DIGITAL FUTURE of WORK

OCTOBER 2024

Business Chamber QUEENSLAND

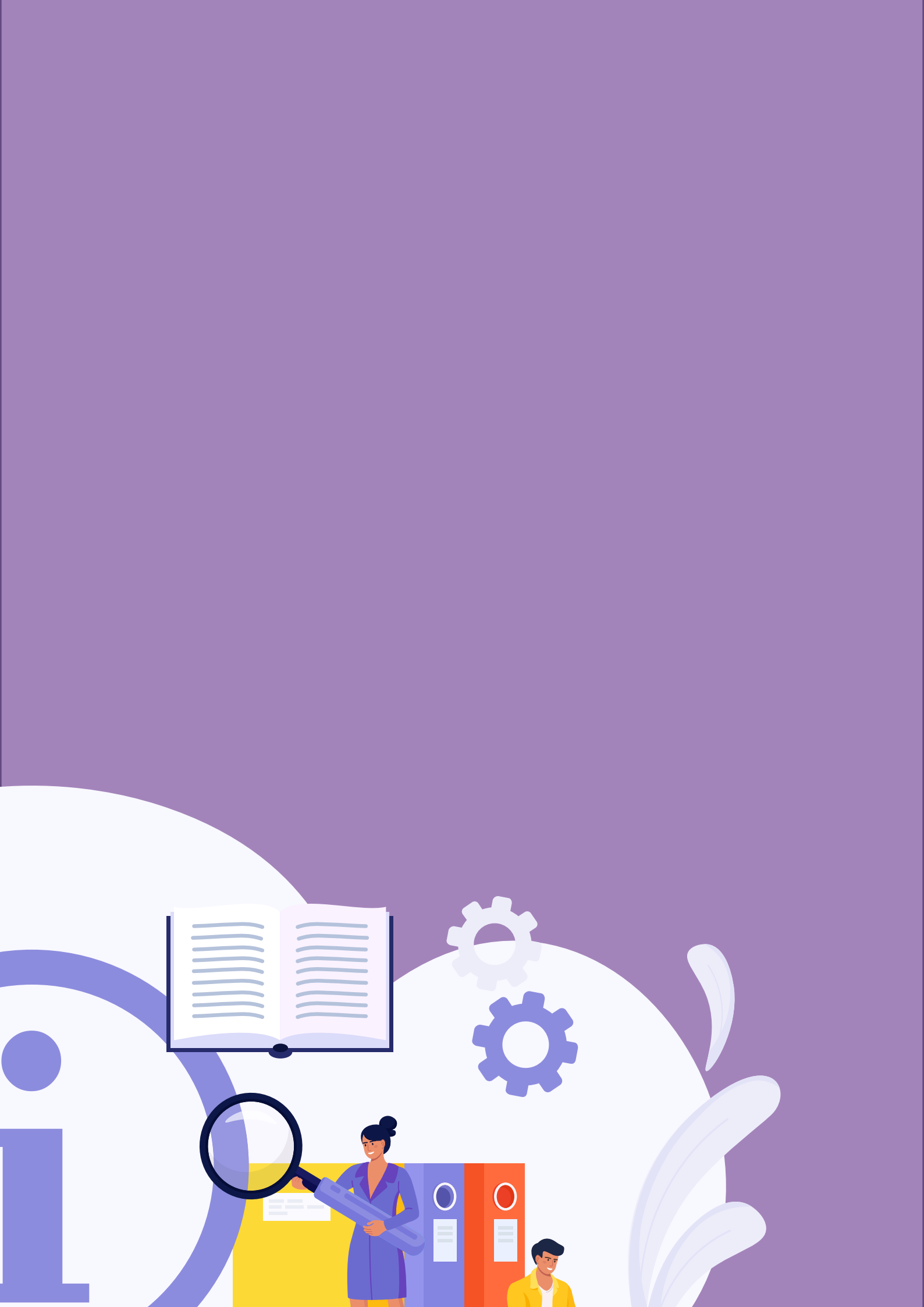Australian Retirement Trust

CONTENTS

A MESSAGE FROM BUSINESS CHAMBER QUEENSLAND

The digital future of work starts now.

Queensland businesses are ready to make the most of the significant economic opportunities we will see in our state in the next decade and beyond, as well as capitalising on growing and emerging global markets.

Businesses who are already utilising the benefits of technology are competitive and maximising opportunities, where technology has the capacity to improve market share and drive efficiency and productivity. However, businesses need support to understand where the opportunities and risks exist in navigating the evolving tech and digital landscape.

Our 2024 Digital Future of Work Report is leading the debate on the evolving nature of work and supporting businesses to prepare for both the risks and opportunities in a digital future.

This research sets out emerging digital trends in the workplace and allows Queensland businesses, industry, and government to track trends, respond, plan, and invest for the future.

Supported by Australian Retirement Trust, the 2024 report covers key issues relating to artificial intelligence and workplace automation, cyber security, internet connectivity, workforce arrangements and the skills and credentials needed for the digital future of work.

It's the second in our Future of Work research series, and expands on the trends and findings we published in our 2022 Future of Work research.

In developing the 2024 Digital Future of Work Report, we considered the most significant findings from our 2022 research and looked into these more closely, with a contemporary, future focused business lens.

Our research found businesses are already proactively working to prepare and protect their operations and workforces in the digital future of work, but digital and technological advancements are happening faster than many businesses can keep up.

At Business Chamber Queensland, we work everyday to ensure Queensland businesses can capitalise on future opportunities, and be competitive and resilient in an ever evolving world.

We are the voice of business and we have listened to businesses across the state who have told us what the digital future of work looks like for them. This report is also an important advocacy tool which will drive a business environment in Queensland that allows businesses to thrive now and in the future.

It's also a critical tool for businesses navigating all stages of the tech and digital evolution, and planning their own digital future of work.

Heidi Cooper
Chief Executive Officer
Business Chamber Queensland

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SUPPORTER, AUSTRALIAN RETIREMENT TRUST

The digital future of work is an evolving and critical issue for Queensland employers, including Australian Retirement Trust, one of Australia's largest super funds.

Across cyber vulnerability, artificial intelligence, connectivity, data and working conditions, the digital future of work presents great opportunities alongside some challenges.

An early and comprehensive understanding of what employers consider to be the main drivers in the digital future of work, and what they need to capitalise on the benefits it presents while meeting the challenges, will allow us to better support our members and employer partners.

For example, we know close to two thirds of Queensland employers look to their super fund for support in digital solutions during employee onboarding. We play an important role in delivering that support, during onboarding and beyond, throughout each employee's tenure.

We have deep roots in Queensland, with around 70% of our membership based here. We're also a major Queensland employer, with our headquarters in Brisbane and more than 2,700 team members employed across the State.

We're proud to partner with Business Chamber Queensland in developing this report, the second in the Future of Work series. It provides trusted and timely insights into the wants and needs of Queensland employers.

Ultimately, confidence and clarity in ongoing economic and societal factors that impact Queensland are important for employers to plan, invest and grow. This research is a great tool in that process.

David Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Retirement Trust
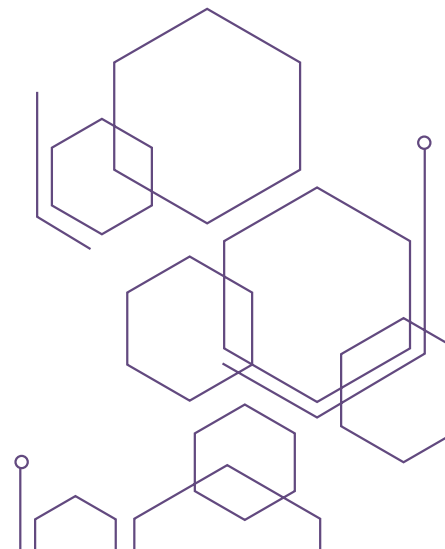
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Digital Future of Work Report is a critical resource for Queensland businesses, industry, policy decision makers, and investors. It provides unique and valuable insights on the issues impacting Queensland businesses now and emerging trends in the digital future of work.

It's the second report in the Future of Work series, and further assesses trends established in the 2022 Future of Work Report, which assessed workforce, workplace and worklife considerations over the coming five years.

The Digital Future of Work Report considers risks and opportunities for businesses navigating digital, artificial intelligence, technological, and cyber security developments, with a contemporary future-focused business lens.

Key topics in the Digital Future of Work

	1. Artifical intelligence and workplace automation- *Evolving business in a world of technological evolution* • Understanding the role of AI and technology in business. • Current use of AI in business. • The implications of AI for employment. • Evolving skills to meet AI challenges.
	2. Cyber security- *Cyber security in an expanding threatscape* • Understanding cyber threats on business. • Business preparedness for a cyber security attack.
	3. Internet connectivity- *The digital divide as a barrier to business* • Accessing internet in metro and regional areas.
	4. Workplace arrangements- *Adapting to the evolving workplace* • Comparing workplace arrangements pre and post pandemic.
	5. Skills and credentials- *Skills and qualifications for the future of work* • Skills needs for micro-credentials and job requirements. • Soft skills development. • Non-permanent labour. • Interstate and international workers in Queensland.

ABOUT BUSINESS CHAMBER QUEENSLAND

Business Chamber Queensland is the leading body for business in Queensland. We are the voice of business in Queensland and represent businesses of every size, industry and region of the state.

We represent the interests of more than 480,000 Queensland businesses to all levels of government.

With a 155-year history, we are an independent, not-for-profit organisation committed to putting Queensland businesses first.

We provide practical support, innovative thinking and powerful advocacy to help businesses seize opportunities now and in the future.

OUR BUSINESS INSIGHT

Business Chamber Queensland has decades of unparalleled Queensland business sentiment, conditions and expectations data and business engagement insight, directly representing the voice of Queensland businesses.

Among this data is our Pulse Surveys, the most authoritative, timely and comprehensive snapshot of the Queensland business environment, backed with consultations across the state and topic-specific research.

Our consistent and timely reporting of issues affecting Queensland businesses ensures regular and comprehensive research is undertaken to drive policy decisions across all parts of government.
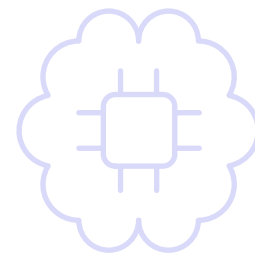
The 2024 Digital Future of Work Report is another example of our rich data and unparalleled business insight.

01 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORKPLACE AUTOMATION

EVOLVING BUSINESS IN A WORLD OF TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the science of making machines that can 'think' like humans, but with the added advantage of being able to process mass data very quickly. It can recognise patterns, and make judgements and recommendations based on those patterns.

In recent years, business' interest in AI applications has surged through high-profile generative AI tools such as ChatGPT.

These tools can access, refashion and compile mass volumes of data to produce audio, code, images, text, simulations, and video content.

Globally, there has also been a rise in human-like robots used in workplaces.

According to the 2023 McKinsey Global Survey, there was 'explosive growth' in the use of generative AI tools last year, with one third of international respondents using these tools regularly in at least one business function.[1]
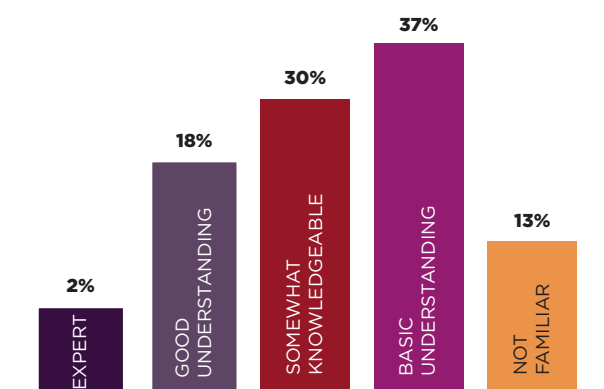
The AI focus has shifted from the technical areas of business to become a major preoccupation for leaders.

Survey findings: Understanding the role of AI and technology in business

The Digital Future of Work survey highlights the challenges many Queensland businesses are facing to comprehend the implications of AI and automation.

While some businesses have a base knowledge of the technology, only a very small percentage are consciously using it comprehensively.

2% of respondents described themselves as experts in AI, with successful integration into multiple aspects of business. 13% were not familiar at all with AI and its potential implications.

Bar chart:
- EXPERT: 2%
- GOOD UNDERSTANDING: 18%
- SOMEWHAT KNOWLEDGEABLE: 30%
- BASIC UNDERSTANDING: 37%
- NOT FAMILIAR: 13%

The data found businesses are caught in a 'tech fog' as they try to understand and traverse rapid advances in technology.

While close to half businesses said they were keeping up with technology, less than 20% said they were managing the change.

50% were mostly keeping up with technological changes.

31% were struggling to keep up with technological changes.

19% said they were coping well with technological changes.
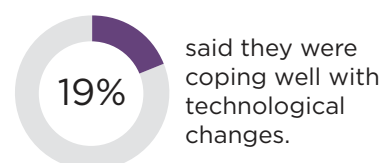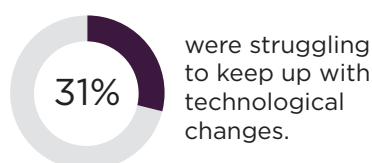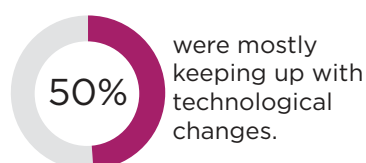
1 McKinsey, 2023, "The state of AI in 2023: Generative AI's breakout year"

Survey findings: Current AI use in business

33% are using AI in a very basic way - when it is built into other programs.

30% of respondents say they use AI for some tasks.

29% of respondents say they are not using AI at all.

5% use AI extensively in their business.

The survey findings suggest many businesses need support to fully understand how AI can help their business to stay competitive and efficient.

In particular:

- One in three want to learn more about AI and the opportunities it presents

- Close to 18% are actively exploring or implementing AI solutions and need access to support and information to do this successfully.

