

Australian Federal Police Association

Membership Research Report 2019



AFPA

Australian Federal
Police Association

Research Objective and Participation Rate

Test member satisfaction with AFPA direction and resourcing

Benchmark concerns about member mental health and access to mental health support

Understand attitudinal differences between sworn and professional workforce

Gauge member satisfaction with their workplace conditions and the 2018-2021 Enterprise Agreement

1,242 or 31% of AFPA members participated in the survey

Key Insights

Members are unhappy with the outcome of the last Enterprise Agreement, with most resentment directed towards the conduct of the AFP, rather than the AFPA.

However, for many members, dissatisfaction with the Enterprise Agreement has negatively affected many aspects of their attitudes towards the AFPA.

Members relationship with the AFP is compromising members access to mental wellness support services.

The perceived poor conduct and attitude of the AFP towards mental wellness prevents member from utilising the services on offer.

A lack of trust in both the quality of service and wider framework to assist people requiring support means members either look elsewhere, or don't seek help.

Enterprise Agreement

Much of the resentment is directed towards the attitude and conduct of the AFP during negotiations.

Many viewed the lengthy negotiations as a deliberate tactic by the AFP to weaken the negotiating position of the AFPA and avoid paying wage increases. That the eventual raises were not back-dated caused much anger.

Members felt that the Government framework, which restricted bargaining, was unfair, as the role and challenges of policing is different to other departments to which the framework is applied.

In future EA processes, members would like to see the AFPA start negotiations in a stronger position by effectively lobbying Government early and establishing a clear strategy.

Work Satisfaction

Just 7% reported being extremely satisfied with their current role, with a further 43% satisfied.

Satisfaction with the role is driven by a sense of reward in working in a challenging environment, but one which benefits the community and country.

All AFP employees, particularly sworn members, highly rate the relationship with their colleagues and immediate supervisor.

91% rate their relationship with colleagues as good or excellent and 80% the relationship with their team leader. The support received from these sources is also rated highly by most members.

Work Satisfaction

Dissatisfaction is caused in the main by the relationship with the AFP. 28% of members say they have no trust in their employer to do the right thing by them, and a further 33% have little trust. Trust is lower among sworn members (64% with no or little trust) than professional members (50%).

Specifically issues such as the leadership within the employer (55% rating as poor or very poor), promotion opportunities (54%) and the strategic direction (41%) are causes of the dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with the AFP is more evident among sworn officers. When asked to rate different aspects of their work, sworn officers were more likely to score the remuneration, support for physical wellbeing, resourcing, promotion opportunities, and the direction and leadership within the organisation lower than the professional members.

Wellbeing

Mental wellness is a critical concern for members, and with 29% saying they have considered seeking support in the last 12 months, and 60% of these accessing an internal or external service, it is clearly an area in which the AFPA has a role to play.

Many of the concerns from members regarding their relationship with the AFP and its conduct raised earlier are revealed in issues regarding mental wellbeing. Those with low trust in their employer are more likely to use an external support service, than the one offered through their employer.

43% rate their the AFP's support for mental wellbeing as poor or very poor.

Wellbeing

Members also mention the institutional prejudices within the AFP – ignorance of mental wellbeing, unwillingness to accommodate recovery and ongoing health and discrimination of those who have sought help are all examples members gave why this issue is not being addressed by the employer.

There would be strong support for an AFPA/external mental wellbeing service.

78% of members who considered support in the last 12 months would have considered using such a service if it existed and, among the wider membership, 75% would support such an initiative.

Enterprise Agreement

The latest EA negotiation has been one of the defining events of the past few years for the AFPA and members.

