



YOUR UNION, YOUR SAY SURVEY FINDINGS

UNITED
WORKERS UNION

The United Workers Union surveyed members in July-August 2021 as part of our commitment to ensure the feedback, aspirations and ideas of members continues to drive organising as well as industrial and political campaigns.

OVER 28,000 MEMBERS

shared their views about their work and what was important to them. Members also outlined what makes them most proud of our union, and ways that UWU can improve.

The survey was distributed to all members via email, text and hard copy. Members across all industries, occupations and states participated, providing a strong picture of how members are feeling about national, industry and local issues.

The survey captured:



Issues that members are facing **At Work**



A profile of the rich **Diversity** of UWU.



How members see the bigger picture.
Politics and Fairness



How members feel about **Our Union**

Top Ten Findings

- 1** Members are proud of the United Workers Union because we are an inclusive union that promotes diversity and equality and supports workers to fight for their rights in the workplaces.
- 2** The top three issues members are experiencing at work are high workload, lack of respect and low pay. These issues stand out across the board, impacting women and men across all age groups.
- 3** Over 86 per cent of all members have some level of concern about the fact that wages are not keeping up with the cost of living. Nearly half of all members were very concerned about this.
- 4** Many of us are feeling the strain of financial pressure. One in five members would not be able to cover a \$400 emergency payment, and an additional quarter of all members stated they could only make the payment if they went without something else. In all, nearly half of all members find themselves worrying about their financial situation very frequently.
- 5** We want a stronger voice to respond to increasing employer power. Two thirds of members were very concerned about management control in the workplace and the failure of employers to consult about change.
- 6** Secure and Stable Jobs stands out as the most important issue that members want to see political action on. Addressing inequality was also important: members feel the gap between rich and poor is too wide, they want fairer taxes, including an end to corporate tax avoidance.
- 7** Fighting against discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race and/or ability is an important priority, particularly for those from diverse backgrounds and young people. Many members commented on their experiences of discrimination at work which contributed to experiences of disrespect and, in some cases, bullying.
- 8** Few members (less than 10 per cent) believe that Scott Morrison has done a very good job as Prime Minister, or in the management of COVID-19. If an election were held today, UWW members would overwhelmingly vote for Labor.
- 9** In terms of improvements, members want to see more frequent communication and face to face visits, and a better flow of information from the union. Members also want to work to build power by increasing membership and fighting for improvements in wages and conditions.
- 10** Nearly two thirds of members wanted to be more active by taking action, being a workplace leader, participating in broader social justice campaigns, getting involved in digital campaigns on-line, or in political lobbying and policy advocacy. Nearly four in ten members want to get involved in training around union rights or professional issues and over a thousand members were keen on being an elected representative on a union governing body or committee. Taken together, these responses indicate a desire of many members to be active in their union and fight for change. Members also overwhelmingly supported union activity that relates to their industry and broader campaigns.

At Work

Every day United Workers Union members confront challenges at work because employers have too much power and control. These issues are reaching boiling point. Members have spoken out about how this impacts their working lives.

High workload and not having enough staff was the most common issue impacting members and was experienced by over 60 percent of all members. Further details about this are below.

