

Survey: Grim Reality for Young Workers

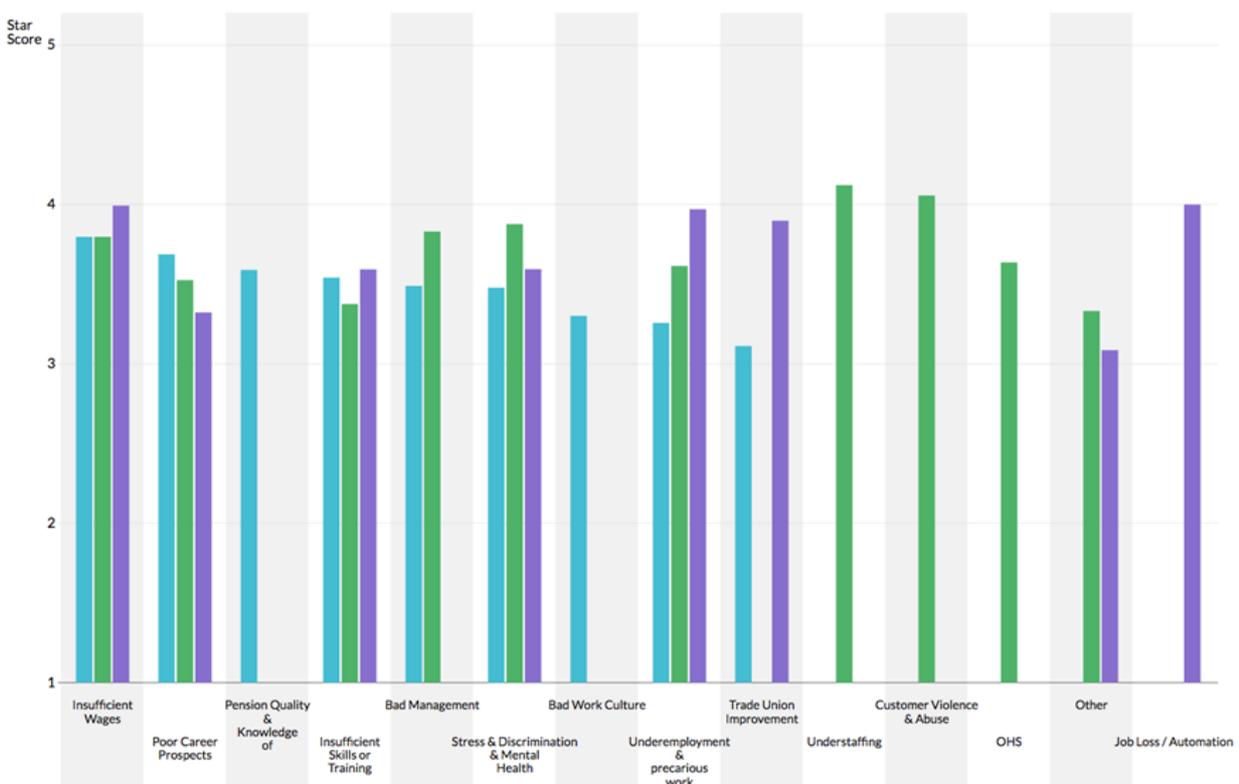
thefutureworldofwork.org/the-lab/survey-grim-reality-for-young-workers

Results from a 1,700 strong survey conducted in Australia, the UK and Latin America reveal that young workers face mounting frustration over insufficient wages, rising costs, understaffing, and the consequences of digitalisation, all of which compound poor mental health.

The Young Workers' Lab at UNI Global Union conducted this survey in 2019 with partners in each region. The results encompass 940 answers voted on 15,000 times by 1,700 participants. The survey asked a single question:

| What are the biggest challenges you are currently facing in relation to work?

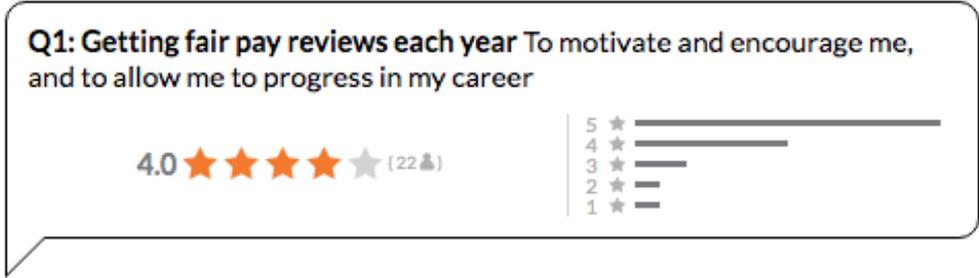
The table below shows the common challenges the young workers across the three regions identified.



UK (Blue) - Australia (Green) - Latin America (Purple)

Insufficient Wages

Low pay was a recurring topic of frustration amongst workers in all areas.



