

The Australian HR Institute

Quarterly Australian Work Outlook

A forward view of the
Australian labour market

June
Quarter
2026

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AHRI's Quarterly Australian Work Outlook report

AHRI's *Quarterly Australian Work Outlook* – a quarterly report monitoring the state of the Australian labour market – offers a forward view of the work environment facing HR professionals and business leaders.

The June quarter 2026 edition of the Australian HR Institute's *Quarterly Australian Work Outlook* provides an updated view of employer sentiment and workforce trends across Australia. It is important to note that the data in this quarter's survey was collected in April 2026, during the first months of the US-Iran conflict.

The findings indicate that labour market conditions, while somewhat softer than 2025, will remain stable this quarter, with AHRI's *Net Employment Intentions Index* holding at +38, the same as in the March 2026 quarter. Recruitment intentions have edged up slightly to 61 per cent, but remain low by historical standards, while redundancy intentions remain relatively low at 19 per cent. This suggests that the slightly softer labour market conditions of this and last quarters are manifesting in the form of slower recruitment rather than increased job losses.

These findings suggest that employers' responses to the recent escalation in the Middle East is to hold firm and take stock of the emerging situation.

While these results point to continued demand for labour, that strength has moderated compared with late 2025. However, while recruitment intentions remain below those seen in the second half of 2025, redundancy intentions are also subdued despite recent stories about large-scale job losses. This supports the view that employers are

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waiting to see what transpires across the global and local economies.

Additionally, the survey points to employers planning to adopt a range of alternatives to redundancies in response to rising cost and economic pressures over the next 12 months. Many organisations report that they are planning to invest in reskilling or retraining, alongside reorganising teams and redeploying employees into different roles. As AHRI has previously reported, this may be due, in part, to the changing skills and job requirements that are being driven by AI, automation and technology¹.

Other alternative measures cited by employers include reducing the use of contractors and adjusting working hours and patterns. Overall, these approaches suggest that, rather than reducing headcount, many employers are seeking to hold on to their existing workforce to preserve skills and organisational capability.

In a continuation of the pattern observed in recent reports, employee turnover has eased again to 13.5 per cent from 14.2 per cent in the March quarter and 15.2 per cent in the December 2025 quarter. This is the lowest level for employee turnover recorded since our first survey in May 2023. Possible explanations for the continued fall in job mobility, which includes voluntary and involuntary turnover, is increased caution among employees in a more uncertain economic environment as well as the easing in net employment intentions. The continued fall in job mobility suggests that labour market churn may be continuing to ease. This is broadly consistent with official data, which shows that employee movement declined between 2023

¹ [Managing the 5Rs report- April 2026 | Australian HR Institute](#)

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and 2025 following a period of elevated job mobility in the aftermath of the pandemic².

Pay increase expectations for the year ahead remain moderate at 3.1 per cent, down slightly from 3.3 per cent in the previous quarter. Any fears that the recent rises in inflation will trigger compensatory wage increases and add to the rising cost pressures that are affecting employers do not seem to be materialising yet. As a result, many employees will experience a further deterioration in real earnings, which could represent an employee engagement challenge for employers and more broadly, consumer spending. In this context, clear communication around pay decisions and organisational constraints will be important in maintaining trust and engagement, alongside a broader focus on non-monetary rewards.

There is also an emerging shift in terms of wage growth comparisons in the public and private sectors. The average rise in earnings, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the 12 months to March 2026, is faster in the public sector (3.3 per cent) than the private sector (3.2 per cent) – continuing the recent trend – and reflecting both the pattern of employment growth³ and wage growth expectations previously predicted in the Work Outlook. However, according to the March and June 2026 quarters' Work Outlook data, this pattern may be reversing, with wage expectations in the year to April 2027 higher in the private sector (3.3 per cent) than in the public sector (2.4 per cent).

This quarter's Focus section examines the management of psychosocial hazards in the workplace, which has become

² [Job mobility, February 2025 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

³ [Wage Price Index, Australia, December 2025 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

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an increasingly critical issue for employers in recent years. While the proportion of organisations reporting complaints or claims related to psychosocial hazards has eased significantly compared with 2024, they remain a significant concern for many organisations.

Job demands (23 per cent) remain the most commonly cited cause of claims and complaints in organisations, highlighting the persistence of workload pressures across organisations. As highlighted in AHRI's previous research on managing psychosocial risks, these risks are closely linked to the core aspects of job design and line management capability⁴.

Other commonly cited factors include conflict or poor workplace relationships (22 per cent), lack of role clarity (19 per cent) and poor support (17 per cent). Taken together, what binds these four issues together is that they are highly dependent on the effectiveness of people management.

Perhaps reflecting the improvements cited above, employers seem fairly positive about the ability of managers to identify and manage psychosocial risks. This is important given the emerging evidence suggesting that employees' willingness to speak up about workload or interpersonal issues can shape how these risks are experienced in practice, reinforcing the importance of effective line management capability⁵.

However, most organisations report being only "somewhat prepared" to manage psychosocial hazards, highlighting continuing gaps in organisational capability. In addition, the findings suggest that while psychosocial risk is now

4 [Managing and Minimising Psychosocial Risks in Australian Workplaces | Australian HR Institute](#)

5 [The Critical Role of Psychological Risk and Safety in Eliciting Worker Well-Being. Loudoun, Doshi, Townsend, Cafferkey & Robertson, 2025](#)

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firmly on the agenda for many organisations, organisational efforts remain more concentrated on compliance, reporting and monitoring outcomes than on addressing the underlying drivers of psychosocial harm. These include job design, leadership and management capability, workload management and organisational change.

Collectively, the data reinforces the case for continued investment in line management capability. In partnership with HR practitioners, effective managers will play a critical role in maintaining employee engagement, motivation and workplace productivity over the period ahead. This will be particularly important as organisations navigate significant challenges, including pressure on real wages, organisational restructuring and the adoption of AI.

Encouragingly, the survey findings suggest that many organisations look set to respond to economic and cost pressures in a sophisticated and flexible way over the next 12 months. Rather than responding primarily through redundancies, many employers are considering approaches such as reskilling, redeployment and team reorganisation. This approach is likely to help organisations manage short-term risks relating to employee engagement and psychosocial hazards, such as workload pressures, while also supporting the medium-term goal of preserving critical skills and retaining talented employees.

AHRI welcomes feedback on this report and ideas and suggestions for how the quarterly series might be developed. These should be sent to: research@ahri.com.au

Sarah McCann-Bartlett
CEO, Australian HR Institute

At a glance:

There is significant scope for improvement in addressing some of the underlying organisational drivers of psychosocial risk.

Summary of Key Findings

1



The most commonly cited cause of complaints is job demands (23 per cent), broadly consistent with the level reported in 2024 (24 per cent).

2



Psychosocial risks factors commonly cited include conflict or poor workplace relationships (22 per cent), lack of role clarity (19 per cent) and poor support (17 per cent).

3



Job demands (36 per cent), poor support (32 per cent), remote or isolated work (27 per cent) and bullying (25 per cent) are higher in the public sector compared with the all-survey average.