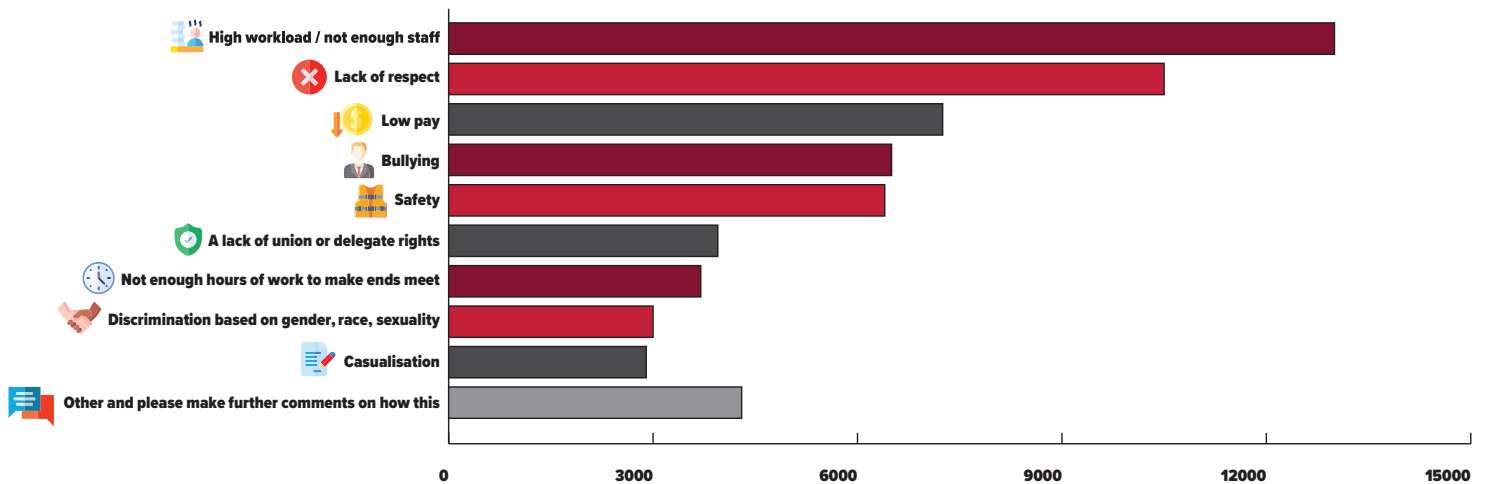
Following workload, over half of all members had experienced a lack of respect at work, and over a third had experienced low pay.

Workload, respect, and low pay resonated across all members, irrespective of industry or state.

A further third of all members had experienced bullying or safety issues. These two issues impacted on some groups of members more than others. For example, public sector members and women were more likely to have experienced bullying, while safety issues were strongest amongst men, and members working in logistics and food and beverage.

Table 1: Have you experienced any of the following at work?

(please tick all relevant answers)



While fewer members had experienced a lack of union or delegate rights, issues of workload, lack of respect, low pay along, bullying and safety issues are all symptomatic of a lack of rights at work.

High Workload and Hours

Concerns about workload came up as the number one issue for members and was especially strong amongst members working in food and beverage, logistics, public sector, early education and care and aged care. It stood out as an issue whether workers were employed full time, permanent part time or as casuals.

Understaffing leading to excessive workload was the most prevalent issue for aged care members. In fact, over 80 per cent of aged care members had experienced this at work. As one member stated, it was common to be

“Working short staffed, skipping breaks, taking short cuts to cope with workload.”

Aged Care Member

Related to workload were issues about working long hours, including undertaking unpaid work. Members working as paramedics, in casinos and home care also mentioned roster challenges as a concern,

“Rostering practices are poor. Weekly rosters fluctuate too much and [are] very random... Inability to request days off. No input for shift preferences.”

Casino Member

While manufacturing members cited concerns about continued casualisation as a tool to erode union rights.

“The employer is casualising the workforce with labour [hire] companies. This has an impact on safety, union membership and [our] legal rights.”

Manufacturing Member

In contrast, casual members with less job security were also impacted by not having enough hours of work. Fifty five percent of all casuals needed more work, compared with 25 percent of members employed full time and permanent part time.

“Recently my work hours have been reduced. Now I do not have enough time to complete my duties with the high standards I was able to achieve before.”

School Cleaner

Respect

Over 10,000 members stated that they experienced a lack of respect at work. While more women experienced a lack of respect, this was ranked as the number two issue by both women and men, and by members in permanent jobs as well as casuals.

A lack of respect was closely associated with workload and low pay.

“If the pay was appropriate to the hours worked...then staff would start to feel a little respected and not have to work long arduous hours trying to do their best to make ends meet at work and home.”

Chef

Failure to recognise and value skills was a theme that was closely aligned with feeling disrespected.

