readiness
for Business

Case Study

Workplace Factor Trends Across Australian Workplaces

What the Data Tells Us

From culture to workload: this report maps out the mental safety story unfolding across Australian workplaces, with a specific focus on psychosocial hazards, and looks at why understanding both people and systems is the key to prevention, compliance, and care.

June 2025

Executive Summary

This case study analyses more than 10,000 workplace factor responses collected by Readiness across a 12-week survey cycle, spanning 37 organisations and 13 ANZSIC industry sectors. These insights reveal where Australian workplaces are performing well and where structural conditions pose persistent risks to mental safety.

The data confirms that while interpersonal safety hazards like bullying and harassment are generally well managed, deeper risks lie in how work is structured. Hazards such as Workload, Job Control, Work Flexibility, Work Life Balance, and Reward and Recognition consistently return lower scores across multiple sectors. These risks are often interlinked, forming hazard clusters that can amplify distress and disengagement if left unaddressed.

Sectors with the highest uplift needs include Accommodation and Food Services, Administrative and Support Services, Retail, Real Estate, and frontline roles in Education and Health. These industries face unique pressures, from shift unpredictability to limited job autonomy.

The Readiness platform not only highlights where psychosocial risk exists, but provides a clear path to practical intervention. For clients, this is a roadmap for action and compliance. For service partners, it's an opportunity to target support where it matters most, be it digital tools for self assessment or leadership led workshops to address key hazards.

In short, this case study is more than a report card. It's a call to shift from reactive policy to proactive system design, creating workplaces where people can thrive.

Are You Managing Psychosocial Risk, or Just Hoping for the Best?

About The Data

This case study presents an in-depth analysis of workplace factors drawn from 10,923 responses collected via Readiness, spanning 37 organisations across 13 ANZSIC industry sectors.

The data was gathered over a 12-week Readiness survey cycle, designed to measure the right topics at the right frequency to provide an accurate picture of how things are tracking in Australian workplaces.

The chart below shows the number of responses received for each topic. You'll notice that dynamic, high-risk issues were measured more frequently than slower-moving or lower-risk topics.

While our focus is aligned with the 14 psychosocial hazards defined in the Workwell framework, our data includes several additional workplace factors that we've been measuring consistently over time. These have proven valuable in understanding broader patterns of risk and are included in the analysis below.

Each topic chart uses red circles to visualise the data. The position of the circle shows the score and the date it was recorded. The size of the circle indicates the number of responses at that point. A larger circle means more people recorded that score. Keep in mind that circle sizes are scaled independently per chart, as sample sizes vary by topic.

Some red circles appear layered. That's because they include responses from multiple sectors – each layer represents a different industry. While we explored ways to visually separate sectors, it reduced clarity, so we've opted for a cleaner view. If you'd like sector specific data, we're happy to provide it...just get in touch.
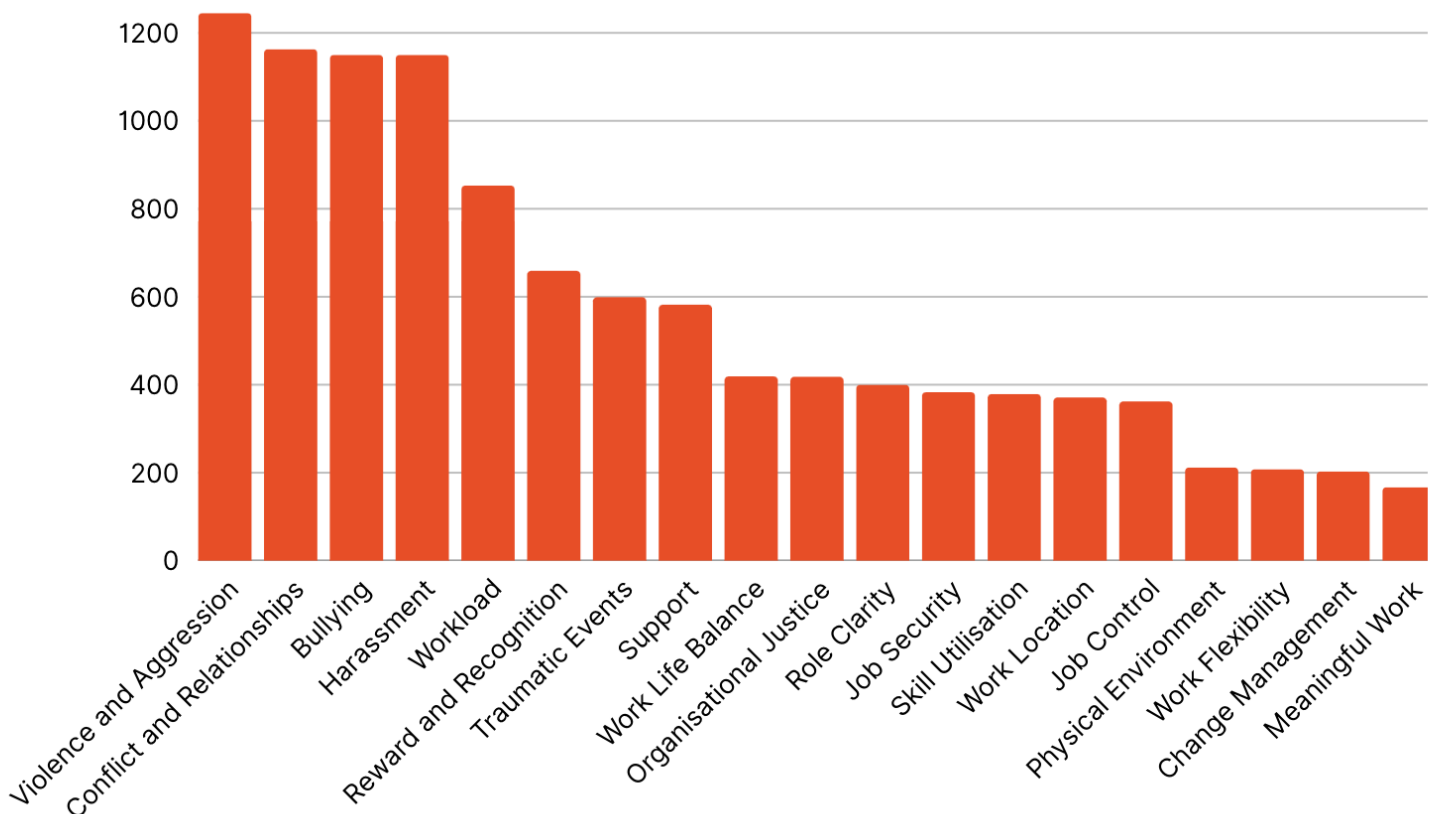
• Figure 1 – Number of responses per topic.

1. Bullying

Bullying is one of the most visible and legally sensitive psychosocial hazards in the workplace. While many sectors scored highly in this area, a closer analysis of the data reveals areas of concern that warrant urgent attention.
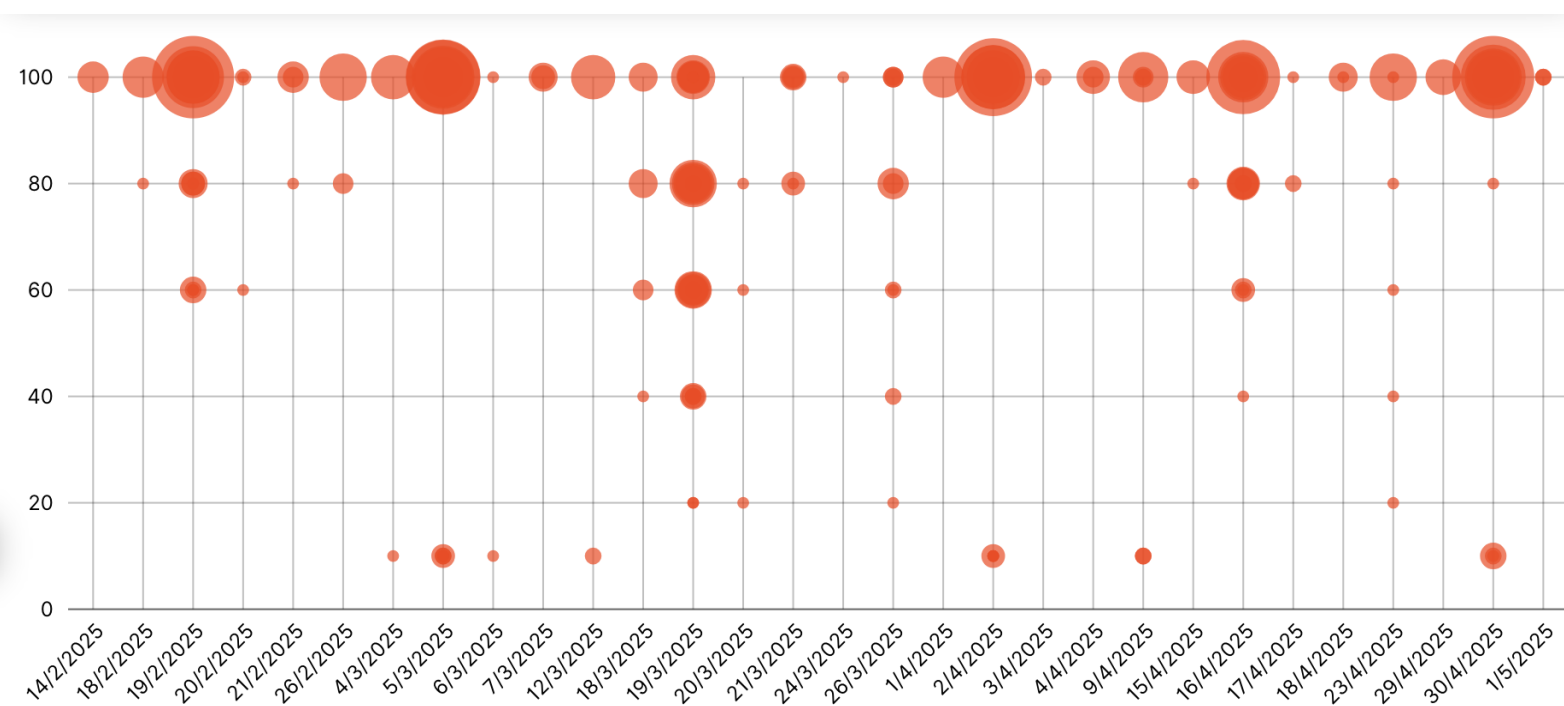
Across all sectors, 14.6% of Bullying scores fell below 70, which is a threshold that typically signals moderate to high risk. These lower scores were not evenly distributed: five sectors showed measurable clusters of concern, with the Information Media and Telecommunications industry recording the highest proportion of low scores (18.2%), followed closely by Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services (15.6%) and Manufacturing (15.5%).

These sectors share some common risk dynamics: dispersed or decentralised workforces, tight deadlines, hierarchical structures, and high external pressure. In such environments, bullying behaviours may go unreported or unchecked, either due to cultural normalisation or lack of psychological safety.