4



The percentage of organisations reporting remote or isolated work as a cause of complaints or claims has fallen to 13 per cent from 17 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, the share of organisations reporting harassment claims has increased to 15 per cent from 8 per cent.

5



The proportion of organisations that have experienced no claims or complaints related to psychosocial risks has risen from 20 per cent in 2024 to 30 per cent in 2026. However, they remain a significant and widely reported issue.

6



Most organisations report being only “somewhat prepared” to manage psychosocial hazards, highlighting continuing gaps in organisational capability.

7



Psychosocial risk considerations are most commonly incorporated into established people management practices such as flexible working (38 per cent), performance management (37 per cent) and leadership development (36 per cent).

8



By comparison, there is less evidence of integration into job design and workload (30 per cent), organisational change (26 per cent) and the adoption of new technologies such as AI and automation (24 per cent).

KEY INSIGHTS

Summary of Key Findings continued

9



Employment growth remains positive, with AHRI's Net Employment Intentions Index holding at +38 in the first two quarters of the year, although this is below the levels recorded in late 2025.

10



The proportion of organisations recruiting has increased slightly to 61 per cent since the March 2026 quarter, although this remains below the 71 per cent recorded in the December 2025 quarter.

11



Redundancy intentions remain relatively low, with 19 per cent of employers expecting to make redundancies in the June 2026 quarter.

12



In response to cost and economic pressures over the next 12 months, many organisations are considering alternatives to redundancy, including reskilling employees (39 per cent), reorganising teams (32 per cent) and redeploying staff internally (31 per cent).

13



Employee turnover in the 12 months to March 2026 has fallen to 13.5 per cent, down from 14.2 per cent in the March quarter and 15.2 per cent in the December quarter.

14



Recruitment difficulties have increased slightly with 29 per cent of employers reporting challenges, up from 25 per cent in the March 2026 quarter. However, incidence of recruitment difficulties remains low by historical standards.

15



Employers' pay increase expectations remain relatively stable at 3.1 per cent, down from 3.3 per cent in the March quarter.

2. Focus: Psychosocial hazards

This quarter's Focus section examines psychosocial hazards, which are aspects of work that have the potential to cause psychological harm. Their significance has increased in recent years, driven by legislation clarifying employer responsibilities. These risks, which arise from the design of work, workload pressures and management practices, are now widely recognised as core workplace hazards, reflecting their impact not only on employee wellbeing but also on productivity, safety and organisational performance.

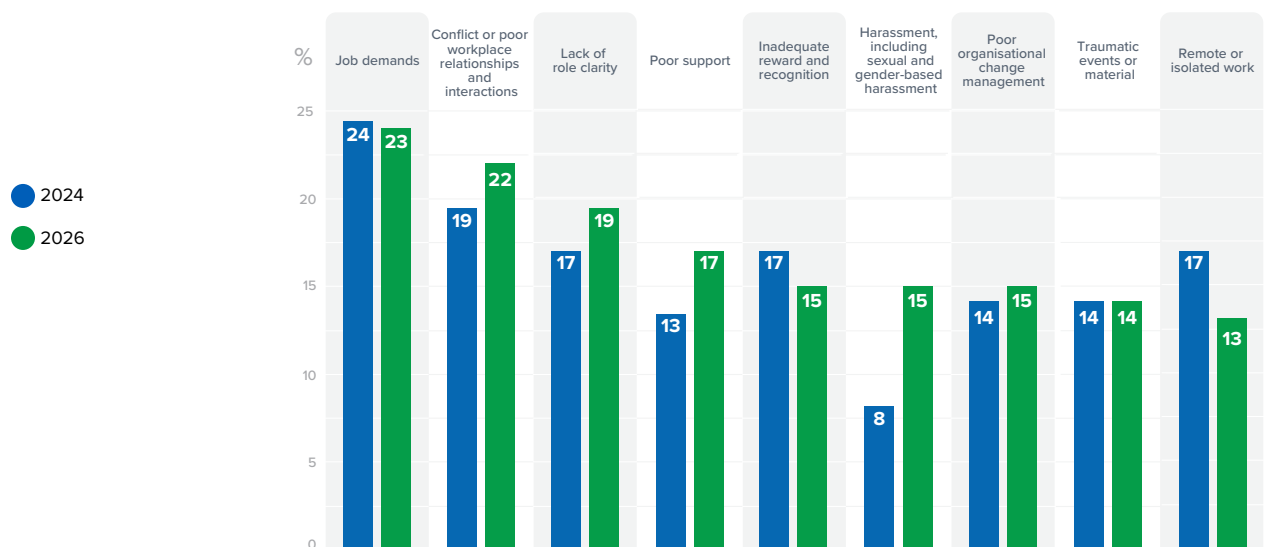
The survey findings show clear evidence that psychosocial risks remain wide-ranging in Australian workplaces, although the proportion of organisations that say they have not experienced any claims or complaints related to psychosocial hazards during the last 12 months has increased from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. However, there is some variation across sectors. The proportion of public-sector employers with no recent history of claims or complaints is much lower (16 per cent) than in the private sector (32 per cent).

As in 2024, the most common cause of complaints or claims regarding psychosocial hazards in organisations over the last two financial years was job demands (23 per cent). Other commonly cited factors include conflict or poor workplace relationships (rising to 22 per cent from 19 per cent), lack of role clarity (19 per cent), and poor support (17

per cent). Interestingly, the percentage of organisations reporting remote or isolated work as a cause of complaints or claims has fallen to 13 per cent from 17 per cent in 2024, which may be another indication that flexible and hybrid working arrangements have stabilised and are being managed well in Australian workplaces.

Closer analysis of the data shows that job demands (36 per cent), poor support (32 per cent) remote or isolated work (27 per cent) and bullying (25 per cent) are much higher in the public sector compared with the all-survey average.

Figure 1: Areas where complaints or claims related to psychosocial hazards have been made during the last two financial years