“The poor treatment I received, and lack of respect has ruined the role. I hate putting on the uniform and quite often I dr[i]ve to work/home from work in tears. The entirety of our mental stamina should be focused on the people we are trying to help, not galvanising us against an industry that views us as numbers only.”

Healthcare EMT Member

“No respect for one’s qualification or experience. Treated with disrespect on the basis of your racial background.”

Chef

Bullying was experienced by one third of members, and 15 percent experienced discriminatory treatment, based on race, sex, age or ability. A lack of attention to workplace safety was also seen as a failure to respect and value workers.

“Discrimination isn’t taken seriously, by our team leaders, and they expect us not to ask questions about it, how was dealt with it. We have no voice, and we aren’t taken seriously.”

Forklift Driver

“Bullying and racism in my workplace is disgusting and not handled properly.”

Poultry Member

Pay and Financial Security

Low pay was an issue at work for over one third of all members, and even a bigger issue for those working in farms, along with those in feminised sectors, such as aged care and early childhood education and care.

Dissatisfaction with pay took many forms. As noted above, in some cases members felt pay was low relative to workload, in others it symbolised a lack of respect attached to being undervalued.

Wage theft was a cause of dissatisfaction with pay for hospitality members, and those in early education and care, and food and beverage.

The issue of low pay is closely related to members' experience of financial security (or lack thereof).

One in five (20 per cent) members surveyed would not be able to cover a \$400 emergency payment, and an additional quarter of all respondents stated they could only make the payment if they went without something else.

Almost half of all members find themselves worrying about their financial situation very frequently.

Members who would struggle to make the emergency payment were more likely to be those who identified as being from a culturally diverse background, and those who work in aged care or farms.

Other significant issues

While the above three issues stood out as part of a common experience of members, other experiences should not be overlooked. As noted in Table 1, nearly one third of all members had experiences of bullying; and another third had experienced safety issues.

Of the 22 per cent of members who marked "other", most raised issues with pay relative to workload, underpayments and wage theft. Members also flagged having to work long hours – often unpaid – and for casual staff, not getting enough hours to make ends meet. Cleaning, disability support and logistics members also rated bullying, harassment, and discrimination by employers as big issue in their workplaces. As various members noted this is fundamentally about insecure work:

“Workers are reluctant to reveal situations like bullying, intimidation, and discrimination due to job security. Feeling like people who have power make decisions in their favour.”

Manufacturing Member

“The company will not follow the fair work act. I have had to fight for entitlements for example vehicle allowance. My pay does not reflect my hours as another entitlement is to be paid for travel between clients and am fighting for casual conversion to permanent part time as I work regularly over 27 hours a week (that does not include travel between clients).”

Community Support Worker

Members spoke out about experiencing unsafe workplaces which is again connected to rights at work.

“Safety concerns. PPE I have used has been severely worn down & has caused some co-workers to develop rashes. I was not informed that PPE was required when cleaning a grill, and only found out recently that you do in fact need it.”

Hospitality Member

“OHS issues are constantly shut down.”

