

# **WORKING FROM HOME**

**"It's done  
wonders."**

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**Finance workers have a say  
in the shape of their working lives.**

**"I can spend bedtime with my son. Before he was asleep by the time I got home."**

**"We need to support people who want to go back (to the office) and people who don't."**

Finance workers across Queensland, Victoria, NSW and South Australia were required to work from home for parts of 2020 and 2021. In early 2022, many employers have required their staff to return to the office.

Whilst some people are looking forward to going back to the office, many workers would rather stay working remotely saying they enjoy having more time with their families, reduced transport costs and improved physical and mental health outcomes. In a February 2022 survey, FSU members said they have several major health and wellbeing concerns about returning to the office.

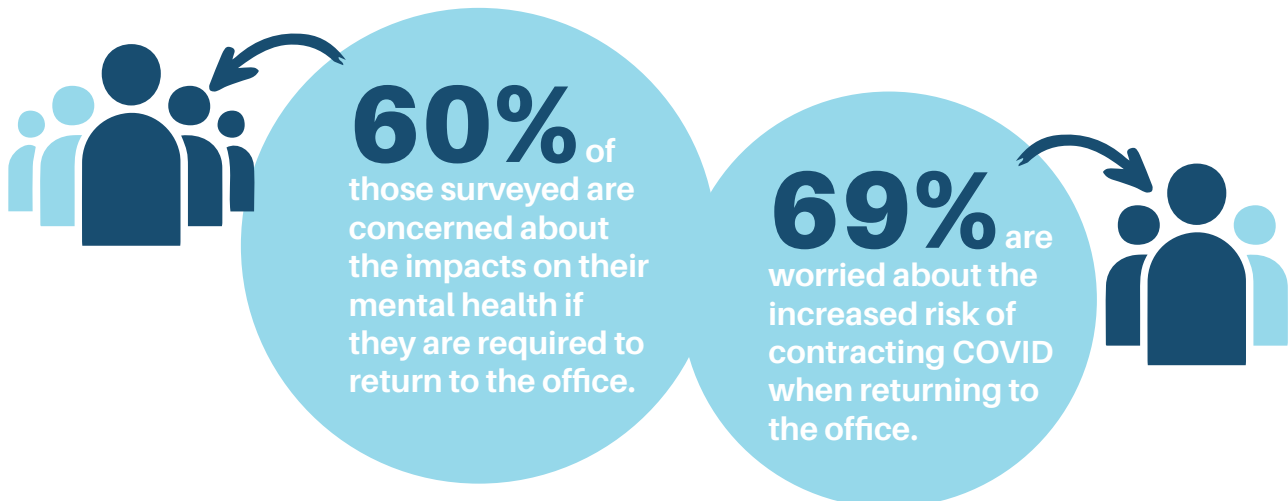
Workers are calling for more choice about where they work. Where operationally possible, workers in the finance sector should have the choice to work entirely remotely. Giving workers the ability to choose to go to the office, work a hybrid approach or entirely from home will be important for staff wellbeing, staff retention and ongoing productivity.

**"Our employers have achieved extraordinary financial results off the back of allowing flexibility, why fix something that is not broken."**

"All staff in Victoria have been told that we will be required to return to the office. We are in the midst of a pandemic as defined under Victoria's pandemic legislation. Is it reasonable to require staff to return? Shouldn't work from home be an option?"

"We have been told two set days at the office, no consideration for part timers or our individual needs."

# Physical and mental health



Whilst workers are concerned about the risk of contracting COVID-19 at the office, many are reporting significant mental and physical health benefits of working from home.

The Productivity Commission 2021 report on working from home found that for some, working from home can improve physical and mental health by giving people more time and control over their day - to sleep, exercise and cook nutritious food.

## Return to office concerns:

Workers should not be forced to return to the office when they have real fears about their safety and the safety of their families.

*"The pandemic is not over, and I can't believe we're being told to go back to the office when there are still tens of thousands of new cases or more per day."*

*"I look after vulnerable elderly parents and afraid of giving covid to them as they are heavily reliant on my support. I have compromised lungs and am prone to illness and if I catch covid my parents will not have the support they need."*

*"I am at high risk of complications if I catch covid due to my health issues."*

*"I have ADHD so having a balance of days in the office is great for me but having the ability to choose based on what I need is critical."*

*"Being forced to return will cause me tremendous anxiety which will severely impact my health and productivity. I know because it happened last time, and my mental health was badly affected (...)"*

**"I exercise more and spend more time with my kids. No more walking from the train station to my car in the dark and being fearful."**

## The choice to work from home:

Workers said that working from home gave them the ability to exercise more and improve their physical and mental health, often contributing to improved productivity. Women also reported feeling safer not having to commute in the evenings when it is dark.

