

Broken Trust: Inside the Public Sector's *Crisis* of Confidence



About Indeed

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world¹, with 615 million job seeker profiles and 3.5 million employers globally.² If you're feeling stuck in your career or facing challenges staffing your business, Indeed has what you need. We provide a seamless experience for job seekers and employers alike, helping Australians unlock new opportunities and employers meet their recruitment goals. Visit au.indeed.com/hire to discover how we can help you get exactly what you need.



Contents

- 04 Introduction**
- 05 About the survey**
-
- 06 Proud but cautious:** Why public sector workers feel stuck
- 12 Trust in flux:** Why confidence is slipping and how to fix it
- 18 Leadership check-in:** Are you giving people what they need?
- 22 Capable but constrained:** How red tape is holding back performance
- 26 Culture feeling the squeeze:** When inclusion talk doesn't match reality
- 30 Flexibility wins the day:** Why balance builds trust and satisfaction
- 34 Future-fit:** How AI and skills can spark new confidence
-
- 38 Looking ahead**
- 39 How Indeed helps you hire better, faster and smarter**

¹Comscore, Total Visits, June 2025

² Indeed data (worldwide), job seeker accounts that have a unique, verified email address

Introduction

Australia's public sector is changing fast. AI is shaking up how work gets done, flexibility is now a must-have, and today's public servants want workplaces built on trust, purpose and real growth.

To keep government employers in the know, respected public sector news outlet The Mandarin teamed up again with Indeed for the 2025 Frank and Fearless Survey, following last year's landmark study.

More than 1,000 public servants shared how they feel about their jobs, leaders and what's ahead — giving us a clear snapshot of Australia's biggest employer.

The takeaway? People are proud of their work but feeling the pressure from ongoing challenges like low career optimism, fading trust in leadership, and issues with bullying and burnout. On the bright side, flexible work is now the norm, and AI use has more than doubled. The sector's ready to move forward — so long as it's supported.

These insights don't sugarcoat reality, but they highlight clear opportunities: stronger leadership, rebuilding trust and creating a workplace where people can really thrive.

Using Indeed's data and know-how, this report shows what matters to public servants today and lays out practical ways government employers can attract, keep and empower talent as the world of work evolves. Let's get into it.



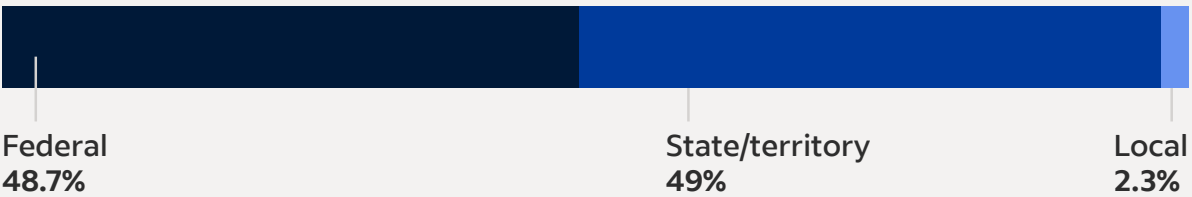
About the survey

The Mandarin's 2025 Frank and Fearless survey was conducted between [4th August and 22nd September, 2025]. The survey received 1083 responses from people across federal, state and local government. Of these, 922 currently work in the public sector. The survey asked a range of questions grouped into five themes:

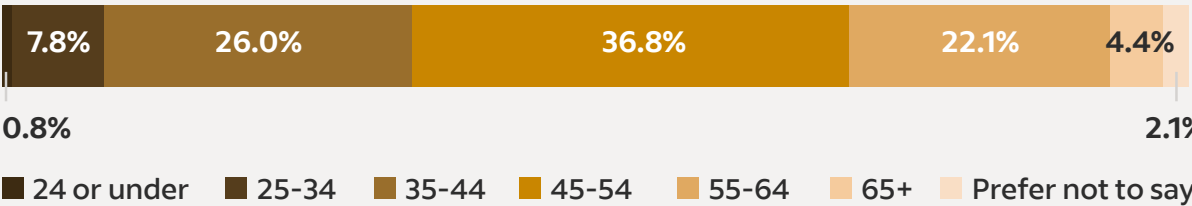
- 1. Levels of satisfaction working in the public service
- 2. Issues faced at work
- 3. Work flexibility and pay
- 4. Public sector politicisation, trust and integrity
- 5. Use of technology

Level of government

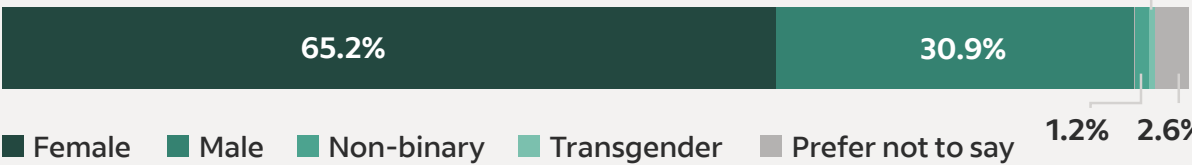
Level of government: 85.1% of respondents currently work in the public service. Of these:



Age



Gender



Proud but cautious: Why public sector workers feel stuck

We won't sugarcoat it — career optimism is low. Many see no pathway and are already eyeing exits. Only three in ten believe they have strong career pathways ahead of them³ and a full 70% say they don't feel optimistic about their prospects within the public sector. One in five describe their prospects as "hopeless".⁴ This is consistent across federal, state and local government employees.

But public servants are still deeply committed to what they do and why they do it, [as they were in 2024](#). Pride amongst the workforce remains high with 83% saying they're proud to work in the public sector.⁵