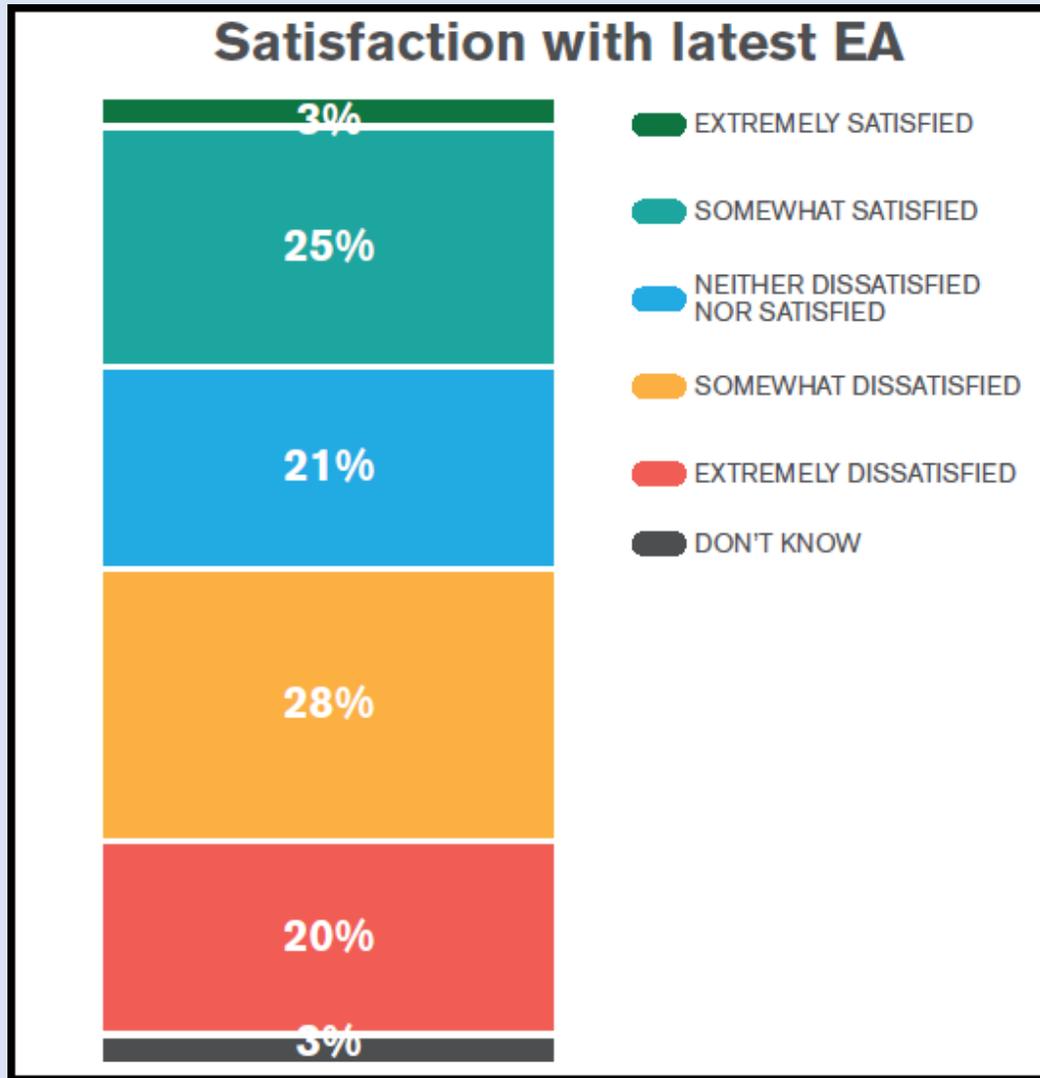
Just under half of all members (48%) are dissatisfied with the outcome of the EA, and this is even higher among sworn members (54%).

Just 28% said they were somewhat or extremely satisfied with the outcome.

Many members felt the AFPA was somewhat ineffectual at delivering the optimal outcome for members, with 35% being dissatisfied with the AFPA being able to get the best deal for them.

Despite this dissatisfaction with the outcome, many felt that the AFPA did the best it could, given the situation.

