

Tuesday, 19 December 2023

Australians have 200 million days of annual leave due

New data from Roy Morgan shows over 8.8 million Australians in paid employment now have 200 million days of annual leave due – up from 185 million days two years ago. There are a further 5.1 million workers in paid employment who have no leave.

The accrued annual leave of 200 million days is a record high and represents an increase of 15 million (+7.9%) on the 185 million days of accrued annual leave Australians had available in September 2021 two years ago.

Accrued annual leave increased rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic

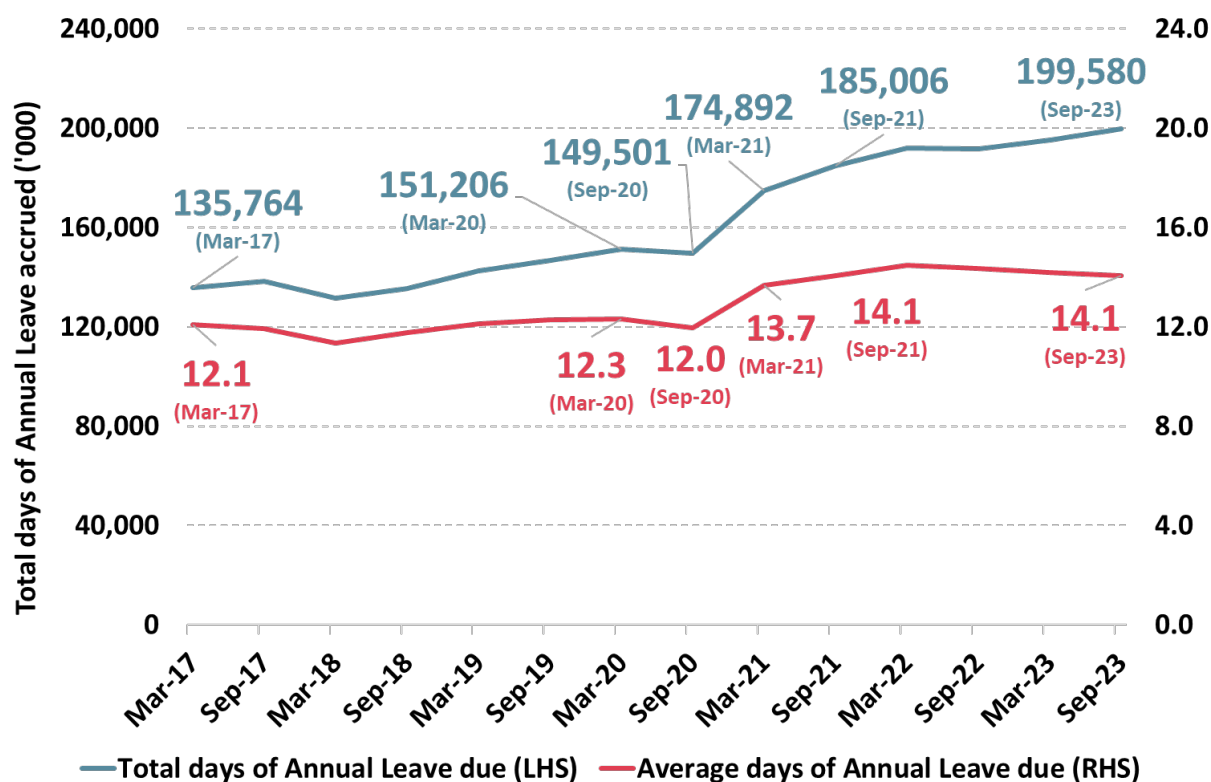
Australians had around 150 million days of annual leave due when the pandemic began in March 2020. This figure increased rapidly during the pandemic years of 2020-2022 and is now over 30% higher than in early 2020.

During the pandemic years the increase in overall accrued annual leave was driven by Australians taking fewer holidays and the average days of annual leave due increased from just over two weeks (12.3 days, March 2020) to nearly three weeks (14.1 days, September 2021).

Over the last two years the average days of annual leave due per worker has remained virtually unchanged at 14.1 days but the overall total has increased as the workforce has swelled significantly.