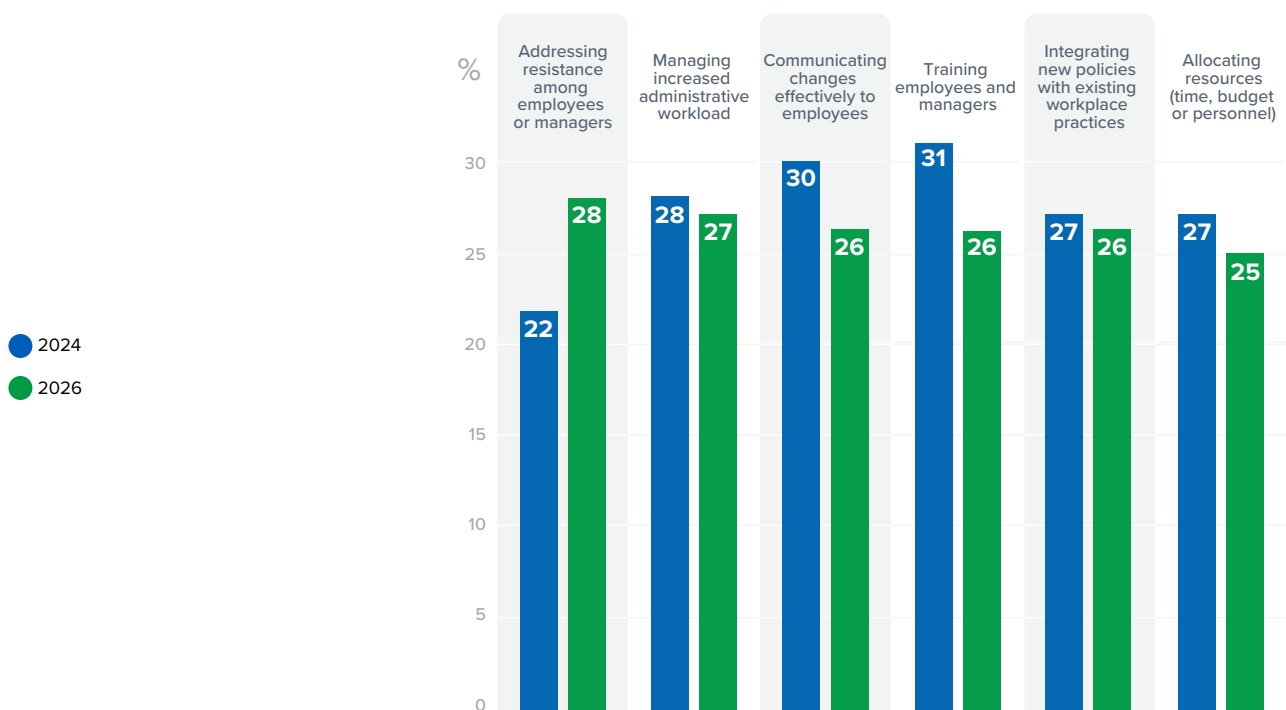


Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

Survey respondents were also asked about the challenges they face in managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace. The most common challenge faced by organisations is addressing resistance among employees or managers (28 per cent), which has risen by six percentage points since 2024 (Figure 2).

Survey respondents also report that managing the increased administrative load (27 per cent), communicating changes effectively to employees, training employees and managers and integrating new policies with existing workplace practices (each 26 per cent) are also key challenges in their organisations.

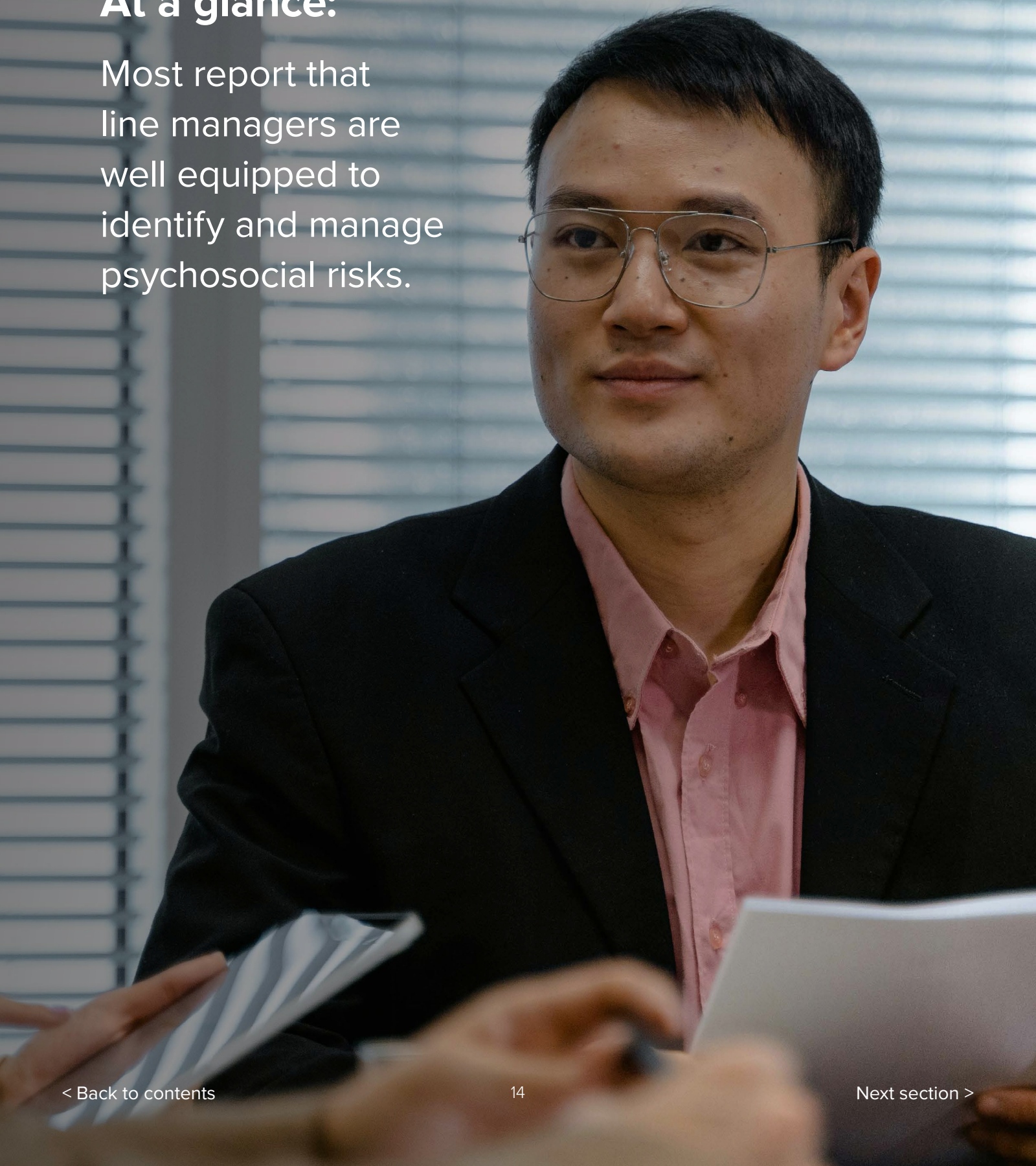
Figure 2: Top six challenges organisations face in addressing psychosocial hazards



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

At a glance:

Most report that line managers are well equipped to identify and manage psychosocial risks.