Enterprise Agreement



54% of the sworn members state they are not satisfied with the latest EA, among professional members it is 29%.

Higher levels of dissatisfaction in Victoria (71%) and NSW (61%).

Satisfaction is higher among those, who have less than 5 years working experience with the AFP (41%).

Enterprise Agreement

Members expressed their belief that they got the best deal they could at the time.

There is a sentiment that the EA bargaining process has caused significant damage to morale and faith in the AFP Executive.

There is a sentiment that the AFP doesn't truly value their employees, and this was reflected in the last EA.

The majority of conditions remained unchanged from the previous EA, while the reduction to safety net hours is more reflective of safe work practice.

That the AFPA let the AFP drag the EA out over 3 years which effectively gave them the money to fund the current EA. That there was no back pay.

The EA process was obviously too lengthy, but I was satisfied that the AFPA advocate the best available outcome for members.

The government bargaining policy led to a woeful outcome and destruction in moral within the AFP.

We didn't lose any conditions and still got a small pay rise

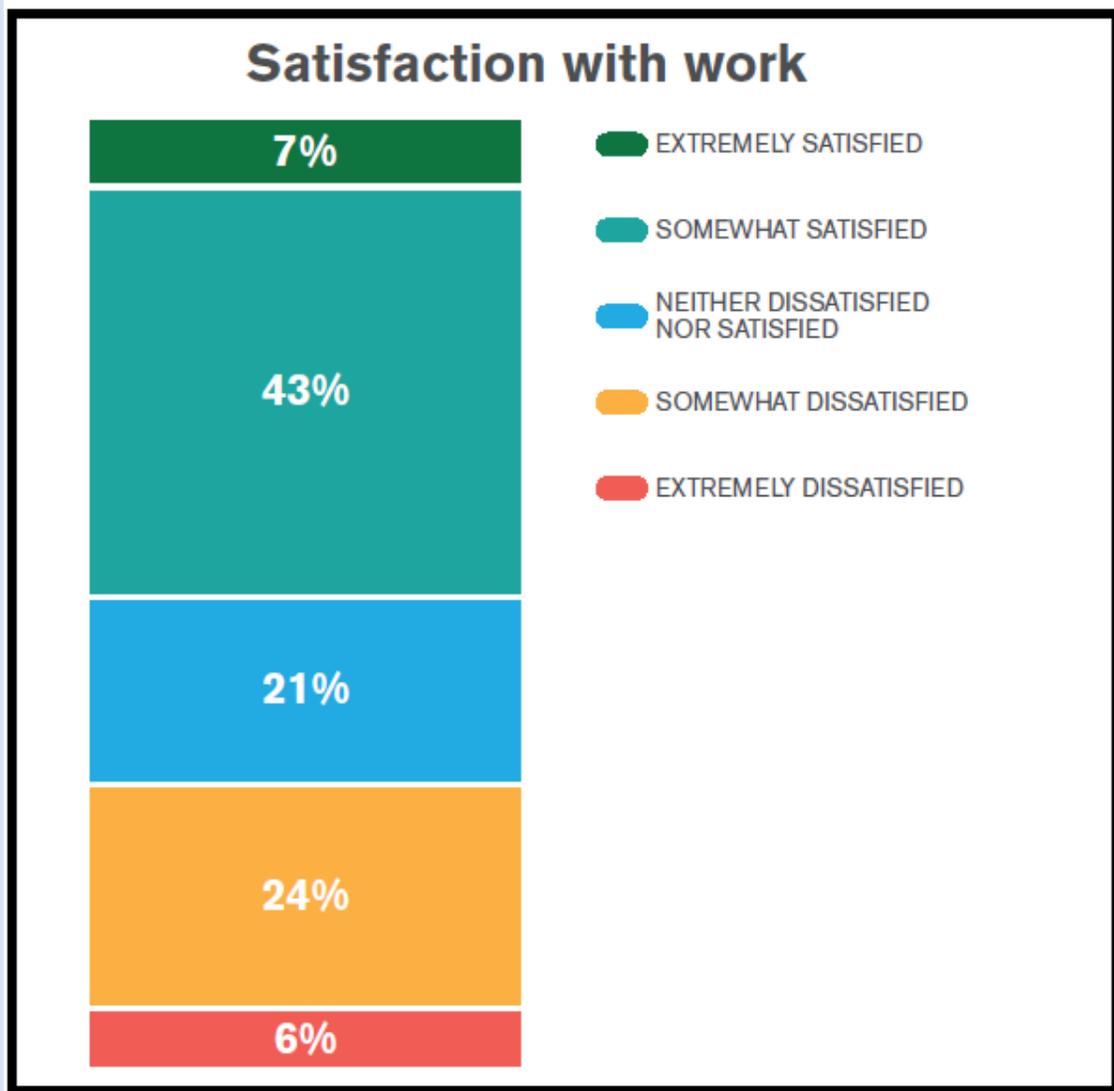
Enterprise Agreement

In terms of the AFPA's involvement in the EA, there is a strong belief that the AFPA communicated well with members throughout the process, however many felt they were at a disadvantage in negotiations from the beginning.

Many of the members don't believe the current policy framework imposed by the government reflects the nature of the work police do, which involves greater risks to their safety and wellbeing and different expectations around working hours.

The absence of a policy around backpay in negotiations has most members furious. Members believe the AFP took advantage of this last time and therefore believe the AFPA needs to campaign against this policy ahead of the next EA.

Satisfaction with role, leadership and relationships



Professional members are more likely to be extremely satisfied with their job than sworn members (11% vs. 6%)

Sworn members who have been working for less than 5 years have a higher satisfaction in their role than others (78% are satisfied or extremely satisfied vs. 49% of longer servicing sworn members).

