

Leave

Chapter 10, Workforce Profile Report 2021

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58.0 hours

sick leave (paid)

per FTE in 2021 (+1.7 vs 2020)



7.2 hours

carer's leave

per FTE in 2021 (+0.1 vs 2020)



2.2 hours

special leave

per FTE in 2021 (-1.5 vs 2020)



148.5 hours

recreation leave

per FTE in 2021 (-0.8 vs 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect workforce availability in 2021.

Table 10.1: Average hours of leave taken per FTE, public sector, 2017–21

	2017 hours per FTE	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE
Sick leave (paid)	59	59.7	57.7	56.3	58
Carer's leave	5.1	5.5	6.4	7.1	7.2
Special leave	0.9	0.8	1	3.7	2.2
Recreation leave ¹	163.2	162.7	159.9	149.3	148.5

Sick leave increased by 1.7 hours per FTE compared to 2020. This was the first increase since 2018. Analysis indicates this largely relates to leave requirements applicable to the Teaching Service during the pandemic.

Carer’s leave increased 0.1 hours per FTE compared to 2020. This follows a longer-term trend of increases in this category of leave.

Special leave dropped by 1.5 hours per FTE compared to 2020; however, it is still more than double the level of earlier years. As this leave could be used in certain circumstances related to COVID-19, this trend appears to reflect the lower case numbers over this period.

Recreation leave decreased 0.8 hours per FTE compared to 2020. This decrease largely relates to reduced levels of leave in the NSW Health Service. While the levels of leave increased in other parts of the sector compared to 2020, they remained below earlier years, reflecting the impact of pandemic-related travel restrictions.

Sick leave

Overall, average sick leave hours per FTE increased moderately, by 1.7 hours, in 2021. This was mainly driven by an increase in the Teaching Service (+9 hours per FTE). Education reported that School Teachers were directed to take leave if they were unwell, as a part of the management of the pandemic.

Within Other Crown services, NSW Trains and Sydney Trains also reported large increases in sick leave (4 hours and 1.1 hours, respectively).

The Public Service and Transport Service experienced a reduction in average sick leave hours per FTE in 2021. Around 80% of all agencies in the Public Service had a decreased level of sick leave, which could reflect higher numbers of office-based employees working from home.

Table 10.2: Average sick leave hours by service, 2020–21

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Public Service	55.0	50.2	-4.9
NSW Health Service	56.1	57.9	1.7
NSW Police Force	55.5	56.2	0.7
Teaching Service	59.3	68.3	9.0
Transport Service	49.7	45.5	-4.2
Other Crown services	59.1	62.9	3.7
Total government sector	56.6	58.4	1.8
Total public sector	56.3	58.0	1.7

Carer's leave

Carer’s leave has remained relatively consistent, only increasing by 0.1 hours per FTE compared to 2020. The Teaching Service recorded the largest increase (+1.1 hours per FTE), while the Transport Service experienced the largest decrease (-0.8 hours per FTE).

Table 10.3: Average carer's leave hours by service, 2020–21

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Public Service	8.2	7.7	-0.5
NSW Health Service	5.9	6.0	0.1
NSW Police Force	7.3	6.8	-0.5
Teaching Service	5.9	7.0	1.1
Transport Service	6.2	5.4	-0.8
Other Crown services	10.4	10.2	-0.2
Total government sector	7.0	7.1	0.1

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Total public sector	7.1	7.2	0.1

Special leave

All services had a reduction in average special leave hours per FTE in 2021, except the NSW Police Force, which had the highest level of special leave (4.1 hours per FTE). The Police Force attributes this to the requirement to self-isolate during the pandemic, as well as workplace closures and transport disruptions. The Teaching Service reported the lowest average special leave hours (1.1 hour per FTE) in 2021. Other Crown services experienced the sharpest decline in special leave hours (-2.5 hours per FTE). Within Other Crown services, the largest contributors to the reduction in special leave hours were NSW Trains (-5.6 hours) and School Administrative and Support (-3.7 hours).