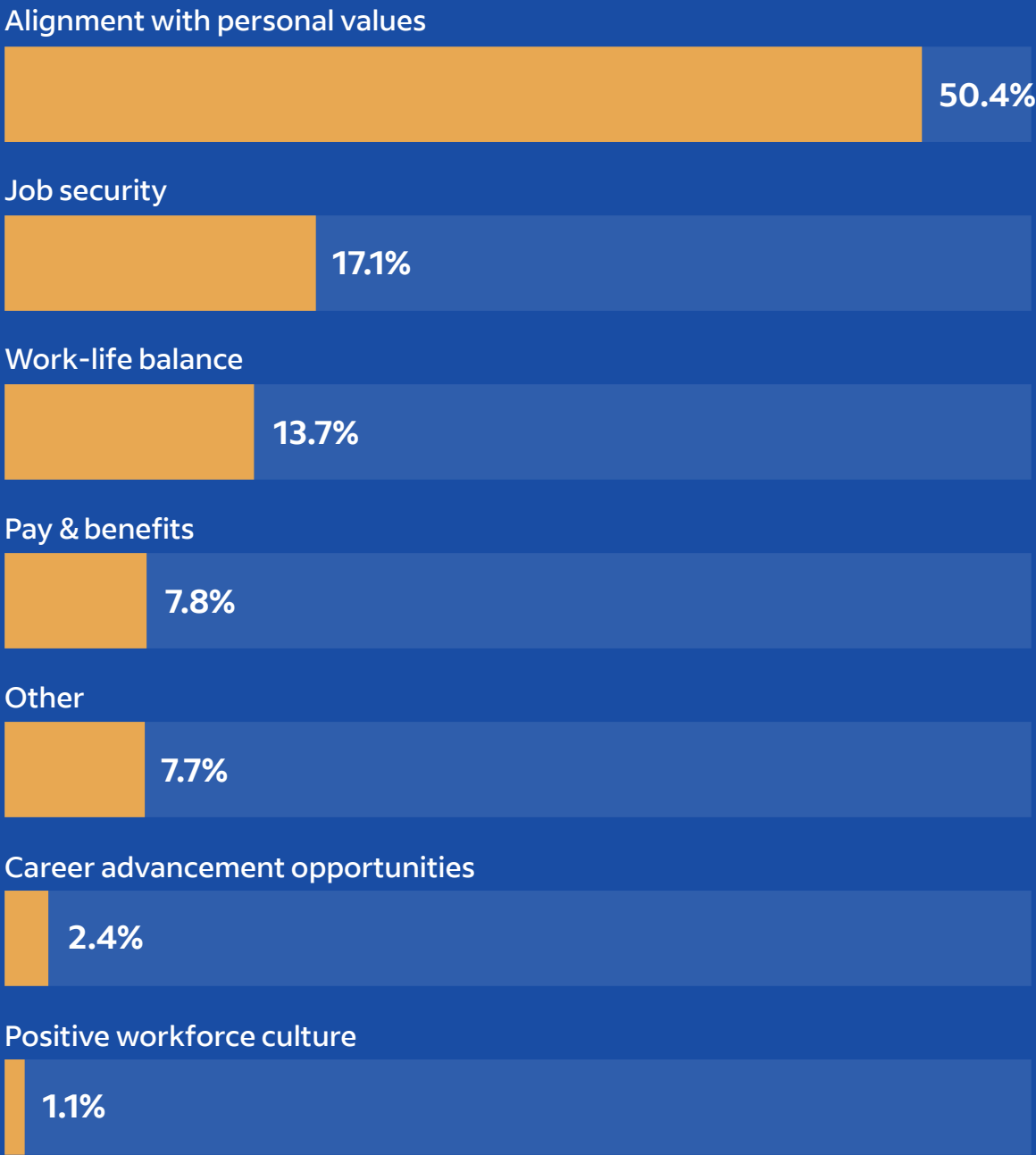
Pride without progression

This year's data reinforces the paradox at the heart of Australia's public sector: people are driven by purpose, not pay. Yet that purpose alone is no longer enough to keep them.

Half of all survey respondents joined the public service because its values align with their own, far outweighing job security (17%), work-life balance (14%) or pay and benefits (7.8%).⁶

Though, alignment doesn't equal advancement. Employees want to build meaningful careers in government, not just stable ones. When those pathways feel blocked, engagement drops and the risk of attrition rises.

What motivates employees to work in the public service?



³⁻⁶ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

The retention risk

[If we thought the intent to leave was high in 2024](#), things haven't improved in 2025. Nearly one in three employees (31%) plan to look for a new job within six months — unchanged from last year's results. While slightly fewer (50%) expect to move within 12 months compared with 64% in 2024, the risk remains widespread.

These are not disengaged employees looking for an easy exit. They're proud, capable and motivated people who can see their growth opportunities running dry. The problem is, as experienced staff leave, valuable knowledge goes with them, making it harder to deliver on promises to the public. If the public service doesn't create pathways for development and growth, people will go where they can keep growing.

31% of employees plan to look for a new job within six months

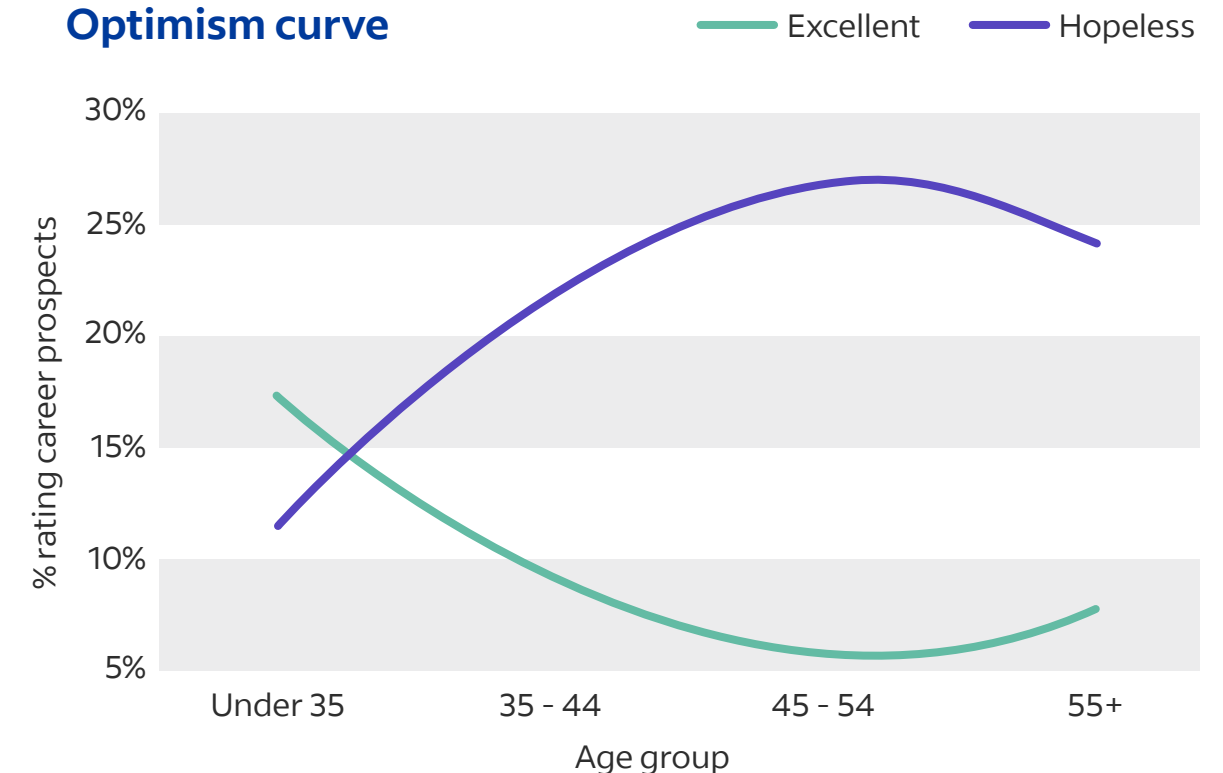
How optimism changes over a career

Career optimism declines steadily with age. Among employees under 35, almost one in five (18%) describe their opportunities as “excellent”, which is twice the rate of those over 45.⁷ But by mid-career, optimism fades: only 6–7% of those aged 45 and over feel positive about advancement, while roughly one in four say their prospects are “hopeless”.⁸ Older workers are the most disillusioned, representing a growing retention risk at the senior and technical levels.

It's a worrying trend, especially since those older workers hold much of the public sector's knowledge and expertise. For employers, that makes career confidence a critical retention issue.

Younger staff often start out optimistic, but if they can't see real opportunities ahead, that enthusiasm fades fast. The fix? Meet people where they are in their careers. Whether they're new grads, mid-career leaders or seasoned professionals, showing that you understand what growth looks like for them builds loyalty, motivation, and long-term commitment.

Optimism curve



The mobility challenge

Flexibility may be changing *how* people work, but not necessarily *where*. As many as 43% say they're unwilling to relocate for a role, and only 31% would move interstate for the right opportunity.⁹

For employers, this means it's time to rethink what career growth looks like. The old model, such as moving staff between cities or offices, doesn't fit how

people live and work today. Growth now needs to happen in new ways: through project-based development, cross-team collaboration and clear skill-building pathways that let people advance without uprooting their lives.

