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2003 SEEK Survey
of Employee Satisfaction and Motivation in Australia



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The research offers insight into what factors influence employees' satisfaction and retention, people's employment intentions and their perceptions of the job market.

The findings will help business owners and senior and front-line managers understand what attracts employees, what makes them leave and how to make them stay.

More than 6500 people participated in the research, conducted by seek.com.au, Australia's largest employment website.

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1. Satisfaction

1.1 Degree of happiness in current role

Almost half of respondents report they are unhappy or very unhappy in their current job.

How happy are you with your current job?

	%
Very happy	6
Happy	19
Neutral	26
Unhappy	31
Very unhappy	18

The size of the company people work for makes no difference to overall levels of satisfaction. Contract workers are clearly the most likely to report they are happy or very happy (34 per cent). Permanent part-time employees are slightly happier than full-time workers.

1.2 Favourable aspects of current role

When asked if they love anything about their job, 54 per cent say, "the people I work with". (Fewer than 20 per cent say they dislike their co-workers.) Salary was fourth placed: more people nominated variety and content of work and hours. Few respondents cited career development or feedback and appreciation.

Is there anything you love about your current job?
(multiple responses permitted)

Rank	Factor	%
1	People I work with	54
2	Variety and content of work	41
3	Hours of work	38
4	Salary	26
6=	Benefits/conditions	24
6=	Workplace environment	24
7	Job security	17
8	Access to training/skills development	15
9	Stress level	14
10	Career development	12
11	Feedback/appreciation	11
12	Quality of management	9

Colleagues are most frequently nominated by every age group until 55-65 year olds, where it comes second to variety and content of work. Those aged 18-24 years are most likely to say they love the people they work with. However, hours of work, colleagues and variety/content of work are the three most common answers in every age range.

Most likely to cite people they worked with were respondents employed in hospitality and tourism (56 per cent); retail/consumer products (56 per cent); and consulting (54 per cent).

Least likely to say they loved the people they worked with were people employed in government (42 per cent), engineering/mining (44 per cent) and education and science (46 per cent). However, government employees were almost twice as likely (52 per cent) as people in other sectors to report they loved the benefits/conditions.

Women were more likely than men to say they loved the following aspects of their job:

- feedback/appreciation;
- career development;
- access to training or skills development;
- job security;
- hours of work; and
- quality of management.

1.3 Unfavourable aspects of current role

Six out of 10 people cite “quality of management” when asked if there was anything they hate about their current job. Nearly half cite lack of career development and stress levels.

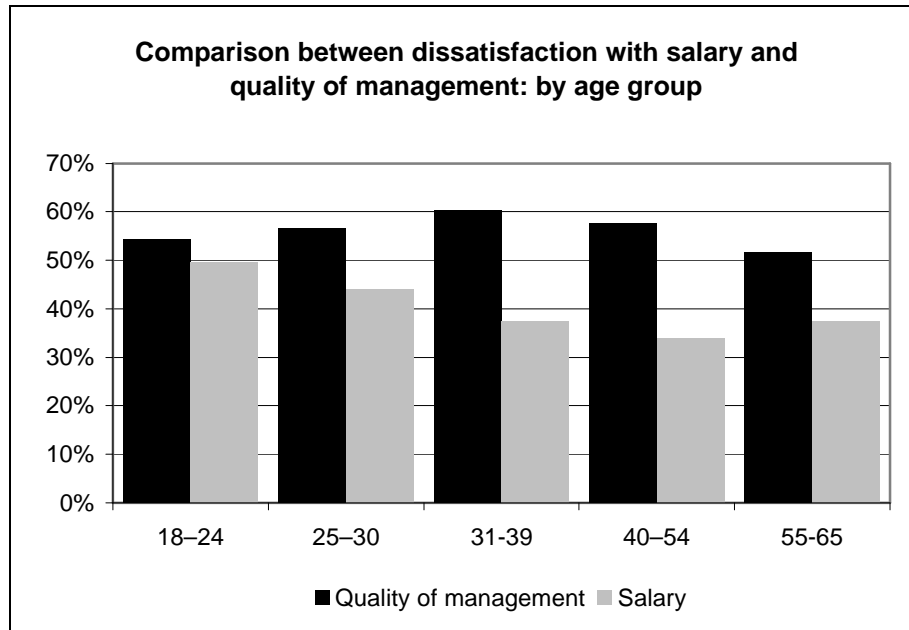
Is there anything you hate about your current job?
(multiple responses permitted)

Rank	Factor	%
1	Quality of management	60
2	Career development	49
3	Stress level	48
4	Feedback/appreciation	47
5	Salary	43
6	Access to training/skills development	38
7	Workplace environment	35
8	Hours of work	32
9	Job security	31
10	Variety/content of work	29
11	Benefits/conditions	27
12	People I work with	19

There was no difference between men and women in the level of dissatisfaction with quality of management, stress level, feedback/appreciation or salary. However, men were more likely than women to be dissatisfied with job security, career development and hours of work.