"*As a small, family-owned business, finding time to keep up with new developments can be challenging.*"

— Small accommodation and hospitality business, Far North Queensland

"*Some technology is good, but the direction it's heading is taking over control from human beings and opening everyone up to hacking and problems.*"

— Small health and community services business, Gold Coast
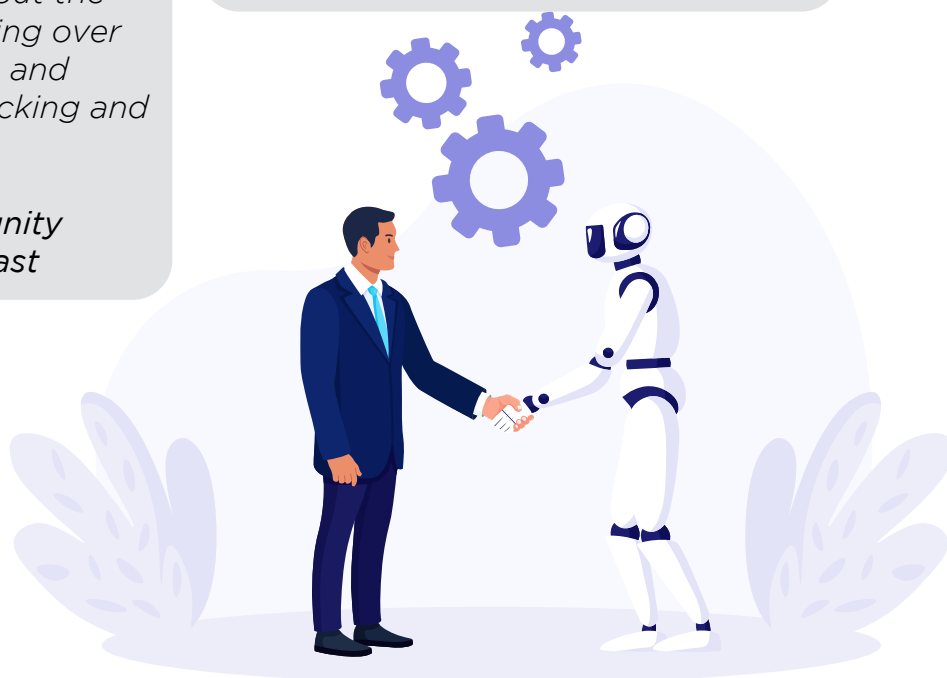
The implications of AI for employment

Globally, much of the conjecture around the AI future has focused on the potential impact on traditional job roles off the back of the robotic and automation revolution. It's expected many roles will be fundamentally altered or even face vocational extinction as a consequence of this change.

The bigger question is whether this will cause mass and rapid job dislocation, driving net job losses and structural unemployment, or if the changes will forge equal or greater opportunities in new fields of work.

This debate is not new. The workforce has seen the computer and digital eras unfold in barely a single generation. Each has fundamentally altered the way humans pursue work, with some job categories now completely obsolete.

Despite this, McKinsey estimates the introduction of the personal computer enabled the net creation of 15.8 million new jobs in the United States after job displacement from technology was taken into account[1]

Survey findings: Likelihood of digital and AI technology to replace employees over the next five years

While a third of businesses expect it is highly unlikely digital and AI technology will replace employees in the next five years, another third expect it's at least possible.

Of those, 11% say it's likely or highly likely digital and AI technology will replace employees in the next five years.

34%	25%	22%	8%	3%
HIGHLY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	HIGHLY LIKELY	LIKELY
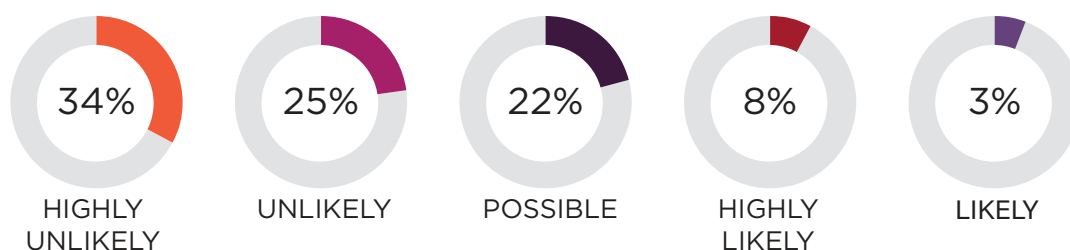
> " *The great danger is the 'shiny object syndrome' where we have the very latest technology foisted upon us — often with little choice — and we might only use 10-15% of it. Most of the time, technology wastes more time than it saves, costs more than it returns and it has created a whole new global criminal industry."*
>
> *— Small professional, scientific and technical services business, Moreton Bay*

---

1 McKinsey, 2017, "Jobs lost, jobs gained: Workforce transitions in a time of automation"

Survey findings: Evolving skills to meet AI challenges

The majority of Queensland businesses recognise workplace skills will need to evolve to meet technological changes.

More than 57% of survey respondents reported a strong or critical need for new skills and training to deal with this transition. 5% saw no requirement for this.

Despite the relatively low expectation of AI absorbing human roles in the next five years, most businesses in the Digital Future of Work survey believed there would be at least some need to change task descriptions and job requirements in current roles.

Similarly, nearly 90% of respondents saw at least some need to use more automation to streamline workflows and to continue to work on their digital engagement with customers. Businesses also overwhelmingly believed leadership skills would need to be developed to capitalise on the increasing technology.

57% reported a strong or critical need for new skills and training to deal with AI transition.

91% believe leadership skills need to be developed to capitalise on increasing technology.

Key findings

Most businesses are aware of the AI transition to come, but few are fully prepared.

- Businesses expect roles to evolve off the back of AI rather than disappear.

- Many businesses are struggling to get the support, information and skills they need to cope with the next generation of AI and technology advancement.

A business perspective

Social Mediology owner and Founder of the AI Success Lab, Kate vanderVoort teaches business professionals and teams how to incorporate AI into operations to boost productivity and increase impact. Kate is at the forefront of using AI in her own businesses and is in huge demand to help others understand and maximise the tech transition.

Kate said the majority of businesses she worked with were at early stages of AI adoption but had keen appetite to implement AI across tasks, roles and departments.

"Businesses and workforces have been using AI unknowingly for years but the difference is it's now easily accessible for every business, and across every part of the business," Kate said.

"It's not just available for businesses with big budgets. The new AI platforms and tools available mean even the smallest of businesses can see massive productivity gains and with very little tech expertise."

Kate says she usually recommends integrating AI into backend operations, marketing, administration, and everyday, repeatable tasks first, rather than letting AI loose on customers directly, through things like customer chatbots.

"It's important to integrate AI effectively into the culture of the business. Sometimes going straight for the shiny object, like a chatbot, can end in disaster if the back end systems are not there to properly support the delivery of the product or services."

"Those who adopt it will leapfrog to the front of their business category and be able to do twice as much in half the time and really enhance the value of their workforce," Kate said. "Now is the time to look at how AI can enhance your workforce productivity and deliverables."

Kate's top 3 tips for businesses at the early stages of AI adoption:

1. Use AI embedded in platforms you already use and are familiar with. It's a good way to test the technology without having to invest.

2. Look at all the places in the business which include repetitive, manual tasks and processes - that's where AI can assist.

3. Put polices in place to protect the business and the workforce, and educate and empower staff in how to use AI in a safe and effective way.

