

CLOCK OFF & SWITCH OFF

Right to Disconnect Report - July 2023

Work-life balance, unpaid overtime, contact after hours and understaffing are systemic issues for many Australian workers.

It is vital that workers can switch off from work and be properly paid for their hours worked – that includes being paid to be available to respond to work-related calls and emails.

To launch the 'Clock Off and Switch Off' campaign for the Right to Disconnect, the Australian Services Union surveyed people working in professional clerical and administrative roles about their work/life balance and unpaid overtime. The findings are explored in detail in this report.

We need the right to clock off and switch off to:

- **Ensure limits around working times are fundamental for all workers;**
- **End unpaid overtime;**
- **Protect workers from negative consequences for refusing contact outside of working hours; and**
- **Safeguard people from being pressured to be constantly connected or available to their employers.**

The right to disconnect is becoming a reality across the world – in countries including France, Spain, Canada, Argentina and Ireland.

It's time for Australia to act.



Executive summary

This report explores how Australian Service Union (ASU) members working in professional clerical and administrative roles in the private sector need a right to disconnect. It provides insight into the blurring of work and home boundaries.

We need a right to disconnect to ensure limits around working times are a fundamental right for employees, to protect employees from adverse consequences for refusing contact outside of working hours, and to safeguard workers from being pressured to be constantly connected or available to their employers.

This report provides evidence from a survey (n= 154) drawn from the ASU membership including professional administrative workers; call centre workers; NGO/Not-for-profit workers; Social and community services workers; local government workers and legal professionals to provide a snapshot of how this cohort is working outside of their agreed working hours, especially since Covid-19 and the rise in flexible working arrangements.

Overall, the survey data reveals that this group of workers feel significantly impacted by the work creep into private time, with heavy workloads and the difficulty to disengage from an always-on culture impacting their well-being.

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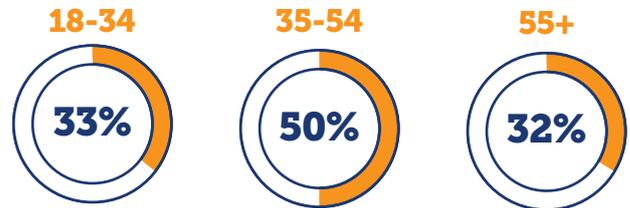
Unable to volunteer for causes I would like to as work interferes.

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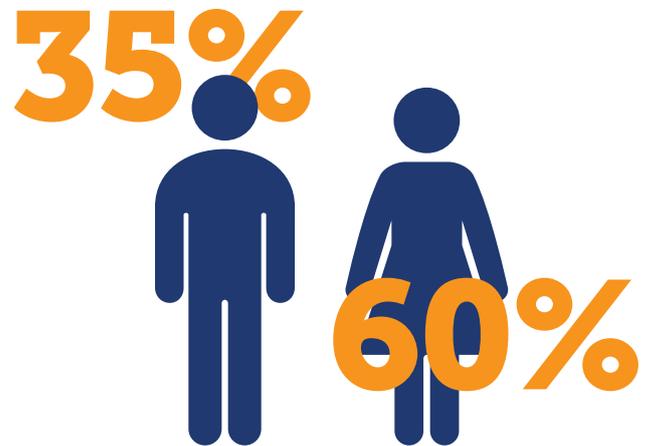
Demographics

Total number of respondents: 154

Age: 67% respondents over the age of 35



Gender: 60% of respondents were female, 35% male and 5% prefer not to say or self-describe



Employment type: The majority of respondents (93%) work as a permanent employee either in full-time or part-time employment. 7% work as a fixed term employee, casual or in another form of employment. Women are more likely to work part-time than men (81% vs 14%).