Dissatisfaction with management increases steadily as people get older, peaking at 60 per cent among people in their 30s before dropping slightly as age increases. Still, more than half (52 per cent) of 55-65 year olds say they hate the quality of management in their current role.

Age makes a greater difference in terms of reported dissatisfaction with salary. Dissatisfaction peaks in the 18-25 year old age group and drops as age increases until rising again in the 55-65 year old age group.



Quality of management is the top complaint in every age group. However, the second biggest area of dissatisfaction for 18-24 year olds is salary, whereas for 25-39 year olds, it is (lack of) career development. For people aged 40-65, stress levels are the second most common complaint.

Quality of management was most criticised by people working in retail, consumer products, advertising and media. People working in trades, personal services and construction were least likely to say they hated the quality of management.

When cross-referenced by industry, the level of dissatisfaction with the quality of management could be seen to cluster around the average: from a high of 65 per cent to a low of 42 per cent. Quality of management was most likely to be cited by those working in retail/consumer services, followed by advertising/media, IT/technical, engineering/mining and government.

In only two industries did fewer than half of the respondents indicate they hated the quality of management: trades/personal services (42 per cent) and construction (48 per cent).

Top three factors ("love", "hate") by industry**Accounting**

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	49
2	Variety and content of work	35
3	Hours of work	33

Hate	%
Quality of management	54
Feedback/appreciation	43
Career development =	42
Stress level =	42

Admin/Customer Service

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	52
2	Hours of work	37
3	Variety and content of work	29

Hate	%
Quality of management	54
Career development	49
Feedback/appreciation	46

Advertising

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	47
2	Variety and content of work	42
3	Hours of work	36

Hate	%
Quality of management	63
Stress level	50
Feedback/appreciation	48

Construction

Rank	Love	%
1	Variety and content of work	49
2	People I work with	47
3	Workplace environment	26

Hate	%
Quality of management	48
Stress level	46
Salary	45

Consulting

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	54
2	Variety and content of work	49
3	Hours of work	33

Hate	%
Quality of management	50
Stress level	42
Feedback/appreciation	38

Education/Science

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	46
2	Variety and content of work	45
3	Hours of work	42

Hate	%
Quality of management	56
Stress level	47
Feedback/appreciation	39

Engineering/Mining

Rank	Love	%
1	Variety and content of work	52
2	People I work with	44
3	Salary	36

Hate	%
Quality of management	60
Career development	48
Feedback/appreciation	47

Financial/Banking/Insurance

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	45
2	Hours of work	35
3	Variety and content of work	33

Hate	%
Quality of management	59
Feedback/appreciation	46
Stress level	45

Government

Rank	Love	%
1	Benefits/conditions	52
2	Hours of work	48
3	People I work with	42

Hate	%
Quality of management	60
Stress level	45
Feedback/appreciation	43

Healthcare

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	49
2	Hours of work	48
3	Variety and content of work	45

Hate	%
Quality of management	52
Stress level	49
Career development	38

Hospitality/Tourism

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	56
2	Variety and content of work	30
3	Hours of work	28

Hate	%
Quality of management	58
Salary	48
Hours of work	48

IT/Technical

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	48
2	Variety and content of work	40
3	Hours of work	31

Hate	%
Quality of management	61
Career development	52
Stress level	45

Legal

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	42
2	Hours of work	36
3	Variety and content of work	32

Hate	%
Quality of management	57
Stress level	46
Feedback/appreciation	44

Manufacturing

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	40
2	Variety and content of work	37
3	Hours of work	30

Hate	%
Quality of management	59
Feedback/appreciation	47
Stress level	46

Retail/Consumer Products

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	56
2	Hours of work	28
3	Variety and content of work	28

Hate	%
Quality of management	65
Feedback/appreciation	53
Career development	53

Sales/Marketing

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	44
2	Variety and content of work	40
3	Hours of work	33

Hate	%
Quality of management	59
Career development	48
Stress level	47

Trades/Personal Services

Rank	Love	%
1	Variety and content of work	42
2	People I work with	39
3	Hours of work	29

Hate	%
Career development	47
Quality of management	42
Feedback/appreciation	39

Transport/Logistics

Rank	Love	%
1	People I work with	49
2	Variety and content of work	36
3	Hours of work	33

Hate	%
Quality of management	58
Stress level	49
Feedback/appreciation	48

1.4 Security of employment

Nearly a third – 31 per cent – of Australians feel less secure in their job now compared to 12 months ago: twice as many as those who feel more secure.

