

A smiling woman and man walking outdoors, holding folders. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored vest over a white shirt, and the man is on the right, wearing a dark green shirt over a white t-shirt. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a blurred city street with tall buildings.

Signature Insights

Workplace Happiness Index 2025

Purpose, job security and the happiness divide – what Australian workers want from their leaders in 2026



About SEEK

A leader in online employment marketplaces, SEEK has been helping people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and helping organisations succeed for more than 25 years.

Founded and headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, SEEK has grown into a multinational technology company with more than 3,300 employees and is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

SEEK's presence spans Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Additionally, SEEK has minority investments in employment marketplaces in China, South Korea and Bangladesh.

In 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 SEEK was recognised as one of Australia's Top Ten Places to Work in Technology in the AFR BOSS Best Places to Work awards.

About this report

The SEEK Workplace Happiness Index provides a comprehensive look at the happiness levels of Australian and New Zealand workers. It delves into key research findings, highlighting the factors that contribute to happiness in and out of the workplace and offering practical tips for improving happiness in employees.

This research was conducted by market research agency Nature on behalf of SEEK, between April and June 2025 via an online survey. Responses were gathered from more than 3,000 individuals currently in the workforce (either employed or looking for work), aged 18 to 64, and living in Australia. To ensure accuracy, the data are weighted to be nationally representative of the labour force for each country, based on age, gender, location, and income.

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Introduction

Happy employees share one thing in common: they find meaning in their work. Last year's Workplace Happiness Index highlighted this connection, and our 2025 findings cement this further. Employees who find purpose in what they do are not only happier, they're also more motivated at work and less likely to leave their jobs. The benefits of investing in employee happiness and connecting them to purpose are undeniable.

This year's report also draws a connection between job satisfaction and engagement. Employees told us they feel happiest when work is interesting, their efforts are recognised, and they feel valued. In an era of advancing AI and other automation tools in the workplace, it's even more important for leaders to ensure employees feel heard and connected to purpose.

Our latest research uncovered that Gen Z in particular is struggling to find meaning in what they do. The least satisfied with purpose of any generation, they are more likely to feel burnt out, unproductive, or unseen compared to other generations. There's clearly an urgent need for leaders to rethink how they engage and support their youngest employees. A dedicated section of this report explores what employers can do.

This report aims to inspire and empower leaders to address happiness shortfalls in their organisations. By providing insights and tools, we hope to enable employers to build a more purposeful and fulfilling workplace for their people.



The state of workplace happiness in 2025

The Workplace Happiness Index asked Australians how happy they are in their jobs and how satisfied they are with different aspects of working life. The results give us a broad view of workplace happiness and its key drivers, again linking happiness at work with purpose, motivation and loyalty.



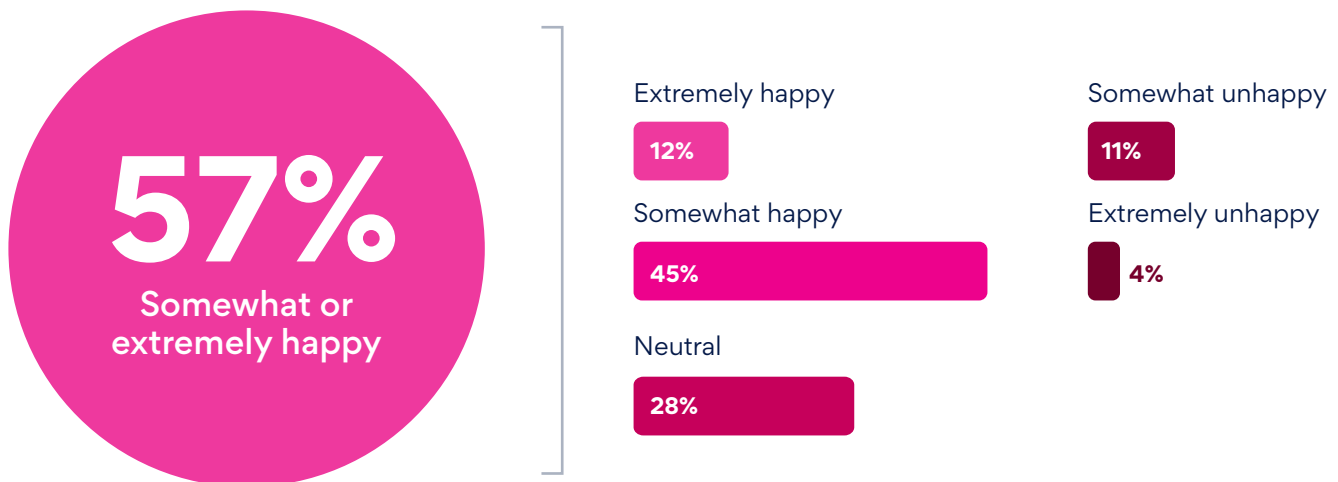
KEY FINDING 1:

Happiness in the Australian workplace is stable with 57% of workers happy

The 2025 survey began by asking Australians the question: How happy are you at work, generally? At 57%, just over half of respondents answered somewhat or extremely happy, while at the other end of the scale, 15% of Australians reported being somewhat or extremely unhappy.