Members in NSW have the highest dissatisfaction (48%, with 12% extremely dissatisfied).

Satisfaction is also lower among those with a diverse cultural background, with just 39% saying they are satisfied

Satisfaction with role, leadership and relationships

Sworn members in particular lack confidence in the human resources services. This gives them a negative view of the opportunities for career growth and personal development.

The transparency of the transfer and promotion process is also viewed negatively.

Members attribute these issues along with a lack of trust and faith in the leadership to what they view as a poor culture and low morale across the organisation. Some refer to it as a “toxic environment”.

It's interesting and challenging enough to keep me motivated without interfering with my personal life. My dissatisfaction is with our leadership.

Little faith in management. No faith in the promotion structure.

An intensely toxic and political working environment where reports of bullying, poor leadership behaviours and associated issues are not acted upon in any meaningful way and where release from the area to an at level position to escape is often denied or difficult to secure, alongside constant restrictions in FTE and budget so that staff are doing more with less. Morale is very low.

The work is rewarding and mostly enjoyable. I feel like I make a difference to the community.

I constantly encounter issues with investigations, morale, culture, administration and finance that repeatedly crushes motivation and reduces loyalty.

No overtime is paid.

Satisfaction with role, leadership and relationships

In terms of the leadership, members don't feel valued. PSO's in particular feel looked down upon.

Opportunities are also a significant issue; members have very little confidence in the promotion system, which also affects the extent to which they feel valued.

Remuneration is a significant issue for the membership. Sworn officers do not believe it sufficiently addresses the nature and risk of the work.

Many members don't believe they have the sufficient resources to do their job properly and feel they are expected to do more with less.