How does your job security now compare to 12 months ago?

	%
Less secure	31
About the same	53
More secure	16

While people in the IT sector felt least secure (40 per cent), industries as diverse as manufacturing, consulting and construction were all above average (36-37 per cent) in feeling less secure. People working in the legal sector were most likely to say they felt more secure.

Less secure

Rank	Industry	%
1	IT/Technical	40.0
2	Manufacturing	37.3
3	Consulting	36.3
4	Construction	36.0
5	Legal	34.3

More secure

Rank	Industry	%
1	Legal	19.4
2	Advertising/Media	18.8
3	Construction	18.6
4	Consulting	18.5
5	Admin/Customer Service	18.3

2 Tenure

2.1 Number of full-time (permanent) jobs per respondent

How many different full-time jobs have you held since you joined the workforce? (Do not include temporary or contract jobs)

Number of jobs	%
1	16
2-5	55
6-10	21
11-15	6
(Other)	3

People working in the transport, logistics, trades, personal services and healthcare industries are most likely to have held between 11-15 full-time jobs – between 13 and 11 per cent (compared to an average across all industries of 7 per cent).

In contrast, those working in retail, consumer products, financial, banking, insurance, advertising and media are most likely to have had five or fewer full-time jobs (79-76 per cent compared to an average of 69 per cent).

Industry	Number of jobs (%)			
	1	2-5	6-10	11-15
Accounting	12.7	56.0	23.4	5.8
Admin/Customer Service	17.4	55.6	20.3	4.5
Advertising/Media	17.2	58.9	16.7	4.8
Construction	9.2	49.4	25.3	10.3
Consulting	11.9	52.2	25.9	6.7
Education/Science	20.1	53.4	19.4	4.8
Engineering/Mining	15.4	56.1	19.9	5.7
Financial/Banking/Insurance	14.0	64.0	17.8	3.1
Government	13.4	56.7	23.4	4.5
Healthcare	15.8	49.3	20.2	10.8
Hospitality/Tourism	18.6	43.3	23.2	7.2
IT/Technical	15.6	55.5	21.6	5.4
Legal	14.8	56.5	20.4	6.5
Manufacturing	12.2	54.7	21.5	6.4
Retail/Consumer Products	30.5	48.9	12.9	4.3
Sales/Marketing	11.6	57.0	21.5	7.4
Trades/Personal Services	11.3	48.8	23.1	11.3
Transport/Logistics	6.3	52.5	26.6	12.7

2.2 Tenure in current role

Only 12 per cent of survey respondents had been with their employer for six or more years.

How long have you been working for your current employer?

Length of tenure	%
Less than 1 year	36
1 year to less than 3 years	35
3 years to less than 6 years	18
6 years to less than 10 years	7
10 years or more	5

Fully 75 per cent of 25-30 year olds and 70 per cent of 25-39 year olds have been in their current job for less than three years. More than 35 per cent of 25-30 year olds have been in their job for less than 12 months.

While the length of tenure increases with age, fully 60 per cent of employees aged between 40 and 65 years have been in their current job for less than three years, likely reflecting the impact of retrenchment – sometimes multiple times – on people in this age group.

Length of tenure	Age (%)				
	Gen Y	Gen X		Baby boomers	
	18–24	25–30	31–39	40–54	55–65
Less than 1 year	46.2	35.4	32.5	31.1	31.7
1 year to less than 3 years	39.2	39.3	31.8	29.1	27.1
3 years to less than 6 years	13.0	18.5	20.8	20.4	16.1
6 years to less than 10 years	1.6	5.7	9.1	9.2	9.5
10 years or more	0.0	1.1	5.9	10.2	15.6

3 Motivation

3.1 Preparedness to consider alternative employment

Fully 96 per cent of respondents are willing to some extent to consider new employment opportunities.

Which of these statements most accurately describes your current situation?

