



Social support and connection

The APS Employee Census has an underlying framework that identifies and considers conditions within workplaces that influence employee and workgroup performance.

This guide explores one element of this framework, social support and connection, and outlines:

- What social support and connection is
- Its effects
- The specific questions that measure social support and connection
- Tips for improving results

Have
your
say



2026 APS
Employee Census

4 May–5 June

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Relationships at work can affect employees' productivity, stress levels, and the ability to think and work at their best. The support gained from social connection is necessary for employees' positive mental health, but it also acts as a buffer for work stress and burnout.

Social connectedness affects more than employees' work performance. People who feel they have greater social connectedness are known to be happier and have better physical and mental health. As many employees spend a great deal of their time at work, relationships in the workplace can have a significant influence on their overall health and wellbeing.

In 2026, the following questions relate to employees' perceptions of social support in their workplace.

- **22e.** My supervisor is invested in my development - higher *Strongly agree* and *Agree* responses indicate higher employee perceptions of social connection.
- **22g.** My supervisor actively ensures that everyone can be included in workplace activities - higher *Strongly agree* and *Agree* responses indicate higher employee perceptions of social connection.
- **30d.** I receive the respect I deserve from my colleagues at work - higher *Always* and *Often* responses indicate higher employee perceptions of social connection.

Actions to improve scores on these questions

- Communicate the value of social connections through workplace policies and procedures.
- Promote a team culture in which workers assist and support each other to achieve group goals.
- Support open communication and encourage workers to share their concerns about work-related stressors at an early stage.
- Hold formal and informal team-building activities to improve team cohesion.
- Establish a peer support system and a mentoring/buddy program for new starters.
- Provide the time to talk through problems with workers and try to promote an 'open door' policy.
- Foster awareness of the importance of having a healthy work-life balance.
- Take an interest in workers' lives beyond the workplace whilst being respectful of personal and professional boundaries.
- Deal sensitively with workers who are experiencing problems.
- Try to be aware of non-work-related stressors that might be present in workers' lives and allow flexible work arrangements where practicable.
- For remote workers, focus on interaction quality over quantity.
- Facilitate access to resources that address remote work and help employees manage stressors.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction such as leaving time before and after online meetings or organising online social events.