What makes us happy at work?

Upskilled Annual Australian Career Survey
Uncovering Australia’s workplace and educational needs

second edition 2016
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Executive Summary

Upskilled’s Annual Australian Career Survey was created to inform discussion on Australia’s continuing education and workplace needs.

In 2016, these needs are being shaped by a number of local and global phenomena.

Locally, our transitioning economy is moving from the capital-intensive mining sector, to the labour-intensive services sector. Adapting to this change will require an increasingly skilled and qualified labour force.

Globally, marketplaces are interconnecting and digitising at an astonishing rate. Geography is becoming progressively irrelevant, and Australian workplaces and training facilities must offer greater flexibility, mobility, and online options to avoid being left behind.

In such an interconnected world of work, global trends also strongly impact domestic markets and labour requirements.

Heading into 2017, the trend of digital disruption and the rise of the start-up are driving the need for tech, innovation, and entrepreneurship capabilities. Education and training must be more readily available online, and courses should be shorter, more targeted, and produce work readiness and niche skillsets.

In assessing Australia’s readiness for this changing world of work, the following report provides a snapshot into the attitudes, aspirations, and satisfaction levels of workers and non-workers across a number of demographics.

The findings offer a number of insights for business leaders, policy makers, entrepreneurs, and managers seeking to drive performance and draft legislation within the Australian labour force.

Jon Lang
Chief Executive Officer
Upskilled
Methodology

Sample and Data Collection
This report is based on an online survey of 3,418 Australian workers and non-workers, conducted via email between September 2015 and September 2016.
Respondents are nationally representative, hailing from every state and territory across Australia. They represent a wide range of industries, employment types, and age groups, and comprise a 45:55 male to female gender split.

Survey Questions
A series of multiple-choice questions around demographic and other data were first asked to understand the demographic makeup of respondents.
Respondents were then asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a variety of statements. These statements regarded job-specific factors affecting satisfaction, attitudes towards further study, and knowledge levels around available training options and funding options.
3418
GRAND TOTAL SURVEYED

1558
MALES

1860
FEMALES

BY STATE OR PROVINCE: TOTAL 3418

WHAT'S YOUR PROFESSION?

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<td>Administrative/Secretarial</td>
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<td>Arts/Recreation Services</td>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- Full-time Employee: 33.7%
- Unemployed: 13.1%
- Part-time Employee: 8.8%
- Casual Employee: 11%
- Self-Employed: 10.5%
- Retired: 21.9%
Australians are happy workers. An encouraging 81 per cent of respondents like their job, and 29 per cent love their job. Self-employed Australians are the happiest group of all, with 92 per cent enjoying their work. The number one reason cited for workplace happiness was having a likeable workplace (66 per cent of happy workers).

But we still believe there’s room for improvement. Despite being satisfied, 70 per cent of respondents have still considered further study. The main reason cited (58 per cent) was to advance their career options even further.

We also think we deserve more. Being happy at work also doesn’t stop us from believing we should be getting paid more. Sixty eight per cent of satisfied respondents believe they deserve a pay rise, and 44 per cent strongly believe this. Only 8 per cent of happy respondents don’t think they deserve a pay rise.

...even though we mostly have a basic level of education. A Certificate I, II, III, or IV was the most common highest level of education at 25 per cent of respondents, followed by a high school certificate at 23 per cent. Only 6 per cent had an advanced diploma, 18 per cent a Bachelor’s degree, 7 per cent a Masters degree, and just 1 per cent had a PhD.

In the end, our career goals are actually pretty simple. Around a third of respondents aimed to just “be happy at work” or have enough money to stop working (28 per cent each). Far fewer were aiming to start a company (13 per cent), run the company they’re currently at (3 per cent), or create any type of legacy (also 3 per cent).
WOMEN
Though women had a significantly lower average income (18% of females earn over $70k compared to 34% of males) they still had slightly higher satisfaction levels than men (82% and 80% respectively).

PAY RISE
Happy workers were slightly more likely to want a pay rise than unhappy workers (68% compared to 63%).