This pattern presents both cultural and legal risks. Persistent low scores in bullying undermine team cohesion, trust in leadership, and employee wellbeing. But beyond that, they may also expose organisations to regulatory scrutiny, formal complaints, or reputational damage. Under WorkSafe psychosocial hazard regulations, bullying is no longer just a "HR issue" – it's a compliance risk.

What makes this especially urgent is that bullying tends to be a lagging indicator: once scores fall, trust and safety have already been eroded. Organisations in high-risk sectors should act quickly, not just with policies, but with measurable prevention efforts, leadership accountability, and safe reporting pathways.

This data shows that even where the majority of responses are positive, a minority of bad experiences is enough to compromise safety culture. Identifying and addressing these risks early is essential to maintaining a mentally safe workplace.

- Figure 2 – Bullying score clusters across all sectors.

2. Change Management

Change Management is a critical psychosocial hazard that often goes overlooked. Poorly managed change can drive stress, disengagement, and confusion across teams. Our analysis reveals that this risk is not hypothetical. It is already playing out across several sectors.

Of the recorded responses tied to the subtopic of Change Management, over 59% fell below the safe threshold of 70, indicating widespread concern about how change is being communicated, implemented, and supported.

The Financial and Insurance Services and Information Media and Telecommunications sectors are especially at risk, with 100% of their recorded Change Management scores falling into the concerning range. These may represent smaller sample sizes, but they strongly reflect industry-wide pressures around automation, restructuring, and external regulatory change.

In Administrative and Support Services, 80% of scores were also below 70. This suggests that even in less change-intensive sectors, how people experience transitions is not being managed well. Manufacturing and Real Estate followed closely behind, with over half of responses flagged as at-risk.

Why does this matter? Because Change Management is not just about comms plans or leadership updates. It directly affects psychological safety. When employees don't feel informed or considered during change, it creates uncertainty, distrust, and anxiety. These effects can ripple into productivity loss, increased turnover, and OHS risk exposure.

In the context of WorkSafe's psychosocial hazard regulations, poor change practices are a compliance issue. Employers must show they are identifying and controlling this risk, not just announcing change, but actively managing its impact.

This data shows that across multiple sectors, Change Management isn't just a strategic or operational gap, it's a frontline mental health risk. Organisations need to treat it with the same care and urgency as any other safety hazard.
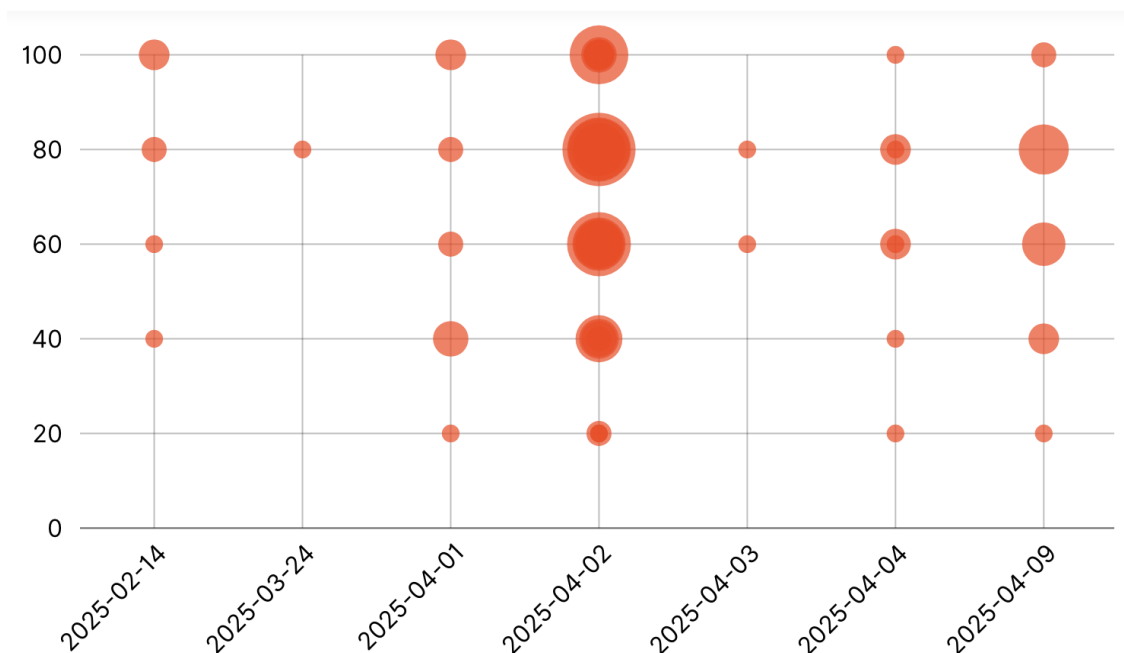
- Figure 3 – Change Management score clusters across all sectors.

3. Conflict and Relationships

Interpersonal tension is one of the most common and corrosive risks to workplace mental safety. The "Conflict and Relationships" subtopic reflects how well employees feel supported, respected, and able to navigate disagreement or tension within their teams. And the data shows this area is far from resolved.

Of the recorded responses across all sectors, approximately 32% of Conflict and Relationships scores fell below the safe threshold of 70. These low scores suggest significant relational strain in a wide range of environments.

The Financial and Insurance Services sector is a standout concern, with 100% of recorded responses rated as high-risk—though based on a very small sample. More revealing are the figures from larger datasets: Information Media and Telecommunications (36.4%), Administrative and Support Services (33.3%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (32.0%), and Health Care and Social Assistance (31.6%) all showed consistently high proportions of concern.

This hazard sits at the core of team cohesion and culture. Persistent interpersonal conflict, unresolved disagreements, or cliques and exclusion can wear down trust and psychological safety over time. In high-pressure sectors like media, healthcare, and professional services, relational breakdowns often go unaddressed—until they trigger staff exits, complaints, or even legal claims.

WorkSafe regulations identify interpersonal conflict as a psychosocial hazard with clear duties of care attached. Employers must actively control this risk—through early intervention, strong team leadership, and mechanisms for safely raising and resolving issues.

This data reveals that relational safety is a silent pressure point across many workplaces. Without action, it can erode engagement and amplify other risks like bullying, burnout, and low job satisfaction. The opportunity here is clear: investing in culture, communication, and leadership capability can shift this hazard from liability to strength.
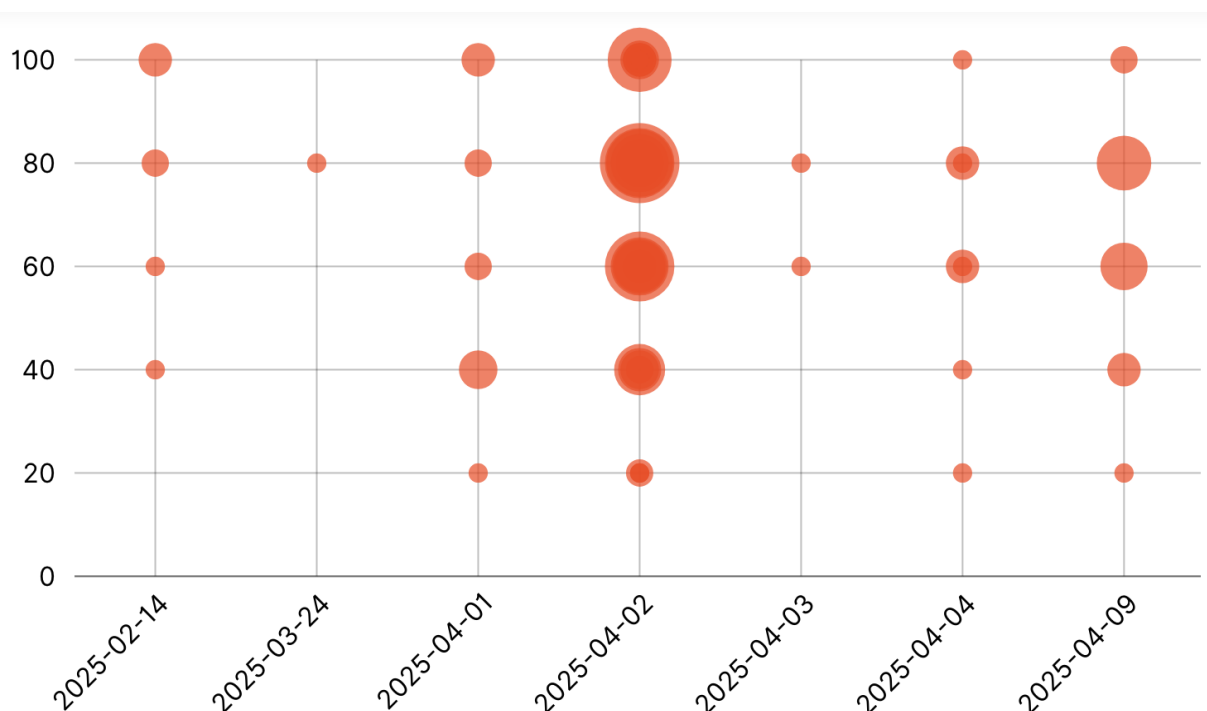
• Figure 4 - Conflict and Relationship score clusters across all sectors.

4. Harassment

Harassment in the workplace, whether based on gender, race, status, or other factors, is a critical psychosocial hazard with both cultural and legal implications. This analysis of sector-wide data reveals worrying signs that harassment remains a present and persistent issue in several industries.

Across all sectors, roughly one in five harassment scores fell below the safe threshold of 70, indicating respondents felt directly or indirectly exposed to inappropriate conduct, intimidation, or exclusion. While some of these responses may reflect perception more than proof, they are no less important: psychological safety is determined by how people experience the workplace.

The Information Media and Telecommunications sector recorded the highest proportion of low scores (36.4%), reinforcing its pattern of high psychosocial risk across multiple hazards. Other high-risk sectors included Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (21.3%), Real Estate (19.9%), and Manufacturing (16.4%). These industries often combine hierarchical structures, competitive environments, and uneven power dynamics, ideal conditions for unchallenged behaviours to emerge.

Harassment is a well-regulated hazard under WorkSafe legislation, and low scores in this area may indicate a compliance gap. For employers, these signals should not be dismissed as isolated. Instead, they warrant deeper cultural review, leadership accountability, and robust, safe reporting mechanisms.

Left unchecked, harassment doesn't just harm individuals, it erodes culture, retention, brand reputation, and team performance. Organisations with recurring low scores in this domain are likely sitting on broader cultural issues that could escalate into formal complaints or public consequences.

