

Aged care

A sector rediscovering its strength

HESTA began the State of the Sector workforce research in 2020 to help the health and community services sector tackle workforce challenges and improve retirement outcomes. Back then, aged care workers reported feeling undervalued and uncertain about their future in the sector. We revisited the research in 2022 and again in 2024 to understand how members' views have evolved. These are the 2024 findings.



Over the past two years, aged care staffing shortages have been exacerbated by an ageing population and increased demand for services, leading to increased workloads for employees.¹

To help improve care delivery and operational efficiency in the face of staffing challenges, employers are increasingly adopting digital technologies.² Meanwhile, the Fair Work Commission is phasing in the 23% award wage increase for aged care nurses, with the full increase to be implemented by August 2026.³

After a period of significant challenge, the aged care workforce is showing signs of meaningful recovery compared to the results of HESTA's research in 2022. In 2024, key indicators across enjoyment, pride and optimism have lifted, marking a return to pre-2022 levels and, in some areas, a step beyond. This renewed positivity appears to be shaped by both policy and purpose. Many employees report feeling more valued than they were two years ago, with stronger career optimism likely buoyed by the award wage increases in 2023 and 2024, and further uplifts to come.

Relationships remain at the heart of the aged care experience. Staff are more likely than peers in most other health and community services to cite client and resident connections as a core source of enjoyment in their work.⁴ However, this deep sense of purpose continues to be tested by familiar pressures, including under-resourcing and high workloads. The sector also stands out for its pace of change. Aged care leads health and community services in the adoption of new technologies, and crucially, in preparing staff to use them.⁴ Clear communication, training and hands-on support are helping frontline teams adapt and thrive.

Despite recent gains, some employer-focused measures remain below the health and community services average — particularly advocacy for leaders and main employer services. Fewer than half of aged care workers agreed their employer “acts in their best interests” or “appreciates their work”, and only 40% felt supported to “succeed to their full potential”.⁴ Strengthening day-to-day support and recognition will be key to turning short-term gains into lasting workforce confidence.

Culture

There are positive signals across workplace culture, with more employees feeling they can be themselves at work (+2%), along with increases in their sense of belonging (+3%) and self-positivity (+7%) compared to 2022.



It makes me feel I am putting something back into the community. ”

Energised

40%

+1% from 2022

Feel energised in their work, the second highest across health and community services.

Understood

57%

+2% from 2022

Feel they can be themselves, an encouraging sign of inclusion and psychological safety in the sector.

Supported

47%

Feel they have the support, tools and resources required to perform their role.

Experience

The frontline experience is improving, but ongoing pressure points remain. Under-resourcing, stress and salary are still the most commonly cited challenges.

Role satisfaction



Feel a sense of personal reward in their role.

Role dissatisfaction*

29% Feel under-resourced.

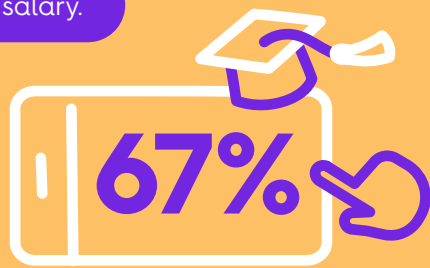
24% Experience workload pressure.

18% Report dissatisfaction with salary.

Technology adoption

18%

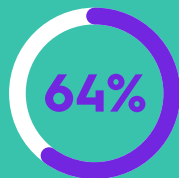
Reported new tech adoption^ (highest among health and community services) in the 12 months prior to the survey.



Of those using new tech^ feel prepared to use it largely due to strong training, clear communication and support.

Fulfilment

Aged care workers continue to find strong meaning in their roles, driven by personal reward and deep connections with the people they care for.



Industry enjoyment

+10% from 2022.



Career opportunities

+13% from 2022.

Highest uplift across all health and community services.



Appreciation

Feel their work is appreciated by their main employer.

Performance

Key performance indicators are trending upwards. Employer advocacy has recovered since a large decline in 2022, though it remains below several other health and community services sectors.



Employer Net

Promoter Score†

Up from -21 in 2022, a substantial +18 point rebound.

Employee sentiment

50%

Believe their employer acts honestly and ethically.



Source: HESTA workforce research 2024; Aged care sample size n=666. The statistics presented are based on responses from participants in the 2024 study and are not representative of the entire population.

¹ Not enough workers to solve labour shortage in 2025, Aged Care Inside, 2 February 2023.

² Aged Care Market Analysis 2024, KPMG, June 2024.

³ Fair Work Commission Work Value Case – Aged Care Industry, Commonwealth’s Submissions Concerning Operative Date and Phasing In, 12 April 2024.

⁴ HESTA workforce research 2024; Aged care sample size n=666.

* Respondents could select up to 3 options.

^ Such as new software or generative AI.

† Likelihood to recommend their main employer to a family member or friend as a place to work.

What this means for the sector

The aged care sector is in a moment of renewal with promising signs of sector pride and purpose re-emerging. But the pressure remains real. Employees are calling for more than just wage increases. They want to feel supported, heard, and empowered in their roles. Persistent issues, from staffing shortfalls to stress, continues to affect trust in and advocacy for their employers.

Leaders now have a window of opportunity to strengthen support systems, continue to champion career pathways, and build recognition into the everyday employee experience. It's not just about retention, but also creating a sector where people feel equipped and inspired to build their future. That means addressing resourcing, alongside other factors such as wellbeing, workload, and the confidence to use new technologies in a changing care environment.

About the HESTA Workforce Research

This report draws on insights from State of the Sector: COVID & Beyond — a foundational research series that began with two survey waves in May 2019 and July 2020. It is further informed by national workforce research conducted in November 2022 (~3,400 participants, including ~550 aged care workers) and November 2024 (~4,200 participants, including ~700 aged care workers). All results are weighted to reflect the HESTA member base across each health and community services sector.



**I love my job.
My work place is
my second home
and everyone
there is a family
to me. ”**



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Four actions you can take

1

**Build trust through
transparent, two-way
communication.**

2

**Pair technology investment
with hands-on training to
build digital confidence.**

3

**Empower staff with
autonomy and purpose
in their day-to-day roles.**

4

**Make wellbeing and
recognition visible, frequent,
and part of daily culture.**

With more than a million members beside us, we know what matters to them.

Access workforce reports, support tools and educational resources for you and your employees today or email yourindustryfund@hesta.com.au

 **Access support
and resources**