FURTHER STUDIES
Despite 70% of respondents wanting to undertake further study, 74% being aware they had funding options, and 52% explicitly stating that funding options would be incentive to study further, only 9% said they had actually had their course subsidised.
JOB SATISFACTION

Overall, Australians are very satisfied with their jobs. A whopping 81 per cent of respondents indicated that they enjoyed their job, and 29 per cent “loved” their job.

Only 3 per cent indicated that they “hardly ever” liked their job, and only 4 per cent actively hated it.

Employment Type

Self-employed respondents were the happiest group, with 92 per cent experiencing job satisfaction. Following this group was full-time employees at 86 per cent, and employers at 82 per cent.

Casual employees experienced the lowest levels of job satisfaction, at 79 per cent, indicating that even the group experiencing the lowest amount of job satisfaction was still fairly satisfied.

Gender

Female respondents liked their jobs marginally more than males, at 82 and 80 per cent respectively. They also both felt equally valued at work at 54 per cent each.

This is despite female respondents receiving far lower pay than men on average, indicating that that pay is not closely correlated with job satisfaction for women. Only 3 per cent indicated that they “hardly ever” liked their job, and only 4 per cent actively hated it.
Gender cont.

Seventy five per cent of respondents who received a gross annual income of $150,000 or more were men. So were 78 per cent of respondents receiving $110,000 to $150,000, and 54 per cent of respondents receiving $90,000 to $110,000.

Women only overtook men at the low end of the pay spectrum. Sixty one per cent of respondents receiving $30,000 to $50,000 were women, as were 62 per cent of those receiving less than $30,000.

State

Workers from the Northern Territory were the happiest of all at 91 per cent enjoying their job. This was followed by South Australia at 86 per cent, and Queensland at 82 per cent.

No state stood out as being very unhappy, with New South Wales, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania all coming in last at 80 per cent.

Industry

The happiest industry was Arts & Recreation Services at 93 per cent, followed by Design & Architecture and Professional/Managerial at 92 per cent, and Education & Training at 91 per cent.

The lowest levels of satisfaction (74 per cent) were found in Manufacturing. This larger spread between happy and unhappy workers across industries indicated that it was a factor able to impact happiness levels.
The Most Likely to be Happy Award goes to
A self-employed Australian (92%) from the Northern Territory (91%) who works in Arts & Recreation Services (93%) and earns over $150,000 (92%).

Income Level

Probably unsurprisingly, well-paid workers were the happiest. The top three gross income brackets took out the three highest happiness levels: 92 per cent of those earning more than $150,000 liked their job, 91 per cent of those earning $110,000-150,000 liked their job, and 89 per cent of those earning $90,000-110,000 liked their job.

This was compared to just 73 per cent of workers who earned under $30,000.

Likable Workplace

A likeable workplace had the strongest correlation with job satisfaction when respondents were asked to rate different aspects related to their work. Sixty six per cent of happy workers liked their workplace, compared to just 15 per cent of unhappy workers, amounting to a significant 51 per cent spread.

Looking closer

We like each other! Seventy five per cent of all workers said they got along with their colleagues, and only 8 per cent said they didn’t.

Feeling Valued at Work

Feeling valued at work came in second when it came to workplace sentiments affecting job satisfaction. Sixty two per cent of respondents who liked their job also felt valued at work, compared to only 17 per cent of unhappy workers, amounting to a 45 per cent spread.
Enjoyable Job

There was a stronger correlation between not liking the job itself and being unhappy, than there was between liking the job and being happy.

Sixty four per cent of unhappy workers disliked their job, compared to just 8 per cent of satisfied workers. Conversely, a slightly lower 59 per cent of satisfied respondents liked their job, compared to 7 per cent of unsatisfied workers.

Work/Life Balance

Work/life balance was not a clear indicator of job satisfaction, with only a one in two chance that it would affect happiness at work. Roughly half (49 per cent) of satisfied respondents enjoyed work/life balance, and roughly half of unsatisfied workers (51 per cent) indicated they didn’t.

Manageable Workload

A manageable workload was also not a clear indicator of job satisfaction, with results again being almost an even split. Fifty per cent of happy workers believed their workload was manageable and 46 per cent of unhappy workers believed it wasn’t.