While the results show that most Australians are generally happy, there's still a significant proportion of people who actively dislike or are neutral about their jobs. With unhappiness tied to low morale, low productivity and high absenteeism, leaders have compelling incentives to address worker happiness.

Overall workplace happiness



“Work is always going to be there, so make more time for yourself and wellbeing.”

- Millennial,
Public sector worker

KEY FINDING 2:

Unhappy workers are twice as likely to consider changing jobs

This year, the percentage of unhappy Australian workers who thought about changing roles sometimes or often rose to 89% (from 83% in 2024). By comparison, only 40% of happy workers said they thought about changing roles. Motivation levels are also much higher in happy workers, with 67% saying they'd go above and beyond at work, compared to only 19% of unhappy workers.

With happy workers more than twice as likely as happy workers to consider switching jobs, there's an urgency for employers to address worker satisfaction if they want to retain staff. And even when unhappy workers stay in their jobs, it's still worth addressing their happiness, since it correlates so strongly with motivation.

Differences in those happy and unhappy at work



KEY FINDING 3:

Purpose is (still) the biggest driver of workplace happiness

In 2025, Australian workers still rank purpose as the top driver of workplace happiness, relevant across all generations and most industries. This is followed by day-to-day role (second), senior leadership (third), company culture (fourth) and low stress levels (fifth).

Salary is ranked 12th most important driver, which correlates with attitudes revealed in SEEK's Money Matters report, where 65% of Australians would choose work-life balance over a higher salary. In fact, work-life balance, team/colleagues and job security all ranked above salary as happiness drivers.

Drivers of happiness at work



*Note: Random Forest Model used to determine drivers of happiness at work.





TAKEAWAYS

- Overall happiness is stable (57%), but more people are actively unhappy (15%).
- Unhappy workers are twice as likely as happy workers to think about switching jobs.
- Purpose is still the biggest driver of happiness at work, followed by day-to-day responsibilities and senior leadership.

“

**Love your work!
Choose a profession you
are passionate about.**

- Baby boomer,
Technology industry worker



Happiness trends

While overall happiness levels are stable, some of the drivers of workplace happiness in Australia have changed, with more of an emphasis on leadership. This year, the survey also asked workers what makes them feel happiest, revealing a workforce that is keen to work hard – and wanting to be recognised for their efforts.



KEY FINDING 4:

Senior leadership and job security are increasingly important

Both senior leadership and job security ranked higher this year as happiness drivers, showing an increased focus on high-level decision-making. In the last 12 months, several high-profile corporate redundancies (for instance, 5,000 jobs cut by the Big 4 banks) may have influenced how Australian workers think about their jobs.

Other external factors such as AI adoption, a challenging jobs market, and a sense of global economic uncertainty may have been top of mind with workers, in turn placing more emphasis on job stability and the actions of senior leaders.

Drivers of happiness at work



*Note: Random Forest Model used to determine drivers of happiness at work.



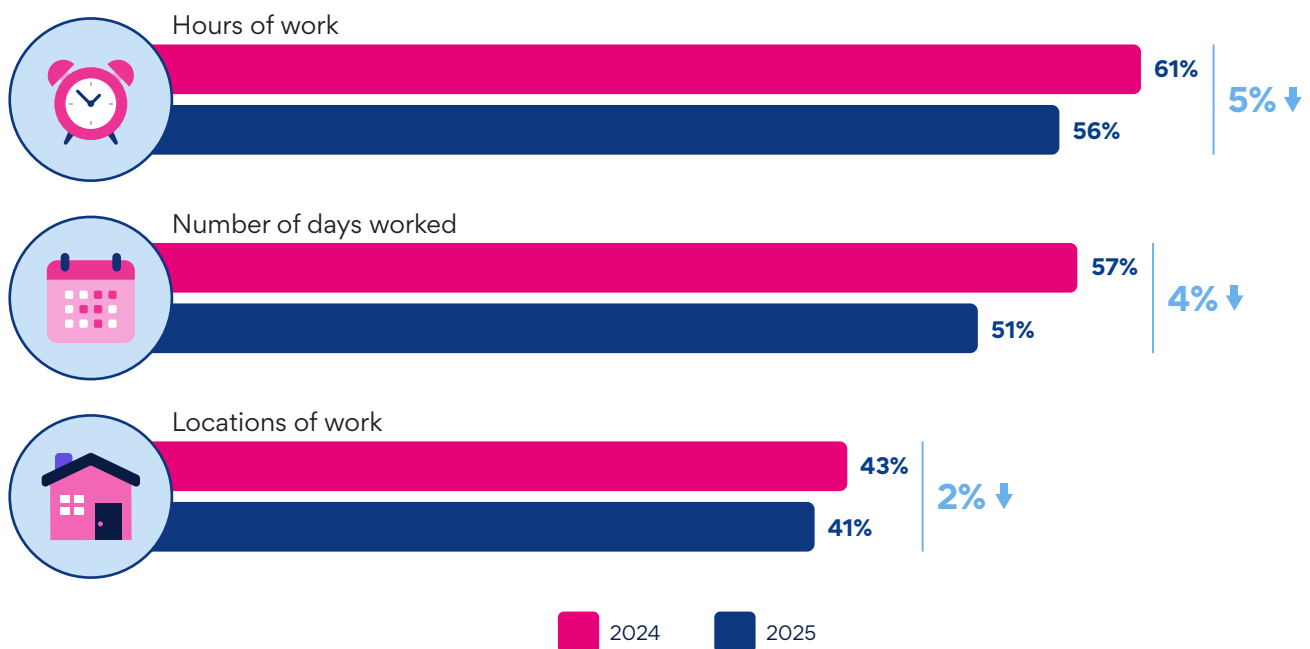
KEY FINDING 5:

Workplace flexibility decreased, but happiness remained stable

This year, fewer Australians were offered flexibility at work. In particular, fewer workers enjoyed flexibility surrounding number of hours of work (56% 2025 vs 61% 2024) and number of days worked (51% 2025 vs 57% 2024). Yet, the majority of workers (57%) still state they're happy with the flexibility they're offered by their employers, with no change from 12 months ago.

With happiness generally remaining stable for work-life balance, stress levels, and location of workplace, it's understandable that a small decrease in work flexibility hasn't affected overall happiness. The smallest drop in happiness was with location of work, which suggests work-from-home flexibility has stayed relatively stable.

Current flexibility offered



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For me, I want to be able to work from home more and have more flexibility.

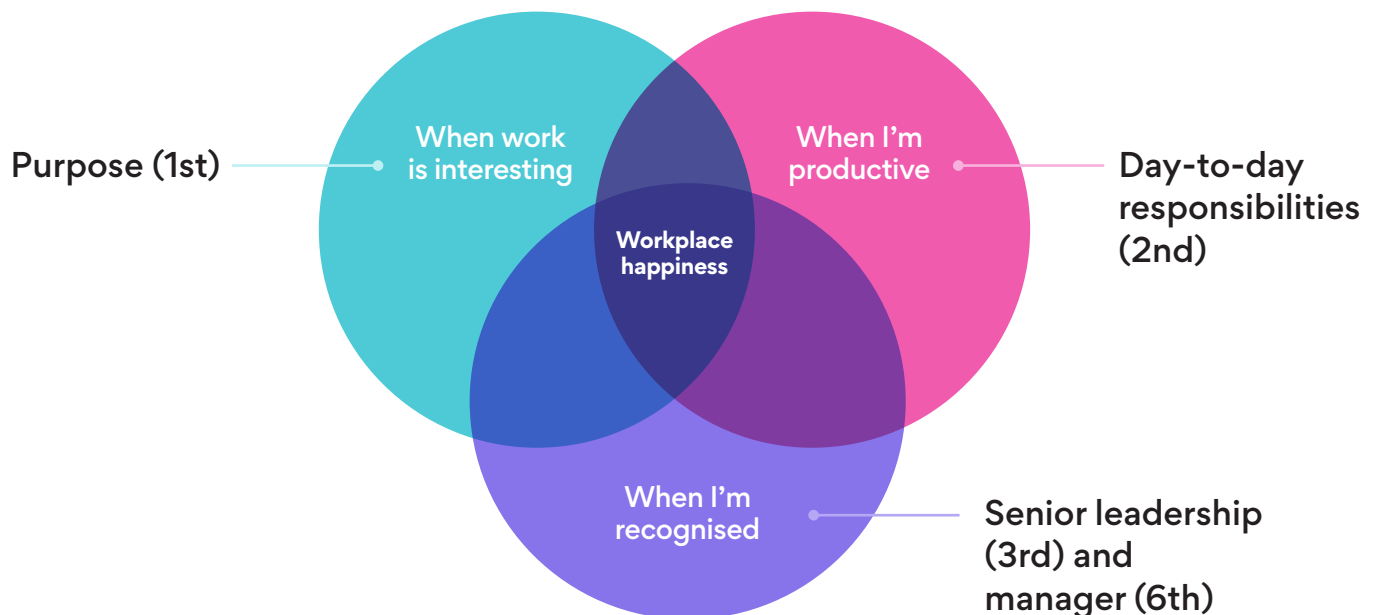
- Millennial,
Technology industry worker

KEY FINDING 6:

Australians are happiest when work is interesting, their effort is recognised, and they're being productive

To gain a deeper understanding about what makes Australians happy at work, we asked them **when** they feel happiest. The top three responses were: when work is interesting (34%), when I'm recognised for my efforts (31%), and when I'm being productive (31%).

