

Leave

Chapter 10

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Sick leave (paid)

66.1 hours

per FTE in 2023 (+**1.5** vs 2022)



Carer's leave

7.0 hours

per FTE in 2023 (+**0.8** vs 2022)



Special leave

2.4 hours

per FTE in 2023 (–**8.8** vs 2022)



Recreation leave

161.0 hours

per FTE in 2023 (+**15.3** vs 2022)



Parental leave (paid) – females

44 days

average days taken in 2023 (same as 2022)



Parental leave (paid) – males

28 days

average days taken in 2023 (+16 vs 2022)

In 2023, patterns of leave continued to differ from the levels generally experienced before the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the use of recreation leave returned to a level more consistent with that of earlier years.

Table 10.1: Average hours of leave taken per full-time equivalent, public sector, 2019 to 2023

Leave	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Sick leave (paid)	57.7	56.3	58.0	64.6	66.1
Carer's leave	6.4	7.1	7.2	6.2	7.0
Special leave	1.0	3.7	2.2	11.2	2.4
Recreation leave	159.9	149.3	148.5	145.7	161.0

Sick leave increased by 1.5 hours to 66.1 hours per full-time equivalent (FTE) in 2023 (see Table 10.1). The use of special leave decreased to 2.4 hours per FTE (–8.8 hours per FTE from 2022). Carer’s leave increased by 0.8 hours per FTE compared to 2022. Recreation leave taken increased by 15.3 hours per FTE compared to 2022. In 2023, 23.3% of employees had accrued a recreation leave balance of 30 days or more, a decrease of 2.4pp from 2022 (25.7%).

Sick leave

Overall, the changes in average sick leave hours per FTE were mixed across all services (see Table 10.2). The Teaching Service reported the largest increase (+11.1 hours per FTE), whereas the NSW Police Force showed the largest decline (–4.5 hours per FTE). The Teaching Service had the highest sick leave hours per FTE (77.7), followed by other Crown services (74.2 hours per FTE).

Table 10.2: Average sick leave taken by service, hours per FTE, 2022 to 2023

Service	2022	2023	Change
Public Service	57.1	58.4	1.4
NSW Health Service	67.1	64.3	–2.9
NSW Police Force	73.1	68.5	–4.5
Teaching Service	66.5	77.7	11.1
Transport Service	51.8	50.3	–1.5
Other Crown services	69.7	74.2	4.5
Total government sector	65.0	66.6	1.6
Total public sector	64.6	66.1	1.5

Carer's leave

All services reported an increase in average carer's leave per FTE in 2023, with the Transport Service and the Teaching Service contributing to the largest shifts (+2.9 and +1.7 hours per FTE respectively).

Table 10.3: Average carer's leave taken by service, hours per FTE, 2022 to 2023

Service	2022	2023	Change
Public Service	7.4	8.2	0.9
NSW Health Service	5.8	6.1	0.3

Service	2022	2023	Change
NSW Police Force	6.3	6.2	0
Teaching Service	6	7.7	1.7
Transport Service	1.7	4.6	2.9
Other Crown services	6.6	7.7	1.1
Total government sector	6.1	7.0	0.9
Total public sector	6.2	7.0	0.8

Special leave

Average special leave hours per FTE in 2023 decreased across all public sector services. Of these, the NSW Health Service and NSW Police Force reported the highest decreases (–12.2 and –13.2 hours per FTE respectively). Special leave usage was heightened in 2022 due to its application in particular circumstances relating to the pandemic and severe flooding.

Table 10.4: Average special leave taken by service, hours per FTE, 2022 to 2023

Service	2022	2023	Change
Public Service	10.9	2.5	–8.4
NSW Health Service	14.4	2.4	–12.0
NSW Police Force	14.9	1.7	–13.2
Teaching Service	10.2	3.5	–6.8
Transport Service	6.7	1.5	5.1
Other Crown services	6.1	3.5	–2.6
Total government sector	11.3	2.4	–8.9
Total public sector	11.2	2.4	–8.8

Recreation leave

Average recreation leave hours taken per FTE increased by 15.3 hours in 2023 in the NSW public sector. Across the government sector, services reported increases between 9.7 and 20.5 hours. Most notably, other Crown services had the highest increase of +20.5 hours per FTE, while the NSW Health Service and the Transport Service also had large increases, at +18.4 hours and +17.8 hours per FTE, respectively.

Table 10.5: Average recreation leave taken by service, hours per FTE, 2022 to 2023

Service	2022	2023	Change
Public Service	130.7	144.4	13.7
NSW Health Service	155.6	174.0	18.4
NSW Police Force	199.6	209.3	9.7
Transport Service	117.9	129.0	11.1
Other Crown services	115.4	136.0	20.5
Total government sector	149.6	162.1	15.7
Total public sector	148.8	161.0	15.3

Parental Leave

Table 10.6: Percentage of employees taking paid parental leave and average days taken by gender, government sector, 2019 to 2023

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male - average days taken	5	5	5	12	28
Female - average days taken	42	44	43	44	44

Male - % taking leave	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.5	3.9
Female - % taking leave	4.8	5.3	5.5	5.9	5.4

The NSW Government introduced a series of enhancements to the parental leave entitlements for NSW public sector employees to better balance work and family life, enable both parents to be involved in raising children, and support women to return to the workforce. The enhancements, effective 1 October 2022, include providing equal entitlements regardless of gender or parental role, with up to 14 weeks paid parental leave available. In addition, 2 weeks bonus paid parental leave is available when parents ‘more equally share’ paid parental leave entitlements and the period when all paid parental leave can be taken has been extended from 12 to 24 months¹.

