

THE CPA AUSTRALIA WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY SURVEY 2016

SURVEY REPORT

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The *CPA Australia Workplace Flexibility Survey 2016* was conducted by CPA Australia from 26 February to 7 March 2016. The survey received 680 respondents from members and non-members around the world, of which 61.6 per cent were women, 36.0 per cent were men and 2.4 per cent preferred not to disclose.

The locations that had the greatest number of respondents were Australia (373 respondents), Malaysia (114 respondents) and Hong Kong (99 respondents).

OVERVIEW

Working flexibly – but at what cost?

The results from CPA Australia’s workplace flexibility survey shows that many men and women have a negative perception of the impact working flexibly could have on their career prospects.

The survey showed that more than a quarter of respondents with flexible work arrangements believed it would have a negative impact on their prospects of promotion, regardless of gender.

The survey also found that employers were more likely to grant flexible working conditions to women, with 77 per cent of female respondents that had asked to work flexibly being successful versus 69 per cent of men.

Overall, men reported a higher level of confidence they would become a senior business leader, with 33 per cent of men saying they were very confident in comparison to only 20 per cent of women.

The motivation to seek flexible work arrangements was divided along gender lines.

Women were significantly more likely to nominate caring for children as the primary reason for seeking flexible work arrangements (40 per cent) as opposed to men (22 per cent).

Whereas men were more likely to nominate work/life balance (42 per cent) as the primary reason for seeking flexible work arrangements as opposed to women (32 per cent).

CPA Australia chief executive Alex Malley said the results pointed to cultural challenges for the business community.

“Gender equality and workplace flexibility is not just a social issue – it has significant consequences for economic growth,” Malley said.

“Many employers have made much of their desire to increase opportunities for workplace flexibility, but unfortunately it would seem the employee experience is not matching up to some of the rhetoric.

“We need to maximise our levels of workforce participation. Creating workplace practices that allow maximum participation is both economically and socially beneficial.”

Malley said that having the right policies in place is only part of the solution. “The culture of an organisation, the leadership’s commitment to the policies and their consistent implementation throughout the business is critical.

“It isn’t enough for a company to say flexible work practices are encouraged, people need to see it in operation and they need to see that those accessing flexible arrangements are not having their opportunities for career progression compromised.”

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS

Requesting flexible work

- Respondents who are women were more likely to have asked to work flexibly than respondents who are men (60.9 per cent of women compared with 53.9 per cent of men).
- Respondents were significantly more likely to state that their employer agreed to their request to work flexibly than not (74.1 per cent of respondents who requested to work flexibly stated their employer agreed).
- Women were more likely to state that their employer agreed with their request to work flexibly than men (77.3 per cent of women compared with 68.9 per cent of men).
- Respondents aged from 40 to 49 were the most likely to have asked to work flexibly (39.2 per cent of respondents who have asked for flexible work) followed by those aged 30 to 39 (33.2 per cent).
- Australian respondents were significantly more likely to have requested flexible work arrangements than respondents from Hong Kong and Malaysia (71.6 per cent of Australian respondents have requested to work flexibly compared with 43.9 per cent of Malaysian and 35.4 per cent of Hong Kong respondents).
- Respondents working for employers with more than 200 employees are more likely to have asked for flexible leave (51.0 per cent of respondents who have asked for flexible work) followed by those working for employers with 20 to 199 employees (28.6 per cent).

Reasons for seeking to work flexibly

- Seeking work/life balance (35.9 per cent of respondents) and caring for children (34.0 per cent of respondents) are by far the most likely reason respondents gave as to why they would seek to work flexibly.
- Women were significantly more likely to state that they would seek to work flexibility to care for children than men (40.3 per cent of women compared with 22.4 per cent of men).
- Men were more likely to state that they would seek to work flexibly for work/life balance reasons (42.0 per cent of men compared with 32.2 per cent of women).
- Employers were far more likely to agree to flexible work requests where the respondent was seeking to care for children than other reasons (47.8 per cent of respondents compared with 30.5 per cent of respondents who sought flexible work for work/life balance reasons).
- Of those respondents that have not requested to work flexibly, they were significantly more likely to state that they would apply for flexible work to achieve a better work/life balance than care for children (39.0 per cent for work/life balance compared with 22.0 per cent for caring for children).
- Respondents from Australia were more likely to seek flexible work to care for children (38.6 per cent) than respondents from Malaysia (30.7 per cent) and Hong Kong (25.3 per cent).