When employees can build skills and experience where they are, they're more likely to stay, grow and keep contributing, and that's a win for everyone.

⁷⁻⁸ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

⁹ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

→ Purpose attracts people, but progression keeps them.



Make growth visible
Show what career pathways look like.



Create development that sticks
Build structured opportunities, such as rotations, mentoring and shadowing, that help employees grow their skills and stay engaged.



Recognise experience
Ignoring older employees is a huge missed opportunity in the public sector. Their experience is gold, you just have to know how to mine it. Signal that their expertise still matters through senior mentoring roles, targeted upskilling, and consulting opportunities.



Connect purpose to progress
Keep the link visible between meaningful work and tangible career growth.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



Employees don't leave the public service because they've lost pride. They leave because they've lost sight of progress. Make career visibility and growth the cornerstone of your attraction and retention strategy.



Offer training to fit every career stage

Career growth doesn't look the same at 25 as it does at 55, and neither does training. [The Indeed 2025 Global Talent Report](#) shows that Gen Z wants upskilling and a seat at the table, mid-career professionals want to see how training links to career progression, and late-career workers value mentoring and meaningful contribution.

The takeaway is simple: tailor training so every generation feels included supported and equipped to succeed. When you do this, you're not just building skills, you're building engagement and commitment.

[Learn more – download the report](#)

Trust in flux: Why confidence is slipping and how to fix it

Trust is fragile, stress is high, and politicisation remains a real concern. Although public servants remain deeply committed to their purpose, only 17% report high trust in their leaders, while 34% say trust is fairly low or non-existent.¹⁰

At the same time, 70% report moderate or high stress, and 77% believe the service is moderately or highly politicised.¹¹ Together, these forces have created a trust deficit that threatens both morale and performance, particularly for long-serving staff.

34% report low or no trust in their leaders

Confidence is steadily eroding

In 2024, trust and integrity were already identified as weak points.¹² A year on, they haven't recovered. The proportion of employees who feel they can fully trust their leaders has barely moved. That lack of confidence affects everything from job satisfaction to wellbeing, motivation and productivity.

Research from [Harvard Business Review](#) found that employees in high-trust organisations experience 74% less stress, 50% higher productivity, 76% greater engagement, and 40% less burnout than those in low-trust ones.¹³

In short, trust isn't just good for culture — it's a proven performance driver.

The politicisation problem

The sense that politics increasingly shapes the public service is now widespread.

In 2024, 44.7% of employees said they thought the public service was highly politicised.¹⁴ This year, 77% now believe politicisation is moderate to high.¹⁵

That's a problem. When staff question whether their work is valued for its expertise or filtered through political interests, it undermines confidence and makes pride harder to sustain.

Stress on the system

The link between trust and stress is unmistakable. With seven in ten employees experiencing moderate or high stress,¹⁶ wellbeing across the public service is under pressure. This isn't simply about workload, it's about control, clarity and confidence in leadership.

As trust falls, employees feel less safe to speak up, less certain their feedback will be heard, and less confident in decisions that affect their work. Stress becomes systemic when people feel powerless to influence outcomes. Lack of trust also creates a defensive environment where people hesitate to share ideas or disagree, which stifles collaboration and innovation.

¹⁰⁻¹² *The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey*, September 2025. Total N=1083

¹³ Harvard Business Review, [The Neuroscience of Trust](#)

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ *The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey*, September 2025. Total N=1083

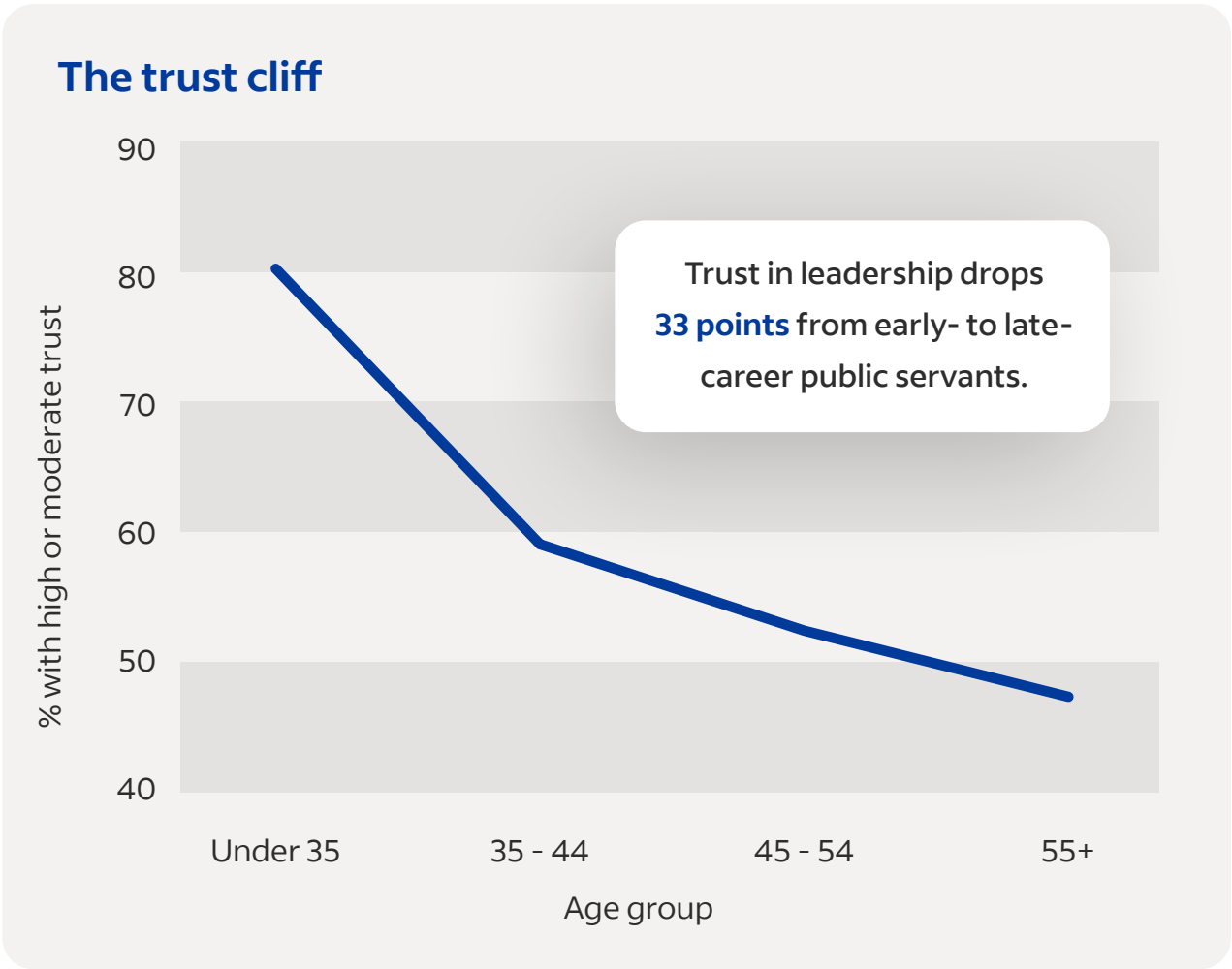
Optimism fades over time

Trust in leadership falls sharply over a public servant’s career. While almost four in five employees under 35 express high or moderate trust, that drops to less than half of those over 55.¹⁷

Low trust more than doubles with age, rising from 18% in younger staff to 44% in older employees¹⁸ — a clear signal that

long-serving workers are losing faith in the system.