These responses link to the top happiness drivers overall – a sense of purpose, day-to-day responsibilities, and senior leadership – and all fall within an employer's control. The responsibility lies with leaders to manage their teams' productivity and recognise employees for the work they do, for the best happiness outcomes.



TAKEAWAYS

- Senior leadership and job security have become more integral to happiness at work.
- Workplace flexibility dropped, but happiness remained stable.
- Australians are generally happiest when they have interesting work, when they're recognised for their efforts, and when they're productive.



“

Don't stress over the little things, it takes time and experience to progress.

- Gen Z,
Public sector worker

The happiness gap

Workplace happiness is not equal among Australian workers. Continuing from last year, we see discrepancies in happiness between generations, industries and states. This year, the divide grew wider. This section looks at the happiness gaps between groups as well as potential reasons, and solutions, for the differences.



KEY FINDING 7:

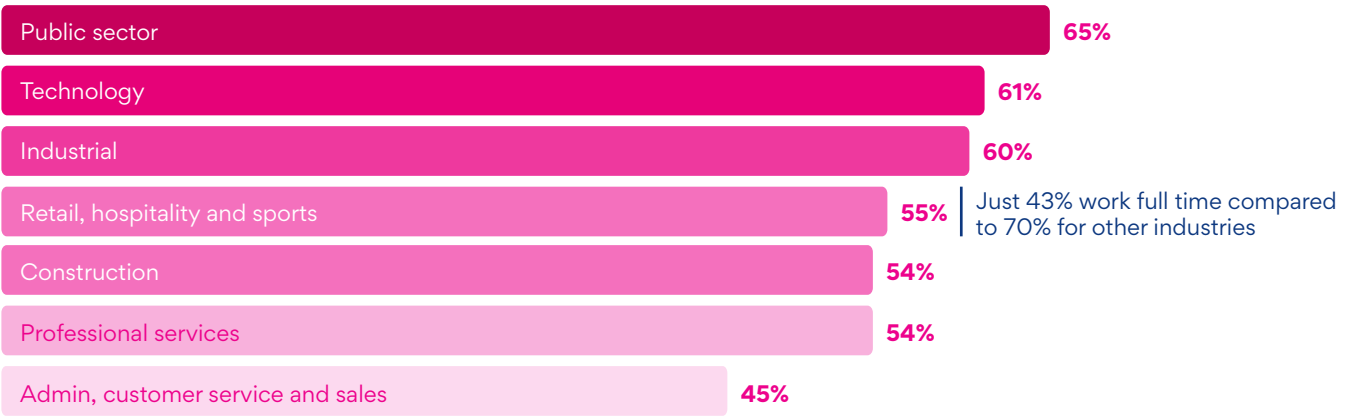
Public sector employees are the happiest at work

Nearly two-thirds of those in the public sector are happy at work (65%), which stems from happiness with their day-to-day responsibilities (65%), purpose (68%) and team/colleagues (65%). They are also most likely to feel like their work makes a positive impact (72%).

Conversely, those in Administrative, Customer Service and Sales roles are much less likely

to feel happy and motivated at work. Less than half of workers in these roles claim to be happy (45%) and motivated to go above and beyond at work (41%). These workers are the least satisfied with their daily responsibilities and stress levels, as well as their managers and senior leaders compared to other industries.

Overall workplace happiness by industry



Industry groupings

Public sector	Technology	Industrial	Retail, hospitality and sports	Construction	Professional services	Admin, customer service and sales
Education & training	Information & communication technology	Manufacturing, transport & logistics	Retail & consumer products	Trades & services	Accounting	Administration & office support
Healthcare & medical	Science & technology	Farming, animals & conservation	Hospitality & tourism	Construction	Banking & financial services	Call centre & customer service
Government & defence		Resources & energy	Sport & recreation	Engineering	Consulting & strategy	Sales & business development
Community services & development				Design & architecture	Advertising, arts & media	Real estate & property
					Legal	
					Marketing & communication	
					Insurance & superannuation	
					Human resources & recruitment	

KEY FINDING 8:

Western Australia has the happiest workers

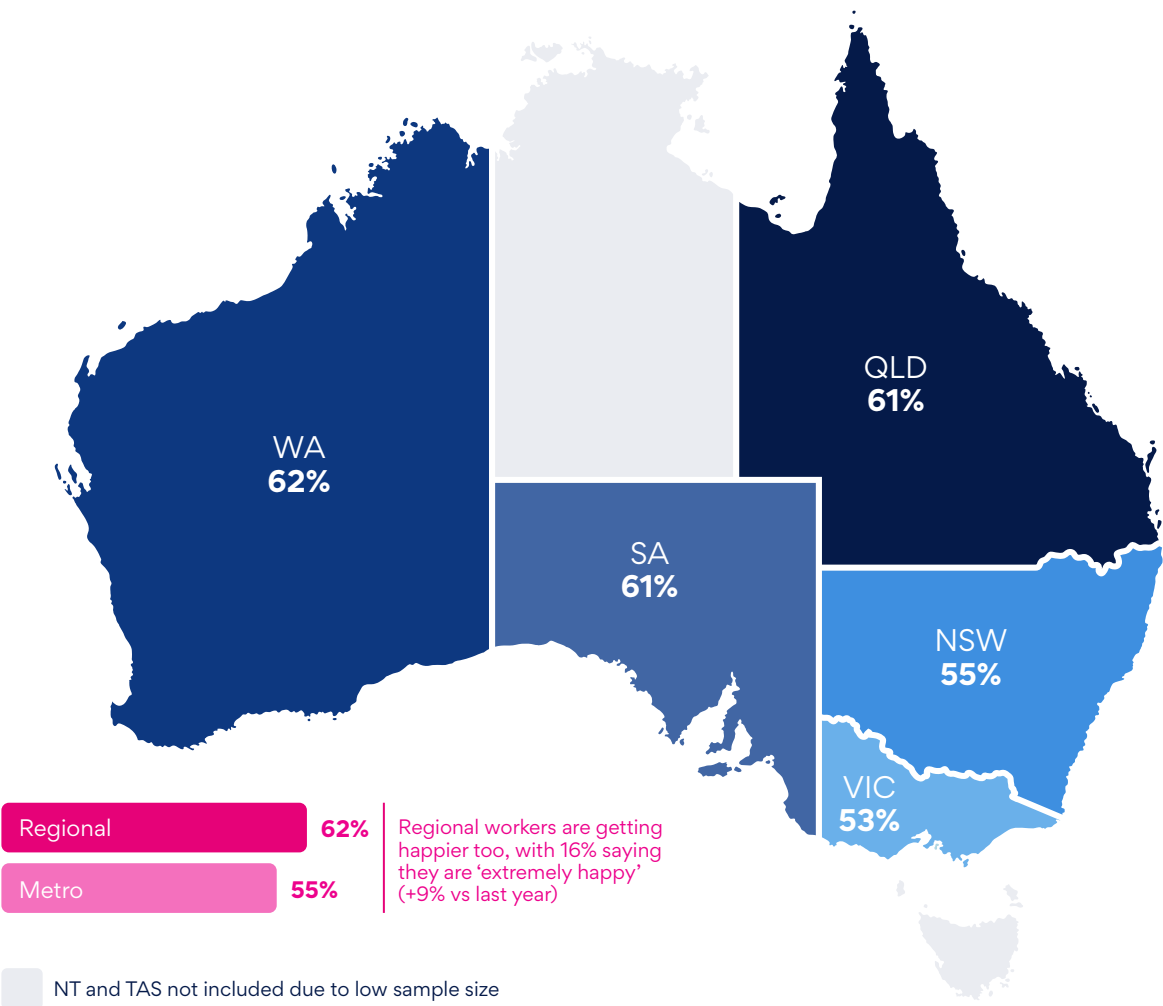
In Western Australia, 62% of workers say they are happy at work. Which is a stark contrast from 2024, where WA was the unhappiest state with only 46% of West Australians saying they felt happy. Nearly two-thirds are happy about their day-to-day responsibilities (64%) and work-life balance (60%), which are amongst their top drivers of happiness.

The unhappiest workers are in Victoria (53%) and New South Wales (55%). This coincides with happiness with job security declining in NSW (52% in 2025 vs 59% in 2024). The concentration of multinational corporations headquartered in Victoria and New South Wales, many with recent

high-profile layoffs, may be skewing happiness levels downwards.

Additionally, more regional workers reported happiness than metro workers, with 62% of people living outside major cities reporting happiness versus 55% of those living in cities. The proportion of “extremely happy” people in regional areas also rose, from 7% to 16% this year, perhaps reflecting people who made a deliberate lifestyle change to rural areas. The Regional Movement Index confirms that more Australians continue to move to regional areas from major cities than in the other direction, presumably seeking better work-life balance.

Overall workplace happiness by state



KEY FINDING 9:

Baby boomers are still the happiest workers – and getting happier

This year, 73% of baby boomers reported feeling happy at work, a 7% increase from last year. This is linked to high satisfaction with purpose (68%) and company values (64%) – their two most important happiness drivers – as well as being happy with their direct manager (66%) and job security (65%). As the most senior demographic and the closest to retirement, it's not surprising to see rising levels of happiness in baby boomers.

The least happy workers are millennials, with 54% reporting happiness at work (down 3% from 2024). Work-life balance and workload demands are more important for this group than for any other generation, but only 58% and 51% respectively are happy with these factors.

Their dissatisfaction may be due to having busy home lives and loved ones to take care of.

Often nicknamed the 'sandwich generation' along with Gen X, many millennials have the responsibilities of taking care of their parents as well as their children, which can be a cause of stress and burnout. Only 42% were happy with senior leadership, which is their third-most important happiness driver.

Baby boomers are the most satisfied with their working lives, with nearly three-quarters (73%) happy at work, compared to approximately half of millennial (54%) and Gen Z (56%) workers.

