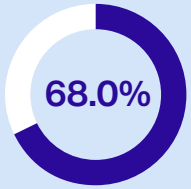
Australian Worker Exposure Survey 2026

About the study:

- Survey of workers in Australia aged 15 years and over
- Designed to build a national picture of work-related hazard exposure
- Conducted with 6,617 participants
- Mixed-mode survey methodology
- Coverage of psychosocial hazards and key agents including chemicals, metals, solvents, radiation, products of combustion, dusts, heat at work and shift work

Exposure overview:



had exposure to at least one agent

About **10.2 million** workers exposed to at least one hazard agent[1]

[1] Based on around 15.0 million employed people in Australia in the ABS Labour Account, December quarter 2025.

28.9% exposed to at least one agent at a **high** level

17.1% exposed at **medium** level

22.0% exposed at **low** level

Psychosocial hazards:

Many workers experience tight deadlines or pressure (**37.3%**), emotionally demanding work (**33.9%**), are exposed to traumatic situations or material (**13.6%**), and verbal abuse, threats or violence (**8.9%**) often or all the time.

The proportion of workers that say they experience tight deadlines or pressures often or all the time is higher in the Financial and Insurance Services (**47.2%**) and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (**46.3%**) and Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (**45.0%**) industries.

Many workers reported generally positive conditions for clarity and support (**94.4%** agree they have clarity of duties; **84.0%** agree they receive support to work safely).

There was also strong agreement among workers that they have a say in how and when their work is done (**71.8%**), feel informed about changes at work (**70.0%**), and consider that people in their organisation are treated fairly (**69.9%**).

Exposure to agents:

High-risk agents have an important focus due to health impacts and where exposure is concentrated:

Solar UV: **32.4%** of workers exposed (about 4.87 million workers), including **21.0%** at a medium level and **6.8%** at a high level. Exposure is concentrated in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (**74.8%**) and Construction (**67.5%**).

Heat at work: **29.9%** of workers exposed (about 4.49 million workers), including **7.2%** at a high level and **11.9%** at a medium level. Exposure is concentrated in Mining (**64.3%**) and among Skilled Animal, Agricultural and Horticultural Workers (**70.9%**).

Diesel engine exhaust: **26.3%** of workers exposed (about 3.95 million workers), including **3.7%** at a high level. Exposure is concentrated in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (**72.8%**) and Mining (**71.5%**).

Silica: **13.6%** of workers exposed (about 2.04 million workers), including **5.0%** at a high level. Exposure is concentrated in the Construction (**71.8%**) and Mining (**63.8%**) industries, and among Construction and mining labourers (**89.9%**) and Construction trades workers (**86.2%**).

Lead: **3.8%** of workers exposed (about 571,000 workers), including **0.7%** at a high level. Exposure is concentrated in the Construction industry (**19.9%**) and among Construction Trades Workers (**38.9%**).

Welding fumes: **3.7%** of workers exposed (about 556,000 workers), including **0.3%** at a high level. Exposure is concentrated in Manufacturing (**13.9%**) and among Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers (**43.3%**).

Asbestos: **2.6%** of workers exposed (about 391,000 workers). Exposure is concentrated in the Mining industry (**22.1%**), and among Machine and Stationary Plant Operators (**19.6%**).

Key Findings

Proportion of workers with multiple exposures:

68.0% of workers had exposure to at least one agent

- **18.6%** One agent
- **10.9%** Two agents
- **8.7%** Three agents
- **7.6%** Four agents
- **22.2%** Five or more agents

Many workers are exposed to combinations of hazard agents:

Of those who are exposed to Ocular[1] UV, Solar UV exposure also occurs for:

91.0%

Of those who are exposed to Solar UV, Ocular UV exposure also occurs for:

91.6%

Of those who are exposed to Heat at Work:

Ocular UV exposure also occurs for: 64.7%

Solar UV exposure also occurs for: 64.8%

Of those who are exposed to Styrene[2], the proportion exposed to other agents is:

Heat at work: 67.1%

Diesel exhaust: 78.1%

Ocular UV: 70.2%

Solar UV: 65.2%

Benzene: 66.9%

Highest rates of workers with multiple exposures (five or more hazard agents):

Industry:

Construction: **68.2%**

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: **60.1%**

Mining: **60.0%**

Occupation:

Construction Trades Workers: **82.1%**

Construction and Mining Labourers: **81.4%**

Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers: **74.6%**

Worker profiles and workplace characteristics:

In general, exposure to hazards is more common among younger workers, men, people working outside capital cities, and among workers in more disadvantaged areas (SEIFA quintile 1) and with Advanced Diploma/Diploma/Certificate qualifications.

Apprentices and trainees were more likely to be exposed to many hazards, including heat at work (**51.1%**), silica (**35.7%**), lead (**17.0%**) and asbestos (**13.7%**).

One in ten workers (**12.3%**) agreed (often or all the time) that if they needed help while working, it would be difficult to get it.

Prepared by the Social Research Centre for Safe Work Australia. Social Research Centre safe work australia

[1] Exposure of the eyes to UV radiation
[2] A chemical used for manufacturing plastics and synthetic rubber