In short, harassment remains a clear risk in multiple sectors. The data suggests it is both under-reported and under-managed, reinforcing the importance of monitoring, prevention training, and culturally embedded safeguards.
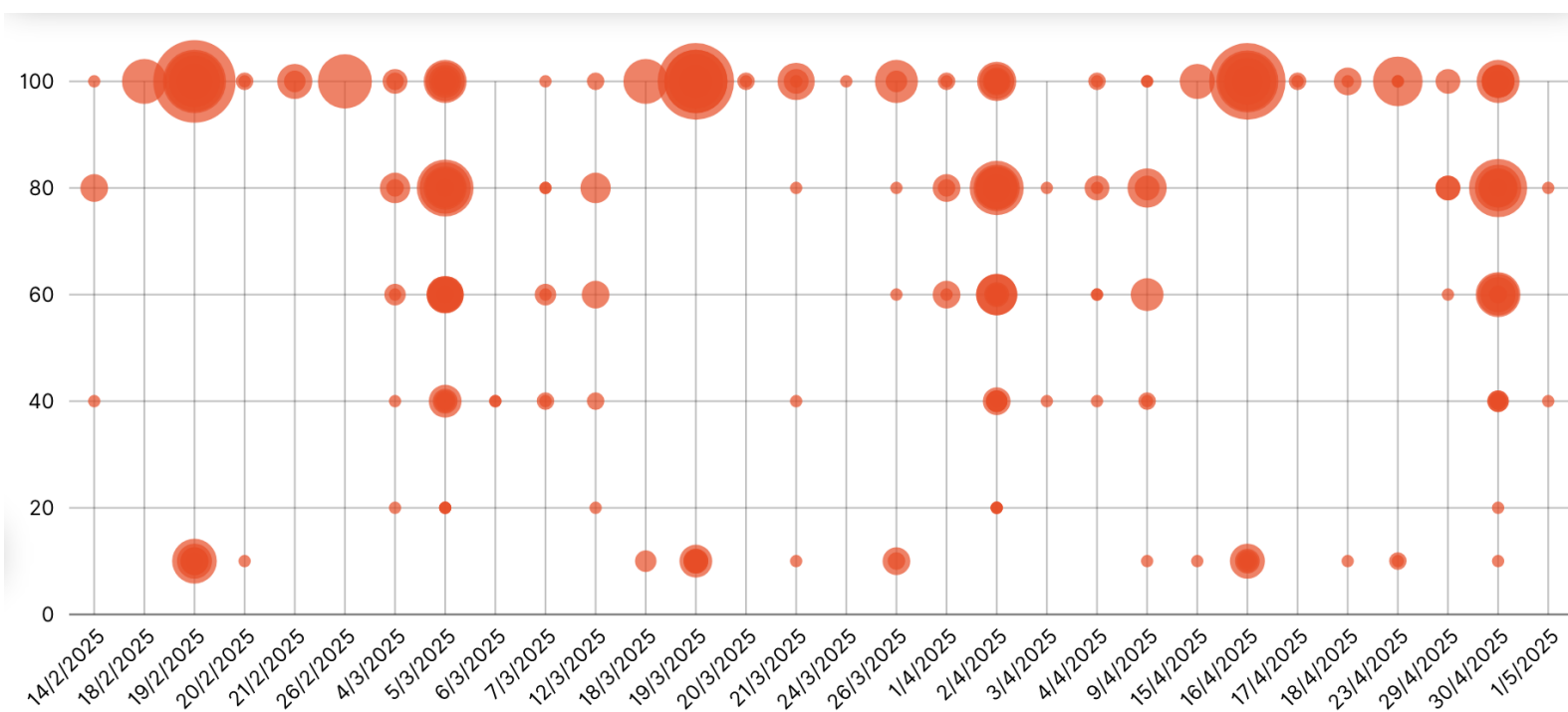
- Figure 5 – Harassment score clusters across all sectors.

5. Job Control

Job Control refers to how much autonomy an employee has in deciding how, when, and in what order their work is done. It is one of the most well-researched psychosocial hazards. When job control is low, employees are more likely to experience stress, burnout, and disengagement. This data reveals that many sectors continue to fall short in providing sufficient autonomy and flexibility in role execution.

Across all surveyed sectors, a significant portion of responses indicate poor perceptions of job control. In particular, the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector recorded the highest proportion of concerning scores. 45.6% of responses in this sector fell below the threshold of 70, highlighting a major exposure to risk. This may reflect pressure from deadlines, client demands, or rigid workflows that limit individual discretion.

Other sectors also revealed troubling patterns. Information Media and Telecommunications (33.3%), Real Estate (27.3%), Manufacturing (23.5%), and Other Services (22.6%) all showed over one in five responses suggesting inadequate job control.

The implications are substantial. When workers feel they lack control over their daily responsibilities, the psychological toll can lead to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and even longer-term health consequences. From a compliance standpoint, low scores in this area may indicate a failure to meet WorkSafe obligations to manage job-related stress.

Job control is often a fixable hazard. Unlike harassment or bullying, which require deep cultural shifts, autonomy can often be improved through process reviews, workload redistribution, and clear communication of role boundaries. This makes it a high impact, high leverage improvement area.

Organisations in high risk sectors should prioritise interventions that allow employees greater say in how they approach their work. Even small increases in control can lead to major gains in both performance and wellbeing.
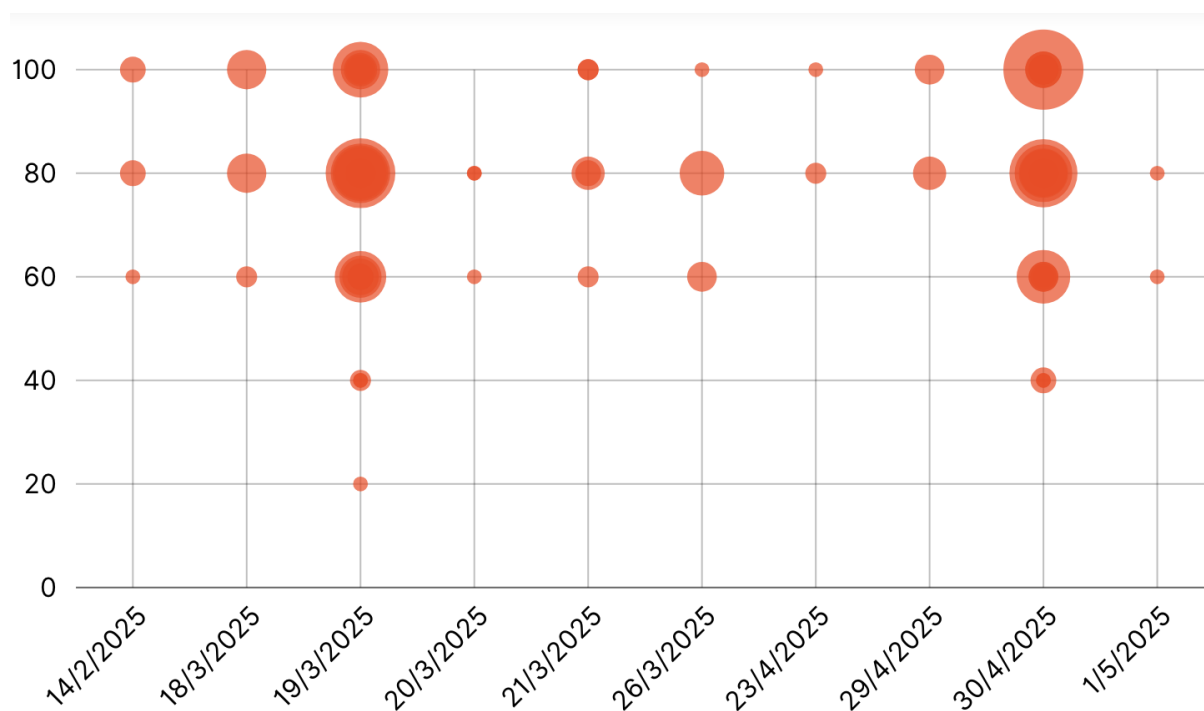
- Figure 6 – Job Control score clusters across all sectors.

6. Job Security

Job security plays a critical role in shaping how safe, valued and stable employees feel within their workplace. It is a foundational element of psychological safety. When uncertainty about role continuity increases, so does stress, distraction and disengagement. Our analysis shows that this hazard remains significant in multiple sectors.

Across all industries, a substantial number of responses indicated concerns about job security. Several sectors showed that over one in five employees rated their job security below the 70-point safety threshold.

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector recorded the highest proportion of concern, with 28.6% of responses falling below safe levels. This may reflect seasonal work, casual contracts, or uncertainty related to economic and environmental conditions.

Administrative and Support Services and Health Care and Social Assistance each showed 25% of responses in the concern range. While these sample sizes are small, they reinforce broader structural issues like high casualisation, funding variability, or evolving job definitions. In Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, a sector known for project-based work, 24.5% of scores were low. Other Services followed closely with 21.8% of responses flagged.

These figures highlight the need for clearer communication around role security, future planning, and organisational stability. A lack of job security not only impacts individual mental health, but also contributes to presenteeism, underperformance, and flight risk.

From a psychosocial risk perspective, job insecurity is a controllable hazard. While not every role can be guaranteed long term, transparency, respectful consultation, and development opportunities can greatly reduce the psychological strain. Organisations operating in high-risk sectors should treat job security as a critical wellbeing lever and ensure it is addressed proactively in workforce planning.
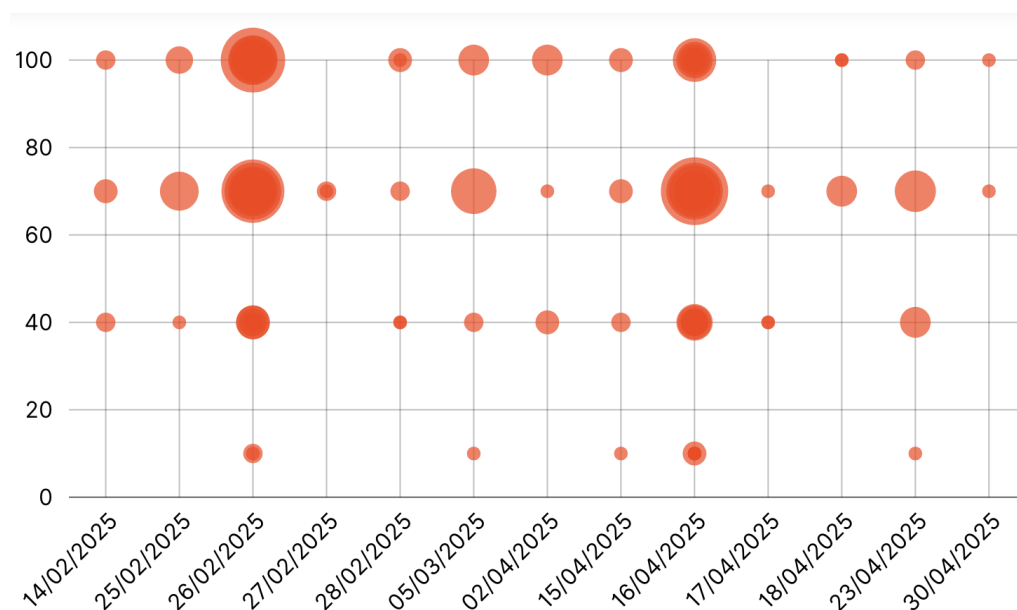
- Figure 7 – Job Security score clusters across all sectors.

