

Unscheduled absence

Chapter 10

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Unscheduled absence

64.1 hrs per FTE for NSW public sector employees in 2019

By age

<50 yrs

56.9 hrs per FTE for PUA in 2019

50+ yrs

76.2 hrs per FTE for PUA in 2019

By salary

<\$100 k

66.2 hrs per FTE for PUA in 2019

+\$100 k

60.3 hrs per FTE for PUA in 2019

Paid unscheduled absence (PUA) is a measure of paid working hours lost due to sickness or caring for an immediate family or household member. PUA is a key metric for effective workforce planning as it is an indicator of the productivity and health of a workforce.

The total number of hours of PUA in the NSW public sector increased 1.5% from 2018 to 20,183,435. However, the number of hours of PUA per full-time equivalent (FTE) decreased to 64.1, a reduction of 1.1 hours per FTE (see Table 10.1).

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Hours per FTE (non casual)	63.7	65.1	67.1	64.1	65.2	64.1
Change from previous year (hours)	1.4	1.3	2.0	-3.0	1.0	-1.1
PUA (,000 hours)	19,484	19,878	20,512	19,549	19,881	20,183
Percentage change from previous year	2.5	2.0	3.2	-4.7	1.7	1.5

Table 10.1: Paid unscheduled absence (total hours and hours per FTE), total public sector, 2014–2019

Most services experienced a decrease in hours of PUA per FTE relative to 2018 (see Table 10.2). The highest reduction occurred in the Public Service (-4.4 hours), the Transport Service (-2.8 hours) and the NSW Police Force (-2.6 hours). Decreases were spread across much of the sector, with 65.3% of agencies experiencing a decrease in PUA per FTE. Rates of PUA increased in only two services: the Teaching Service (2.2 hours) and other Crown services (0.5 hours). The largest contributor to the increase in PUA in other Crown Services was the TAFE Commission, where PUA per FTE increased by 8.5 hours compared to 2018.

Service	2018 FTE	2019 FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Public Service	58,091	59,912	69.9	65.5	-4.4
NSW Health Service	109,184	111,619	63.1	61.8	-1.3
NSW Police Force	19,290	19,285	67.3	64.7	-2.6

Service	2018 FTE	2019 FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Teaching Service	60,824	64,629	61.5	63.7	2.2
Transport Service	13,506	12,734	64.4	61.6	-2.8
Other Crown services	35,933	38,237	70.7	71.2	0.5
Total government sector	296,829	306,417	65.4	64.3	-1.1
State owned corporations	7,250	7,565	59.2	57.8	-1.4
External to government sector	978	1,019	52.0	52.0	0.0
Total public sector	305,058	315,000	65.2	64.1	-1.1

Table 10.2: Paid unscheduled absence by service, 2018–19

The direction of change in PUA per FTE from 2018 to 2019 was consistent across major occupation groups (see Table 10.3). There were reductions in six out of seven occupation groups, with Professionals being the only group to experience no change. The three occupation groups with the highest decreases were Community and Personal Service Workers (-2.6 hours), Machinery Operators and Drivers (-2.2 hours), and Labourers (-2.0 hours).

ANZSCO Major Group	2018 FTE	2019 FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Professionals	151,252	158,363	60.1	60.1	0.0
Technicians and Trades Workers	12,789	13,048	71.3	71.0	-0.3
Managers	20,234	21,395	52.4	51.9	-0.5

ANZSCO Major Group	2018 FTE	2019 FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Clerical and Administrative Workers	49,839	51,507	69.0	67.1	-1.9
Labourers	11,927	12,114	75.1	73.1	-2.0
Machinery Operators and Drivers	9,962	9,046	83.1	80.9	-2.2
Community and Personal Service Workers	48,852	49,335	74.5	71.9	-2.6
Total public sector	305,058	315,000	65.2	64.1	-1.1

Table 10.3: Paid unscheduled absence by occupation groups, 2018–19¹

The Professionals occupation group accounted for nearly half of the sector workforce, and its PUA remained unchanged since 2018. Clerical and Administrative Workers were the second largest occupation group and experienced a relatively large reduction in PUA per FTE (-1.9 hours).

Managers had the lowest overall rate of PUA, with 51.9 hours per FTE in 2019. This is a slight decrease from 2018. In 2019 those with a salary of \$100,000 or more took 5.9 hours less leave per FTE than those on lower salaries (60.3 hours per FTE versus 66.2 hours respectively). This is consistent with previous years.

Age

There is a well-established link between the age of employees and the rate of PUA. Consistent with the trend seen in earlier years, average hours per FTE for those aged 50 or over was close to 20 hours higher than for those under 50 in 2019 (76.2 hours and 56.9 hours, respectively). However, the biggest reduction in PUA between 2018 and 2019 was in the 60–64 age band, at -3.2 hours per FTE.

In 2019, there was an incremental increase in hours per FTE with each successive five-year age band, except between the 35–39 and 40–44 age bands (see Figure 10.1).

The rate of PUA decreased across most age groups between 2018 and 2019. The exception was in the 20–29 age band, where the rate of PUA increased

Age Bands	2018 FTE	2019 FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
15 to 19	287	353	42.8	40.5	-2.4
20 to 24	9,040	9,909	43.9	44.5	0.6
25 to 29	30,845	32,793	49.2	49.8	0.7
30 to 34	35,973	38,065	56.8	56.6	-0.2
35 to 39	35,054	37,039	61.1	60.1	-1.0
40 to 44	36,516	37,414	60.7	59.6	-1.0
45 to 49	42,282	42,974	61.8	60.6	-1.2
50 to 54	38,274	38,769	64.8	63.8	-1.0
55 to 59	39,714	38,958	75.4	74.2	-1.2
60 to 64	25,390	26,224	87.9	84.7	-3.2
65 plus	11,647	12,460	105.5	103.6	-1.9
Total public sector	305,058	315,000	65.2	64.1	-1.1

Table 10.4: Paid unscheduled absence by age, 2018-19²

Notes

¹ The Sales Worker category has been excluded due to its small size, so totals do not match total sector figures.

² Records where employee age is unknown are included in total sector figures. These accounted for 0.01% of total records in 2018 and 2019.