	%
I'm actively looking for a new job	50
I'm thinking of changing jobs but haven't started actively looking yet	22
I'm not looking but I'd consider changing jobs if the right one came up	24
I'm not looking and wouldn't consider changing jobs	4

3.2 Strategies to increase retention

One in four say that a new or improved management style or attitude was the single most important thing employers could change to make them want to stay in their job. Another 20 per cent say a pay rise would make them reconsider leaving. Greater variety or more interesting work was important to 11 per cent of respondents.

	%
New or improved management style/attitude	25
Pay rise	20
Greater variety or more interesting work	11
Other	7
Promotion	6
Improve job security	6
Access to more training/skill development	5
More feedback/appreciation	4
New team/ work with different people	3
Reduce workload	3
Less hours of work	3
Improve workplace environment	3
More hours of work	2
Improved benefits (parental/annual/sick leave etc)	2
Nothing needs to change	2

The frustration of many Australian workers is evident in the comments they included. Integrity, fairness and effective communication were key areas where improvement is needed.

- "Sack the incompetent MD."
- "Attitude and honesty of GM is not consistent. Does not speak to staff directly concerning problems pertaining to them."
- "He should not yell at us in front of the customers."
- "Stop lying to employees and with-holding information in order to further their own career advancement."
- "My current job is for 28 hours per week however, I find the manager schedules meetings for me on my day off and outside normal hours. This is not balanced with any additional payment or time off in lieu."
- "Better communication with staff - tantrums don't count."
- "My employer could stop saying that "people are our most important asset" or start acting like they are."
- "Create a stable strategic direction for the company. Stop the continuous chopping and changing of strategy and company direction."

3.3 Organisational influence on job selection

Which of these is more important to you when considering a new job?

	%
Company/organisation more important	6
Type of work more important	21
Both equally important	73

4 Job search intentions

4.1 Length of time to find alternative employment

People are not optimistic about finding a new job quickly. More than a third (35 per cent) think it would take more than three months to find their next job. Only 8 per cent think it would take them less than two weeks.

How long do you expect it would take you to find your next job if you started looking today?

	%
Less than 2 weeks	8
2-4 weeks	19
1 month to less than 3 months	38
3 months to 6 months	24
More than 6 months	11

Some 34 per cent of those earning \$15-30K expect it would take less than four weeks to find a new job, compared with just 9 per cent of people earning more than \$125K. And 34 per cent of those earning less than \$70K expect it would take them more than three months to find their next position, compared to 46 per cent of those earning more than \$70K and 53 per cent of those earning more than \$125K.

People in construction, trades, personal services, hospitality and tourism are most optimistic about finding work within two weeks or less than four weeks. Some 36 per cent of people in government think it will take them more than three months to find a job, more than in any other sector.

How long do you think it would take you to find a new job now compared to 12 months ago?

	%
Take more time	30
About the same	53
Take less time	18

Sourcing information about employment vacancies

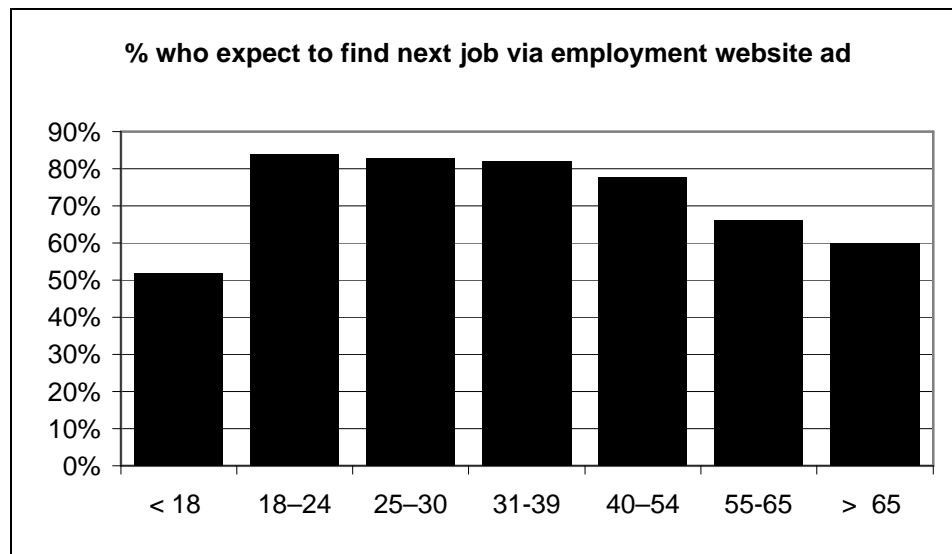
More than eight out of 10 respondents nominate employment websites as the most likely way they expect to find their next job, more than any other job search method. Both personal and professional networks ranked highly (30 and 44 per cent respectively).