The latest [Roy Morgan employment figures](#) show the workforce now comprises over 15.5 million workers, up by 1 million from two years ago. This includes over 14 million employed Australians, an increase of over 820,000 over the last two years.

Total annual leave accrued owed to Australia's paid workers (2017-2023)



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), April 2016 – September 2023. Average annual interviews for each 12 months period, n=19,802. **Base:** Australians 14+ in paid employment who are entitled to annual leave.

Over a third of Australian workers have no annual leave, while over one-in-five have over 5 weeks

A large cohort of 5.1 million Australians (36.7% of paid workers) have no annual leave due, up slightly from the 5 million (38.6%) without any annual leave two years ago – although this now represents a smaller share of the growing workforce.

A slight majority of the workforce, now 7 million Australians (50.6% of paid workers), have at least 2 weeks of annual leave due. This is up from 6.5 million (50.7%) two years ago with the increase driven entirely by the larger pool of workers while the share has remained virtually unchanged.

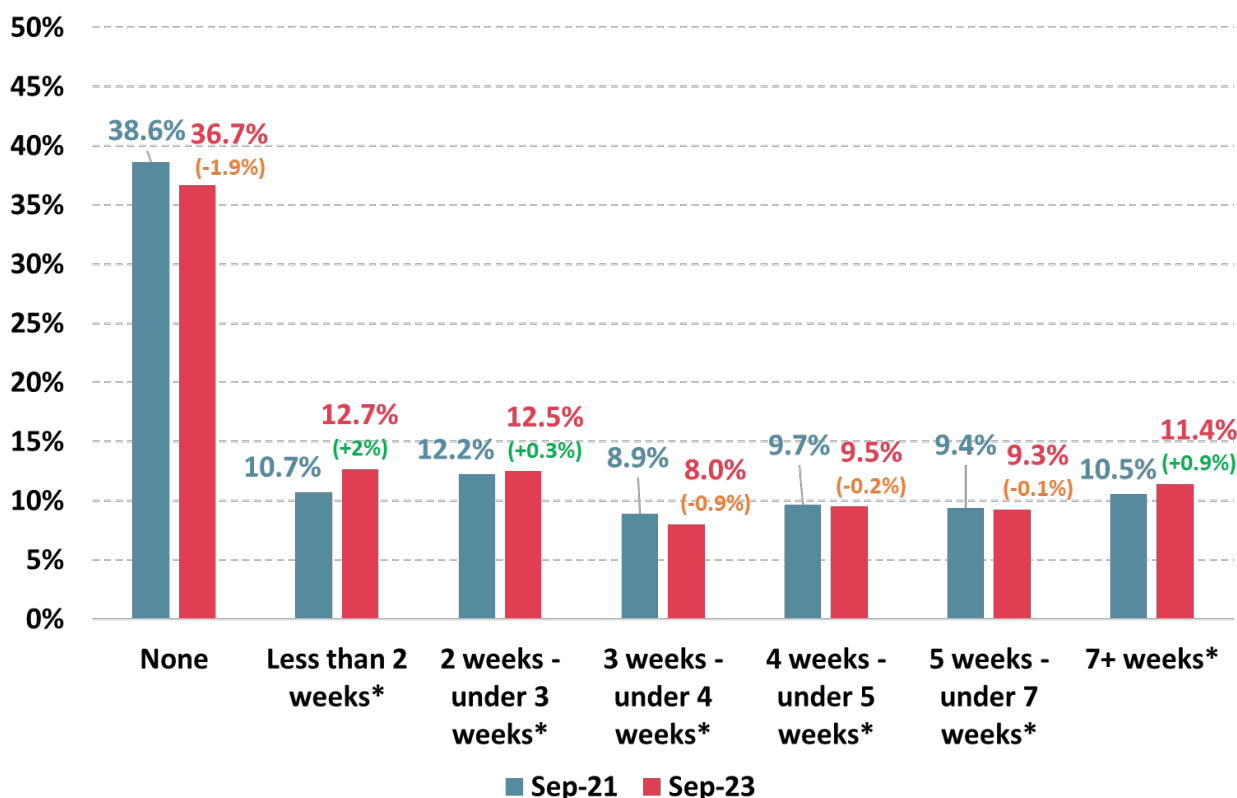
The largest increase has been for those workers with less than 2 weeks of annual leave due, now numbering 1.8 million (12.7% of paid workers), up from 1.4 million (10.7%) two years ago.

