

Health and wellbeing of the NSW non government workforce

Background

NADA and the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) conducted a survey on the health and wellbeing of the NSW non government AOD workforce in 2017.

The survey of 294 workers showed that personal wellbeing rates were relatively high. Some of the key findings are presented here, along with strategies to enhance worker wellbeing. For detailed findings, [download the full report](#).



Respondents

Respondents were more likely to be:

- female (66%)
- heterosexual (82%)
- aged over 40 years (60%)
- born in Australia (77%), not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity (92%), and comfortable speaking English only (87%).

Respondents were more likely to work:

- on a permanent full-time basis (58%)
- providing direct client services (76%)
- as an AOD worker (34%)
- in an urban location (53%).

Results

Let's celebrate...

- Who are we?** Respondents came from a diverse range of personal and professional backgrounds:
- **23.5%** of workers were born overseas
 - **15%** identified as LGBTI
 - **42%** identified as having lived experience
 - **40%** had undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications

- How are we?** Personal wellbeing levels were relatively high, and burnout was very uncommon:
- **81%** rated their health as at least 'good'
 - **88%** reported moderate-high levels of resilience
 - **80%** reported positive quality of life
 - **58%** were satisfied with their work/life balance
 - Burnout was rare (at **2%**)

- What are we doing to protect our health & wellbeing?** Approximately **half to two-thirds** reported that they regularly engaged in behaviours to optimise their health and wellbeing such as taking breaks during the work day, eating well, getting a good night's sleep, socialising, engaging in non-work interests and asking for help when needed.

Let's strengthen and watch out for...

- A large proportion were relatively young, new to their role, and had limited sector experience:
- **40%** were aged 20–39 years
 - **38%** had been in their current role for <1 year
 - **44%** had <5 years AOD work experience
 - **18%** did not have an AOD-related qualification

- Comparative levels of tobacco use, and risky alcohol consumption were concerningly high:
- The number of respondents that reported daily tobacco use was higher than the national average (12%) at **16%**
 - **24%** reported drinking at risky levels 1–4 times per week

Approximately **one-third** reported that they 'never' or 'rarely' take sick leave when needed, consciously limit screen time, and take 'time out' to rest and recharge.

How are we working? Most respondents reported moderate-high levels of occupational self-efficacy, job satisfaction, engagement, and were optimistic their work could make a difference:

- **93%** were confident they had the knowledge and skills they needed to do their job effectively
- **77%** reported high levels of job satisfaction
- **88%** reported that they frequently felt a sense of vigour, dedication, and absorption—all indicators of engagement—about their work
- **99%** reported moderate to high levels of therapeutic optimism

How are our workplaces faring? Several aspects of respondents working conditions were perceived positively:

- **85%** reported that they felt supported to undertake their role
- **63%** were positive about team cohesion in their workplace
- **71%** were positive about opportunities for growth and development
- **53%** reported that their workplace offers flexible working arrangements

A relatively large proportion of respondents reported working additional hours and perceived their workplace job to be stressful, and cognitively demanding, with many intending to leave the sector:

- **53%** reported working additional hours
- **32%** reported high levels of workplace job stress
- **48%** reported high levels of cognitive demands
- **20%** planning to look for work outside the AOD field

Several aspects of respondents working conditions were perceived less positively:

- **58%** reported that they could not live comfortably on their pay
- **25%** believed that there was at least a medium chance that they would lose their job in the next 12 months for a reason beyond their control
- **38%** reported inadequate staffing levels
- **29%** perceived leadership quality to be low
- **26%** reported low levels of open communication
- **Less than half** reported having access to internal (37%) or external (42%) clinical supervision
- **9%** reported experiencing bullying regularly



Recommendations

What can we do enhance worker wellbeing?

- Promote good, open and honest communication at all organisational levels.
- Provide leadership training, coaching and mentoring to managers.
- Ensure all employees receive a formal induction and have a current job description.
- Ensure staff receive adequate clinical and administrative supervision.
- Develop confidential grievance handling processes and address instances of bullying promptly.
- Provide programs to enhance worker coping and resilience and reduce stress and burnout.
- Support staff to develop a self-care plan and encourage help-seeking behaviours in the workplace.