But Kate advocates a human-centred approach to AI. "It is important that we implement AI ethically and responsibly. Let's see how we can use AI to do more, deliver more, serve more; rather than use it to cut out humans. AI can actually help us to be more human, rather than less."

"I'm 50% thrilled and exhilarated by the opportunities AI presents, and 50% terrified of what could go wrong," Kate said.

"The challenge is it's not a slow or gradual change, it's changing daily in leaps and bounds, and the rate at which these models are evolving is breathtaking."

Kate said businesses should act quickly, but cautiously.

"I'm very optimistic. AI has the potential to solve some of the biggest challenges facing humans if we use it well, but it can be used in negative ways too. There will be some mistakes made and some examples shown of where it can all go wrong," she said.

"Monumental change is happening for businesses, and they can't afford to sit back and wait.

"AI isn't coming, it's already here. I say fasten your seatbelt, it's going to be a wild ride."

"AI has a whole lot of business risk, but there is greater risk in not using it."

02 CYBER SECURITY

CYBER SECURITY IN AN EXPANDING THREATSCAPE

Rapid advancements in technology, the proliferation of internet-connected devices and the expansion of attack surfaces (like cloud computing and remote work) all contribute to the increasing threat of cyber attacks and data breaches.

AI represents new privacy risks, like using AI to deploy convincing social engineering tactics such as voice cloning and phishing emails that closely mimic the identity of the impersonated sender.

Attacks are increasingly sophisticated as perpetrators learn to exploit new vulnerabilities and use innovative techniques to bypass traditional security measures that many businesses use.

Most Australians are likely to have been, or know someone who has been, affected by recent high-profile cyber attacks.

According to the latest privacy data from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, 62% of Australians see the protection of their personal information as a major concern in their life, however 57% do not know what to do to protect it.[1]

In FY 2022-23, the Australian Signals Directorate's Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) responded to more than 1,100 cyber security incidents from Australian entities, while nearly 94,000 reports were made to law enforcement.

It represents about one report every six minutes - an increase from one report every seven minutes in the previous financial year.

Of the total number of reports, Queensland registered the highest volume in Australia (30%) relative to its population compared to Victoria (26%), New South Wales (21%), Western Australia (11%), South Australia (6%), ACT (2%), Tasmania (2%) and Northern Territory (1%).[2]

The majority of cybercrime reports made in FY 2022-23 were from small businesses. On average, small businesses are losing around $46,000 per attack, while medium businesses and large businesses are outlaying $97,200 and $71,600 respectively.[2]

The most common cybercrimes businesses reported were email compromise, business email compromise fraud (where there is a financial loss recorded) and online banking fraud.

Survey findings: Business' cyber security
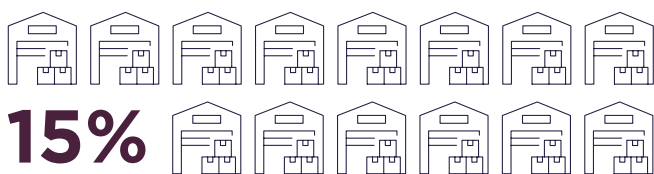
15% of businesses have experienced a cyber security attack in the past 12 months.

52% of those businesses were small businesses.

1 Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, 2023, "Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey"
2 Australian Signals Directorate, 2023, "ASD Cyber Threat Report"

Understanding cyber security for business

Businesses in the professional, scientific and technical services space experienced the highest volume of attacks or breaches (12%) compared to any other sector.

It's likely due to the sector's access to valuable data (e.g. client information), use of advanced technologies and the complexity of supply chains.

These are lucrative targets for attackers and have far-reaching consequences for businesses.

Understanding the 'threatscape' — a term used to describe the landscape of cyber security threats individuals, organisations and systems face - is essential for businesses to effectively mitigate risks, protect their assets and put in place appropriate measures to defend attacks.

The Federal Government's 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy outlines six 'cyber shields' to help defend against threats:

1. Strong businesses and citizens

2. Safe technology

3. World-class threat sharing and blocking

4. Protected critical infrastructure

5. Sovereign capabilities

6. Resilient and global leadership

Small and medium businesses struggle to find the time, resources and expertise to uplift their cyber security.

This means it can take longer to recover, and be more costly for small and medium businesses following a cyber incident compared to larger businesses.

Data: Businesses' preparation for a cyber security attack or data breach

5.8
Average Rating

Survey respondents' average rating of level of preparedness for a cyber security attack or data breach on a scale of one to 10 was 5.8.

7%	37%	48%	7%
HIGHLY UNPREPARED	UNPREPARED	PREPARED	HIGHLY PREPARED

30% of respondents were rated four or less, of which **three quarters** were small businesses.

Of the **15%** of businesses that reported a cyber incident, the average level of preparedness was 6.5.

53% believe there is a strong or critical need for staff training in cyber security while **90%** reported there was some need.

Key findings

Most respondents are only just prepared for a potential cyber security attack or data breach. Small businesses are more likely to experience a cyber incident, yet they are the least prepared.

There is more to do ensure businesses are safeguarded against potential cyber threats. Everyone has a role to play in cyber security, including staff who must be vigilant and understand how to identify suspicious activity.
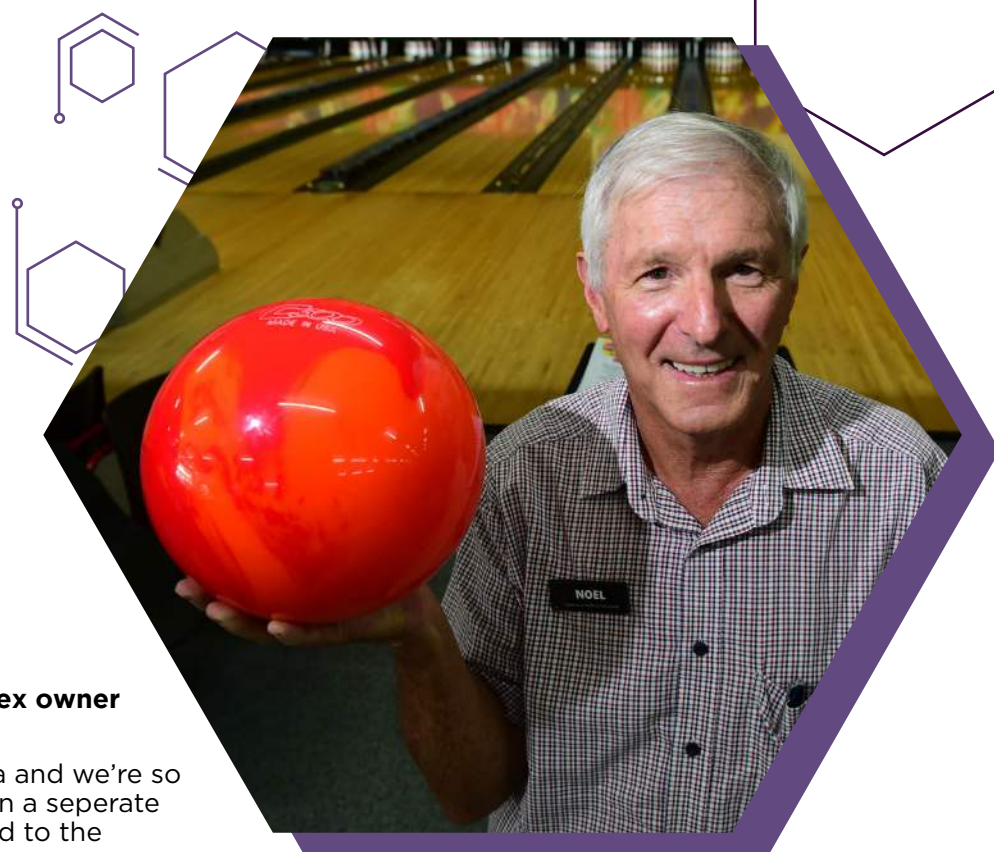
A business perspective

Noel Amber
Bundy Bowl and Leisure Complex owner

"We have a huge amount of data and we're so concerned about it, we keep it on a seperate computer that it is not connected to the internet.