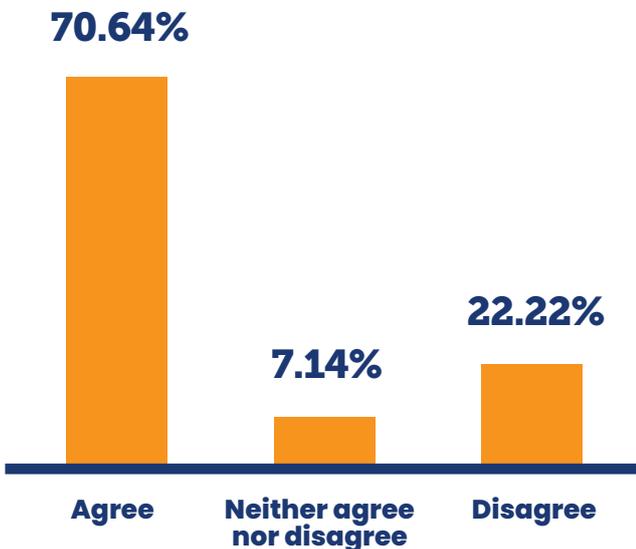
“No time or space for basic self care like cleaning my home, or even cooking a healthy meal.”

Survey results

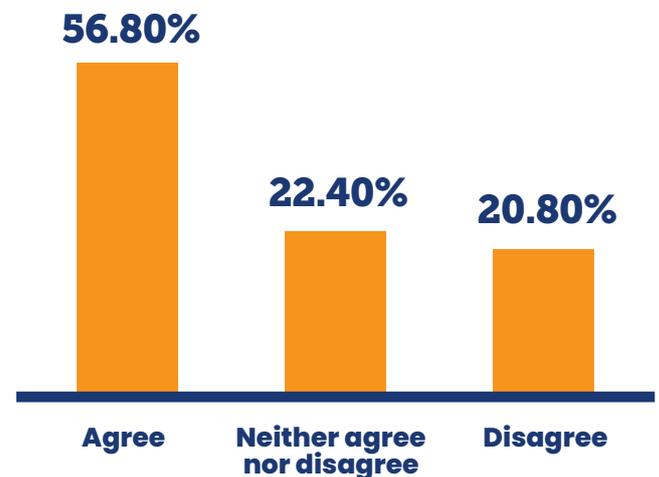
Working outside of work hours

- 70% of workers often take work related calls or check emails outside of work hours.
- 1 in 3 workers are expected to perform work outside of scheduled working hours.
- 67% of workers struggle to complete their workload within their normal working hours.
- Half of all workers feel pressured to take calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours.
- 57% of workers find it difficult to say no to performing work outside of normal working hours.

I often take work related calls or check my emails outside of work hours



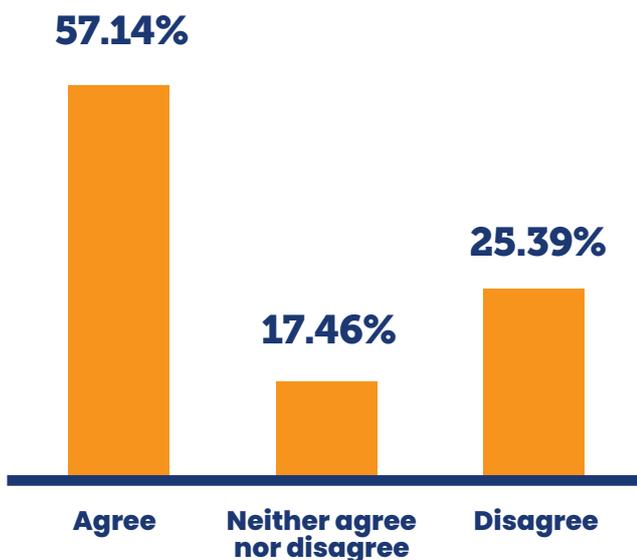
I find it difficult to say no to performing work outside of normal working hours



Consequences of blurred work time boundaries

- 57% of workers feel anxious if they do not answer calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours.
- Half of all workers feel they will be viewed negatively in their workplace if they do not take calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours.
- Half of all workers feel their career will be negatively affected if they do not take calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours.
- Nearly 1 in 4 workers feel that they will be disciplined if they do not answer calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours.