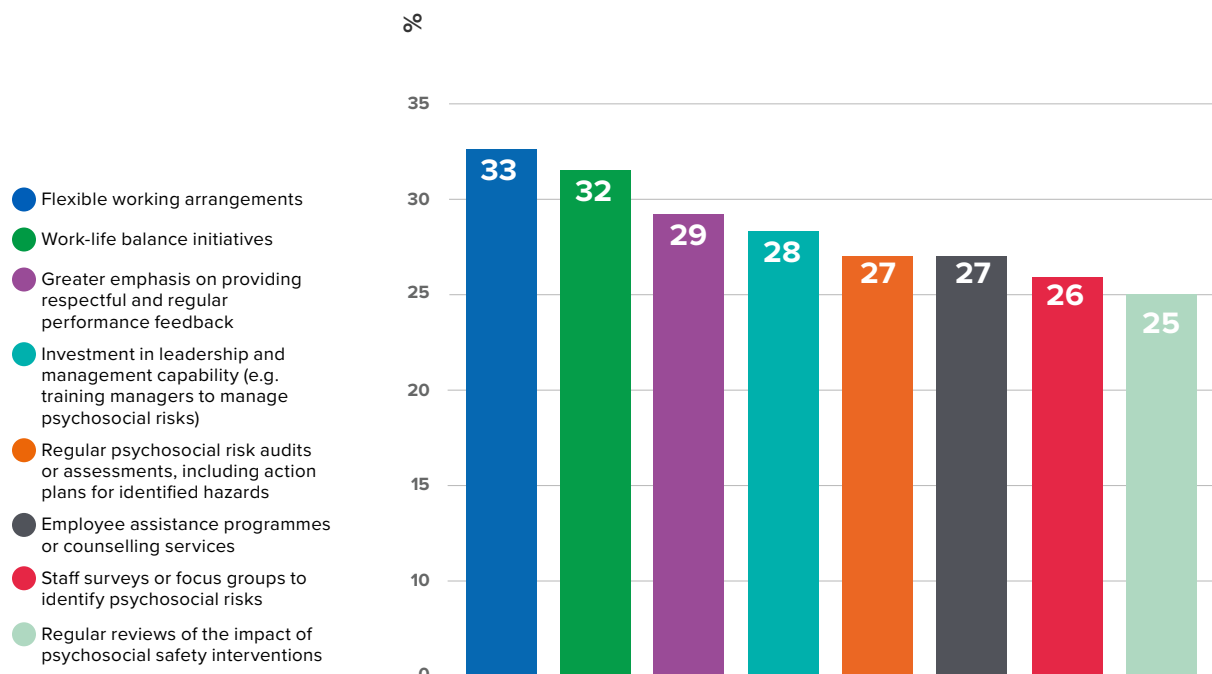


FOCUS

Australian employers are using a wide range of initiatives to help manage psychosocial risks in the workplace. The three most commonly cited interventions include flexible working arrangements (33 per cent), work-life balance initiatives (32 per cent) and a greater emphasis on providing respectful and more regular feedback (29 per cent).

However, the findings also point to significant scope for improvement in addressing some of the underlying organisational drivers of psychosocial risk identified in Figure 1. For example, just over a quarter (28 per cent) of employers report investing in leadership and management training, while only 21 per cent report making changes to work organisation or job design to improve psychosocial safety. This suggests that organisational efforts remain more concentrated on employee support and flexibility initiatives than on broader organisational and management practices that may contribute to psychosocial harm.

Figure 3: Interventions and policies used to improve psychosocial safety at work



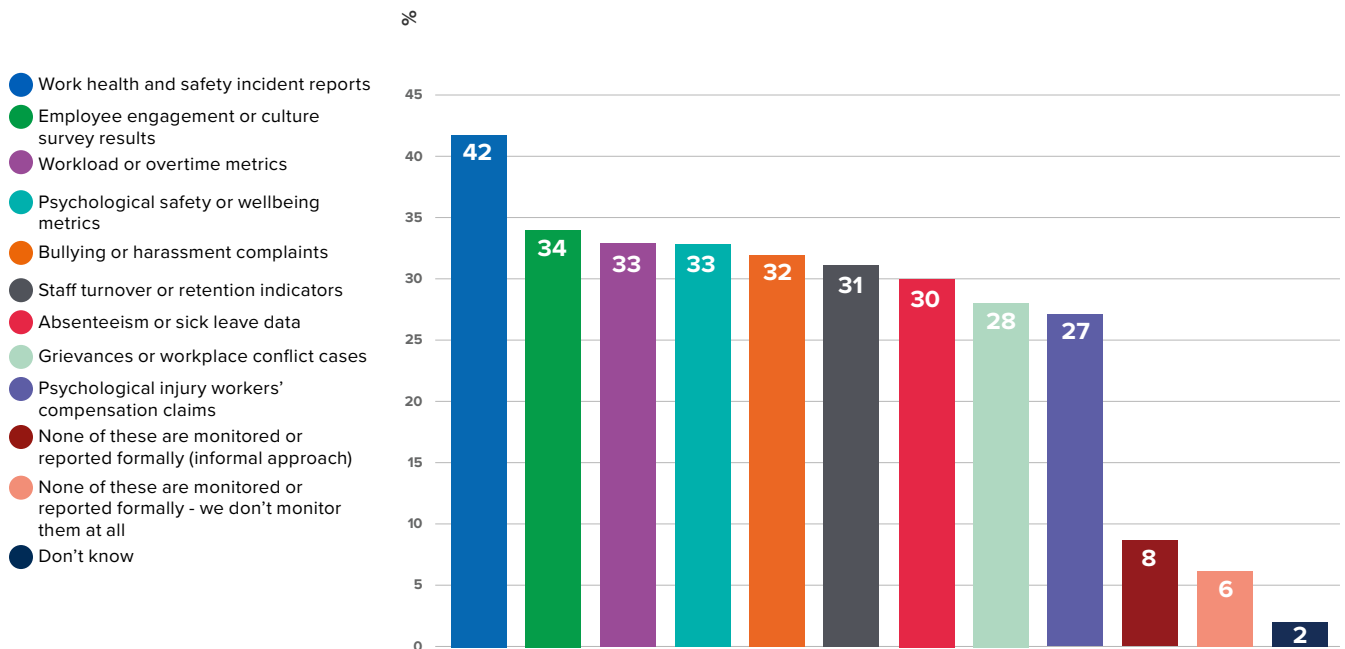
Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

Survey respondents were also asked which psychosocial risk indicators are monitored or reported to senior leadership or the board (Figure 4). Work health and safety incident reports are the most commonly monitored or reported (42 per cent), followed by employee engagement or culture survey results (34 per cent), workload or overtime metrics (33 per cent) and psychological safety or wellbeing metrics (33 per cent).

In a similar vein, these measures primarily capture outcomes or broad sentiment and may not fully address the more significant underlying drivers such as workload pressures, job design and management capability.

Measures more directly related to psychosocial risk, such as psychological injury workers' compensation claims (27 per cent) and grievances or workplace conflict cases (28 per cent), are monitored less frequently.