That generational decline is a warning alarm for culture and succession. When long-serving employees stop believing in the system, their disillusionment filters down, shaping how the next generation sees leadership, trust and purpose.



¹⁷⁻¹⁸ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

→ **Rebuilding trust needs visible, consistent action from leadership.**



Make transparency the norm

Communicate clearly and often. When people understand what’s happening and why, confidence grows.



Show integrity in decision-making

Explain the “why” behind policy and organisational changes.



Model accountability

Leaders who admit challenges and share progress build credibility.



Prioritise wellbeing

Stress isn’t weakness, it’s feedback. Treat it as an organisational health metric and work to improve it.



Reconnect people to purpose

Remind teams how their work contributes to the public good.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



If employees don’t trust leadership, it doesn’t matter how flexible or well-paid they are, they won’t stay. Build trust deliberately. Lead visibly, act transparently, and prioritise wellbeing.

What's the Public Sector Playlist?

When asked to sum up their experience as a song title, public servants kept it real. The top pick? *Under Pressure* by Queen, chosen by more than one in four respondents (26%)!¹⁹

Other hits included *Send in the Clowns* (16%), *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* (12%) and *Should I Stay or Should I Go?* (12%). A brave 9% went with Pharrell's *Happy*, while only a few hopefuls picked David Bowie's *Heroes*.²⁰



¹⁹⁻²⁰ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

Leadership check-in: Are you giving people what they need?

Leadership is where trust is breaking, but it's also where the fix begins. People have faith in their direct managers, but that confidence fades higher up the chain. This suggests that while day-to-day leadership feels solid, strategic leadership is less so.

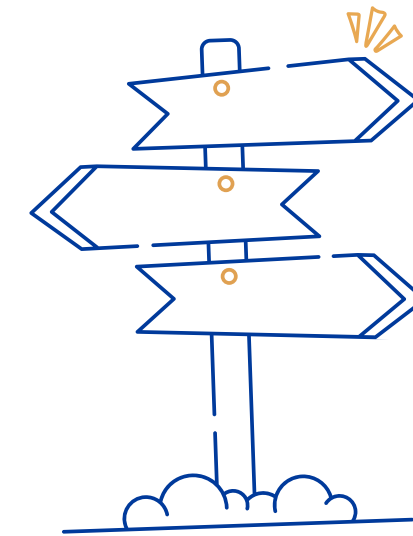
The leadership divide

Leadership is polarising public sector employees. Overall, 41% of employees say their leaders are “pretty good”, yet 27% describe them as “hopeless” or “awful.”²¹ We can take this to mean that leadership quality and perception varies dramatically from team to team, department to department.

27% of public sector employees describe their leaders as “hopeless” or “awful”

Drill deeper and the picture gets starker: 71% of employees aged under 34 rate their leaders positively, but that falls to just 37% among those over 55.²² In other words, optimism about leadership declines the longer employees stay in the system.

Despite broader frustrations with leadership, there's good news for direct managers who continue to earn respect. 63% of employees say their immediate boss is an effective manager, and 69% feel safe discussing challenges or bad news with them.²³ At the frontline, leaders are clearly working hard to protect teams, build psychological safety, and maintain morale. But without strong communication and backing from senior leaders, even the best managers will struggle to keep this confidence over time.



What is blocking employees?

The majority of employees (80%) say they feel effective in their roles, yet they identify poor leadership, bureaucracy and lack of clarity as their biggest blockers.²⁴ It's a contradiction between high individual commitment, but low organisational confidence. Public servants are doing their best work despite the system, not because of it.

The data demonstrates a leadership gap that's bigger than management skills; it's about clarity and direction. When people can't see the “why” behind their work, they lose focus and motivation. Strong leadership isn't just about inspiration; it's about removing the blockers and giving people and agency the space to do great work.

“Leaders make promises and don't back it up with any reality of being able to deliver.”

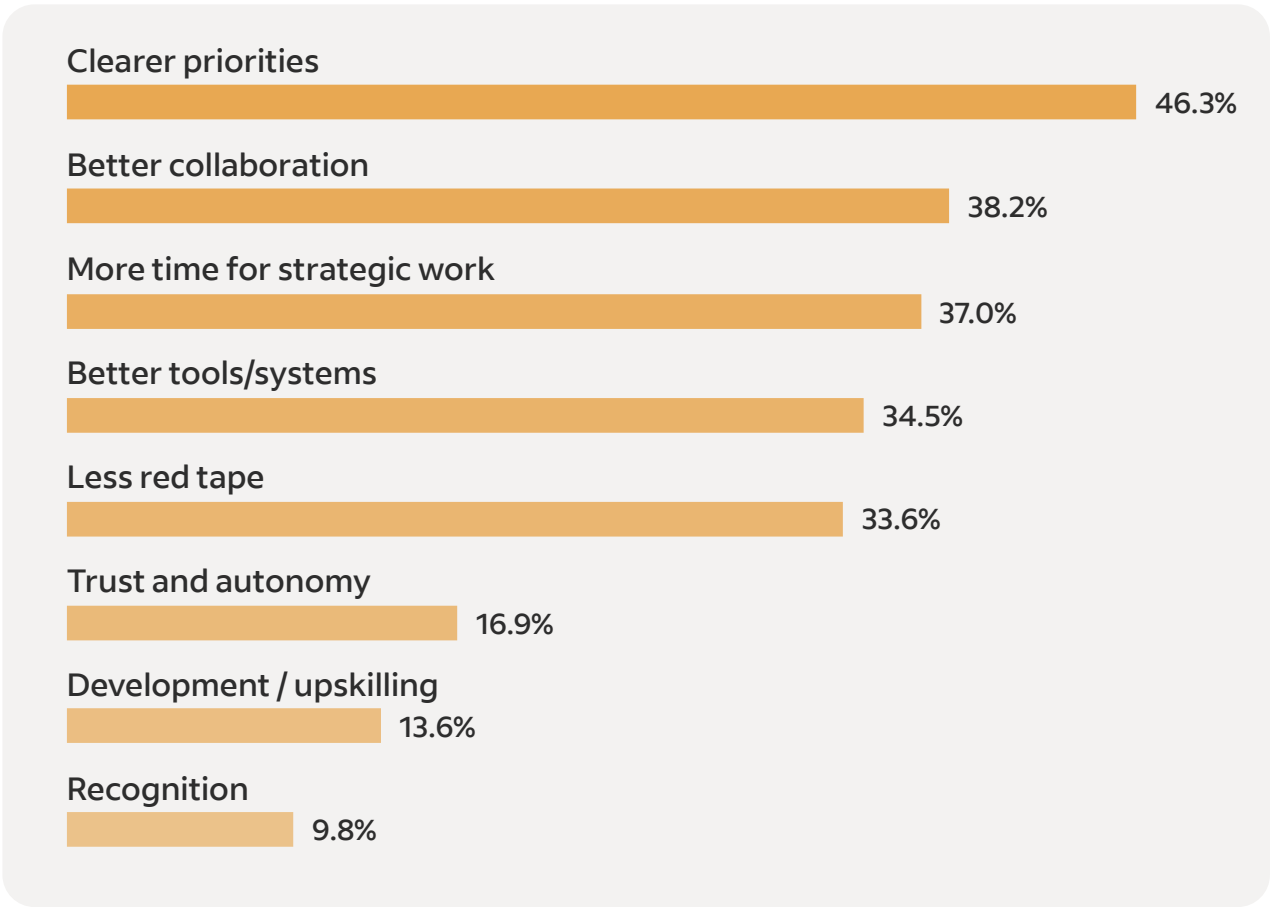
– Federal government employee

²¹⁻²³ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

²⁴ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

What employees want from leadership

When asked what would make them more effective, employees pointed to leadership-driven solutions. Not grand reforms, but everyday basics done well:²⁵



This is where good leaders come in. The data reveals that employees already have the motivation and capability to perform, but now they need leaders who can remove friction, articulate purpose, and make it easier to focus on what matters most.