*"I have more energy at the end of my shift, I started riding my bike."*

*"I exercise more and spend more time with my kids. No more walking from the train station to my car in the dark and being fearful."*

*"It's done wonders for the mental health of myself and my partner - we've been able to support each other throughout the day, which has helped tremendously with our mental health challenges and brought us closer together. We're able to take the dog out for a walk each morning and do some exercise now that we don't have to commute into the city, which has also helped a lot for both our physical and mental health."*

*"I am happier, and my depression and anxiety has significantly reduced. My children and I aren't getting as sick as often and we are all getting more sleep leading to better moods throughout the day. My KPIs have also improved massively, and I am meeting more of my targets than I do in the office because of my improved mental and physical health."*

*"I am the happiest I have ever been in my life."*

*"Working from home as allowed me to take control of my mental health, with more time before and after work to seek medical care."*

*"When I finish late, I'm home and safe. No late evening commute especially through winter months and being afraid of travelling home alone at night (...). I can now use my time to go to the gym or a walk instead of the commute."*

# Family and caring responsibilities

## Return to office concerns:

More than 1 in every 2 surveyed workers (57%) are concerned about managing their caring responsibilities and losing time with their children if required to go back to the office.

*"I will lose out in spending bedtime with my son as he is normally asleep when I reach home."*

*"My children and I are up at 5am for me to be at work on time and then not getting home and dinner eaten until closer 8.30 also means my children suffer as they just aren't getting enough sleep."*

**We recognise that family and carer responsibilities are not confined to your personal time but are interwoven into all aspects of your life, including employment.**

- NAB Family care and flexibility



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*"I have been able to spend more time with my sick mother and feel less anxiety that I am going to get a call at work to have to rush back home if anything goes wrong."*

*"Enabled me to pick up grandchildren from school/childcare when required."*

*"As the parent of a child with a disability who has multiple in-home therapists and support workers, I need to work from home."*

*"Being able to take my children to school and pick them up without having to put them in before and after school care - better for them, nicer for me and reduces our cost of care."*

# Financial impact

**"It's improved my finances by at least \$5k per year and freed up about 15 days per year."**



**75%** of surveyed workers are concerned about the time and cost of commuting if required to return to the office

Some workers reported significant savings on travel costs working from home in 2020 and 2021.

In 2021, according to the ABS, consumer prices rose 3.5% and wages just 2.3%. While workers saved money not travelling to work in 2020 and 2021, the rising cost of living and the rising cost of fuel are hitting workers hard in 2022.

CommSec chief economist Craig Jones says motorists are paying an extra \$35 to fill up compared to 12 months ago, when fuel prices were sitting at an average of around \$1.40. Prices have already exceeded \$2.20 in March and some estimates have predicted prices could reach \$2.50.

Workers should not have to absorb the increased cost of commuting to work when their work can be performed from home. Workers say that working from home has saved them time and money: "It's improved my finances by at least \$5k per year and freed up about 15 days per year."

## Re-imagining how we work

**We're giving our employees flexibility in how, when, and where they work. Our goal is to ensure the majority of our roles can be flexible so that our people can work where and how they choose.**

- CBA [Re-imagining how we work](#)



**Working for us, you've the freedom to work how, where, and when it makes best sense to you, the business and customers.**

- NAB [Flexibility and the Workplace](#)



# Employers should live their values

The FSU calls on employers across the finance sector to implement fair, flexible work which should include, where possible, the option of fully remote working arrangements.

The finance sector is well suited - the [Productivity Commission](#) has defined working from home being most suited to "office-based workers such as managers, professionals and clerical and administrative workers, where workers use computers." If employers are going to implement their own policies around work flexibility, mental health support, staff wellbeing and family and caring principles, they need to give employees the choice, where possible, to continue to work from home.

A lack of true flexibility will affect staff retention when [staff shortages](#) are already hitting the sector. In its working from home report, the Productivity Commission found that employees highly value the ability to work from home and are willing to change jobs to continue to do it.

The [First Super 2021 Collective Agreement](#) outlines best practice working from home clauses.

Employers can follow the FSU best practice principles for successful work for [work from home arrangements](#).



**Finance  
Sector Union**

Fighting to improve the lives of finance sector workers every day.  
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