Figure 4: Psychosocial risk indicators monitored and reported to senior leadership or the board



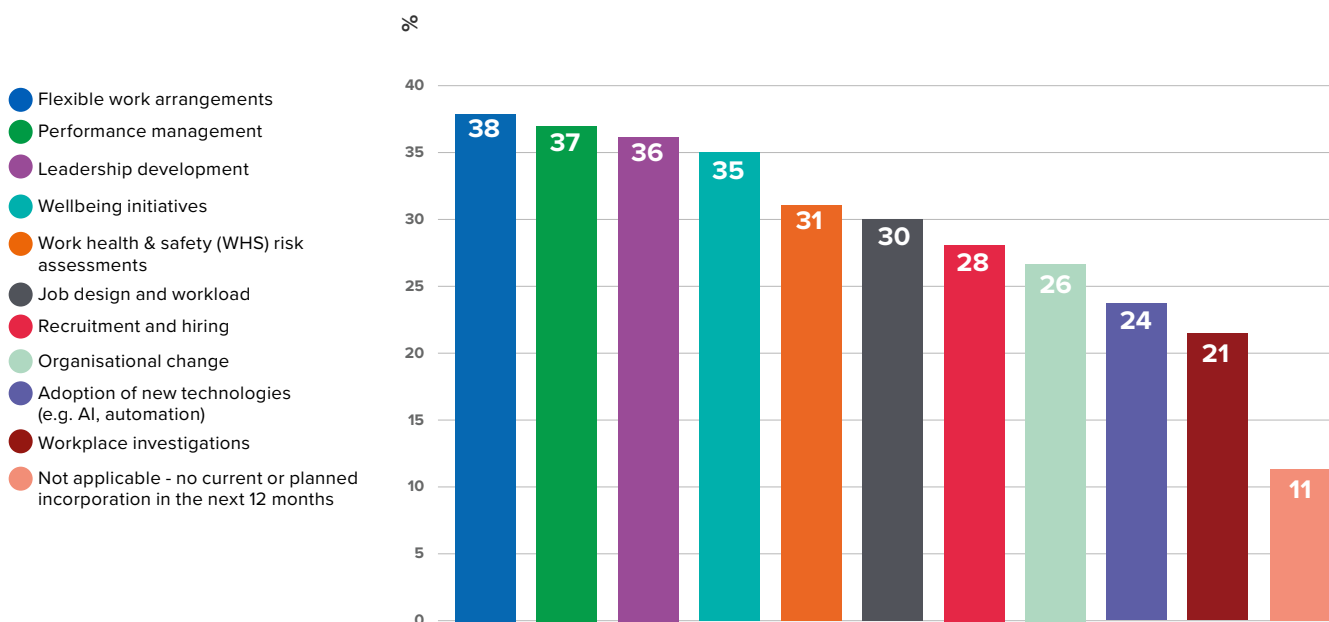
Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

While many organisations report incorporating psychosocial risk considerations into workplace practices there remains significant scope to strengthen and broaden these efforts across Australian workplaces. The survey data reveals that psychosocial risk considerations are most commonly incorporated into established people management practices such as flexible working (38 per cent), performance management (37 per cent) and leadership development (36 per cent). However, there is

FOCUS

less evidence of integration into job design and workload (30 per cent), organisational change (26 per cent) and the adoption of new technologies such as AI and automation (24 per cent). Taken together, the findings suggest that organisational efforts to manage psychosocial risks remain uneven across different areas of practice.

Figure 5: Integration of psychosocial risk considerations into workplace practices



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

Respondents were also asked how well-equipped line managers are to identify and manage psychosocial hazards and whether employees are consulted or involved in these processes. The findings suggest a high level of confidence overall, with most reporting that line managers are well-equipped to identify (93 per cent) and manage (90 per cent) psychosocial risks, while a strong majority indicate that employees are consulted or involved in identifying (85 per cent) and managing (80 per cent) these hazards.

At a glance:

The decline in employee turnover suggests a shift towards less job mobility.

3. Employment Outlook for the Upcoming Quarter

The AHRI quarterly survey asks employers how they expect staffing levels to change in the June quarter.

While this should not be interpreted as a forecast, it provides a timely indication of employer sentiment and projected demand for labour.

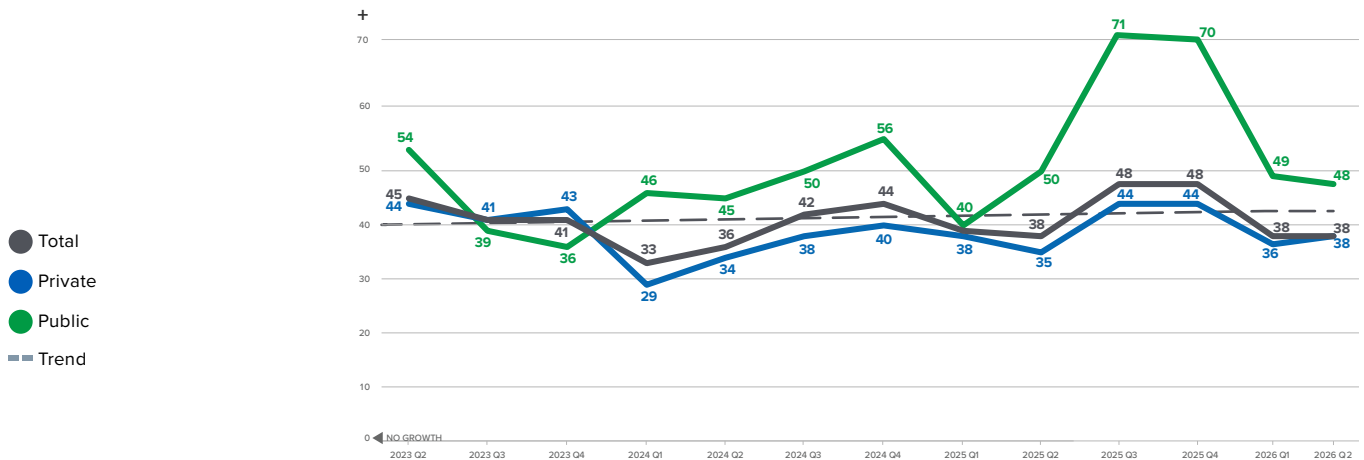
The June quarter 2026 survey points to a moderation in the recent pattern of strong employment growth. AHRI's *Net Employment Intentions Index* stands at +38, unchanged from the March 2026 quarter but below the +48 recorded in both the September and December 2025 quarters (Figure 6). This suggests that, while employment is continuing to expand, the pace of growth has eased compared with late 2025.

Employment intentions remain positive across both the private (+38) and public (+48) sectors. Consistent with recent trends, intentions are strongest in the health sector (+45) and weakest, though still positive, in the distribution sector (+31). Intentions are also strongest among larger organisations with 200 or more employees (+45), and weakest among small organisations of 20 employees or less (+30).

Taken together, these findings suggest that employer demand for labour remains resilient but is becoming more measured, reflecting a labour market that remains tight but is showing some signs of cooling.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 6: *AHRI Net Employment Intentions Index*
June quarter 2026



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

The *AHRI Net Employment Intentions Index* is calculated by taking the percentage of employers intending to increase staffing levels and subtracting the percentage of employers intending to decrease staffing levels:

- An index of +100 would mean that all organisations intend to increase staffing levels
- An index of -100 would mean that all organisations intend to decrease staffing levels
- A 0 index could mean that either all organisations expect no change in employment levels, or that 50% of employers intend to increase staffing levels while the other 50% intend to decrease staffing levels.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Recruitment intentions

June quarter 2026

AHRI asked respondents to share their recruitment intentions for the upcoming quarter.