Security Member

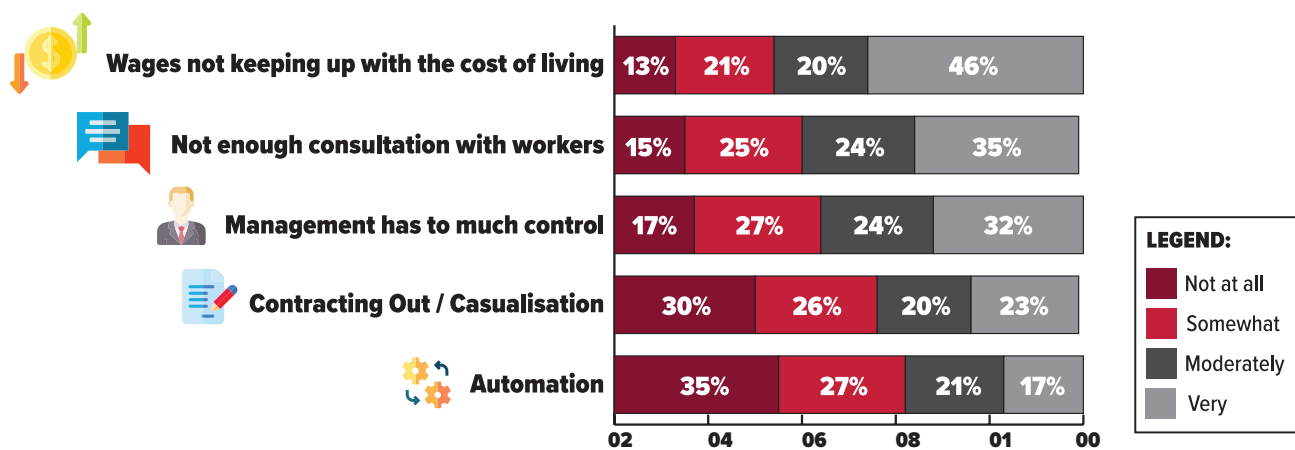
At Work: Issues of Concern

24,000 members provided feedback on the issues that most concerned them about work.

Members were most concerned that wages were not keeping up with the cost of living - 86 percent expressed concern about this, of which 46 per cent indicated that they were very concerned.

Women were more likely to be very concerned about this, including over half of early educators and 60 per cent of aged care members. The top five issues of concern are summarised below.

Table 2: How Concerned are you about the following issues?



Over a third of all members were very concerned that management had too much say and control in my workplace, and a third more felt that there was not enough consultation with workers about change that affects us. This suggests a need for members to have more power and a stronger voice through which to raise and respond to the issues that are impacting on them, such as workload, a lack of respect and pay.

These top five concerns were shared by women and men. However, slightly more men were concerned about automation, casualisation, and management having too much control. While women were a more likely to be very concerned about wages not keeping up with the cost of living, and a lack of consultation about change but overall, these differences were minor.

Members from a culturally diverse backgrounds expressed a greater level of concern about wages,

casualisation and automation, when compared with the rest of the union. Automation stood out as the biggest point of difference, with 71 per cent of members from culturally diverse backgrounds expressing some level of concern, and only 62 per cent of members doing so from the rest of the union.

70 percent of members expect to remain in their jobs in the next 12 months. Importantly, of those who will not stay, or are unsure, the reasons for leaving are excessive workload, low pay, feeling undervalued, poor management (lack of support, communication and/or bullying and harassment) and workplace health and safety. As one member summed up:

“I don’t feel safe or valued. There is not enough staff to do our job with pride. I feel like we have no voice for ourselves, the children we work with or their future education. I feel sad more than satisfied.”

Teacher’s Aide

“Number one issue is my role has almost zero work life balance and not adequate annual leave to manage burnout and make up for so many on call hours.”

Paramedic

Summary: At Work

In summary, the responses about work paint a picture where UWU members desire.



More control over their workload and hours, including rosters and having the right number of staff at their workplace so they can perform their jobs to the best of their abilities



Respectful treatment at work, including through improved pay. Members also desire a stronger voice in change that happens in the workplace, including around decisions around contracting out and casualisation.



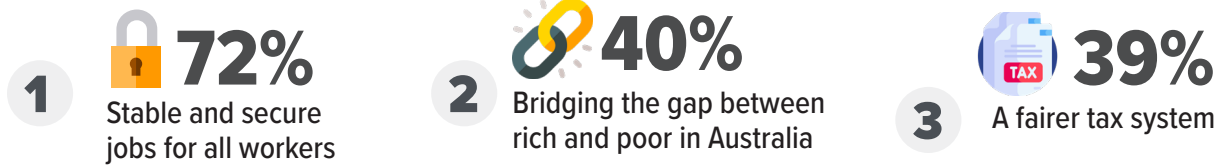
Wages that properly reflect the value of work and commitment of members to their workplace, that keep up with the cost of living and that reduce the burden of financial insecurity.



Workplaces where safety issues, bullying and discrimination are taken seriously and addressed.