That's our way of guarding our precious data, ensuring it's totally secure.

Our staff are really well trained, but there is always a risk if we're not careful."
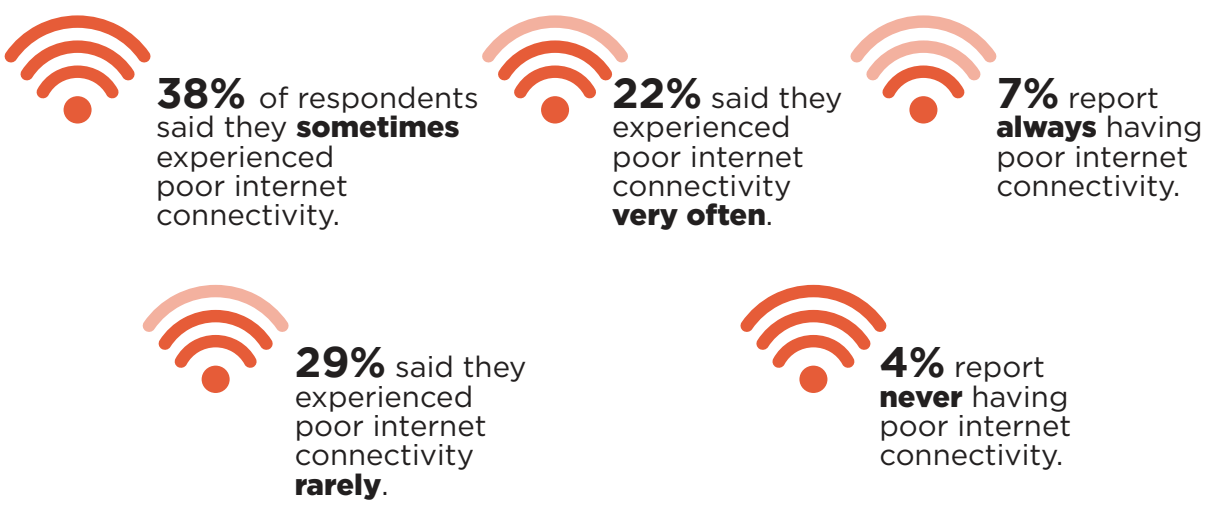
03 INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AS A BARRIER TO BUSINESS

Internet connectivity is a barrier to business productivity and connectivity across metro and regional Queensland areas. 45.6% of survey respondents in July 2024 said they considered telecommunications infrastructure a major or critical concern for their business.[1]

Poor internet connectivity limits businesses' participation in broader markets, impacting their ability to scale and grow.

Survey findings: Internet connectivity

38% of respondents said they **sometimes** experienced poor internet connectivity.

22% said they experienced poor internet connectivity **very often**.

7% report **always** having poor internet connectivity.

29% said they experienced poor internet connectivity **rarely**.

4% report **never** having poor internet connectivity.

Of those businesses who said they always or very often experienced poor internet connectivity, 24% primarily operate in Brisbane and 76% operate in regional Queensland.

Poor internet impacts on business operations

A business perspective

Nadine Zrinzo
Co-founder and Director
Bright Humans

"Poor internet connectivity impacts our daily business operations very often. We struggle to have more than one person on a Zoom call.

We want and need good internet but we need to understand exactly what's going on and how to fix it. We're a service business so beyond emails, web searches and Zoom calls, we're not heavy internet users but it's frustrating when we're reliant on these tools.

We need to be able to communicate and we want to be able to do things as quickly as we can.

As a small business, we don't have a dedicated IT person so one of the owners needs to take time out the business to resolve any issues."

> "
>
> *The coverage out here is very spotty. [We have] constant dropouts and constant overload causing lags."*
>
> *— Small rental, hiring and real estate business, Far North Queensland*

> "
>
> *Poor internet (and internet phone) connections are the bane of our current world. We are constantly having to have meetings with video turned off to increase bandwidth, even though we are connected to the NBN and our meetings are with countries with better internet connectivity than ours (e.g. Chennai, India). There are constant phone and mobile drop-outs within inner Brisbane"*
>
> *— Small professional, scientific and technical services business, Brisbane*

04 WORKPLACE ARRANGEMENTS
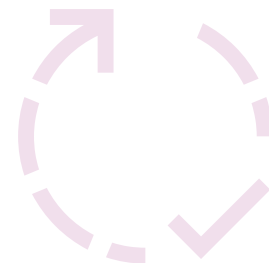
ADAPTING TO THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE

In 2020, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said the COVID-19 pandemic started two years of digital transformation in two months.

The unexpected and rapid workplace decentralisation had opportunities and challenges including an impact on business productivity and employee careers and development.

Businesses knew they needed to adapt to continually evolving workplace demands to be competitive in a tight labour market.

Businesses surveyed in the 2022 Future of Work Report said flexible working arrangements were among their most significant considerations for digital engagement in the future workplace.[1]

An ABS analysis in 2023 revealed working from home had been increasing at about 2% each year even before the pandemic. In the core pandemic years between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of Australians regularly working at home increased by 8% to 40% which has since decreased to 37% in 2024.[2]

Comparing work arrangements pre and post pandemic

The rapid workplace evolution during the pandemic had marginal long-term impacts on businesses' preferences for work.

In 2024, 43% of businesses reported full-time, on-site work was their preferred model, compared to 59% pre-pandemic.

Hybrid work arrangements as the most preferred model rose 8% to 29% in 2024 while businesses' preference for a flexible schedule increased 4% to 15% in 2024.

The percentage of businesses which preferred full-time remote work increased 3% to 5.74% in 2024.

Data: Preferred workplace arrangement - Pre pandemic (2019)

59%	21%	11%	3%
FULL-TIME ON-SITE WORK	HYBRID WORK	FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE	FULL-TIME REMOTE WORK

Data: Preferred workplace arrangement - Post pandemic (2024)

43%	29%	15%	6%
FULL-TIME ON-SITE WORK	HYBRID WORK	FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE	FULL-TIME REMOTE WORK
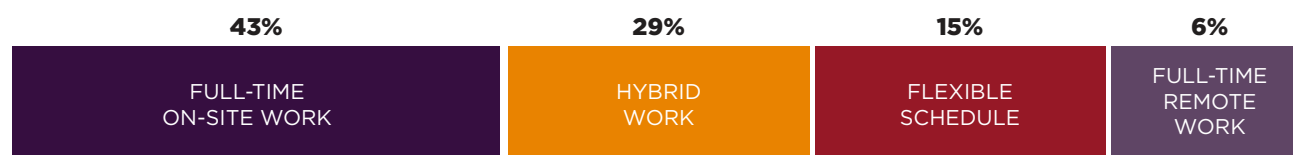
Key finding

- Workplace disruption since the pandemic had marginal long-term impacts on businesses' preferences.