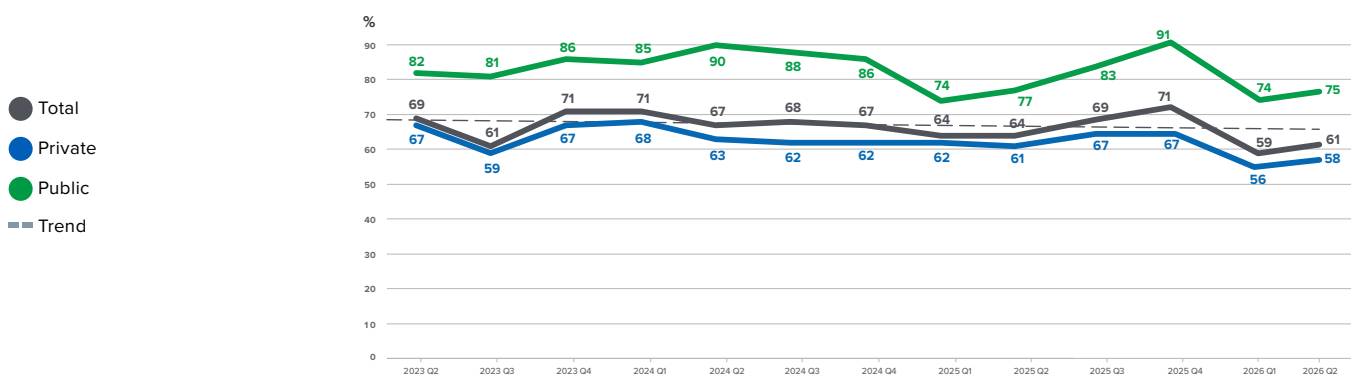
Recruitment intentions have increased slightly in the June 2026 quarter, with 61 per cent of organisations planning to hire staff, up from 59 per cent in March but below the 71 per cent recorded in December 2025 (Figure 7).

Recruitment intentions remain higher in the public sector (75 per cent) than in the private sector (58 per cent), and private-sector intentions remain relatively subdued compared with recent quarters.

This indicates that, while hiring activity has stabilised in the short term, it is down from recent highs.

Figure 7:

Recruitment intentions June quarter 2026



Base:

June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Redundancy intentions

June quarter 2026

Around one in five (19 per cent) of employers expect to make workers redundant in the June 2026 quarter.

Redundancy intentions remain relatively low. Around one in five (19 per cent) employers expect to make workers redundant in the June quarter, unchanged from the previous quarter and among the lowest levels recorded since the survey began in May 2023 (Figure 8). This is notable given the uncertain economic environment and suggests that employers are not rushing to make workforce reductions.

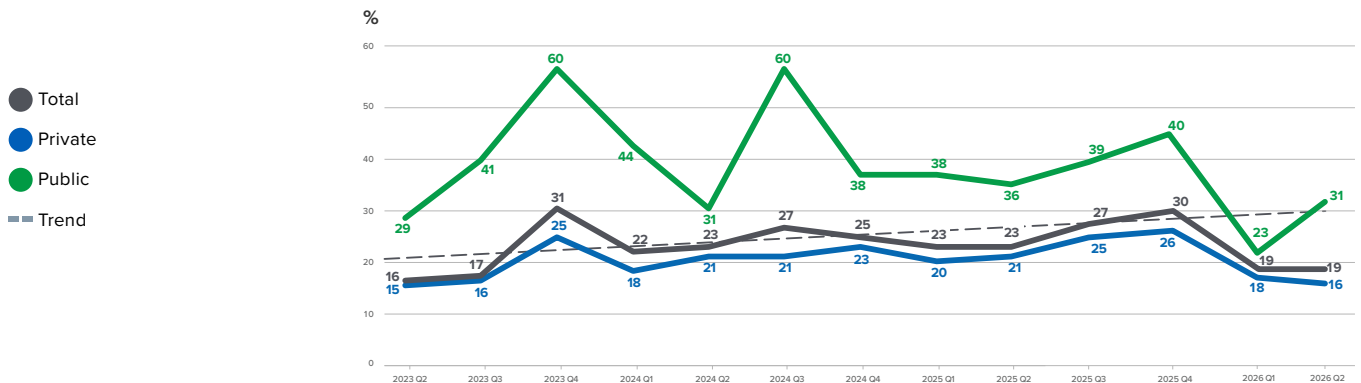
As in previous reports, redundancy intentions remain higher in the public sector than in the private sector. Redundancy intentions continue to be highest in health and education (28 per cent) and lowest in production (8 per cent), although levels remain relatively contained across most industries.

Employers expecting to make redundancies in the June 2026 quarter plan to cut on average 5 per cent of their workforce. Among those organisations that plan to carry out redundancies, employment appears set to fall most sharply in the construction industry (11 per cent of the workforce), and planned reductions are higher in the private sector (6.5 per cent) than in the public sector (3 per cent of the workforce).

Taken together, the combination of stable recruitment intentions and contained redundancy activity points to a labour market in which employers are adjusting cautiously to changing economic conditions.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 8: Redundancy intentions, June quarter 2026



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

Redundancy alternatives

The relatively low redundancy intentions are consistent with the extent to which employers are considering or planning to adopt alternative measures (Figure 9). This reflects a focus on preserving workforce capability. Such an approach might also offset the risk of increasing workload pressures, commonly identified as a leading psychosocial risk.

A significant proportion of employers report investing in reskilling or retraining (39 per cent), together with reorganising teams or job roles (32 per cent) and redeploying employees into different roles (31 per cent). These findings suggest that many organisations are seeking to adapt their existing workforce rather than reduce headcount.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

