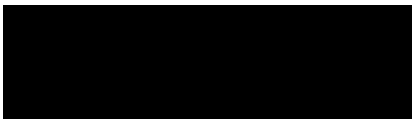


Statement of A/Prof Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland

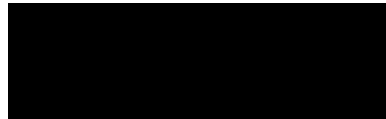
1. The report titled “Australia’s Flight Attendant Workforce in 2025” was prepared by Natasha Cortis and Megan Blaxland from the Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales. Natasha Cortis is Associate Professor and Megan Blaxland is Senior Research Fellow.
2. We were invited by the Flight Attendants’ Association of Australia (FAAA) to prepare a proposal to conduct a study of Australia’s flight attendant workforce. The proposal is at Attachment A. The proposal outlines how we approached the research, and our experience. Commercial in confidence material is redacted. The FAAA subsequently commissioned the study. Data was collected online from 31st of March to the 28th April, 2025.
3. Information about our expertise and experience is in the proposal on page 11-13. Our CV’s feature in the proposal on page 17-19 (Cortis) and page 20-21 (Blaxland). Our CVs list our qualifications and recent projects and publications. This reflects the expertise which enabled us to conduct the study and prepare the final report.
4. The study was designed based on our expertise in capturing workers’ experiences of their work and family lives. We developed our knowledge of flight attendants through a literature review. We then designed a survey.
5. We designed the survey questions specifically for the flight attendant workforce. As set out on page 6 of the proposal, we approached the research with the expectation that flight attendants would be a heterogeneous group, and that they would utilise a range of skills. We designed the survey to include questions intended for quantitative analysis and also provided participants with opportunities to provide comments. In our past research, we have found this approach to survey design is helpful for enabling employees to share their experiences in their own words and frames.
6. Our protocol including research design and recruitment was approved by UNSW’s Human Research Ethics Advisory Panel (iRECS8290). Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential.
7. Study design was the responsibility of the researchers. The FAAA provided comments on the draft survey instrument which we considered. The FAAA used

their networks to ensure the survey reached flight attendants. It was open to all flight attendants not only FAAA members. The final sample of 2794 is around 28% of Australia's flight attendant workforce (based on estimates that they number around 10,000). Recruiting survey participants via unions and professional associations may result in over-representation of employees who are more experienced and have been in the industry for longer, and may under-represent those with more marginal industry attachment including those who are newer, working very short hours, or in casual positions, who may be more difficult to reach.

8. We are familiar with the Harmonised Expert Witness Code of Conduct and consider the study to comply with it.



A/Prof Natasha Cortis
3.11.2025



Dr Megan Blaxland
3.11.2025



UNSW
SYDNEY

Australia's
Global
University

Survey of Flight Attendants

Proposal for the Flight Attendants Association of Australia (FAAA)

Submission Date: 21 November 2024 (revised 10th Dec)



This proposal is submitted by

**The Social Policy Research Centre
University of New South Wales**

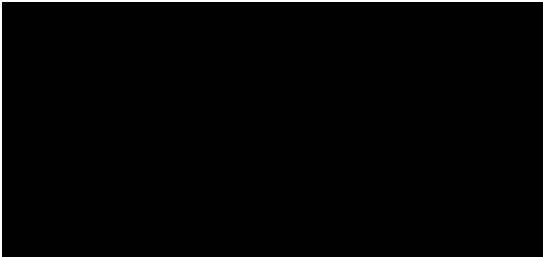
The Research Team

Associate Professor Natasha Cortis, Dr Megan Blaxland

For further information

Associate Professor Natasha Cortis (Project Lead) n.cortis@unsw.edu.au

Andrea Walisser (SPRC Proposals Co-ordinator) sprcproposals@unsw.edu.au



The legal entity for the contract is the University of New South Wales

ABN: 5719873179

The UNSW is a GST-registered organisation

CRICOS Provider Code 00098G

21 November 2024

Sally Taylor
Industrial Officer
sallyt@faaa.com.au

Dear Sally,

Re: Proposal: Survey of Flight Attendants

Please find attached a proposal for the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at UNSW Sydney to conduct this research project.

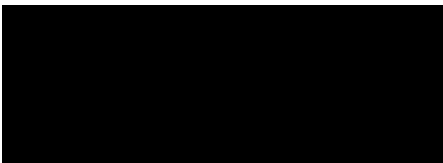
Our team is well-placed to complete this work given our expertise and reputation in designing and conducting social and labour market research, including research focused on the characteristics and experiences of employees in feminised industries.

SPRC has a long history of operating as a productive specialist research organisation. Our professional researchers are experts in designing and conducting qualitative and quantitative research with a range of population groups, enabling us to make a real difference to policymakers and communities. The proposed research team consists of Associate Professor Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland.

If you have any questions about the proposal, please contact Associate Professor Natasha Cortis at n.cortis@unsw.edu.au.

We look forward to a productive research relationship with the Flight Attendants Association of Australia.

Sincerely,



Professor kylie valentine
Director, Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW Sydney
T 02 9385 7825

1. Introduction

The Flight Attendants Association of Australia (FAAA) seeks a research team to develop a national understanding of the Flight Attendant workforce and the nature of the work they perform. This proposal, from the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), outlines how we propose to conduct the research.

The project aims to fill key knowledge gaps about the characteristics, experiences, perceptions and general status of the flight attendant workforce, drawing on workers' first-hand accounts. Findings will inform advocacy to ensure appropriate wages and conditions, and gender equality. The research involves:

- A rapid review of scholarly evidence on the changing nature of work in the aviation industry, including for women
- Survey design and implementation in Qualtrics
- Data collection (online survey to be distributed through FAAA networks)
- Data analysis, exploring flight attendants by gender, role, experience, wage setting arrangement, and other relevant variables
- Produce draft and final report on key findings relevant to FAAA including flight attendants' demographics, work tasks and activities, hours, pay, health and stress, customer interactions, work-family balance, perspective on wages and conditions.

In addition and at an appropriate time, we can prepare a statement based on the report that may be used as evidence by the FAAA in the Australian Fair Work Commission. The scope and any costs can be negotiated following project completion.

The research team consists of A/Prof Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland who together have vast experience designing and conducting mixed methods research, including via employee surveys, and translating data to ensure industrial and policy impact.

2. Background

Flight attendants (or cabin crew) are a feminised, mainly part time workforce, estimated to be around 77% female, with 64% of all in the occupation working part time¹. While figures are not available to give a precise indication of the current size of the workforce, in 2021, the ABS Census of Population and Housing counted around 6100 flight attendants. The current size of Australia's flight attendant workforce is likely to be higher, given the impact of the pandemic at the time of the Census, which affected flight attendants including through standdowns, redundancies and outsourcing.²

In the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), flight attendants are characterised as a type of travel attendant which provides “services for the safety and comfort of aircraft passengers”, including checking tickets; stowing, preparing and serving food; conducting safety checks and demonstrations; carrying out emergency procedures; coordinating sales; managing completion of customs and immigration documents; and tidying aircrafts.³ However, such descriptions are unlikely to capture the detail of the activities performed and skills utilised by cabin crew, nor the way work is changing in the context of developments affecting the aviation industry in recent years. In this context, the research aims to provide new information about flight attendants and the work they do, using the perspectives and voices of these workers themselves.

While content will be developed through the study, we envisage capturing flight attendants' demographics; work roles; experience; work tasks and activities; skills utilised; perceptions of job quality; rostering and working time; wage setting; classification; flexibility and care arrangements; main challenges in their work. In establishing the contemporary characteristics and experiences of flight attendants, the research will provide a basis for exploring the adequacy of industrial settings for this group, and monitoring change over time.

In terms of process, once the project is established and ethics clearance obtained, we propose conducting the research through phases outlined below.

¹ Jobs and Skills Australia (undated) *ANZSCO 451711 Flight Attendants Occupational Profile*, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/occupations/451711-flight-attendants>

² Commonwealth of Australia (2022) *The future of Australia's aviation sector, in the context of COVID-19 and conditions post pandemic*, report of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/Covid_Aviation/Report

³ ABS (2022) *ANZSCO- Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/anzsco-australian-and-new-zealand-standard-classification-occupations/2022/browse-classification/4/45/451/4517>

3. Proposed approach & methodology

The project involves designing a large national survey of flight attendants, collecting data and analysing results to produce a report for FAAA. We envisage that flight attendants will be invited to participate in the study via the networks of the FAAA, given existing links with the workforce.

We will utilise our methodological and content expertise to investigate the characteristics and experiences of flight attendants, the changing nature of their work and perspectives on pay setting and working conditions. Our approach is informed by:

- Our extensive experience of generating knowledge from practitioner surveys, based on both quantitative and qualitative material;
- Review of relevant literature relating to flight attendant work;
- Our expectation that flight attendants will be a heterogeneous group, with differences in characteristics, types of work and perspectives;
- Our understanding that flight attendants utilise a wide range of skills, including interpersonal skills, which may not be immediately visible.

We have designed research components to be undertaken in phases with consideration of the available timeline. While we consider our plans to be technically sound, ethical, appropriate, and practical for the period available, we welcome input from FAAA and relevant stakeholders and feedback on ways to sharpen our approach.

3.1. Project set up

During the remainder of 2024, we propose that the university will issue a contract to FAAA, and that the FAAA will continue to provide any policy documents or literature which may be helpful to the research team as background, along with any guidance which may inform survey questions (e.g. guidance on language). FAAA is welcome to establish an advisory group if preferred. The research team will liaise with FAAA as required, to ensure a clear understanding of project requirements, identify any risks and mitigation strategies, and discuss preferred communication channels.

3.2. Rapid evidence review

We propose a rapid review of policy and scholarly evidence to deepen understanding of the nature of flight attendant work, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 and safety protocols following 9/11. The review will be conducted as a targeted analysis of documents to answer the question of what is known about flight attendant employment, and how it is changing. It will cover key topics of gender in airline employment; flight attendants' work activities and working conditions; working time challenges; skill; and health, safety and stress. The review will draw on databases available via the UNSW Library as well as Google Scholar. Analysis from the review will be included in the final report.

3.3. Planned survey content

Survey design will be informed by the rapid evidence review, discussions with FAAA and any advisors, and our previous experience of surveying employees on the nature of work, work value and gender equality. We anticipate the survey will explore some of the following themes:

- Flight attendant careers
 - Experience, motivations
 - Employer
 - Aircraft trained to crew on
 - Work context such as specialisation, responsibilities, role (i.e. crew, supervisor, manager)
- Skills at work
 - Skills utilised, including interpersonal skills for working with complex passenger needs, challenging customer behaviour / aggression
 - Use of authority, judgment, initiative
 - Health and safety skills including de-escalation, responding to harassment
- Maintaining quality services
 - Training, supervisory support, mentoring, professional development
 - Team-work, collaboration, peer support, relationships at work
- Working time arrangements
 - Rostering
 - Paid working hours
 - Layovers, overnight stays, meal breaks, days off
 - Any work activities required in unpaid time
 - Impacts of working time arrangements on health and on care (incl. childcare)
- Other conditions and pay
 - Pay setting arrangements (Award, enterprise agreement, classification)
 - Perceptions of pay, and undervaluation
 - Job security
 - Workload
 - Work stressors, what would help address them
 - Intention to stay/leave and reasons
- Demographics
 - Age, gender, cultural background
 - Education/ training
 - Years of service
 - Care responsibilities

The survey will be designed in Qualtrics with skips and branching as required, with additional questions asked of particular groups where relevant (e.g. supervisors/managers, parents, or those whose pay is set only by the Award). Each section will include opportunities to provide open ended comments.

3.4. Refinement

The draft survey will be shared with FAAA for comment, before it is tested, refined further, and launched.

3.5. Ethics clearance

We will obtain ethics approval from UNSW. Human research is governed by the principles outlined in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). Our Research Code of Conduct sets out the obligations on all University researchers, staff and students to be aware of the ethical framework governing research at UNSW and to comply with institutional and regulatory requirements, including approval processes. This project involves data collection from employees and may capture content relating to work and health stressors (e.g. harassment). As such, it may require clearance via the 'more than low risk' Human Ethics Pathway.

3.6. Data collection

The data collection period is planned for Feb-March 2025, contingent on ethics clearance. Recruitment will be discussed with FAAA. Once the survey opens, we propose that FAAA circulate the survey link and initial information to members and networks, in order to reach all relevant employees. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous. The recruitment email should be sent to relevant employees, and can be shared through networks and newsletters to raise the profile of the survey and serve as a reminder to participate. Survey participation should take 15 minutes or less. The research team will be available to answer any questions from potential participants throughout the survey period. An incentive will be provided to encourage participation (one of two \$250 gift vouchers distributed randomly via a prize draw).

3.7. Analysis and reporting

Prior to commencing analysis, the team will develop an analysis plan, developed against the key project aims and questions, that will guide analysis and reporting. We will analyse quantitative responses using frequencies and cross tabulations using Excel and SPSS software. We will analyse qualitative responses thematically. The findings will be developed into a detailed report which will be provided to FAAA as a draft, prior to finalisation and being made publicly available. The report will translate findings into an accessible document that will outline evidence and amplify employees' voices through the use of quotes from flight attendants throughout. Information can be used as a baseline, against which to track change, should future surveys be undertaken.

The report will include an executive summary of sufficient detail and breadth to act as a short standalone report if required. Breakdowns for different groups of employees, including by employer, classification, or other relevant variables, will be provided, where sample sizes allow. Qualitative responses will be used to illustrate the report findings and provide deeper insight into employees experiences, in their own words and frames.

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6. Our team

The proposed team consists of A/Prof Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland, who each have proven track records in designing and undertaking similar research. Each are leaders in their fields, with extensive experience collaborating together, and with employees, trade union leaders, policy makers and organisational leaders. They have strong reputations in the academic community, enhancing impact. Brief CVs are provided at the end of this document.

A/Prof Natasha Cortis has broad mixed-method expertise relating to the organisation, delivery and evaluation of human services. Special interests relate to women's employment and economic security; funding models in community services, and the community services workforce. Recent work has related to occupational segregation (for the FWC) and large national employee surveys focused on workers in community services, retail, disability, legal aid, and domestic violence services. Natasha has worked on significant social program evaluations for the Australian Government, including the independent evaluation of 1800RESPECT, and the Second Anniversary review of the National Redress Scheme. She is Co-Chief Editor of the Australian Journal of Social Issues. Natasha will manage the project and ensure that it is adequately planned, co-ordinated and resourced, and delivered on time and within budget to the highest standard. Further information including links to publications can be found in the CV provided at the end of this document, and at

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/dr-natasha-cortis>

Dr Megan Blaxland is Senior Research Fellow at the Social Policy Research Centre. She has collaborated extensively with A/Prof Cortis in the conduct of workforce surveys and community service delivery. In addition, she has extensive experience in family policy, particularly early childhood education and care policy, and how it is experienced and navigated by families. Dr Blaxland's recent work includes the Australian Research Council Linkage project Engaging Families in Early Education, which examines how early childhood services can best engage with low-income families and their children. Dr Blaxland's research skills include qualitative and quantitative methods and detailed, comparative, policy analysis. Further information can be found at <https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/dr-megan-blaxland>

7. Examples of our experience

Project Title	Survey of the Social and Community Services Workforce
Funding Agency	Australian Services Union
Researchers	Natasha Cortis, Megan Blaxland,
Timeframes	2023-24
Summary	This project involved surveying community sector workers, to understand workforce characteristics and challenges. The report provides detailed insight into what social and community service workers do in their work, and how their work is characterised, classified and paid in the context of the regulatory arrangements set by the Social, Community, Home Care & Disability Services (SCHADS) Award. Survey data from 3122 social and community service workers shows the ways this feminised workforce remains susceptible to underclassification, a form of undervaluation.
Publications	https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/sprc/our-projects/australias-social-and-community-services-workforce
Impact	The research is contributing to advocacy to improve the SCHADS Award, including via the Priority Awards – Gender Undervaluation process in the Fair Work Commission https://www.fwc.gov.au/hearings-decisions/major-cases/gender-undervaluation-priority-awards-review

Project Title	Gender-based Occupational Segregation: A National Data Profile
Funder	Fair Work Commission
Researchers	Natasha Cortis, Yuvisthi Naidoo, Melissa Wong, Bruce Bradbury
Timeframes	2023
Summary	We examined gender segregation in Australia by analysing data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census and the 2021 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours. We identified 29 occupations which are large, highly feminised (over 80%), and in feminised industries. We also identified 13 modern awards used to set pay in these 29 large, highly feminised occupations.
Publications	Cortis, N., Naidoo, Y., Wong, M. and Bradbury, B. (2023). Gender-based Occupational Segregation: A National Data Profile. Sydney: UNSW Social Policy Research Centre. https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/consultation/gender-based-occupational-segregation-report-2023-11-06.pdf https://www.fwc.gov.au/agreements-awards/gender-pay-equity/gender-pay-equity-research
Impact	The report was released via a President's statement . The findings informed the 2024 Annual Wage Review and have been used to define the Fair Work Commission's directions on gender pay equity.

Project Title	Challenges of Work, Family and Care in Australia's retail, online retail and fast-food industries
Funding Agency	Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Union
Researchers	Natasha Cortis, Megan Blaxland, Sara Charlesworth
Timeframes	2021
Summary	This project involved designing and conducting a large survey of childcare arrangements and preferences among low-paid retail workers. The project explored working arrangements, care challenges, and access barriers to early education and care affecting children of retail workers. In addition to survey data, the project analysed the workforce profiles and information on organisational policies contained in employers' WGEA reports.
Publications	<p>Cortis N; Blaxland M; Charlesworth S (2021) Challenges of work, family and care for Australia's retail, online retail, warehousing and fast food workers. http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/fapi/datastream/unsworks:77843/bin5df0551d-5d63-41be-993e-f098287c1b1c?view=true&xy=01</p> <p>Cortis N; Blaxland M; Charlesworth S (2023). Care theft: Family impacts of employer control in Australia's retail industry. <i>Critical Social Policy</i>, https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183231185766 Fact sheets are available at: https://national.sda.com.au/care/</p>
Impact	Upon its release, the report was welcomed by the then Shadow Ministry, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, ACTU leaders and key work and family advocates. The government used the research to inform and justify the expansion of rights to flexibility in the Fair Work Act. It was used by Tony Burke in introducing Labor's landmark Secure Jobs, Better Pay industrial relations changes (27/11/22) and has informed advocates' submissions to numerous inquiries, including the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care, the Cheaper Child Care Bill, Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act, and the ACTU's Equity for Women at Work report for the Jobs Summit.

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A/Prof Natasha Cortis

Associate Professor, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney

B. Ec(SocSc)(Hons) PhD USyd

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/associate-professor-natasha-cortis>

Areas of Expertise

Natasha's work is focused on the organisation, delivery and evaluation of human services, including issues of service quality, funding and workforce development; financial sustainability in not-for-profit organisations; domestic and family violence, and women's employment and economic security.

Relevant Roles and Achievements

Natasha joined SPRC in 2005 and was UNSW Vice-Chancellors Postdoctoral Fellow from 2008-13. From 2014 to 2016 Natasha led a study of strategies to promote women's economic security following domestic violence, funded by ANROWS. In 2021 and 2012 she received the Norm Smith Publication in Social Work Research Award for the best article in Australian Social Work. In 2018, she received the Mary Parker Follett Award for Theory Informed Research from the US Network for Social Work Management, for research on non-profit human service organisations, and the Dean's Award for Social Impact, for work on service quality and Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme. With Professor Katz and co-researchers, in 2015 she received the Australasian Evaluation Society Award for Excellence in Evaluation. She has provided expert evidence to the Fair Work Commission, and Australian Parliamentary committees, including the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS. Natasha is co-Chief Editor, Australian Journal of Social Issues.

Current and recent projects:

- A national survey of social and community service workers (for the Australian Services Union, 2023-24)
- A national survey of legal aid private practitioners (for National Legal Aid, 2024)
- Gender-based occupational segregation: a data profile (for Fair Work Commission, 2023)
- Commissioning, Contracting and Procuring Homelessness Services (For Homelessness NSW, 2023)
- Evaluation of use of specialist domestic violence financial counsellors in women's legal services (2022-23)
- The Australian Community Sector Survey (with ACOSS and the COSS network, 2019-23)
- A study of costing community services in the ACT (for ACT Council of Social Service, 2021)
- A study of Work, Family and Care among Australia's retail and fast food workers (for the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union, 2021)
- Feedback study for the Second Anniversary Review of the National Redress Scheme (2020)

- Evaluation of 1800RESPECT (for Department of Social Services, 2018-2019)
- A study of older people's social and emotional needs in aged care (with Macquarie University, RMIT University, the Health Services Union, and United Voice) (2019)
- Surveys of the domestic and family violence and sexual assault workforces (commissioned by Department of Social Services) (2017-18);
- Analysis of data collected by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to develop new knowledge about charities' characteristics, activities and finances (2015-18)
- analysing the impact of pricing arrangements on service quality and decent work in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (with the Health Services Union, Australian Services Union and United Voice)

Selected recent publications (full list at <https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/associate-professor-natasha-cortis>)

Cortis N; Blaxland M, 2024, *Australia's Social and Community Services Workforce: Characterisation, Classification and Value*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/30162>, <https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/sprc/our-projects/australias-social-and-community-services-workforce>

Cortis N; Blaxland M; and Charlesworth, S, 2024, Care theft: Family impacts of employer control in Australia's retail industry, *Critical Social Policy* 44(1):106-128 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183231185766>

Cortis N; Naidoo Y; Wong M; Bradbury B, 2023, *Gender-based Occupational Segregation: A National Data Profile*, Fair Work Commission, <https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/consultation/gender-based-occupational-segregation-report-2023-11-06.pdf>

Cortis N; Blaxland M, 2023, *At the precipice: Australia's community sector through the cost-of-living crisis*, findings from the Australian Community Sector Survey, ACOSS, Sydney, https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/At-the-Precipice_ACSS-2023.pdf

Cortis N; Smyth C; Katz I, 2023, *Reducing restrictive practices: A review of evidence-based alternatives*, Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2023-08/Research%20Report%20-%20Reducing%20restrictive%20practices%20-%20A%20review%20of%20evidence-based%20alternatives.pdf>

Cortis N; Blaxland M; Adamson E, 2022, 'Quality and marketised care: The case of family day care', in *Designing Social Service Markets: Risk, Regulation and Rent-Seeking*, ANU Press <http://dx.doi.org/10.22459/dssm.2022.01>

Toorn G; Cortis N, 2022, 'Marketisation and Regulatory Labour in Frontline Disability Work', *Work, Employment and Society*, pp. 095001702110580, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/09500170211058024>

Cortis N; Blaxland M; Adamson E, 2022, *Counting the Costs: Sustainable funding for the ACT community services sector*, https://www.actcoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/publications/2021-report-Counting-the-Costs_1.pdf

Cortis N; Katz I, 2022, 'Waiting for redress: Child sexual abuse survivors' experiences of Australia's National Redress Scheme', *Child Abuse and Neglect*, vol. 129, pp. 105657, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105657>

- Cortis N; Blaxland M, 2022, Helping people in need during a cost-of-living crisis: findings from the Australian Community Sector Survey, ACOSS, Sydney, https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ACSS_demand_snapshot_2022.pdf
- Cortis N; Blaxland M, 2022, Carrying the costs of the crisis: Australia's community sector through the Delta outbreak, ACOSS, Sydney, <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ACSS-Full-2021-Report-v6.pdf>
- Cortis N; Van Toorn G, 2021, 'Safeguarding in Australia's new disability markets: Frontline workers' perspectives', *Critical Social Policy*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/02610183211020693>
- Cortis N; Blaxland M; Charlesworth S, 2021, *Challenges of work, family and care for Australia's retail, online retail, warehousing and fast food workers*, <https://national.sda.com.au/care/>
- Cortis N; Foley M; Williamson S, 2021, 'Change agents or defending the status quo? How senior leaders frame workplace gender equality', *Gender, Work & Organization*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12742>
- Cortis N; Smyth C; valentine k; Breckenridge J; Cullen P, 2021, 'Adapting Service Delivery during COVID-19: Experiences of Domestic Violence Practitioners', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 51, pp. 1779 - 1798, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcab105>
- Smyth C; Cullen P; Breckenridge J; Cortis N; valentine k, 2021, 'COVID-19 lockdowns, intimate partner violence and coercive control', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.162>
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Dr Megan Blaxland

Senior Research Fellow, Social Policy Research Centre,
UNSW Sydney

BSocSc(Hons) UNSW, PhD USyd

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/dr-megan-blaxland>

Areas of Expertise

Analysis of service system support for families and children facing multiple adversities. Dr Blaxland's research experience has included projects on the community services sector, the community services workforce, young people and early childhood education and care.

Specialist Skills

Mixed method research and evaluation design, implementation and analysis, both qualitative and quantitative survey data analysis, in-depth qualitative data analysis, policy analysis, detailed knowledge of Australian family, care responsibilities and early childhood education and care.

Select Recent Projects

- 2023-2032, Uniting NSW/ACT, Annual Families Report
- 2023-2024, Australian Services Union, A national survey of social and community service workers
- 2019-2023, Australian Council of Social Services, Annual survey of Australia's Community Services Sector
- 2022-2023, KU Children's Services, Workforce Survey on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Culture
- 2021, ACT Council of Social Service, Costing Community Service Delivery
- 2021, Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union, Care responsibilities among retail and fast food workers
- 2018-2020, Australian Department of Education and Training, Child Care Package Evaluation, consortium led by Australian Institute of Family Studies, with Centre for Social Research and Methods, ANU, and Social Research Centre.
- 2018, Department of Social Services), Survey of the domestic and family violence and sexual assault workforces
- 2017-2019, ARC Linkage, Young people and adversity: stories of resourcing and resourcefulness

Professional Activities

Co-Chair, Indigenous Research Knowledge Exchange group, Social Policy Research Centre

Member, Ethics and Research Committee, SDN Children's Services Member, Supporting Early Years Group in the Blue Mountains.

Dr Blaxland has provided expert evidence to the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care, and her research has been used in submissions to the Productivity Commission, Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care, and Council of Australian Governments Review of the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

Selected publications (full list: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/staff/megan-blaxland>)

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Australia's Flight Attendant Workforce in 2025

FINAL REPORT

3 November 2025

Prepared for:

Flight Attendants Association of Australia

Prepared by:

Natasha Cortis and Megan Blaxland

Acknowledgement of country

We value the cultures, knowledge and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We are committed to not perpetuating harms caused by research on and about Indigenous Peoples. We embrace and honour Indigenous knowledges and continue to learn from Indigenous Peoples where we work.

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Research Team

A/Prof Natasha Cortis and Dr Megan Blaxland

For further information, contact A/Prof Natasha Cortis at n.cortis@unsw.edu.au

Social Policy Research Centre

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Glossary

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
EBA	Enterprise bargaining agreement
FAAA	Flight Attendants Association of Australia
FWA	Flexible working arrangements
GDP	Gross domestic product
Modern Award	Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020 (MA000047)
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RDO	Rostered Day Off
RSI	Repetitive strain injury
SJSP	Same Job Same Pay legislation
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
UNSW	University of New South Wales

Executive summary

This report provides information about Australia’s flight attendant workforce. Estimated to number around 10,000, flight attendants comprise a feminised occupation within a masculinised industry. Their work enables the aviation industry to directly generate around 1% of gross domestic product (GDP). They are also integral to the economic contributions made in tourism, trade and other key industries.

Popular understandings of flight attendant work are replete with stereotypes. Historically, the work has been understood as pleasant and glamorous, involving non-pecuniary rewards of free travel. Such stereotypes are challenged in this report, based on the first-hand accounts of 2794 flight attendants. Flight attendants pointed out that gendered depictions of the work which emphasise hospitality and customer service overlook and undervalue more significant aspects of their roles, including their contributions to safety and security. Gender stereotypes also obscure the challenging aspects of the work, and its health and personal costs.

“It’s not just food in the air, it’s way more than that. You’re a firefighter, you’re a first aid responder, you’re the go to for an emergency, you’re everything!”
(Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years’ experience, international flights)

Flight attendant work has changed in recent decades, following shifts in aviation from an elite service to a form of mass transport. Flight attendant work has transformed in response to competition from low-cost models, more diverse passenger demographics, larger aircraft and reduced crew to passenger ratios. Flight attendants apply expanded repertoires of skills, including to identify, prevent and address safety threats. Their work increasingly involves addressing passenger noncompliance and aggression. Responsibilities have also increased in response to changes in catering and ground operations. Flight attendants must manage exposure to physical, environmental, and psychosocial harms. These generate long term health costs, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, sleep disorders, and depression.

“We are not glorified waitresses. We are safety professionals... we are responsible for hundreds of lives in the event of an emergency. Flight attendants need more recognition”
(Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

The complexity of flight attendant work, and the way the work has transformed in recent years, is not reflected in pay. Wages have been depressed by companies’ aggressive cost minimisation strategies, including indirect hiring of casual flight attendants via labour hire firms.

There has not been a work value assessment for decades and the emphasis on enterprise bargaining has neglected to ensure the Modern Award, the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020, contains rates and classification structures that fully recognise flight attendants’ skill.

Survey participants

The 2794 survey participants constitute around 28% of Australia’s flight attendant workforce. Recruited via the networks of the Flight Attendants Association of Australia, the sample includes many highly experienced and qualified workers who have long histories in the occupation. The largest group were flying mainly international routes (48%). Although two thirds of participants were women (67%), women were under-represented in higher ranking, better paid roles among cabin managers and supervisors, and among those flying international routes. Women were over-represented among part time and casual flight attendants, and those whose pay was set by the Award.

“No day is the same and it could be anything, a medical emergency or an aggressive passenger that needs to be handled. Our ability to adapt and work through problems without any extra resources is unique to our industry.” (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Skills

Flight attendants participating in the survey were highly experienced. 42% had 20 years or more of experience in the industry. Over half held a Certificate IV qualification or higher, and 28% held a bachelor’s degree qualification or higher. All were trained in emergency preparedness and response. They reported routinely encountering challenging and unpredictable situations. Common adversities include arguments among passengers (reported by 81% of flight attendants), severe turbulence (72%) and unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from passengers (65%).

Flight attendants are proud of their diverse range of skills. They report that their safety and security skills have become more important in their work, and feel these skills are not well recognised. As examples, they highlighted their contributions in dealing with medical situations onboard, identifying risk, and preventing and de-escalating aggression. 60% had experienced a serious medical incident onboard and 16% had experienced a death on board.

Survey participants reported taking responsibility for large numbers of passengers each time they fly – more than 100 for the majority of flight attendants. They also described a more complex passenger cohort. Over two thirds said it has become more complex to manage non-compliant passengers (69%). They said their work is more complex due to the entitlement and unrealistic service demands of ‘top tier’ passengers, and behavioural and mental health issues among the wider travelling public. They also reported work intensification, with less time for rest and breaks and growing company expectations to perform work tasks during personal time. Checking rostering and completing company required reading were the most common tasks completed in unpaid time, performed by more than 75% of survey participants.

Working time

Working time arrangements generate physical and social harms for flight attendants. Their schedules are unsocial and irregular. 81% of all survey participants, and 88% of those flying internationally, say they miss important social events because of their roster. 74% of participants, and 80% of those flying

internationally, report that rosters impact on their mental health.

Schedules also change with little warning. In the last 12 months:

- 92% had their rosters changed at short notice, and
- 88% were unable to predict when they would return home.
- Over 90% of flight attendants have been delayed past rostered sign off times, and this has affected 63% more than 5 times in the last year.
- 85% have missed a break, and 48% have missed breaks more than 5 times.
- 74% have been denied a roster adjustment, and 72% have been unable to take leave at chosen times.

Flight attendants find unpredictable rosters limit their access to good nutrition, and contribute to fatigue, illness and injury. They have difficulties getting time off for important events. They struggle to meet routine care responsibilities, and to coordinate work schedules with child care. Bidding and roster swaps give only limited opportunities for control. Access to flexible working arrangements appears limited.

“I’m a single parent and being called out last minute is enormous stress to me and my son and family and friends I have to rely on... Having little notice is not good. I can always see flights the night before that need crew and I beg the company to pre-allocate it so that I can get my family organised but they decline and it causes me to be awake all night.”
(Female cabin crew member, part-time, 20+ years’ experience, international flights)

Having flight attendants on home reserve (or standby) enables airlines to maintain service when crew are unavailable at short notice, such as due to illness, flight delays or mandatory rest. Among survey participants, 85% said they had been on home reserve in the last year. This was higher for casuals (95%). In their comments, flight attendants typically say home reserve is disruptive and poorly paid. When on home reserve, crew cannot engage in activities at home or in the community that may interfere with their quick attendance to work, yet they are not adequately paid for the disruption. Only 8% felt they were paid enough for home reserve. Short call out periods, in which flight attendants are

expected to report for work at the airport with 90 minutes notice, are particularly difficult. Only 15% of those with 90 minute call out periods find this time frame easy to achieve.

“The companies are stretching our working days to the legal parameters in order to increase their profit margins. The rosters are so full on that my whole life outside of work is recovering from work for my next duty. ...Flying is already fatiguing without throwing back-to-back, long days, with maxed out passengers on each flight. It’s not safe and it needs to change.” (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 3+ years of experience, domestic flights)

The work schedules required of flight attendants are particularly difficult for those with caring responsibilities. In the study, over half (54%) had care responsibilities, either for a child or an adult such as an elderly parent. Of this group, 41% said their roster doesn’t suit their care responsibilities. Unsuitable rosters make it difficult to meet care responsibilities, impacting on other people and generating anxiety and family stress. Flight attendants unable to access flexible working arrangements that suit them, or receive the schedules they bid for, rely heavily on extended family and friends, and use annual leave or sick leave to manage their caring responsibilities.

Pay

Most flight attendants in the sample reported being paid according to an enterprise agreement, with just 6% paid under the Award (7% were unsure how they were paid). Women were 76% of those paid under the Award and 64% of those under an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA).

Overall satisfaction with pay is low. Only:

- 26% agree they are paid fairly for their work.
- 25% agree they are well paid for time away from home.
- 13% feel pay rates recognise safety risks and stress.

Satisfaction with pay is lower among those paid under the Award compared to those under an EBA.

Crew say their pay reflects outdated stereotypes and neither recognises their full range of skills nor compensates for the risks and harms in their work environment. Many rely on allowances due to inadequate base pay.

- Very few flight attendants find their allowances sufficient to cover missed breaks (10%), uniform fittings (9%), standby/home reserve (8%), phone/data allowance (7%), and lost baggage (5%).
- Among those paid under agreements, 31% felt they were paid enough for layover compared with only 16% of those under the Award.
- 27% of those paid under enterprise agreements feel their meal allowances are enough, compared with only 13% of those under the Award.

Flight attendants described particularly low allowances in some destinations. They also queried being paid less to eat than pilots, a male dominated occupation flying the same routes and layovers. Flight attendants report financial stress from payment of allowances in arrears. Often, they seek trips offering better allowances, to make up for low base pay. As hours and destinations are unpredictable, so too is pay.

Flight attendants say pay does not reflect the nature and conditions of their work, and living costs, including costs of living near to the airport. 69% of those paid under an EBA and 79% of those paid under the Award say they need more than their flight attendant wage to meet living costs. Financial strain causes people to work through illness and fatigue. Although it is difficult and contrary to company preference, many have to work a second job.

“Pay has not kept up with inflation at all however my airline has made huge profits.” (Female team leader, full time, 20+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

“In my 18 years I’ve had to accept 4 pay freezes leaving me behind where I should be.” (Male cabin crew supervisor, full time, domestic flights)

“Cabin crew salary isn’t liveable. All of my friends including myself have second jobs to make ends meet. Being crew is exhausting enough, we shouldn’t be pressured for a promotion or made to work second jobs to make ends meet.” (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years’ experience, regional flights)

Box 1 Kelly's reflections¹

Kelly is a full time cabin crew member, mainly flying domestic routes. She describes challenges with rostering and pay which are similar to many others who completed the survey. Kelly has a university degree and over a decade of experience, which includes time crewing for other companies. She is proud of her skills in emergency response, safety, risk assessment and reporting, first aid, security, conflict resolution, communication and team work, and feels these are inadequately recognised. Kelly has observed changes in her work environment, which have made the work more complex in recent years:

In our particular airline, we have received more and more new variants of aircraft type that have different procedures and locations of equipment meaning our training is longer and more detailed. People are less compliant, more entitled and don't respect cabin crew for the role they do. Most passengers believe we are there for service and unaware of our actual role. There are more guests requiring assistance than ever before – more hidden disabilities and anxiety conditions... Medical incidents have also become more common for me.