1 Business Chamber Queensland, 2022, 'Future of Work Report'
2 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, "Working arrangements"

05 SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

The World Economic Forum describes the skills shortage impacting workplaces globally as a 'reskilling emergency'.

It is expected technology will transform close to one third of all jobs (about a billion) this decade and millions of jobs that do not currently exist will emerge.[1] Slow-burn, long-course credentialling that lasts a lifetime is becoming less relevant in many industries, in favour of micro-credentialling.

In this context, a micro-credential generally refers to the formal recognition of a specific ability or experience. The term usually relates to either a subset of a traditional degree, diploma or certificate, or a certified qualification that sits outside of the formal system.

Employers are struggling to find work ready staff, and businesses are doing more in-house training and talent development in situations where the new-world skills can simply not be found externally in adequate supply.

As workforce vocational skill demand evolves, stronger emphasis is on broader, adaptable attributes.

This trend, coupled with micro-credentialling developments, points to a business climate where businesses seek smart, adaptable staff who can evolve and learn on the job.

Survey findings: Skills needs

The Digital Future of Work survey shows businesses are preparing for change, and training staff internally to keep pace with labour needs.
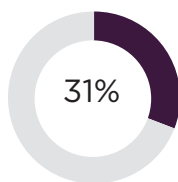
The results show businesses expect to evolve and retain their current workforce over replacing them with new employees.

There is low expectation of the system delivering all the necessary skills from outside the organisation.
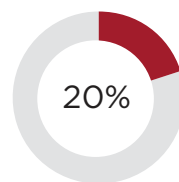

MICRO CREDENTIALS
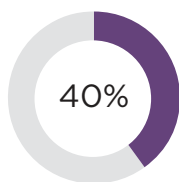
40% said there was some need for recognition of micro-credentials and informal training.

31% reported a strong or critical need to recognise micro-credentials or informal training.

20% of respondents believed there was no need.
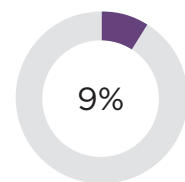
9% of respondents described the need as critical.

JOB REQUIREMENTS
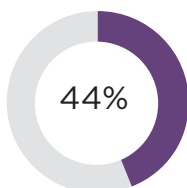
44% saw some need to change task descriptions and job requirements in existing roles over the next five years.

28% of respondents saw a strong need.

21% of respondents believed there was no need.

7% of respondents rated this need as critical.

1 World Economic Forum, 2020, "We need a global reskilling revolution — here's why"

Survey findings: Soft skills development

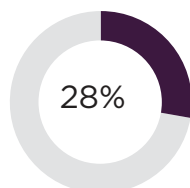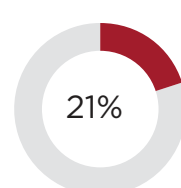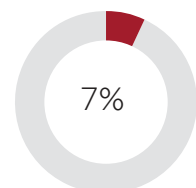More than 17% of businesses in the Digital Future of Work Survey expected a critical need for people with stronger communication, personal and soft (non-technical) skills over the next five years.

A further 37% saw a strong need. 17% of businesses saw a critical need for new skills and retraining to meet technological change over the next five years. Only 12% saw no need for this retraining.

38%
saw a strong need

33%
saw some need

17%
saw critical need

12%
saw no need
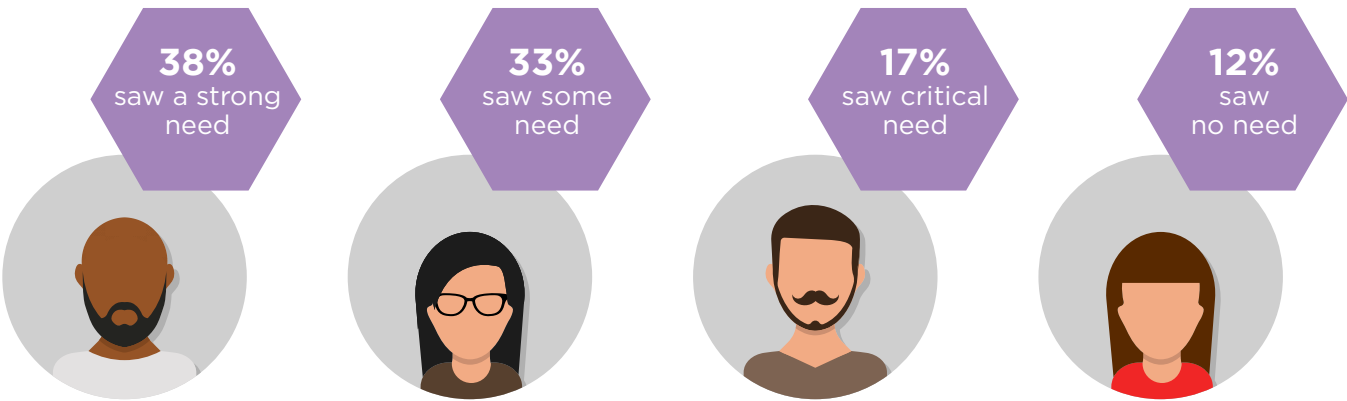
Non-permanent labour

The Fair Work Ombudsman describes the gig economy as a process where "individuals provide services to consumers for a fee via digital platforms or marketplaces."[1]

Unlike other forms of non-permanent labour, the gig world has largely developed from the activation of readily available assets that were previously underutilised — private cars for ride share, spare time for odd jobs and services, and bicycles for food delivery are examples.

Survey findings: Non-permanent labour

43% saw some need to increase the use and availability of casual, contractor and gig workers.

27% don't expect a need to increase the use and availability of casual, contractor and gig workers in the future.

23% saw a strong need to increase the use and availability of casual, contractor and gig workers.

6% saw critical need to increase the use and availability of casual, contractor and gig workers over the next five years.

1 Fair Work Ombudsman, 2024, "Gig economy"

Importing skills and labour

The prevailing skills and labour shortages in Australia have driven fresh national debate about the country's ability to produce the talent base needed to drive its economic future.

Historically, shortages have largely been addressed through immigration policy.

In the current environment, housing shortages and cost pressures have placed greater challenges on importing labour to fill gaps.