“We have a lot of technical specialists in leadership roles who lack the human element needed to be a good leader.”
– State government employee

²⁵ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

→ For employers, the message is clear: leadership needs to connect at every level.



Rethink what great leadership looks like

Technical skill and policy knowledge matter, but human skills like listening, empathy, adaptability, and clear communication are now the most essential skills.



Invest in leadership at every layer

Don’t stop at the top. Support emerging and mid-level leaders as they’re the ones shaping daily culture and employee experience.



Strengthen communication

Consistent, transparent messaging from leaders builds confidence and alignment, especially during change.



Build psychological safety

Back managers who make teams feel heard, trusted and supported.

ACTION CHECKPOINT

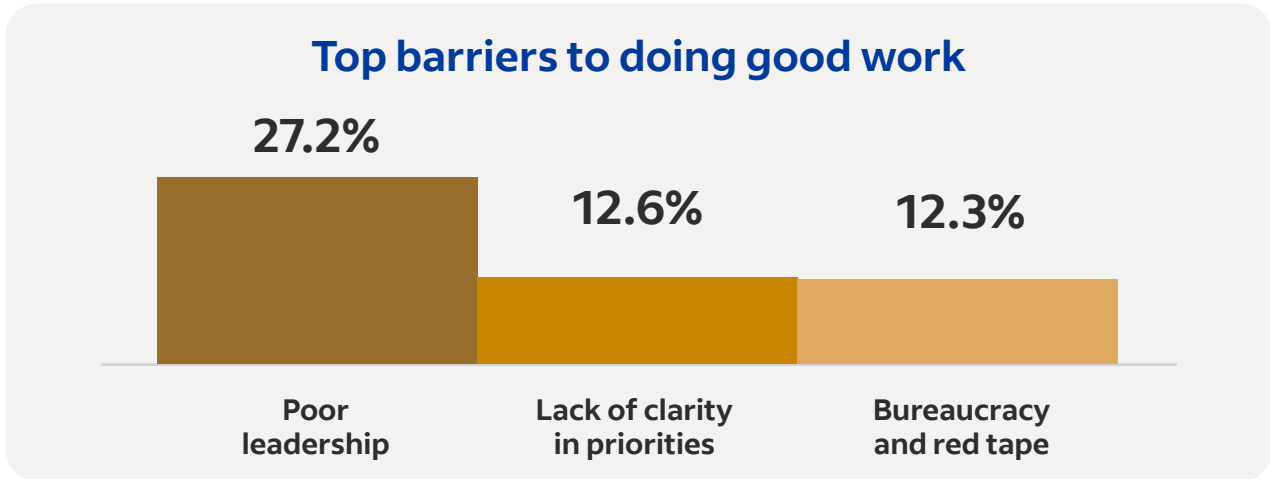


Invest in leaders who communicate clearly, connect authentically, and empower their teams. Soft skills aren’t soft — they’re the strongest enabler of engagement, trust and performance.

Capable but constrained: How red tape is holding back performance

Public servants are getting the job done — often despite the system, not because of it. Most employees (80%) say they feel moderately to highly effective in their roles. They know what needs to be done, and they care about doing it well. But the same issues keep getting in their way: red tape, poor leadership and unclear priorities.

When asked about the biggest challenge to doing their job well, three barriers came through loud and clear:²⁶



These are all fixable, but they require leaders who listen, communicate, and strip away unnecessary complexity so people can focus on impact.

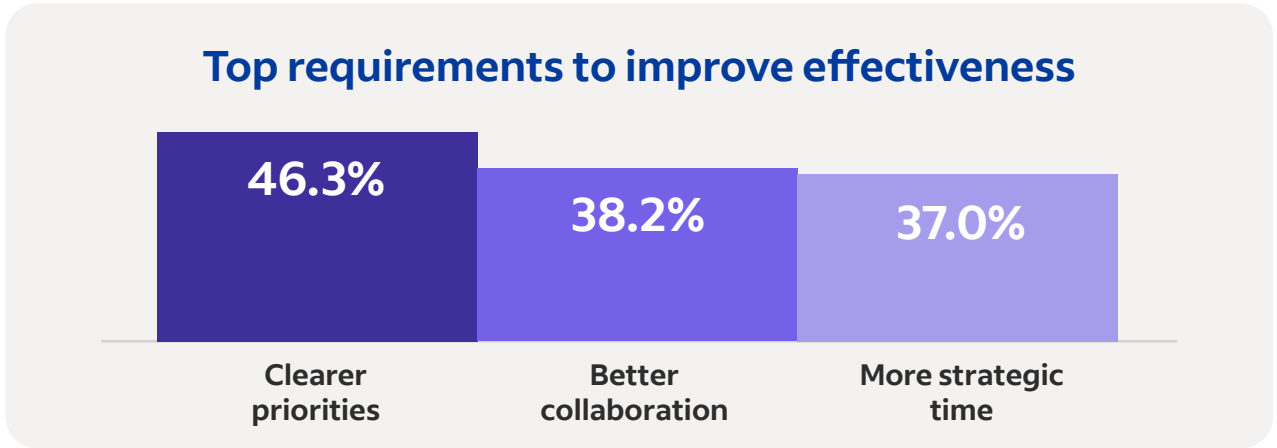
²⁶ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

The productivity paradox

It's not that people aren't working hard — they are. Almost two-thirds (62.7%) say they're mostly productive, but nearly 30% admit they only get the basics done.²⁷

That's not a motivation problem. It's a systems problem. When processes are slow, communication unclear, and red tape is endless, even the most dedicated employees can lose momentum.

It's no surprise, then, that employees say the top things that would help them be more effective are clearer priorities, better collaboration and more time spent on strategy.²⁸



“The bureaucracy and red tape have gotten worse. It slows things down and shows a lack of trust in very well-paid people.”

– Federal government employee

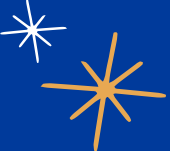
This frustration comes at a cost: when high-performing people spend their energy fighting processes rather than solving problems, the system loses agility, speed and morale. It also impacts trust. Trust in leadership and trust in systems are deeply connected. When employees feel trusted to make decisions, productivity rises. When every task requires permission, innovation and creativity slows.

²⁶⁻²⁸ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

AI is part of the productivity solution

Many employees see AI as part of the solution. Four in ten (42%) say government should invest in AI to reduce administrative burden²⁹—a sign that technology could help cut through the very inefficiencies holding productivity back.

AI isn’t about replacing people; it’s about giving them time back. Done right, it can handle repetitive admin tasks, freeing up staff to do the work that really matters: problem-solving, policy thinking and service delivery.



Designing work that works

Work is evolving faster than ever, driven by AI and technology. But speed and efficiency alone aren’t enough. Today’s Australian workers want more than smart tools; they want purpose, flexibility and real wellbeing support.

Indeed’s 2025 report, [Designing work that works – for tech and people](#), explores the human side of the AI revolution. It shows how aligning roles with individual strengths, fostering connection, and using AI to empower (not overwhelm) can create resilient, motivated teams ready to thrive in the future of work.