Kelly manages these complexities within a work schedule that she describes as unpredictable and inadequately compensated:

I start and finish at a different time every single day I go to work. This means I can't get to sleep on time, get enough sleep or feel rested for the next day. I feel tired most days. There is absolutely NO routine in my role. This has a knock-on effect when it comes to prioritising healthy eating and exercise into my schedule.

Like so many other flight attendants, Kelly says the job makes it difficult to have a normal social life. Although there is some flexibility formally on offer, it is difficult to access, even for one-off special events such as weddings. She feels the company “*makes it very difficult to organise in advance and we have to do multiple complicated processes to apply and can still be rejected.*”

Kelly hasn't progressed up in pay in the last year, and does not feel she is paid fairly for her work. She feels pay rates do not recognise safety risks and stress, nor compensate for time away from home. She is particularly dissatisfied with her work related costs:

At my airline we don't receive phone/data allowance, yet we're expected to be contactable at all times even overseas. We don't receive lost baggage allowance and are expected to handle it ourselves- I pay out of pocket for yearly travel insurance for this reason.

Payment for reserve time is also an issue for her:

[We] only get paid 1/3 of our hourly rate for home reserve and no call out payment. Compared to other industries with on call and call out payments, I don't think this is an acceptable amount of pay.

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

1. Introduction

The 2021 Census of Population and Housing, conducted during disruptions to aviation, indicated there are around 6,100 flight attendants in Australia. While there is not a more recent official count, experts estimate that Australia's flight attendant workforce currently numbers over 10,000². In 2024, these workers helped transport 64 million domestic and 41 million international passengers (Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics, 2025). Their work enables the aviation industry to directly contribute around 1% of GDP annually, and indirectly supports income generation in other key industries such as tourism, trade, and higher education (Australian Government, 2024).

Flight attendants are part of a feminised occupation which operates within a masculinised industry.³ While men dominate leadership and technical roles such as pilots, engineers and air traffic controllers, over three quarters of flight attendants are estimated to be women (77%)⁴ (Jobs and Skills Australia, undated). Some other occupations and industries in Australia currently exhibit higher levels of gender segregation (Cortis et al., 2023)⁵, but gender segregation, and gender stereotyping, nonetheless presents problems for aviation. Segregation deters and excludes both women and men from jobs to which they'd be suited, so constrains productivity (Jackson, 2022). Segregation also enables the undervaluation of feminised jobs. Gender stereotyping misrepresents the work, contributing to low pay, and poor pay and conditions further discourage workers and contribute to skill shortages (Treasury, 2023; Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023; Richardson, 2007). In 2023, flight attendants were in shortage nationally and in all jurisdictions other than Western Australia, and in 2024, they were in shortage nationally and in all jurisdictions other than Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2024).⁶

Recognising the importance of the flight attendant workforce, this report is concerned with the nature of the work they perform, drawing on the accounts of flight attendants themselves. Australia's new occupational classification, the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia, provides a high level description of flight attendants' work activities. These include customer service functions, such as assisting passengers (including with specific needs or medical conditions), serving meals, and resolving issues and complaints. Their work activities also include safety functions such as

² See 2021 Census of Population and Housing - counting persons, 15 years and over; person records, accessed via Table Builder. The more recent figure is based on internal FAAA estimates.

³ Two thirds of workers are male in the 'air and space' industry, see 2021 Census of Population and Housing - counting persons 15 years and over.

⁴ Again, this figure is based on Census data collected in 2021, a time that aviation was disrupted. Information from the 2016 Census which categorises flight attendants in the broader category of travel attendants indicates they were 74% female.

⁵ 2023 research commissioned by the Fair Work Commission (Cortis et al., 2023) did not identify flight attendants as a large, priority occupation for review, as they numbered below 10,000 in the 2021 Census, and were below 80% women and not in a feminised industry. However Cortis et al (2023) recognised the thresholds used to identify priority occupations were restrictive and would not capture all parts of the labour market affected by gender segregation and potential undervaluation.

⁶ As well as flight attendants, other aviation occupations experiencing shortages include aircraft maintenance engineers, baggage handlers, ground crew, pilots, flying instructors and air traffic controllers (Australian Government, 2024, p. 99).

conducting safety briefings and safety checks, ensuring passengers comply with safety regulations and procedures, and responding to emergencies (see Appendix A, Table A. 1).

This report develops a more detailed understanding of flight attendant work, drawing on flight attendants' accounts. This is important in the context of historical mischaracterisation of the work, which underpins risks of undervaluation. Indeed, characterisations of flight attendant work have been shaped by gendered and sexualised stereotypes of flying as easy, pleasant and glamorous work, and a source of free travel, dining and accommodation, enabling freedom for young women. Popular images promulgated via airline marketing have mischaracterised flight attendant work as hospitality. This has obscured flight attendants' primary safety roles and the unique contexts in which they work, which involve multiple physical and psychosocial stressors and require a skill set which is both very wide, and highly specialised (Tsaur et al, 2020; Chen and Chen, 2012). Images of flight attendants providing 'comfort and catering' emphasise more visible, customer-facing functions. Such images continue to keep flight attendants' preparedness for danger such as fires and rapid evacuation out of the public eye. While this upholds customer confidence in flying, it maintains the invisibility of safety functions, and underpins the undervaluation of the work.

1.1 Purpose and structure of this report

This report provides detailed examination of the ways flight attendant work is currently experienced, characterised, organised and paid. Findings come from two sources. First, recent scholarly literature is used to outline the changing context of flight attendant work (Section 2) and the nature and conditions of the work (Section 3), including in relation to gender stereotypes, safety and security and working time and worker health. Then, Section 4 introduces new information from a large national survey of flight attendants conducted in April 2025. Findings, presented from Section 5, draw on 2794 survey participants' accounts to outline flight attendants' characteristics, skills, activities at work, working conditions, and perceptions of pay. This provides insight into the nature, conditions and value of flight attendant work, and shows differences in experiences among groups of flight attendants, including those flying internationally, those with caring responsibilities, and those paid under the Modern Award.

Part One: Literature Review

2. The changing context of flight attendant work

This section draws on academic literature and policy documents to understand changes in the context of flight attendant work in recent decades, providing background for understanding the accounts of flight attendants captured in the survey. The changes outlined include the intensified competition following deregulation and market entry of low-cost providers (Section 2.1); changed safety cultures following 9/11 (Section 2.2); the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 2.3); and fragmentation of wages and conditions through the use of labour hire (Section 2.4).

2.1 Competition and low-cost carriers

Increased competition has been a defining feature of global aviation, including in Australia following elimination of the ‘two airline’ policy in 1990 (James, 2011). Around the world, new low cost, ‘no frills’ carriers have entered the market, placing pressure on the costs and productivity of traditional airlines, whilst enabling air travel to expand to serve a more general population (Tsauro et al, 2020). The shift of aviation from a luxury, elite service to a form of mass transportation has changed the nature of flight attendant labour. Increased aircraft sizes have enabled planes to carry more passengers, and airlines have reduced crew member to passenger ratios. New carriers have operated lower cost models and placed pressure on traditional airlines, which have struggled to maintain market share and profit, catalysing reorganisation of onboard work and increased requirements of employees (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015; Tsauro et al., 2020; Tremblay and Nogues, 2024).

Flight attendants are airlines’ main interface with passengers. Crew have been the focus of company attempts to prioritise customer care and improve service quality, as airline brands seek to differentiate themselves in competitive markets (Taylor and Tyler, 2000; Taylor and Moore, 2015). While their work is essential to airline service standards and retention of repeat custom, flight attendants are also a central element of company strategies to cut costs. Computerised planning has enabled reductions in labour costs and increased profit margins, as airlines optimise routes and schedules to maximise work hours and reduce rest and layover periods while staying just within legal parameters. Inevitably, this impacts on fatigue and morale (Tremblay and Nogues, 2024; Ng et al, 2011). Flights also now operate with reduced crew numbers. Australia’s required ratio of flight attendants to passengers was formally changed from 1 to 36 to 1 to 50 in 2010, on the basis that lower ratios would provide for more efficient, lower cost operation which would not pose safety or security concerns and would benefit the travelling public (Australian Government, 2017).⁷ However, experts have contended that as well as passenger numbers, ratios should account for the functions to be performed in an emergency, such as the number of cabin doors to be operated in an evacuation (Dell, 2019).

⁷ Since 2006, 1 to 50 ratios were permitted as exemptions to the 1 to 36 requirement.

2.2 The impact of 9/11

Changing safety cultures are another source of change in flight attendant work. The terrorist hijacking of 11th September 2001 resulted in deaths of 2977 people and led to reductions in flying and mass layoffs, while also revealing flight attendants' very high exposure to violence in the workplace. The hijackings catalysed major changes in aviation work environments, including increased safety and security roles for flight attendants (Macdonald, 2003). Globally, the 9/11 attacks led to a change in focus onto safety rather than passenger service (Santin and Kelly, 2017). In their study of flight attendants' dealings with aggressive or abusive passengers, Santin and Kelly (2017) note that customer service models prior to 9/11 positioned flight attendants as subservient to passengers, emphasising courteous customer service and accommodating requests. Following the attacks, the norms of commercial aviation shifted to accommodate new policies and cultures of security. Cabin crew are now expected to apply much higher levels of discretion and assertiveness in their dealings with passengers.

The renewed emphasis on safety over service resulted in a more empowered model of professional practice (Santin and Kelly, 2017). Santin and Kelly describe this as a '9/11 effect', whereby expectations that flight attendants would act subserviently to accommodate passenger needs were replaced with expectations that they would act with more autonomy, authority and assertiveness. Flight attendant work shifted to emphasise identifying and managing behaviours in the cabin, managing disruptive and non-compliant passengers, communicating with pilots about disruptive incidents, and securing the flight deck at all costs. This empowered flight attendants to step out of gendered scripts of courteous service, to make judgments about safety threats, handle aggression assertively and protect passengers and crew. Following 9/11, flight attendants drew on expanded repertoires of skill in more complex, multifaceted roles.

2.3 COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic further altered the nature and conditions of flight attendant work. It had a massive, immediate impact on global aviation and changed employment through layoffs, furloughs, and changes to pay (Folke and Melin, 2024). Around the world commercial operations were suspended or reduced in 2020, with 64% of the world's airline fleet grounded by mid-April 2020 (Cirium, 2020). In Australia, the number of domestic air passengers fell to around 5% of pre-pandemic levels and international air passengers fell to around 3% (Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics, 2024).

Flight attendants and pilots were expected to work to keep cargo and essential travel moving. Initially this was without vaccines or masking requirements, with the World Health Organisation slow to acknowledge COVID was airborne and the aircraft industry emphasising low risks of transmission in aircraft cabins (Anderson, 2022). With reduced flight numbers and passenger loads and in the context of job uncertainty, flight attendants' work schedules were disrupted and reorganised (Miguel and Cufre, 2025). Additional tasks associated with COVID included instructing passengers to comply with government and airline policies, including around masking, and managing non-compliance. Flight attendants work in the enclosed and crowded space of the cabin and so could not engage in social distancing available to other employees. Relations with passengers were affected by changes in

duties such as some reductions in service. Through the period, passenger noncompliance and aggression became more common (Anderson, 2022). ‘Air rage’ incidents increased, as COVID 19 increased pandemic-related anxieties and friction in dynamics of interaction between flight attendants and passengers, including around mask wearing and public contention around the effectiveness of masks in preventing transmission (Rösch et al, 2020; Haghani, 2024).

Folke and Melin (2024) found crew working in Europe reported declining health and safety following COVID-19. They found both cabin crew and pilots perceived a decline in working conditions through the period, with 50% of pilots and 71% of cabin crew reporting scheduling problems, and 36% of pilots and 29% of cabin crew feeling flight safety deteriorated. Post pandemic, crew perceived organisational changes prioritised profit; they found themselves doing more for less and described changes in maximum hours and minimum rest, reduced control over schedules, more standby duties, and more frequent rostering changes (Folke and Melin, 2024). Crew expressed concerns about unstable rosters, limited influence over schedules, financial worry, and felt increasingly disrespected and undervalued. Crew members also faced direct health risks associated with the virus, and public noncompliance with COVID-19 protocols, including mask wearing, increased crew members’ risk (Rösch et al, 2020). As flying increased, downsized airlines were expected to rapidly expand, which again placed pressure on crew health, safety and security.

2.4 Fragmentation of pay and conditions

Flight attendants’ pay and conditions have become increasingly fragmented, as a result of airlines’ aggressive cost minimisation strategies. In Australia, pay and conditions have developed from multiple instruments over decades, including the Flight Attendants (Domestic Airlines) Award 1999 (see Pay Equity and Awards Team, 2025). The collapse of Ansett in 2001 left Qantas as the only major carrier subject to this Award. As Qantas used an enterprise agreement, the Award attracted little scrutiny and was not varied in a major way. The Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2010 was made as part of the award modernisation process, however the main focus was on streamlining multiple awards to provide cabin crew with the same rate of pay regardless of where they were operating or the type of aircraft. This was later consolidated as the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020 with no substantive variation other than annual wage review increases (Pay Equity and Awards Team, 2025).

In practice, enterprise agreements are the main means of pay setting, however the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020 provides a safety net, which advocates have sought to improve. Around 800 flight attendants have been estimated to work under the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020 (FAAA, 2024), however, numbers may be higher. As part of the 2023 Modern Awards Review the FAAA called for a series of changes, which related to overtime, missed break and other allowances; reserve conditions and call out periods; annual and paid carer leave entitlements; classifications; and stronger regulation over rostering. In its submission to the 2023-24 Annual Wage Review, the FAAA underlined possible gender based undervaluation given the lack of work value assessment of cabin crew work since 1998 and the history of wage setting by consent with little scrutiny, along with low wages; lack of skill recognition; inadequate classification structure; and lack of access to the full range of allowances offered in male dominated aviation awards (Pay Equity and Awards Team, 2025, p8).

The importance of ensuring the Award is fit for purpose has recently been underlined in the context of

two examples of corporate behaviour. First, Qantas threatened to terminate an expired enterprise agreement for international cabin crew during negotiations, which would cause large numbers of crew to revert to the Award. Without substantive variation of the award for years, this would have dramatically cut conditions won through enterprise bargaining, including pay and superannuation contributions as well as rest breaks and accommodation arrangements (Raynes and Stanford, 2022). Raynes and Stanford (2022) point out that this threat was used by Qantas to compel workers to accept an austere new agreement.

Second, the proliferation of flight attendants employed via labour hire has underlined the need for a decent award safety net. In 2023, ACTU research identified that Qantas drew on a cabin crew workforce spread across 14 companies and contractors. Cabin crew employed by the company work alongside those employed by labour hire companies doing the same work, with the potential for five different rates of pay on the same plane, and different access to penalty rates, job security and notice of a shift (ACTU, 2023). This has been addressed via the 'Same Job Same Pay' changes legislated in December 2023 which sought to require labour hire workers to apply to be paid at the same rate of pay as a comparable employee under the host employer's enterprise agreement, where they perform the same work. In the context of this new legislation, FAAA negotiations have recently resulted in substantial pay rises for some domestic and international flight attendants employed via labour hire subsidiaries and flying for Qantas (Watt, 2025).

However the need to adapt the Award to provide a decent safety net remains important, as despite historical neglect of the award and emphasis on agreement making, some flight attendants remain award reliant, and awards provide the basis for agreements. Further, aviation operates in a context of aggressive corporate cost minimisation strategies, which place downward pressure on wages and conditions, including via indirect hiring, underlining the importance of maintaining appropriate industrial minima.

3. The nature and conditions of flight attendant work

While Section 2 outlined changes in the context of flight attendant work, this section focuses on the nature and conditions of flight attendant work, as depicted in recent scholarly studies. It outlines research on the main themes in studies of flight attendant work: gendering of the work (Section 3.1), safety and security functions (Section 3.2), working time arrangements (Section 3.3), work intensification (Section 3.4), and health and wellbeing (Section 3.5).

3.1 Gender stereotypes and gendered processes

Research outlines the way flight attendant work has been gendered through sexualised stereotypes, gendered spaces, and expectations that female flight attendants will enhance labour processes with contributions of emotional labour.

While the work is formally described using gender neutral terms, aviation is organised along gendered lines, replete with stereotypes. For decades, gender stereotypes have been reflected and reinforced in the ways airlines have marketed aviation, embedding these stereotypes in community understandings of flight attendant work (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). Sexualised icons of stewardesses were adopted in marketing strategies since at least the 1960s and 1970s, and continued to promulgate stereotypes and frame flight attendant work as appropriate for young and attractive women, with images of young, attractive female flight attendants deployed as marketing tools to create positive images of cabin service (Chen and Chen, 2012; Sangster and Smith, 2016; Whitelegg, 2007).

Airlines have also organised flight attendant work in gendered ways. Research has noted the way airlines are divided into two gendered physical spaces: the masculinised, technical realm of the flight deck occupied by pilots; and the realm of the cabin, where flight attendants serve passengers and ensure their comfort (Smith et al, 2023). Within the cabin, female flight attendants form the majority, characterised using stereotypes of white middle class femininity, while the male minority is also subject to gender stereotypes, typically of gay identity whereby men are assumed to possess female attributes (Smith et al, 2023; Ferguson and Ayuttacorn, 2019; Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). Historically, the feminisation of aircraft cabins has been maintained through recruitment of female flight attendants meeting strict aesthetic standards and grooming rules, weight checks, forced retirement at marriage, and bans on working while pregnant (Smith et al, 2023; Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). Women have been channelled into ‘stewardess’ roles beneath the male pursers (or cabin managers) with higher status supervisory job descriptions and higher pay (Sangster and Smith, 2016).

Gendered assumptions have shaped cabin labour processes, for example, through expectations that the feminised workforce will enhance airline service with contributions of emotional labour, skills they are assumed to possess by virtue of their gender identity (Sangster and Smith, 2016; Taylor and Tyler, 2000; Williams, 2003). Indeed, Hochschild (1983) coined the term ‘emotional labour’ in her landmark study of flight attendants. She revealed the way flight attendants create outward emotional displays and manipulate their own feelings to meet the ideals of femininity demanded by companies, which enhance customer service but also contribute to flight attendants’ alienation and burnout.

Subsequently, emotional labour has been understood as a core aspect of flight attendant work, although others have proposed more expansive definitions. Bolton and Boyd (2003) for example depicted the way cabin crew juggle different types of emotion work. Rather than simply enacting managerially prescribed 'feeling rules', flight attendants' emotional labour is nuanced, as they respond to situational demands of managers and passengers in the cabin. Often, this is performed under pressure to increase productivity and in contexts of diminished resources and reduced staff numbers (Curley and Royke, 2013).

The concept of emotional labour is helpful in making some aspects of flight attendant work visible and showing the complexity of the frontline service roles of cabin crew. However, this pervasive framing has overshadowed other important aspects of flight attendant work, causing misrepresentation of the full range of skills and work value. In their study of Scandinavian flight attendants, Bergman and Gillberg (2015) argue that rather than emotional labour, studies of flight attendants need to refocus on working conditions. They point out that the emotional components of the work are diminished by work intensification and job insecurity in the context of heightened competition in the aviation industry. Indeed, in their study, flight attendants' main concerns were not with the emotional labour demanded of the job, but rather, the intensification of the work and growing workload, and feelings of insecurity as they aged in an industry that has continued to emphasise youthful femininity (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015). That study called for further exploration of service work beyond Hochschild's influential framework of emotional labour, to focus more closely on flight attendants' working conditions and skills.

3.2 Safety and security

Flight attendant work has been portrayed narrowly as a customer service role, reflecting the public-facing aspects of the work. However, flight attendants' responsibilities are much wider in scope than other frontline service or hospitality roles. One way that crew have resisted narrow, stereotypical depictions of their work has been through calls to better recognise their safety roles (Whitelegg, 2007). Indeed, flight attendants are primarily safety personnel. They are trained to evacuate passengers in emergencies, administer first-aid, extinguish fires, brief passengers on safety protocols and perform safety and security checks, monitor behavioural risks and restrain unruly passengers (Wen et al, 2023). They maintain safety in the context of turbulence or other risks, and handle emergencies including restraining disorderly passengers (Tsaur et al, 2020). However, their safety skills are, by necessity, kept invisible. Safety drills are conducted outside the public gaze, and safety tasks in the cabin are performed in disciplined and unobtrusive ways, often imperceptible to passengers (Macdonald et al, 2003).

Cabin crew receive initial and recurrent training to respond to in-flight medical incidents. Globally, in-flight medical emergencies have been found to occur 18.2 times for every million passengers and deaths from inflight medical emergencies have been found to occur at a rate of 0.21 per million passengers (Borges do Nascimento, 2021, p161). However these figures vary by context (Paxinos et al., 2021; Peterson et al, 2013; Martin-Gill et al., 2018). Common in-flight medical incidents include chest pain, stroke-like symptoms, loss of consciousness, injuries, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory symptoms, anxiety, and burns (Paxinos et al., 2021; Borges do Nascimento, 2021). Projecting the global figure of 18.2 emergencies per million passengers to Australia, where around 64

million domestic and 41 million international passengers were transported in 2024, suggests that nearly 2,000 incidents could occur each year. Medical incidents are clearly common events. While medical providers may be coincidentally travelling on the flight and agree to assist, this has been found to occur inconsistently. Indeed, the global review by Borges do Nascimento (2021) found that, on average, medical personnel were onboard and willing to assist on only 31% of flights where there were inflight medical emergencies, leaving it to flight attendants to respond in the vast majority of cases. Any medical emergencies and risks in the cabin environment must be managed by flight attendants in an unobtrusive way so as not to threaten safety of other passengers or flight crew.

Reflecting their core safety role, flight attendants must carefully communicate and coordinate with the flight deck, and this is particularly important during emergencies (Choi, 2023). Cabin crew must know when to speak up and alert team members in the cockpit during risky or hazardous situations. Reluctance of cabin crew to convey crucial information to pilots (for example ice on the wings) is well recognised as a factor contributing to accidents (Ceken and Unsal, 2023). A high level of communication and coordination with the cockpit is needed, to ensure they communicate concerns but do not interrupt or interfere with flight deck which could contribute to errors, for example by calling the cockpit at the wrong time such as when the aircraft is below a certain altitude (Choi, 2023).

Flight attendants must also manage a range of passenger behaviours. Sexual harassment often from passengers, but also sometimes from pilots and coworkers, was reported by 26% of North American flight attendants, however this is under-reported, as unwelcome sexual behaviour is rarely labelled as harassment (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). More common are unruly passengers, who may present threats to safety and security as a result of “their demeanour, behaviour, or failure to comply with cabin crew directions” (Goldsmid et al, 2016).

Noncompliant or disruptive behaviour is more common than outright aggression or violence and may include smoking, failure to fasten seatbelts or follow other instructions, intoxication, and offensive or disorderly conduct. It may be driven by passenger related factors such as mental health issues such as anxiety, substance use; environmental factors such as physical confinement or claustrophobia, or the temperature on board; or customer frustration with carrier factors such as baggage restrictions, flight delays, seat assignments, high passenger numbers, or limited service (Goldsmid et al, 2016; Rösch et al, 2020). Indeed, Haghani (2024) describes aircraft as a ‘pressure cooker for emotions’, with passenger anxiety beginning before arriving at the airport, and exacerbated by lack of control over delays and queues; unmet service expectations; cramped space and discomfort; inequality of cabin classes; and alcohol use and nicotine withdrawal. Incidents have been found to be more common among travellers to major entertainment events, sporting teams or groups such as fly-in fly-out mining workers (Goldsmid et al, 2016).

Flight attendants can lack protection in these interactions which take place in the confined space of the aircraft cabin, especially when confronting groups (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020), and must also manage situations which can become more complex when fellow passengers intervene. In some cases, crew may choose to quietly diffuse situations and cope passively, as they are unlikely to meet customer perpetrators again, or feel obliged to suppress or fake emotional responses to meet employers’ emotional display rules, reducing flight attendants’ defence against perpetrators (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020; Coyle et al., 2021). However, they also deploy verbal techniques to de-escalate, and in some cases, physical restraint, which may need to be improvised (Coyle et al, 2021).

An important recent development has been airlines' introduction of self-service check-in kiosks and bag drops. While automation offers an efficiency for airlines, it also has reduced the opportunity for airline ground staff to identify and prevent noncompliant or disruptive passengers prior to boarding. Airline staff have minimal contact with passengers prior to boarding so cannot monitor and assess passenger behaviour and risk prior to boarding, pushing responsibility for risk identification and de-escalation onto cabin crew in flight, while also increasing their exposure to risk (Goldsmid et al, 2016).

3.3 Working time arrangements

Flight attendants' working time arrangements have remained poorly matched to the needs of social and family life. Primarily, rostering is designed to meet company demands and profit goals, rather than workers' needs for stable work and family lives. Although scheduling and working time such as flying hours, breaks and rest times are formally regulated, the work is nonetheless characterised by atypical working hours which are at odds with common professional and family routines (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021). Schedules also vary seasonally, with peak seasons during holiday periods. Usually, shifts are rotational and irregular, and planned schedules may be affected by flight cancellations and delays, making it difficult to form a routine (Wen et al., 2023). The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC, 2024) reports that in Australia, 23% of flights did not operate on time, and an additional 2% were cancelled altogether, during September 2024, indicating cancellations and delays are not rare events.

Flight attendants' working time schedules are complex, irregular and changeable. They diverge substantially from working time norms in the wider community. Work activity involves time flying, time in the airport or on ground activities, time on layover, time on call or reserve, and is subject to mandatory rest (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021). The work involves night work, flying long distances without the possibility of quick returns home, moving across time zones, and on-call or reserve periods requiring immediate availability (Ribeiro et al, 2016). In addition to time spent flying, there are times where boundaries between actual working time and personal time are unclear. This includes time on standby or reserve, which involves time at the airport or at home, and ensures availability of replacement staff if needed at short notice so as not to disrupt flight schedules, such as when other staff cannot work due to illness or are delayed on other flights. Reserve time can be particularly stressful and disruptive due to the uncertainty of call ups and possibility staff will be required for long distance or overnight travel, and the likelihood that call ups will generate changes to subsequent schedules (Tsaug et al 2020).

Flight attendants also spend considerable unpaid time on essential work activities not included in their working time (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021). Airlines typically do not pay for all time spent on layover, time in the airport including to clear customs and airport security or all the time required for boarding and disembarkation. Airlines who do pay for these tasks usually do not cover all the time required (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021; Sainato and Cecco, 2025).

To give crew a degree of control over their schedules, airlines may offer a 'bidding' system. This provides opportunity to express preferences for particular flights or days off, with the rostering preferences of senior staff sometimes prioritised (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021; Ribeiro et al, 2016). Bidding systems allow crew to register their preferred times and routes according to personal and

family circumstances. This gives opportunities to shape working schedules, rather than just accepting what is allocated by the company. However bidding usually involves a limited number of requests for roster periods spanning months, and there are no guarantees that requests will be granted.

Depending on company policy, longer serving, senior crew may have better access to preferred flights while others can be expected to work on any flight. Crew may also be able to access preferred shifts by swapping shifts allocated by the company with other crew.

Reflecting the challenges of schedules and scheduling arrangements, crew can feel anxious before schedules are announced, as shifts may be undesirable and it may be difficult to arrange and rearrange personal and family schedules (Tsaur et al, 2020). Non-standard working time arrangements make it hard to plan schedules and live normal lives (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015). Flight attendants with children require a strong support network at home, including to ensure children's care and supervision and manage family organisation during periods of absence (Ribeiro et al, 2016). Separation may be a source of stress (Jupp and Mayne, 1992). Citing Whitelegg (2003), Ribeiro et al 2016 describe difficulties for flight attendants leaving to commence duty, as they say goodbye to children and families, endure separation on layover, and then may find it difficult to adjust to family and domestic life when returning home tired and jetlagged. Unpredictable and long working hours have been understood to reflect the 'colonisation' of an increasing portion of life outside work, generating feelings of insecurity and inadequacy especially for flight attendants with family responsibilities (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015).

3.4 Work intensification

Work intensification increases workload and time pressure on employees. For flight attendants, work may intensify in various ways, including pressures to speed up tasks such as meal services; addition of tasks to work processes; requirements for more complex multitasking; expansion of physical and mental effort required; increased demands on availability, and reduced access to breaks (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015; Ng et al., 2011; Macdonald, 2003).

Bergman and Gillberg (2015) observed intensification in that flight attendants were working harder as airlines minimised crew numbers and turnaround times between flights, and were constantly under pressure to make up time. Intensification is reflected in descriptions of pressures on flight attendant work: "flights are usually full; passengers are more demanding; more hand luggage is being carried onboard; passengers are more frequently using electronic devices on board, which must be handled at take-off and landing; and the company are asking cabin attendants to sell more goods. In addition, the company's policy of offering free coffee or tea means a lot of pouring and extra garbage." (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015, p. 31).

Schedule optimisation by airlines has been a major source of intensification. A study of flight attendants in Europe and Canada showed intensification of work resulting from reduced staff numbers and increases in tasks to be performed on each flight (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021). This included increased tasks relating to safety, security and hygiene; new tasks such as sales and managing personal entertainment and devices on board; reduced breaks which are difficult to take on short flights; more difficult passengers; and reductions in stopover times. Indeed, computerised scheduling has enabled companies to optimise flight and layover times, utilising flight attendants in

ways that conform with legal requirements but which minimise time for crew to rest and recover between and during shifts. As well as contributing to less rest time and subsequent fatigue, schedule optimisation has also limited the time available to flight attendants to enjoy the social aspects of their work with passengers and each other, and their opportunity to explore destination cities, which in the past has helped to compensate flight attendants for the challenges of the work. (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021; Bergman and Gillberg, 2015). Whitelegg (2007) points out however that framing travel opportunities as a form of compensation for the work is gendered. Not only is it gendered to assume that non-pecuniary rewards are appropriate, the opportunity to travel is also gendered, considered more appealing to women given the geographic limits on women's traditional household roles.

3.5 Health and wellbeing impacts

A final theme in the literature relates to the health impacts of flight attendant work. Flight attendants encounter a range of physical, environmental, psychological and relational stressors in their work, impacting on health and wellbeing. Flight attendants work long and antisocial hours in an enclosed and cramped environment where physical movement is both required and constrained, and where employees are repeatedly exposed to noise, vibrations and pollutants, raising risks of injuries and harm (Macdonald et al, 2003; Chen and Chen, 2012). They need to be fit and able to handle emergencies, requiring recovery and concerted maintenance of fitness to remain in the job (Bergman and Gillett, 2015). Węziak-Białowolska et al (2020, 173) describes flight attendants as an “understudied group exposed to a wide and unique range of adverse working conditions, such as high-altitude radiation, pesticides, circadian rhythm disruption, poor air quality, elevated ozone levels, hypoxia, high levels of occupational noise, and heavy physical and psychological job demands.”

Physical health risks arise from these exposures. McNeely et al (2018) found that when compared to national survey data, flight attendants had higher prevalence of female reproductive cancers as well as other cancers, along with sleep disorders, fatigue and depression. Among the other health conditions that increased with job tenure were sleep disorders, anxiety and depression, alcohol abuse, peripheral artery disease, foot surgery and infertility. Researchers attribute these health conditions to crew's occupational exposures to radiation, chemicals and smoke, along with circadian rhythm disruption.

Working time arrangements in the industry are associated with numerous adverse mental and physical health outcomes. Shift work is associated with elevated risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, sleep disorders, cancers, gastrointestinal issues and poorer mental health (Wen et al, 2023). Cabin crew members have greater risk for depression and anxiety compared to the general public (Wen et al, 2023). Crew also experience jet lag, which increases risk of adverse health outcomes (Wen et al, 2023). Sleep is important to flight attendants' health and wellbeing, and working schedules are misaligned to time zones and circadian rhythms. Crew travel across time zones resulting in symptoms of jetlag such as fatigue, loss of appetite, decreased ability to concentrate and irritability, each of which impacts on flight attendants' wellbeing (Ng et al., 2011). Fatigue is widely reported, arising from job strain, extended duty periods, disrupted schedules, irregular hours of work, and sleeping away from home (Griffiths and Powell, 2012).

The scoping review of 27 studies by Wen et al (2023) found fatigue was commonly reported, with

prevalence of fatigue measured with validated scales ranging from 64% to 77% of crew. Fatigue was considered a health problem and disadvantage of being a cabin crew member. The prevalence of fatigue was double that in the general public. It was found to be low during the preflight phase, but found to grow during the flight, peaking during the commute home. Flight delays were associated with poor sleep quality, and sleep disturbance was most common the night before duty, on layovers and the first night upon returning home (Wen et al., 2023). Average sleep duration for a workdays was found to be 4.6 hours, significantly lower than on rest days (7.2 hours) and self-perceived sleep needs among cabin crew of 8.1 hours sleep per day (Wen et al, 2023)

In addition, flight attendants work in difficult relational contexts. Isolation, and demanding work with difficult passengers and low supervisory support contributes to poor mental health outcomes. (Griffiths and Powell, 2012). Support structures are limited as flight attendants work remotely and with different colleagues. The team mix changes on every flight and crew need to quickly build cohesion (Gillet and Tremblay, 2021). They also encounter demanding passengers and must complete high workloads, and family and social routines are disrupted, the combination of which can lead to high levels of job stress, poor work family balance and burnout.

3.6 Summary

Overall, scholarly studies have challenged stereotypes of flight attendant work as hospitality. Research has underlined the changing context of flight attendant work, recognising flight attendants' expansive safety and security roles. However, dated depictions of the work as an extension of women's traditional, 'natural' hospitality role persist, downplaying flight attendants contributions to contemporary aviation. Studies have also underlined the increased complexity of the work in line with changing demographics, demonstrating growing recognition of the health and wellbeing costs borne by flight attendants, and their role in underpinning profitability. However, few studies were identified that focus specifically on flight attendants in Australia, nor capture their own accounts of their skills and responsibilities, conditions of work and pay.

Therefore, to capture the characteristics and experiences of flight attendants in Australia, a large survey was undertaken, reported in the following sections. Flight attendants' accounts were collected in a survey and analysed to explore the skills and responsibilities required in contemporary aviation contexts; the conditions of the work in relation to health, safety, security, working time and pay; and the impacts of the work, including on flight attendants' wellbeing, capacity to manage care, and financial status. As shown below, findings reflect themes in the international literature and show the intensification of flight attendant work, along with increases in work complexity and skill requirements, while flight attendants' qualifications and training remain invisible. Findings show flight attendants have largely carried the costs of airline profit strategies, including through indirect hiring and casualisation, hyper-flexibilised rostering and unpaid work, enabled through pay rates which are low relative to the work performed.

Part Two: The 2025 Survey of Flight Attendants

4. About the survey

4.1 Study design and development

The 2025 Survey of Flight Attendants was conducted as an initiative of the Flight Attendants Association of Australia, in collaboration with the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Recognising the changing context of flight attendant work and the evidence-base outlined in Part One, the survey was designed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the nature and conditions of work performed by flight attendants in contemporary Australia. Participation was voluntary. Questions were designed by UNSW researchers in consultation with the Flight Attendants Association of Australia (FAAA).

The survey sought to reach large numbers of flight attendants to capture the diversity of their experiences, while minimising participant burden. Survey questions covered flight attendants' characteristics, skills, work contexts, working time arrangements, safety and security, and views on pay. A priority was to enable participants to provide their perspectives using their own words and frames, and so the survey was designed to include multiple opportunities for comments, alongside closed survey questions with fixed options. The survey was administered via Qualtrics and piloted prior to launch. Ethics clearance was obtained from the UNSW Human Research Ethics Panel (iRECS8290).