At Work: Issues of Concern

When asked about the bigger picture, members identified the following as most important to them:



Stable and secure jobs stood out as the most important issue for women and men, across most age groups, occupations, and cultural backgrounds.

This was followed by *bridging the gap between rich and poor in Australia*, and *a fairer tax system*.

While there are some differences in second and third order priorities depending on age, industry, and cultural background, these also reinforced themes of equality and fairness.

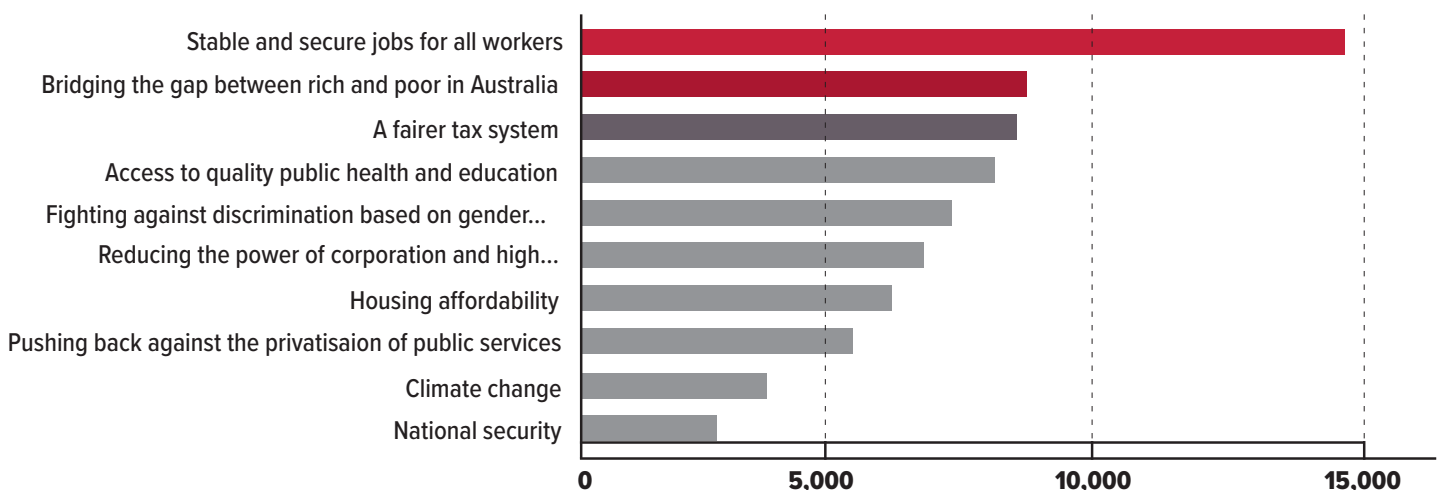
Fighting against discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race and/or ability was the second priority for farms members, and the third priority for cleaners, home care and hospitality members. *Fighting against discrimination* was also ranked as the second priority for members from culturally diverse backgrounds and by young members. Interestingly it was ranked as priority number eight by members who only speak English. This suggests there is some work to do in strengthening solidarity between members who experience discrimination at work or in society and other members.

Unsurprisingly early educators and public sector members ranked access to *quality public health and education* as their second priority. This priority was ranked in second place by women members more generally.

Younger members (aged 30 years and under) ranked housing *affordability* as their third order priority.

The results are summarised in the table below. This shows that members tended to opt for the bigger, broader issues as most important to them. Similarly, most members opted for equality that was based on *bridging the gap between rich and poor* rather than focussing on specific issues that generate inequality, such as privatisation, housing affordability and climate change.

Table 3: UWU prides itself on speaking out against injustice. Of the following, what are the three most important issues to you?



Political Leadership

Fewer than 10 percent of members believed Scott Morrison had done a very good job as Prime Minister. By contrast nearly one third of members did not believe the PM had done a good job at all, and the remaining members had mixed views about this.

Members had similarly negative views about the Prime Minister’s management of COVID-19. One third of members did not believe the Prime Minister had done a good job at all, and over half of all members had mixed views about this.

Over 14,000 members took the opportunity to describe what they would do **if they were Prime Minister**.