7. Meaningful Work

Meaningful work sits at the intersection of motivation, purpose, and engagement. It reflects how connected employees feel to the value and purpose of what they do. When scores in this area drop, it signals a deeper issue that directly impacts morale, performance, and retention.

Across the dataset, several sectors reported high proportions of concern in this subtopic. Both Administrative and Support Services and Information Media and Telecommunications recorded 100% of their responses under the 70-point threshold, although these are based on single-record samples. More telling are results from sectors with broader participation.

In Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, 42.9% of scores were rated below 70. This suggests that a significant number of employees in these sectors feel disconnected from the meaning or purpose of their work. Whether due to repetitive tasks, siloed project roles, or limited feedback loops, the result is a loss of psychological engagement.

The Other Services sector also showed concern, with 25% of responses flagged. This could reflect challenges in highly operational or transactional environments where employees feel undervalued or unseen.

Low scores in meaningful work are a leading indicator of broader workplace disengagement. Employees who feel their work lacks purpose are less likely to go the extra mile and more likely to burn out or leave. They may also become more sensitive to other stressors, amplifying psychosocial risk across the board.

Improving meaningful work requires more than motivational posters. It involves helping employees see the connection between their efforts and outcomes, involving them in decision-making, and recognising contributions regularly. For high-risk sectors, this should be part of a broader strategy to improve culture and reduce turnover.
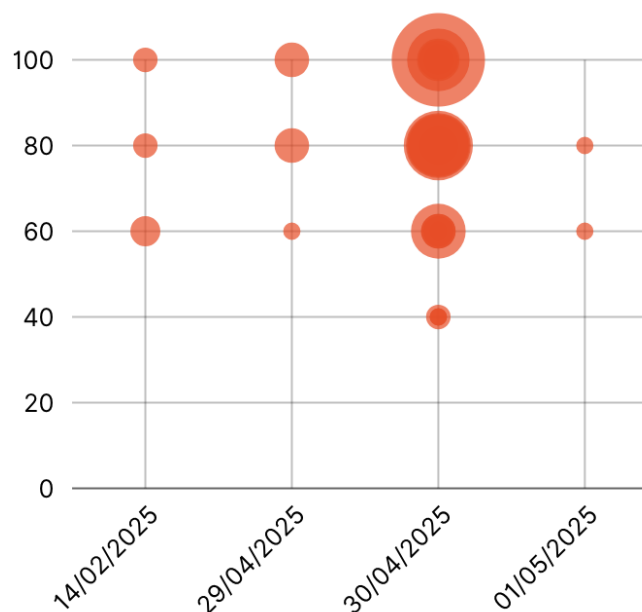
- Figure 8 – Meaningful work score clusters across all sectors.

8. Organisational Justice

Organisational justice refers to perceptions of fairness, consistency, and integrity in how decisions are made and people are treated at work. It is a key driver of trust, culture and psychological safety. When employees feel that processes are biased or outcomes are inconsistent, the effects can ripple through morale, engagement and even retention.

Across the dataset, several sectors showed high levels of concern. In Information Media and Telecommunications, 50% of responses on organisational justice fell below the 70-point safety threshold. This aligns with previously observed trends across this sector, where pressures from disruption, rapid change, and communication breakdowns likely contribute to feelings of unfairness or confusion.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services also showed elevated concern, with 37.9% of responses under threshold. This may be driven by perceived favouritism, opaque decision making, or inconsistent application of policies in project-based environments.

Additional red flags appeared in Real Estate (34.7%), Other Services (30.2%), and Administrative and Support Services (25.0%). These sectors may be dealing with rapid staffing changes, informal processes, or unclear role boundaries, all of which impact fairness perception.

Low organisational justice scores often sit upstream of other issues such as conflict, bullying and disengagement. It is also a known trigger for formal complaints and departures. From a psychosocial hazard lens, perceived injustice can create an enduring sense of emotional strain or helplessness, especially if employees feel they lack voice or recourse.

Improving this area involves more than surface-level communication. It requires consistent leadership, transparent decision making and fair grievance pathways that are trusted and used. The sectors identified here would benefit from reviewing how they embed fairness into daily practice, especially in times of change or pressure.
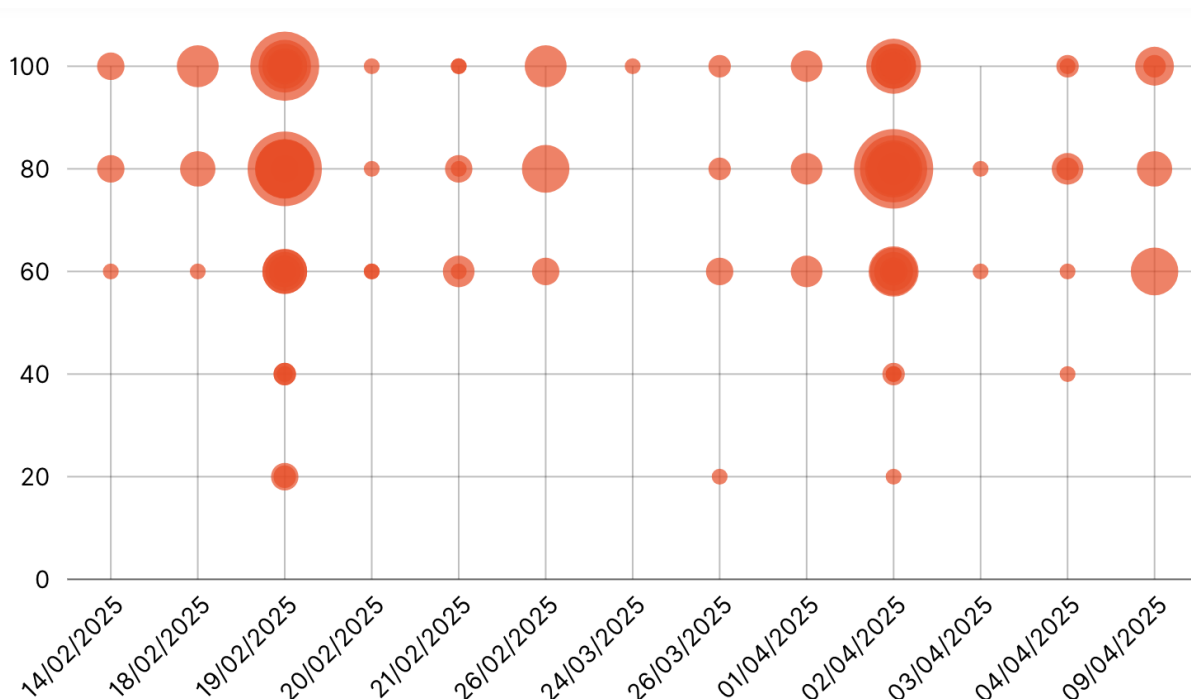
- Figure 9 – Organisational Justice score clusters across all sectors.

9. Physical Environment

The physical environment refers to the physical conditions in which employees work, including lighting, noise, ventilation, space, cleanliness and safety. It is often assumed to be a "basic" issue, but poor environmental conditions can quickly erode wellbeing and trust, especially when discomfort or safety risks go unaddressed.

Survey data reveals that several sectors are falling short in this area. In Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services, 46.2% of responses scored below the 70-point threshold. This suggests that many respondents experience subpar or inconsistent physical working conditions. As this sector includes highly mobile or client-facing roles, issues may include travel strain, shared or temporary workspaces, or inadequate access to private, ergonomic environments.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services also showed concern, with 33.3% of responses under 70. This is notable given the sector's knowledge-based nature, and may reflect dissatisfaction with open plan offices, poor acoustics, or workstation layout. Similarly, Manufacturing (22.7%) reported significant risk, likely driven by noise, temperature, or physical fatigue associated with production environments.

Even in Accommodation and Food Services and Agriculture, sectors typically accustomed to physically demanding work, some responses flagged the environment as a risk. While these jobs may involve controlled risks, perception still matters: if workers feel unsafe or unsupported, stress accumulates.

This hazard has both safety and compliance implications. A poor physical environment can lead to fatigue, distraction, accidents, and long-term physical and mental strain. Under WorkSafe guidelines, it is considered a controllable hazard and one that is easy to assess through regular audits and consultation.

Employers should regularly check in with staff on their workspace needs and experiences—not just for legal reasons, but to create more supportive and productive environments. These findings make a clear case for proactive and ongoing physical environment reviews.
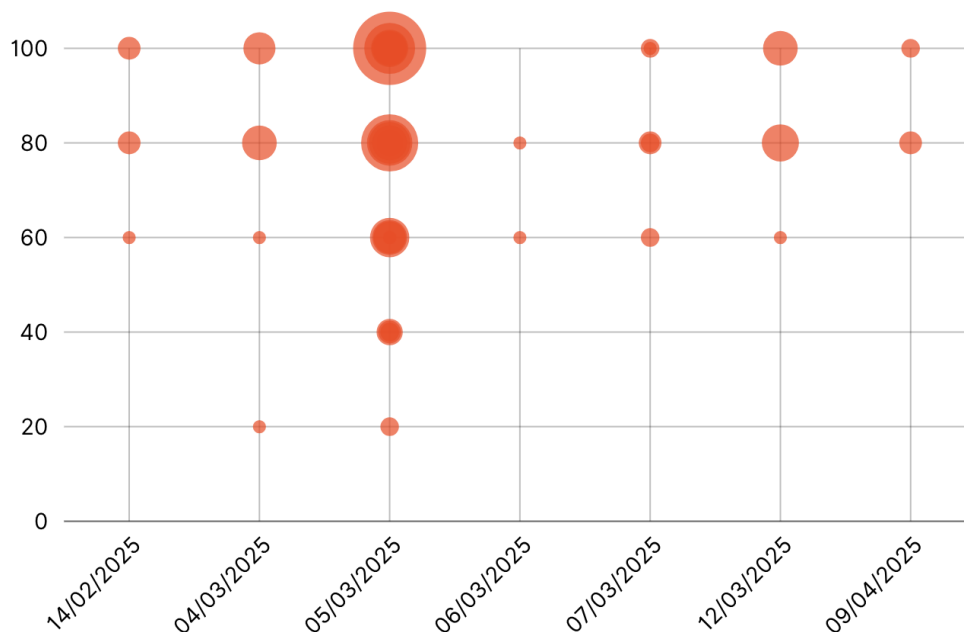
- Figure 10 – Physical Environment score clusters across all sectors.

10. Reward and Recognition

Reward and recognition refer to how employees feel acknowledged, valued and appreciated for their work. When this psychosocial factor is underperforming, the results are often silent but significant. It drives disengagement, quiet quitting, and ultimately retention risk. The data shows that this hazard is not being adequately addressed in several key sectors.