4.2 Recruitment

The survey was open from 31st of March to the 28th April, 2025. Flight attendants were invited to participate by the FAAA however participation was not restricted to members. Recruiting research participants via trade unions and professional associations has been used in many previous studies and is a proven method of engaging workers spread across a range of workplaces, although it may not capture some groups of workers. In addition to emailing a link to the survey to FAAA members and reaching out through newsletters, posters with a QR code containing a link to the survey were posted in crew rooms at airports. Some snowball sampling was also used, in that crew were able to tell colleagues about the survey and share the link. As an incentive to participate, those completing the survey could opt to enter a prize draw to win one of two \$250 gift vouchers, which were drawn and randomly distributed once the survey closed.

Participation was open to people currently working as a flight attendant or who had done so in last 12 months. The vast majority were current flight attendants. Of the 2794 survey completions, 2773 (99.3%) were completed by current flight attendants, with only 21 (0.7%) completed by people who had worked as flight attendants in the last 12 months but were not currently doing the work.

4.3 Analysis and reporting

Responses were analysed to produce an overall understanding of the flight attendant workforce, and to explore differences among groups, including those based on gender, and the main routes flown (international, domestic or regional). Information about the company that survey participants worked for was collected however for any with low numbers of responses, categories were combined for the purposes of reporting, to maintain confidentiality. Written comments provided by participants were analysed to identify the range of themes covered. All names are pseudonyms, and potentially identifying details have been changed. To provide context, each comment is labelled with information about gender, role, hours, experience and main routes flown are reported, where this was available and non-identifying.

4.4 Response analysis

The recruitment strategy was successful in reaching a large and diverse sample of workers. In total, 2794 flight attendants completed the survey. Most (2214, or 79%) completed it via the link, while 580 (21%) completed it via scanning the QR code. 92% were FAAA members, 7% were not and 1% were not sure. For some survey items, totals may be below 2794 due to non-response, as not all survey questions required a response.

While a perfectly accurate response number could not be calculated, the 2794 completions are estimated to constitute 43% of FAAA members, which number around 6,500 (FAAA, 2024). Completions can also be estimated to constitute around 28% of Australia's flight attendant workforce, based on estimates of around 10,000 flight attendants in Australia. By these measures, the sample size is sufficient to produce reliable, meaningful results.⁸

The survey sample differs in some ways from estimates of the composition of flight attendants arising from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, although the 2021 Census is not reliable for aviation given collection during the disruption to air transport during the pandemic period. Survey participants are older than the workforce captured in the 2021 Census (see Table 1). Whereas the Census reports 22% were aged in their 50s and 4% were in their 60s, in the survey sample (Table 2) these figures were 35% and 12% respectively. Correspondingly, 27% in the Census were under 30 (see Table 1) compared with 16% in the survey sample (Table 2). The survey sample was also more qualified, with 28% having a degree level qualification or higher, compared with 17% in the Census.

Gender identity was measured differently in the survey than in the Census, to enable survey participants to indicate a non-binary or other gender identify. Notwithstanding, the survey sample was 67% female (Table 2) whereas the Census depicts the flight attendant workforce as 77% female (see Table 1). Differences between the survey sample and Census may reflect changes in the industry which have occurred since the Census was conducted in 2021, which was at a time aviation was disrupted by COVID-19. Differences may also reflect the prominence of union members in the sample

⁸ A 1994 survey also conducted in collaboration with the FAAA captured perspectives of 2912 Australian-based flight attendants, approximately 60% of the population, at a time the Association had near complete coverage. See Williams, 2003.

because the survey was distributed by the FAAA, as union-based samples tend to better represent more experienced workers who have been longer term in the industry and so are more likely to be union members. It may also under-represent those with more marginal attachment to the industry such as those working very short hours or in casual positions who may be more difficult to reach. Finally, having primarily reached union members, the survey sample likely over-represents those in workplaces which have better conditions as a result of union activity.

Table 1 Gender and Age of Flight Attendants, ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

	Under 30	30s	40s	50s	60 and over	All
Female (n=4732)	29%	25%	21%	21%	3%	100%
Male (n=1385)	20%	23%	24%	27%	6%	100%
All (n=6119)	27%	25%	22%	22%	4%	100%
Female %	84%	79%	75%	72%	65%	77%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics TableBuilder, 2021 Census - counting persons, 15 years and over, SEXP Sex by 6-digit level OCCP Occupation by AGE10P Age in Ten Year Groups, Counting: Person Records

Table 2 Gender and Age of Flight Attendants, Survey Sample, 2025

	Under 30	30s	40s	50s	60 and over	Prefer not to say	All
Female (n=1855)	18%	15%	16%	37%	12%	1%	100%
Male (n=885)	11%	21%	21%	33%	14%	1%	100%
Other gender identity (n=16)	6%	20%	20%	31%	3%	20%	100%
Missing (n=28)	7%	14%	14%	39%	4%	21%	100%
All (n=2784)	16%	17%	18%	35%	12%	1%	100%
Female %	78%	59%	61%	70%	64%	64%	67%

5. Flight attendants in the study

This section outlines characteristics of the 2794 flight attendants in the study, including their location, gender, roles, qualifications and experience, and the nature of their employment.

5.1 Locations

As would be expected, the highest number of participants were based in the more populous eastern states, and in the capital cities that form Australia’s hubs for domestic and international aviation. Of the 2794 participating flight attendants, 46% were based in New South Wales, 22% in Victoria and 19% were based in Queensland. A small number (141, or 5%) were based outside a capital city.

5.2 Routes

In the last 12 months, 66% had flown internationally, 55% domestically, and 15% had flown on routes to regional or rural areas within Australia. The main route flown was international for 48%, domestic for 45% and regional for 7%.

5.3 Gender, roles and routes

Two thirds of participants were women (67%) however this differed by role. Women comprised smaller proportions of cabin crew managers (60%) and supervisors (52%) but were 70% of cabin crew members and 80% of team leaders (Figure 1). Women comprised a higher proportion of those flying mainly regional and domestic routes (83% and 72% respectively) and were 59% of those flying mainly international routes (Figure 2). Correspondingly, women made up 75% of those working on narrow bodied (single aisle) aircraft, 56% of those working on wide bodied aircraft, and 73% of those who worked on both (Figure 3).

Figure 1 Gender of main flight attendant roles

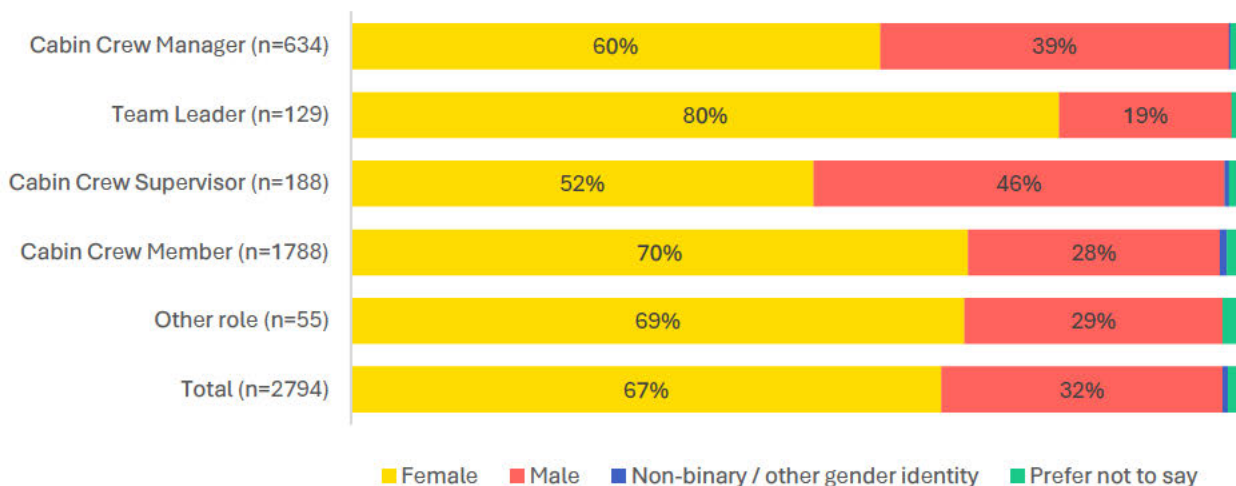


Figure 2 Gender of flight attendants by main routes usually flown

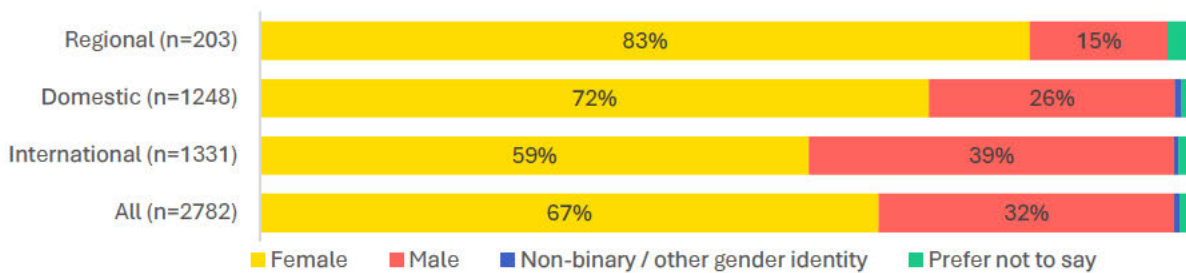
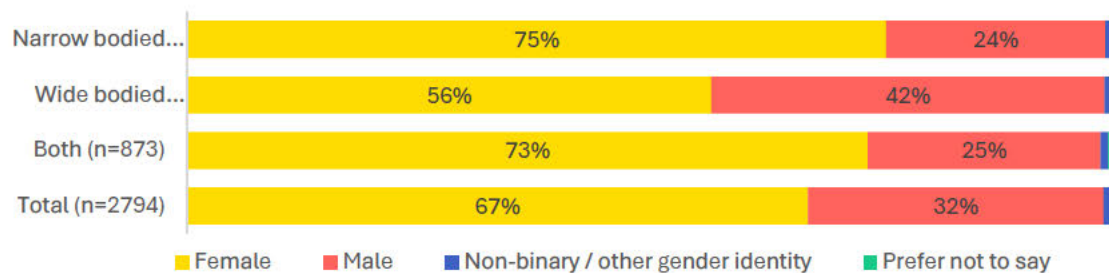


Figure 3 Gender of flight attendants by main aircraft type



5.4 LGBTQI+ status

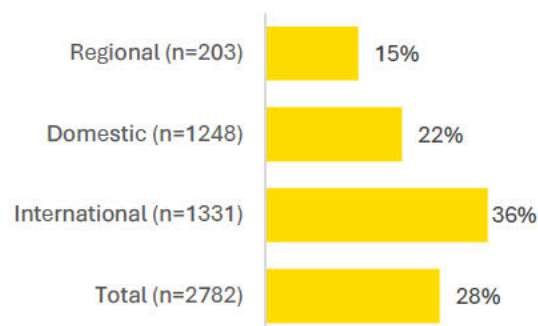
Problems of stereotyping and homophobia persist, however decades of activism and community building by LGBTQI+ communities have helped to build gay friendly workplaces and work cultures within the aviation industry (Ferguson and Ayuttacorn, 2019; Williams, 2003). Correspondingly, people with gay, lesbian or other queer identities maintain a strong presence in Australia’s flight attendant workforce. Survey participants had the opportunity to indicate if they had an LGBTQI+ status. Overall, 22% did, however this was much higher among men (64%) than women (2%). While concentrations of gay men among cabin crew may reflect homophobia and discrimination in other occupations and industries, gay men have also been found to be well represented in feminised jobs which allow for task independence and which utilise skills of social perceptiveness and accuracy in anticipating the reactions and mental states of others (Tilcsik et al., 2015). The research is far from definitive, and gay men are of course a diverse group; nonetheless the skills required by flight attendants, along with gay friendly workplace cultures developed in aviation, may help explain the large number of gay men in the study sample.

5.5 Qualifications

Flight attendants are trained by airlines according to government requirements and industry and airline-specific standards. Initial and ongoing training is mandatory and intensive but is not recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Although formal, external qualifications are not required, survey data suggests that formal qualifications are widely held by flight attendants (Table 3). Over half of participants (56%) had a Certificate IV level qualification or higher; 28% had a bachelor degree or higher. The proportion with a degree was higher among those mainly flying internationally, varying from 15% of those flying regionally, to 22% of those working mainly domestic routes, and 36% of those working mainly on international flights (Figure 4). Fields of study were not captured.

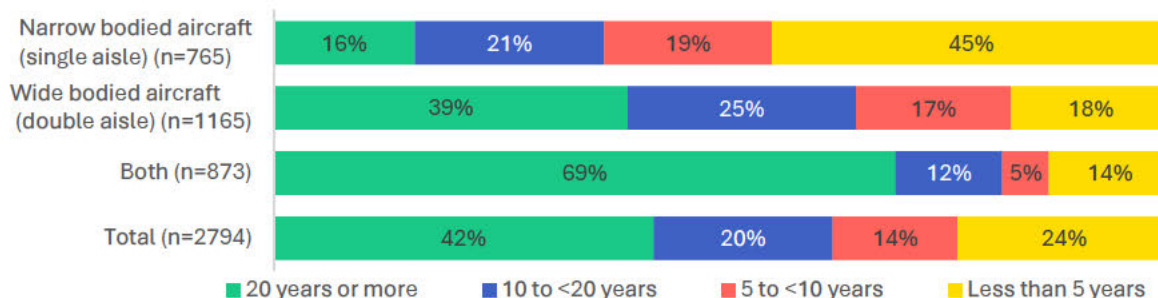
Table 3 Highest qualification

	Frequency	Percent
Below Year 12	133	5%
Year 12	699	25%
Cert I to II	86	3%
Cert III	206	7%
Cert IV	230	8%
Diploma, Advanced, Associate	550	20%
Degree		
Bachelor Degree or higher	777	28%
Other	12	0%
I prefer not to say	101	4%
Total	2794	100%

Figure 4 Flight attendants with a degree-level qualification or higher, by main route

5.6 Years of experience

Survey participants' years of experience as a flight attendant is shown in Table 4. The smaller numbers of participants with 3 to 4 and with 4 to 5 years of experience likely reflects the disruption to hiring during the pandemic. A high number of participants (42%) had 20 years or more of experience. More experienced participants comprised the majority of those able to work both narrow and wide bodied planes (Figure 5). Among those currently working only on narrow bodied aircraft, 16% had 20 years of experience or more, while among those working both aircraft sizes, 69% had 20 years of experience.

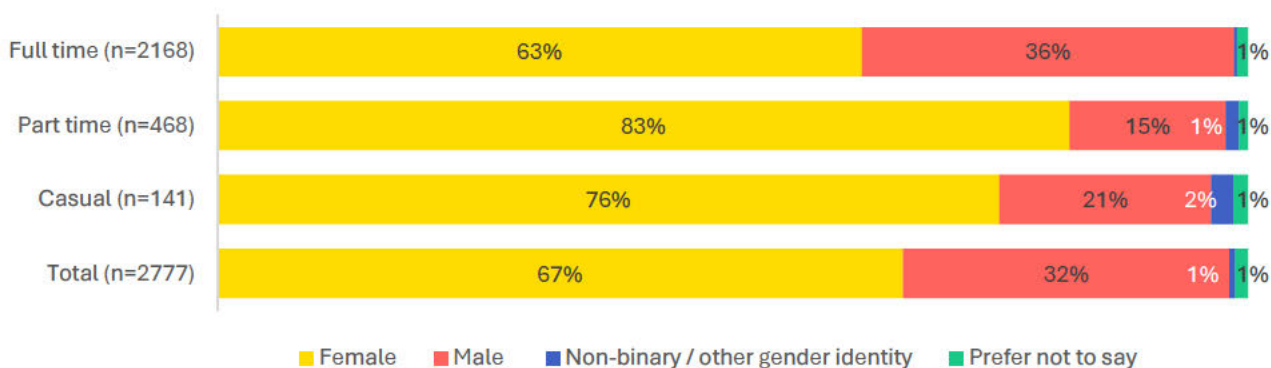
Figure 5 Experience and aircraft type**Table 4 Years of experience**

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	57	2%
1 to < 2 years	182	7%
2 to < 3 years	293	10%
3 to < 4 years	95	3%
4 to < 5 years	39	1%
5 to < 7 years	173	6%
7 to < 10 years	215	8%
10 to < 15 years	283	10%
15 to < 20 years	276	10%
20 years or more	1181	42%
Total	2794	100%

5.7 Employment type

In the sample, 78% were employed on a full-time basis, 17% were employed part time and 5% were casual.⁹ While overall, two thirds of survey participants were female, this was higher among those employed on a part-time basis (83% of whom were female), and those employed casually (76%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Gender of full time, part time and casual employees



5.8 Employers

Most flight attendants in the survey indicated the company they work for (Table 5). The largest group worked for Qantas Airways Limited (40%). A large group worked for Qantas Cabin Crew Australia (QCCA) (22%), one of the subsidiaries providing long haul flight attendants to Qantas; the parent company has not directly hired new cabin crew since 2008 (ACTU, undated). There were also substantial groups of participants working for Virgin Australia (13%) and Qantas Domestic (6%).

A breakdown showing concordances between employers and the airline brand that survey participants were flying for is shown in Appendix Table A. 3. Appendix Figure A. 1 shows a more experienced workforce was flying for Qantas: 52% had 20 years or more of experience.

⁹ As the survey captured the basis of employment, these figures are not comparable to information collected in the Census of Population and Housing, which captured hours of work in the preceding week. The survey asked 'On what basis are you employed' and captured full time, part time and casual status. By contrast, the Census asks about hours worked in the previous week, and distinguishes full and part time workers using a 35 week threshold, with those answering zero defined as 'away from work'. Between 41% and 43% of flight attendants appear to have worked part time hours in the week prior to Census night, based on Census definitions applied since 2011 (see Appendix Table A. 2). While the different question asked in the survey likely explains differences, the apparently low proportion of part time workers in the survey may also reflect the union-based sampling which may have led to increased proportions of male, full-time workers.

Table 5 Employing company of survey participants

Company	n	%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	1114	40%
Qantas Cabin Crew Australia (QCCA)	619	22%
Virgin Australia	363	13%
Qantas Domestic	180	6%
Altara Qantas	82	3%
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	73	3%
Alliance	55	2%
Team Jetstar	52	2%
Network	41	1%
Jetstar	29	1%
MAM	29	1%
Altara Jetstar	24	1%
National Jet Express	26	1%
Rex	20	1%
Jetstar International	13	0%
VARA	8	0%
Other	23	1%
Missing / Prefer not to say	43	2%
Total	2794	100%

5.9 Pay setting

Among flight attendants in the sample, 85% said they were employed under an enterprise agreement and 6% were employed under the Modern Award, the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award. However, due to the survey recruitment method via the FAAA, the sample is likely skewed towards those employed under an enterprise agreement. Figure 7 shows that among women, 7% were employed under the Award and 82% under an enterprise agreement, while among men, 4% were employed via the Award, and 91% under an agreement. Correspondingly, flight attendants in the non-managerial role of cabin crew member were more likely to be employed under the Award than others (9% compared with 2% of Cabin Crew Managers and Cabin Crew Supervisors, see Figure 11). Figure 9 shows that while the majority of those employed on a full or part time basis were paid under an enterprise agreement, around two thirds of casuals (65%) were paid under the Award.

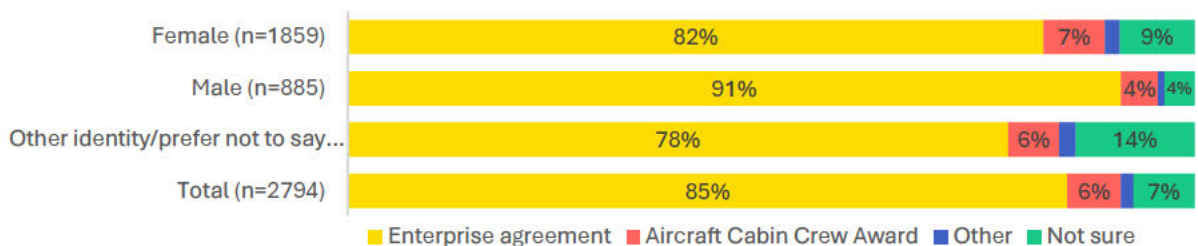
Figure 7 Gender and pay setting method

Figure 8 Role and pay setting method

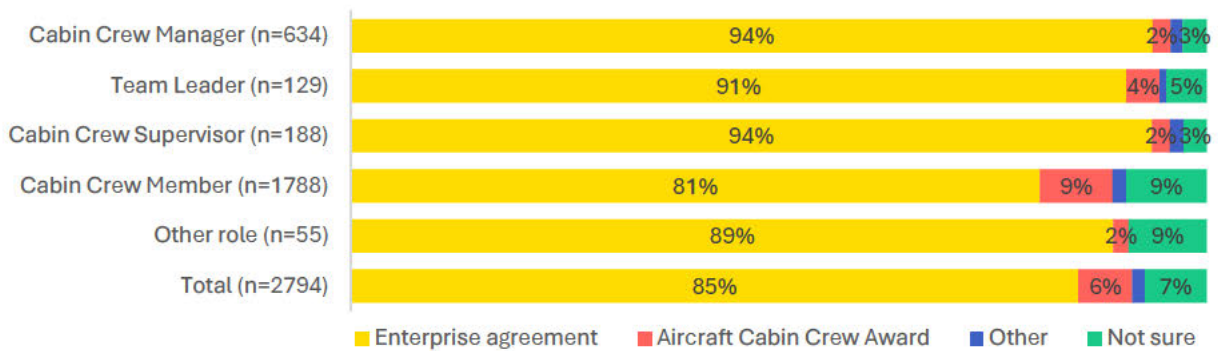
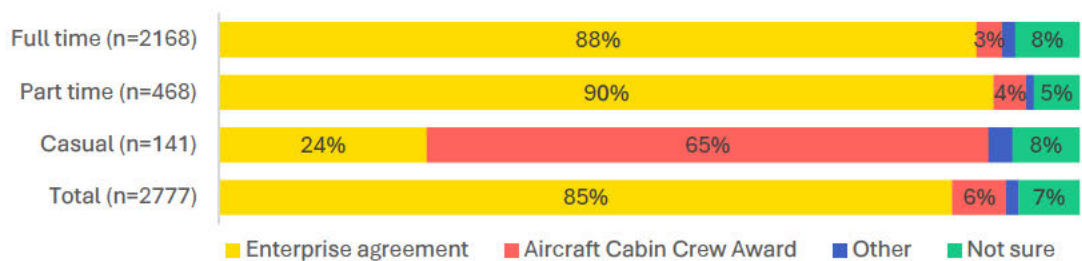


Figure 9 Employment type and pay setting method



6. Skills and responsibilities

As shown in Sections 2 and 3, the context of flight attendant work has changed, with increasing competition in the industry, changing passenger demographics, and an increased emphasis on security. The survey therefore sought to better understand the skills that flight attendants use in their work and the responsibilities they have, including any newly emerging responsibilities in the current aviation context. To explore these, participants were asked about their work activities, skills they are proud of, and any skills they felt lacked visibility. Experienced flight attendants were asked how their work was changing.

6.1 Managing complex situations

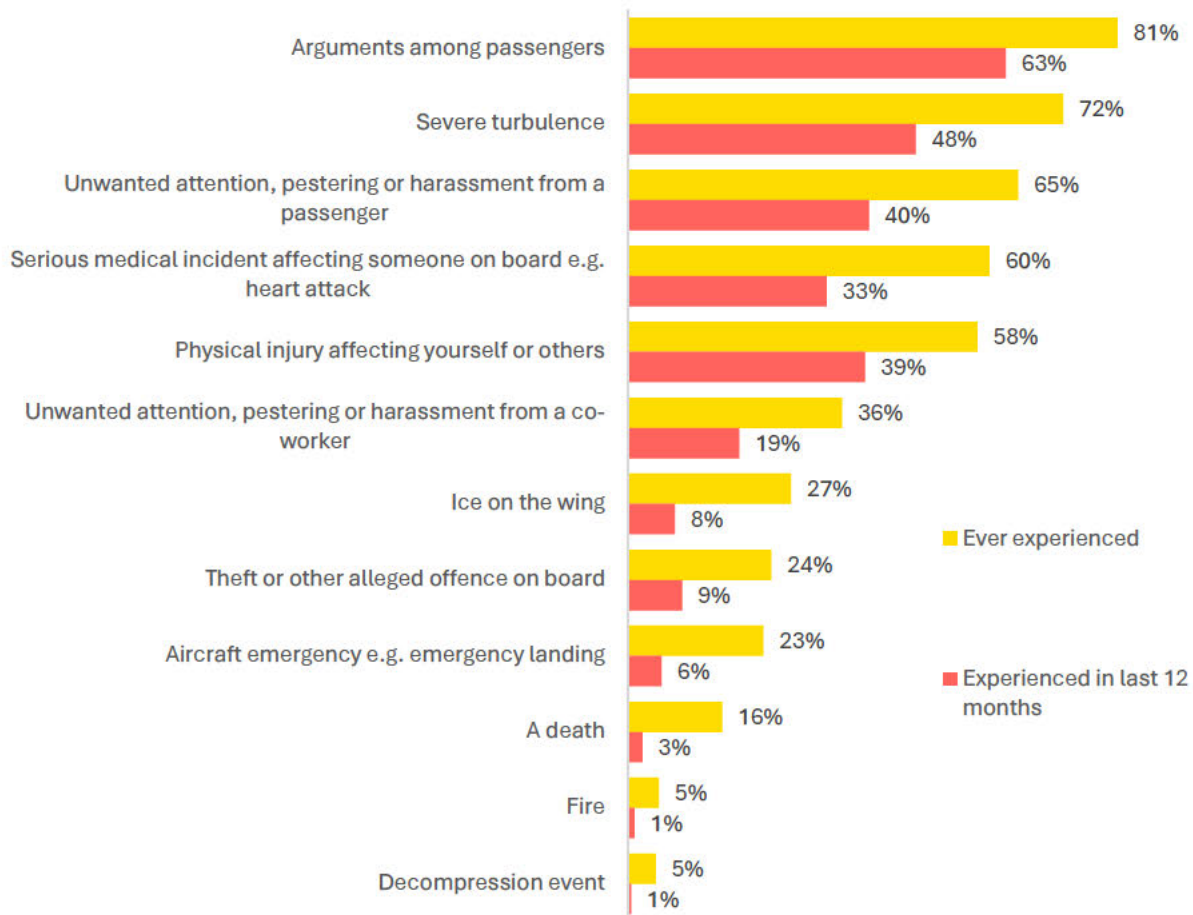
Although typically executed discretely, a fundamental responsibility of flight attendants is to manage complex and dangerous situations. As most survey participants work on large aircraft, they are responsible for very high numbers of people when flying:

- 75% said they are responsible for 100 or more passengers.
- 32% said they are responsible for 200 or more passengers.
- 48% report supervising or mentoring other crew members on board.

They must be prepared for a wide range of adversities which are routinely encountered in the air. Flight attendants do inherently risky work, and must manage multiple risks as part of their work. They are trained in emergency preparedness and response, and routinely encounter a wide range of

challenging and unpredictable situations. The impacts of these exposures accumulate throughout their careers and can affect mental and physical health. To explore this, the survey provided a list of situations and asked flight attendants if they had experienced these during their careers, and if so, whether they had in the last 12 months. Results are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Situations experienced ever, and in the last 12 months (n=2794)



Only 4% reported that they had never experienced any of these adverse situations, meaning that flight attendants can expect to experience one, if not several, of these during their career. Commonly, flight attendants manage arguments among passengers; this has been experienced by 81% of flight attendants so far, and 63% in the last 12 months. Severe turbulence is also common, experienced by 72%, and almost half (48%) in the last 12 months. Unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from passengers has also been experienced by a majority (65%), affecting most women (66%) as well as men (62%).

As noted in Section 3.2, medical incidents on board are serious issues which crew are required to deal with. Studies have shown volunteer health professionals are available onboard to assist in less than a third of incidents (Borges do Nascimento, 2021). In the survey, 60% of flight attendants said they have experienced a serious medical incident onboard and 16% have experienced a death. In the last 12 months, 33% have experienced a serious medical incident and 3% have experienced a death.

These experiences of adversity accumulate throughout a career; as such, there are higher proportions of more experienced workers who have experienced each. For example among those with 20 years or more of experience, 72% have experienced a serious medical incident and 24% have experienced a death on board (Appendix Table A. 4).

Adversity also differs by flying type. Higher proportions of those flying internationally reporting arguments among passengers, pestering from coworkers, and theft, injuries, fires, serious medical incidents and deaths on board (see Appendix Table A. 5).

Box 2 Examples of managing complex situations

Two passengers were hitting each other, yelling, causing me to have to jump in between them. And then spend the rest of the flight calming everyone down. Including passengers around them... wasn't until I got home I thought about the danger I was in. (Female cabin crew, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

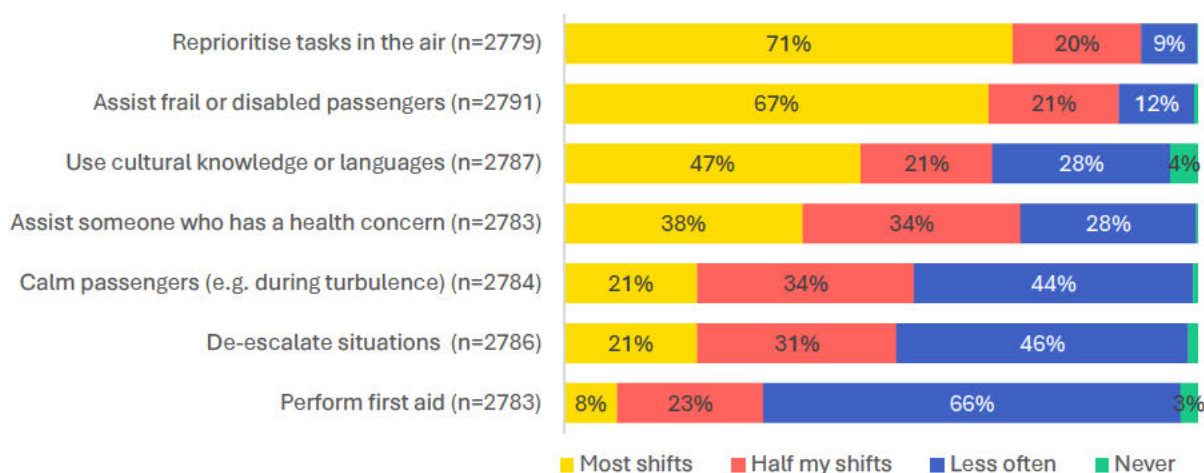
I had a death on board at the start of a duty. A very severe medical, we managed to bring the gentleman back but it was confronting and exhausting. We continued duty. We should have been removed and replaced [by fresh staff]. At the time we were given a choice, but who in their right mind is thinking when we just dealt with a huge medical/CPR/defibrillator with a man dying and coming back. It was a lot and I don't think it was ever dealt with accordingly. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Had suspicious article found on board with huge psychological impact. Plus lots of unusual incidents with passengers appearing cognitively impaired either by mental health issues, drugs or alcohol (ie: just last month a passenger locked himself in toilet and was non-responsive – we had to try and break into the toilet. He then opened the door as if nothing had happened). There are lots of strange behaviour incidents like this. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

6.1 Lesser known skills

Many of the skills used by flight attendants are not visible to passengers or the general public and lack recognition. Some of these skills can also lack visibility to managers and the company. While the food service and hospitality roles of cabin crew may be more visible to the public, there are other activities that flight attendants are trained for, and routinely perform. Indeed, 71% said that reprioritising tasks in the air was a feature of most of their shifts, and a further 20% said they did this during around half their shifts (Figure 11). Assisting frail and disabled passengers and using cultural knowledge were also relatively common. A fifth said they de-escalate situations on most shifts while a further 31% do so on about half their shifts.

Figure 11 Frequency of activities



To capture flight attendants’ perspectives on which skills may lack visibility, the survey asked what skills are important in the job, but not well known. The most common responses related to flight attendants’ multiple safety and security skills:

The safety and security aspect of our role [are not well known], most of the general public see us as walking vending machines. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 4+ years’ experience, regional flights)

[People don’t know] that we aren’t just serving chicken and beef or tea and coffee. We perform first aid, assist passengers with all kinds of situations, we are there to keep them safe and controlled in an evacuation that we study and practice extremely hard for. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 5+ years’ experience, international flights)

[Our skills include] identifying suspicious persons, identifying persons who have had too much to drink but are onboarded by airport managers anyway. (Male team leader full time, 20+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Skills of prevention and de-escalation also featured prominently:

Conflict resolution. We are in a confined environment and de-escalation is the only option we can’t run away and call the police. We are the police. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years’ experience, international flights)

How to shut bad behaviour down to avoid it getting out of control. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Profiling passengers. Constant situational awareness. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Importantly, these safety and security skills, which crew felt lacked recognition and visibility, were integrated and balanced with customer service activities. One explained for example managing dual roles:

Delicately balancing the safety aspect of the role with the hospitality and customer service side. We need to conduct ourselves authoritatively and ensure control of the cabin while still acting hospitable and ensuring our passengers have a comfortable on-board experience. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 4+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some highlighted long lists of skills and responsibilities in their work that they felt weren't well recognised by the general public, nor by their managers and industry regulators:

That we are firefighters, police, counsellors, organisers, communicators, problem solvers. The list is absolutely massive and we use so many unique skills day in day out. Passengers, and even senior management and I'm sure organisations such as CASA [Civil Aviation Safety Authority], have no idea what can go on behind the scenes, especially on a long haul flight, that cabin managers have to deal with. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

In their comments, it was evident that many flight attendants wish to break stereotypes they feel are constraining recognition of their work:

[I am a] first responder. A lot of people just think we're there to give them beef or chicken, which is insulting. We're the first people on the scene for anything that can happen on the aircraft, which I believe is always not acknowledged. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

We are there for safety, not to serve tea and coffee. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

More than a trolley dolly, we are a fire fighter, a nurse, a psychologist, a performer, a police officer who flies at 37000 feet. Unfortunately when crap hits the fan it's the crew who are there at all hours of the night to assist. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 7+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some highlighted lack of general recognition of the training completed and skills held by cabin crew:

The public doesn't realise how intense our training is and what we are trained for. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

[People don't know] how much training and recurrency we do to keep the job – and continuous updates and changes to procedures – compared to many other work places. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 15+ years' experience, regional flights)

As shown in Section 5.5, many flight attendants hold formal qualifications. However, these do not reflect the intensive and ongoing training mentioned by the crew members above. This training is required of flight attendants to commence and maintain their employment yet is not formally recognised, as one cabin crew manager explained:

All the training we do is not properly certified and should be quantified as a proper qualification like a Certificate III or IV... Pilots' aircraft qualifications belong to them and they can take them away, we get no paperwork to demonstrate our experience. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years experience, international flights).

Box 3 An observation of crew members' qualifications and skills

Most older long haul crew have minimum undergraduate degrees, it seemed to be almost a condition when hired...Crew are wonderfully adept at dealing creatively with situations as and when then they arise and solving problems by thinking outside the square. Many crew have technical qualifications which they employ regularly onboard. Crew can have a way of seeming to be light and totally service focused - which is important - but at the times when required, you will find they have great depth, knowledge and skills to immediately deal with the pressing issues at hand. And, of course the ability to manage all sorts of dangerous situations on board, which absolutely must be solved, given the countries or ocean you are currently flying over. You cannot call for help from the police or emergency services. (Cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years experience, international flights)

6.2 Skills that crew are proud of

Flight attendants are proud of their diverse range of skills. When asked which particular skills they were most proud of, responses covered customer service, communication, safety, medical, problem solving and teamwork, and some provided long lists revealing an extensive and varied skill set. Often, flight attendants were proud of using multiple skills simultaneously, such as scanning for safety risks while providing attentive customer service, while others were proud of adaptiveness between roles, underlined in responses like these:

To be able to switch roles so quickly. One minute you're focused on hospitality service, the next you're dealing with a medical event. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The ability to be so many things. Sometimes we just smile and say hello then we are first aiders, firefighters, psychologists, security you name it we do it!! (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

At one moment I can be doing customer service and then the next moment attending to a passenger having a heart attack, being able to adapt to the situation very quickly. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights).