Download the report to get fresh, local insights and actionable strategies to help your organisation build a workplace that works better — for people and technology alike.



Get the report

²⁹ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

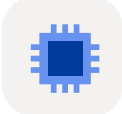
→ **The challenge isn’t to make people work harder, but to help them work smarter.**



Simplify processes
Review where governance adds value and where it’s just adding friction.



Clarify direction
Define priorities clearly and communicate them often.



Invest in tech
Explore technology, like AI, that amplifies human impact and efficiency.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



The public service doesn’t have a performance problem, it has a permission problem. Empower people to act, simplify the process, and you’ll unlock the productivity that’s already there.

Culture feeling the squeeze: When inclusion talk doesn't match reality

Culture is the heartbeat of any workplace. And right now, it's under pressure.

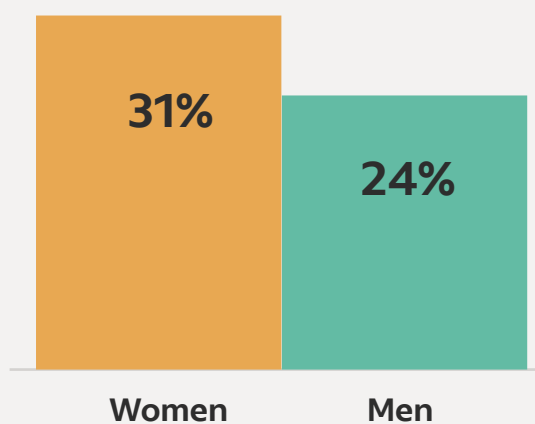
Across the public service, 30% of employees say they've experienced bullying or harassment in the past year. For women, that figure rises to 31%, compared with 24% for men. The most common forms? Undermining someone's work (23%) and unfair treatment (18%).³⁰

At the same time, inclusion and diversity feel more like slogans than lived experience for many. Only 32% of employees believe their workplace takes inclusion and diversity seriously. Almost one in five (19%) say it's all an act.³¹

Gender and age matter

Women experience higher rates of bullying and exclusion than men. Older employees, meanwhile, are significantly more negative about workplace culture and leadership than younger colleagues — a sign that years of exposure to bureaucracy and inconsistent management can take a quiet toll.

Have you been bullied or harassed in the past year?



Values vs. lived experience

The public service prides itself on integrity, equality and professionalism. But for many employees, the daily reality doesn't always reflect those values. That disconnect erodes morale and credibility.

Staff hear strong messages about inclusion, but often see limited accountability when behaviour crosses the line. And when leaders fail to act, trust collapses fast. Psychological safety (the feeling that it's safe to speak up or be yourself) becomes fragile.

“There are pockets of toxic culture and bullying where poor behaviours are condoned.”
– State government employee

Why culture matters for performance

Culture isn't just about being a great place to work, it's a performance multiplier.

Research from Diversity Council Australia's [Inclusion@Work Index](#)³² consistently shows a strong link between inclusion at work and team performance.

Teams that feel safe, respected, and supported are:

- **10 x more likely to innovate than non-inclusive teams**
- **8 x more likely to work together effectively**
- **4 x more likely to deliver excellent customer service**
- **2.5 x more likely to go the extra mile to help their team succeed**

When inclusion is genuine, people stay longer, do better work, and represent their organisation with pride. When it's ignored or superficial, the opposite happens: engagement drops, trust fractures and reputations take years to rebuild.

³⁰⁻³¹ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

³² Diversity Council Australia, [The case for D&I](#)

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

→ Turn policy promises into everyday practice.



Back zero tolerance with real action

Make it clear that poor behaviour has consequences, no matter someone’s title or tenure.



Empower leaders to act early

Equip managers to identify and address small issues before they escalate.



Measure what inclusion feels like

Go beyond diversity metrics. Track belonging, respect and psychological safety — that’s where culture lives.



Listen continuously

Listen and act on feedback on a regular basis.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



Culture can’t be fixed by policy alone. Leaders must model respect, act early on poor behaviour, and make inclusion measurable, not optional.



Flexibility wins the day: Why balance builds trust and satisfaction

Flexible and hybrid work isn't a trend anymore — it's the norm. And employees expect it to keep evolving with them. 77% of public servants now work in some form of hybrid arrangement, with 43% on flexible hybrid schedules and just 17% in the office full-time.³³

77% of public servants now have some form of hybrid working arrangement

Flexibility equals loyalty

Nearly 60% of employees say their current setup matches their ideal work arrangement “very closely”.³⁴ That's proof hybrid work has moved beyond a pandemic fix to a sustainable long-term model.

But this also raises the stakes. Once flexibility becomes standard, removing it or managing it poorly is a fast track to attrition. Employees see flexibility as more than convenience — it's a sign of trust. When you protect it, loyalty grows. When you restrict it, trust breaks down.

³³⁻³⁴ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083



Generational divides in flexibility

Flexibility looks very different depending on where you are in your career.

Among employees under 44, almost 90% work hybrid or remote, with only 10–13% in the office full-time. For over-45s, 79% work hybrid or remote, but they're nearly twice as likely as younger peers to be in the office five days a week.³⁵

Compared with 2024, that's a major cultural shift. Last year, around 70% of

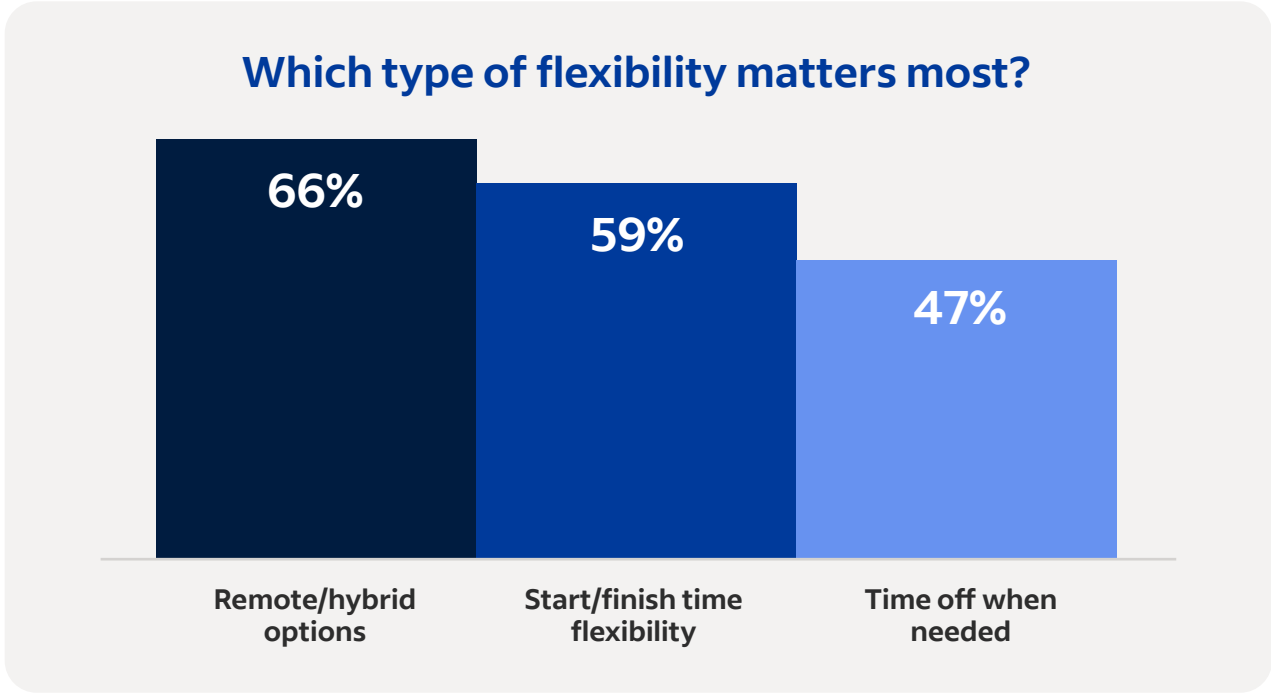
under-44s and 61% of over-45s worked hybrid or remote.³⁶ In 2025, those figures have jumped to 87–90% and around 79%, respectively.³⁷

Hybrid working is now fully entrenched and flexibility is non-negotiable. But it's not one-size-fits-all. Younger employees see it as a right, while older staff are still adapting to the new rhythm. Smart employers know how to balance both.