Looking closer

If you want to reduce your work stress, stop typing and choose a trade! Tradespeople and miners were most likely to say their workload was manageable at 54 per cent each, while just 10 per cent of writers and journalists felt the same.
Workplace Training

While the availability of workplace training appeared to have only a moderate effect on job satisfaction, its absence seemed to make workers unhappy.

Only a moderate 42 per cent of happy workers believed they received adequate workplace training, making it an important factor of happiness for less than half of happy respondents.

A much larger 67 per cent of unhappy workers complained they didn’t receive adequate workplace training, indicating a lack of training is somewhat likely to cause unhappiness.

Looking closer

Writers and journalists were least likely to believe their workplace offered great training, with 70 per cent saying their workplace didn’t offer this.

Appropriate Remuneration

Interestingly, satisfied workers had more complaints about remuneration than unsatisfied workers did.

Looking closer

Time to head north? The Northern Territory had the most respondents in the highest pay bracket at 7 per cent (compared to the national average of 3 per cent). Tasmania had the most respondents in the lowest pay bracket at 54 per cent (compared to the national average of 35 per cent).
**SUMMARY**

**Biggest indicators of HAPPINESS**
- 66% of happy workers had this
- 62% of happy workers felt this
- 59% of happy workers experienced this

**Biggest indicators of UNHAPPINESS**
- 49% of unhappy workers had this
- 51% of unhappy workers didn’t have workplace training
- 50% of unhappy workers had this
- 46% of unhappy workers didn’t have workplace training

**Factors that had LITTLE EFFECT**
- 67% of unhappy workers didn’t have workplace training
- 64% of unhappy workers didn’t like their job
- 55% of unhappy workers didn’t feel valued

**RENUMERATION**
- 68% of happy workers
- 63% of unhappy workers

**WORK/LIFE BALANCE**
- 49% of happy workers had this
- 51% of unhappy workers didn’t have this

**MANAGEABLE WORKLOAD**
- 50% of happy workers had this
- 46% of unhappy workers didn’t have this

**INADEQUATE WORKPLACE TRAINING**
- 67% of unhappy workers didn’t have workplace training

**JOB WAS NOT ENJOYABLE**
- 64% of unhappy workers didn’t like their job

**NOT FEELING VALUED**
- 55% of unhappy workers didn’t feel valued

**GREAT WORKPLACE**
- 66% of happy workers had this

**FEELING VALUED @ WORK**
- 62% of happy workers felt this

**ENJOYABLE JOB**
- 59% of happy workers experienced this
QUALIFICATION LEVELS & TRAINING

“Our economic prosperity depends on the quality of our graduates, the outcomes of the training you give them and whether they are skilled in the way employers need them to be skilled. Our international competitiveness depends on skilled people meeting employers’ needs. To deliver we must first become more innovative in the way we approach the task of generating a workforce capable of keeping pace with the economy’s rapidly changing needs.”

Hon. Karen Andrews MP (Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills)

Higher levels of education

Eighteen per cent of respondents held a Bachelors degree, 7 per cent a Masters degree, and 1 per cent a PHD.

These respondents were typically in more technical roles: the largest proportion of PHD holders were in Technical/Engineering roles (5 per cent), the largest proportion of Masters holders were in Information Technology (22 per cent), and the largest proportion of Bachelor degree holders were in Education & Training (37 per cent).

Respondents with a Bachelors and a Masters degree were also the most likely (75 per cent each) to want to undertake further study.

Mid levels of education

The most common qualification held by all respondents (25 per cent) was a tertiary level Certificate I, II, III, or IV. The majority of respondents with this level of education were tradespeople at 44 per cent, followed by Hospitality/Tourism at 38 per cent.

This is a positive sign for our transitioning economy, where services-centric occupations will play a greater role in a post-mining economy.

“Vocational education and training is fundamental to Australia’s future success as we transition to a 21st century economy”

- Hon Simon Birmingham MP (Liberal Minister for Education and Training)

Lower levels of education

A High School Certificate was the second most common level of education of all respondents, at 23 per cent. Five per cent of respondents did not graduate high school at all.