Others listed a wide range of skills they were proud of, for example:

Medical care, social skills, diffusing of aggressive incidents, working closely with the pilots, aircraft knowledge, keeping an eye out for suspicious behaviour from passengers e.g. child trafficking, working between all cabins, ability to respond quickly to any situation. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

Keeping everyone calm, managing complex medicals, caring for and inspiring other crew, and creating a great atmosphere for all. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

My ability to read people and relate genuinely. Make them feel welcome and share a laugh. Also the hidden skill of being a safety professional. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Among cabin crew managers, leadership, and ability to foster positive team cultures was evident:

My ability to lead a team to achieve the best possible outcomes for our customers by empowering my crew to work to their strengths. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Managing and mentoring not only crew but working as a team with ground crew and Flight Crew. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Problem solving, multitasking and rapid reprioritisation were also sources of pride, including during crises:

Ability to handle last minute changes and think on my feet with creativity to manage situations. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Situational awareness, confidence in making vital decisions regarding crew and passenger safety. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 3+ years' experience, regional flights)

I take pride in my ability to remain calm under pressure, ensuring passenger safety through thorough training in emergency protocols. My strong teamwork and collaboration, combined with adaptability and effective problem-solving, enable me to manage crises efficiently and create a secure, positive environment on board. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, international flights)

Crew also described being proud of their work in holding service standards while managing shortfalls, to ensure passengers had a quality experience even in the face of poor resourcing and disruptions or delays. They recognised that passengers would sometimes board with grievances or feelings of frustration with the airline, and so cabin crew needed to solve problems and compensate for poor company service by providing a good experience once onboard. Many took pride in their ability to maintain positive passenger experiences in such situations:

Being able to deal with constant setbacks and company errors but still ensuring the customer gets the best possible experience regardless of the company's shortcomings. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

The ability to create an okay experience for customers when supplied with a crap aircraft, crap food and even crappier service procedures. As an onboard manager, my work day is 10% fixing problems that occur in the day and 90% fixing problems due to incompetent management. (Male cabin crew manager full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Box 4 One flight attendant's wide range of skills

The knowledge and experience that is required to deal with any situation is what really makes us stand out, but for some reason we are not considered a skilled worker. We are: Safety professionals, food servers, beverage servers, RSA skilled to ensure we do not have intoxication issues. Fire fighters. Medical first-aiders. Mental health first aiders. Dangerous Goods experts, ensuring the right questions are asked and profiling those who may inadvertently bring dangerous goods on board that should not be. And we are actors. We smile all day, every day, putting others before ourselves, putting on a brave face for passengers when there is turbulence or unfamiliar noises and reassuring passengers. Risking our own safety every second that our seatbelts are unfastened whilst airborne. We also care for unaccompanied minors and can be rostered to accompany children under 5 who have no one able to travel with them, which makes us either a babysitter or nanny. We also manage security and ensure situations are not escalated, maintaining decorum and calm. Asserting authority to ensure the aircraft, passengers and crew remain safe. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

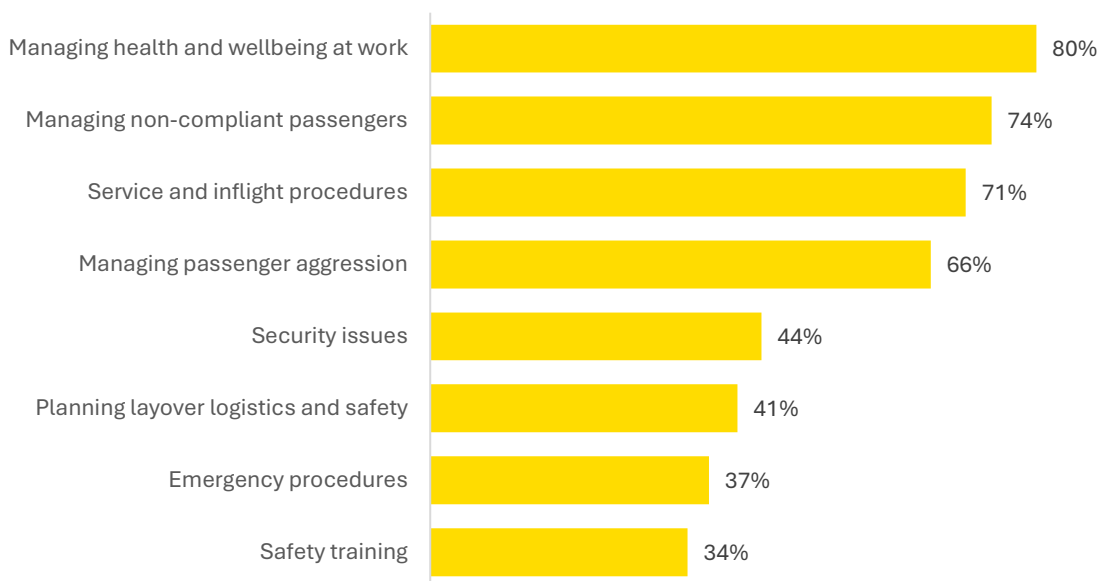
6.3 Perceptions of increasing work complexity

To explore changes in the nature of flight attendant work, the survey provided an opportunity for experienced flight attendants to indicate which aspects of flight attendant work have become increasingly complex. Eight aspects of work were listed. Participants were also asked to comment on how their work was changing, which elicited responses relating to increasing work complexity. These were only asked of survey participants with more than two years of experience.

Figure 12 shows that four in five (80%) indicated that 'managing health and wellbeing at work' was becoming more complex. Three quarters (74%) said managing non-compliant passengers was becoming more complex and 65% felt managing passenger aggression was more complex. Service and inflight procedures were also considered more complex for 71%.

While the question above showed perceptions of growing complexity from a fixed list of options, flight attendants' comments provide much deeper insight into the changing nature of their work. To capture new or emerging features of the work, crew with at least two years' experience were invited to comment on how their work has been changing. Comments covered a range of topics, clustered around four themes: the expanded responsibilities of flight attendant roles (including increased safety emphasis) (see section 6.3.1), increasing complexity of working with passengers (section 6.3.2), and work intensification through changed working time arrangements.

Figure 12 Aspects of work considered increasingly complex (n=2555)



6.3.1 Expanded responsibilities

Flight attendants provided a range of examples of the ways the responsibilities of their job had changed over the years. Again, many focused on increases in safety and security related responsibilities. They pointed out that the role was increasingly unsafe due to passenger behaviours, and that the emphasis of the role had shifted towards managing safety and security.

It's become less service oriented & more security & logistics based. (Male cabin crew member ,part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Our roles are ever changing in the areas of safety and security of assets and people, both crew and passengers...overseas ports as different countries become more of a security risk to slip in. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Several pointed out they required expanded capabilities including for working on a wider range of aircraft types, requiring higher levels of training, which often needed to be completed in personal time:

There is much more rigorous training and aircrafts to be trained on which is also challenging when you could be on any 4 aircrafts with different types - much more stressful on reserve lines! (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

There also isn't a limit (as far as I'm aware) on how many different types of aircraft we can operate on. I am on 3 different aircraft, with each having further differences (eg Group 1, 2, or 3), so there are a lot of emergency procedures information that we have to retain. We are a Charter company, so for each client (eg, Virgin Australia, Qantas-link, and multiple Mining Companies) we have a whole set of different requirements

for example announcements, inflight service differences and even different uniforms. One of the biggest changes has been the increase to the volume of emails, operational notices, charter briefs, and online courses we have to do, outside of our sign on/off times. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, regional flights)

Flight attendants also took on expanded safety roles due to changes in other parts of the aviation workforce, including among ground staff:

There are more new staff in the aviation industry which also puts pressure on individual working groups (ie cabin crew) to ensure other staff are completing their roles correctly (ie ground staff, ramp etc). I'm finding I'm seeing and reporting more hazards than I used to (ie incorrect procedures for rear stairs being attached etc). (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Indeed, flight attendants' work tasks expanded due to necessity, as they needed to solve problems arising from poor service in other departments, including those relating to aging or poorly maintained fleet. Often, they found themselves 'working to cover faults'. This point made vividly by a cabin crew manager:

Due to the current state of our aircraft, the current workload often increases dramatically with issues stemming from older aircraft impacting the cabin experience and creating more recovery for our crew before the flight has even begun. For instance I have had 5 occasions within the last 2 months of having to block off several lavatories (including business class) due to toilet vacuum/ blockage issues and including the troubleshooting that occurs inflight with maintenance advice/ our technical support guide. I have felt like a plumber not a flight attendant. Our crew are amazing and do a great job but there is now a lot of "extra" that is beyond our control, but we still need to mitigate and manage for smoke and mirrors to try and ensure these issues are not detrimental to customers (and crew) during their flight. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

Expanded catering responsibilities were often mentioned, as flight attendants increasingly had to manage mistakes made in other departments, or found changes had been made which shifted responsibility onto crew:

There are less of us now, on aircraft that have had more seats squeezed in. Our workplace is smaller. Passengers are flying a lot more regularly so have high expectations. Other departments are making more mistakes that we have to deal with onboard (catering is a big one). (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The onboard service changes have increased pressure on cabin crew, particularly in terms of manual handling and time management. Tasks that were previously handled by catering are now our responsibility, requiring more physical effort and results in longer service duration and limits break opportunities, as a result increasing the risk of fatigue or injury. While the intention may be to enhance the customer offering while managing costs, the operational impact on crew workload and wellbeing should be reconsidered. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

Indeed, many noted the increase in physical workload as responsibilities for assembling meals were

shifted from caterers to crew, especially on international flights:

Inflight service delivery now impacts cabin crew physically in all cabins, as there are so many components to 'building' a tray before delivering it to a customer. The reduced crew complement on most aircraft increases workload therefore contributing to more physical and fatiguing body stresses. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

There are currently no preset passenger meal trays like they're used to be. Cabin crew manually construct every individual tray. It is extremely time consuming; creates physical repetition causing pain in shoulders/back etc & customers become more frustrated as their tray & rubbish sits in front of them for ages. The service takes hours. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Changes in the nature of flight attendant work were also reflected in increased requirements among crew to supervise colleagues. Managers felt they were stretched thinner and had much more 'managing' to do. Reductions in the flight attendant workforce during COVID, and a subsequent increase, meant longer term staff needed to focus on training new staff, which could be a source of frustration as it exacerbated workloads if unsupported:

Workload has increased for the more mature crew as employment of young kids out of school does not work in our environment. Crew need to be competent in communication, ability to talk to others, maturity and compliance. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

New hired crew aren't being trained to the level they should be, or lack life experience needed in the job (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

In addition to managing a less experienced workforce, managers also commented that they were managing a more complex team, with a wide range of different working arrangements:

We are doing more work with less crew, managing different contracts and work conditions. Some days all my crew are on different conditions and I have to know them all! (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Box 5 Krystal's concerns about service quality

Krystal is a full-time Cabin Crew Manager flying internationally. She has a bachelor's degree, language skills, over a decade of experience, and impressive leadership skills which are a source of pride. She provides mentoring and coaching on the job, and often, during unpaid time, as she frequently receives phone calls from crew for advice or a chat about issues they face at work. She feels the pay managers in her role receive do not recognise the amount of work that needs to be performed outside of flight hours.

Krystal's experience has given her rich insight into the changing nature of flight attendant work. She is particularly concerned that standards of service are slipping. As the work has intensified, it has become increasingly difficult to connect with passengers in ways that she knows are integral to a quality service:

Today, more than ever, our crews are being asked to do more with less time —tighter schedules, more demanding operational requirements, and an increased focus on compliance and efficiency. While safety and service have always been at the core of our role, the opportunity to create those personal, memorable connections with our passengers is becoming more limited. What used to be a shared smile, a quick chat, or a thoughtful gesture can now be overshadowed by time constraints and the need to move quickly through service. This shift can be disheartening, especially for those of us who take great pride in making each passenger feel seen, valued, and welcomed onboard. Our challenge moving forward is finding innovative ways to bring the heart of our service — the human connection — back to the forefront, even if just in small moments. Because for many passengers, it's those brief yet genuine interactions that turn a flight into an experience they remember long after they land.

Krystal isn't sure how long she'll remain in the role, she doesn't feel valued and is concerned about burnout.

6.3.2 A more complex passenger cohort

Passenger service featured strongly in flight attendants' accounts of how the work has changed, becoming increasingly complex. Some pointed out changes in ratios of crew to passengers which meant each crew member was serving higher numbers of passengers:

Crew to passenger numbers seem to have increased since COVID and not returned to pre COVID levels. 5 crew down to 4 on a B737 aircraft. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The company I work for has CASA approval for 2 Cabin Crew per 100 passengers which used to be 3 per 100. This can be quite challenging on shorter sectors to complete the service in time. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, regional flights)

However, it was more common that comments focused on increasing complexity within passenger cohorts. Crew emphasised that the demographics of passengers are changing, and that attitudes are becoming more difficult to manage as they become more demanding, non-compliant and aggressive, and more difficult to manage. Often, complexity was linked to changing passenger demographics:

The demographic of people flying is changing. It's more affordable for more people. You deal with people that have never flown and have no idea how to behave on aircraft. Its demanding. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

The demographic of passengers on board is evolving and we are having to learn new and more complex ways on how to handle those situations. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Flight attendants described managing more challenging passenger cohorts and passenger behaviours:

The clientele has definitely changed. Lower fares and becoming a mid market airline has seen guests being more impatient and threatening. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

People are becoming more unruly. Drug and alcohol consumption, mental health issues. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Flying is no longer a luxury it's a right and therefore passengers treat us as maids. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, regional flights)

The cost of tickets being relatively affordable means that these days anyone can fly. So people with mental health issues can fly, people fly when sick and unwell physically. People hide their substance abuse and fly whilst under the influence, or bring their own drugs/alcohol on board and hide the use until the cabin crew recognise the signs that someone is not acting normally, but by that stage you are stuck in a metal tube with no immediate escape from dangers and those creating the dangers.... (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Importantly, it wasn't only lower fares that were changing passenger cohorts and contributing to more complex behaviours, 'top tier' passengers with high expectations and a sense of entitlement could also be difficult to manage, as this flight attendant described:

The role of a Flight Attendant has changed due to the company I work for making Top Tier Frequent Flyers feel they are in control of what happens when they are onboard and what they can bring onboard and what they demand onboard. Our job/role has become disrespected to the point where passengers are constantly rude, use disgusting and rude language. They threaten us and I have personally on a few occasions been physically abused. The role of a Flight Attendant is looked upon as just being a waitress and this is because of the company I work for. I constantly have non compliant passengers who try to tell me what is going to happen, to go away, go back to the kitchen etc. I love my job and do not stand for this behaviour. I have many passengers met by Federal Police or off loaded and this should not be happening. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20 years' experience, domestic flights)

In a few cases, crew illustrated the increasing complexity of their work by describing instances of harm they were exposed to, including assaults arising from mental health issues in the community:

I have in the last 12 months been physically assaulted by a passenger, he jumped across from a window seat and grabbed me around the head. Happened so quick. The incident was frightening. And not what I'd ever expect or experienced in my workplace (he was having a psychotic meltdown). Amazing support from other passengers and crew to assist in restraining him. As crew we are managing more & more issues with aggressive passenger behaviour. It's unacceptable. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I feel that passengers' mental health is one of the most dangerous parts of our role as people are very volatile and snap very quickly these days. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Passengers were also considered more difficult to manage because of technology, which was seen to make them passengers less aware and responsive to safety and people around them:

Phones and listening to their own devices for passengers, they are less aware of what's happening around them. Also because people are in their own worlds a lot, they are not thinking the bigger picture in regards to themselves and the aircraft dynamics. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

Sometimes, the high levels of passenger risk were seen as issues companies could prevent, for example by identifying risky passengers prior to boarding. However companies were not doing this, resulting in more complex and unpleasant work for flight attendants:

I feel as though the security of passengers is lacking at times with checking the state of the passenger before travel to assess their fitness to fly. Far too often we have to deal with intoxicated passenger that should have been picked up earlier before boarding and unfortunately these issues lead to passenger aggression and agitation. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, regional flights)

Alcohol consumption on the ground prior to boarding is a big issue in places like Perth

and ground staff will not address the issue - putting it back onto the cabin crew.
(Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I have been concerned for a long time now about the self check-in system. People can easily buy a ticket but anyone can board the flight that is not necessarily the person who purchased the ticket for themselves, as nobody checks ID at the self check-in machine. If someone is on a terror watchlist for example, they can get their relative to buy a ticket then they check in pretending to be that person instead. ...There needs to be ID checks done like at international. (Team leader, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

6.3.3 Work intensification

A further way flight attendants said the work was changing was in work intensification, much of which related to working time arrangements and rostering. Crew found their work had come to involve more flying time and fewer opportunities for rest. They said things like:

Turnaround times at airports are compressed to maximize aircraft utilization, leaving less time for crew rest and recovery. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Planned rosters becoming increasingly demanding. More and more flying hours adding to rosters. (Male team leader, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flight)

We are working longer hours even though we work in pressurised environment which is a lot more tiring comparing to regular jobs. Now we work 12 hrs with 4 take offs and 4 landings which is equivalent to 16 hrs in normal jobs. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ domestic flights)

Lack of time for rest on layover was mentioned frequently.

Working harder for less money and longer shifts with shorter layovers (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Shorter slip times and longer flights adds to accumulated fatigue, less health and wellbeing (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ experience, international flights)

Expectation to do more, less time, less crew, definitely more responsibilities. Not as much time off in slip ports and in home base. Fatigue increased (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

In addition to less time on layover, flight attendants pointed out they had less opportunity for rest and breaks onboard:

it's changing because our layover times are much shorter than in previous years. Fatigue plays a huge part today. We have no rest at all on the A330. Rest time is spent sitting on an aisle being bumped continuously by customers queuing for toilets , listening to flushing toilets and crying babies (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Intensification was also evident in increased necessity and expectation that unpaid work would be

performed during personal time, including reading required by the company.

The expectations out of official 'work hours' have increased, ie time to get through security, helping passengers in the terminal, waiting for baggage, reading safety and security briefs, reading service changes etc. All these tasks are 'undocumented' hours even though the company can still work us up to our maximum hours per month. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Constant service changes and communications are exhausting, days off are no longer days off as there is so much new information coming through. (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

You used to be able to put your phone down and take a break on days off, but now because we have mobile phones with internet, we are being contacted all the time. Emails keep coming in, SMS, Teams messages and whilst we can sometimes try to ignore these, they are constant and persistent and pile up if you don't read them. It is overwhelming how much of my personal time is dedicated to work (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Box 6 Cheryl's experience of work intensification

Cheryl is a full time team leader with decades of experience and post-school qualifications. She is proud of her skills as a safety professional: "*We are first responders and trained to run towards emergencies & disaster.*" Over the years, Cheryl has observed changes in flight attendant work which reflect its intensification and increasing emphasis on safety:

More duty hours with less slip time. Less cabin crew per aircraft with a higher workload. More non-compliant customers. More carry-on luggage with empty promises from management on dealing with excessive carry-on luggage. Higher expectations from the customer....Customers are getting more argumentative & with less patience. The media likes to whip up controversy within the aviation industry which encourages bad behaviour from customers. Customers are feeling more entitled than ever. Customers with high Frequent Flyer status are the worst.

Cheryl is positive about her pay, but doesn't feel it recognises her safety role, or the risks and stress involved in the job. She reports recent experiences of arguments among passengers, severe turbulence, injuries on board, and serious medical incidents. She is conscious of wear and tear on the body and constantly monitors risks of injury, infection, and exhaustion.

Looking back at her career, she reflects positively, but recognises it has come at a cost:

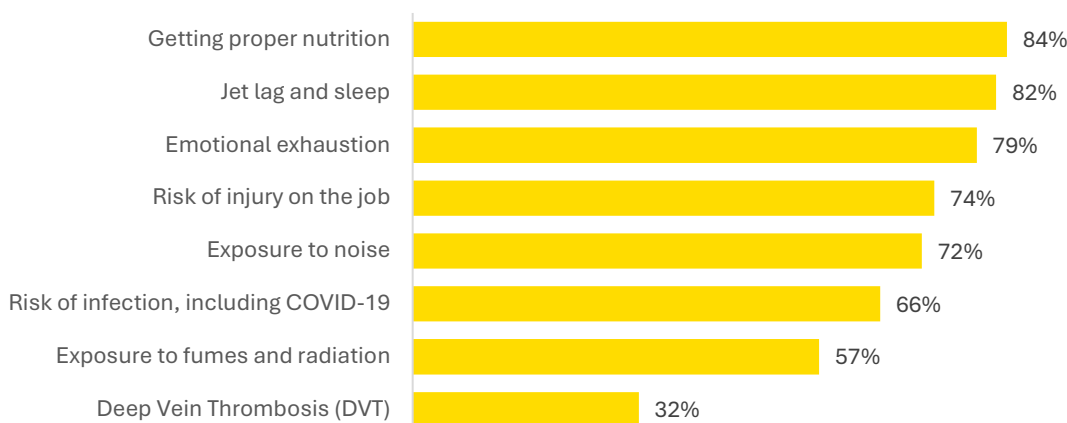
It's been a great job over the past decades however, I have missed many important moments in my personal life e.g. birthdays, wedding anniversaries, funerals, parties & school events when my children were young. The most stress is during the Christmas season. The job is physically and emotionally tiring at times. Constant juggling work/life balance.

Aged in her sixties, she is approaching retirement after what she feels has been a great career and says that "I will find it hard to leave when the time comes".

7. Health, safety and conditions of work

While flight attendants manage the health, safety and security of others, their work also involves managing risks arising from the work environment that affect their own work and non-work lives. They described how the conditions of their work generate difficulties meeting basic day-to-day health needs, such as healthy eating, managing tiredness and preventing injury. These were frequently identified as issues flight attendants needed to manage as part of their job (Figure 13). Indeed, 84% said they needed to manage getting proper nutrition as part of their job, 82% needed to manage jet lag and sleep, and 79% needed to manage emotional exhaustion. When asked to comment on health and safety, flight attendants focused on these issues and detailed concerns about the conditions of their work and the personal costs generated. The main themes arising in their comments are covered below, including nutrition (Section 7.1) rest and fatigue (Section 7.2), hygiene and illness (Section 7.3), physical injury risk (Section 7.4), and harassment and abuse (Section 7.5).

Figure 13 Issues flight attendants need to manage as part of their job



7.1 Nutrition

Flight attendants' working conditions make it difficult to access healthy eating. As one explained:

Being able to have a proper diet at work is a major challenge. Meal prep is very hard due to the lack of a routine we can have with roster based work like us. We only have an oven onboard and so options to what kind of food to bring is very limited. Company catered meals are lacking nutrition, excitement and sometimes volume. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Like the flight attendant above, many pointed out the poor quality of food provided at work, and the difficulty of bringing food from home. In any case, there wasn't always time to eat:

The food the company provides really needs to be looked at. We have no other option while at work to eat. They don't have fridges onboard so we can bring our own food and store it safely. So often we are left to eat their rubbish food causing many health concerns. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic

flights)

Getting time to eat on these short sectors is challenging. The food provided while a nice thing to have could hardly be called nutritious. One example passengers get real scrambled eggs, crew get powdered eggs. It's best to bring your own although not always possible. (Female with 20+ years' experience, full time, domestic flights)

The conditions of work, which involved restrictions across borders, meant it was not possible or practical to bring food from home:

The food is awful, it's not nutritious, full of salt and fat and same old same old. Bringing your own isn't always possible given quarantine issues, don't always get to eat it, best alternative is to graze on packets of pretzels and almonds or whatever the salty snack is or a piece of bread soaked on coffee to stave off hunger. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

We are not provided with anywhere to keep food cold or keep it frozen on multi day trips. It is difficult to take fresh food because of Bio-Security & LAG (liquid, aerosols and gels) restrictions. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Lack of time during the work day was mentioned frequently, along with expensive and poor quality options on layover:

Rarely get enough time to eat during the working day. State border restrictions can make it difficult to take proper food to work, and room service options are not always within budget or a healthy option. Some hotels (and arrival times) are not convenient for accessing food options. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

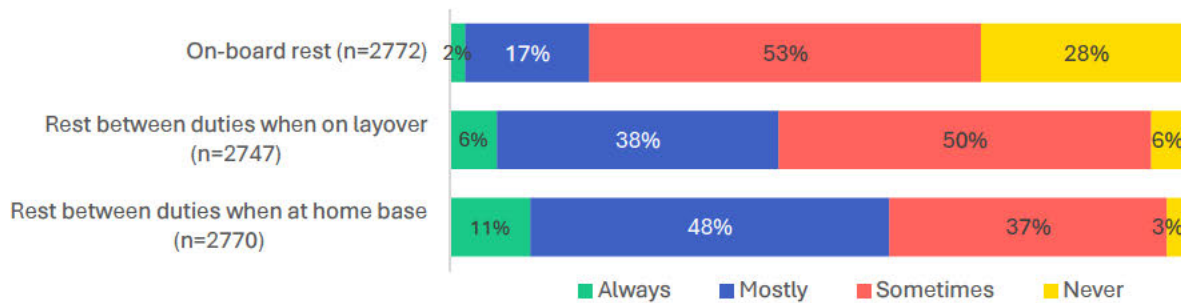
Often room service at hotels is exorbitantly priced despite the generous discounts procured by the union and often after dark it's not safe to walk up to the food outlets to get food and it's not near a supermarket so it's not a salad or something healthy it's a burger and chips. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some flight attendants received assistance with costs from meal allowances provided by the company, discussed in Section 10.3.

7.2 Fatigue

Managing sleep, jetlag and exhaustion are key challenges. The survey asked how often they get enough rest on board, between duties on layover, and between duties when at home base (Figure 14). Only 2% felt they always get enough on-board rest, and a further 17% said they mostly do. For the vast majority, on-board rest is inadequate, with 28% saying they never get enough and 53% saying they only sometimes do. Only 6% said they always get enough rest between duties when on layover, although 38% said they 'mostly' do. Only 11% said they always get enough rest between duties when home, however almost half (48%) said they 'mostly' do. Overall, sufficient rest is not consistently available to all.

Figure 14 How often flight attendants get enough rest



The quality and quantity of opportunities for rest frequently arose in the comments. Flight attendants highlighted the importance of rest in the context of work which was irregular, and difficult physically and emotionally. Crew described the factors contributing to tiredness:

Long hours, irregular schedules, and the physical demands of our job can lead to significant levels of tiredness. Additionally, increased service requirements have further complicated our ability to rest effectively during flights. The expectations to provide exceptional service, manage passenger needs, and attend to various inflight duties leave little room for adequate rest breaks. This neglect of inflight rest is concerning, as it compromises our ability to perform our safety-sensitive roles effectively. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

With the flying these days and the reduced crew just constantly exhausted with no time for self or even to exercise and eat healthy. It takes a strain both physically, emotionally and mentally. I love my job but it has certainly become a lot harder post covid and more exhausting. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Lack of crew rest onboard was repeatedly mentioned. They said things like:

Very concerned about cumulative sleep deprivation from long overnight flights with no horizontal crew rest. Fatigue is ever present and I'm sure my health will suffer and exacerbate my chance of cancer or chronic illness. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Need to provide nutritional food for crew and have a designated crew rest for crew to have some rest. It's not hard to put a curtain up so crew can have a proper rest without passengers staring at them while lining up to go to toilet. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

Several pointed to particular aircraft where crew rest space was particularly inadequate, such as A330s and 737s:

No flat crew rest on 330 trips that are long i.e. Japan 10 hours, back neck shoulder pain. (Male cabin crew supervisor, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

Inadequate rest facilities on the A330 fleet - sitting on a jump seat for rest causes body

aches and pain and is not ergonomic. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years of experience, international flights)

Not getting required breaks and adequate rest on the 737 i.e. no curtain and customers reclining their seats into row 30. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 1+ year of experience, domestic flights)

Others pointed out that rosters were organised in ways that placed excessive demands on them, resulting in negative consequences for their wellbeing and capacity to do their job well.

Our rosters are 240 hours. They were designed for long range high density flying with horizontal rest provisions. But we are doing medium range flying with minimum turnaround. It is back of clock flying with no adequate rest areas. Hence crew are extremely fatigued. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Working 210 hrs when the old company maximum was 190 – so wrong. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

I've noticed that when I'm rostered for 210 to 220 hours, my well-being takes a significant hit. My mental and physical health truly suffers under those conditions. However, with rosters that provide 190 to 200 hours, I find I have enough time at home to recover and enjoy my life. This balance not only enhances my well-being but also allows me to perform better as a leader in the business. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Inadequate rest on layover was a common concern. Rest time on layover left very little time for actual sleep, as it included travel time and required time for eating, showering and exercise:

Rest can be reduced to 10 hours away from home base (on a layover) leaving just enough time for 8 hours sleep, at some hotels the commute is 40 minutes each way, leaving just 40 minutes of layover time not including the time it takes to get ready for work, this can cause extreme fatigue and sleep deprivation. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years of experience, domestic flights)

Sometimes the rest period is from 10pm to 10am which is from Airport to Airport especially if away from home base. In those 12 hours you have transport to and from the airport - a 1hr wake up call which leave 9 hrs to shower, sleep, eat and exercise. If you're doing this 5 days a week it's very hard to fulfil the fatigue management that is suggested and required in this role. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 15+ years of experience, domestic flights)

Flying more than four sectors in a day was considered extremely fatiguing. Flight attendants described being tired out by repeated altitude changes, losing focus from doing the same thing repeatedly risking slip ups in procedures, and not having enough time to eat, use the bathroom or breathe fresh air due to quick flights and short turnaround. Lack of break time away from passengers was also an issue. Some said that high levels of fatigue made it difficult to deliver good customer service, and said it impacts on social and home life after the duty.

I find when I fly more than 4 sectors, my body starts to "shut down". I notice the onset of fatigue as well as upper respiratory symptoms - "blocked or runny nose", red eyes,

cough and bloated stomach / stomach aches. It should also be noted that most of the time these symptoms aren't effectively managed as flight attendants are issued inadequate minimum rest between shifts. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years experience, domestic flights)

The possibility of crashing my car on the drive home following a 4 sector day trip. Numerous times I've had to have a nap in the carpark before attempting to drive home otherwise I'd wrap myself around a pole or worse, kill someone else on the road whilst driving home. Management say they support fatigue matters however when crew report fatigue we are questioned on it and our capacity. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 15+ years of experience, domestic flights)

Like the flight attendant above described, long, taxing shifts without rest contributed to high levels of risk after work. Other crew also said they tried to manage fatigue after work by sleeping in the car park before driving home:

We work up to 14 hours. We don't get a break. At all. No lunch break, the 10 minute tea break. Most crew sleep in the car park for an hour before driving home. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years of experience, domestic flights)

Fatigue is huge, back of clock flying, taking off at 02.30 am, 737 NO CREW REST, then driving home. Common knowledge that lack of rest is like driving drunk but we are expected to work on an aircraft, be responsible for people then get in a car and drive home. (Male team leader, full time, 20+ years of experience, domestic flights)

Clearly, the demands at work contributed to exhaustion which spilled over to affect flight attendants in their personal lives:

The demanding schedule often leaves me mentally exhausted, making it difficult to fully recharge during my time off. This fatigue can spill over into my personal life, affecting my ability to engage and connect with my spouse. The tiredness and lack of quality time together, I'm away most weekends, can strain our relationship. This has only affected me since returning to flying after covid. For 23 years, my lifestyle of flying has never impacted my marriage and raising a family, like it has in the last 2 years. Absolutely draining. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

7.3 Hygiene and illness

A further set of comments focused on illness and hygiene issues in the work environment. Flight attendants described being repeatedly exposed to passenger illnesses and poor hygiene, for example:

People don't cover coughs and sneezes nor do they wash their hands after visiting the loo, we know because we are standing outside the loo and hear it flush at the same time the door opens and they come out. We don't clean anything down anymore and trying to communicate through a mask is not easy. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Although we have personal protective equipment (PPE) we are still at risk of catching sicknesses from passengers who come onboard acting as if they're not sick, and then

once in the air they're vomiting, or disclose they have a stomach bug, or start coughing in your face when serving them. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ year of experience, domestic flights)

Communicable diseases due to passengers not wanting or having the flexibility (finances) to cancel or change their flights due to illness. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

While some pointed to passenger behaviours, crew also pointed to poor company practices which did not effectively manage risks. Crew mentioned working on planes which had not been adequately cleaned, and being unable to use gloves to handle dirty materials due to company policy. For example:

Company does not allow flight attendants to wear PPE gloves when serving premium customers (as it does not reflect premium airline service standards) This has exposed me to illness and virus for which crew are not entitled to adequate sick leave. Post COVID hygiene and cleaning standards have slipped and unrealistic unfair demands denying health issues are an issue... ... reducing paper napkins and supply of antiseptic wipes so surfaces are becoming dirtier and not properly wiped. On one of my recent patterns an aircraft was allowed to fly for over a week with vomit from a passenger not being properly cleaned up - yet the aircraft was allowed to operate. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

I think the planes need to be deep cleaned on terminating sectors. The amount of times I've gotten on a plane the next morning out of a main hub, and the toilets are filthy, and the seats smell of dirt and must. Occasionally I do clean them myself and the antiseptic wipes are black after a few wipes. I think crew health shall be prioritised. Just as much as we prioritise the company. (Male cabin crew member in first year of service, full time, domestic flights)

7.4 Physical injury

Physical injury and risk also featured prominently in comments about health and safety. Often, this related to the passenger behaviours, and the physical requirements of tasks, for example:

Passengers' non-compliance with hand luggage restrictions and their expectations of us stowing their luggage currently poses a big injury risk. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Galley benches are too high on A380 - cause issues with neck/shoulders. A330 crew rest = economy seats that virtually do not recline especially on A330-200 means my lower back is wrecked. Lots of lifting and moving heavy and awkward items, stretching to high places, touching hot things. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Things like seat pocket checks, cleaning, passenger bags, and avoiding knees and elbows puts strain on our backs and makes us more prone to injury. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1 years' experience, domestic flights)

However many comments also identified risk factors in the work environment, such as poor aircraft

equipment and lack of noise protection, and crew pointed to ways they felt injuries could better be prevented:

A definite increase of injuries has occurred since the decrease of 1 crew member on board. An increase of injuries has also occurred due to old-broken aircraft fixtures. i.e. assist mechanism on push up lockers. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The noise is crazy I have an Apple Watch and when I stand by the door for a 45 min boarding or disembarkation my noise levels hit 95 decibels for the whole time that is very bad for my ears but I can't wear noise protection as then I can't hear and talk to the passengers boarding and the company doesn't allow it. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some explained increases in the demands on them when working in new aircraft:

The job is getting more physically and mentally demanding. The new aircraft will require us to individually load all meals into ovens, then individually unload into carts then individually hand out then individually collect. Huge RSI (repetitive strain injury) issues. Our old aircraft meals are loaded into racks which catering slide into ovens. We just cook and slide racks from ovens to carts then individually hand out and collect meals. This new aircraft is doubling the hand movements in limited space. Plus pouring tea & coffee from bats, handing out ice creams from handheld tubs. Running drinks from call bells. Pulling pushing heavy carts in tight spaces. It's constant wrist, elbow shoulder back movements. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

This crew member pointed out that airlines gave flight attendants insufficient opportunities to manage the injuries accumulated at the end of their career, such as determining their schedules and roles on flights:

There is no doubt long term crew carry a legacy of decades of fatigue and injury. Back and shoulder injuries are common as are foot and knee problems. We are all capable of continuing our work and fulfilling our duties, however there is no leeway in the system to allow us to best manage these situations. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Among physical injuries, noise was a common concern:

The noise level we are being exposed to every day on the older aircraft is making us all deaf. The only way I know what a passenger wants is because I have become very good at lip reading. The company keep telling us it's acceptable to work 10+ hours a day at that level of noise. My hearing begs to differ. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Noise levels are detrimental onboard when on the air and when aircraft door open for rear stair boarding/de boarding with no aerobridge attached from adjacent gate with engine noise. (Female team leader, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

This flight attendant noted that as well as noise, spending extended periods in the dry, pressurised environment caused ear problems:

Flying 4 flights a day is the most draining thing ever the impact on your health is crazy. The super drying environment as well as the pressurisation of the cabin the constant up and down puts so much pressure on your ear drums and sinus. The doctors know immediately just by looking at your ear drums that you are a flight attendant. I have to use nasal sprays day and night and take decongestants when I fly just to not burst my eardrums due to the amount of fluid buildup from 4 flights a day. The toll it has on your body is so odd like it's a different kind of fatigue being in that cabin environment. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

7.5 Abuse, harassment and personal safety

Abuse, harassment and personal safety also featured in crew comments about the conditions of work they needed to manage. Working with passengers who were aggressive was a constant source of frustration. Some pointed out that abuse was unfortunately a normal, routine part of the work:

Passenger behaviour and respect for staff is at an all time low. It's a good day when there is only one or two instances of abuse be it verbal or physical onboard. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Every day you have to cop abuse and rude dismissive comments from customers with no support from the company that in every day life out of work you would not have to tolerate, I feel unsupported and unprotected from abuse at work by my company. (Female customer service manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

One young crew member provided an example of the harassment from a passenger she had endured:

My flight yesterday for example I had a man in his 60s yelling to everyone that he was going to marry me and telling everyone I'm gorgeous. I'm flattered however the comment is completely unnecessary. I'm 20. I told him that's not going to happen and please stop the comments, respectfully, but let me know if you need anything throughout the flight. He proceeded to grab my bum every time I walked past even after my cabin manager spoke to him and told him the behaviour was unacceptable, he just said he can't help it that I'm gorgeous. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Others described behaviours involving stalking, and also involving filming without consent:

Harassment that has left my privacy affected and being stalked and harassed on my private social media. Being filmed without consent often in these situations is common too. Disruptive behaviour from guests between other guests and the crew are about a daily occurrence I'd love to see security cameras be installed on aircraft. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I've noticed more antisocial behaviour from passengers especially after the use of social media has become more prevalent. Passengers would film crew's reaction and post the video online without providing any context. Very often the agitated crew would look unprofessional because the video is edited in a way that favours the exchange to the passengers. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

8. Working time

In aviation, working time arrangements are central to employees' work and non-work lives, and to their health. As this cabin crew member explained:

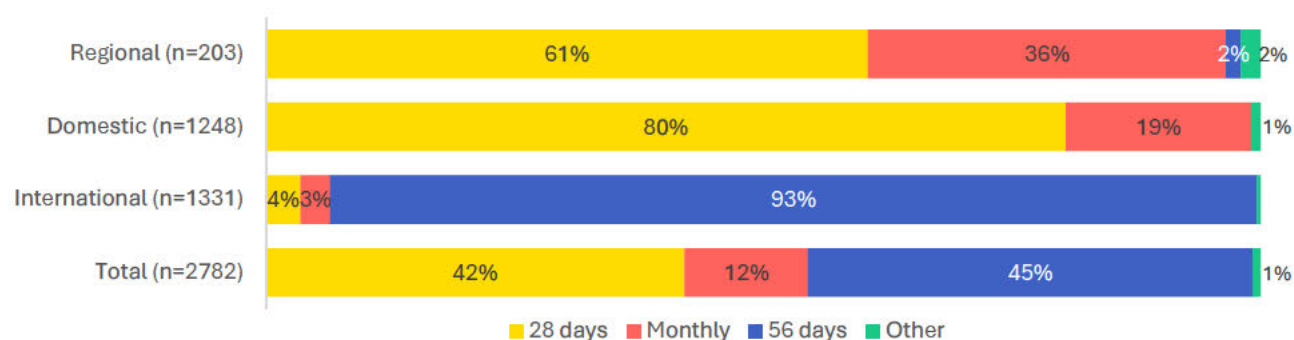
Our roster is our LIFE and impacts every aspect of our time away and time at home, including pay, rest, nutrition, lifestyle, life/work balance and mental health. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

In their survey responses, flight attendants repeatedly reported managing difficult rosters and unrealistic expectations, which both made their work more difficult and generated personal costs. Unfortunately, they overwhelmingly described their working time arrangements as negative. The following sections examine flight attendants' schedules. First, it describes survey participants' roster periods (Section 8.1) and paid and unpaid hours (Section 8.2). Then looks in more detail at rostering practices (Section 9) and impacts, on flight attendants themselves and on family and friends (Section 9).