Perceived impacts of flexible work on career

- Respondents were most likely to nominate that working flexibly would in their opinion negatively impact promotion chances (31.2 per cent), although a sizeable number of respondents also stated it would have no impact on their promotion opportunities (25.6 per cent), and that it may have a positive impact on the quality of their work (23.4 per cent).
- Women were somewhat more likely than men to state that working flexibly would have a negative impact on their promotion opportunities (33.2 per cent of women compared with 25.7 per cent of men).
- Those that have not asked to work flexibly were more likely to believe that flexible work would be detrimental to promotion opportunities (32.1 per cent) than those that have successfully requested to work flexibly (27.4 per cent).
- Respondents from Malaysia were less likely to believe that working flexibly would negatively impact promotion chances than respondents from Australia and Hong Kong (20.2 per cent of Malaysian respondents compared with 35.1 per cent of Australian respondents and 31.3 per cent of Hong Kong respondents).
- Respondents from Malaysia were more likely to believe that flexible work would have a positive impact on the quality of work they perform than respondents from Australia and Hong Kong (36.0 per cent of respondents from Malaysia compared with 20.1 per cent of Australian and 24.2 per cent of Hong Kong respondents).

Confidence that respondent will become a senior business leader

- Men were more likely to be very confident that given their current work arrangements they will become a senior business leader in their field (33.1 per cent of men compared with 19.6 per cent of women).
- Men were also more likely to currently be a senior business leader (31.4 per cent of men compared with 20.8 per cent of women).
- Women are more likely to not intend to become a senior business leader (16.5 per cent of women compared with 5.3 per cent of men), or are not confident they can become a senior business leader (21.0 per cent of women compared with 11.4 per cent of men).
- Respondents from Hong Kong were significantly more likely to be not sure whether they can become a senior business leader than respondents from Australia and Malaysia (35.4 per cent of respondents from Hong Kong compared with 18.8 per cent of Australian and 15.8 per cent of Malaysian respondents).