The change in policy settings is potentially shifting the balance of leave arrangements, with the percentage of males taking paid parental leave increasing in 2023 while there was a small decrease in the percentage of females taking paid parental leave. Table 10.6 shows that the percentage of female government sector employees taking paid parental leave incrementally increased from 4.8% in 2019 to 5.9% in 2022 and dropped by 0.5pp in 2023 to 5.4%. In comparison, the percentage of males taking paid parental leave increased each year, with a 0.4pp increase to 3.9% in 2023.

There has been a notable increase in the average number of paid parental leave days taken by males, while for females this has remained stable. The average number of paid parental leave days taken by males in 2023 was more than 5 times the number in 2019 (28 vs 5) while females using paid parental leave took an average of 44 days in 2023².

Paid unscheduled absence – sick leave and carer’s leave

Paid unscheduled absence (PUA) is a combination of paid sick leave and carer’s leave that can be used as an indicator of workforce availability to assist with workforce planning.



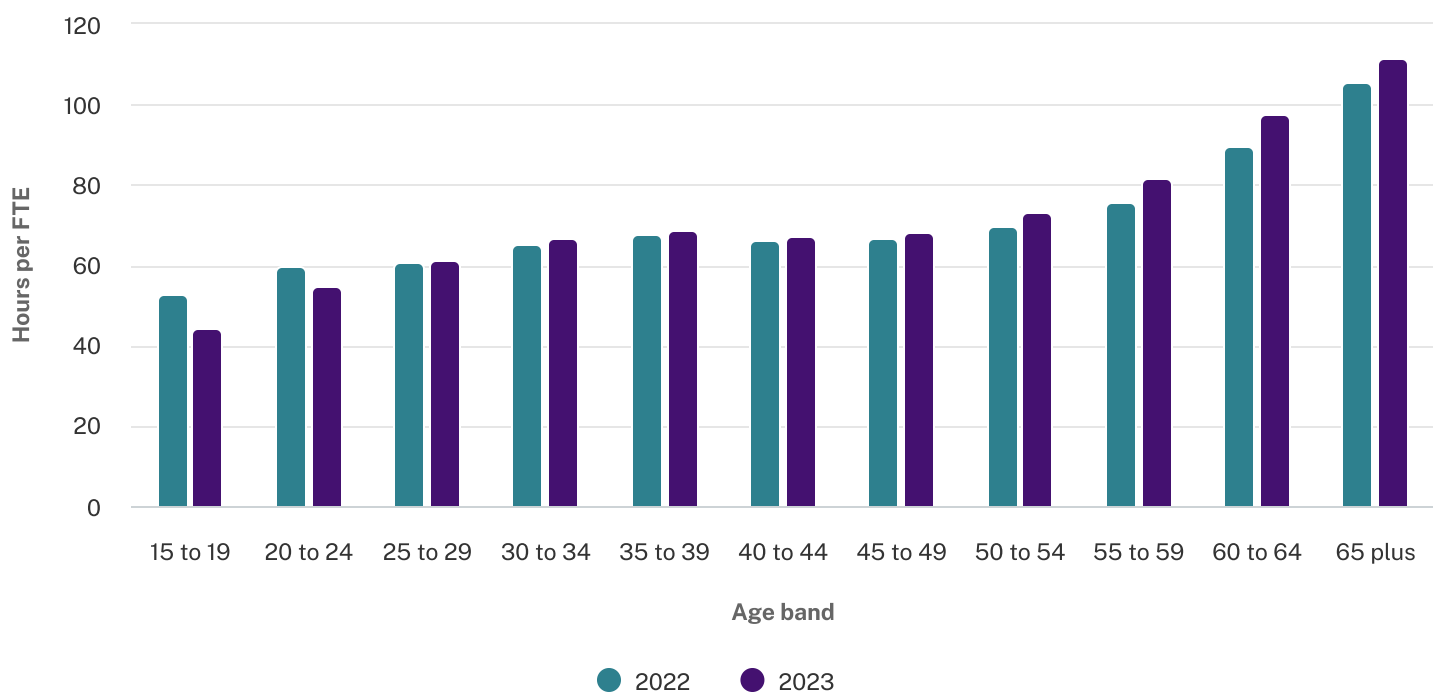
Paid unscheduled absence

73.1 hours

per FTE in 2023

There is an established relationship between PUA and age, with hours of leave generally increasing with age (Figure 10.1). Every age group experienced an increase in PUA hours per FTE between 2022 and 2023, except for the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups, which saw comparably large decreases of 8.8 and 4.7 hours respectively. The 55–59 and 60–64 age groups experienced the largest increases in PUA per FTE, increasing by 5.9 hours and 7.8 hours respectively.

Figure 10.1: Paid unscheduled absence by age band, 2022 to 2023³



Age band	2022	2023
15 to 19	52.9	44.2
20 to 24	59.7	54.9
25 to 29	60.6	61.2
30 to 34	65.3	66.7
35 to 39	67.7	68.9
40 to 44	66.3	67.4

Age band	2022	2023
45 to 49	66.8	68.1
50 to 54	69.6	73
55 to 59	75.8	81.6
60 to 64	89.8	97.6
65 plus	105.7	111.3

Figure 10.1: Paid unscheduled absence by age band, 2022 to 2023³

Notes

¹ **Paid Parental Leave – Parent with responsibility for care associated with the birth, adoption, altruistic surrogacy or permanent out-of-home care placement of a child.**

² Parental leave is expressed as days taken at full pay to more closely align with parental leave entitlements. Leave taken at half pay is converted to the equivalent number of days at full pay.

³ Where the employee age is unknown, the data is included in total sector figures. These accounted for 0.03% of total FTE in 2022 and 0.03% in 2023

Chapter 11

Regional profile of the public sector