8.1 Roster periods

Flight attendants' working time is organised via rosters, with crew advised in advance of duty and reserve periods for the duration of the roster. In the survey, the largest groups were working 28 day and 56 day rosters (42% and 45% respectively, see Figure 15). These reflect the main routes flown, with 56 day rosters used for nearly all those flying international routes (93%), while those flying mainly domestic routes were usually on 28 day rosters (80%) as were those flying regionally (61%).

Figure 15 Roster length by main route flown



8.2 Paid and unpaid hours

Table 6 shows the average number of paid and unpaid hours worked in the period roster period, according to roster length and full time, part time and casual status. For those on a 56 day roster, full timers worked an average of 210 paid hours and contributed an additional 13 unpaid hours, while part timers worked an average of 142 paid and contributed 10 unpaid hours. Part timers worked, on average, 69% of the hours of full timers.

Full timers on a 28 day roster reported on average, working 122 paid hours plus 10 unpaid hours, while part timers reported averages of 76 paid and 7 unpaid hours. Part timers on 28 day rosters worked, on average, 62% of the paid hours of full timers, while casuals worked an average of 74% of the paid hours of full timers. Information for those flying mainly regional, domestic, and international routes is in Appendix Table A. 6.

As noted in Section 6.3.3, many flight attendants noted their work was intensifying, with unpaid hours becoming an increasing feature of their work. 80% reported at least some unpaid time during their previous roster. Table 7 shows the proportion of flight attendants' total working hours (i.e. paid and unpaid hours) that were unpaid. On average, unpaid time comprised 6% of total working hours among full timers. Unpaid work comprised a slightly higher proportion of total hours worked by part timers (8%) and was higher again for casuals (11%). For those employed under the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award, unpaid work comprised 11% of total working hours in the most recent roster period (Table 8). Differences in unpaid hours by main route flown were minimal (Table 9).

Table 6 Average paid and unpaid hours

		Paid hours last roster		Additional unpaid hours last roster	
		Number of flight attendants	Mean	Number of flight attendants	Mean
28 day roster	Full time	874	122	808	10
	Part time	165	76	152	7
	Casual	75	90	67	17
	Total	1114	113	1027	10
Monthly	Full time	236	130	209	10
	Part time	35	83	34	13
	Casual	59	67	50	15
	Total	330	113	293	11
56 days	Full time	944	210	873	13
	Part time	249	142	234	10
	Casual	1	110	1	9
	Total	1194	196	1108	12
Other	Full time	15	140	13	20
	Part time	4	50	4	8
	Casual	4	73	4	13
	Total	23	112	21	17
Total	Full time	2069	163	1903	11
	Part time	453	112	424	9
	Casual	139	80	122	16
	Total	2661	150	2449	11

Table 7 Unpaid hours as a proportion of total hours, by employment type

	n	Average % of total working hours that were unpaid	95% Confidence Interval
Full time	1874	6%	5.7% to 6.4%
Part time	415	8%	6.6% to 8.6%
Casual	121	12%	8.8% to 15.0%
Total	2410	7%	6.3% to 7.0%

Note: This ratio was calculated only for those who reported figures (including zero) for both their paid and unpaid hours, and reported working on a full time, part time or casual basis.

Table 8 Unpaid hours as a proportion of total hours, by pay setting method

	n	Average % of total working hours that were unpaid	95% Confidence Interval
Enterprise agreement	2094	6%	5.9% to 6.7%
Aircraft Cabin Crew Award	144	11%	8.8% to 14.1%
Other	33	7%	4.1% to 9.0%
Not sure	149	6%	4.8% to 8.2%
Total	2420	7%	6.3% to 7.0%

Note: This ratio was calculated only for those who reported figures (including zero) for both their paid and unpaid hours, and their pay setting method.

Table 9 Unpaid hours as a proportion of total hours, by main route flown

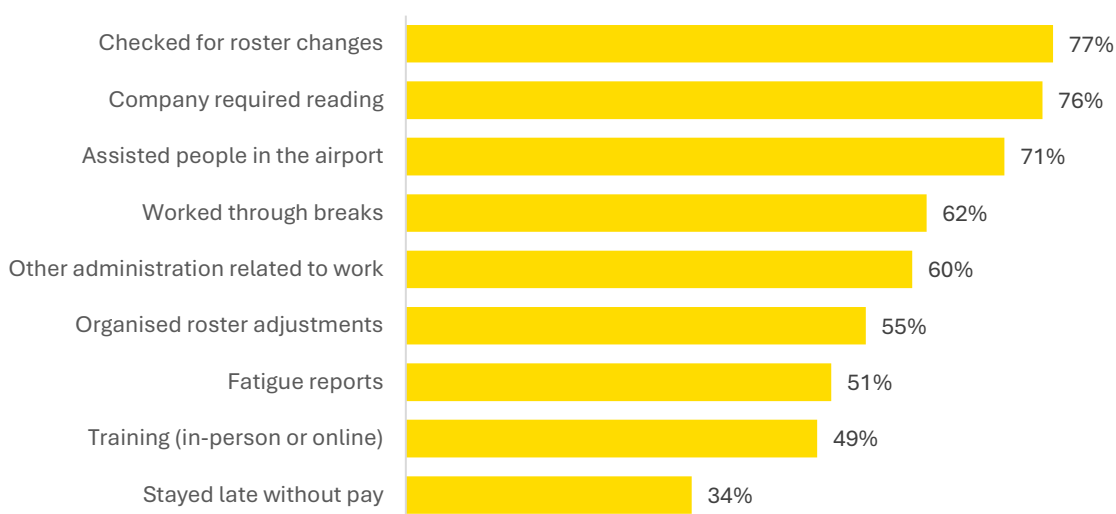
	n	Average % of total working hours that were unpaid	95% Confidence Interval
Regional	172	8%	6.6% to 9.9%
Domestic	1063	7%	6.4% to 7.7%
International	1173	6%	5.5% to 6.3%
Total	2408	7%	6.2% to 7.0%

Note: This ratio was calculated only for those who reported figures (including zero) for both their paid and unpaid hours, and the main routes flown.

8.2.1 Activities performed in unpaid time

To understand the tasks performed in unpaid time, the survey asked what activities were performed during any unpaid time, with a list provided and an opportunity to note any other activities. Figure 16 shows that checking for roster changes was most common (77%). Almost as many (76%) said they performed reading required by their company in their unpaid time.

Figure 16 **Activities performed in unpaid time**



Required reading was mentioned in multiple comments. These cabin crew members, for example, included reading among other activities required outside of paid hours:

Hours spent reading constant manual amendments and briefs that we are expected to memorise. Our manuals total thousands of pages. We are also expected to attend online teams and zoom calls from the company in our time. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

I feel like there is a lot of extra tasks we are expected to do on our days off which go unpaid. For example, study for emergency procedure training, renewing our IDs, reading CSOs before duties, replacing and altering uniforms, being expected to check company emails. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, international flights)

Reading company documents in unpaid time was particularly evident among cabin managers, who included reading among the other tasks they performed during their personal time:

The amount of reading as an on board manager is incredible compared to the past. 1200 new crew, new J class service, publication after publication. It's never ending. Preparing for flight, briefing preparation, working out who is best for what position, ThankQ's, Intelexes, emergency procedures study, reports. Hours and hours of personal time. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Planned flight briefings, completed reports, followed up with departments with issues raised, listened to Qantas webinars, read company briefs, watch videos, one on one catch ups with manager. (Male cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Work from home day prior to every trip doing work positions. Reading e log, emailing Captain and Customer Service Supervisor, answering crew emails. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Indeed, 76% of all participants said company required reading was an activity performed in unpaid time. However this was higher among cabin managers (85% reported it).

Another set of unpaid activities related to airport processes and travel which were done before sign on and after sign off. Flight attendants explained how they had to routinely use their personal time to walk through busy airports and go through airport security, customs and immigration; wait for passengers to disembark (which usually took longer than assigned duty time); and wait for and travel on crew transport. Comments like these were typical:

Unpaid time for security and customs at airport as sometimes the airport is really busy. To avoid getting late I usually make myself arriving airport at least an hour before my paid sign on time. And same when I finished my duty, getting outside airport can take extra 30 mins after company paid sign off time. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, international flights)

We are paid for half an hour after landing, however it can take longer than that to assist passengers off the aircraft. The airline also often selects hotels a great distance away from the airport/city, so for example, after arriving into Los Angeles the crew have a bus ride to the hotel that is 1-2 hours long (at one stage after New York shuttles, and due to roadworks, it was 3 hours long). (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Airports have increased in size i.e. changing aircraft from Gate 10 in Melbourne to Gate 24 can take up to 15 minutes to walk. Passengers are bringing on more luggage which results in longer disembarkation. (Female team leader, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

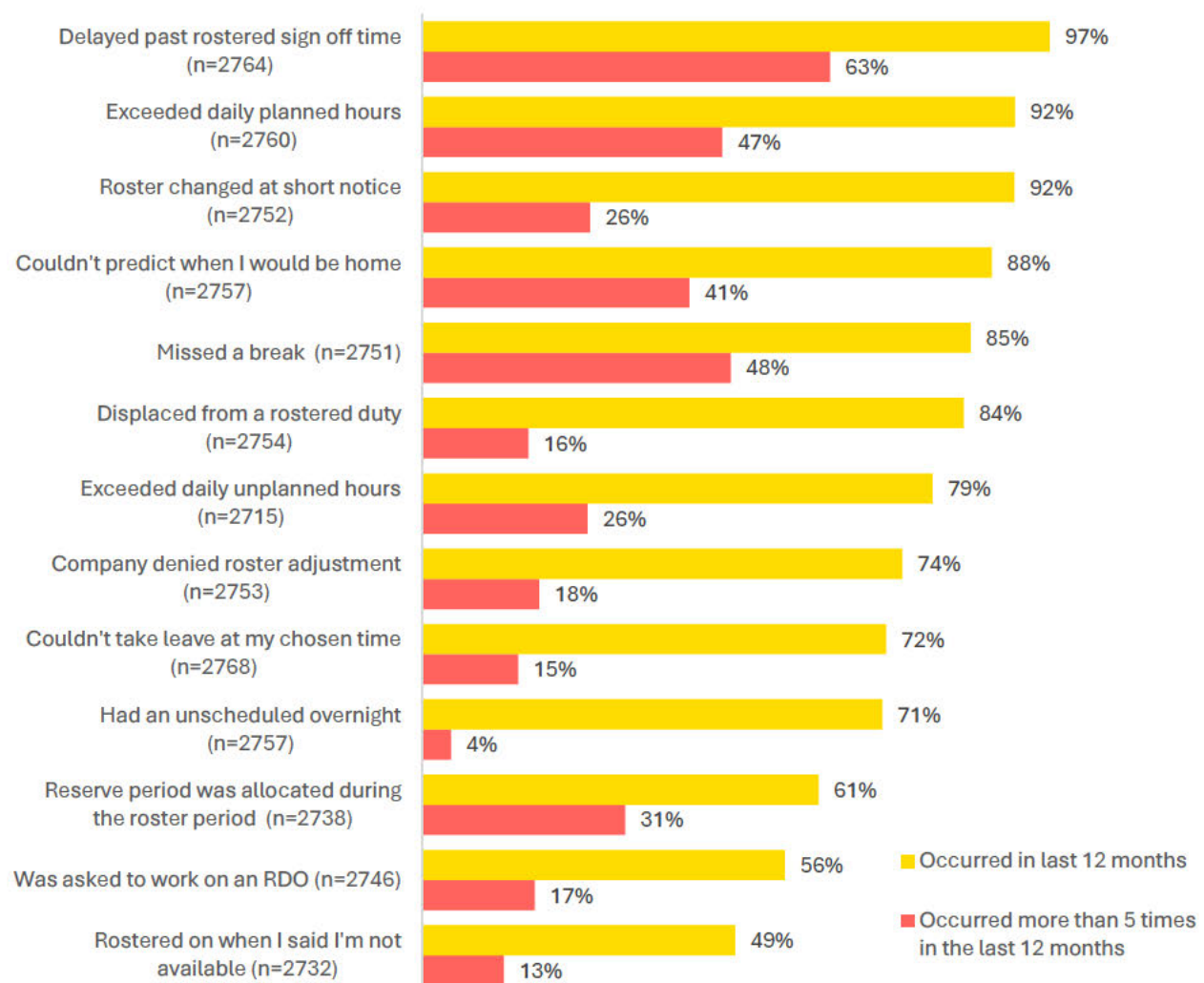
As shown in Section 6.3.3, expectations of unpaid work were felt to increase. Interestingly, tasks associated with work related duties, such as organising schedules, and ensuring employer compliance with pay, were also pushed onto crew, as captured by this very experienced flight attendant:

There are increasing expectations placed on flight attendants, but with fewer tools and more reliance on our personal time to manage work-related duties. We are required to constantly check our payslips to ensure correct payment, whether for extended delays, reduced slip time, or completion of online training. We also need to monitor whether our flight allocations comply with the conditions outlined in the EBA, often having to verify with the FAAA if a duty falls within legal requirements. All of this is done in our own personal time, adding to the workload without any formal support. (Cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

9. Rostering

Flight attendants reported experiencing a wide range of problems with their rosters, and with working time arrangements in general. Figure 17 shows the proportion who experienced particular roosting problems in the last 12 months, and whether these had been experienced frequently (more than five times). Being delayed past rostered sign off time was a near universal experience, reported by 97% of survey participants, and the majority (63%) said this had occurred for them more than 5 times in the last 12 months. Almost all had also exceeded daily planned hours (92%), and the same proportion had a roster changed at short notice (92%) although these had occurred over 5 times for smaller proportions (47% and 26% respectively). Other challenges were also experienced commonly, such as being unable to predict when they would arrive home (88%), missing breaks (85%) and being displaced from a rostered duty (84%). Breakdowns for full time, part time and casual flight attendants, and for those flying mainly regional, domestic and international routes, are in Appendix Table A. 8 and Table A. 9 respectively.

Figure 17 Proportion experiencing roosting problems



9.1 Challenging schedules

When asked to comment on rostering or its impact, most left comments about the challenge of working under airlines' rostering systems, and the unreasonable, unpredictable nature of their schedules. Few flight attendants described rosters they considered fair and easy to manage. They attributed roster difficulties to company expectations and policies, which made unreasonable demands on them and gave little option but to accept gruelling rosters.

Flight attendants described how rosters could be unsociable and unpredictable, given with insufficient notice, and vulnerable to change. This made it difficult to make and hold personal commitments. Crew members explained:

Rosters literally rule our lives and for me I have no predictability from one month to the next. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Our roster is delivered 7 days prior to the roster period (monthly) and it often leaves us rushing around trying to make fixes to enable personal events to be attended if bids aren't achieved. Also the lack of consistency on bids affects the predictability of the roster and means plans can't be made until it is released and you have an overview of your work commitments vs personal commitments. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

With young children the irregularity of roster patterns makes childcare extremely difficult. If there was a forward pattern of work which could be predicted it would make things much easier for those who needed to employ a nanny or book daycare places or coordinate with a partner's work. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 20+ years experience, domestic flights)

Flight attendants could experience difficulties keeping even basic commitments outside of work due to their rosters, as these crew members explained:

The unpredictability of our roster makes it extremely difficult to plan life outside of work. With rosters released only two weeks before the start, it's nearly impossible to commit to a second job, regular classes, or even a gym membership. There's often no consistency in days off, and some weeks we may not be home at all. This lack of stability impacts both our personal wellbeing and financial flexibility. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

It's impossible to have a life outside of work... You're rostered unreasonable hours within a 7 day block with 1 day off to rest, complete any housework and have a social life. There is no time for exercise, social events, regularly scheduled classes, its only work, sleep, eat, repeat. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Employers' expectations of constant availability were seen as out of step with norms of the wider labour market and society:

I don't know another job where even if you're part time 50% or 75% you need to have unlimited availability 365 days of the year. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Often, time at home was spent catching up with rest, or managing fatigue rather than spending quality time with family and friends, or doing other leisure activities, in the limited time off that was available:

Domestic flying is very fluid. You could be starting a 3 day trip with 3am wake-ups every morning. Then being scheduled another 3 day trip the very next day - starting late and working through the night. It can be hard to catch-up on rest. Especially when they might only schedule you 1 rostered day off. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Minimal days off in between duties, particularly any duty that involves a red eye flight, really affects long term fatigue. I regularly get 2 days off in between 5 or 6 day trips with 2 red eyes in them and I end up only sleeping, with no time to attend to my personal life, even something simple like cleaning the house or doing laundry. Burn out has impacted me to the point I take a week of annual leave just to have some days off to catch up on life. And I am a single person with no kids. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

This experienced cabin crew member found it difficult to plan life in these circumstances, and sometimes felt there were repercussions from the company for refusing to work unsociable times:

It is incredibly hard to plan. You are at the whim of the company, but also the weather and other unplanned and unexpected delays. There is no guarantee you will be home every night. You are also expected to work all Public Holidays including Christmas because we fly 24/7. Whilst some are paid more to work unsociable hours and days, for other crew it is simply an expectation, and repercussions could be expected for refusing to work on the days. You risk losing your job, but also may be rostered fewer shifts as punishment for not being fully available. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The expectations of the company were considered unreasonable, with this cabin crew member, for example, underlining the high levels of flexibility required with little offered in return:

We are expected to be flexible for the company but the company is rarely ever flexible for us! (Female cabin crew, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

[They] have this mentality that they own us and we need to do as directed by them at all times. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

I am very flexible and happy to take any duties given to me by the company. However, the standbys are challenging for me and cause me anxiety and stress. Also, the lack of consideration from the roster team is often very difficult to handle. The lack of flexibility despite being open to everything is truly frustrating. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

Lack of flexibility on the part of airlines left crew unable to be present for loved ones through important and difficult life events, as they were unable to arrange time away from work:

I understand it's difficult and working full time you cannot always get everything off that you want, however I had a funeral for my aunt and wasn't allowed it off. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Standby was a particularly unpredictable period, and could jeopardise plans for the days after the reserve period. These experienced cabin crew members explained their frustration at being called out at the end of reserve periods, with knock-on effects on subsequent days.

Rostering AV or standby is a necessity but should be absolute. I am on standby for 5 days, that means being avail for five days only, ie not to be called out on Day 3 for a 4 day trip. Because, in fact I am only avail for 2 more days... 5 days of AV = 5 days of being avail for 5 duty days. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Getting rostered a 4 day trip all 5 am starts, then on day 5, on call, getting called out [and arrive] home at midnight [affects] days off. My body clock can't cope and my days off are spent sleeping. I can't enjoy them. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Many commented on the way instability could be exacerbated by illness or other disruptions, as sick leave or flight cancellations could result in them feeling they 'owe' hours to the company. With 84% reporting that they had been displaced from a rostered duty in the last 12 months, this would be a common occurrence (Figure 17). Flight attendants did not consistently understand these complex requirements, and some considered it unfair that disruptions generated further scheduling changes, with days thought to be guaranteed as non-work days becoming potential working days.

When sick leave is accessed or a flight cancelled, the roster is suddenly very unstable as you owe the hours, which then feels like you are permanently on reserve, just with a longer notice period. If you had achieved a day off for an event, this is now in jeopardy due to being 'available'. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

If there is a flight cancellation with my airline and I'm displaced I then "owe" my company hours, according to them, which then makes me available to them for the remaining roster to pay back the hours. It's the same with sick leave, if we go sick we then owe hours. Its like sick leave doesn't exist...[then I] am basically on standby for them to assign me any trip they like for the rest of the roster. It's extremely unfair and at no fault of the crew members. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

I'll never understand why I have to work to pay back a sick day. Disgraceful. (Male Cabin Crew Supervisor, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

The way the company makes you owe hours at no fault of your own is incredibly stressful. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Others recognised unpredictable, inflexible schedules were an inevitable part of flight attendant work, but felt they should be compensated on par with similar conditions in other industries:

Usually such an unpredictable and inflexible job such as this would be compensated in other measures e.g. more time off, more pay, but this is not seen with cabin crew. (Female cabin crew in first year of service, full time, regional flights)

For those working casually for labour hire firms, schedules could be particularly challenging, and punitive, with no guarantee of hours. This cabin crew member described increasing inflexibility with rostering, which risked that he would be left without shifts for full roster periods:

They have recently implemented this new rule in regards to rosters. The new rule being that if you forget to bid for your available days, you do not get any shifts for the entire roster. You are not allowed to pick up work by calling crewing, not allowed to swap with other coworkers, not allowed to pick up on open time, and not allowed to use staff travel. For context, previously if you had forgotten to bid then you would get a whole roster full of shifts and going from this to the complete opposite, not being able to do anything about it and not having work for a whole month just because of an accident seems unfair. (Male cabin crew member, casual, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Box 7 Linda's sacrifices of family time

Linda is a full time cabin crew member aged in her 50s. She flies mainly domestic routes, but sometimes internationally. She has a 28-day roster. Linda prides herself on her problem-solving and patience, and notes diplomacy is an increasing requirement of her work, including to manage non-compliant and aggressive passengers. Linda loves her job "with a passion" but struggles with work-life balance. She notes the personal and family sacrifice the work involves:

There is no work life balance. Minimum rest in ports is a huge issue. Big hour days, running from one side of an airport to another to change aircraft. No consistency with hours. Very early mornings are mixed with late sign-ons in a roster. Cannot have a routine of any description. Exercise is really important to me and it's always a struggle to fit it in. ...When I'm home all I want to do is sleep and rest and not talk to anyone which my husband finds frustrating as he wants to go out and do things. Then trying to keep on to of all the mundane things like washing, cleaning, food shopping, cooking. Because your time frame of when you are home is do small you are always trying to cram stuff in!!

Her time on reserve is also challenging:

It's always hard on reserve because you don't know what you're going to get so you can't really organise anything. It would also be nice if we could either choose on reserve to do early morning or later shifts just do you can have a bit of a life.

Linda's roster can be difficult to manage. She is regularly rostered on at times she's said she's unavailable. She isn't happy with the pay and takes on extra shifts to make a decent wage. The requirements of the job mean she routinely misses important social and family events, which impacts her mental health, and her family:

My family hate the fact that I don't get to spend Christmas, Easter or any of the public holidays with them. It would be nice to even have a morning /afternoon of a special day to at least have a coffee/chat.

Linda is hoping to retire, but needs to work a few more years so she has sufficient superannuation.

9.2 Roster bids

Processes for determining rosters were widely considered to be unfair, exacerbating difficulties for crew. When asked for any comments about rostering or its impacts, many wrote about a lack of fairness in the rostering system, including in the roster bidding process. They pointed to problems with the system of ‘bidding’ for particular days off or particular routes, which didn’t effectively take into account reasonable scheduling needs, such as childcare, as these crew members explained:

I bid for late starts as I live more than an hour’s drive from the airport, [yet] I am constantly being rostered midnight finishes and then the next week I’ll have a 4am airport reserve that requires me to get up at 2.30am. There is no protection around our shift work. (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 10+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Not achieving requests means we get given days outside of daycare which is impossible to swap making it stressful every month (Female cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years’ experience, regional flights)

Comments on bidding overwhelmingly referred to flight attendants’ inability to have preferences met. Crew observed trade-offs, so that if a bid for a day off was granted, they would not be given a preferred route, or vice versa. Flight attendants’ repeated frustrations were reflected in comments like these:

Can never get your preferred bids. Can’t even get AM or PM preference right. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Our roster system penalises you for requesting days off by ignoring any other roster requests once you get your days off i.e. you are at their mercy if you specifically request days off. (Cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years’ experience, international flights)

If you bid for a day off it can significantly decrease your pay as you will get destinations with less pay. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years’ experience, international flights)

Being granted limited preferences within an eight-week period was considered particularly frustrating, and would seem an unreasonable way to meet crew needs for working time security and stability.

When we were on 28 day rosters, we had an opportunity to get our highest bid once in a month. Now we are on 56 day rosters, we have an opportunity to get our highest bid once in two months. Less roster satisfaction. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years’ experience, international flights)

For some, the issue was that bids needed to be placed very far in advance which made it difficult to anticipate needs as social events were not yet planned. Others saw unequal rostering outcomes, which generated impacts on wellbeing:

Daily I hear stories of people allocated dream rosters contrasted against those whose rosters are full of unwanted and undesirable trips. Rostering is the one area that has the biggest impact on our physical and mental wellbeing. It is the biggest cause of unwarranted sick leave and dissatisfaction, yet seems to be an issue widely ignored.

(Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Lack of transparency about these outcomes, such as how automated scheduling algorithms operated to allocate patterns and trips meant rosters were sometimes attributed to favouritism, for example:

Rostering has a complete lack of transparency and allows individuals to be favoured over others...Just last week on roster release I had two close friends call me in tears over yet another taxing roster, while “the chosen few” were rostered multiples of the same duties with high duty hours that maximise their days at home. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ experience, international flights)

With no checks on how the company rosters, I wonder about favouritism. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Many flying internationally mentioned problems with allocation to routes which were unpopular for reasons of payment and costs at the destination, location and security, transport, time zones, trip length, or other reasons. Crew observed that some flight attendants seemed to be allocated less desirable trips often, while others were almost never asked to fly those routes:

I feel it's not fairly shared. Why do I continue to do the right thing and end up poor? E.g. doing Johannesburg for \$201.50 for a 4-day trip, when I can go sick and pick up \$360 for a Singapore overnight. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

I just wish there was more fair sharing of undesirable trips, e.g. Bangalores or Johannesburg. Some crew haven't done any in 12 months and have had multiple desirable trips. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

One flight attendant, who was satisfied with their rostering, explained that this was achieved through bidding strategically for less popular overseas routes, and keeping expectations low. Interestingly, the 'roster satisfaction' they described was incomplete; they also referred to problematic reserve periods:

I achieve a high degree of roster satisfaction as a business and first flight attendant (BFA) as I do not bid for highly desirable trips/destinations. I keep my bids simple and my expectations low. I bid for simple patterns on my desired day of departure... My pain point is the regularity of reserve/stand by which seems to be allocated more frequently than I'd like and impacts the rest of the family. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Others found that when their scheduling preferences were not taken into account, they managed their rosters by calling in sick for duties that did not suit, for example:

When bidding for specific days off or a duty to finish on a day to make plans and the bids are not taken up. Which means you have to go sick for the day you asked for off, or asked to finish early but didn't get that specific bid. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

Of course, using sick leave to manage rostering, and lack of schedule control generates further problems for airlines, and for crew, as airlines need to replace people on sick leave, generating more

use of reserve staff, and more disruption, unpredictability and dissatisfaction with rosters. This was evident in the comment from this cabin crew member:

Some crew call sick so as not to go to a lower money making destination, which has an onflow effect e.g. crewing having so much trouble with Johannesburg - and is unfair to those of us that do the right thing and always turn up regardless of destination and only call sick if actually really sick. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Box 8 Ethan's concerns about schedule control

Ethan is an experienced cabin crew member working on long haul international flights. Nearing the end of a long career, he observes the work is now more challenging than ever before:

We have never worked harder. Inflight service has increased dramatically, layovers are shorter and sectors longer. Our home-life balance has become worse. Our last EBA removed seniority as a way of planning rosters and allocating work positions. These decades long systems were replaced by ad-hoc systems that aren't transparent, consistent or predictable... Our previous system allowed us to build a complete roster allowing us to plan days off plus have a say in our destinations. It also allowed us to build rosters that suited our own physical needs and sleep patterns, we all have preferred destinations, sector length and passenger mix... Whilst, a seniority based rostering system is now seen as outdated, it did allow crew to manage their responsibilities.

Managing fatigue is a huge issue for Ethan. Standby periods are particularly difficult:

The standby periods are 12 hours long, but you can be called for a sign on 90 minutes after that period has ended. I have completed a 12 hour standby and then been called out to complete a 14 hour overnight sector. There is never enough warning time and I have certainly had to race across the city in peak hour to crew a long flight with minimum notice. Vacancies on certain flights can be seen the day or night previous to the duty, but allocation of the trip is still done with minimum notice. A 12 hour standby, 4am - 4pm for example, is quite exhausting... You always start waking prior to your standby period, so it is not unusual to start waking at 2 or 3 in the morning.

Ethan's partner also works in aviation, and airline rosters have been a challenge, and haven't met his changing needs across the lifecourse:

As we get older we gain partners, children, pets, mortgages, coach school sport, do charity work etc. As we age and gather more responsibilities, seniority allowed us increasing control. My partner and I have several decades of combined flying experience, two children and a house to maintain. We have no more control over our rosters than an 18 year old living at home with their parents. Furthermore, we both carry long-term work-related injuries and have decades of jet lag, fatigue and shift work. Yet we are unable to make roster choices regarding the destinations that best suit our physical and emotional needs.

Ethan feels that while he and his partner were able to both work full time in aviation while raising children (albeit with family help), this would not be possible under current arrangements unless one parent worked half time, impacting family income and retirement savings.

9.3 Seniority

In some companies, senior staff are given better opportunity to determine their rosters. Systems of 'seniority' also attracted multiple comments. Those with access to it reported that seniority works to their benefit and felt grateful for the degree of schedule control it gave them, but often considered themselves 'lucky' to be in a position to receive favourable outcomes from their roster bids:

I am lucky now that I can get most of the trips I bid for because of where I sit in the seniority list. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I'm very lucky to be senior enough to receive most of my bids so I get the days off I'd like and mostly work trips for the extra money. But it would be nice if we didn't have to fight for trips, as they make up most of our pay, and it's unfair my less senior colleagues have to suffer because of this. (Female cabin crew manager full time, 7+ years' experience, regional flights)

Others, however, felt that seniority was deeply unfair, especially when they lacked access:

Seniority is an extremely unfair system...Totally unfair that senior crew get all their days off, the 'nice' flying, stable hours, better money trips, nicer destinations, Xmas off, New Year off, ad infinitum, whereas junior crew get the leftovers no-one wants and can't get their days off. (Male cabin crew manager full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Seniority rules aviation. It's a very unfair system. We are all trained for same role, it should be fairer. (Cabin crew member, casual, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Labour hire employees without seniority therefore always get the dregs of what flying is left, rarely a day off request, work every public holiday/school holiday. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The unfairness of seniority was especially egregious for flight attendants with extensive experience but no access to seniority:

The rostering is a seniority system where the top 10% of crew get every request and most desirable trips. I have been flying over 30 years and still not able to achieve work life balance majority of rosters. (Male cabin crew manager full time, 30+ years' experience, domestic flights).

I'm 25 years with my company and still can't bid Christmas or New Years Day off. Long weekends are hard to achieve. Sometimes I have events and ask for a day off and it's not granted. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some flight attendants worked in contexts where seniority privileges had been removed, but called for the system to be returned as it gave at least some staff more certainty.

Bring back seniority! It allowed us to build a roster around what we could achieve. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Once seniority was taken away we have no certainty. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Others felt that a degree of fairness could be achieved with a different approach, or if seniority was rotated between staff, either month by month, or at key times of the year:

It would be beneficial to all to rotate seniority especially around Christmas like B737 pilots. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Whilst I know there will not be a return to seniority, there are dozens of different rostering systems employed by the airline industry. This current system is not transparent nor easy to understand. Its results vary widely and at times the results are quite inexplicable. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

9.4 Roster swaps

When flight attendants receive rosters that do not suit them, they may have the option to swap trips with others. This can help ameliorate crews' frustration with rosters, including poor outcomes from bidding in short windows, and insufficient notice of rosters. Opportunities to swap shifts were highly valued however some found obstacles in their way, with companies often refusing swaps.