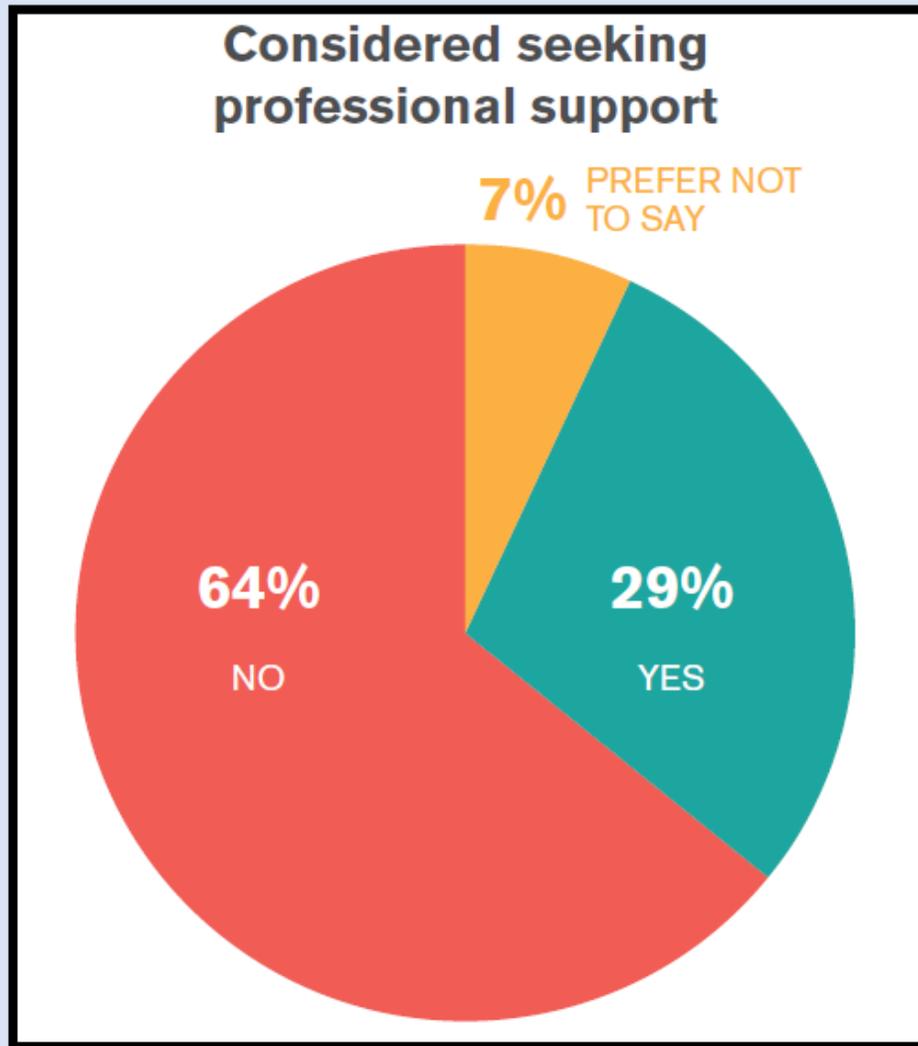
More recently I think Policing has lost its way, predominately through over administration, financial restraints and government expectations. The job remains tough, but we are limited in being able to do the job to a standard we can be proud of. I am concerned about the future of Policing as the role continues to get further away from what we joined up to do.

The promotional system (if you want to call it a system at all) is a joke. It is cumbersome and not transparent. It does not value experience and does not account for longevity.

The last pay rise was a joke. It does not and has not kept up with inflation or the real cost of living. The AFP is now one of the lowest paid Police Forces in Australia.

As a PSO my team and I are continually undermined and ostracised by our peers (Police and Professional Staff) and management team. The portfolio is heavily under resourced and we continue to achieve outstanding results in a field where we receive little support.

Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Those with low trust in their employer are more likely to have considered seeking help than those who trust their employer.

Members who had lower trust in the AFP were more likely to have sought professional support independently and away from the organisation (36% of members who considered seeking support and trust the AFP used the internal service compared to 25% of those who didn't trust their employer)

Sworn members within ACT Policing were most likely to have sought professional support compared to the rest of the workforce.

Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many of the issues identified throughout the research culminate in an impact on mental wellbeing for members. Lack of trust with the AFP, poor organisational culture, lack of resources and funding all contribute to the fact that members have little faith in the AFP to deliver the professional support they need.