REQUESTING FLEXIBLE WORK

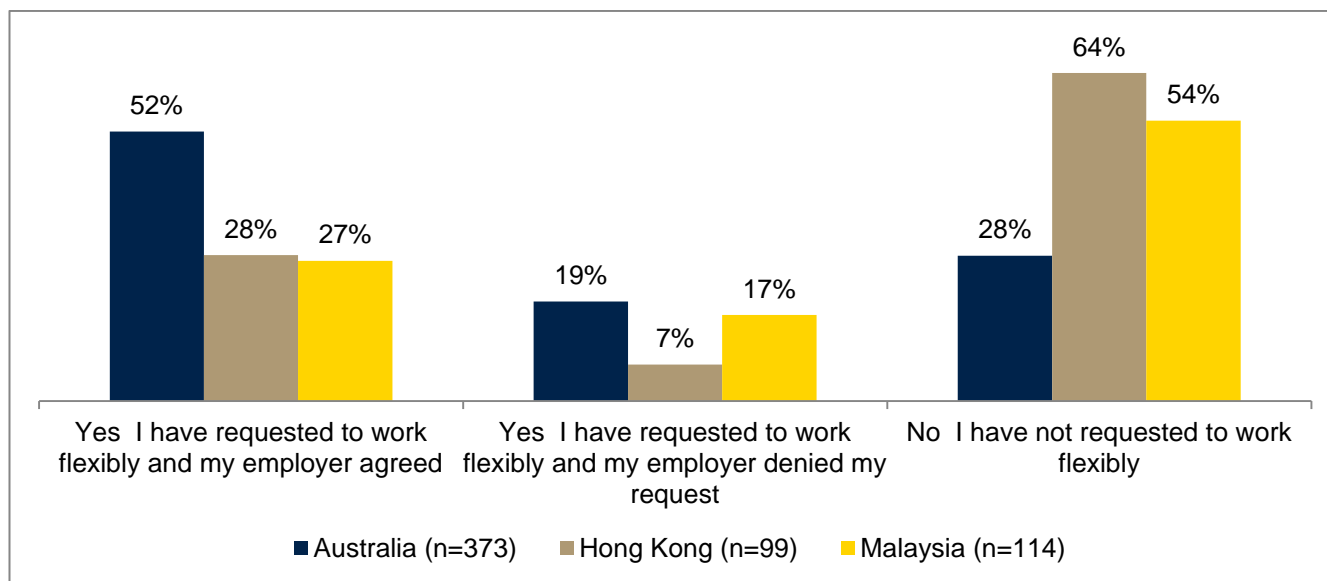
Requesting flexible work – by gender

	Women	Men
Percentage of respondents that requested to work flexibly	60.9%	53.9%

Requesting flexible work – likelihood of employer agreeing

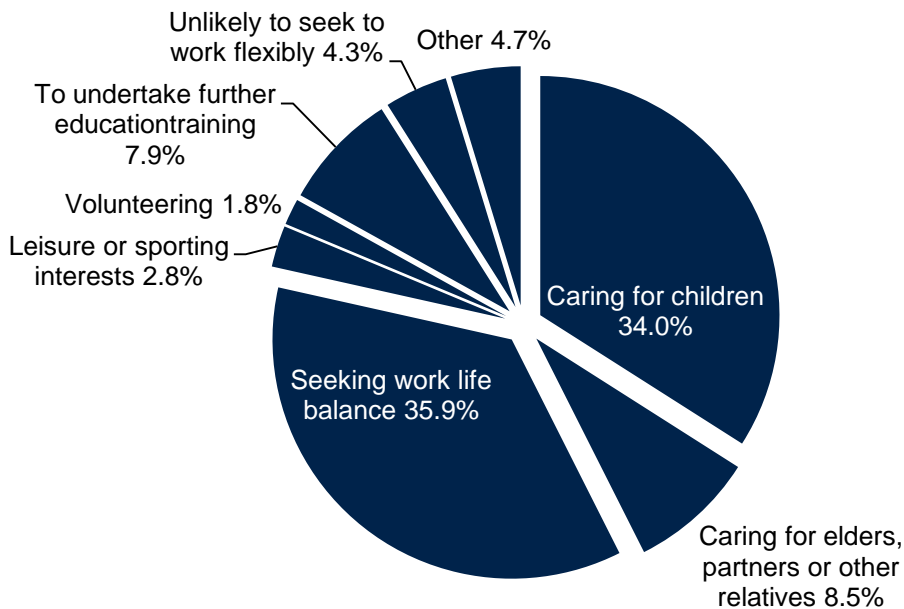
	Women	Men
Of those who requested to work flexibly, the percentage where the employer agreed	77.3%	68.9%

Requesting flexible work – comparison of Australian, Hong Kong and Malaysian results



REASONS FOR SEEKING TO WORK FLEXIBLY

Reasons for seeking to work flexibly – total



Reasons for seeking to work flexibly – by gender

For what reason would you most likely seek to work flexibly	Women	Men
Caring for children	40.3%	22.4%
Seeking work/life balance	32.2%	42.0%

Reasons for seeking to work flexibly – comparison of Australian, Hong Kong and Malaysian results

For what reason would you most likely seek to work flexibly	Australia (n=373)	Hong Kong (n=99)	Malaysia (N=114)
Caring for children	38.6%	25.3%	30.7%
Seeking work/life balance	35.7%	32.3%	37.7%

PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF FLEXIBLE WORK ON CAREER

Perceived impacts of flexible work on career - total

Perceived impact of accessing flexible work on promotion and work	
Negative impact on promotion chances	31.2%
No impact on promotion chances or the quality of work the respondent does	25.6%
Positive impact on the quality of work the respondent does	23.4%
Have an impact on the quality of work the respondent does	9.4%
Don't know	6.8%
Other	2.8%
Have a positive impact on promotion chances	0.9%