We are lucky that we can swap shifts with other crew but it still needs to be accepted by the crewing roster people who don't like to accept most swaps. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Rosters basically rule your life in this job, but what makes it more difficult is when they are not published far enough in advance, bidding windows are very short, work patterns are extremely unpredictable, and changes such as swaps or roster requests are difficult to achieve. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Several observed that requests to swap trips were often denied because of roster rules, for example, a team leader explained that, despite same job same pay, flight attendants working for the same brand and who may be working together, yet employed by different companies, cannot swap duties:

It's ridiculous I cannot swap my duties with other crew due to different employment categories. For example I cannot swap my holiday / duties with QD employees because I'm QAL. Same job same pay should have made this happen but it hasn't. (Female team leader, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Others noted that rules that impeded swapping would sometimes be ignored by the company when asking flight attendants to pick up extra work.

If our bidding system worked properly, more crew would be satisfied. Our company also denies trip swaps due to pathetic rules, yet when ops require us to work, those rules disappear. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

In some cases, poor roster allocations and the inability to swap caused crew to resort to sick leave to

manage rosters:

I put in availability for specific days then my roster gives me duties on days I can't work. I have to rely on constant duty swaps (if they work within rule limitations) or sick leave. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

Managing rosters in these ways would not be necessary if rostering took better account of the preferences and availability of employees.

9.5 Home Reserve

Having a pool of flight attendants on home reserve (standby) helps airlines to maintain service when crew are unable to work at short notice, such as due to illness, delays or mandatory rest. Among survey participants, 85% said they had been on home reserve in the last year, and 38% had been on airport reserve. These figures were much higher among flight attendants employed on casual contracts: 95% had performed home reserve and 96% had performed airport reserve in the last year (Table A. 7).

Home reserve requires flight attendants to be ready to present at the airport within a certain period, when called. Among those who had done home reserve in the last year, 69% had a 2 hour call out period, 28% had a 90 minute call out period, while 3% were unsure (Figure 18). Among flight attendants employed under the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award, 65% had a shorter (90 minute) call out period, compared with 25% of those employed under an enterprise agreement (Appendix Table A. 10). Figure 19 shows the perceived adequacy of call out periods.

- For those with a 90 minute call out period, only 15% found this was easy to meet, 52% found it difficult, and 33% said it was not enough time to get to the airport.
- By contrast, among those with a 120 minute call out, more (37%) found it easy, a similar proportion said it was difficult (51%), and far fewer (13%) considered it insufficient time.

When asked what a reasonable call out period would be, only 2% said 90 minutes. 36% said 120 minutes, and 46% said 150 minutes. 17% commented and specified another amount, with half of this group (9% of all) saying 180 minutes or 3 hours.

Those who specified this higher amount pointed to traffic and commute times, and that they needed to clear immigration and security before signing on, plus difficulty leaving at short notice due to home life planning (eg childcare). Three hours was also preferred by many on the basis that it matched the timeframe given to pilots, and because it matched the timeframe that flight attendants had to give the company when sick. Those using public transport or taxis to get to the airport generally reported needing longer call out periods than those travelling by private car (Appendix Table A. 11).

Several said they would prefer to be assigned a duty the night before, or as far in advance as possible. Others made comments that an appropriate call out time depends on the day of the week, as this affected traffic and travel times, or the location, for example time needed is longer in Sydney given traffic, distance of crew parking to the airport, and time needed to move through the airport. Reflecting this, jurisdictional analysis shows crew based in NSW with 90-minute call outs were least likely to say

that this timeframe is sufficient to get to the airport (Table A. 12).

In their survey comments, flight attendants underlined that call out periods caused a rush, including because of the activities required prior to commencing duty, and that many crew had long distances to travel to the airport:

Call out times don't reflect what needs to be done prior to sign on. E.g. Preparing Pre-flight briefing, Online immigration documentation for destination country. (Male cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

As a commuter, I stay near the airport during reserve, so I have no issues on getting to the airport in time. But I do think this is not long enough in big cities for people who have to live further out. More and more people require this due to the cost of living crisis and it puts incredible strain on people. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Figure 18 Call out period for those doing home reserve (n=2357)

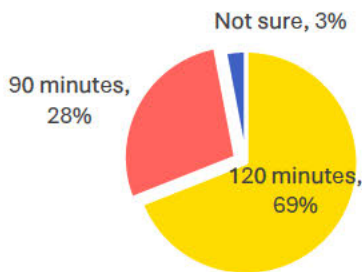


Figure 19 Whether crew can easily meet home reserve call out period

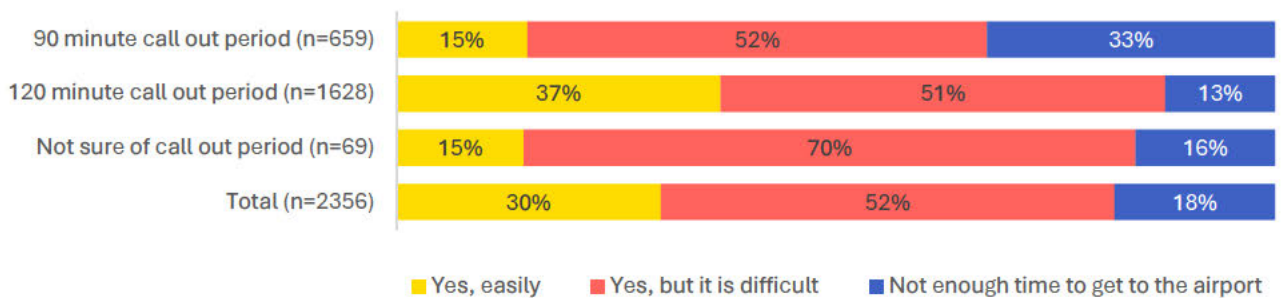


Figure 20 Preferred call out period (n=2353)



Reserve times were particularly difficult for crew with family responsibilities:

When organising kids/caring arrangements, 2 hours is simply not enough. One can only be so organised when you don't know what the next week is going to look like potentially particularly difficult when standby time starts at 4am. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

I find it so stressful as I live 1.5 away from the airport and have small kids to organise and a husband who also does shift work. I can't sleep the night before because I get so stressed. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

As well as underlining the need for longer call out periods, comments also focused on the way that home reserve unfairly eats into employees' time away from work, making it impossible to perform activities or fulfil responsibilities that could interfere with their rapid availability to work. Crew do not find days on home reserve to be non-work time. As one cabin crew member put it:

When on reserve your days off are not your days off. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

Others agreed, commenting that they are unable to make appointments or social arrangements, or take on a second job, as home reserve periods require them to cancel with little notice. They explained:

Being on standby is the one part of the job I find the most stress and anxiety about. I feel I can't leave the proximity of my home, in fear of I'll get called when I'm at the shops or gym for example. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

4+ day reserve spans make it very difficult to do anything outside of work during those days, which can impact social health of many crew. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

For casuals, reserve periods were a routine source of stress:

Being casual we are always on reserve. It gives me anxiety always waiting to be called and not having any flying rosters so we never know where we are going, when or who we are working with! Very stressful! (Female cabin crew, casual, 1+ years experience, domestic flights)

Some noted that the way reserve periods are organised can be extremely stressful and turn into long days, contributing to exhaustion. As one explained:

Standby is very stressful for people like me who care about knowing which aircraft I'm on, to organise my day, and who are stressed about time and getting to the airport. Our 12 hour home reserve shifts are WAY too long...after not sleeping due to 4am reserve and stress of being woken by a call, to waiting 4-10 hours on high alert for every phone call, then to be finally called out...by the time I get to the airport...it doesn't matter how much time I have until the flight, I am exhausted from the stress of the day. And being International, we usually have a flight that is between 8-17 hours to work. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

Others similarly described reserve could feel like a ‘never ending work day’, as this casual flight attendant explained:

[Reserve days] can become very long days. A full home reserve becomes an airport reserve which then may become a duty. This in total can extend to 18+ hours that you are available to the company. Only paid for 3 hrs on a 12hr home reserve span.
(Female cabin crew, casual, 20+ years experience, domestic flights)

Crew pointed out that this could be avoided, or managed better, as companies could allocate trips in advance, to ensure flight attendants had enough notice before trips. For example,

It is VERY frustrating when you have filled out the form requesting pre-allocation of a trip when on standby & you can see a trip in [the rostering system] the day before & yet you get called out for that trip just 2 hours before. Pre-allocation of that trip the night before would enable a much better rest than the stress of a 4am call! (Female cabin crew, part time, 20+ years experience, international flights)

If trips are sitting visible in the system missing crew, these should be pre allocated prior to standby start times to allow crew to actually get sleep and prepare for a flight. Assigning it last minute or at standby start times, means rushing to pack and be ready, little to no real sleep achieved as you end up roster watching all night and just frustration overall. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years’ experience, international flights)

Comments on home reserve also underlined lack of pay, as being on standby meant crew could not make appointments or commitments, and as such it limited what could be done and was “definitely not a day off”. Crew felt strongly their reserve periods should be better paid. While arrangements differ in different companies and circumstances, crew explained the need to remain available to the company for long periods while on reserve, in some cases this involved a 12 hour span, for which they were only partially paid . They also cited impacts such as fatigue, inability to do other activities, and costs of work such as being unable to prepare appropriate meals with no notice of where they might travel:

Being paid 2 hours for 12 hours of standby is wrong. Multiple days of early standbys is hugely fatiguing. (Male cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years’ experience, international flights)

You are on alert and highly anxious for 12 hours only to receive 3 hours pay (Female cabin crew, casual, 2+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

Participants repeatedly commented on the need for reserve to be better paid, as their time was available to the airline despite being physically at home.

If it’s a work day, I need to be paid appropriately for that, ie my hourly rate for every hour on home reserve/available. If I’m expected to drop what I’m doing and go to work, I need to be paid my normally hourly rate, instead of being paid 1 hour for every 3 hours on call. That’s not normal. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years’ experience, domestic flights)

When we are on home reserve every hour should be counted as rostered working

hours... we have to be ready for work, we can't be out & about doing as we please, can't be in the garden getting dirty or sweaty exercising, we can't have a glass of wine, babysitters have to be organised & paid for just in case we go to work. Some of these things might be possible for people who live close to the airport but many of us have to be dressed & ready to run out the door as soon as we get the call. Reserve duties are also very difficult from a health aspect...with biosecurity & liquids, aerosols and gels restrictions, it is very difficult to meal prep with no notice of where we will be going. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

9. Impacts of rostering

Unsurprisingly, most flight attendants in the survey reported their rosters had negative impacts on their personal and social lives. This section shows the stress that rostering processes cause for flight attendants, their sense that rostering is becoming more challenging, and the impact of rostering in their ability to engage in other activities, including paid work.

Figure 21 shows:

- 81% of all survey participants, and 88% of those focused flying mainly internationally, agreed that they miss important social events because of their roster.
- 74% of all participants, and 80% of those flying internationally, agreed that rosters impact on their mental health.
- Two thirds (65%) said rostering makes it difficult to work a second job, but this was higher among those focused on regional flights (76%)
- Over half (54%) said their schedule causes hassles for other people.

Figure 21 Proportion agreeing with statements about roster impacts



9.1 Rostering stress

Reflecting the high proportion who reported that their rosters affected their mental health, in their comments, flight attendants repeatedly reported that the way in which rosters were organised caused them stress which spilled into their non-work lives. These two cabin crew members, for example, explained the multiple and interacting stressors in detail:

The unpredictable nature of their schedules...makes it challenging to maintain a stable work-life balance, as flight attendants must constantly adapt to new schedules and time zones. The stress of not knowing when they will be called to work or how long they will be away can also take a toll on their mental and emotional well-being. Managing other responsibilities becomes a juggling act, where the demands of the job often take precedence, leaving little room for personal time and self-care. This uncertainty can lead to feelings of frustration and burnout, highlighting the need for better support and more predictable scheduling practices within the industry. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

This is something I knew would be part of the job, however I do feel like the rostering particularly in recent months have become very fatiguing with minimal days off in between trips so feel like I'm constantly chasing my tail when I'm home and unable to have proper quality time with loved ones. I'm usually experiencing and recovering from the effects of back-of-clock shifts on my days off, and just when I'm starting to feel recovered, I'm due to fly again. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, international flights)

Experienced flight attendants explained how rostering practices had become worse for them, over time. They described how rostering is now less accommodating of their needs and takes less account of their preferences. There were many practices which had made rostering more difficult, these included being unable to state a preference for mornings or afternoons, a loss of seniority for some, fewer shorter breaks between shifts and an increase in the hours required per roster.

Rostering away from preferred AM /PM preferences impacts my health and rest. I went part time when the bidding system changed and I could no longer control my bids as easily. Roster became too random, whereas I could structure it quite well previously. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The loss of seniority has impacted my rostering. I was a junior flight attendant until about 6 years ago (26 years of flying), and then the company took away seniority and with 32 years of flying, my rosters are the worst they have ever been. [Plus], we have lost a lot of long haul flying to offshore bases, so an even greater impact. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

This survey participant explained that rosters could look acceptable 'on paper' but were difficult to manage, as they did not allow sufficient rest between duties, resulting in accumulating fatigue:

Rostering is more inflexible than it used to be. I have to take leave more often instead of being able to rely on rostered days off like I used to. I have less time off than I used to and I don't recover as quickly. 2 days off after a 3 day pattern with an overnight flight looks fine on paper but I never fully recover so the fatigue accumulates. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Some managed difficult rosters by reducing hours. This cabin crew member for example found the lack of balance between her work and non-work life so difficult that she changed to part time hours, and a lower income. She explained that the stress that her roster caused, and the lack of respect she felt from the airline, was so great, that she has no interest in returning to full time hours.

I had to go 75% and suffer financial restrictions in order to achieve some work-life balance and be able to do personal things that are important to me. I would /could NEVER return to 100% rostering again. No life balance, no respect for X days and personal plans, no respect for fatigue issues and no respect for a flight attendants' personal life. We are classed as donkeys!! (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Similar, this single mother managed the unpredictable, demanding nature of rosters in her company by reducing hours to work part time, contributing to financial stress:

I have had to go 50 percent to manage my life at home with children as a single mother. If I had more certainty about when I'm working, e.g. reserve periods, I would love to be full time as I need the money. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

Finally, in a workplace with such highly flexible rostering arrangements, a lack of flexibility on the part of the airlines, so that even necessary changes to the roster were difficult to secure, caused additional stress. As one example, a cabin crew member was unexpectedly offered a medical appointment when another patient cancelled. She needed the appointment, so sought annual leave (rather than sick leave, for reasons that are unclear) so she could attend. While it isn't evident whether the leave was granted or not, it was clear the process of negotiating for leave to attend an important medical appointment was stressful. At a time she may have already been worried about her health, additional stress was difficult to manage:

When applying for annual leave due to a medical appointment that I got in from someone's cancellation. There shouldn't be a reason not to allocate annual leave. Life is important, life is hard and a little support in situations like this should be easy not made more stressful. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

Others found it difficult to obtain leave that matched other family members, causing stress for the family:

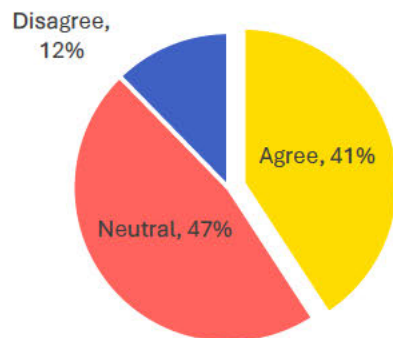
When leave is involved it's difficult to secure the same leave as my spouse. It's never guaranteed, which is frustrating and puts stress on us as a family. (Male cabin crew supervisor, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

9.2 Care challenges

Such unpredictable working time arrangements, and inflexibility of companies to meet employee needs, generates impacts beyond individual staff and affects their families and loved ones, especially children and older relatives. In the sample, there were 1505 flight attendants (54%) who had care responsibilities. The largest group were parents (952, 34%) and a further 553 (20%) had care

responsibilities for an adult such as elderly parents or an adult with disability or chronic health condition. 1498 of these crew members with caring responsibilities responded to the statement “my roster does not suit my care responsibilities”. The largest group was neutral (47%), likely indicating mixed experiences. However, many more agreed that their roster does not suit their care responsibilities (41%) than disagreed with the statement (12%).

Figure 22 Proportion who agreed with the statement ‘My roster does not suit my care responsibilities’ (n=1498)



The survey provided an opportunity for participants to comment on managing care responsibilities as flight attendants. Overwhelmingly, they responded by describing the many ways in which managing care is extremely difficult. This flight attendant described in detail many of the grievances mentioned by her colleagues.

This is the hardest part of the job and many fantastic flight attendants have left because they don't have family close by to provide unpaid care, especially while their children are small. I understand the airline industry is 24/7, but other companies allow you to have some time where you are not available due to other commitments. But we must be available 24/7 for roster build. Why can't we pair with other parents to split the coverage so we can have 1 guaranteed day off so kids can play sport or I can commit to a community group or my parents don't have to be a backup on that day? ...But the company must always all the time be number one in the family & everything has to work around it 24/7. This has a big toll on the family. The company could be more flexible, and still keep all planes flying, and have reserve coverage, but they don't care. The company's attitude is fit in or leave. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

She noted the impossibility of raising small children without extensive family support, the challenges of unpredictable schedules for family commitments, the impact on family members of airline scheduling, and the feeling that the contributions that she and her family make are not valued by the company.

Like the flight attendant above, others emphasised the difficulty that unpredictable rosters and shift work caused for the care of children, elderly parents and others with care needs.

I can't stress enough how hard it is to organise care for children whilst away. It takes a

lot of time out of my days trying to juggle work commitments along with family commitments. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

It is really difficult because of the nature of the job. Our society does not provide any support or services for shift workers despite the growing number of jobs involving shift hours. Try and find a childcare centre that operates 24 hours a day. Even Qantas opened one where the hours of operation were only suited to the office workers despite the majority of its work force being shift workers. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

It's hard to manage the tight rostering with 2 days off in between trips & caring for your elderly parents. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

It sux. I always feel bad for going to work and leaving kids, I wish I could be rostered on specific days / flights to make sure I'm home on regular days. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Many, like the flight attendant above, called for some degree of predictability in their schedules, so that they could commit to some of the regular responsibilities of parenting, like transporting children to after school activities or health appointments.

Sole parents drew attention to the enormous challenges of managing care for children when there are no other adults at home, and couples struggled to coordinate schedules to ensure someone could provide care, or so that they could both be home at the same time occasionally.

Many commented on the difficulty of booking doctors and specialist appointments for themselves, or those they care for.

Extremely difficult, even impossible to book ahead doctors' appointments! (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

Can be tricky when you have medical appointments that come up when rosters have already been published. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

Very difficult to schedule [anything] between rosters. Due to rosters being published two weeks before their commencement, I have to wait to see which days I have off to be able to book or rebook specialist appointments. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

In some cases, parents had requested flexible arrangements to help manage their schedules and accommodate care responsibilities, but reported that their requests were denied:

My roster and my bids cause me anxiety as I am primary carer for my children and they are not in full time care. I submitted an FWA to find a suitable arrangement to complement my childcare needs and it was denied with no alternative offered. (Female cabin crew, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

9.2.1 Impacts on loved ones

Not only were flight attendants unable to provide care when and how they wished, many also told us that the ways their care was restricted had implications for their loved ones. These cabin crew members for example underlined how schedules ripple beyond employees to affect families:

Being a flight attendant is not only a job it is a lifestyle and it affects a lot more people than the employee - you miss out on social events due to rostering and working public holidays, the hours away and being on reserve affects your family with uncertainty of when you may be home. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

If the rostering isn't more helpful for parents...there will be more mental health issues ... Not only for the parents but for their kids also. I've already experienced parents having to rush home with kids needing their mums home straight away, so it's not just us but our kids that need us...it affects everyone around us. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some relied heavily on other family members to provide care and enable them to fulfil company requirements, which then limited that person's choices.

My husband is restricted in job opportunities as he needs to be able to work around my roster and also take care of our children/take them to school & after school activities. Without him I could not do this job and manage my child care responsibilities. (Female flight attendant, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

I am part time and my husband took a pay cut to have a more flexible job which has allowed us to both manage the kids and work around my schedule. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

The care of my elderly parent has had to move to other family members (cousins) as I am no longer as available as I was previously, due to shorter periods of time at home between trips. (Male flight attendant, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

This mother of a child with disabilities found standby periods particularly difficult:

I have a son with disabilities, so every time I am rostered a home standby I have to put him into care, as I never know what I will get called for and this disrupts his routine. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Others described pressure to reduce or change the care they were providing to accommodate schedules, sometimes at critical times in their loved ones' lives. This flight attendant reported that she has been asked to reduce her use of the sick leave she was using to care for her mother with cancer.

My mum has cancer. I've been spoken to about my sick leave requirements being too high. I am working to limit this. (Female flight attendant, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

If she uses less leave, she will have less time to support her mother during this difficult time. Another flight attendant had a similar experience and had to move her father into residential aged care because she could not care for him, no matter how she tried to adjust her roster.

It's very hard to bid around my care requirements. I had to put my father into full time care as I couldn't achieve the shifts needed to make it work. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years, domestic flights)

9.2.2 Mental health and family stress

Trying to combine their work with providing care to loved ones exacerbated stress for many flight attendants. For some, this related to the challenges of providing care when feeling tired from demanding work on long shifts combined with sleep deprivation:

It is increasingly difficult for any number of reasons, from being able to secure a medical appointment and be able to have the time off to attend, to being constantly sleep deprived and exhausted and trying to care for one's self in order to then care for those around me that need my care. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

High density flying leaves me tired, snappy and unable to give my full attention to my family when at home, attend to daily chores to maintain house and garden. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Due to our odd hours & overnights it's really hard when you have a family to look after. It's stressful. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Others found it heartbreaking to be far away from loved ones, or uncontactable while in the air, when their loved ones were experiencing an emergency.

I can't be there for my family when needed. It is heartbreaking trying to manage these things from a hotel room on the other side of the world. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 20+ experience, international flights)

It's almost impossible. My son had a car crash last week where I was away. It's the most horrible feeling. (Female cabin crew, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

9.2.3 Work arrangements to manage care

The way companies organised work left flight attendants with minimal resources for care. Survey participants explained how they drew on a range of personal strategies to help manage their care responsibilities, often involving extended family. They sought flexible working arrangements where these were available, reduced hours despite financial costs, drew on their leave, and did their best to strategically manage the timing of their shifts and flights. Importantly, they noted that all these arrangements have significant downsides, and underlined limited supports from the company to help them manage care. For this flight attendant, the company denied access to flexible working

arrangements typically available in other occupations. She felt lucky she could draw on her children's grandmothers to help care for children:

My mum and my mother-in-law are both retired I'm lucky they will care for my children overnight, off hours and late notice when I need them to. Something which isn't available in a paid care setting. My company expects crew to use extended family to cover and are unwilling to work with crew to make any adjustments for care responsibilities. The response I have received in the past is "flying is a lifestyle and if the lifestyle doesn't suit you anymore then maybe it's time for a career change". They will not accept FWA's or offer options like job share or other flexibility into the job, other than moving to lower part time which has huge financial implications. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Another explained the high costs incurred by the family because of inflexibility of the company, which denied flexibility to care for young children, resulting in high care costs, and complicated care arrangements contributing to anxiety among the children:

I applied for FWA as I have young children and no one to care for them on Saturday. I also requested no reserve rosters due to the psychological impact on the kids not knowing if I would be picking them up or they would go to alternative care. FWA was denied. This means I now get reserves rosters of which we can make no plans, my kids are anxious not knowing if I can pick them up, bring them to sports, etc. I also work nearly every Saturday, costing us \$150 for a babysitter. This is on top of the full-time childcare I pay because I can't get guaranteed days off so need to pay for full time care. We also pay for before and after school care for my eldest and cancel if time permits and we won't be penalised. Often on reserve we are paying for days they don't attend just to hold a place. This also impacts on my partner who has to do the last minute run around if I get called out. It has been hard getting leave over school holidays. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Where flexible arrangements could not be negotiated, reducing their hours to part-time was a common strategy for flight attendants with caring responsibilities. However, they did not present this as a choice, but the only option available to them, for example:

The only way I can manage my responsibilities as a parent and with elderly parents is to work part time. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

I cannot work full time due to shift patterns. My husband also works shifts so the only option for me is to work part time. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

However, part time hours meant lower pay which led to financial stress, and did not address problems relating to unpredictable rosters:

It's very hard. I had to go part time, as I couldn't do both [work and care when I was] full time. Now have no savings and I'm stressed out. it's been very, very hard and I have had great support from my managers. But the pay is small and hard to navigate when you can't pick up extra work. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 15+ years'

experience, international flights)

I have to go part time as I was struggling to cope with the rosters and my caring responsibilities for my elderly Mum who has various health issues. I take her to doctors and hospital appointment, cook and clean for her. Whilst I struggle with my pay now, it's worth it as I have a better work/life balance and I'm much happier for it. I am a better version of myself both at home and at work as I have more time to look after mental and physical health. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Importantly, participants reported that part-time hours could be just as unpredictable as full-time, which meant managing care was still difficult and made planning a return to full time hours feel impossible.

Apparently, part time is the flexible arrangement, but it most certainly is not. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

It is difficult to care for a young family when there is not much flexibility with rostering and not a lot of say for someone with my seniority. Currently it is manageable as I am part time, but would like to return to full time work in the future but struggle to see how that will be possible when needing to be available for my child for things such as school drop off and pick up, as well as simple things such as having dinner prepared and lunches organised. (Female customer service manager, part time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Choosing to be part time and getting thrown overnights on rosters is very frustrating as it's extremely hard to swap and being part time low I cannot do flexible work arrangements. Every month is different and I'm not sure what I'm going to get on my roster. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some reported that due to inflexible rosters, they relied heavily on annual leave or sick leave in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities:

It's not always an ideal job to be doing when raising a family especially with roster bids not working or getting trips that mean you're away from home a long time...But it does mean that I have to utilise annual leave or sick leave just to make it work sometimes. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

If I need to be home to look after my mother I can rarely manage it through roster adjustment. Usually it requires me to use my annual leave. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

It is so very hard to commit to family responsibilities (eg grandchild), when our rosters are so inflexible at times. It is so hard to swap or change duties at times it's just easier to go sick in the end. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Finally, others reported managing their shifts and trips through duty bids to try and ensure they could be available to loved ones when needed. However, they did not report that this strategy was successful very often. Many complained of effectively having to decide to bid for specific days off, or

to bid for specific routes, but never being able to have a good combination of both, making it difficult to achieve the consistency needed to fulfil care responsibilities. Although a number of flight attendants said swapping shifts should enable them to meet their care responsibilities some of the time, mostly they reported that it was too difficult and was not a feasible strategy.

Put in availability for specific days then roster gives duties on days I can't work. Have to rely on constant duty swaps (if they work within rule limitations) or sick leave. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

Rosters are built to the max hours and trying to swap trips to make for a better work life balance is difficult. I don't believe the company makes it easier, too, with minimum rest after flights that are extremely tiring. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

I'm a new mum and it's mostly the standby days that are the hardest and if something comes up it's really hard to swap my trips so that I do not call sick. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

Ultimately, trying to find ways to manage work and care without success left flight attendants feeling disrespected by their employers; they felt they lacked recognition of the challenges they faced.

I do not want to emphasise as it will bring me into tears, losing a mum 2 years ago and I never got any sort of assistance [from my employer]...[They] need to start taking care of their crew more. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

The company do not care. We use sick leave as we have no bid system. I have a teenager plus an elderly mother and aggressive ex-husband. Company do nothing to help. It's a joke. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years of experience, international flights)

Although parents considered company support to be minimal, those caring for older adults felt they received even less support:

The company does not support people caring for older parents. Only parents with children. (Male cabin crew member, casual, 15+ years' experience, flights both domestic and international flights)

The impacts of these difficulties can be profound. Some flight attendants observed the challenges others faced, and expressed that they were unsure about whether or not they should try to start a family, given that managing care responsibilities would be very difficult in their occupation. Many were deterred from taking on care responsibilities:

Starting a family is in the near future for me, and I don't know how I will be able to do both with this kind of work. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 2+ years' experience, regional flights)

I am at the stage where I am thinking about how I am going to be able to effectively manage care responsibilities in the near future considering that I do want children. It is a concerning topic if things don't really change from here. (Male cabin crew member,

full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I have put off having children and may choose not to have them now, partly because of my job. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The nature of the occupation made even caring for pets difficult:

I have not even bought a dog due to unpredictability of this job and rostering practices. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

I can't even imagine having childcare responsibilities; I could barely keep my fish alive with this job. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 7+ years' experience, domestic flights)

10. Pay and financial stress

The survey asked a series of questions about pay setting arrangements, perceptions of pay such as fairness and recognition of the nature of the work, allowances, pay progression and financial stress.

10.1 Pay setting arrangement

In terms of pay setting, most flight attendants report being paid under an enterprise agreement (2376, or 85%). In addition, there were 175 flight attendants (6%) who said they were paid under the Modern Award, the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award 2020. However, a little more than this number (202, 7%) were unsure of their pay setting arrangement.

Among the 175 who said they were covered by the Award, 76% were women, 22% were men and 2% reported another gender identity or chose not to disclose. Figure 23 and Figure 24 show higher proportions of women among those who said they were working under the Award (76%) compared to an agreement (64%).

Figure 23 Gender of those with pay set by an enterprise agreement (n=2376)

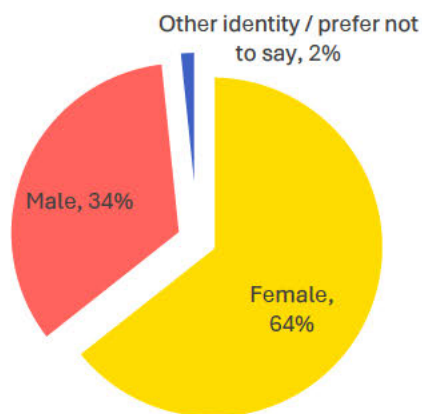
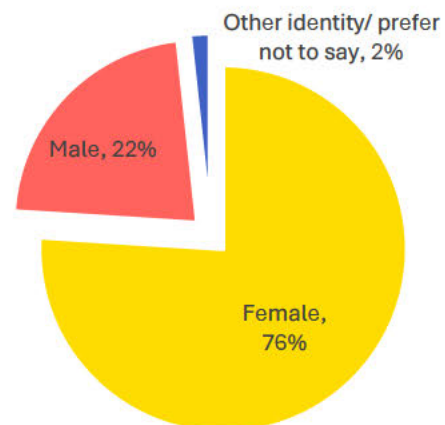


Figure 24 Gender of those with pay set by the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award (n=175)



10.2 Perceptions of pay

Survey participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about pay, and its fairness in the context of what the work requires (Figure 25). Among all flight attendants who answered, a quarter reported agreeing that they were paid fairly for their work (26%), and around the same proportion felt well paid for time away from home (25%). In the comments, a handful made positive comments about their pay, for example:

I love the people I work for and I get paid well for what I do. (Female cabin crew)

manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Good pay and conditions with lots of time off. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

However, many more expressed dissatisfaction with rates of pay, given the nature and conditions of the work, for example.

It is in our job description to protect the flight deck at all costs. We are expected to put our lives on the line for low base salary. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

We spend our working lives 40 000 feet above the earth where there is no margin for error. Humans are so blasé about flying they have forgotten what we are actually doing. Aluminium tube going 1000 kms per hour. My pay rate doesn't reflect the risks involved in my job. And I do it through the night on little or no sleep. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years experience, international flights)

Some were dissatisfied that they had reached a pay ceiling, with no prospects for further increase, or that their pay, in real terms, was now less than at previous points in their career:

As an onboard manager I have reached my income potential in my flying career. We have KPIs but no bonus attached to it. If I want to earn more I have to change jobs. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

My pay, in real terms, is much less over my flying career. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some disparities among participants were evident according to how their pay was set (Figure 25). Among those paid under the Award, 19% agreed they were paid fairly, lower than those paid under an enterprise agreement (26%), however the proportions disagreeing with the statement were closer (62% and 59% respectively). Figure 25 also shows the majority of survey participants (72%) disagreed that their pay rates recognise the safety risks and stress involved in the work. Only 13% agreed, and this figure was the same for those whose pay was set by either an agreement (13%) or the Award (12%). Relatively low proportions of those working under the Award agreed they were well paid for time away from home (13%), compared with 26% of those working under an agreement.

Perceptions of pay progression are shown in Figure 26. Among all survey participants, 27% felt confident in prospects for career progression, agreeing that they have a pathway to progress and increase their career, while 47% disagreed. One in three (34%) said that in the last 12 months, they have progressed up a level or pay point, however this was much lower among those working under the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award (17%).

