

Press release
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1 in 2 workers are now more willing to take a career break than they were pre-Covid

- 55% of Australian workers are more willing to take a career break now than they were before the Covid-19 pandemic
- 59% would use a career break to prioritise their mental health and 50% would spend quality time with family
- The concerns that make workers less willing to take a career break are financial (63%) and around job security (50%)
- Only 39% of employees are aware of their employer's guidelines for taking a career break

Sydney, 12 November 2024 – An increasing number of Australian workers are keen to experience the benefits that a career break¹ will bring to their professional and personal lives as more than half (55%) of Australian employees say they are now more willing to take a career break than they were five years ago, new independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) reveals.

However, workers are not confident about the support that their employer can offer them to take a career break, with about one third (30%) reporting guidelines have not been established by their employer.

A break not on the cards for all

While 55% of workers are more willing to take a career break, the research outlines another 26% of workers are less willing to take one now than they were before the Covid-19 pandemic because of the effect it may have on their careers and earning potential. The remaining 19% of workers have had no change in willingness for a career break.

*“We're seeing a significant shift in attitudes towards career breaks,” says **Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half**. “The events that have unfolded in the last few years have prompted many individuals to re-evaluate their priorities and consider taking time off for personal growth, mental health or family commitments.”*

The reasons behind workers' willingness to take a career break

When asked why they wanted a career break, those workers who are more willing now than five years ago want the time to focus on themselves and their families:

- To focus on mental health 59%
- To spend quality time with family 50%
- To undertake personal development, such as travel or passion projects 46%
- To reevaluate career plans 30%

When those workers who are less willing to take a career break were asked for their reasons, they commonly revealed concerns about what a break would mean for their current and future prospects:

- Hold concerns about finances 63%
- Hold concerns about job security 50%
- Hold concerns about career advancement 30%
- Want to keep skills current 29%

¹ A career break is defined as an absence from work that is typically much longer than an annual leave or long service leave break and can last for more than a year.

“While some individuals are more hesitant about career breaks due to financial worries or concerns about job security or falling behind in their careers, others see it as a valuable opportunity to recharge and return to the workforce with renewed energy and focus,” Gorton says.

The support employers can provide to workers taking a career break

The research reveals only 39% of workers are aware their employer has a policy or guidelines in place to accommodate workers who request a career break. Almost as many (30%) workers report guidelines have not been established by their employer, while 31% are unsure if they exist.

Workers do agree there are ways that employers can better support them when they want to apply for a career break:

- 44% of workers think employers should offer flexibility when employees return to work, such as the date of return, the hours worked on recommencement and the ability to phase back into full-time work
- 39% of workers want the conversation around career breaks to be normalised and career break planning to be encouraged
- 38% of workers want employers to establish a formal policy that explains the specifics of a career break available to staff
- 37% of workers want employers to emphasise the mental health resources available to employees and to destigmatise the fact that career breaks can be a method to prevent burnout

“Many employers are becoming more understanding and accepting of career breaks as they recognise the benefits it brings to their workforce like employee satisfaction, productivity and staff loyalty when they return. Creating supportive policies that encourage employees to take time off without fear of jeopardising their careers is an efficient long-term retention tool.

“Honesty and clarity in communication relating to career breaks is crucial. If career breaks are not an option, an employer can provide alternatives, such as offering sabbaticals, unpaid leave or reduced work schedules to accommodate employees' diverse needs and preferences,” concluded Gorton.

Tips for workers considering a career break

1. Communicate and discuss options with your employer

Communication with your employer is imperative. Discuss your career break plans openly and honestly with your manager and HR department to understand your options and potential impact on your employment.

2. Plan how you will use your career break

It is important to have a clear plan for how you will spend your time off and how you will transition back into the workforce. This includes financial planning, skill development and networking.

3. Stay connected to your industry and network

Even during a career break, it is important to take the time to stay informed about industry trends, network with colleagues and maintain your professional relationships.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in June 2024 by an independent research company, surveying 1,000 full-time office workers across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com/au.

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For more information

Courtney Fletcher

PR Manager

Courtney.Fletcher@roberthalf.com.au

+61 421 209 304