Perceived impacts of flexible work on career – by gender

Perceived impact of accessing flexible work on promotion and work	Women	Men
Negative impact on promotion chances	33.2%	25.7%
No impact on promotion chances or the quality of work the respondent does	26.0%	25.7%
Positive impact on the quality of work the respondent does	22.7%	24.9%

Perceived impacts of flexible work on career – comparison of those who have had a request to work flexibly approved against those who have not made a request

Perceived impact of accessing flexible work on promotion and work	Employer agreed to request to work flexibly	Have not requested to work flexibly
Negative impact on promotion chances	27.4%	32.1%
No impact on promotion chances or the quality of work the respondent does	33.2%	20.9%
Positive impact on the quality of work the respondent does	26.1%	19.1%

Perceived impacts of flexible work on career – comparison of Australian, Hong Kong and Malaysian results

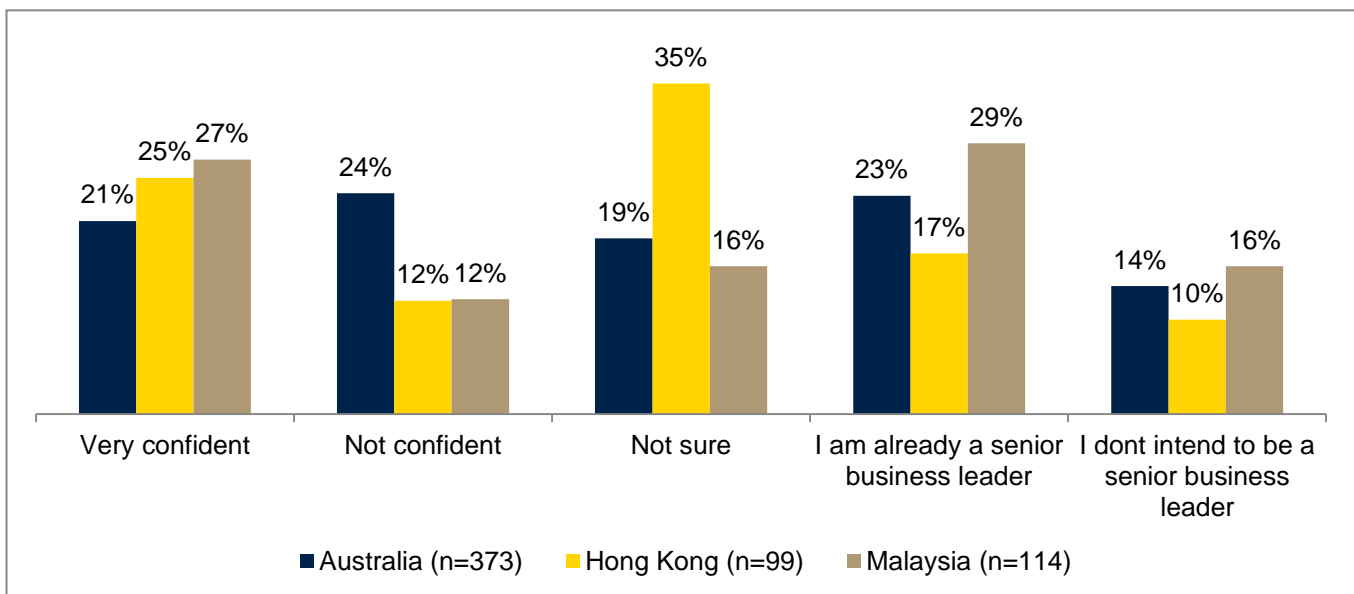
Perceived impact of accessing flexible work on promotion and work	Australia (n=373)	Hong Kong (n=99)	Malaysia (N=114)
Negative impact on promotion chances	35.1%	31.3%	20.2%
No impact on promotion chances or the quality of work the respondent does	25.2%	22.2%	24.6%
Positive impact on the quality of work the respondent does	20.1%	24.2%	36.0%

CONFIDENCE IN CAREER PROSPECTS

Perceived confidence that respondent will become a senior business leader – by gender