Not surprisingly members said they would focus on improving jobs and wages. This included creating more jobs, increasing job security and promoting equality and fairer pay for all workers. On wages, members said they would prioritise lifting pay including the minimum wage, addressing inequality in wages, and reigning in CEO pay. As one member so eloquently put it:

“Address wages now. All the industries that are essential and risking getting covid every time they go to work are the lowest paid. In Sydney we continue to work and where is any government appreciation? I would acknowledge and thank and give bonuses on-top of substantial wage increases to the essential workers from cleaners, childcare and supermarket workers to name a few. Job security must be available for all. Having to work 3 jobs just to feed your family and live is unacceptable and has to be sorted. We are called the lucky country but for many they have no time to enjoy living here, they’re busy running off to their second job. Plus climate change has to be addressed too.”

Early Childhood Educator

Female members (19%) were more likely than males (12%) to talk about wages particularly those who worked in aged care (29%) and early childhood education (26%), who were more likely than those in other industries to make comments regarding this issue.

Taxation was also an area of action for over 10 per cent of members, going to issues of fairness to ensure wealthy businesses and individuals pay more.

The third group of issues that members would tackle included improving “politics” – and there were many suggestions here, with a focus on politicians doing a better job and getting fewer perks, less pay and pension.

Other issues that members would act on if they were Prime Minister included putting Australia first, which included investing in manufacturing and jobs; better health care; changes to the welfare system and action on the environment and climate change. Improving public education and tackling both housing affordability and the increasing cost of living were also member priorities.

Voting Intention

Nearly sixty percent of UWU members would vote Labor if an election were held today; while 14 per cent would vote for the Coalition, 6 per cent for Greens, and others would vote Independent or were undecided. The Labor vote was stronger across culturally diverse and First Nations members, where almost two thirds would vote Labor. While young members overwhelmingly exhibited a preference for voting Labour (54 percent), they were also significantly more likely to vote for the Greens (18 percent) and far less likely to vote LNP than others.

OUR UNION

Members are proud to be part of the UWU because it stands up for and supports workers' rights, wins wage rises through bargaining, keeps employers honest and assists with underpayments and unfair dismissals.

Union Proud

Members are proud of the United Workers Union because we are an inclusive union that promotes diversity and equality and supports workers to fight for their rights in their workplaces. In fact, members most commonly cited the UWU's inclusivity and diversity when discussing their pride in UWU. Members are very proud that UWU treats everyone from different cultures, countries, and ethnicities equally.

Members also expressed pride in the support they received and felt from the union - whether through interactions with delegates or member rights officials. This support led members to take action and achieve their aims in their workplaces.

The pride in UWU comes through clearly in the following member comments:

“UWU has always gone above and beyond to give fair and full inclusion to all members of different backgrounds and identi[ties]. UWU fights for equality and fair pay and the rights within the workplace for all members.”

Cleaning Member

“The Newsletters I receive from the union always promotes diversity and tell stories from all walks of life. It depicts the struggles of all working class, and I can easily identify with these people as I am one of them.”

Chef

“Having a multitude of people from different nationalities as their delegates/workers and recognising the land of the indigenous before commencing meeting.”

Casino Member

“I love the multicultural diversity of our union workers, definitely the way to go, as aged care has so many beautiful people from a wide range of birthplaces and backgrounds, adds to the rewarding experiences in aged care.”

Aged Care Member

“UW[U] continue[s] to fight for all its members by keeping everyone informed, up to date with policy & procedures regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or colour. They give a feeling of inclusivity in everything they do.”

Teacher's Aide

Inclusion

94 per cent of survey respondents experienced the UWU as inclusive of members from all backgrounds and identities. This touched on how well UWU does at including diverse people in campaign materials and in the recognition of delegates and officials who come from diverse backgrounds and different nationalities.

It was also felt that the UWU brings people together to fight for rights, and celebrates delegates from different backgrounds, while encouraging minorities to get involved and take up leadership roles.

“Union reps and staff were very excellent in dealing with... members from all background and identities. I'm proud to be a union member.”