There is a perception that the AFP does not take wellbeing seriously, and therefore does not provide the necessary network and support.

Members feel that 'lip service' is being paid with 'knee-jerk' reactions and short-term solutions, rather than implementing a suitable solution.

It took me a long time to reach out to AFP Welfare when I was suffering. It was when I nearly committed suicide that I realised I had to reach out. At this time I also decided that I would withdraw my Comcare claim as the claim and the AFP were not worth taking my life for. This decision also included consideration that anything I said to AFP Welfare could be used against me.

The AFP offers extremely poor mental health support services to its employees. I had a mental breakdown at work in 2019 and had to wait 2.5 weeks to see a psychologist through Employer Assistance Program (EAP).

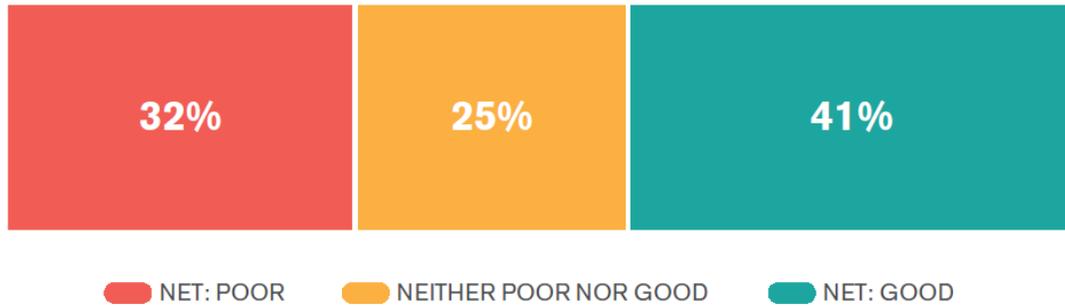
ACTP is extremely apathetic and non-supportive for people with mental illnesses. Very little, if anything, is done to support them - the bare essentials only. I have witnessed this on a few occasions.

The Executive like to be seen to be doing the right thing, whether it be for mental health or career development but really only pay lip service to these matters. There is no real substance in what they do.

I do not feel that the AFP nor ACT Policing is particularly concerned with my mental health or career progression. I have raised the fact that I am extremely fatigued and require a break from general duties on a number of occasions only to be told that staffing numbers are too low to be released or moved to an area away from frontline Policing. I am seriously considering leaving the organisation due to the lack of flexibility moving from general duties in ACT Policing.

Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing

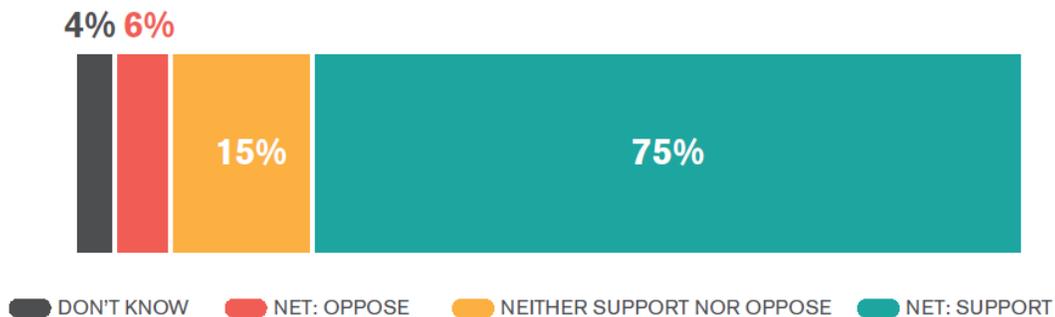
Rating of support received through internal service



Members overwhelmingly support an external mental health service to the AFP.

However there was some concern that despite it being provided as an external service, members' anonymity may not be maintained as absences from work would still need to be communicated to the employer.

Support for establishment of independent psychological service





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