Figure 25 Agreement with statements about pay, by pay setting method

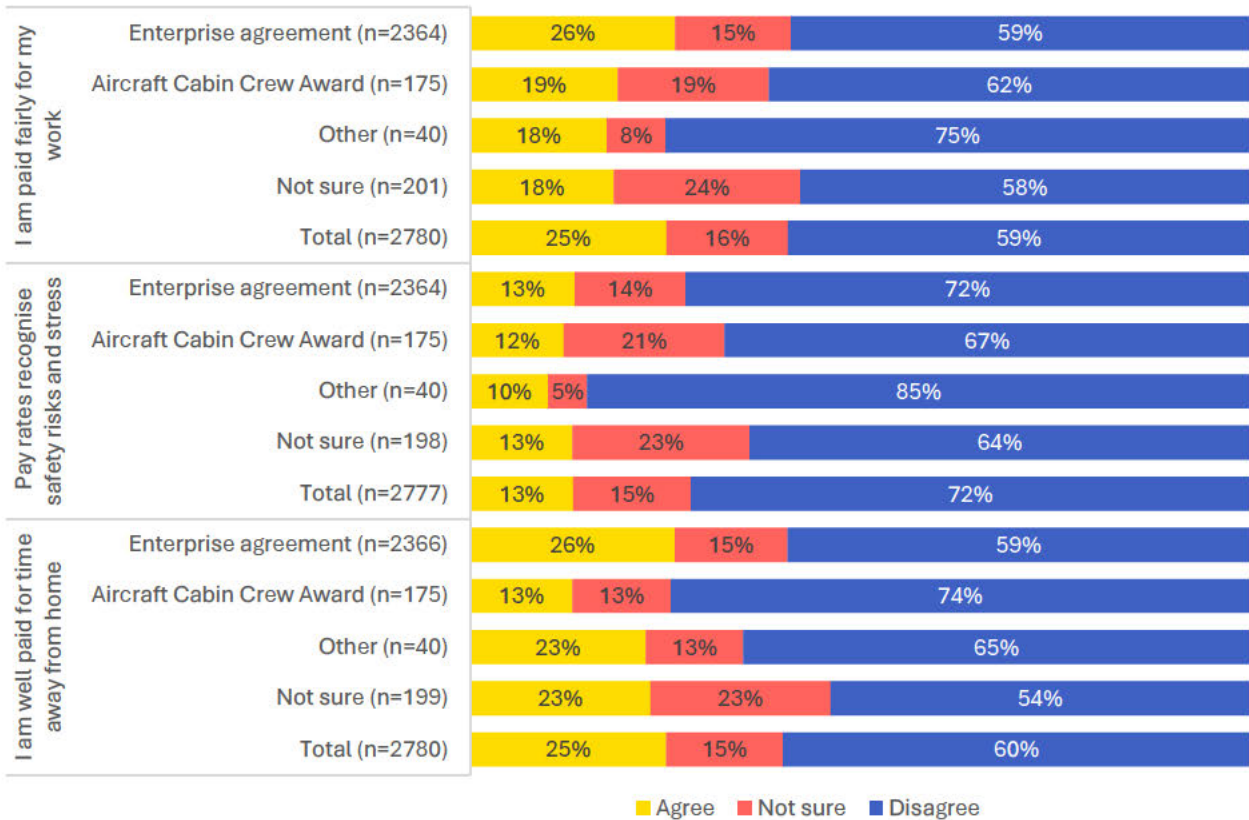
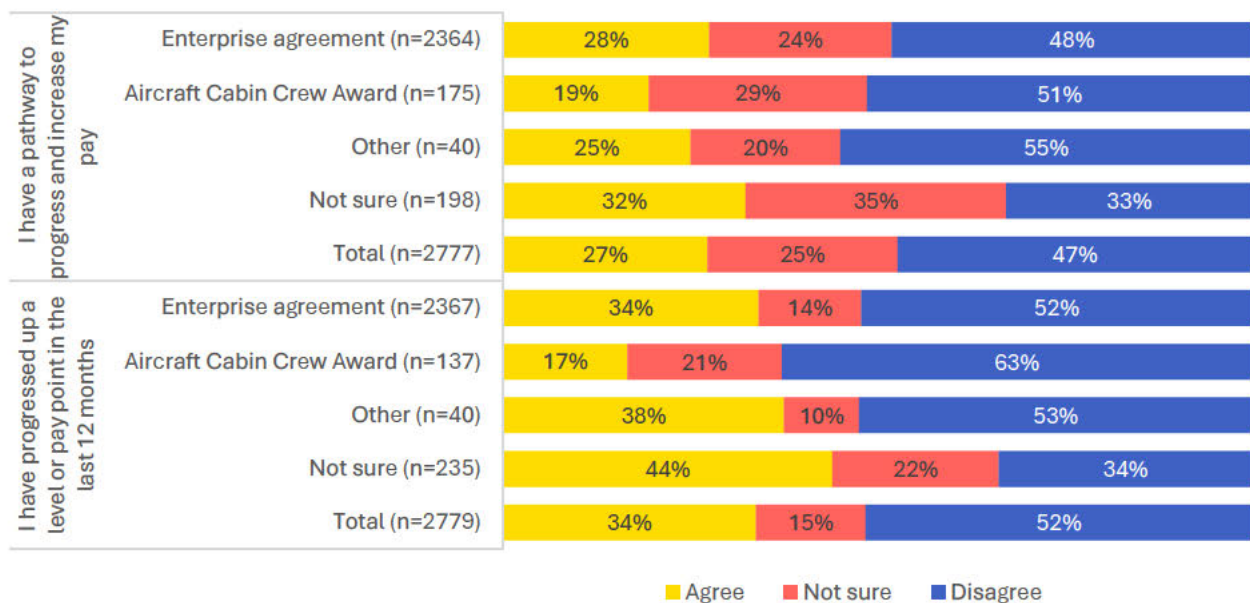


Figure 26 Career progression and pathways, by pay setting method



10.2.1 Recognition of skills and responsibilities

Flight attendants evaluated their pay in the context of the detailed skills and responsibilities required in their job, and the growing demands (see Section 6). When invited to comment on their pay, they underlined how pay rates do not reflect the skills and responsibilities currently required in the job. As this survey participant pointed out, for example, pay continues to reflect outdated stereotypes of the work:

We are constantly putting ourselves at risk for the sake of our passengers and work in a high risk setting, with some of the most fatiguing environmental factors of any occupation due to altitude. Yet none of this is reflected in our pay. If this was a male dominated occupation (like pilots) then our pay would be much higher. We get paid like we are just young girls in a dress serving tea and coffee and anyone with sense would know that just isn't the reality of this job. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The airline thinks that cabin crew are the same as cafe workers and pay us accordingly despite the highly skilled and unique work environment we operate in. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

We wear many caps on any given day and our conditions and pay do not reflect the hours we work, the differing roles we take on and the expectations set by our employer. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Many noted their pay did not account for physical and psychosocial risks and responsibilities:

The risk of the job should mean we are paid more. Not just physical risk but psychosocial risks with increase in passenger aggression. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

[its] a physically demanding job that requires you to fight in an event of an emergency at any time, boarding or at 40,000ft during service. We deserve to be compensated for what we go through mentally, physically and emotionally. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Flight attendants are not paid enough for the responsibility, demands of the job or enough to cover the basics. My hourly rate is \$2.44 above minimum wage. (Female solo flight attendant, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

This international flight attendant found her pay to be 'embarrassing' given the expectations, conditions of work and toll the work took on her health:

For the expectations our pay is terrible. It's really low. The amount of time I am away from home and family/ children - I am not getting paid for. My safety seems of no concern especially when going into countries like Johannesburg. We have to have an armed guard escort us and we cannot leave a certain area and this flight is exhausting in the A380. Not only am I exhausted from these flights I get blood noses and difficult breathing due to altitude of Johannesburg. Then paid an extremely low amount for jeopardising my health. It's embarrassing to even mention the pay here as it is so bad. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

Crew also described pay as inadequate in the context of their schedules, which included public holidays and weekends which did not attract penalty rates. They also felt underpaid for irregular rosters, which could leave them unable to access and afford childcare, for example:

Not paid enough for part time where due to not having set days of work (like the pilots with young families do), you would have to book your child into childcare 5 days a week (or have a support network on the weekends) or a nanny. That would cost A LOT of money. So in that regards it's not enough. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Comments on pay also underlined the work flight attendants perform outside of their working hours, which left many necessary tasks unrecognised in pay:

We work so many extra hours per year unpaid as the company sign on times and sign off times are too short to allow for problems that occur pre and post flight. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Pay does not accurately reflect duties performed outside of rostered hours. Significant paperwork is required of managers and supervisors, without any financial incentive or payment for hours rendered. Example, a situation on my last duty required 2-3 hrs unremunerated reporting during slip/layover time. (Male cabin crew manager, part time, 5+ years' experience, international flights)

As a crew manager I am not remunerated enough for the duties I'm assigned and expected to carry out. Being a frontline manager, expectations of the airline are high and unachievable with limited time and resources. Remuneration needs to be increased to factor in work, study, reading of company communications prior to scheduled shift. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

10.2.2 Pay parity

Flight attendants are employed by various airlines and labour hire companies, paid different rates for the same work. Even among flight attendants who were generally satisfied with their circumstance, they expressed aspirations to achieve parity with others doing the same work.

I love flying and I love my overnights and for me work is about happiness so I'll scrape by with the money for the lifestyle, but I do believe we all should be on the same Enterprise Agreement and earning the same money as we all do the same job. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Regional crew, in particular, aspired to pay parity with other flight attendants. One regional flight attendant for example explained this, describing being 'paid peanuts' despite being in charge of the cabin, and lacking access to breaks and meals. They felt this was not fair given rates for those flying other routes:

Regional cabin crew do a lot of flying 5 days a week with sometimes flying as far as 4 hours, but because we are regional cabin crew we don't get nearly as much as others which should change. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience,

regional flights)

Flight attendants in the survey also highlighted their low rates of pay by making many comparisons between the pay they received and the pay earned in lesser skilled occupations in hospitality, reception and retail:

We do not get paid enough for what we are trained to do. As flight attendants we barely get paid more than a waiter or waitress when we are expected to perform first aid, be prepared for emergency situations and evacuations and put our lives at risk to save other people. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

We are aviation first responders and it is disheartening that our pay is close to that of an 18 year old Woolworths worker who receives minimal to no training and does not have the same level of responsibility for human life (eg. Expectation to rescue a full plane load of passengers in an emergency ~300 people). (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

When you compare the job, expectations, skills and experiences of a receptionist with a cabin crew member, it does not make sense how the receptionist has a higher remuneration package. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some also compared themselves with the rates their teenage children were earning, or what they themselves earned in another job, for example:

Rate of pay not changed much for the role in 25 years. My children are earning similar wages as 18 year olds for jobs with much less responsibilities and training requirements. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

People doing jobs with less safety risks and responsibility who have a predictable roster and go home to their families every night are paid significantly more than I am. I need to work a second job that one day's work is almost 1 quarter of my fortnightly pay. 2 days a fortnight it makes HALF of my fortnightly pay. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 15+ years' experience, regional flights)

They also used airline staff at head office, and executives, as points of reference, and described their pay as very unfair:

The company held us for years with no increase, however could pay the top executives extremely lucrative bonuses. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

I feel like we have been stuck in a time warp for years. We accepted a wage freeze years ago & it seems to have gone on forever. The corporate staff are well paid. It's really corporate greed... \$40 per hour doesn't cut it! (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

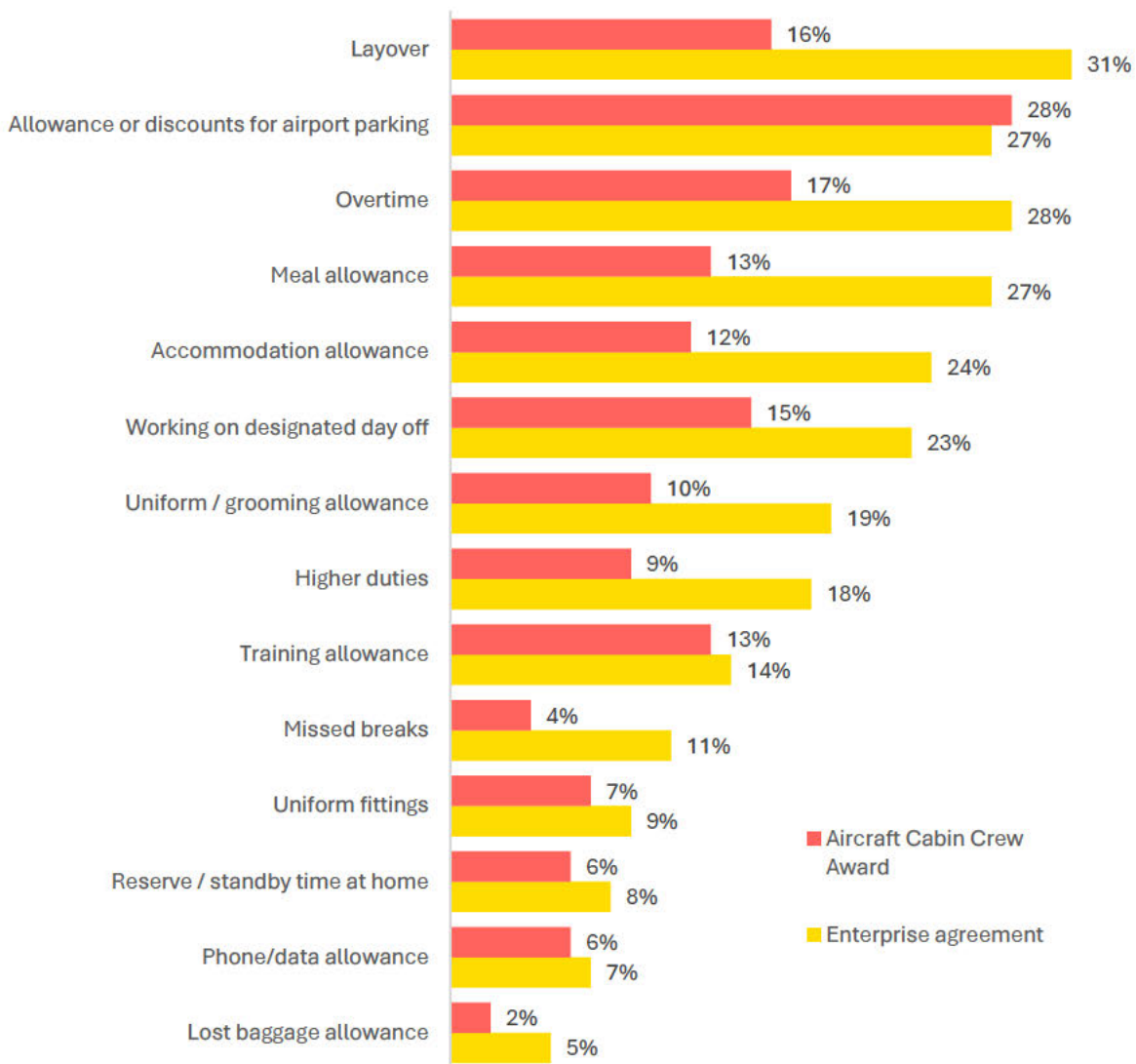
One drew an interesting parallel with fly in fly out workers:

I read lots of media articles about poor FIFO workers and their families but our stressful, absent lives are portrayed as spoilt and glamorous. I believe this is because FIFO mine work is dominated by straight males while our work is seen as female and gay male and consequently undervalued. This undervaluation causes significant stress and health issues. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

10.3 Allowances

When asked about additional payments and allowances received for particular aspects of flight attendant work such as layover and overtime, or for the costs of work, such as airport parking, most said they were not paid enough. Responses are shown in Figure 27. On each measure, only a minority felt the pay they received was adequate. Very few felt pay was sufficient for missed breaks (10%), uniform fittings (9%), standby/home reserve (8%), phone/data allowance (7%), and lost baggage (5%).

Figure 27 Proportion who agreed they were paid enough, by pay setting method



Breakdowns by pay setting method are in Appendix Table A. 15. There were gaps in the way those paid under agreements and the Award rated their pay. Among those paid under agreements, 31% felt they were paid enough for layover compared with only 16% of those under the Award. There were similar gaps by pay setting method for all other items, other than airport parking and phone/data allowance, for which the proportions who felt they were paid enough were closer. Substantial gaps were evident for meal allowance with 27% of those on agreements agreeing it was enough compared with 13% of those under the Award. Similarly, 24% of those under agreements felt accommodation allowance was sufficient compared with 12% with pay set under the Award.

Appendix Table A. 16 shows data for flight attendants focused on regional, domestic and international routes. Relatively high proportions of those flying mainly regional routes reported pay was not enough for layover, meals, accommodation, missed breaks and overtime (Table A. 16). Flight attendants employed casually, nearly all of whom perform reserve, were more likely than others to say they were not paid enough for home reserve (Table A. 17). Indeed, 92% of casuals felt they were not paid enough for home reserve compared with 74% of part timers and 76% of those working full time. Casuals were also more likely than others to feel pay was not sufficient for layover (84% of casuals compared with 57% of full time and 56% of part time crew (Table A. 18).

In their comments, flight attendants underlined how they rely on allowances to make up for low base pay. Allowances are intended to cover the cost of essentials while travelling, for example, the cost of a decent meal. But, as the comments below, show, allowances are often used instead to boost flight attendants' pay. Allowances were considered essential for decent pay, but their value varies depended on whether or not flight attendants are assigned to the more lucrative trips. This causes pay to fluctuate substantially.

The base salary isn't enough so I rely on allowances. Sometimes good and sometimes not so good as I don't always get the high allowance trips which are very popular.
(Male cabin crew member, full time, 2 + years' experience, international flights)

Allowances should primarily cover our food expenses while traveling. With the rising cost of living, many of us find ourselves using these allowances to pay for rent, mortgages, and school fees, which is not their intended purpose. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

We get paid a base salary and then make allowances off meal periods and overnights.
(Male cabin manager, full time, 2+ years' experience, regional flights)

However, they often expressed dissatisfaction with these payments. Trying to maximise allowances where possible, could take a physical toll:

Requesting long range flights that have high allowances is more difficult on the body and rest and my family life, but is needed because of the income. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

The preference for a better base salary was expressed by this international flight attendant:

I would prefer having a standard allowance that's lower but a base salary that is much higher. For example if I don't fly, I'm really struggling some weeks to make ends meet.

But if I manage to get a good allowance trips, I can set some money aside, which is what most crew do. But allowances are meant for meals. There are many crew members who can't afford to take leave because it means they won't get allowances and overtime. (Female cabin crew manager, part time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

Dissatisfaction with payment for home reserve was common, reflecting issues raised in Section 9.5:

I have to sit at home on standby for 8 hours a time. My airlines rosters us 1 week of standby per 56 day roster however I am only credited for 2 hours a day that I have to sit at home on call in case my airline calls me out. Why I am not credited 8 hours I have no idea but find it extremely unfair. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

We should be paid for each hour we're on home reserve. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Some mentioned home reserve among other aspects of their pay which were inadequate, such as payments for missed breaks or for delays. Regional flight attendants in particular pointed to inadequate additional payments, including for missed breaks and overtime:

We are not scheduled any breaks in our shifts, so paying \$11 is not sufficient for a missed break every day. We also don't get any crew meals. We don't get paid for home reserve either and are often on home reserve for 12 hours. (Female cabin crew in first year of service, full time, regional flights)

Would be great if we had the missed break allowance and rates for overtime in our EBA. The modern award for regional flight attendant needs to change so that we can get this in new EBAs. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 3+ years' experience, regional flights)

Payment for airport delays, and expectations to work extended hours caused by delays, was also a source of frustration:

Major delay at airports is a \$15 payment to crew. Delayed 4 hours and crew get enough to buy a coffee then do a 14 hr shift. Totally inadequate (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Overtime payments were seen as unfair and out of step with community norms:

On my contract we get overtime after 12 hours. A normal work day is approx 7.6 hours. A fairer starting time for overtime would be at the 8 hour mark. We recently received a pay rise that is life changing, but still not on par with employees hired prior to 2007. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

The airline only pays overtime once 156 hrs have been exceeded in a month. Full time Cabin Crew can work over 50hrs in a calendar week and receive no extra remuneration. Penalty rates for cabin crew for public holiday and weekends also do not exist. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Overtime is under paid. Should be at least double time once you reach 8 hours. As it stands it is single time after 12 hours. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, international flights)

10.3.1 Meal allowances

Flight attendants repeatedly referred to inadequate meal allowances in their comments. Despite the physical nature of the work of cabin crew, allowances for meals were inferior to those received by pilots, who were able to afford better quality meals on layover. This was seen as unfair:

Pilots and Cabin Crew are paid different amounts for our allowances overseas. I 100% understand that we do different jobs/professions and there should be a salary difference, but I don't understand why pilots get a higher meal allowance on layovers than cabin crew. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 4+ years' experience, international flights)

It is staggering to me that pilots get paid a higher meal allowance to buy better quality healthy food and get an extra bottle of water while we crew have to buy take away and less quality food as that is all we can afford to pay... I cannot understand how any court in Australia can think this is fair. Fair allowance should be equal allowances so that we all can buy healthy food. (Female cabin crew, part time, 20+ years experience, international flights)

My last allowance was \$25 for an overnight. I don't understand that pilots, who make more money than us, are entitled to a higher allowance than us. We are both human beings with the same basic needs. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Flight attendants also described how meal allowances could differ for different destinations, which could cause that route to become unpopular, as crew tried to maximise their allowances to supplement low base pay:

Meal allowances in SOME destinations are fair. In others they are less than \$100 for 24h which is unreasonable, particularly when in those destinations, it is unsafe to leave the hotel, as instructed by airline security. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Although the meal allowance is paid according to local currency, in certain destinations this makes for undesirable flying and those patterns become unpopular. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ experience, international flights)

I fly to USA where it is mandatory that I tip 30% on my bill but my allowance does not include these tips. The company transport driver, the coffee shop, the uber driver the ice cream server - they all ask for tips and the company doesn't give us this so we go backwards in wages going to America. Also the US dollar is so bad that this also affects what I can afford to order for dinner. Many crew eat un-nutritious food like 2 minute noodles or McDonald's just to afford to eat. When in fact with all the jet lag and shift work and time changes we should be nourishing our bodies with healthy vegetables and protein. (Female cabin crew member, part time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

10.3.2 Accessing allowances

In addition to finding allowances inadequate, flight attendants commented on the difficulty of accessing them. First, not all flight attendants could access allowances, which shifts costs, from airlines onto crew, for essential work items and services:

I don't get paid an overnight allowance due to being casual but the union is working on the same job same pay agreement. (Female cabin crew member, casual, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

We don't receive phone allowance but should, considering we are overseas regularly and it is essential to have phone access for work access, calling operations, connecting with managers if necessary, but also for the emotional/mental necessity of having access to home when away. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Another described how rather than making a uniform payment, her airline required crew to fix the uniforms provided, at their own expense:

Uniforms provided are faulty and it is at crews own expense to repair or repurchase faulty uniforms. (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

Crew who could access allowances described relying on them to cover costs while working, such as while on layover, but were unable to receive them for weeks as they were paid in arrears, which contributed to financial stress:

I am paid for my allowance in arrears... I do not receive that money for two weeks, I'm forever playing catch up on my credit card to pay off what I've spent. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

At present, we may not receive an allowance until 4-6 weeks AFTER a trip. Some crew do not have a cash flow to support this and it causes undue stress to be away from home and not knowing if you can pay for food. Meal allowances need to be paid in our slip port or paid into our bank accounts when we commence our trip. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Processes for claiming allowances were also considered to deter crew from accessing these entitlements:

Crew complete a manual timesheet and are given minimal time to make amendments and have to submit proof of amendments in the form of screenshots to roster throughout the month. A lot of new crew are not trained in how to correctly complete the timesheet meaning they are missing allowances or pay and the company will not automatically amend these if they notice things missing. (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 10+ years' experience, regional flights)

Most of our allowances we have to claim ourselves manually and you have to know what you can apply for and when you can apply for it, and yet most times it's not added to your payslip or they just deny you the allowance. This has happened to most crew I

work with and also myself. And most crew don't even bother claiming for an allowances. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, regional flights)

Some felt their entitlements should be automatically applied:

We don't get meal/uninterrupted breaks so these should be considered automatically as opposed to having to fill out forms to apply for compensation. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

We used to receive our allowances for meals on layovers at the hotel on check in which was awesome as we could fund our layovers. Now we can be waiting over a month after our trips end before we get our allowances, which creates unnecessary financial stress. (Male cabin crew member, part time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

Pay slips could also be clearer so that crew could easily understand their allowances:

The pay slips are so ridiculously complicated making it nearly impossible to read. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

It would be good to have a training session explaining all the different allowances and how to read our payslips. (Female cabin crew, full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

10.4 Financial stress

The proportion of survey participants who agreed with a series of statements about financial stress are shown in Figure 28 and Figure 29, with breakdowns by pay setting method and employment type.¹⁰ The data shows that while financial stress was evident among all, it was slightly higher among those with pay set under the Award (Figure 28), and correspondingly, those working casually (Figure 29). Almost two thirds of those with an enterprise agreement (64%) reported the company expects them to purchase certain things for work, but this was higher among those dependent on the Award (81%). Figure 30 shows this ranged by company, from 56% in QAL to 90% or more for those working for Rex or Team Jetstar (full data is in Appendix Table A. 24).

Many also said they need more than their flight attendant wage to meet living costs: 69% of those paid under an agreement and 79% of those under the Award. Most of both groups also said they take on extra shifts to make decent wages (58% of those under an agreement and 71% of those under the Award). This was common even among full time flight attendants (see Appendix Table A. 20, Table A. 21). Over half of those dependent on the Award need help from family and friends to meet living costs (55%), as do 40% of those paid under an agreement (Figure 28).

¹⁰ Full data is in Appendix Table A. 11 (pay setting), Appendix Table A. 12 (employment type), with additional breakdowns by company in Appendix Table A. 24.

Figure 28 Proportion who agreed with statements on financial pressure, by pay setting

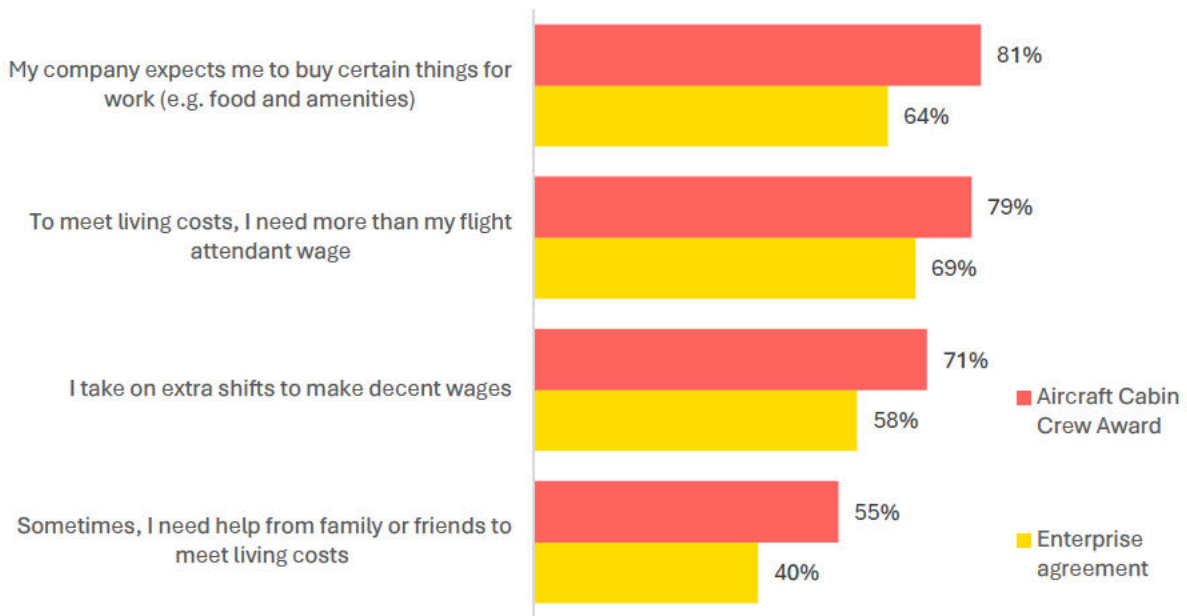


Figure 29 Proportion who agreed with statements on financial pressure, by employment type

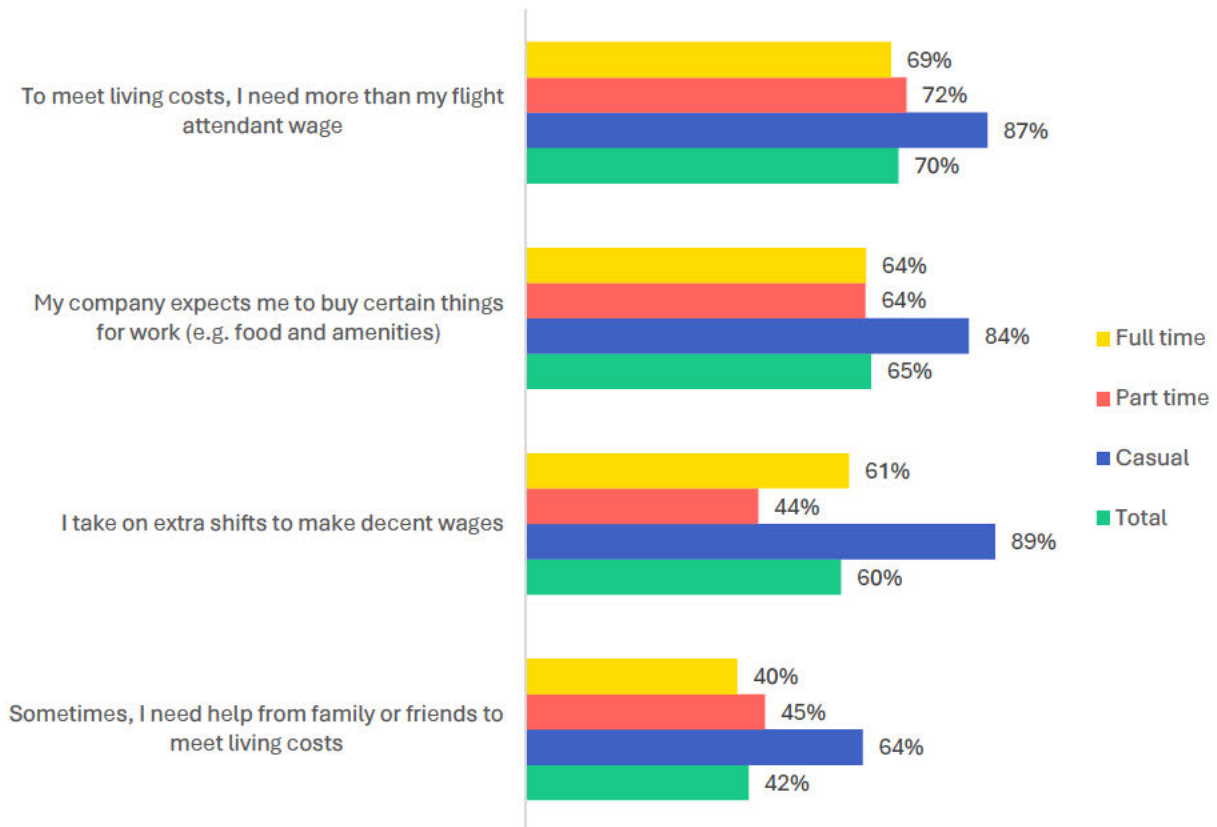
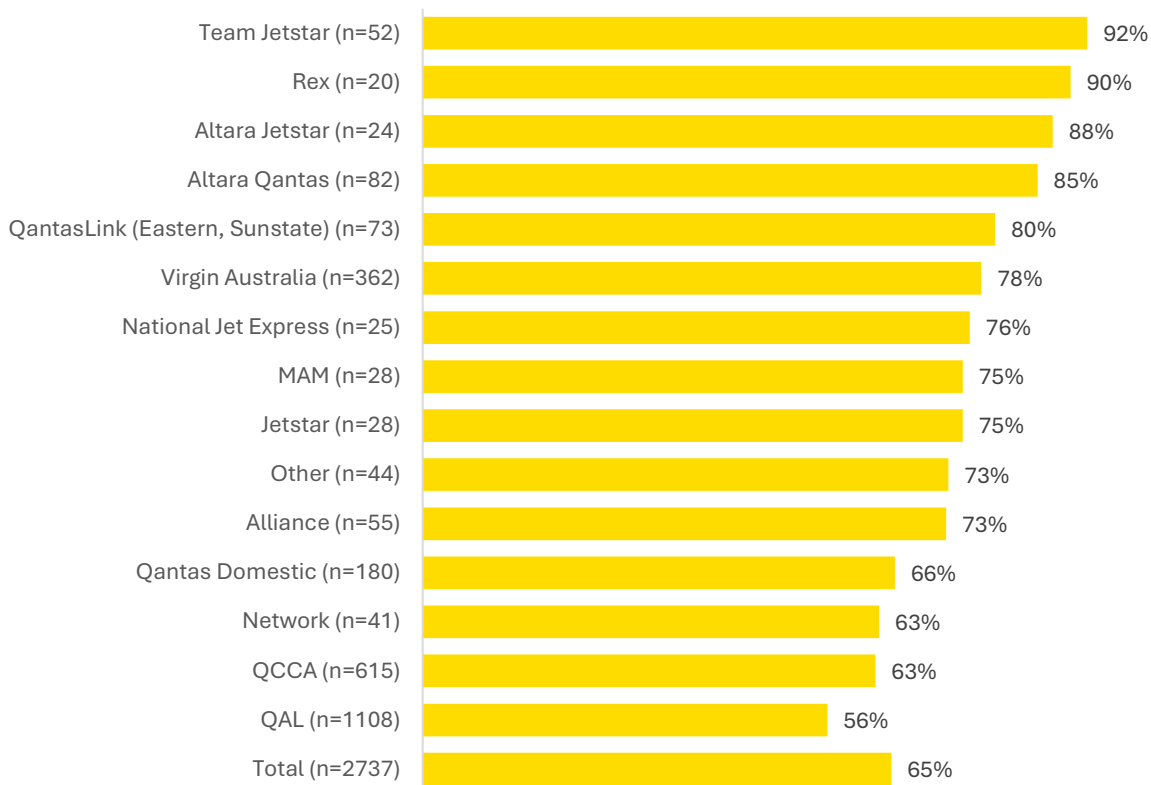


Figure 30 Proportion who agreed with the statement “My company expects me to buy certain things for work (e.g. food and amenities)”, by company



In their comments, crew illustrated the financial stress affecting them:

As a whole, the base and hourly rates for flying, the overall remuneration and compensation is not enough. I can confidently say that most cabin crew members are not able to have a decent lifestyle or see themselves being able to achieve life goals such as purchasing property or raising a family on the current industry average remuneration rates for cabin crew. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, domestic flights)

We are paid the equivalent of a fast food worker. We are expected to live somewhere we can get to the airport in an hour and a half, but not paid enough to cover rent close to the airport. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, regional flights)

Lots of changes to the business and still the wages do not meet inflation...our company has the lowest pay, no same job same pay, it's like we are going backwards whilst management go forward. We lose lots of great people due to wages not being enough to survive with rent, mortgages so they get 2 or 3 jobs to cover that's not work life balance. (Female, full time, 20+ years' experience, regional flights)

I spend hours filling out paper work, going through menus all of which is in my personal time. I barely can afford my rent in Sydney as a single person, let alone save any money. I feel I'll never be able to afford my own house or comfortably even be able to have children without a partner earning around \$200k - it's so frustrating (Female)

cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

Financial stress was exacerbated by lack of predictable hours and pay:

We don't get paid enough as a base salary for cost of living, given the roster unpredictability it's hard to know how much we will get paid on top of that and it causes a lot of anxiety, we can't afford to buy a home without a substantial savings deposit but we can't save as we earn just enough to cover cost of rent food and bills. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

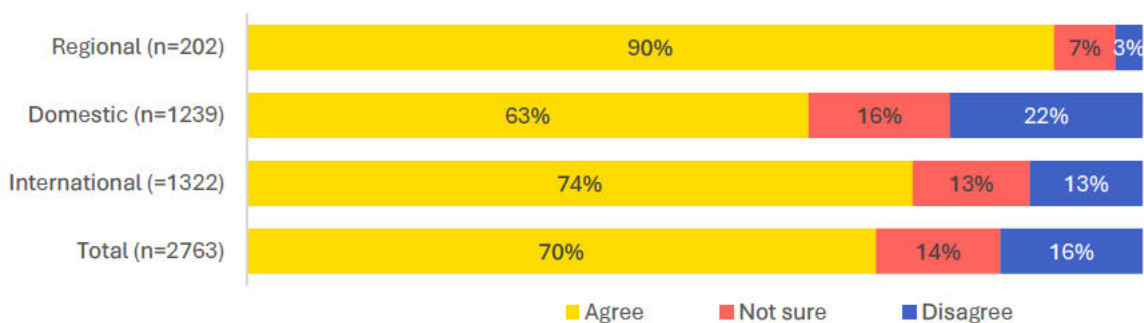
Financial strain also caused people to work through illness and fatigue:

Crew are in a safety critical role and yet are being paid minimum wage. People are working through fatigue and illness because they can't afford to live unless they do long trips. Crew are under financial stress and are working hard to make enough to buy groceries. People don't always want to be away from home but feel pressured in order to earn money. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, domestic flights)

10.5 The need for a second job

To meet living costs, 70% of survey respondents reported needing more than their flight attendant wage (Figure 31). This was higher for those flying mainly regional routes, 90% of whom said they need more than their flight attendant wage to meet living costs. It also varied by company (see Table A. 22).

Figure 31 Proportion who agree with the statement “To meet living costs, I need more than my flight attendant wage”, by main routes flown



Many flight attendants commented that they need to work another job, because their flight attendant pay was inadequate and unpredictable, however this could fall afoul of company policy:

Very hard to earn enough in the current financial situation with cost of living on the rise. Company don't allow crew to have second jobs unless it is approved by the company. Most crew I know have second jobs but many have not disclosed to management as they have fear of management not permitting their second job leading to them unable to afford cost of living. (Male, full time, 5+ years' experience, regional flights)

Most flight attendants have second jobs because we aren't paid enough. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 1+ years' experience, international flights)

I still have to have a second job. (Male cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, international flights)

Cost of living is high I have to have 3 jobs including flight attendant just to get by, my work life balance is non-existent. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 7+ years' experience, international flights)

In the absence of adequate pay and support from the company, flight attendants had to juggle their other jobs to ensure they had sufficient income, although this was done out of necessity rather than preference:

I have a business on the side... often I have put in roster requests and not gotten them. So I have no choice but to call sick when I'm not sick, and to use up my sick days to work my second job when I will make double what I would make on one given day being a flight attendant. A part-time option would suit me best, but my company only offers part-time based on seniority. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 2+ years' experience, regional flights)

Cabin crew salary isn't liveable. All of my friends including myself have second jobs to make ends meet. Being crew is exhausting enough, we shouldn't be pressured for a promotion or made to work second jobs to make ends meet. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, regional flights)

Working another job was seen as detrimental to health and wellbeing:

We need a higher overall base pay and increases in allowances. A lot of crew have second jobs because of the low wages and this is putting their health and mental wellbeing at risk. (Female cabin crew supervisor, part-time, 15+ years' experience, domestic flights)

The majority of crew now have 2nd jobs to keep up with the cost of living and as such work 6-7 days per week and very long hours. This ultimately can jeopardise their level of fatigue and the safety of the aircraft but many feel that they have no choice to pay the bills. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

However, the unpredictable nature of rosters, home reserve and the possibility of unexpected overnights could make it especially difficult to work a second job.