³⁵⁻³⁷ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

From flexibility to autonomy

The next frontier isn't just where people work, it's how much control they have over when and how they work. When asked which type of flexibility matters most, employees said:³⁸



Flexibility now means autonomy. Public servants want to shape their workday around productivity, not presenteeism. And support for flexible work runs deep: almost 60% believe non-public-facing roles should “absolutely” be allowed to work from home. Only 3% think everyone should be in the office.³⁹

That’s a clear signal: flexibility is no longer seen as a perk or a privilege. It’s about fairness, trust, and respect for employees’ lives. Employers who resist embracing it risk appearing out of touch with the expectations and values of today’s workforce.

³⁸⁻³⁹ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

↓ WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE



Make flexibility a strategy, not a perk.



Set the guardrails, then trust people to deliver
Create frameworks that balance autonomy with accountability, so teams know where the freedom starts and ends.



Back your managers
Give them the skills and tools to manage hybrid teams by outcomes, not attendance.



Keep culture alive
Establish rituals that bring people together, wherever they’re working.



Design fairness into flexibility
Make sure frontline and regional roles have access to flexible options that work for them too.



Track what matters
Measure the impact of flexibility on retention, wellbeing and productivity, and use that data to keep improving.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



The question isn't whether to offer flexibility, it's how to manage it well enough to keep people inspired, connected, and loyal.

Future-fit: How AI and skills can spark new confidence

If there's one thing public sector employees agree on, it's that the future depends on skills. And the pace of change is only speeding up.

Employees are clear about what's missing: soft skills (57%), technical and digital skills (41%), and project management and coordination (41%) top the list of skill gaps.⁴⁰

When asked which skills will matter most to the public sector workforce over the next three to five years, the message was just as strong: leadership and change management (57%), data analytics (48%), and AI proficiency (43%) lead the pack.⁴¹

What are the most critical skills for the next 3–5 years?



This shift marks a big step forward. Leadership development is still the number-one need, but AI skills have almost doubled in importance since last year, reflecting how quickly technology is reshaping public sector work.

AI enthusiasm is real, but not where you'd expect

Nearly half of all public servants (49%) are already using AI tools like ChatGPT or Copilot⁴² at work, up from 25% in 2024.⁴³ But here's the twist: it's not the youngest staff leading the charge.

Only 37% of employees under 34 currently use AI, and just 35% say they're excited about it, the lowest engagement of any group. Adoption peaks among 35-44-year-olds with 56% integrating AI into their daily work. Among 45-54-year-olds, nearly half (48%) report using AI, while 44% of those aged 55 and over are using it too.⁴⁴

Mid-career and older employees are driving much of the AI enthusiasm, with almost one in two (49%) describing

themselves as excited or very excited about its potential.⁴⁵

This bucks global and cross-industry trends, where younger workers consistently lead in AI adoption and excitement. In Indeed's [Workplace Wellbeing Report 2025](#), 72% of Gen Z had high AI adaptability compared to only 34% of Baby Boomers and 47% of Gen X.⁴⁶

One likely reason? Sample size and structure. The under-34 group in this survey is relatively small (just 8% of respondents) and younger public servants are often in junior or compliance-heavy roles with stricter rules around access and experimentation. In other words, it's not necessarily that they're less interested in AI, they may simply have fewer opportunities to use it.

42% believe the public sector should prioritise AI investment to reduce administrative burden

Employees across the board see AI's practical potential: more than 42% believe the public sector should prioritise AI investment to reduce administrative burden, freeing up time for more meaningful, strategic work.⁴⁷

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

^{42-45, 47} The Mandarin, Frank and Fearless Survey, September 2025. Total N=1083

⁴⁶ Indeed Workplace Wellbeing Report, based on a commissioned survey conducted by Forrester Consulting, 2025.

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO PRIORITISE

→ **Move fast on AI capability and leadership development to set yourself apart in both talent attraction and retention.**



Invest in people, not just platforms

Training and mentoring turn new systems into real value, as they're the missing link between adoption and impact.



Make AI feel safe, not scary

Create space for people to learn, experiment, and get comfortable before they're expected to be confident.



Connect tech to purpose

Show how AI helps deliver better outcomes for citizens and frees people to do more meaningful work.



Equip leaders to lead through change

Leadership and change management top the skills list for a reason. People need direction, not just new tools.

ACTION CHECKPOINT



The workforce is ready for AI but it's waiting for leadership to catch up. Give staff the tools, training and trust to experiment safely. The agencies that build AI confidence now will own the next wave of public sector innovation.

Using AI to unlock skills-first hiring

Generative AI is reshaping how employers identify and match talent. By analysing both job descriptions and resumes, AI can now uncover the underlying skills that matter most — even when the language doesn't match perfectly. This gives employers a clearer picture of capability and helps them recognise transferable experience that traditional hiring might overlook.

That's where **skills-first hiring** comes in. Also known as skills-based hiring, it focuses less on credentials and more on what people can do. It's an approach that opens public sector doors to a broader, more diverse pool of talent. But it's also been difficult to scale. AI has the potential to change that, making it easier to pinpoint the skills a role truly needs and find candidates who have them.

Learn more in our Insights

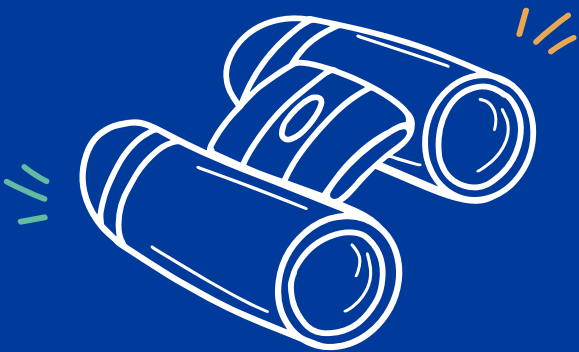
Looking ahead

Australia’s public servants remain proud, purposeful and deeply motivated by service. That pride has held steady across two years of data, even as frustration has grown around leadership, culture and opportunity.

Employees aren’t disengaged, they’re disheartened. They want to deliver great work, learn new skills and make a difference, but many feel stuck in systems that haven’t evolved as quickly as they have.

Public servants have been clear about what they need to stay: meaningful career development, strong and authentic leadership, trust and flexibility, and a culture where they feel respected and included. These are the foundations of a happy, high-performing workforce.

For government employers, the path forward is simple but urgent: build trust, remove barriers, and invest in people. Those that act now will attract and retain the talent needed to deliver for Australia’s future.



How Indeed can help

As a trusted partner to a range of government departments across Australia and abroad, Indeed understands the challenges you face — from filling specialised roles and navigating red tape, to building a strong employer brand that attracts top talent.