UK workers reported feeling left behind amidst rising living and housing costs

Workers in the **United Kingdom** lamented that pay progression is not keeping pace with inflation, particularly for young workers. Top voted answers addressed increased living and housing costs. Another popular answer asked that employers think of their staff as dynamic and able to learn and grow as they are challenged. *'Pay should recognise the skills individuals bring to an organisations and that those skills and contributions are not static.'* Solutions included pay progression and financial recognition for improving in your role over time. *'In-grade pay increases would reward my growing expertise,'* wrote one respondent.

In **Latin America**, frustration mounts over low pay and high rents. One popular answer read, *'I work so many hours and yet I still have no money because the pay is so low!'* Workers reported feeling unappreciated and exploited. Anxieties also stemmed from recent factory closing and companies being in crisis. Poor enforcement of labour laws were another complaint.

In **Australia**, pay for public holidays and Sundays was a recurring theme. *'Bruh I give up a whole Sunday and am barely compensated,'* wrote one respondent, *'Brother works at [removed] and gets double on Sundays.'* Recognition of the liveable wage was another popular topic. Respondents described feelings of growing financial insecurity amidst higher prices. *'Everything is becoming more expensive, and as I graduate and attend UNI, I will have little savings left because I am being paid minimum wage.'*



Workers in Australia described working on Sunday with no added pay.

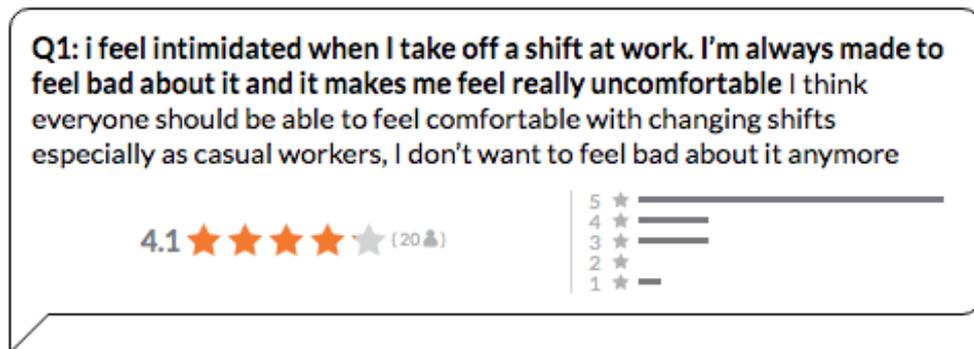
Stress & Discrimination & Mental Health

In Latin America, workers pressed to reject sexual harassment, which they reported as a prevalent part of daily of life in a male dominated society rife with gender stereotypes. 'The fact that victims are vilified, this needs to change,' read one upvoted response. Stressors on mental health was another recurring theme. Workers reported difficult reconciling being treated like a robot, with few breaks and more time expected at work than with their families. Managers were unwilling to accommodate worker's private lives, like the need to see a doctor.



Workers in Latin America resent being treated like robots.

In **Australia**, workers reported finding it difficult to care about their work when the feeling was not reciprocated. 'The company does not care about its employees yet wants higher standards of us so why should employees care about the work given this,' read the top response. Abuses of power lead to unhealthy relationships between workers and managers. Workers weren't sure how to push back on these abuses. Workers felt pressured to work even when sick, for instance. Summarised one worker about lack of care, 'Who wants to be around people who don't appreciate what you do?'



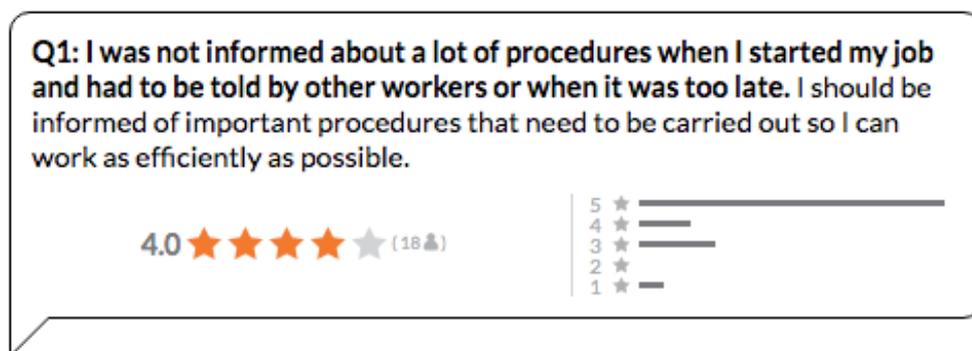
Workers in Australia face poor mental health due to power abuses by management

Diminishing staff levels were a big topic of conversation amongst workers in the **United Kingdom**. 'Workload stress Life is so chaotic these days and understaffing is a huge problem which causes workload stresses which you carry into your free time.' The lack of support made them frustrated with the quality of their work, which often had to be rushed. Often these expectations lead to workers investing their time above and beyond contracted working hours. All of this was demoralising for staff.