Across the entire dataset, a large proportion of responses indicate dissatisfaction in this area. The Information Media and Telecommunications sector leads with 80% of scores falling below the 70-point threshold. This suggests a pervasive lack of acknowledgment in a high-output, high-pressure environment.

Health Care and Social Assistance also shows elevated concern, with 57.1% of scores rated below safe levels. This is concerning given the emotional and physical demands of healthcare roles. Feeling unrecognised in these sectors can intensify burnout and emotional exhaustion.

The pattern continues in Real Estate (50%), Professional Services (44.6%), and Other Services (42.2%). These findings suggest that recognition practices may be inconsistent or lacking entirely, particularly in sectors that rely on output, commission, or transactional relationships.

Reward and recognition may seem intangible, but its absence is deeply felt. When employees give consistent effort without acknowledgment, their engagement and sense of value drops. In time, this manifests in productivity loss, cynicism, and exit risk.

This is also one of the most fixable hazards. Recognition does not always need to be monetary. Timely, specific, and visible appreciation from leaders and peers can make a significant difference. For the sectors highlighted here, a strategic rethink of feedback, appreciation, and internal celebration practices could offer rapid returns in both wellbeing and morale.

Reward and recognition is not a "nice to have." It's a core pillar of workplace mental safety.
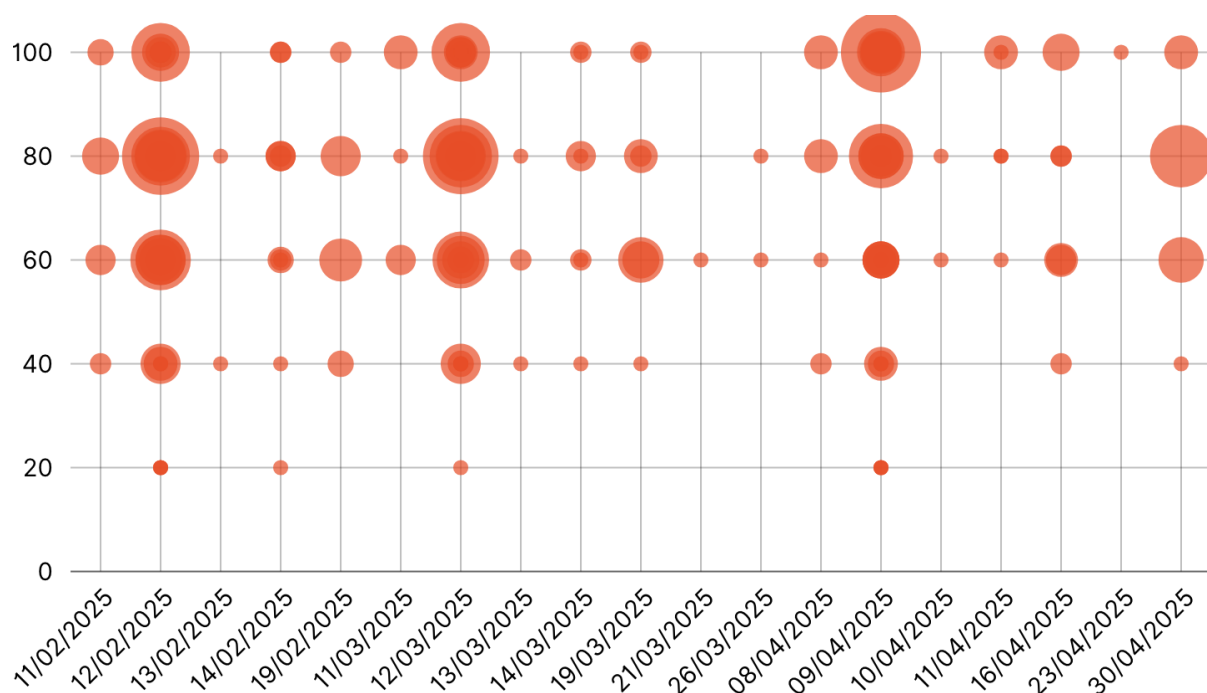
- Figure 11 – Reward and Recognition score clusters across all sectors.

11. Role Clarity

Role clarity is a foundational element of mental safety. It refers to whether employees understand what is expected of them, how their role contributes to broader goals and how responsibilities are shared or delegated. When clarity is lacking, confusion, frustration, and unnecessary conflict often follow. This analysis shows that role clarity is a serious concern across multiple sectors.

In Manufacturing, 43.0% of responses fell below the 70-point safety threshold. This is concerning in environments where coordination, timing, and process discipline are critical. A lack of clarity can lead to errors, inefficiency, and even safety risks on the floor.

Administrative and Support Services and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing both recorded 42.9% of scores in the risk zone. These sectors often involve mixed roles, cross-functional responsibilities, or frequent task switching, which can blur boundaries and expectations. Other Services also showed concern, with 40.4% of scores flagged.

Even in Information Media and Telecommunications, where only a handful of responses were recorded, 50% reported low role clarity. This suggests instability or rapid change, possibly driven by evolving job definitions or poorly communicated restructures.

Low role clarity erodes confidence. When people are unsure of what to prioritise, who owns a task, or how success is measured, stress increases and engagement drops. It can also amplify other risks like conflict, poor performance, and low job satisfaction.

Importantly, this is one of the easiest hazards to address. Clear onboarding, documented responsibilities, regular check-ins, and feedback loops all contribute to better clarity. Given how widespread the issue is, particularly in operational and dynamic environments, improving this area should be a priority for leaders and team managers alike.
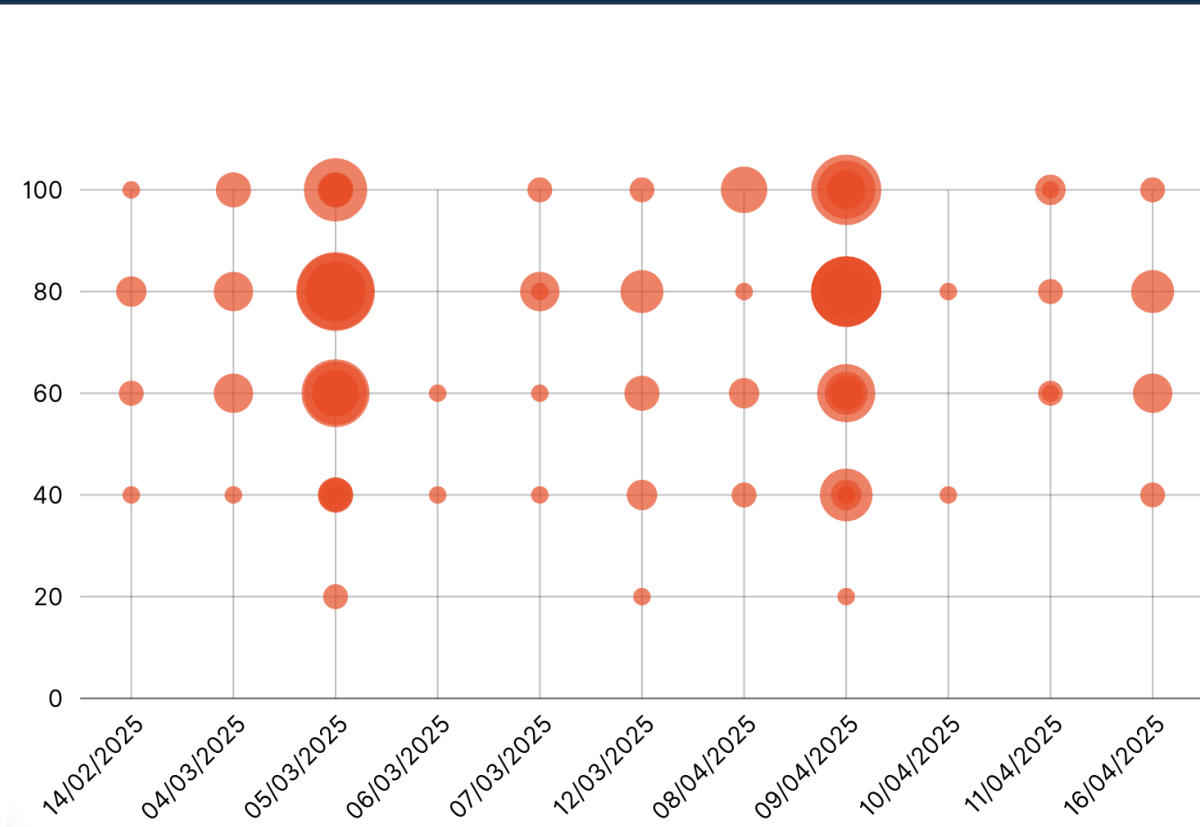
- Figure 12 – Role Clarity score clusters across all sectors.

12. Skill Utilisation

Skill utilisation measures whether employees feel their knowledge, experience, and capabilities are being meaningfully applied at work. It reflects the alignment between a person's potential and how their role is structured. When this hazard scores poorly, the result is often disengagement, frustration, and the feeling of being undervalued.

Our data shows that this issue is prevalent across a range of industries. In Information Media and Telecommunications, 66.7% of scores fell below the 70-point safety threshold. Although the sample size is relatively small, this highlights a pattern of misalignment between role demands and staff capabilities, likely linked to role ambiguity or underused specialisation.

In Manufacturing, 39.7% of responses signalled concern. This may reflect rigid task design, limited opportunity for creative input, or poor job fit in production roles. Similar findings appeared in Arts and Recreation Services (38.5%) and Professional Services (35.1%), where people often expect greater autonomy and creative challenge.

Real Estate also showed signs of risk, with nearly 30% of respondents rating skill utilisation poorly. This could relate to admin-heavy workflows, fragmented role focus, or lack of development pathways.

When skill utilisation is low, employees may feel overqualified, disengaged, or simply disconnected from the value of their contribution. Over time, this can erode motivation and lead to high turnover among top performers.