Happiest and unhappiest generations

Change from 2024



Baby boomer
happiness
up 7%



Millennials
happiness
down 3%



TAKEAWAYS

- Australians working in the public sector are the happiest.
- Workplace happiness is highest in Western Australia and lowest in Victoria.
- Baby boomers are by far the happiest workers in Australia.



“

Know exactly what you want and stick to finding the best role and fit.

- Gen X,
Admin, customer service
and sales industry worker

Modelling happiness

Justine Alter, registered organisational psychologist and co-founder of Transitioning Well, shares insights for leaders looking to improve employee happiness.

Role modelling is important

At Transitioning Well we often say 'you can't be what you can't see' – role modelling things like work-life balance and flexibility are vital for a company's positive culture and, in turn, an individual's happiness at work.

Ask, don't assume

Don't assume you know what your employees need to manage their stress or to feel purpose at work. Ask them. And remember that each individual is going to be different. It's important to spend time with your team to understand their drivers, and then support them with that.

Foster culture

So often we hear people talk about the 'manager lottery'. What we don't want is a system where people have to rely on the luck of the draw to get the support they need. What we want is culture that filters throughout every level of an organisation.

Create a safe space

One of the most important things employers can do is create a psychologically safe environment, where all workers – regardless of career stage – feel safe and supported. This will translate to people being willing to ask for help, admit to mistakes, and be open to vulnerabilities.



A look at migrant workers

According to a 2019 report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), migrant workers hold around 26% of all jobs in the country (56.6% permanent migrants, 29.5% migrants on temporary work visas, 12.9% New Zealand citizens). Given the labour-force share of migrants, it's worth looking at their specific happiness drivers.

While they shared the top three happiness drivers, they place more importance on workload demands, company success, and salary – and they report feeling less happy with almost all elements of work than people who have lived in Australia for more than 10 years.

“

Set boundaries, make sure you have a good work life balance. Maintain a high work ethic and seek a salary that you are worth.

- Millennial,
Technology industry worker

Nurturing Australia's future workforce

Australia's youngest workers are significantly less happy than their more established and experienced colleagues. Aged from 13 to 29 (though our research only includes those aged 18 to 29), they represent more than 18% of Australia's population and make up approximately 27% of the country's workforce. It's estimated that by 2030, this will rise to 33%. Addressing Gen Z happiness is not just important for productivity today, it's essential to a happy and healthy future workforce. This section looks at trends in workplace happiness specific to Gen Z.



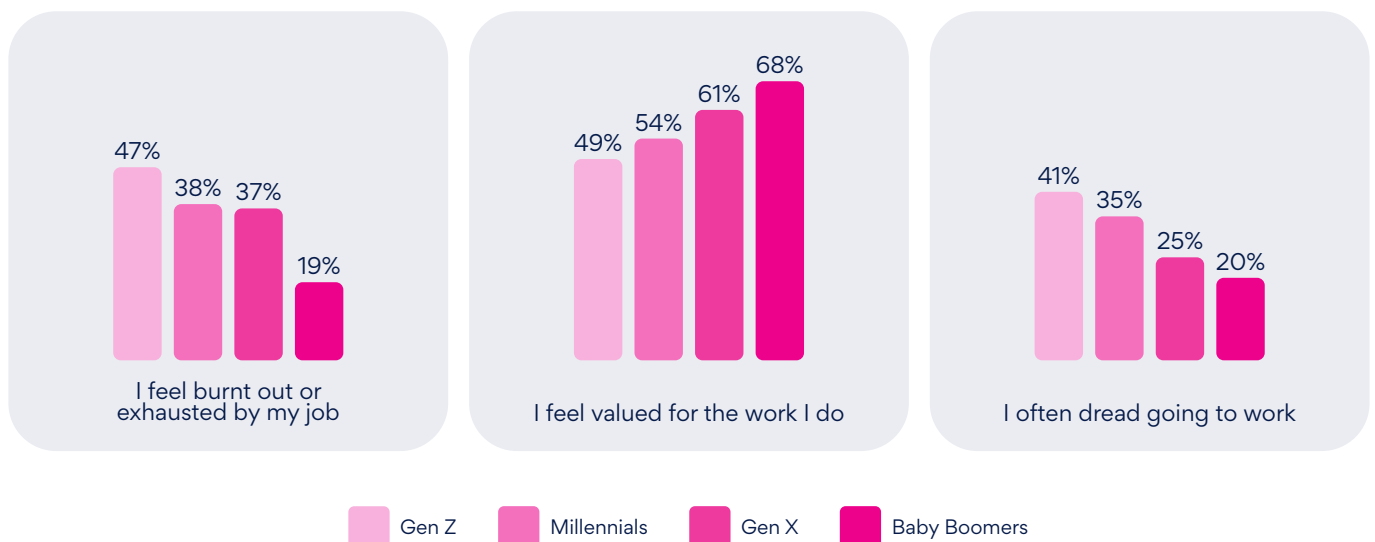
KEY FINDING 10:

Gen Z is the most burnt out and least happy with their purpose

Only 50% of Gen Z workers are happy with their purpose – their most important happiness driver. They are less happy with their purpose than other generations, particularly baby boomers (68%). Less than half (42%) are happy with their stress levels, which this year became their second most important driver. Roughly half (52%) are happy with their manager, their third most important driver.