In addition, there's a significant increase in the share of workers with greater than 7 weeks of annual leave due, up from (1.35 million, 10.5% of paid workers) two years ago to 1.6 million (11.4%) today.

For more detail see Roy Morgan's employment estimates on the latest trends in Australia's employment markets: ['Australian employment increased to over 14 million for the first time in November, but still over 3 million unemployed or under-employed'](#).

These results are from the Roy Morgan Single Source survey, derived from comprehensive in-depth interviews with over 1,000 Australians each week and around 60,000 Australians per year.

Annual leave owed to Australia's paid workers by length of time (2023 vs. 2021)



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source, Oct. 2020 – Sept. 2021, n=35,510, Oct. 2022 – Sept. 2023, n=39,991.

Base: Australians 14+ in paid employment. *Annual leave owed is calculated based on (working) days owed. Less than 2 weeks: 1-9 days; 2 weeks – under 3 weeks: 10-14 days; 3 weeks – under 4 weeks: 15-19 days; 4 weeks – under 5 weeks: 20-24 days; 5 weeks – under 7 weeks: 25-34 days; 7+ weeks: 35+ days.

Heading into the 2023/24 summer break Australians have a record 200 million days of annual leave saved – up 15 million days from two years ago and up around 50 million days since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020 says Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine:

“The annual leave Australians have accrued soared during the pandemic and has kept increasing since as the Australian workforce has expanded at a record rate over the last 12 months.

“In September 2023 Australians had accrued a record 200 million days of annual leave – an increase of over 30% since March 2020 just before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

“The bulk of this increase occurred during the pandemic years as Australians were forced to stay at home and weren’t allowed to travel internationally, and for much of time not allowed to travel interstate either.

“By September 2021, as restrictions and lockdowns began to ease for the final time, Australians had accrued a total of 185 million days of annual leave. The leave was shared by Australian workers at an average of 14.1 days per worker, up from 12.3 pre-pandemic – an increase of almost two days per worker during the pandemic.

“Since September 2021 the average days of annual leave accrued has stayed constant at 14.1 days but the overall level of accrued annual leave has increased as the workforce has rapidly expanded during the last two years.

“A closer look at how much annual leave Australians have accrued shows increases for those with between 0-3 weeks of annual leave, and also those with 7+ weeks of annual leave. Around a quarter of Australians have either 0-2 weeks of annual leave (12.7%, up 2% points from two years ago) or 2-3 weeks of annual leave (12.5%, up 0.3% points).

“In addition, over one-in-ten Australians (11.4%, up 0.9% points) now have 7+ weeks of annual leave with this total continuing to increase since the pandemic ended. These potential holidaymakers, representing over 1.5 million working Australians, are an increasingly lucrative potential market for travel and tourism operators to tap into.

“One important factor to take into consideration when looking at the accrued annual leave available to Australians is that nearly two-in-five Australian workers actually have no accrued annual leave – now 36.7% of workers.

“In fact, when this large cohort of workers with no annual leave due is removed from the equation the average amount of annual leave due for workers who do have annual leave due rises to over 20 days – equivalent to a four-week holiday.”

Related research findings

View our [Roy Morgan Holiday Intention Leading Indicator Report](#), or [profiles of Australians who intend to holiday in various locations](#), such as [Bali](#), [Adelaide](#), [Barossa Valley](#), [Brisbane](#) and many more.

Roy Morgan’s travel and tourism research quantifies the dollar-value of the tourism industry’s diverse markets; and includes detailed information and insights into what activities people look for when travelling, who they travel with, where they get their information, whose advice they seek when planning a holiday and much more.

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About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 80 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
1,000	±3.0	±2.7	±1.9	±1.3
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2