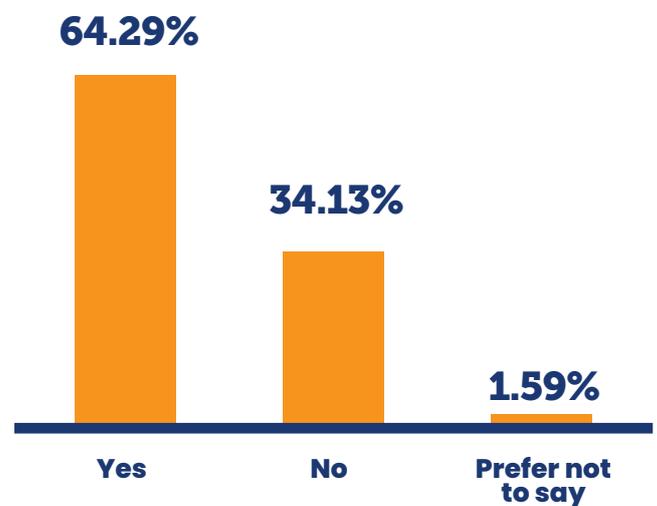
I sometimes feel anxious if I do not answer calls and/or monitor emails outside of work hours



Contact during periods of leave

- 64% of workers have been contacted in relation to work whilst on a form of leave (eg. sick leave, carers leave, annual leave, long service leave).

I have been contacted in relation to work whilst on a form of leave (eg. sick leave, carers leave, annual leave, long service leave)



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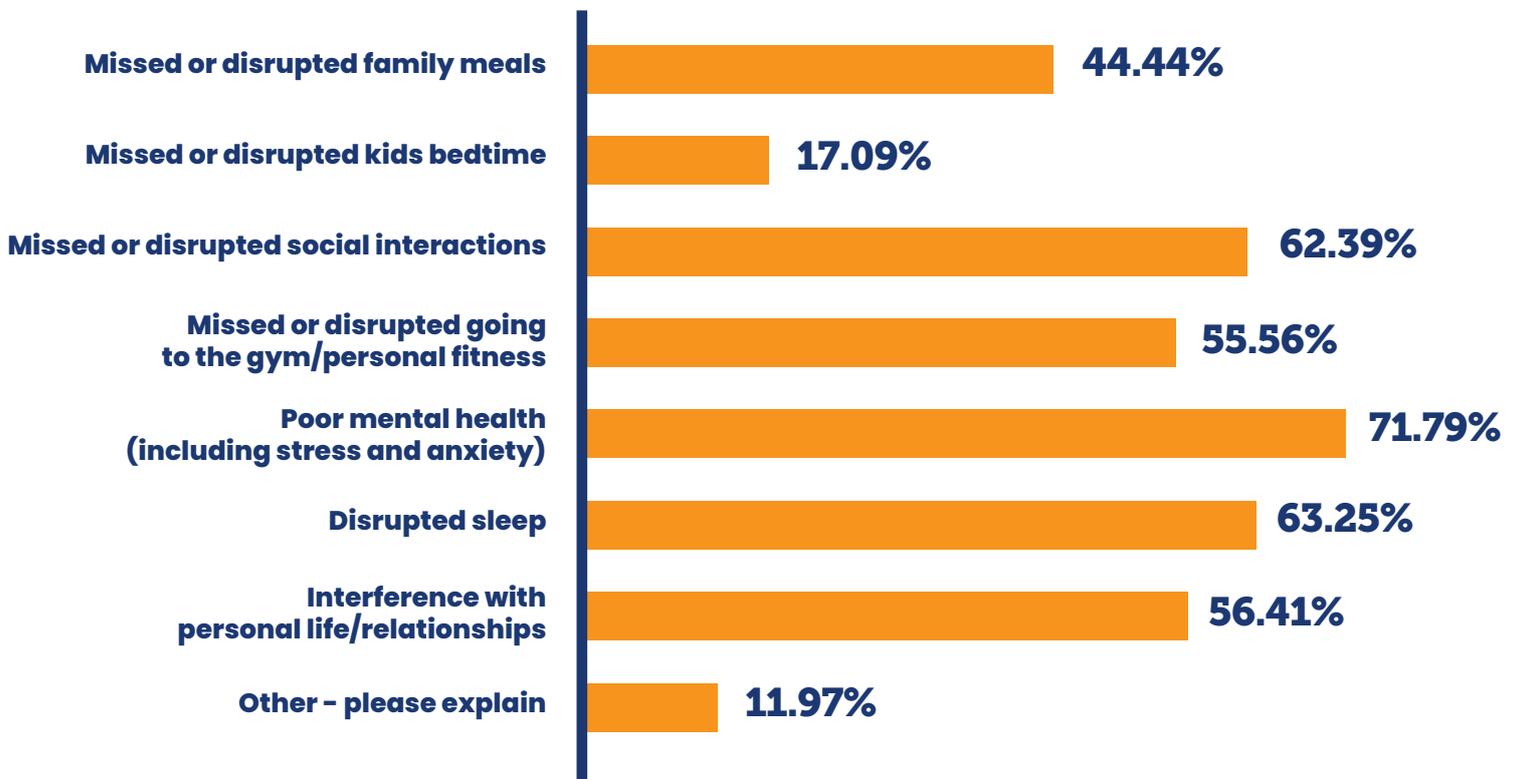
Sunday afternoon preparing for work next day is cutting into my Sunday relaxation as I am checking emails for next week.