Gen Z also reported being burnt out (47%), feeling undervalued (49%) and dreading going to work (41%). Interestingly, they're the generation that most values collaboration, with 22% reporting they're happiest when collaborating in a team, and only 17% happiest when they have the freedom to work independently.

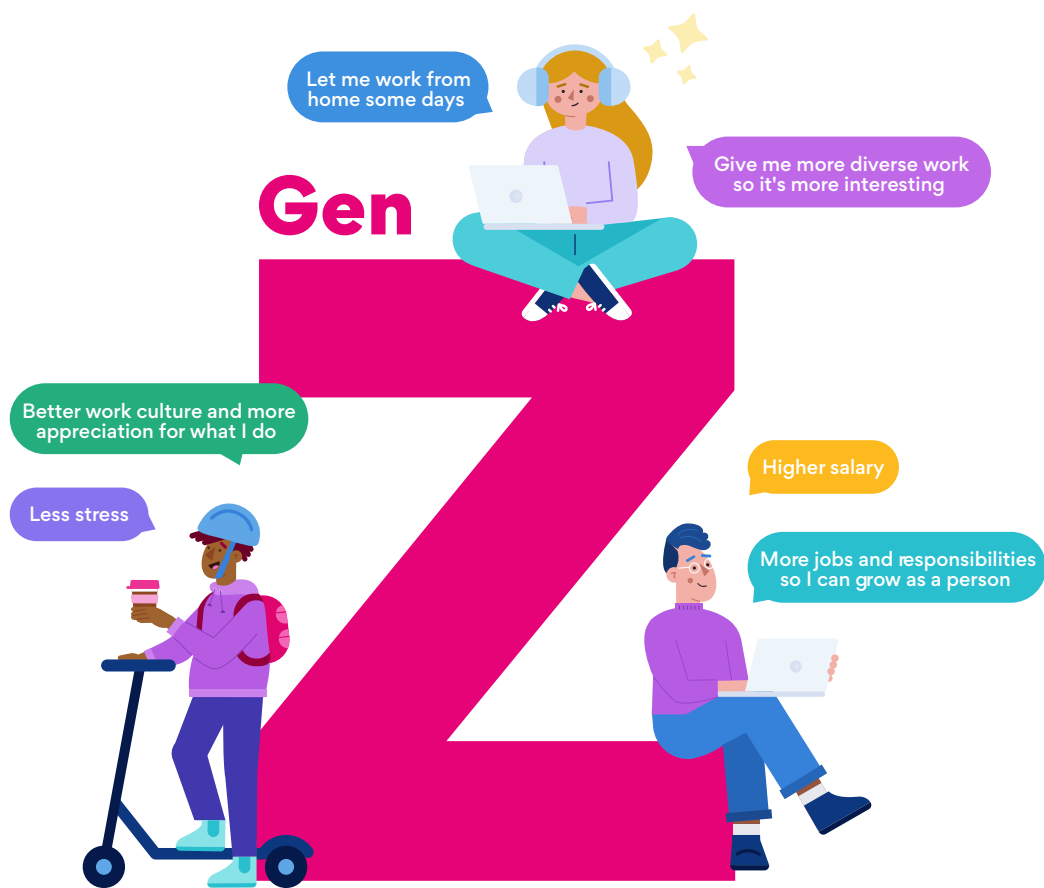
Happiness statements by generation



Gen Z are the most likely to be working in retail, hospitality and sports (36% vs 17% among other generations) and in part-time roles rather than full-time (39% vs 26% among other generations).



What Gen Z wants



Nurturing Gen Z at work

Gen Z represents the future of Australia's workforce, but in 2025 they felt overworked and undervalued. To ensure the best start to working life for Gen Z workers and set them up for ongoing success and a fulfilling working life, employers can improve their happiness levels by addressing preferences and concerns specific to them.

Recommendations for Gen Z workplace happiness

Gen Z is happiest when...	Employers can
Work is interesting (37%)	• Ensure young workers have mentally stimulating work and not solely entry-level tasks • Train Gen Z and upskill them
My workload is manageable (29%)	• Avoid overwhelming younger workers, who may face a steep learning curve while taking on responsibilities • Provide support beyond onboarding
I'm recognised for my efforts (27%)	• Acknowledge the work of entry-level employees even if it is not always business critical • Provide regular encouragement
I feel listened to/valued (26%)	• Set regular 1:1s • Ask Gen Z for input in team decision-making • Appoint a Gen Z representative to be the voice of younger workers at an organisational level
I'm working collaboratively in a team (22%)	• Create collaborative opportunities for Gen Z workers • Support Gen Z with mentorship from older workers • Promote teamwork, especially in retail and hospitality and sports industries (where Gen Z are likely to start their working lives)



Three ways older generations can nurture Gen Z

Mentorships or buddy systems. These can bridge the generational divide, increase sense of purpose for older workers and give Gen Z the support and guidance they need to learn their jobs and manage their workloads.