Survey findings: The need for interstate and international workers in Queensland

45% saw no need

29% saw some need

16% saw strong need

10% saw critical need
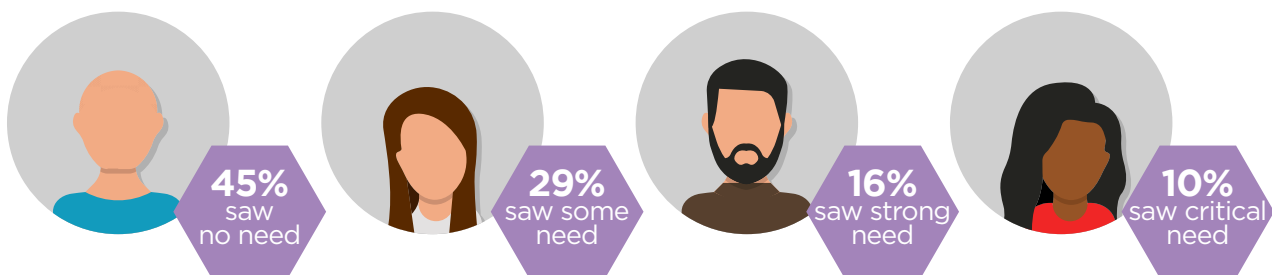
Key findings

- Employers are expecting more micro-credentialling and informal training to keep employee skills up to date.
- Most businesses see a need for changed tasks and job descriptions over the next five years.
- Just over half of businesses see some need to bring workers from interstate and overseas to fill skill gaps.

A business perspective

Philip Jenkins
Business owner, Benchmark Business Solutions

"Training for the job and the skills required for the job is entirely different to training for leadership and management.

I'm observing when businesses adopt systems, those systems can drive everything from strategy to behaviour. The risk is workforces lose the ability to think through and solve challenges which they face every day, allowing systems to drive us and business.

In an increasingly digitised world, the solution is a balanced focus on digital and personal skills – tech expertise to work with systems and technology but also personal skills to manage when systems fail.

This will become more critical as technology, and society's reliance on it, develops. I'm a great believer in change – in a measured and smart fashion."

IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS

IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS FOR THE DIGITAL FUTURE OF WORK

Artificial Intelligence and technology

While AI has many potential efficiency benefits, only 18% of businesses are actively exploring AI solutions and nearly one in three want to learn more about AI and the opportunities it presents. As with the early stages of digital adoption, businesses need support in the AI business transition.

Cyber security

While 15% of businesses reported a cyber attack in the past year, the survey suggests a relatively low level of confidence overall about preparedness for these attacks.

Given the potential risk to business continuity and personal privacy, it is important small businesses in particular are equipped with the support they need to create sufficiently robust digital systems.

Internet connectivity

The survey found 7% of businesses always have trouble with their internet connectivity. Our technology infrastructure is just as important as our bridges, roads and airports. Fixing the connectivity gaps needs to be a priority.

Investment in high-speed internet and digital infrastructure across the state with a focus on regional areas will improve connectivity and enhance digital opportunities.

Workplace evolution and flexibility

The survey provides some interesting insights into how Queensland workplaces have evolved after the fast-track change to work from home and greater flexibility models during COVID-19.

For example, a third of businesses report some workforce productivity impact from the workplace evolution of the past five years.

It also needs to be recognised, while employers have long supported a more flexible and progressive approach to industrial laws and regulations, the push for greater workplace flexibility is largely being driven by employees.

Regulators and policy makers need to recognise this, and ensure the rules match the needs and wants of both employees and employers.

Skills and training

Businesses expect roles and the skills required in their business to evolve with technology change over the next five years. They are also expecting to need greater micro-credentialling and in-house training to help their people make this transition.

If micro-credentialling and in-house training is to be portable for employees, there will need to be clear and consistent approaches to placing formal value on skills attained in the workplace.

The findings also highlight the need for continuing reform in the education and training sectors to ensure the system is flexible enough to keep up with rapid skills change and versatile enough to keep evolving at a faster pace than was envisaged in the system's original design.

With such a high level of public investment in the training sector, it needs to be fit for purpose.

Industry is best placed to work with government to prioritise relevant and work-ready programs in cyber security, AI and digital strategy to support businesses in developing digital skills. A digital centre of excellence can lead the state in digital innovation and skills development.
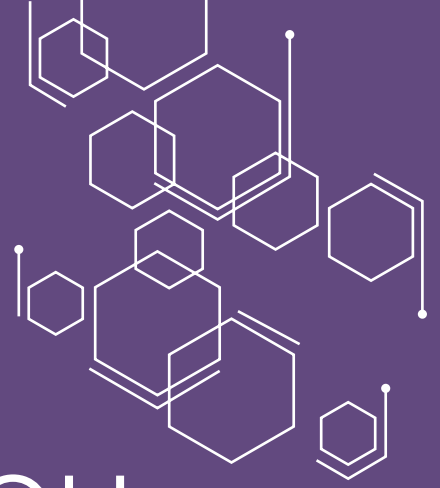
SUPER AND YOU: PARTNER FEATURE

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU IN A SUPER FUND?

This year's survey was delivered in partnership with Australian Retirement Trust and included questions about superannuation.

Topics were surveyed to understand how Queensland businesses perceived their level of importance, and to track trends and attitudes towards super funds.

Summary of findings

- 60% of respondents believe support from super funds in relation to employer super obligations (e.g. paying super contributions) is either somewhat or very important.

- Just under two thirds (60%) agree it is either somewhat or very important to receive support from super funds when it comes to digital solutions to make onboarding employees easier.

- A majority of respondents (74%) are of the view it is either somewhat or very important to receive support from super funds in relation to understanding changes due to mandated superannuation legislation (e.g. PayDay Super).

- Almost half (48%) believe it is not very important or not at all important super funds support the provision of financial education for employees, while 52% see value in super funds helping employees find financial advice and guidance.

- More than half (58%) agree it is somewhat or very important for super funds to support the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

Australian Retirement Trust

About Australian Retirement Trust

Australian Retirement Trust is one of Australia's largest super funds.

Close to 2.4 million Australians trust us to take care of over $300 billion of their retirement savings.

We're here to help our members retire well with confidence, focused on strong long-term investment returns, lower fees and the information and access to advice our members need to manage their super and retirement.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESPONSE PROFILE

OUR RESEARCH

In the 2024 Digital Future of Work survey, Business Chamber Queensland sought to understand the unique challenges associated with workplace transformation businesses experience, including rapid advancements in digital technology.

