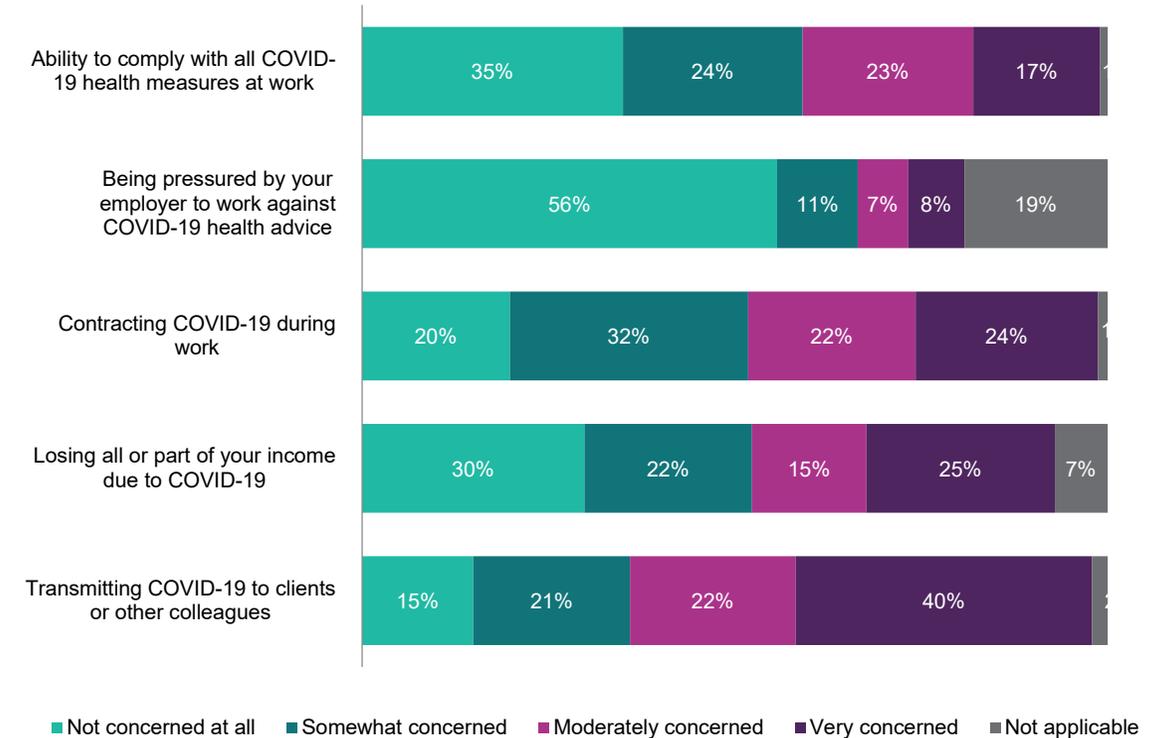
Base: n=683
Question: Overall, do you think the COVID-19 pandemic affected your experience of working in the disability sector?

Impact of COVID-19 on NDIS workers plans to work in the workforce



Base: n=669
Question: Has the pandemic changed your plans to work in the disability sector?

COVID-19 concerns of NDIS workers



Base: n=676-677
Question: During the pandemic, how concerned have you been about the following at work...