

Leave

Chapter 10

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64.7 hours

sick leave (paid)

per FTE in 2022

+6.7 vs 2021



11.2 hours

special leave

per FTE in 2022

+9.0 vs 2021



6.2 hours
carers leave

per FTE in 2022

-1.0 vs 2021



146.0 hours
recreation leave

per FTE in 2022

-2.5 vs 2021

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and NSW flood emergency is evident in the changing patterns of employee leave in 2022.

Table 10.1: Average hours of leave taken per full-time equivalent, public sector, 2018 to 2022

Leave	2018 hours per FTE	2019 hours per FTE	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE
Sick leave (paid)	59.7	57.7	56.3	58	64.7
Carers leave	5.5	6.4	7.1	7.2	6.2
Special leave	0.8	1	3.7	2.2	11.2
Recreation leave ¹	162.7	159.9	149.3	148.5	146.0

Sick leave increased by 6.7 hours to 64.7 hours per full-time equivalent (FTE) in 2022 (see Table 10.1). This is 4.8 hours per FTE higher than the average rate for the last 10 years, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, the use of special leave increased to 11.2 hours per FTE (+9.0 hours per FTE), the largest amount ever reported. From 2014 through to 2019, special leave ranged between 0.8 and 1.4 hours per FTE. From 2020 to 2022, special leave usage increased due to its application in particular circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the severe bushfires in 2020 and the severe flooding in 2022.

Carer’s leave decreased by 0.9 hours per FTE compared to 2021. This is the first year this category of leave has decreased after consistent increases since 2017. This may have been impacted by a number of factors related to the pandemic. There were unique leave arrangements available through special leave to care for

close contacts with COVID-19 and the increase in working from home arrangements and extended core hours for many employees may have enabled them to balance some care arrangements with their work.

Recreation leave taken decreased by 2.5 hours per FTE compared to 2021. This decline is consistent across the sector. Recreation leave usage was at the lowest point since 2013, reflecting the impact of pandemic-related travel restrictions and increased rates of sickness hindering planned recreation leave. At the same time, 25.8% of employees had a recreation leave balance of 30 days or more, an increase of 5.8pp since 2019.

Sick leave

Overall, average sick leave hours per FTE increased across all services except for the Teaching Service (see Table 10.2). The main increases were in NSW Police Force (+16.9 hours per FTE), NSW Health Service (+9.3 hours per FTE) and other Crown services (+6.9 hours per FTE). The main increases in other Crown services were in Sydney Trains (+23.6 hours per FTE) and NSW Trains (+24.8 hours per FTE).

The Teaching Service had a decrease of 1.7 hours per FTE in sick leave in 2022. The rate of leave reduced significantly while remote learning was implemented as a strategy to enable continued safe learning during the COVID-19 Delta variant lockdown.

Table 10.2: Average sick leave hours by service, 2021 to 2022

Service	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Public Service	50.2	57.4	7.2
NSW Health Service	57.9	67.2	9.3
NSW Police Force	56.2	73.1	16.9
Teaching Service	68.3	66.5	-1.7
Transport Services	45.5	51.8	6.2
Other Crown services	62.9	69.7	6.9
Total government sector	58.4	65.1	6.7
Total public sector	58.0	64.7	6.7

Carers leave

All services saw a decrease in average carer’s leave per FTE in 2022, with the Transport Service and other Crown services contributing to the largest shifts (-3.7 and -3.6 hours per FTE respectively).

Table 10.3: Average carer's leave hours by service, 2021 to 2022

Service	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours)
Public Service	7.7	7.4	-0.3
NSW Health Service	6.0	5.8	-0.2
NSW Police Force	6.8	6.3	-0.6
Teaching Service	7.0	6.0	-1.0
Transport Services	5.4	1.7	-3.7
Other Crown services	10.2	6.6	-3.6
Total government sector	7.1	6.1	-1.0
Total public sector	7.2	6.2	-1.0

Special leave

Average special leave hours per FTE in 2022 increased across all public sector services. Of these, the NSW Health Service and NSW Police Force reported the highest increases (+12.1 and +10.8 hours per FTE respectively). The application of special leave in particular circumstances relating to the pandemic and the severe flooding in 2022 is evident in the increases across the services that had key roles in these emergency responses.

Table 10.4: Average special leave hours by service, 2010 to 2022

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2022 vs 2021
Public Service	5.0	2.8	11.0	8.1
NSW Health Service	3.5	2.3	14.4	12.1

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2022 vs 2021
NSW Police Force	3.8	4.1	14.9	10.8
Teaching Service	2.3	1.1	6.7	5.6
Transport Services	3.3	2.4	6.1	3.7
Other Crown services	4.8	2.3	10.2	7.9
Total government sector	3.7	2.3	11.3	9.0
Total public sector	3.7	2.2	11.2	9.0

Recreation leave

The impact of the pandemic and severe floods is reflected in changes to recreation leave patterns across the NSW public sector. Average recreation leave hours taken per FTE decreased by 2.5 hours in 2022. The largest contributors to this decrease were other Crown services (-8.7 hours per FTE) and the Public Service (-4.0 hours per FTE).

Other Crown services reported decreases across most of its agencies, with the largest contributors being the TAFE Commission (-8.8 hours) and NSW Trains (-17.7 hours). The largest contributor to the decrease in the Public Service are the Office of the NSW Rural Fire Service (-18.0 hours per FTE) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (-15.6 hours per FTE).

Table 10.5: Average recreation leave hours by service, 2020 to 2022

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2022 vs 2021
Public Service	130.8	135.5	131.4	-4.0
NSW Health Service	163.6	156.2	155.7	-0.5
NSW Police Force	195.3	201.3	199.6	-1.7
Transport Services	116.8	119.6	117.9	-1.7

Service	2020 hours per FTE	2021 hours per FTE	2022 hours per FTE	Change (hours) 2022 vs 2021
Other Crown services	119.4	124.2	115.5	-8.7
Total government sector	150.7	149.3	146.7	-2.6
Total public sector	149.3	148.5	146.0	-2.5

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.



70.9 hours
per FTE in 2022

By age

Aged 50 or under
65.2 hours per FTE in 2022

Aged 50+
80.7 hours per FTE in 2022

Age

There is an established link between the age of employees and the rate of PUA, with employees aged 50 or over taking higher amounts of PUA leave than those under 50. While this trend continued in 2022 (80.7 hours vs 65.2 hours), the gap between the groups narrowed to 15.5 hours per FTE. This decrease has

occurred over the pandemic period, decreasing 5.5 hours per FTE since 2020.

Every age group experienced an increase in PUA between 2021 and 2022, except for those aged over 65, which saw a slight decrease. The 20–24 and 15–19 age groups experienced the largest increases in PUA per FTE, increasing 12.2 hours and 11.3 hours, respectively.

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 2021 and 0.03% in 2022

Chapter 11

Regional profile of the public sector