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Impact on personal lives

- 80% of workers feel working outside of hours has resulted in disruption to their leisure time.
- 72% of workers have experienced poor mental health (stress and anxiety) due to working outside of normal work hours
- Other negative consequences experienced due to working outside normal work hours include: disrupted sleep (63%), missed or disrupted social interactions (62%), interference with personal life/relationships (56%), missed or disrupted ability to go to the gym/personal fitness (56%); and missed or disrupted family meals 44%

What negative consequences have you experienced due to working outside of your work hours (please tick all that apply)



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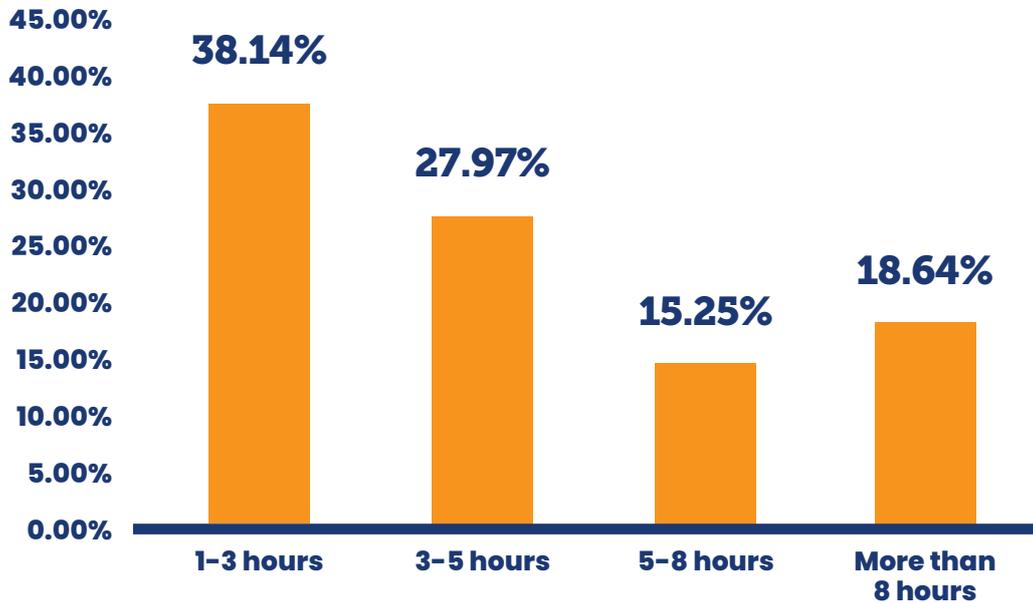
Unable to help with my kids homework.

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Unpaid overtime

- 6 in 10 workers work in excess of 3 unpaid hours on average per fortnight (28% work 3-5hrs, 15% work 5-8hrs, 19% work 8+hrs)

How many unpaid hours outside of work would you say you work on an average fortnight:



Support for a right to disconnect

- 78% agree that a legal protection on the right to disconnect would be beneficial to them in their working life.

I feel that a legal protection on the right to disconnect would be beneficial to me in my working life