This is also a hazard where improvement can deliver fast returns. Regular role reviews, feedback loops, internal development pathways, and project based opportunities can all help individuals better apply and grow their skills. For high-risk sectors, addressing this hazard is not just about engagement—it's about unlocking the full value of your workforce.
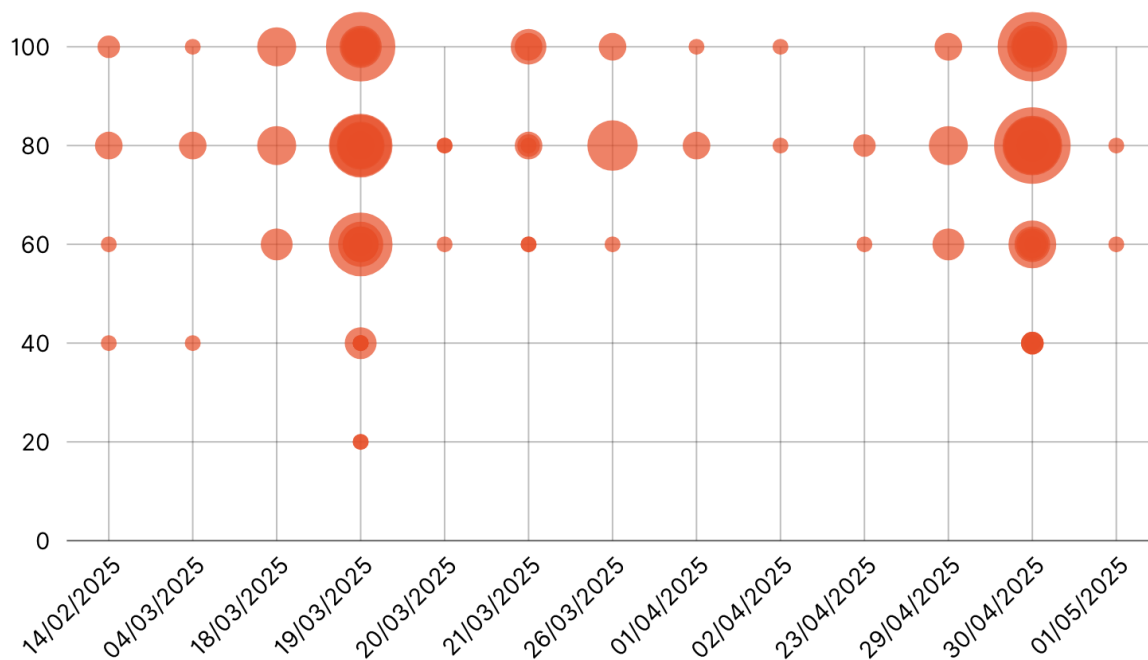
- Figure 13 – Skill Utilisation score clusters across all sectors.

13. Support

Overall, Support scores across most industries remain within the 70 – 80 range, suggesting that while most workers feel some level of team or managerial support, there is room for strengthening consistent, high-quality assistance. The national average across all observations sits just under 77 – respectable, but short of the high-performance zone.

Several sectors, including Health Care, Education, and Agriculture, consistently returned Support scores of 80 or above. These industries often rely on strong interpersonal bonds and close team coordination, which may buffer against broader organisational strain. Notably, Accommodation and Food Services also reported solid scores, indicating that front-line environments can foster strong support systems when well-managed.

By contrast, Administrative and Support Services and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services showed wider variation and lower average scores. In these sectors, the perceived availability of emotional or practical support seems more fragile, likely due to role fragmentation, casualisation, or high output demands.

The data also reveals that lower Support scores (under 60) do occur, particularly in weeks following apparent workload pressure points – hinting at a correlation between Support and stress regulation.

For employers and regulators, this underscores the importance of ensuring that employees have access to both peer and supervisory support. Embedding reliable support structures not only helps reduce stress during peak demand but also cultivates trust and retention. Targeted check-ins, buddy systems, and responsive leadership communication are effective strategies to reinforce Support as a psychosocial safety pillar.
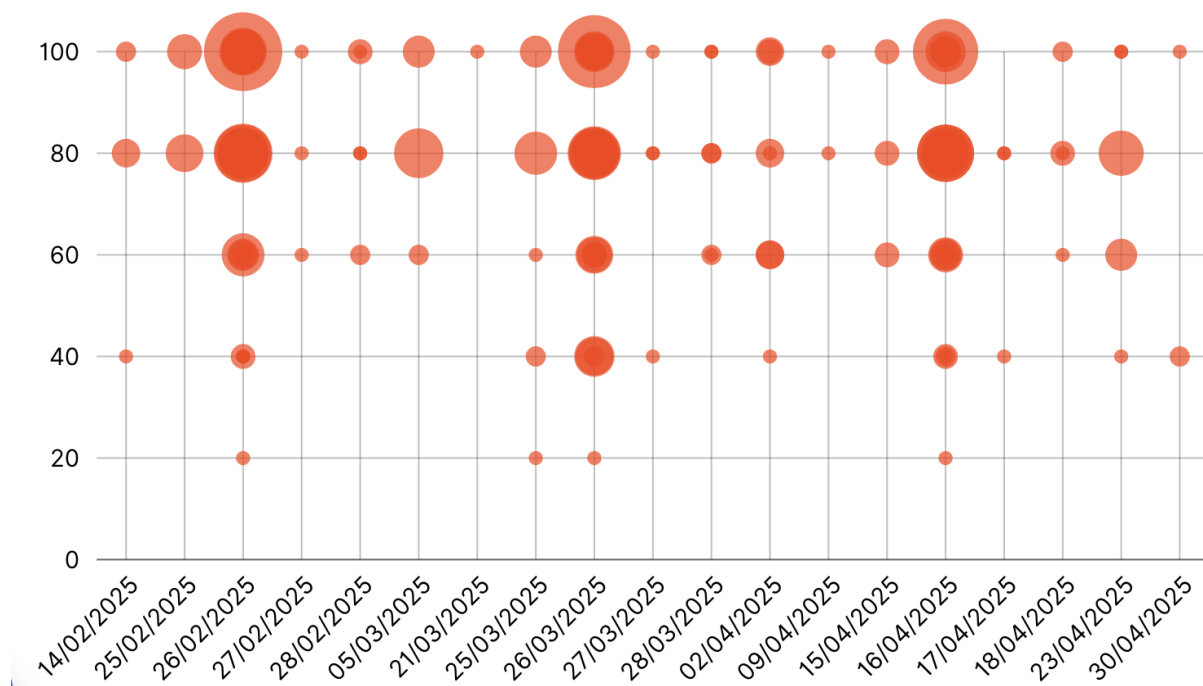
- Figure 14 – Support score clusters across all sectors.
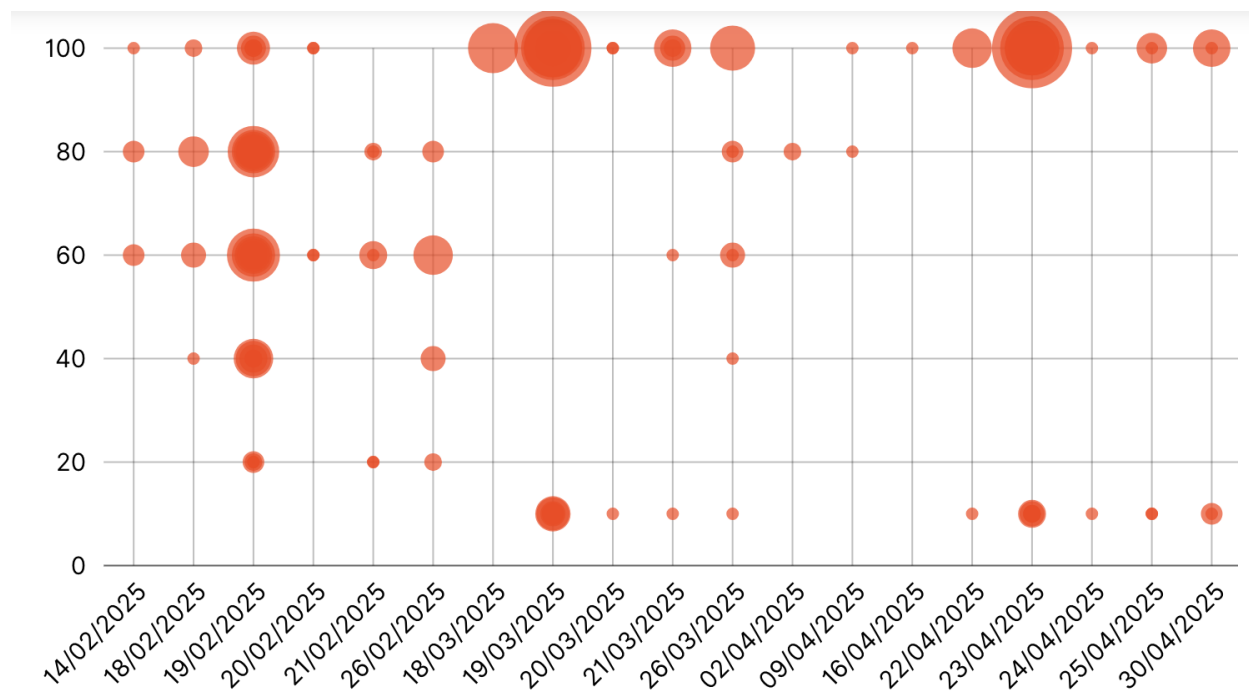
14. Traumatic Events

This summary focuses on the workplace hazard of Traumatic Events, one of the key psychosocial risks identified in the Workwell framework. It refers to exposure to incidents at work that are emotionally distressing, confronting, or potentially harmful, such as witnessing violence, handling crises, or managing emergencies. Based on survey responses across 13 sectors, this analysis offers insight into how workers perceive their exposure and organisational response to these events.

On average, the Traumatic Events subtopic scored in the mid-to-high 70s across most sectors. This suggests that for many workplaces, the frequency or impact of such incidents is perceived as relatively well managed. However, the presence of lower scores in the 40–60 range, particularly within Accommodation and Food Services, Administrative and Support Services, and some Public-facing industries, flags pockets of heightened vulnerability.

Several sectors, including Agriculture, Education, and Health Care, returned scores of 80 or higher. These environments are often better prepared for high-pressure situations through structured protocols, formalised crisis response training, or peer support systems.

By contrast, variability in sectors like Real Estate, Support Services, and Hospitality suggests that some employees may feel unprepared or unsupported when exposed to emotionally intense events. Notably, scores of 40–60 were often isolated to specific dates, hinting at event-driven impacts such as on site incidents or conflict escalation.

For organisations, this highlights the value of proactive planning: offering trauma-informed training, embedding debriefing processes, and ensuring staff know how to access support post-incident. From a compliance perspective, addressing this hazard not only meets Workwell expectations but significantly contributes to a psychologically safe environment.

• Figure 15 – Traumatic Events score clusters across all sectors.

15. Violence and Aggression

This hazard reflects exposure to threatening, abusive, or aggressive behaviours in the workplace, whether from customers, clients, or colleagues.

Survey results across over 1,000 entries show a generally strong performance in this area, with most sectors reporting high confidence in safety, respect, and incident prevention. In fact, the majority of industry groups returned average scores between 85 and 100. This trend is particularly evident in Agriculture, Education, Finance, and Public Administration, where robust policies, professional standards, and environmental controls likely play a protective role.

Despite this overall strength, the data also reveals outlier clusters of extremely low scores, some as low as 10, in sectors including Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, and Education and Training. These events appear to be time-specific, suggesting that particular incidents or circumstances (e.g. customer conflict, student aggression, or community related tension) drove the responses down on those dates.

Such findings reinforce the importance of incident based analysis and real-time support mechanisms. While overall systems may be effective, even isolated violent or aggressive events can trigger psychological distress and impact workplace culture.

Employers are encouraged to maintain and strengthen incident response frameworks, empower staff through de-escalation training, and ensure psychological recovery plans are in place. For public facing roles especially, a visible commitment to zero tolerance and staff protection contributes significantly to both safety and morale.