Insufficient Skills or Training

In **Latin America**, workers reported feeling anxious about the rise of digitalisation and its consequences for decent work. *'These are times of great technological changes and companies should engage workers in better training, thus improving the results.'* Others reported feeling demoralised because of the constant need to retrain. *'The biggest challenge is to be constantly learning the new technology that the company develops,'* read one popular answer, *'Because being up to date about new work techniques is continuous.'*

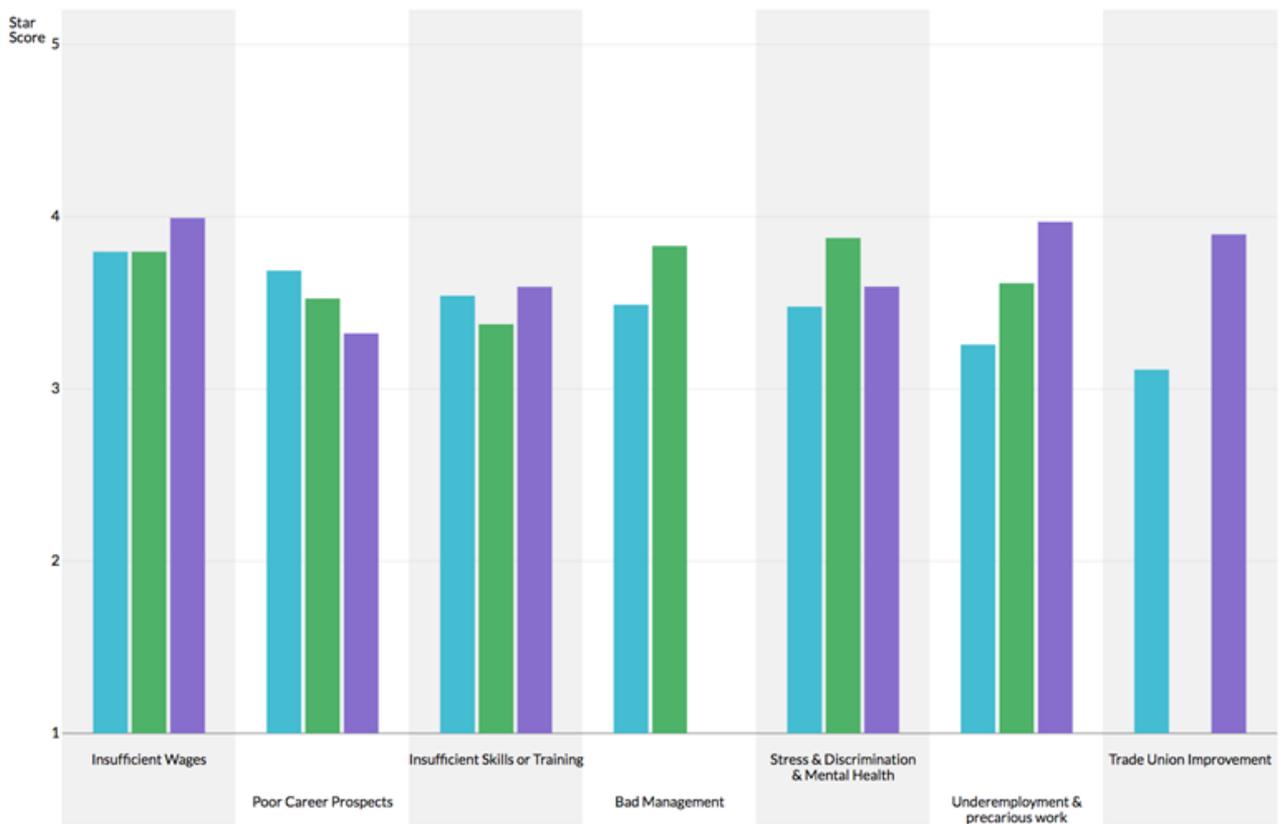
The need for better training resonated in **Australia** as well. Workers reported feeling frustrated with a lack of direction, which caused them to make mistakes. The many the biggest challenge they faced was, *'Not being taught everything and having difficulty keeping up. I believe that this is important as it prevents mistakes at work and allows me to work with more confidence.'*



A top voted answer among workers in Australia about on-the-job training

In the **United Kingdom**, workers reported frustration with generational change and limited knowledge sharing. *'Experienced generations are leaving and under-experienced staff are remaining and structure and learning opportunities are reduced due to saving money.'* Workers seek advice on how to be better at their jobs but don't know who to turn to. This was just not a skills problem. Poor IT infrastructure was also a common complaint. *'We fall behind partners and other private capabilities by not keeping pace in technology and pushing innovation. We become irrelevant as a result.'*

A Closer Look



A closer look at core issues for workers in the **UK** (Blue) - **Australia** (Green)
- **Latin America** (Purple)

This multi-national survey provides a window into core struggles that young workers are facing around the globe. They report a desire to learn and aspire to provide better work that, regrettably, is not being heard and facilitated properly by managers. This, along with rising prices, is having a toll on workers.

This survey was conducted using a tool called ThoughtExchange. ThoughtExchange is a paid tool; please be in touch with UNI Global Union if you are an affiliate who would like to try it. Learn more about other new tools in our [Connective Action: Digital Tools for Trade Unions](#). Read about prior survey tests [here](#).