In addition to presenting survey findings, this report aims to provide meaningful insights and potential actions for Queensland businesses to strategically plan for their future.
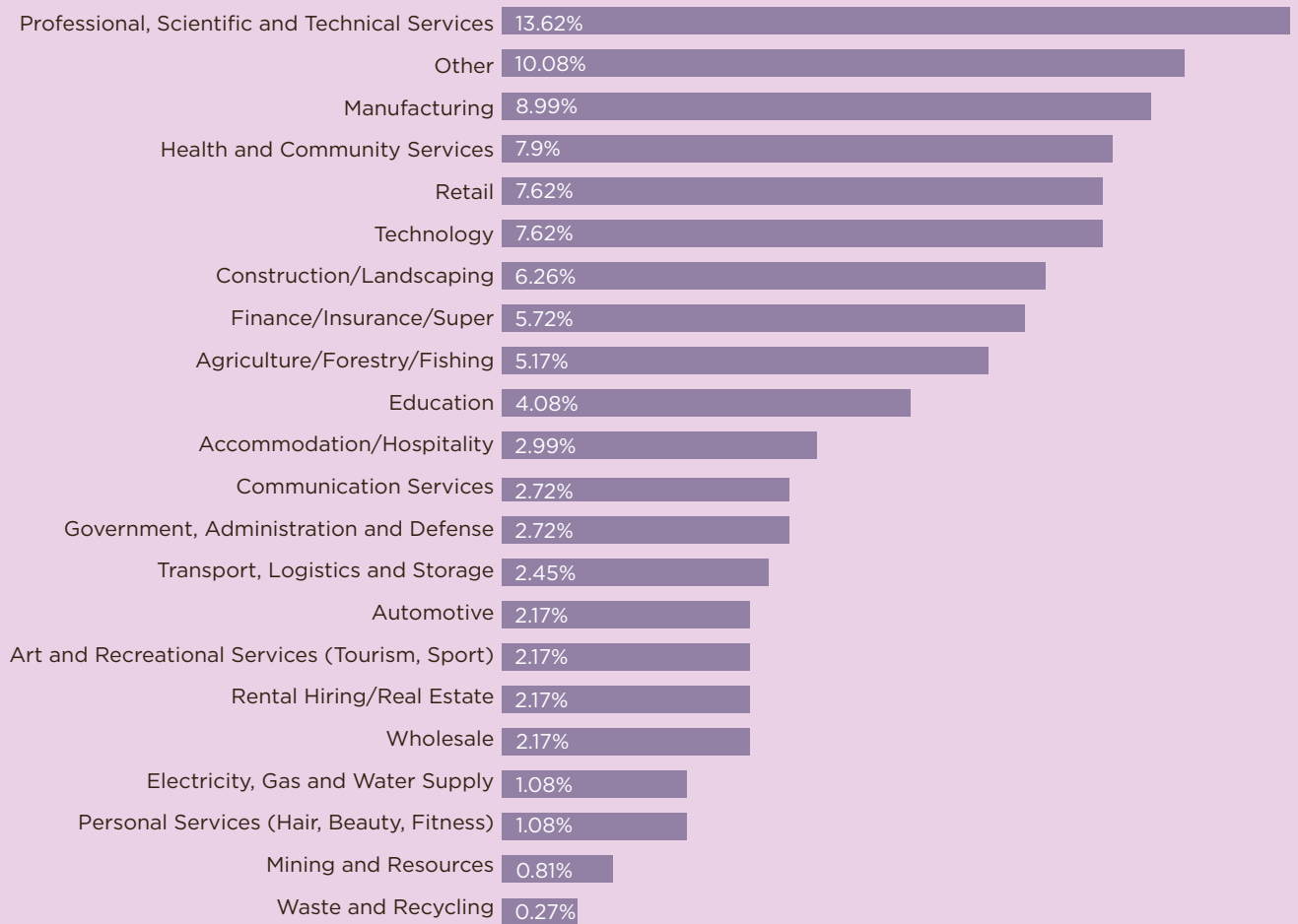
It is Business Chamber Queensland's expectation this report also informs further collaboration — between the wider Queensland business community and all levels of government — to rapidly prepare the state for future opportunities.

Prior to the development of the Digital Future of Work survey, Business Chamber Queensland gathered insights from Queensland businesses to ensure it captured key topics affecting workplace transformation, such as the use of artificial intelligence, cyber security risk and working arrangements.
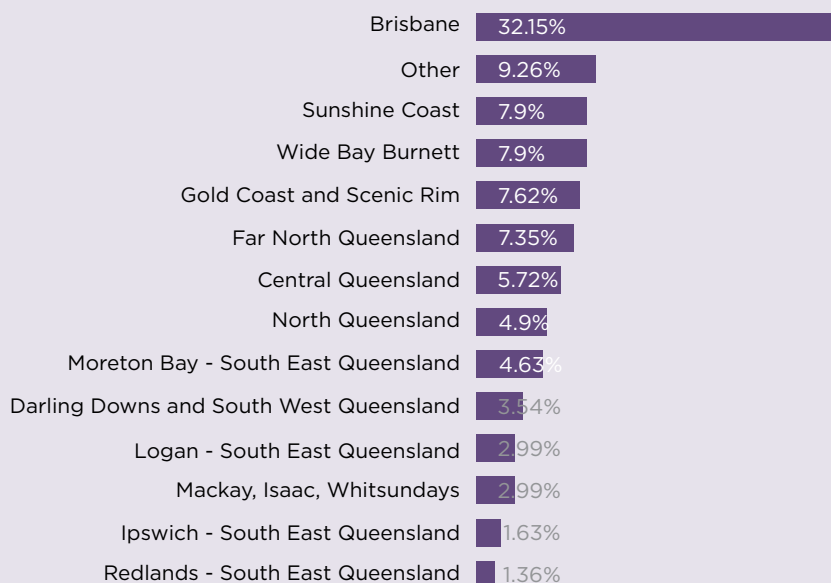
The survey was open for five weeks from 5 February to 10 March 2024, and achieved a sample of 367.
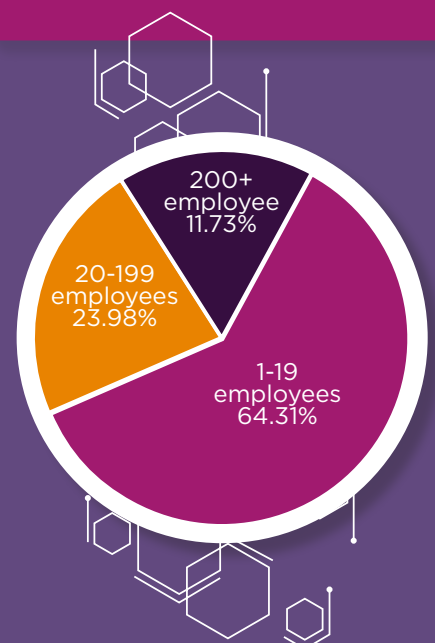
Industry breakdown of survey responses

Industry	Percentage
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	13.62%
Other	10.08%
Manufacturing	8.99%
Health and Community Services	7.9%
Retail	7.62%
Technology	7.62%
Construction/Landscaping	6.26%
Finance/Insurance/Super	5.72%
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	5.17%
Education	4.08%
Accommodation/Hospitality	2.99%
Communication Services	2.72%
Government, Administration and Defense	2.72%
Transport, Logistics and Storage	2.45%
Automotive	2.17%
Art and Recreational Services (Tourism, Sport)	2.17%
Rental Hiring/Real Estate	2.17%
Wholesale	2.17%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	1.08%
Personal Services (Hair, Beauty, Fitness)	1.08%
Mining and Resources	0.81%
Waste and Recycling	0.27%

Region breakdown of survey responses

Region	Percentage
Brisbane	32.15%
Other	9.26%
Sunshine Coast	7.9%
Wide Bay Burnett	7.9%
Gold Coast and Scenic Rim	7.62%
Far North Queensland	7.35%
Central Queensland	5.72%
North Queensland	4.9%
Moreton Bay - South East Queensland	4.63%
Darling Downs and South West Queensland	3.54%
Logan - South East Queensland	2.99%
Mackay, Isaac, Whitsundays	2.99%
Ipswich - South East Queensland	1.63%
Redlands - South East Queensland	1.36%

SURVEY RESPONSES BY BUSINESS SIZE

- 200+ employee 11.73%
- 20-199 employees 23.98%
- 1-19 employees 64.31%