These insights show that while many organisations are doing well, sustaining high performance in this hazard category requires ongoing vigilance, consistent communication, and a readiness to respond swiftly when aggression does arise.
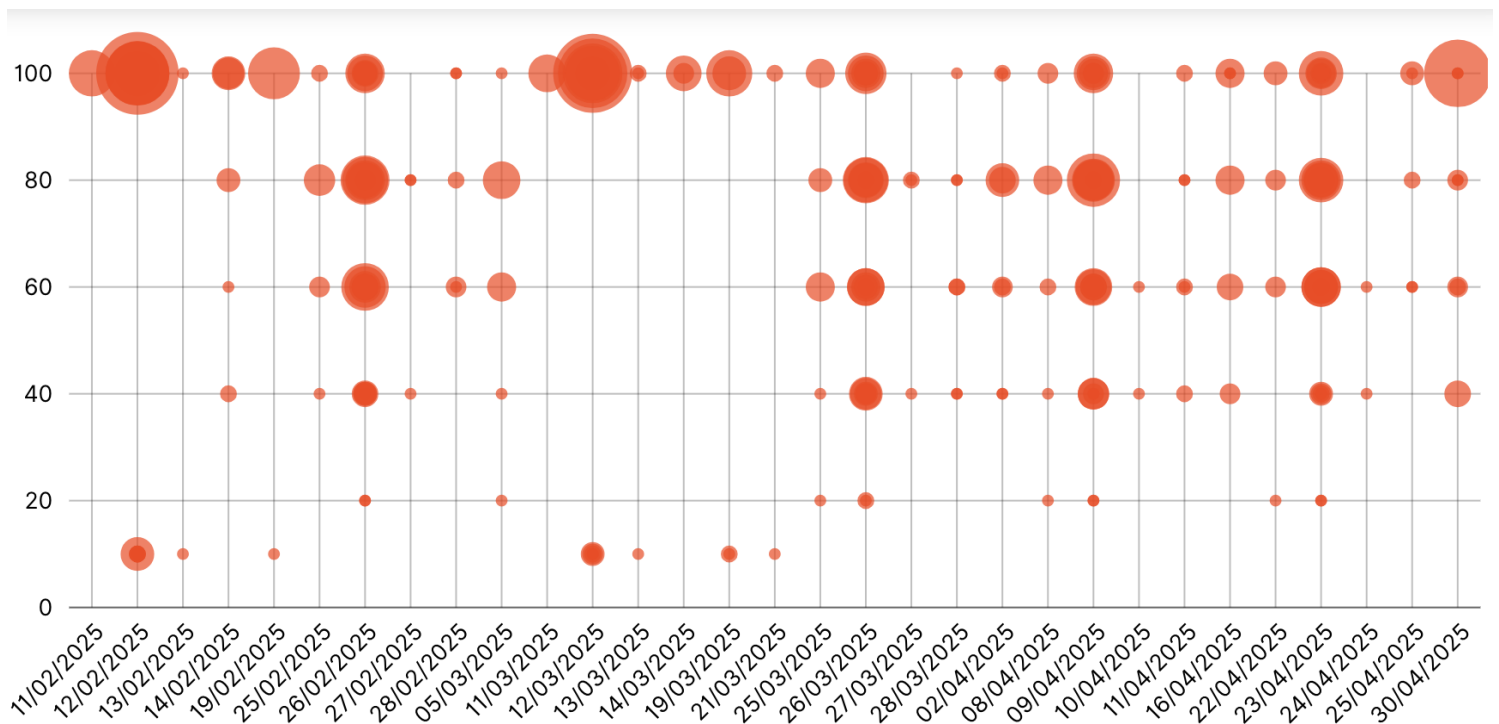
- Figure 16 – Violence and Aggression score clusters across all sectors.

16. Work Flexibility

Work Flexibility, a core component of the Workwell psychosocial hazard framework, refers to the degree of choice and autonomy employees have over how, when and where they work. This includes options for flexible scheduling, remote work, and personalisation of working arrangements.

The survey data reveals wide variation in how flexibility is experienced across Australian industries. While the overall average score trends in the mid-70s, the spread of responses from as low as 40 up to perfect scores of 100, suggests that this hazard is highly context-dependent and strongly influenced by organisational culture and role design.

Sectors like Agriculture, Education, and Finance typically returned high flexibility scores, often over 80. These roles tend to offer structured flexibility such as seasonal shifts, academic term cycles, or hybrid office arrangements which meet both operational and personal needs.

However, significant inconsistencies were observed in Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, and Support Services. These sectors frequently reported scores under 60, pointing to limited perceived control over rosters, breaks, and location. In many frontline or production-based jobs, flexibility remains a structural limitation rather than a cultural choice.

Low flexibility scores also often coincide with drops in other hazards such as Workload or Support, indicating that employees may feel trapped in rigid systems with insufficient recovery or adaptability. This compounding effect increases psychosocial risk, especially during high demand periods.

To improve outcomes in this domain, organisations can explore shift swapping options, input into roster design, and the use of flexibility incentives. Where flexibility is not structurally feasible, increased support and predictability can help mitigate the risk.

Flexibility is no longer a luxury. As expectations shift post-pandemic, it is becoming a baseline for mental safety, engagement, and retention.
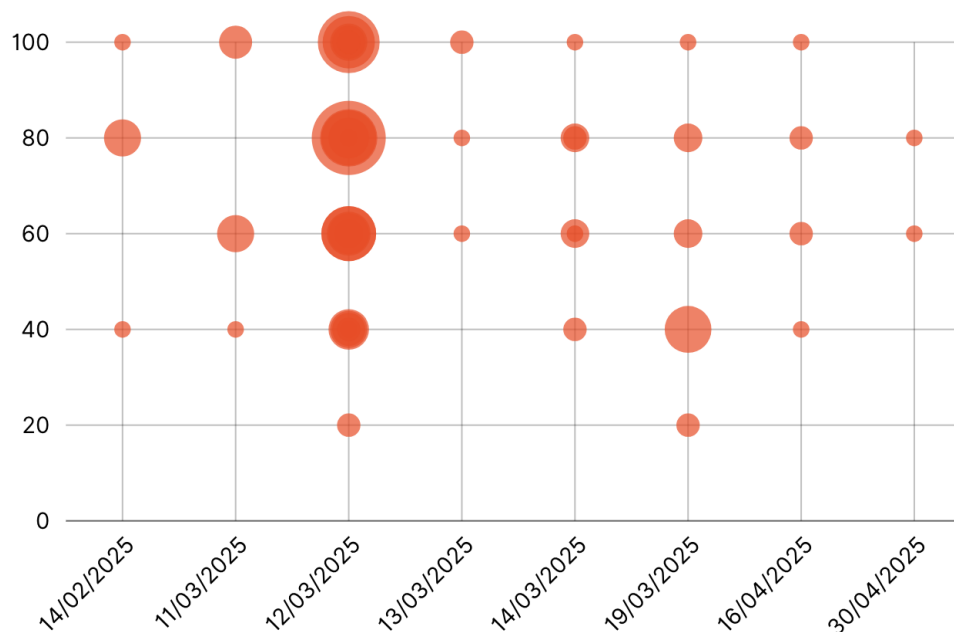
- Figure 17 – Work Flexibility score clusters across all sectors.

17. Work Life Balance

Work Life Balance, as defined in the Workwell framework, assesses how well employees can manage the interface between work demands and personal life. It reflects not just the number of hours worked, but also how predictable, manageable and flexible work patterns are in relation to life outside the job.

Across the survey dataset, Work Life Balance emerges as a mixed performer. While some sectors consistently report high satisfaction, particularly Agriculture, Health Care, and Finance, other industries display troubling dips. The overall average hovers in the low-to-mid 70s, but a long tail of responses in the 40–60 range highlights pockets of systemic strain.

Low scores were most evident in Accommodation and Food Services, Real Estate, and Administrative Support. In these sectors, roster inflexibility, extended trading hours, and workload unpredictability likely contribute to perceptions of imbalance. For many frontline or customer-facing roles, time away from work may be scarce, irregular, or disrupted, making it difficult for employees to recuperate or fulfil non-work responsibilities.

The data also shows that Work Life Balance scores often correlate with lower ratings in Workload, Support, and Flexibility, reinforcing that psychosocial risks tend to cluster. Poor balance isn't just about time; it's also about perceived fairness, autonomy and emotional bandwidth.

For employers, this presents a strategic opportunity. By focusing on roster transparency, clear workload expectations and recovery time between shifts, organisations can significantly lift perceptions of balance. Even in roles with fixed schedules, offering input into shifts or creating space for short, regular breaks can yield big improvements.

In a workforce that increasingly values sustainability and personal agency, Work Life Balance has become a leading indicator of mental safety and engagement. Prioritising it is not just an operational issue, it's a cultural commitment.
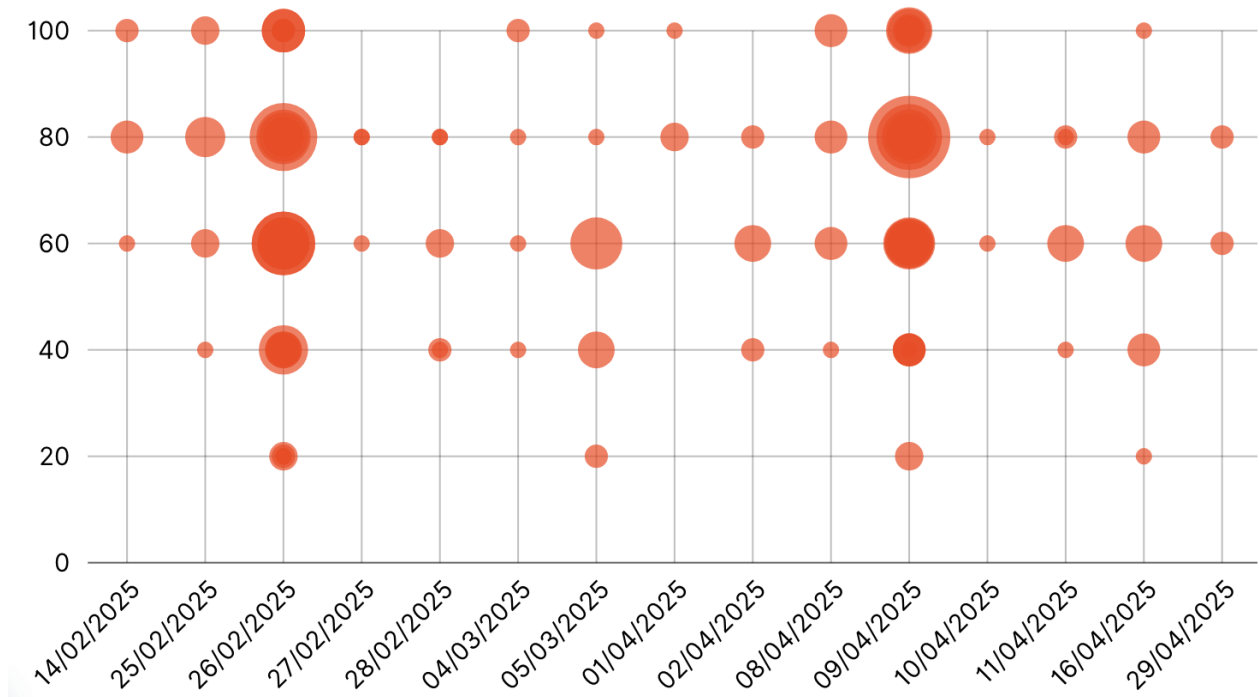
• Figure 18 – Work Life Balance score clusters across all sectors.