Industries with the greatest number of respondents holding High School Certificates were Retail, Manufacturing, and homemaking (39 per cent each). Fourteen per cent of those in Rental/Hiring/Real Estate, and who were unemployed, never graduated.

Respondents without an education or with only a high school education were also the least interested in undertaking further study, at 56 per cent and 62 per cent respectively.

Workplace training

Thirty five per cent of respondents said they didn’t receive adequate workplace training, but this was much higher in certain industries.

Seventy per cent of writers and journalists cited inadequate or no workplace training, as did 50 per cent of workers in Information Technology. The latter is particularly concerning as information technology and computer sciences become increasingly important to the future of work. To add to this, only 5 per cent of respondents who had considered further study wished to study Information Technology.

Looking closer

Tasmania had the lowest percentage of every state for PHDs (2 per cent), Masters (2 per cent) and Bachelors (6 per cent). However, it had the highest percentage of every state for Diplomas (19 per cent), and Certificates I, II, III, or IV (46 per cent).
ATTITUDES TO FURTHER STUDY

Seventy per cent of Australian workers want to be better qualified. Only 20 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their current education, and just 9 per cent didn’t really see any value in upskilling.

Reasons to Study

Upskilling was generally considered a means to improve career outlook. Almost half of those wanting to upskill wanted better career prospects (47 per cent), one fifth wanted to change careers (19 per cent), and another fifth wanted to earn more money (18 per cent).

Impediments to study included price (33 per cent), the belief that they already had all the skills they needed (26 per cent), and a lack of available time (16 per cent).

By employment Type

Casual employees and employers were most likely to want to complete further study at 76 per cent each. The retired were the least likely at 40 per cent, a whole 30 per cent less than the closest category, indicating that upskilling was linked to furthering career prospects.

Preferred Delivery Method

Forty four per cent of those wanting to study further wanted a completely online delivery, followed by a blended option of online/on-campus, at 26 per cent. Only 6 per cent of respondents wished to study on campus full-time.

Awareness of Funding Options

Australians are largely aware that there are government options to assist their study, at 74 per cent. Fifty two per cent of respondents also said they would consider studying if they could access a government loan that allowed them to pay for their course at a later point.

However, there is a large gap between awareness and action when it comes to funding.

Despite 70 per cent wanting to upskill, 74 per cent being aware they had funding options, and 52 per cent explicitly stating that funding options would be incentive to study further, only 9 per cent said they had actually had their course subsidised.

Only 2 per cent of respondents had also been informed by their employer that they had funding options, potentially indicating low levels of support from employers regarding further education.
CONCLUSION & POLICY POINTS

The results of the 2016 Annual Australian Career Survey bode very well for the Australian workforce and wider economy.

We are largely satisfied at work, and interested in bettering ourselves through education. We believe education is a means to access greater career opportunities. We are also mostly aware that there are government funding options that will allow us to access this education.

However, several areas of concern have also emerged from the findings:

• Entrepreneurial ambition cited by a very minimal percentage of respondents, a factor of concern considering the growing emphasis on innovation and start-ups in global marketplaces

• Minimal workplace training or desire to upskill in Information Systems, a discipline of crucial importance to an increasingly digitised world of work

• A large gap between awareness and action when it comes to accessing educational subsidies to become more skilled and better qualified

• Minimal education by employers on the funding options that could assist employees to upskill

• A significant disparity between the remuneration of male and female respondents
ABOUT UPSKILLED

Upskilled is one of Australia’s largest Registered Training Organisations, delivering over 100 online and face-to-face courses to working professionals, job seekers, and school leavers across Australia. Founded in 2009, Upskilled was created to provide the wide range of innovative, flexible, and high quality courses Australians needed to gain a competitive edge in an ever-changing workforce.

+ DISCLAIMER

This report is based on a survey of 3,418 workers and non-workers. While the information contained in this report is current as at the date of publication, it may change without notice. Upskilled is under no obligation to update the information or correct any inaccuracy that may become apparent at a later date. Upskilled does not take any responsibility for any reliance on the information contained in this report or for its accuracy and completeness.