

# Research shows Tasmanians want more support for retail workers

Australia's **1.5 million retail workers** are the country's second-largest workforce cohort. The Coronavirus pandemic has seen retail workers shoulder a disproportionately large burden of ensuring society can continue to function during the crisis. This has amplified pre-existing issues impacting the health and wellbeing of retail workers.

Recent public opinion research<sup>1</sup> across Tasmania provides evidence that TAS residents want more government support to help retail workers tackle health and wellbeing issues.

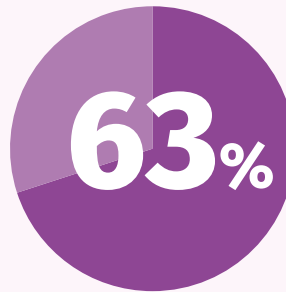


## essential workers essential support

# 18%

of Tasmanian adults have worked in retail, including food retail, in the past 3 years.

One-third of 18-34 year-old Tasmanians have worked in retail.



of Tasmanians agree that leaders should be doing more to support retail workers, similar to other essential services like healthcare.

### Crime and abuse are leading to retail workforce attrition.



**67%** of retail workers in TAS agree that abuse and crime faced by workers are reasons retail staff look for other jobs.

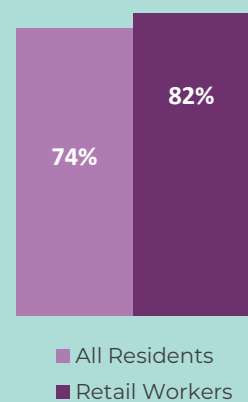
### Abuse is more accepted in retail than other workplaces.

**88%** of retail workers nationally have experienced physical or verbal abuse from customers.

**Two-thirds** (69%) of TAS retail workers feel this abuse is more accepted in retail than in other workplaces, and 45% of TAS residents agree.

### Calls for more action to combat abuse.

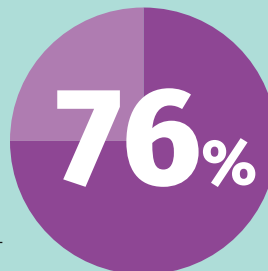
**82%** of TAS retail workers agree that government should invest in campaigns and support programs to combat abuse of retail workers. 74% of TAS residents agree.



### Tasmanians want harsher penalties for retail crime.

There is overwhelming support in Tasmania to look at stepping up penalties for these offences.

**Three quarters** (76%) of Tasmanians agree their leaders should consider harsher penalties to address retail crime. Support is equally high among those most affected – the retail workers themselves – with **78%** agreeing harsher penalties for retail crime should be considered.



1. Data from an n=4348 telephone survey of Tasmanian residents 18+ between 25 August and 1 September. Data weighted to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures to be representative of the Tasmanian population by age and gender to within a maximum margin of error of +/-1.48% on the total sample.

# Retail workers at greater risk of poor health and wellbeing

Stress and abuse experienced by retail workers makes them even more vulnerable to negative lifestyle choices. The pandemic has brought the importance of health and wellbeing sharply into focus around Australia, but especially for essential workers.

While the retail industry is undertaking many actions to accommodate the changing demands of the Coronavirus response, increased tensions faced by the retail workforce may be exacerbating the poor lifestyle choices of some retail workers such as poor nutrition, lack of physical exercise and smoking.



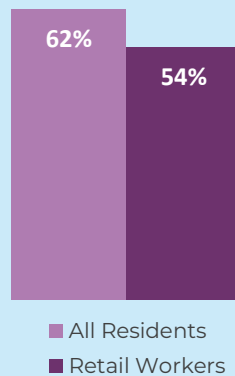
## TAS residents are aware of their disproportionately high smoking rates.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' latest National Health Survey figures show the smoking rate is 16.4% in TAS, considerably higher than the national average of 13.8%<sup>1</sup>, and that rate is no longer going down.

Retail workers are more likely to be smokers than other sectors<sup>2</sup>.

**62%** of TAS residents are aware that Tasmania has the highest smoking rate of any Australian state and that smoking rates are no longer going down.

Higher than average smoking rates in Tasmania are an issue that TAS residents want leaders to address.

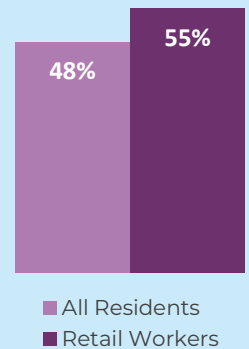


## Calls for leaders to look at legalising vaping products to reduce smoking.

Tasmanian residents are supportive of TAS leaders considering legalising less harmful alternatives to cigarettes – such as smoke-free vaping products – to reduce smoking rates for smokers who don't quit.

**48%** agree TAS should consider legalisation, and this is considerably higher among TAS retail workers at 55%.

Retail workers need access to alternatives to help them quit smoking.



## Tasmanians support health & wellbeing investment in retail workers.

In 2010, the Department of Health<sup>3</sup> found that retail workers (those in retail and food service) were overrepresented for inadequate fruit and vegetable intake and inadequate physical activity outside of work.

Tasmanians see the need for health issues impacting retail workers to be addressed.

**61%** agree that government should invest in campaigns to improve the health and nutrition of retail workers. This rises to 70% among retail workers.



This research supports the National Retail Association's **landmark report into retail worker wellbeing**, which details the health and wellbeing struggles of the retail workforce.

Find the report at [www.essentialretail.com.au](http://www.essentialretail.com.au)

**essential workers**  
**essential support**

# It's time to act.

[www.essentialretail.com.au](http://www.essentialretail.com.au)

1 <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18-Main%20Features-Key%20Findings-1>

2 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6642a2.htm>

3 <http://www.healthworkers.gov.au/internet/hwi/publishing.nsf/content/industry>.