18. Work Location

The Workwell aligned hazard of Work Location examines how the physical environment impacts psychological safety and wellbeing. It captures aspects like noise, crowding, personal space, access to natural light and the appropriateness of the space for the job. It also includes how comfortable and safe employees feel in their usual place of work, whether on-site, remote, or hybrid.

Data from thousands of survey responses shows generally strong performance in this area. Most sectors report average scores of 80 or above, with particularly high satisfaction in Agriculture, Health Care, and Finance. These industries often feature well-established work environments designed for specific roles and workflows such as field operations, clinics or quiet office zones.

That said, there is meaningful variation. Some sectors, including Accommodation and Food Services and Support Services, show isolated clusters of low scores (40–60). These typically arise in customer facing or shared space roles where staff have limited control over their surroundings. For example, kitchens, crowded reception areas or communal facilities can reduce personal safety or comfort, especially when under pressure.

These findings suggest that while most workers feel positively about their physical environment, certain contexts consistently pose risks. Importantly, Work Location often intersects with other hazards like Workload or Support, where discomfort in the workspace may intensify when under time pressure or feeling under supported.

Improving this hazard doesn't always require major infrastructure investments. Small changes like noise dampening, ergonomic improvements, personal space considerations or predictable shift rotations can significantly improve perception of workplace location.

Ultimately, ensuring workers feel physically safe, comfortable and respected in their environment is foundational to mental safety. In sectors with frontline or variable worksites, it's critical that organisations monitor and adapt work environments proactively.
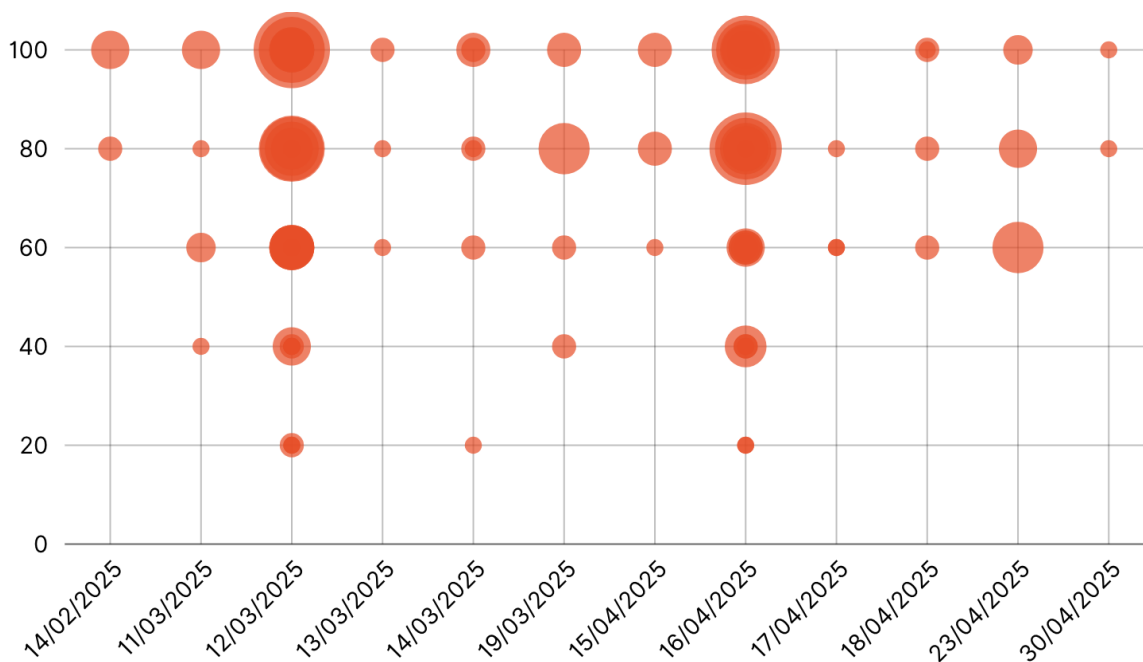
- Figure 19 – Workload score clusters across all sectors.

19. Workload

Workload is one of the most critical psychosocial hazards within the Workwell framework. It reflects the extent to which the quantity, pace and pressure of work are sustainable, and whether employees feel they can reasonably complete their tasks within the time available.

In this dataset, Workload presents as a consistent point of pressure. Average scores fall within the low 70s, but a large number of responses are clustered between 40 and 60, especially in sectors such as Accommodation and Food Services, Education, and Administrative Support. These results indicate a material risk to mental safety, where overwork or unrealistic expectations are undermining employee wellbeing.

While some industries — particularly Agriculture, Finance, and Health Care — return more balanced results with scores approaching 80 or above, the overall pattern suggests that high or uneven workload remains a systemic concern. Time specific clusters of low scores indicate that this hazard is not just chronic but also event driven, with demand spikes or resourcing gaps likely influencing the results.

Importantly, Workload is often correlated with declines in Support, Work Life Balance, and Job Control. When employees feel overwhelmed and unsupported, the psychological toll is amplified, increasing the risk of burnout, presenteeism, and disengagement.

From an organisational standpoint, addressing Workload means more than hiring. It requires redesigning roles to balance complexity and time demand, empowering employees to flag overload early, and training managers to monitor for strain and adjust expectations in real time.

Improving workload conditions is not only a compliance issue under emerging mental health regulations, but also a driver of productivity and retention. When employees feel their effort is manageable and fairly distributed, engagement rises and risks decline, making Workload a linchpin of mentally safe work environments.
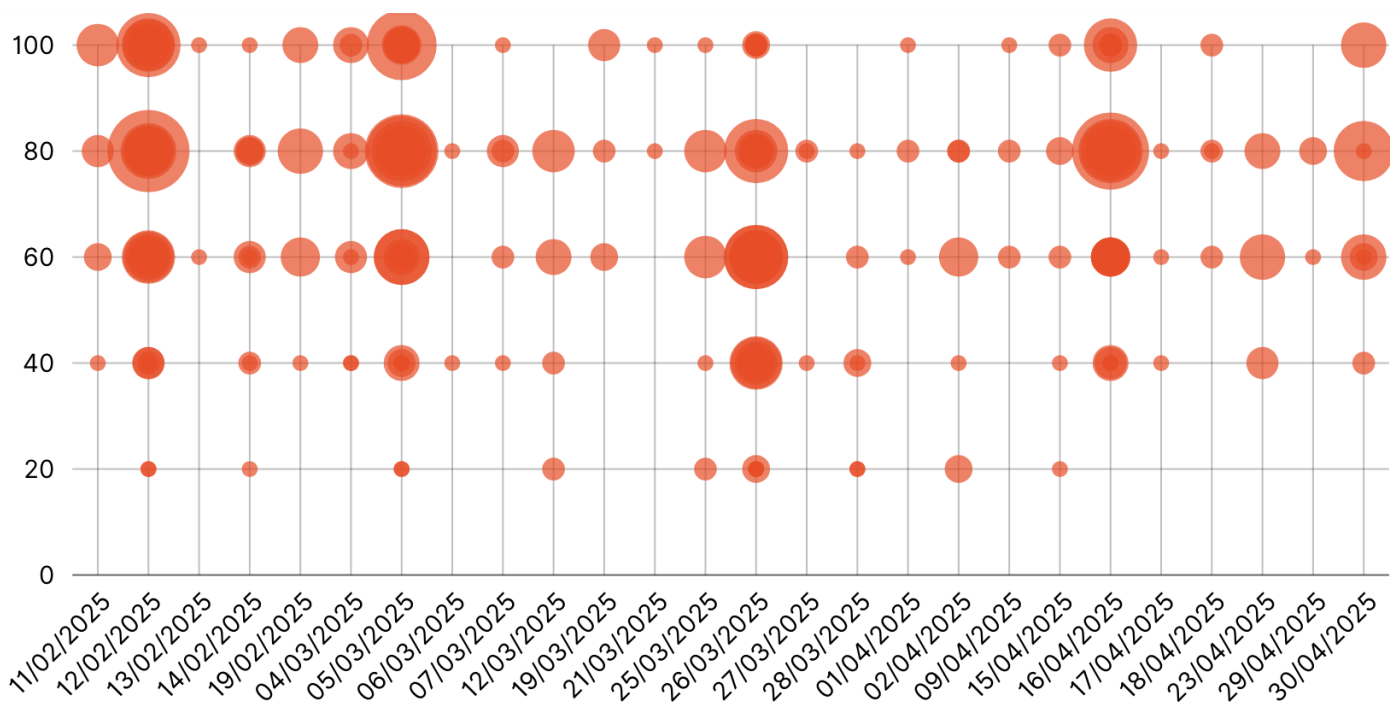
- Figure 20 – Workload score clusters across all sectors.

Conclusion

Prioritising Psychosocial Hazard Uplift Through Targeted Action

This case study confirms what many have long suspected. The greatest risks to mental safety in the workplace are not just about individual stress. They are about the systems and structures that shape how work is done. From thousands of responses across diverse sectors, the data paints a consistent picture. Interpersonal safety is improving. However, structural pressures remain unresolved.

The standout finding is the underperformance of hazards linked to work design. Workload, Job Control, Flexibility, and Recognition are not just trending low. They are appearing together and forming persistent clusters of psychosocial risk. These clusters signal a need for integrated solutions. Policies that reduce overload must also increase autonomy and recognition. Without this balance, the benefits will not last.

Sectors most in need of support include Accommodation and Food Services, Retail, Administrative Support, and Real Estate. These industries face rigid schedules, high customer interaction, and limited scope for self-direction. All of these factors heighten psychosocial risk. However, these sectors also represent the greatest opportunity for impact. Even small design changes can move the needle. For example, involving staff in rosters, making recognition visible or increasing recovery time.

For service partners, this case study provides direction. Programs that address structural change, support team leadership, and embed psychosocial literacy in operations will be the most effective. Whether delivered digitally or face to face, support needs to move beyond awareness and into implementation.

For clients, the message is simple. Mental safety cannot be left to chance. Compliance matters, and so does design. This data is a starting point for both. It can help organisations build systems that protect, empower, and retain their people.

By using evidence to drive decisions, we can shift from patchwork fixes to lasting change. The result is a workplace that is not only legally safe, but also genuinely human-centred.