Interesting work and complementary teamwork. Baby boomers and Gen Z both feel happy doing interesting work, providing an

opportunity for older and younger workers to bond over new projects or training.

Gen Z sessions and spaces. Gen Z workers want to be heard and recognised – team leaders can support this by providing regular opportunities for Gen Z to share ideas with older workers.

Advice from other generations



Fostering a happier workplace

Workplace happiness is linked to many positive outcomes – for workers and for employers. Based on the findings of SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index 2025, the top drivers of workplace happiness this year all fall within an employer's control. This presents an opportunity for leaders to implement changes that increase worker satisfaction and help set their organisations up for long-term success.

Following are practical recommendations addressing the top three drivers of overall workplace happiness.

1. Purpose

Purpose is the top driver of workplace happiness across all demographics – for the second year in the row. However, not all workers feel equally connected to their job's purpose.

Here are some recommendations that can promote a stronger sense of purpose for workers.

- **Define your organisation's mission.** For employees to feel their work is meaningful, leaders first must define a clear organisational mission. Team objectives should then be connected to individual roles and responsibilities.
- **Recognise employees' contributions.** Respondents – particularly younger workers – said they feel happiest when their efforts are recognised and they are valued and listened to at work. Regular 1:1s with managers, internal recognition programs and achievement awards can all help boost recognition. Companies can also implement performance-related bonuses and incentives.
- **Focus on younger workers.** While baby boomers and Gen X workers feel purpose in greater numbers this year, Gen Z are the generation least happy with their purpose at work. Leaders can provide more support for younger workers and consider a mentorship program that pairs them with an older colleague to provide encouragement and guidance.



2. Day-to-day responsibilities

Daily duties ranked highly for most age groups as a happiness driver though Gen X ranked stress as the third-most influential factor. All age groups ranked interesting work in their top two most important factors when asked what makes them happiest at work. All of this tells us that both the type of work and the workload are important to workplace happiness.

Here's how leaders can boost employee satisfaction with day-to-day responsibilities.

- **Match the role to the skill set.** Jobs should match an individual's skill set and interests. Leaders can provide training to upskill less experienced workers and keep senior employees challenged and engaged. Team members should have formal opportunities to provide feedback on their duties.
- **Be aware of generational differences.** Baby boomers generally prefer autonomy, while Gen Z is happiest working collaboratively. Leaders should look at the generational makeup of their teams and provide more day-to-day support to those who need it while allowing more autonomous employees to work independently.
- **Promote work-life balance.** This year, stress seems to be limiting workplace happiness, particularly for millennials and Gen X. These generations are both likely to have busy home lives, possibly caring for children and/or ageing parents. To ensure good work-life balance, leaders should ensure team members have everything they need to do their jobs efficiently, that workloads are manageable, that employees are taking breaks and sufficient leave, and that reasonable flexibility is offered.

3. Senior leadership

This year, senior leadership rose to third place for happiness drivers yet only 44% of respondents are happy with their organisation's leaders. This heightened awareness of, and dissatisfaction with, leadership may be due to high-profile corporate layoffs, rising costs of living, the widening wealth gap, and even global current affairs. Job security has also risen this year, up five places from 2024, reinforcing a link between a sense of stability and workplace happiness.

To improve trust in senior leaders, organisations can:

- **Prioritise transparency.** Regular organisational updates through town halls or company-wide meetings can share the performance of the company, milestones and achievements, and any planned organisational changes. Informed employees are more likely to feel reassured and secure in their jobs.
- **Lead with integrity.** The senior leadership team should model the organisation's values and promote a supportive workplace culture (the fourth-most important happiness driver).
- **Build a relationship with employees.** Regular check-ins with teams, team-building activities, 1:1s, team CSR initiatives and holiday events can all help build trust in leaders and improve overall morale and connection to company values.

Happiness checklist for leaders

- ☐ I regularly check in with my employees.
- ☐ I formally recognise individual effort in my teams.
- ☐ My employees are encouraged to provide feedback.
- ☐ My organisation's purpose is well defined and articulated.
- ☐ I allow my employees to do jobs they find interesting and meaningful.
- ☐ Senior leadership models my organisation's values.
- ☐ My organisation supports and mentors younger workers.
- ☐ My organisation offers reasonable flexibility to employees.



What employees want



This study is part of SEEK's Voice of the Customer program. Through our research work we listen and empathise, we synthesise and share, and we influence and act.

By distilling our candidate and hirer insights we can tell a story about what's most important to our customers, empowering us to make meaningful impact.

LEARN MORE

Reach out to Nicola Laver, SEEK Workplace Success Manager for more information, if you're interested in a Workplace Happiness Index industry deep dive or training for people leaders.

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