10.6 Pay increases

Given widespread perceptions of low base pay and inadequate allowances, along with experiences of financial stress, many comments welcomed pay increases, including those arising from the 'Same Job Same Pay' legislation.

Same job, same pay legislation has finally brought labour hire/casual rates to parity, though they still work unsustainable hours. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 20+

years experience, domestic flights)

We really appreciate the same job same pay. My pay went up about \$300 per week (\$15K per year). It really helps! (Female cabin crew supervisor, full time, 15+ years' experience, international flights)

I love my job and would only now (since same job same pay) recommend it to younger people. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

Some underlined the immense contribution made by pay rises, which enabled crew to better plan for the future and feel valued, as well as cope with current living costs:

I love my job and after same job same pay has been introduced will really help with affordability of cost of living. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 3+ years' experience, domestic flights)

We recently had a pay rise so in light of that, the pay has significantly improved which has an onflow effect - improves quality of life, feel more valued, and can set better goals, eg home loan etc. (Male cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Others underlined the need for further increases, given poor work-life balance, lack of recent pay increases and inability of some groups to access the increase:

We've recently received a pay rise which has helped immensely but due to poor work life balance, I feel it could still be more. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 2+ years' experience, international flights)

Pay has increased with the same job same pay legislation HOWEVER that is the first increase I've had in 10 years. (Female cabin crew member, full time, 10+ years' experience, international flights)

It is a disgrace that we have so many different work groups where some get paid substantially more than others. Same job same pay helps some groups but more work needs to be done. (Female cabin crew manager, full time, 20+ years' experience, domestic flights)

11. Conclusion

This report has examined Australia's flight attendant workforce. It attests to the important contributions of their work, and its challenging nature. The work of flight attendants underpins the significant economic contributions made by the aviation industry, and enables the operation of other industries, such as tourism and trade.

Survey responses from 2794 flight attendants provide insight into the nature, conditions and value of flight attendant work, and shows differences in experiences of groups of flight attendants, including those operating international long-haul flights, those with caring responsibilities, and those employed and paid under the Modern Award. Flight attendants employed under the Award were a small group of survey participants, reflecting the emphasis on enterprise bargaining in recent years. However, the characteristics of those employed under the Award underline its importance for women, and for those employed casually.

Flight attendants' accounts show their roles are much more physically and mentally challenging than stereotypes of the work suggest. Associations between cabin crew work and hospitality are inherently gendered and fail to account for the complexity of service roles performed in the unique context of an aircraft. Moreover, depictions of flight attendant work as hospitality have failed to account for changes in the aviation industry in recent decades which have increased the skill demands and preparation required of flight attendants, which has worked to overlook and undervalue the expanded role these workers play as safety and security professionals. Flight attendants are proud of their wide-ranging skills, which they acquire and maintain through extensive initial and ongoing training. However, they find their skills are inadequately recognised and rewarded. Training is not formally recognised under the AQF, and is not portable between employers, maintaining the invisibility of skill.

Flight attendants in the survey expressed serious concerns about their working conditions, including their schedules, and the impacts of their work on their physical and mental health, and on their families and social relationships. Nonetheless, flight attendants are highly committed to their jobs. Although intentions differ widely by company (see Appendix Figure A. 2), the vast majority of survey participants plan to continue to work as a flight attendant in 12 months: 85% plan to continue working as a flight attendant in their current company, and a further 4% plan to continue in the role, but for a different company. However, the majority are dissatisfied with their pay and conditions. They call for their rosters to be better managed and more predictable, and for their contributions to be more appropriately valued and paid, to enable them to realise their aspirations to remain in the occupation, and to ensure skilled, experienced colleagues are attracted and retained. Those employed under the Award expressed most dissatisfaction with rates of pay, evident in Appendix Table A. 15 and Table A. 19. They also performed relatively high proportions of unpaid work (Table 8).

Together, flight attendants' perspectives underline how regulatory settings, under either agreements or the Modern Award, neglect to adequately account for their needs. Employers offer rosters which stretch working hours to legal parameters. Flight attendants find themselves carrying the costs of very high levels of insecurity and irregularity in airline rostering. The arrangements they describe appear out

of step with norms of working time in the wider labour market and community. Bidding, seniority and roster swaps are offered by some employers to some groups of workers. Yet these processes lack transparency and outcomes are unpredictable; they provide minimal opportunity for schedule control. Workers repeatedly experience periods of uncertainty and anxiety as they anticipate the release of their next roster. They feel ‘lucky’ when rostered to a destination or day off that they bid for.

Flight attendants have very limited access to the flexible working arrangements that are standard in other occupations and industries. They routinely miss out on important social events and report that their working time arrangements make it particularly difficult to maintain relationships and to care for others, and for themselves. Flight attendants must manage the heavy personal demands of their work, including the nutrition needed in a highly physical job; fatigue associated with travel and long hours; poor health; and financial stress arising from their work conditions. Although challenges are experienced among flight attendants overall, high proportions of those flying international routes report difficulties with their schedules. High proportions of those whose pay is set by the Award find their pay is inadequate. While the majority plan to continue working for their company in the next 12 months, some are questioning whether they can afford to remain in the occupation in the longer term.

Substantial changes are needed to ensure all flight attendants have a more reasonable level of schedule control, and decent pay, which recognises responsibilities and compensates for the harms of the work. Flight attendant pay should cover all work tasks. It should reflect their training and roles as safety professionals; the complexity of their work in managing passenger behaviour; the large numbers of passengers and staff they are responsible for; the significant disruptions to home life inherent in working for an airline, such as delayed flights and reserve periods; and the impact of the work on health, including access to nutrition.

Current settings appear ineffective in providing flight attendants with decent levels of certainty and predictability over either their working hours or their incomes. Flight attendant rostering should provide greater predictability and stability in work and home life, through regular weekly work and non-work days and protected time away from work. Adequate break times while on duty, and between duties are important for managing fatigue.

Changes to improve flight attendants’ financial security, and their working time security are urgently needed. As well as challenging pervasive stereotypes of flight attendant work, reforms should ensure the full range of industrial rights and protections apply meaningfully to flight attendants, and that companies enable flight attendants to easily access their entitlements.

11.1 Improving conditions and pay

To improve skill recognition, study findings underline the need to:

1. Take account of developments in aviation over recent decades which have expanded flight attendants’ scope of work, and increased work complexity, including in relation to safety and security. Accordingly, there is a need to avoid depicting flight attendant work as hospitality.
2. Formally recognise flight attendant training, and the skills acquired and maintained by flight

attendants.

To improve working time security, findings suggest the following improvements:

3. That rostering practices across the industry better reflect the Fair Work Act's object of helping employees balance work and family (recognising that family may not necessarily consist of a heterosexual nuclear family structure).
4. That rosters on offer be improved, so that shifts are more stable and predictable.
5. That flight attendants be able to access regular weekly work and non-work days, or other arrangements that improve predictability of working time and help accommodate social life and caring responsibilities.
6. That airlines increase call out times for employees on home reserve, and provide advance notice to staff (such as the night before) to enable preparation and travel to the airport.
7. That employees have sufficient control over their schedules such that they do not need to take sick or other leave to manage unsuitable scheduling.
8. That there is more transparency provided to employees regarding the ways companies allocate rosters and make decisions about roster bids and swaps.
9. That flight attendant have adequate break times during duties, and adequate access to horizontal rest.

To improve pay and financial security, study findings indicate a need to:

10. Recognise that gender-based undervaluation occurs in a broad range of work contexts, beyond 'invisible' caring work.
11. Ensure pay covers all work tasks and time, including training, administration and ground activities such as passing through airport formalities such as security and customs.
12. Ensure time on reserve is considered 'work' and paid accordingly.
13. Recognise the full range of risks and adversities involved in flight attendant work, and ensure these are fully compensated.
14. Reduce the use of indirect employment.
15. Ensure flight attendants receive the same remuneration and conditions, regardless of their employer, and whether they are employed via labour hire.
16. Flight attendants' meal allowances should match those of pilots and enable the purchase of nutritious food in all locations.
17. Base rates of pay, including rates in the Modern Award, should be sufficient, so that employees can use allowances for intended purposes (such as meals) and not as supplements for low pay.
18. Remove barriers to accessing allowances or other entitlements, such as cumbersome application or other administrative processes.
19. Ensure timely payment of allowances upfront, so that employees are not out of pocket on layover.
20. Promote understanding among employees of how pay is set, and how allowances are calculated.
21. Ensure pay slips provide information in a clear and transparent way, so that they are

thoroughly understood by employees.

To improve gender equality, we recommend:

22. Ensuring minimum wages and conditions in the Aircraft Cabin Crew Award deliver equal remuneration and eliminate gender-based undervaluation, including undervaluation associated with stereotypes of femininity which have historically applied to women and to gay men.
23. Ensuring that the flexible work arrangements available match employees' needs and are effective in helping manage flight attendants' diverse range of caring responsibilities.
24. Assessing whether Award classification structures adequately recognise training, qualifications and gradations of skill, and enable progress to supervisory and managerial roles, especially for women.

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Appendix A Supplementary material

Table A. 1 Flight attendants in the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)

Job title	Flight Attendant
Alternative title	Cabin Crew
Code	461731
Skill level	3
Specialisations	Cabin supervisor (aircraft); Crew attendant (Air Force)
Main tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists passengers with boarding and disembarking the aircraft, and provides assistance and support to passengers with specific needs or medical conditions • Conducts pre-flight safety briefings and demonstrates the use of safety equipment while ensuring passengers comply with safety regulations and procedures during the flight • Serves meals, beverages and snacks to passengers during the flight • Performs emergency procedures in response to in-flight emergencies or equipment malfunctions of the aeroplane • Makes announcements during the flight and informs passengers about safety procedures and protocols • Performs safety checks and maintains cleanliness of the aircraft cabin • Responds to passenger enquiries and resolves any issues or complaints

Source: ABS, 2024. Note that OSCA replaces the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

Table A. 2 Hours worked in the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Census

	Travel attendants in the Air and Space Industry		Travel attendants in the Air and Space Industry		Flight attendants	
	2011		2016		2021	
Employed, worked full-time	3292	42%	3479	44%	1432	23%
Employed, worked part-time	3196	41%	3424	43%	2546	42%
Employed, away from work	1318	17%	1049	13%	2145	35%
Total	7806	100%	7953	100%	6119	100%

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2011, 2016, 2021, Tablebuilder. In 2021, more detailed occupational classifications enabled flight attendants to be distinguished from other travel attendants in the air and space industry.

Table A.3 Company and brand flying for

Company	Brand flying for	n	%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	Qantas	1110	39.7
QCCA	Qantas	609	21.8
Virgin Australia	Virgin	363	13.0
Qantas Domestic	Qantas	179	6.4
Altara Qantas	Qantas	82	2.9
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	Qantas	73	2.6
Alliance	Other	54	1.9
Team Jetstar	Jetstar	52	1.9
Network	Qantas	41	1.5
Jetstar	Jetstar	29	1
MAM	Qantas	28	1
Altara Jetstar	Jetstar	24	0.9
Rex	Other	20	0.7
National Jet Express	Other	19	0.7
Jetstar International	Jetstar	13	0.5
VARA	Virgin	8	0.3
Other	Other	47	1.6
Missing/Prefer not to say	Other	43	1.5
Total		2794	100

Figure A.1 Brand flying for, by years of experience

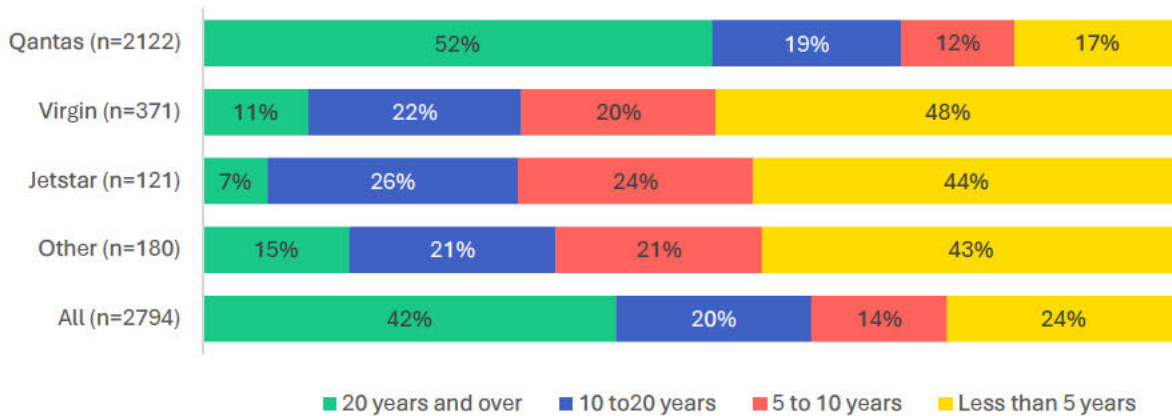


Table A. 4 Proportion who have experienced particular adversities, all flight attendants and those with at least 20 years of experience

	All (n=2794)	20 years of experience or more (n=1181)
Arguments among passengers	81%	85%
Severe turbulence	72%	81%
Unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from a passenger	65%	62%
Serious medical incident affecting someone on board e.g. heart attack	60%	72%
Physical injury affecting yourself or others	58%	65%
Unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from a co-worker	36%	36%
Ice on the wing	27%	40%
Theft or other alleged offence on board	24%	28%
Aircraft emergency e.g. emergency landing	23%	32%
A death	16%	24%
Fire	5%	8%
Decompression event	5%	7%
None of these, so far	4%	2%

Table A. 5 Proportion who have experienced particular adversities, by main route usually flown

	Regional (n=203)	Domestic (n=1248)	International (n=1331)	Total (n=2782)
Arguments among passengers	63%	82%	84%	81%
Severe turbulence	70%	74%	71%	72%
Unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from a passenger	64%	65%	65%	65%
Serious medical incident affecting someone on board e.g. heart attack	37%	59%	65%	60%
Physical injury affecting yourself or others	37%	58%	61%	58%
Unwanted attention, pestering or harassment from a co-worker	31%	30%	41%	36%
Theft or other alleged offence on board	17%	24%	25%	24%
Ice on the wing	25%	29%	26%	27%
A death	3%	9%	24%	16%
Aircraft emergency e.g. emergency landing	31%	22%	22%	23%
Decompression event	10%	5%	4%	5%
Fire	2%	4%	7%	5%
None of these, so far	9%	3%	3%	4%

Table A. 6 Average paid and unpaid hours, by main route flown

		Paid hours last roster		Additional unpaid hours last roster	
		Number of flight attendants	Mean	Number of flight attendants	Mean
28 day roster	Regional	113	107	105	12
	Domestic	956	113	883	9
	International	45	124	39	10
	Total	1114	113	1033	10
Monthly	Regional	68	118	64	9
	Domestic	220	111	192	11
	International	40	117	35	11
	Total	328	113	295	11
56 days	Regional	3	179	1	5
	Domestic	0	--	0	--y
	International	1194	196	1110	12
	Total	1197	196	1112	12
Other	Regional	4	92	4	38
	Domestic	13	87	12	10
	International	5	189	4	9
	Total	22	111	21	17
Total	Regional	188	112	174	12
	Domestic	1189	112	1087	10
	International	1284	191	1188	12
	Total	2661	150	2461	11

Table A. 7 Proportion doing home and airport reserve in last 12 months, by full time, part time and casual status

	Has done home reserve in last 12 months		Has done airport reserve in last 12 months		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Full time	1853	85%	827	38%	2168	100%
Part time	364	78%	103	22%	468	100%
Casual	134	95%	136	96%	141	100%
Missing	13	76%	6	35%	17	100%
Total	2364	85%	1072	38%	2794	100%

Table A. 8 Proportion experiencing roster problems, by full time, part time and casual status

		Full time	Part time	Casual	Total
Delayed past rostered sign off time (n=2750)	Occurred in last 12 months	98%	96%	93%	97%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	65%	57%	57%	63%
Exceeded daily planned hours (n=2746)	Occurred in last 12 months	92%	91%	92%	92%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	49%	38%	40%	47%
Roster changed at short notice (n=2737)	Occurred in last 12 months	92%	91%	86%	92%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	28%	20%	16%	26%
Couldn't predict when I would be home (n=2743)	Occurred in last 12 months	89%	87%	87%	88%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	43%	35%	43%	42%
Missed a break (n=2737)	Occurred in last 12 months	85%	81%	96%	85%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	50%	36%	57%	48%
Displaced from a rostered duty (n=2740)	Occurred in last 12 months	85%	81%	74%	84%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	18%	13%	11%	16%
Exceeded daily unplanned hours (n=2701)	Occurred in last 12 months	81%	76%	70%	79%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	28%	16%	22%	26%
Company denied roster adjustment (n=2739)	Occurred in last 12 months	76%	76%	53%	74%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	19%	14%	14%	18%
Couldn't take leave at my chosen time (n=2754)	Occurred in last 12 months	74%	72%	36%	72%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	16%	10%	9%	15%
Had an unscheduled overnight (n=2743)	Occurred in last 12 months	74%	65%	49%	71%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	5%	2%	2%	4%
Reserve period was allocated during the roster period (n=2724)	Occurred in last 12 months	62%	55%	70%	61%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	33%	21%	36%	31%

Table A. 9 Proportion experiencing roster problems, by main route flown

		Regional	Domestic	International	Total
Delayed past rostered sign off time (n=2752)	Occurred in last 12 months	98%	98%	97%	97%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	75%	72%	53%	63%
Exceeded daily planned hours (n=2748)	Occurred in last 12 months	97%	95%	88%	92%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	56%	60%	33%	46%
Roster changed at short notice (n=2740)	Occurred in last 12 months	97%	91%	91%	92%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	45%	27%	22%	26%
Couldn't predict when I would be home (n=2745)	Occurred in last 12 months	96%	90%	85%	88%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	59%	51%	30%	41%
Displaced from a rostered duty (n=2742)	Occurred in last 12 months	93%	88%	78%	84%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	34%	23%	8%	16%
Exceeded daily unplanned hours (n=2703)	Occurred in last 12 months	84%	81%	77%	79%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	32%	33%	18%	26%
Company denied roster adjustment (n=2741)	Occurred in last 12 months	77%	70%	78%	74%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	23%	19%	16%	18%
Couldn't take leave at my chosen time (n=2756)	Occurred in last 12 months	80%	75%	67%	72%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	17%	20%	9%	15%
Had an unscheduled overnight (n=2745)	Occurred in last 12 months	74%	67%	75%	71%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	4%	4%	5%	4%
Was asked to work on an RDO (n=2734)	Occurred in last 12 months	82%	69%	40%	56%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	36%	28%	5%	17%
Rostered on when I said I'm not available (n=2720)	Occurred in last 12 months	54%	48%	48%	48%
	Occurred more than 5 times in last 12 months	17%	16%	9%	13%

Table A. 10 Call out period, when doing home reserve, by method of pay setting

	90 minutes		120 minutes		Not sure		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Enterprise agreement	503	25%	1433	72%	52	3%	1988	100%
Aircraft Cabin Crew Award	102	65%	52	33%	2	1%	156	100%
Other	7	20%	28	80%	0	0%	35	100%
Not sure	47	26%	115	65%	16	9%	178	100%
Total	659	28%	1628	69%	70	3%	2357	100%

Table A. 11 Whether call out period gives enough time to get to the airport, by method of travel

	Yes, easily		Yes, but it is difficult		No, it does not give me enough time to get to the airport		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Private car	505	40%	603	47%	164	13%	1272	100%
Taxi / Uber	161	20%	470	58%	186	23%	817	100%
Public transport	33	25%	68	52%	31	24%	132	100%
Other	11	8%	79	56%	50	36%	140	100%
Total	710	30%	1220	52%	431	18%	2361	100%

Table A. 12 Whether 90 minute call outs give enough time to get to the airport, by jurisdiction

	Yes, easily		Yes, but it is difficult		No, it does not give me enough time to get to the airport		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	28	8%	167	49%	149	43%	344	100%
VIC	24	17%	84	59%	34	24%	142	100%
QLD	25	23%	54	51%	28	26%	107	100%
SA	2	17%	10	83%	0	0%	12	100%
WA	16	32%	30	60%	4	8%	50	100%
Other	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	4	100%
Total	98	15%	345	52%	216	33%	659	100%

Table A. 13 Whether 120 minute call outs give enough time to get to the airport, by jurisdiction

	Yes, easily		Yes, but it is difficult		No, it does not give me enough time to get to the airport		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	203	28%	419	57%	108	15%	730	100%
VIC	103	31%	181	54%	54	16%	338	100%
QLD	157	46%	149	44%	34	10%	340	100%
SA	58	62%	34	36%	2	2%	94	100%
WA	76	62%	41	33%	6	5%	123	100%
Other	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%
Total	600	37%	824	51%	204	13%	1628	100%

Table A. 14 Perceptions of a reasonable call out period when on home reserve, by jurisdiction

	90 minutes		120 minutes		150 minutes		Another amount		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	14	1%	312	28%	545	49%	248	22%	1119	100%
VIC	13	3%	160	32%	253	51%	70	14%	496	100%
QLD	10	2%	199	44%	187	42%	53	12%	449	100%
SA	3	3%	56	52%	40	37%	8	8%	107	100%
WA	6	3%	107	62%	49	28%	12	7%	174	100%
Other	1	13%	5	63%	0	0%	2	25%	8	100%
Total	47	2%	839	36%	1074	46%	393	17%	2353	100%

Table A. 15 Proportion who agreed they were paid enough, by pay setting method

Layover	EBA(n=2362)	Award (n=174)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=197)	Total (n=2773)
Not paid enough	57%	74%	70%	59%	58%
Not sure	13%	10%	13%	20%	13%
Paid enough	31%	16%	18%	21%	29%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Allowance or discounts for airport parking	EBA (n=2347)	Award (n=173)	Other (n=38)	Not sure (n=197)	Total (n=2755)
Not paid enough	35%	39%	34%	32%	35%
Not sure	38%	33%	40%	34%	37%
Paid enough	27%	28%	26%	35%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Overtime	EBA (n=2363)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=198)	Total (n=2776)
Not paid enough	62%	66%	73%	57%	62%
Not sure	9%	17%	5%	22%	11%
Paid enough	28%	17%	23%	21%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Meal allowance	EBA (n=2330)	Award (n=173)	Other (n=38)	Not sure (n=198)	Total (n=2739)
Not paid enough	62%	67%	76%	65%	63%
Not sure	11%	20%	11%	17%	12%
Paid enough	27%	13%	13%	18%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Accommodation allowance	EBA (n=2335)	Award (n=173)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=199)	Total (n=2746)
Not paid enough	39%	55%	41%	40%	40%
Not sure	37%	34%	39%	41%	37%
Paid enough	24%	12%	21%	19%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Working on designated day off	EBA (n=2356)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=194)	Total (n=2765)
Not paid enough	61%	62%	63%	62%	61%
Not sure	17%	23%	18%	24%	18%
Paid enough	23%	15%	20%	13%	21%

Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Uniform / grooming allowance	EBA (n=2349)	Award (n=174)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=198)	Total (n=2760)
Not paid enough	61%	69%	87%	62%	62%
Not sure	20%	21%	10%	27%	21%
Paid enough	19%	10%	3%	11%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Higher duties	EBA (n=2354)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=196)	Total (n=2764)
Not paid enough	51%	61%	72%	46%	51%
Not sure	32%	31%	21%	41%	32%
Paid enough	18%	9%	8%	12%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Training allowance	EBA (n=2348)	Award (n=174)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=198)	Total (n=2759)
Not paid enough	58%	64%	69%	57%	59%
Not sure	28%	22%	23%	31%	27%
Paid enough	14%	13%	8%	12%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Missed breaks	EBA (n=2358)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=196)	Total (n=2768)
Not paid enough	70%	78%	77%	68%	71%
Not sure	19%	18%	15%	26%	20%
Paid enough	11%	4%	8%	6%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Uniform fittings	EBA (n=2360)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=38)	Not sure (n=194)	Total (n=2767)
Not paid enough	52%	55%	53%	45%	52%
Not sure	39%	38%	40%	50%	40%
Paid enough	9%	7%	8%	5%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reserve / standby time at home	EBA (n=2353)	Award (n=174)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=196)	Total (n=2762)
Not paid enough	75%	81%	85%	82%	76%
Not sure	17%	13%	8%	15%	16%
Paid enough	8%	6%	8%	3%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Phone/data allowance	EBA (n=2341)	Award (n=174)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=199)	Total (n=2753)
Not paid enough	56%	66%	77%	66%	58%
Not sure	36%	29%	21%	32%	35%
Paid enough	7%	6%	3%	3%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lost baggage allowance	EBA (n=2343)	Award (n=173)	Other (n=38)	Not sure (n=198)	Total (n=2752)
Not paid enough	46%	39%	50%	41%	45%
Not sure	49%	60%	42%	55%	50%
Paid enough	5%	2%	8%	4%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: EBA refers to Enterprise Bargaining Agreement; Award refers to Aircraft Cabin Crew Award, 2020.

Table A. 16 Proportion who agreed they were paid enough, by main route flown

Layover	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1236)	International (n=1324)	Total (n=2761)
Not paid enough	79%	54%	59%	58%
Not sure	11%	12%	14%	13%
Paid enough	10%	34%	27%	29%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Allowance or discounts for airport parking	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1224)	International (n=1318)	Total (n=2743)
Not paid enough	28%	28%	43%	35%
Not sure	25%	37%	39%	37%
Paid enough	47%	35%	18%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Overtime	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1238)	International (n=1325)	Total (n=2764)
Not paid enough	82%	56%	65%	62%
Not sure	8%	11%	11%	11%
Paid enough	10%	33%	25%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Meal allowance	Regional (n=200)	Domestic (n=1218)	International (n=1309)	Total (n=2727)

Not paid enough	82%	59%	64%	63%
Not sure	7%	14%	11%	12%
Paid enough	12%	27%	26%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Accommodation allowance	Regional (n=200)	Domestic (n=1219)	International (n=1315)	Total (n=2734)
Not paid enough	67%	40%	36%	40%
Not sure	22%	32%	44%	37%
Paid enough	12%	27%	20%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Working on designated day off	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1236)	International (n=1316)	Total (n=2753)
Not paid enough	71%	47%	72%	61%
Not sure	9%	13%	24%	18%
Paid enough	20%	40%	4%	22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Uniform / grooming allowance	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1224)	International (n=1323)	Total (n=2748)
Not paid enough	75%	59%	63%	62%
Not sure	12%	15%	27%	21%
Paid enough	13%	26%	11%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Higher duties	Regional (n=199)	Domestic (n=1233)	International (n=1320)	Total (n=2752)
Not paid enough	71%	49%	51%	51%
Not sure	26%	34%	32%	32%
Paid enough	4%	18%	17%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Training allowance	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1227)	International (n=1319)	Total (n=2747)
Not paid enough	67%	51%	64%	59%
Not sure	26%	30%	25%	27%
Paid enough	7%	18%	11%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Missed breaks	Regional (n=202)	Domestic (n=1236)	International (n=1318)	Total (n=2756)
Not paid enough	91%	69%	69%	71%

Not sure	7%	13%	28%	20%
Paid enough	2%	18%	3%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Uniform fittings	Regional (n=202)	Domestic (n=1233)	International (n=1320)	Total (n=2755)
Not paid enough	48%	48%	56%	52%
Not sure	42%	44%	36%	40%
Paid enough	10%	9%	8%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reserve / standby time at home	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1226)	International (n=1323)	Total (n=2750)
Not paid enough	82%	59%	91%	76%
Not sure	7%	29%	6%	16%
Paid enough	11%	12%	3%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Phone/data allowance	Regional (n=200)	Domestic (n=1223)	International (n=1318)	Total (n=2741)
Not paid enough	66%	53%	61%	58%
Not sure	24%	38%	35%	35%
Paid enough	10%	9%	4%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lost baggage allowance	Regional (n=201)	Domestic (n=1218)	International (n=1321)	Total (n=2740)
Not paid enough	26%	31%	62%	45%
Not sure	65%	65%	34%	50%
Paid enough	10%	5%	4%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table A. 17 Perceptions of payment for reserve / standby time at home, by employment type

	Not paid enough		Don't know		Paid enough		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Full time	1619	76%	352	16%	174	8%	2145	100%
Part time	341	74%	95	21%	28	6%	464	100%
Casual	127	91%	4	3%	9	6%	140	100%
Total	2087	76%	451	16%	211	8%	2749	100%

Table A. 18 Perception of payment for layover, by employment type

	Not paid enough		Don't know		Paid enough		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Full time	1225	57%	278	13%	652	30%	2155	100%
Part time	261	56%	67	14%	137	30%	465	100%
Casual	118	84%	13	9%	9	6%	140	100%
Total	1604	58%	358	13%	798	29%	2760	100%

Table A. 19 Agreement with statements about financial pressure, by pay setting method

My company expects me to buy certain things for work					
	EBA(n=2363)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=39)	Not sure (n=199)	Total (n=2776)
Agree	64%	81%	74%	66%	65%
Not sure	18%	9%	8%	17%	18%
Disagree	18%	10%	18%	17%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
I take on extra shifts to make decent wages					
	EBA (n=2363)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=198)	(n=2776)
Agree	58%	71%	63%	65%	60%
Not sure	16%	14%	13%	17%	16%
Disagree	26%	15%	25%	18%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
To meet living costs, I need more than my flight attendant wage					
	EBA (n=2363)	Award (n=137)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=235)	(n=2775)
Agree	69%	79%	80%	79%	70%
Not sure	14%	14%	8%	12%	14%
Disagree	17%	7%	13%	9%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sometimes, I need help from family or friends to meet living costs					
	EBA (n=2362)	Award (n=175)	Other (n=40)	Not sure (n=198)	(n=2775)
Agree	40%	55%	48%	49%	42%
Not sure	16%	14%	13%	19%	16%
Disagree	44%	31%	40%	32%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A. 20 Agreement with statements about financial pressure, by employment type

My company expects me to buy certain things for work				
	Full time (n=2158)	Part time (n=465)	Casual (n=140)	Total (n=2763)
Agree	64%	64%	84%	65%
Not sure	18%	19%	9%	18%
Disagree	18%	17%	8%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
I take on extra shifts to make decent wages				
	Full time (n=2157)	Part time (n=465)	Casual (n=140)	Total (n=2762)
Agree	61%	44%	89%	60%
Not sure	15%	24%	6%	16%
Disagree	24%	33%	5%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
To meet living costs, I need more than my flight attendant wage				
	Full time (n=2157)	Part time (n=465)	Casual (n=140)	Total (n=2762)
Agree	69%	72%	87%	70%
Not sure	14%	14%	9%	14%
Disagree	17%	15%	4%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sometimes, I need help from family or friends to meet living costs				
	Full time (n=2154)	Part time (n=468)	Casual (n=140)	Total (n=2762)
Agree	40%	45%	64%	42%
Not sure	16%	16%	14%	16%
Disagree	44%	39%	23%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A. 21 Agreement with ‘I take on extra shifts to make decent wages’, by company

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Altara Qantas	73	89%	6	7%	3	4%	82	100%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	511	46%	225	20%	372	34%	1108	100%
Qantas Domestic	113	63%	15	8%	52	29%	180	100%
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	57	78%	5	7%	11	15%	73	100%
QCCA	394	64%	85	14%	135	22%	614	100%
Virgin Australia	254	70%	57	16%	52	14%	363	100%
Altara Jetstar	22	92%	1	4%	1	4%	24	100%
Jetstar	19	68%	7	25%	2	7%	28	100%
Team Jetstar	32	62%	5	10%	15	29%	52	100%
Alliance	40	73%	9	16%	6	11%	55	100%
MAM	23	82%	2	7%	3	11%	28	100%
National Jet Express	17	65%	4	15%	5	19%	26	100%
Network	35	85%	2	5%	4	10%	41	100%
Rex	18	90%	1	5%	1	5%	20	100%
Other	26	59%	9	20%	9	20%	44	100%
Total	1634	60%	433	16%	671	25%	2738	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A. 22 Agreement with ‘To meet living costs, I need more than my flight attendant wage’, by company

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Altara Qantas	75	92%	5	6%	2	2%	82	100%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	622	56%	217	20%	267	24%	1106	100%
Qantas Domestic	110	61%	30	17%	40	22%	180	100%
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	68	93%	2	3%	3	4%	73	100%
QCCA	490	80%	59	10%	67	11%	616	100%
Virgin Australia	312	86%	17	5%	33	9%	362	100%
Altara Jetstar	21	88%	3	13%	0	0%	24	100%
Jetstar	21	75%	6	21%	1	4%	28	100%
Team Jetstar	37	71%	10	19%	5	10%	52	100%
Alliance	33	60%	12	22%	10	18%	55	100%
MAM	22	79%	3	11%	3	11%	28	100%
National Jet Express	22	85%	3	12%	1	4%	26	100%
Network	35	85%	3	7%	3	7%	41	100%
Rex	18	90%	2	10%	0	0%	20	100%
Other	35	80%	5	11%	4	9%	44	100%
Total	1921	70%	377	14%	439	16%	2737	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A. 23 Agreement with the statement ‘Sometimes, I need help from family or friends to meet living costs’, by company

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Altara Qantas	54	66%	9	11%	19	23%	82	100%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	334	30%	201	18%	572	52%	1107	100%
Qantas Domestic	65	36%	29	16%	86	48%	180	100%
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	50	69%	5	7%	18	25%	73	100%
QCCA	278	45%	91	15%	245	40%	614	100%
Virgin Australia	226	62%	43	12%	94	26%	363	100%
Altara Jetstar	18	75%	3	13%	3	13%	24	100%
Jetstar	8	29%	6	21%	14	50%	28	100%
Team Jetstar	23	44%	7	14%	22	42%	52	100%
Alliance	14	26%	11	20%	30	55%	55	100%
MAM	13	46%	6	21%	9	32%	28	100%
National Jet Express	17	65%	3	12%	6	23%	26	100%
Network	22	54%	7	17%	12	29%	41	100%
Rex	12	60%	5	25%	3	15%	20	100%
Other	17	39%	11	25%	16	36%	44	100%
Total	1151	42%	437	16%	1149	42%	2737	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table A. 24 Agreement with the statement ‘My company expects me to buy certain things for work (e.g. food and amenities)’, by company

	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Altara Qantas	70	85%	7	9%	5	6%	82	100%
Qantas Airways Limited (QAL)	623	56%	235	21%	250	23%	1108	100%
Qantas Domestic	118	66%	26	14%	36	20%	180	100%
QantasLink (Eastern, Sunstate)	58	80%	7	10%	8	11%	73	100%
QCCA	387	63%	117	19%	111	18%	615	100%
Virgin Australia	281	78%	48	13%	33	9%	362	100%
Altara Jetstar	21	88%	2	8%	1	4%	24	100%
Jetstar	21	75%	5	18%	2	7%	28	100%
Team Jetstar	48	92%	3	6%	1	2%	52	100%
Alliance	40	73%	7	13%	8	15%	55	100%
MAM	21	75%	3	11%	4	14%	28	100%
National Jet Express	19	76%	3	12%	3	12%	25	100%
Network	26	63%	8	20%	7	17%	41	100%
Rex	18	90%	1	5%	1	5%	20	100%
Other	32	73%	6	14%	6	14%	44	100%
Total	1783	65%	478	18%	476	17%	2737	100%

Note: totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Figure A. 2 Proportion of flight attendants intending to work as a flight attendant in their current company in 12 months, by employer