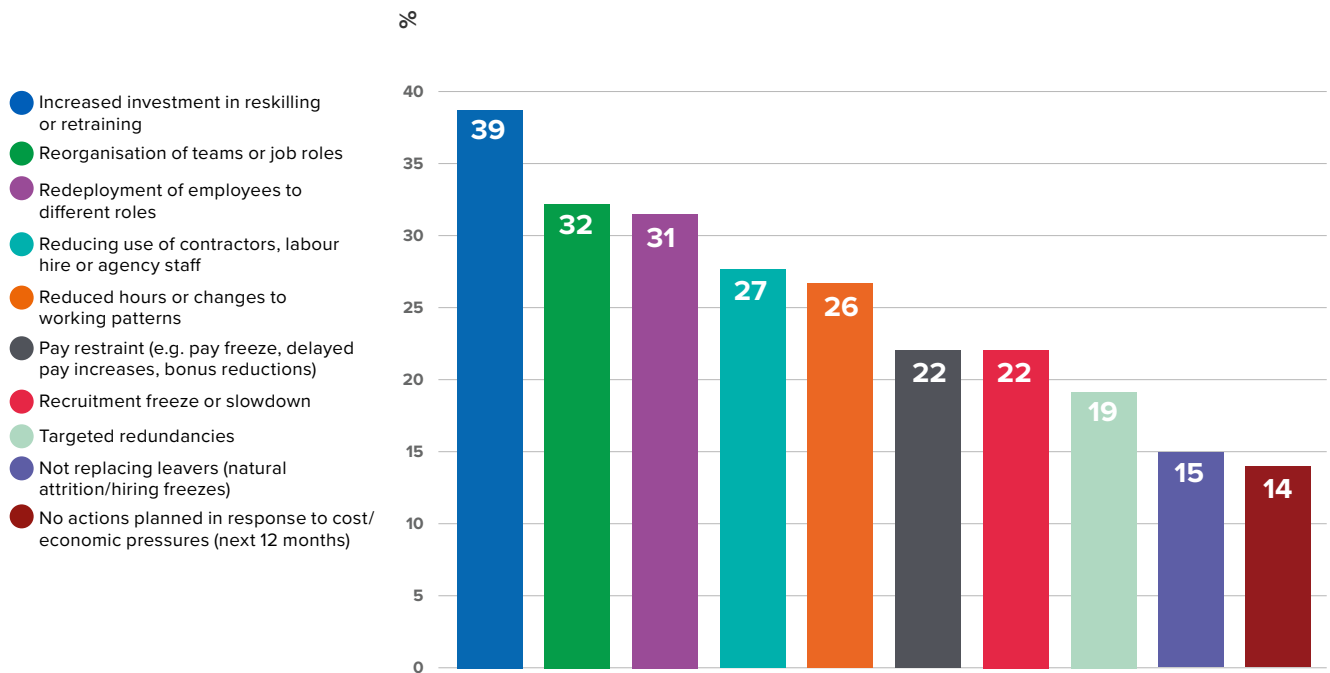
Alongside these approaches, employers are also adopting a range of cost-containment measures. Over a quarter are reducing the use of contractors, labour hire or agency staff (27 per cent) or adjusting working hours and patterns (26 per cent). Around one in five are implementing pay restraint measures (22 per cent) or introducing recruitment freezes or slowdowns (22 per cent), indicating that hiring activity is being carefully managed.

By comparison, targeted redundancies remain less prevalent, with 19 per cent of organisations reporting targeted redundancies and 15 per cent not replacing leavers.

Taken together, these findings suggest that employers are managing cost pressures primarily through internal workforce adjustments rather than job cuts. This may help to explain why redundancy activity remains relatively subdued, while employee turnover has eased and recruitment pressures remain contained despite ongoing demand for labour.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 9: Measures organisations are considering or planning in response to cost and economic pressures over the next 12 months



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Recruitment difficulties

June quarter 2026

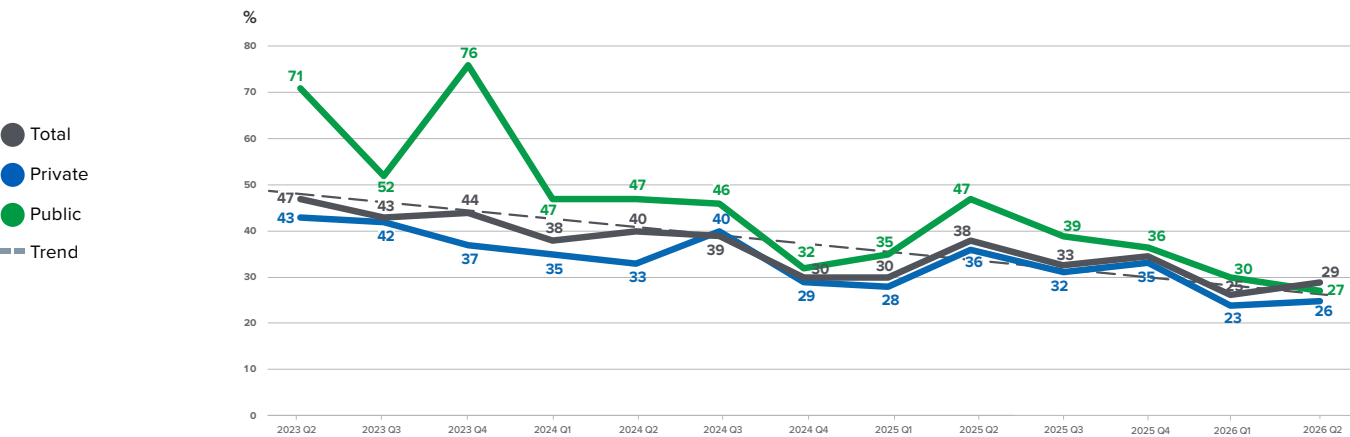
The proportion of employers stating recruitment difficulties has increased slightly compared with the previous report.

The proportion of employers reporting recruitment difficulties has increased slightly in the June 2026 quarter, in line with a labour market that remains relatively tight. Around three in 10 (29 per cent) recruiting employers report experiencing difficulties, up from 25 per cent in March (Figure 10), but still below the longer-term trend in this survey.

While this represents a modest increase, recruitment difficulties remain low compared with previous survey results. The recent easing in employee turnover may have weakened the demand for labour somewhat, alongside the easing in recruitment intentions, with employee caution also holding voluntary turnover back.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 10: Share of recruiting organisations currently experiencing recruitment difficulties



Base: June quarter 2026, all recruiting employers n=555
(private sector n=439; public sector n=100; not-for-profit n=16)

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Employee turnover

June quarter 2026

The average employee turnover was 13.5 per cent.

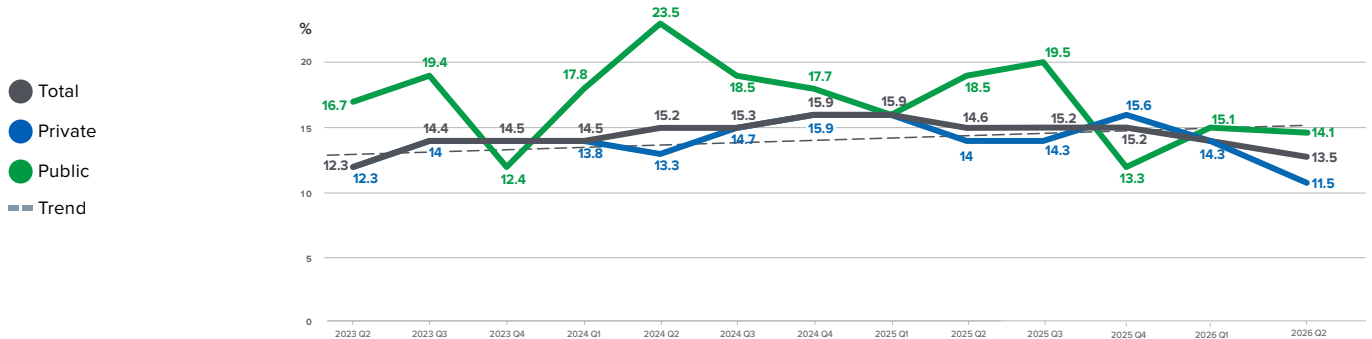
The average employee turnover rate for the 12 months to March 2026 stands at 13.5 per cent, down marginally from 14.2 per cent in the previous quarter and significantly from the 15.2 per cent in the December 2025 quarter (Figure 11). This is the lowest level for employee turnover recorded since the first AHRI Quarterly Australian Work Outlook report was released in May 2023.