How do you expect you would find out about your next job? (Please select all that apply).

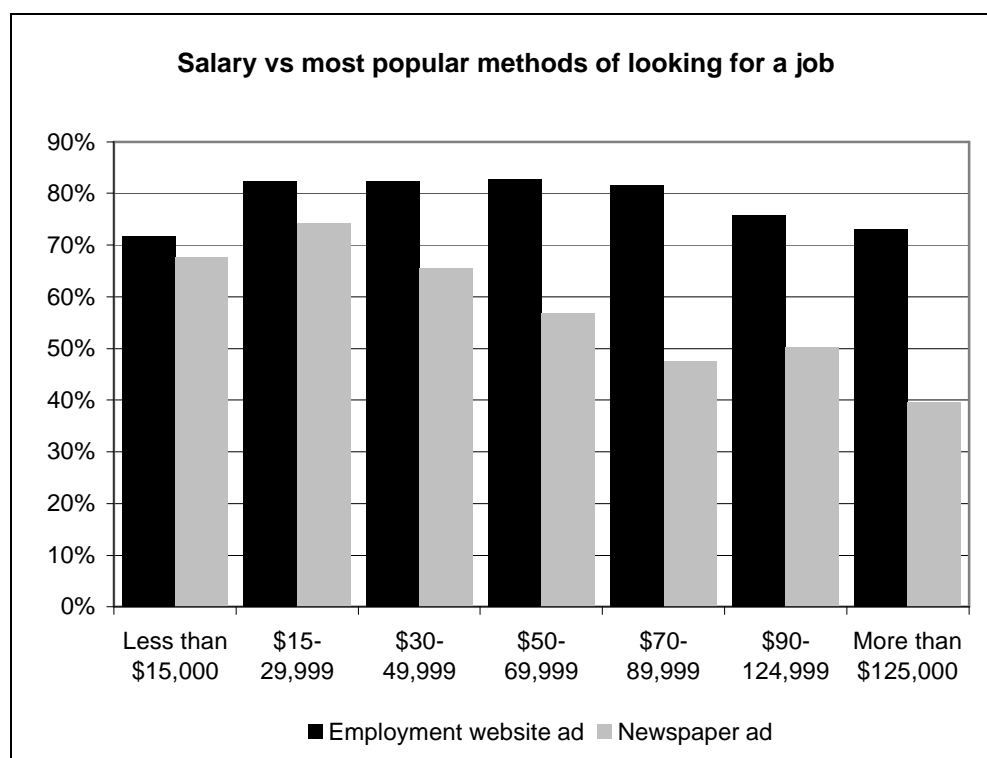
	%
Employment website ad	81
Newspaper ad	63
Word of mouth (professional network)	44
Contact from a recruitment consultant	43
Word of mouth (friends or family)	30
Personal approach to specific organisations	28
Company ad in shop window or noticeboard	5
Other	3

IT/technical workers rely least on newspaper advertising, followed by those in consulting and financial/banking/insurance.

While confidence in employment websites is highest among those aged 18-39 years old (83 per cent), it is the most frequently cited method for all people aged over 18 years. A full 63 per cent of those aged over 55 years also say they expect to find their next job advertised online.



The more someone earns, the more important *professional* networks are to finding a new job. In comparison, the importance of *personal* networks decreases as salary rises. In general, the more someone earns, the more confidence they have in online advertising compared with newspaper advertising.



4.2 Sourcing information on prospective employers

How do you find out information about organisations you might want to work for? (Tick all that apply).

	%
Company website	76
Word of mouth/personal recommendations	59
Employment website	45
Newspapers and news websites	44
Personal approach (phone call, visit)	32
Recruitment consultancies	32
Other	2

About the Survey

The *2003 SEEK Survey of Employee Satisfaction and Motivation in Australia* collected responses from 6506 people who were currently employed. Data collection was via an online survey. Invitations to participate were published on seek.com.au and sent via email to 650,000 people who had registered with SEEK in the past five years. It measures employees' perceptions of their current employer, their employment prospects and their intentions.

About SEEK

SEEK Ltd is a privately held Australian company that owns seek.com.au, the country's largest employment marketplace. It publishes between 45,000 and 50,000 employment vacancies at any one time and is visited by more than a million people looking for work each month.

Online advertising queries can be directed to SEEK's customer service team on 1300 658 700 or by email to listings@seek.com.au.