[Visit our dedicated hub for government employers](#) with targeted resources, insights, and tools that streamline your talent acquisition efforts, connect you with quality candidates, and elevate your organisation’s visibility where it matters most.

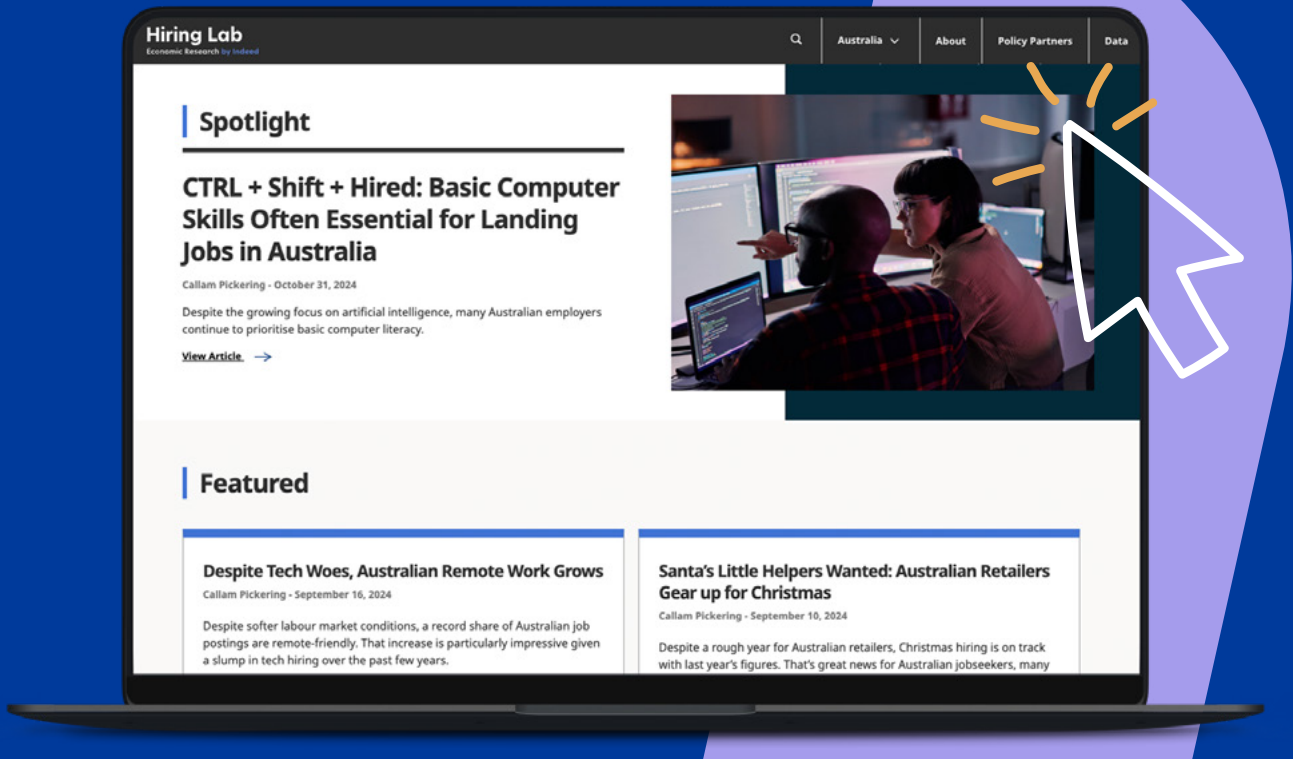


Collaborate during strategy days where we collaborate closely to align your goals with effective recruitment strategies from planning to tactical execution.



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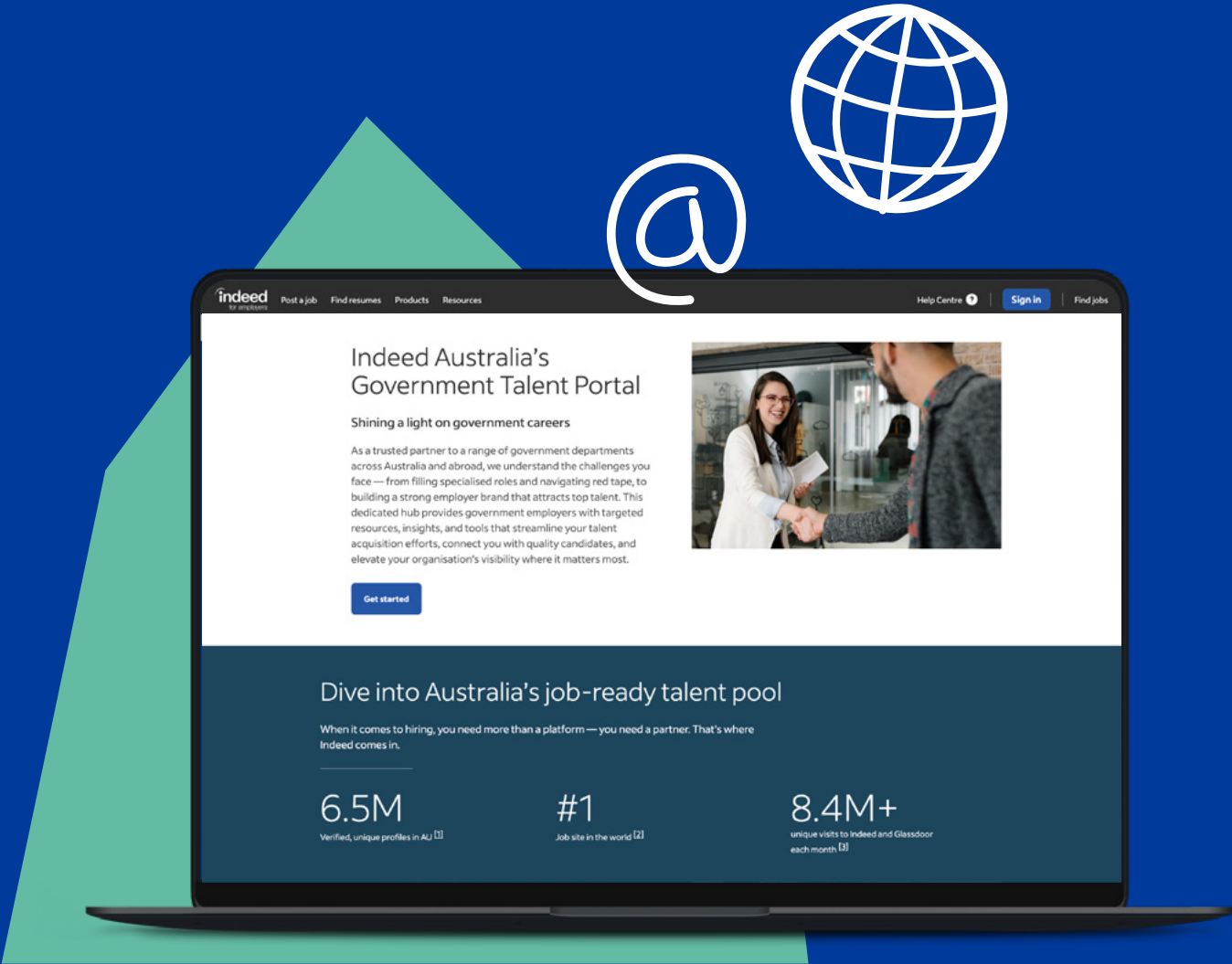
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