While our survey's movements in turnover have typically been modest from quarter to quarter, this decline over this period is significant in relative terms and suggests a shift towards less job mobility. This may reflect a degree of economic uncertainty, prompting increased caution among employees.

Turnover varies by sector, with rates marginally higher in the private sector (14.1 per cent) than in the public sector (11.5 per cent), reversing the pattern observed in previous quarters.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 11: Annual employee turnover to March 2026



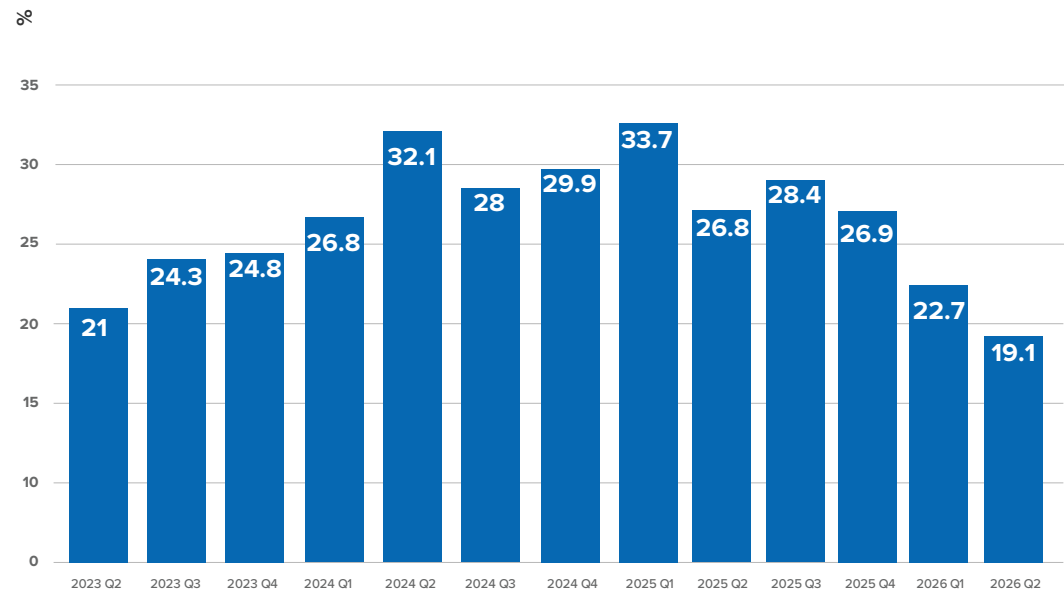
Base: June quarter 2026, all employers who are aware of their organisation's turnover rate n=584 (private sector n=468; public sector n=99; not-for-profit n=17)

Just under one in five (19 per cent) of organisations reported that total annual average employee turnover for the 12 months to the end of March 2026 was 20 per cent and higher. This is the lowest level recorded since the launch of the AHRI Australian Work Outlook series in May 2023 (Figure 12).

Almost half of organisations (44 per cent) reported that total annual average employee turnover for the 12-month period was less than 10 per cent. This represents one of the highest levels recorded since the *Quarterly Australian Work Outlook* survey began, reinforcing the broader easing in turnover observed in recent quarters.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Figure 12: Share of organisations reporting annual employee turnover of 20 per cent and higher



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers who are aware of their organisation's turnover rate n=584 (private sector n=468; public sector n=99; not-for-profit n=17)

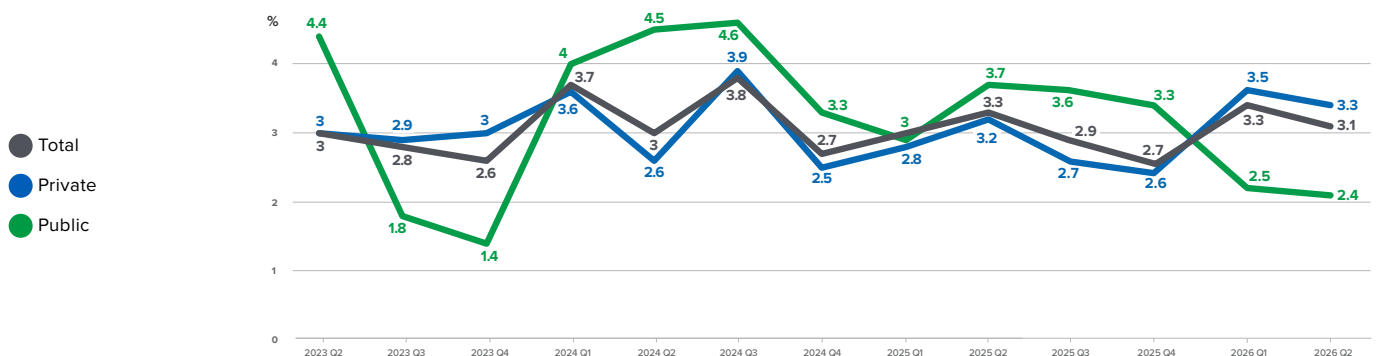
4. Wages Outlook for the 12 months to April 2027

Pay increase expectations are broadly unchanged at +3.1 per cent.

Pay increase expectations for the 12 months to April 2026 are +3.1 per cent, broadly unchanged from the previous quarter (Figure 13). This suggests that, despite some easing in labour market conditions, overall wage pressures remain relatively stable.

However, this stability masks a clear divergence between sectors. Employer wage expectations are stronger in the private sector (+3.3 per cent), while public sector expectations have fallen to +2.4 per cent. This represents a continuing shift away from earlier quarters, when public sector wage expectations were typically higher.

Figure 13: Employers' mean total fixed remuneration expectations for the 12 months to April 2027



Base: June quarter 2026, all employers n=606
(private sector n=488; public sector n=101; not-for-profit n=17)

Research Methodology

All data, unless otherwise stated, has been sourced by YouGov Plc.

The total sample size for this survey was 606 senior business decision makers, including HR, from organisations with two or more employees. Fieldwork was undertaken online between 5 April and 11 April 2026. The figures have been weighted by employee size, state and industry to reflect the latest ABS Industry Employment estimates.

Respondent profile

Breakdown of the sample, by number of employees per organisation

Employer size band	2-19	20-199	200+	Total
Count	164	175	267	606

Breakdown of the sample, by sector

Sector	Private	Public	Not-for-profit	Total
Count	488	101	17	606

In addition, some sub-sectors, such as health and education, have been grouped together to provide a more granular breakdown by industry.

AHRI welcomes feedback on this report and invites ideas and suggestions to inform the future development of the quarterly series. Please contact: research@ahri.com.au

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