Cleaner

At the same time, members felt there could be improvements in communicating in different languages and taking steps to ensure that delegates are approachable and engaging with members. Unsurprisingly there was also a desire by some to see more people from diverse nationalities in leadership.

Engagement

Members were asked about preferred ways to engage with their union and members were most interested in staying informed on industry and union wide activities, attending union provided professional development and taking action at their own or fellow member's workplaces through strikes. While many members wanted to engage in their union from their own industry perspective, thousands also wanted to sign up for training that helps them talk about the union with their workmates and get more involved in broader union and social justice campaigns along with political lobbying. Over a thousand members were also keen on being an elected representative on a union governing body or committee. Taken together, these responses indicate a desire of UWU members to build power and fight for change.

Almost 25 per cent of members wanted to enrol in professional development courses run by the union, and more than 10 per cent wanted training that would help members talk about the union with their workmates. Not surprisingly professional development was mostly sought after by members working in education, including teacher's aides and early childhood educators, however this was by no means the exclusive domain of members in these industries or of female members more broadly. 20 per cent of logistics members, the majority being men, also wanted to engage via professional development.

Table 4: I want to engage more with my union by..

Receiving updates about union activity in my industry	66%	10987
Receiving updates about union-wide activity	27%	4424
Enrolling in professional development courses that the union offers	24%	4039
Taking action at my own or other members' workplaces (e.g. attend strikes)	21%	3408
Signing up for training that will help me talk about the Union with my workmates	14%	2277
Participating in broader union/social justice campaigns	14%	2261
Getting involved digitally (e.g. signing and sharing petitions, Twitter campaigns)	11%	1879
Being a delegate/leader/WHS representative in my workplace	10%	1712
Getting involved in political lobbying and policy advocacy	7%	1197
Becoming an elected representative on a union committee/governing body	6%	1013
	Answered	16549

Areas for Improvement

When asked how the union could improve, members most identified issues related to improvements in communications and consultation, and better flow of information. Some members also mentioned the need for more meetings, face to face visits, and wanted continuity and follow through on issues. For example, 14 per cent of members wanted more help for better wages and conditions and 12 per cent wanted more visits at workplaces.

It is noteworthy, that 12 per cent of members actually indicated that the union was doing well and that they were happy with UWU in response to this question. Other minor themes that members raised were improvements in power, expressed as increasing membership, building strength, better campaigns and fighting for wages and conditions.

A further, but less significant area for improvement was in relation to delegates, with a desire for more approachable and proactive representatives, continuity and training.

This feedback is very important and will be discussed by members at the upcoming 2021 Convention.

The aim is to identify opportunities to unlock scale in how we campaign and organise to ensure we are building solidarity by sharing information about whole of union issues and campaigns as well as providing the sort of industry and local information that members desire – and doing all this in a way that educates members about their role as delegates and leaders and supports member activism.

Keeping in touch

Members have opted for more traditional forms of contact from the union. Email is overwhelming preferred by over two thirds of members, followed by SMS (56%). Face to face contact was preferred by 19 per cent of members, and fewer were keen on phone calls, Facebook groups, social pages, or WhatsApp.

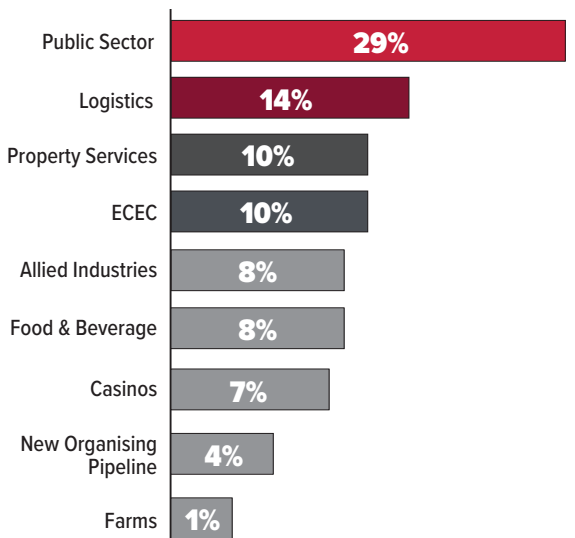
Diversity

Industry and Occupation

28,222 members responded from across various industries and dozens of different occupations.