Table 10.4: Average special leave hours by service, 2019–21

Service	2019 hours per FTE	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2021 vs 2020
Public Service	1.7	5.0	2.8	-2.2
NSW Health Service	0.5	3.5	2.3	-1.2
NSW Police Force	1.8	3.8	4.1	0.3
Teaching Service	0.5	2.3	1.1	-1.2
Transport Service	0.9	3.3	2.4	-0.9
Other Crown services	0.7	4.8	2.3	-2.5
Total government sector	0.9	3.7	2.3	-1.4
Total public sector	1.0	3.7	2.2	-1.5

Recreation leave

Average recreation leave hours taken per FTE decreased by 0.8 hours in 2021. This was largely driven by reduced leave in the NSW Health Service (-7.3 hours to 156.2 hours per FTE). Decreases occurred across most Local Health Districts and large Health agencies, highlighting the impact of the pandemic on this

service.

All other public sector services had an increase in average recreation leave hours taken per FTE in 2021, compared to decreases in 2020, although levels remain below those seen in earlier years. The NSW Police Force experienced the largest increase, at 6.1 hours per FTE (up from 195.3 hours in 2020), due to the active management of excess recreation leave balances.

In the Public Service, average recreation leave taken per FTE increased by 4.7 hours. More than 60% of agencies within the Public Service had an increase.

The increase in Other Crown services occurred across the majority of agencies, with the largest contributors being the Treasury Corporation (+28.2 hours) and NSW Trains (+10.5 hours).

Table 10.5: Average recreation leave hours by service, 2019–21

Service	2019 hours per FTE	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2021 vs 2020
Public Service	141.6	130.8	135.5	4.7
NSW Health Service	170.6	163.6	156.2	-7.3
NSW Police Force	212.1	195.3	201.3	6.1
Transport Service	138.8	116.8	119.6	2.8
Other Crown services	130.4	119.4	124.2	4.8
Total government sector	160.9	150.7	149.3	-1.4
Total public sector	159.9	149.3	148.5	-0.8

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 is generally used as an indicator of the productivity and health of a workforce, to assist workforce planning.



65.1 hours

per FTE in 2021

By age

Aged 50 or under

57.8 hours per FTE of PUA in 2021

Aged 50+

77.6 hours per FTE of PUA in 2021

By salary

Salary under \$100k

68.8 hours per FTE of PUA in 2021

Salary \$100k+

59.6 hours per FTE of PUA in 2021

Age

The established link between the age of employees and the rate of PUA continued this year. In 2021, the gap in average hours per FTE for those aged 50 or over (77.6 hours) and those aged under 50 (57.8 hours) narrowed slightly to 19.8 hours. Every age group experienced an increase in PUA between 2020 and 2021. The 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 age groups experienced the largest increases in PUA per FTE, averaging 4 hours and 3.7 hours, respectively.

Table 10.6: Paid unscheduled absence by age, 2020–21²

Age	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
15-19	38.5	41.8	3.3
20-24	43.5	47.5	4.0

Age	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
25 - 29	48.5	52.2	3.7
30 - 34	55.7	58.7	3.0
35 - 39	59.3	60.5	1.2
40 - 44	58.4	59.0	0.6
45 - 49	59.0	60.6	1.7
50 - 54	62.8	63.8	1.0
55 - 59	72.0	72.6	0.6
60 - 64	88.3	88.8	0.5
65+	107.9	108.6	0.7
Total public sector	63.5	65.1	1.7

Notes

¹ Due to the unique leave arrangements in schools, data for the recreation leave taken for the Teaching Service and the School Administrative and Support Agency is excluded from all recreation leave figures.

² Where the employee age is unknown, the data is included in total sector figures. These accounted for 0.04% of total FTE in 2020 and 0.04% in 2021.

Next chapter

Regional profile of the public sector

