

Press release
22 August 2024

Employer calls set to go unanswered as workers welcome the right to disconnect

- 36% of Australian workers are called or emailed outside of work hours at least a few times a week by their employer.
- 70% of employees would feel comfortable ignoring calls or emails from their employer outside of work hours when the 'right to disconnect' comes into effect this month.
- 68% of employees believe they will experience improved work-life balance while 35% expect increased pressure to complete their workload during office hours.

Sydney, 22 August 2024 – The 'right to disconnect' will directly impact 87% of office workers who say they are contacted outside of work hours, new independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds.

The new 'right to disconnect' comes as a response to employee mental health concerns and will allow eligible employees to refuse contact from their employer or a work-related third party outside of work hours¹.

*"The right to disconnect is a game changer for work-life harmony in Australia," says **Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half**. "It empowers employees to reclaim their personal time and disconnect from the potential pressure of work-related communication, something we hear often from candidates who look for balance in a role. Our recent observations of increased burnout and stress among employees from after-hours contact will soon lessen and improve employee morale and reduce turnover. The 'right to disconnect' is not just a new rule, it's a cultural shift, further emphasising the increased focus on employee wellbeing and mental health.*

Workers are frequently contacted after hours

The research has also shown that while 87% of employees are contacted by their employer via a phone call or email outside of work hours, more than a third (36%) are contacted more than once a week. Only 13% of office workers say they are never contacted by their employer outside of work hours.

Frequency of contact	Workers contacted out of work hours
Always (every day)	6%
Very often (every workday)	11%
Often (a few times a week)	19%
Sometimes (about once a week)	16%
Occasionally (a few times a month)	13%
Rarely (once a month or less)	22%
Never	13%

Source: Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 1,000 full-time office workers in Australia in June 2024.

Workers plan to avoid after-hours contact

Once the Fair Work Act amendments come into effect, most workers (70%) say they will be comfortable ignoring work emails and phone calls after hours. Only 15% indicate they will not feel comfortable. The remaining 15% feel indifferent.

¹ [Fair Work Ombudsman, Right to Disconnect, July 2024](#)

In a sign of generational attitudes towards digital communication and work-life balance, Millennials (75%) are the most comfortable about ignoring work-related contact after hours, closely followed by Gen Z (73%). Baby Boomers (68%) and Gen X (64%) are a little less comfortable avoiding after-hours contact.

The rewards and challenges of disconnecting from work

The overall majority (92%) of workers expect positive impacts on both their work and life because of the right to disconnect. The most reported positive impacts will be:

- Improved work-life balance (68%)
- Reduced stress and burnout (55%)
- Increased job satisfaction (43%)
- Improved productivity during business hours (31%)

However, 72% of employees do expect some challenges that may come with the right to disconnect, including:

- Increased pressure to complete tasks within regular hours (35%)
- Challenges staying informed about important work matters (31%)
- Potential negative impact on career progression (28%)
- Feeling disconnected from the team (21%)

*“As cited by workers themselves, the ‘right to disconnect’ is expected to significantly improve employee wellbeing and job satisfaction,” says **Gorton**. “When employees feel empowered and have control over their time, they’re generally more engaged and productive during work hours.*

“For businesses, this amendment to the Fair Work Act requires a shift in mindset and communication practices, creating an opportunity to build a healthier workplace culture that prioritises employee wellbeing. For those businesses who rely heavily on after-hours availability, there will be increased focus on delivering more efficient and streamlined operations.

*“This will also open up new conversations between companies and staff about work expectations and company culture, leading to stronger long-term success,” concluded **Gorton**.*

##

Notes to editors

About the research

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

About Robert Half

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

Follow Robert Half Australia



Read related articles on our [Robert Half's worklife blog](#)

For more information

Courtney Fletcher

PR Manager

Courtney.Fletcher@roberthalf.com.au

+61 421 209 304