All UWU member occupations responded strongly and relative to their numbers within the union. Table 5 outlines the key occupations, capturing just some of the diversity of the important work that UWU members do every day.

Chart/Table 5: Industry and Occupation of Survey Respondents



Teacher aide	3052
Cleaner	2998
Carer	2282
Educator	1520
Storeperson, Warehouse worker, logistics	1129
Pick/packer/process or production worker	1140
Paramedic and Patient Services/Support	771
Security	694
Casino gaming	646
Forklift Driver	610
Chef/Cook/Baker	579
Machine operator	541
Nurse, AIN, Orderly	468
Bar staff/Barista/Hospitality (general)	319
Correctional officer	79

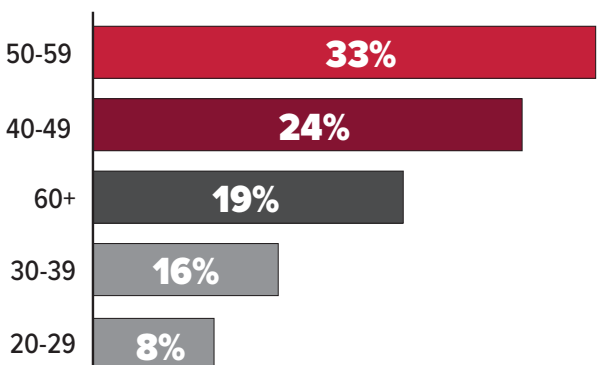
* Allied Industries includes regional membership, manufacturing, laundries, private corrections, pubs, call centres and leisure

** New Organising Pipeline includes Home Care, along with HospoVoice members.

Age and Gender

Slightly over half of all members were women, one third were aged 50-59 years old, and a majority were born in Australia. While the survey is slightly skewed towards older members, around 8 per cent of respondents were under 30 years of age.

Chart 6: Age of Members



Cultural Identity

Three percent of survey respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. This equated to almost 700 First Nations members answering the survey. This is a particularly strong response from First Nations members of UWU. Over 30 per cent of First Nations members who responded to the survey worked in the public sector and 17 per cent worked in property services. Roughly 10 per cent worked in ECEC and logistics.

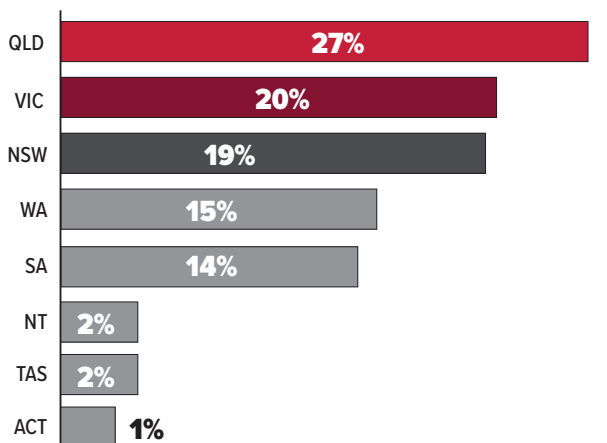
Members from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds featured strongly in all industry sectors, in particular Property Services, Casinos, Food and Beverage and Logistics. Eight in 10 respondents from the Farms sector were from a CALD background.

The top languages of members who speak a language other than English at home spanned over 10 languages including Filipino, Hindi, Spanish, Arabic, Samoan, Mandarin, Punjabi, Italian, Vietnamese, and Nepali.

Where members live

Members responded from all around the country as the chart below shows.

Chart 7: Membership by State



Employment type

Just over half of all respondents were employed full time, one third worked as permanent part time workers and 11 percent were casuals. Casuals were more likely to be employed in hospitality, and to be younger members.

Table 8: What is your type of employment?