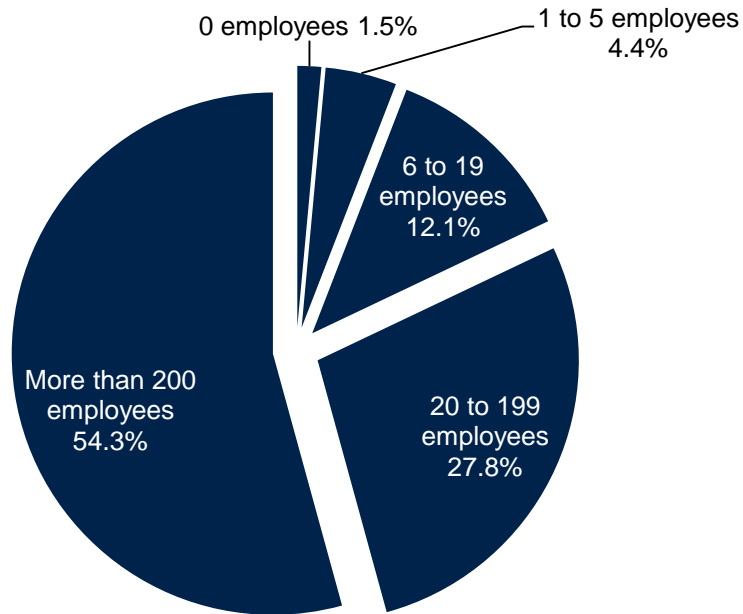
Given current work arrangements, confidence that respondent will become a senior business leader in their field	Women	Men
Very confident	19.6%	33.1%
Not confident	21.0%	11.4%
Not sure	22.2%	18.8%
I am already a senior business leader	20.8%	31.4%
I don't intend to be a senior business leader	16.5%	5.3%

Perceived confidence that respondent will become a senior business leader – comparison of Australian, Hong Kong and Malaysian results

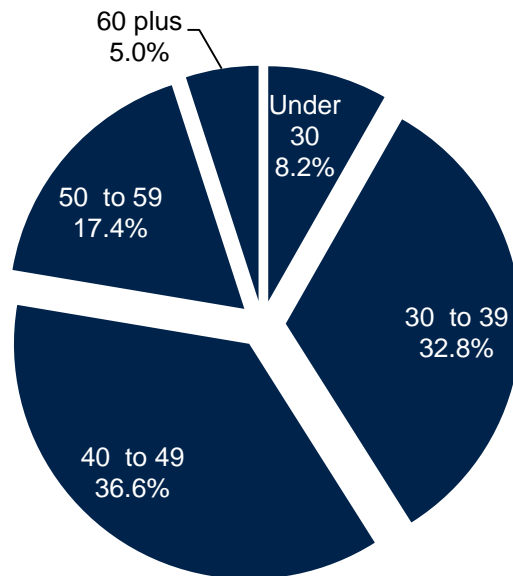


DEMOGRAPHICS

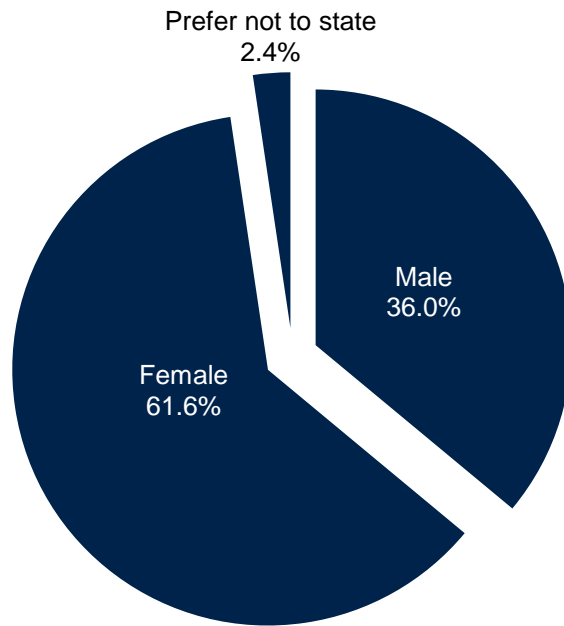
Employer size



Age profile



Gender



Location

