

Research shows Regional Queensland wants 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 research¹ across **Queensland** provides evidence that regional QLD residents want more government support to help retail workers tackle health and wellbeing issues.



**essential workers
essential support**

17%

of adults living in regional QLD, have worked in retail, including food retail, in the past 3 years

62%

of regional QLD residents 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.



64% of retail workers in regional QLD 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.

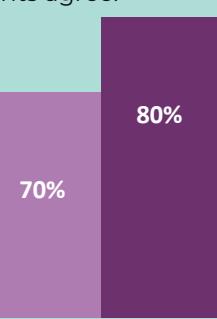
69% of retail workers in regional QLD feel this abuse is more accepted in retail than in other workplaces, which is higher than the state average (68%).

Regional Queenslanders want harsher penalties for retail crime.

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

More than three quarters (76%) of regional QLD residents agree leaders should consider harsher penalties to address retail crime. Support is equally high among those most affected – the retail workers themselves – with **77%** agreeing harsher penalties for retail crime should be considered.

76%



National Retail Association

1. Data from an n=5,002 telephone survey of Queensland residents 18+ between September 1 and September 13, with a robust n=2,967 sub-sample of residents living in metropolitan areas, and n=2,035 living in regional/rural areas. Data weighted to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures to be representative of the Queensland population by age and gender to within a maximum margin of error of +/-1.38% on the total sample, +/-1.89% on the metropolitan sample, and +/-2.17% on the regional/rural 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.



Queensland has the highest rate of smoking in any mainland state.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' latest National Health Survey figures show QLD has a smoking rate of 14.9% and that rate is no longer going down. The average smoking rate of areas outside Brisbane is much higher at 17.9% with some areas as high as 26%.

Despite some of the strictest tobacco control measures in the world, many residents lack awareness of stalled smoking rates with 81% of regional QLD residents unaware of this issue.

Retail workers are more likely to be smokers than other sectors². Stagnated smoking rates are an issue that QLD leaders should address.

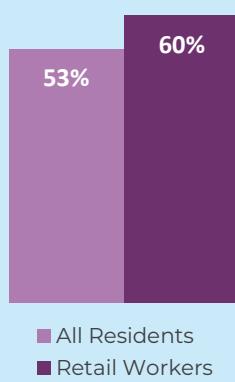


Calls for leaders to look at legalising vaping products to reduce smoking.

Retail workers need access to alternatives to help them quit smoking. Regional QLD residents are supportive of leaders considering legalising less harmful alternatives to cigarettes – such as smoke-free vaping products – to reduce smoking rates for smokers who don't quit.

60% of regional QLD retail workers agree leaders should consider legalisation, and 53% of residents agree.

State-wide, more than half of QLD residents agree that leaders should consider alternatives.



Regional Queensland supports health & wellbeing investment in retail workers.

In 2010, the Department of Health³ 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.

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



58% of regional QLD residents agree that government should invest in campaigns to improve the health and nutrition of retail workers. This rises to 68% 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

**essential workers
essential support**

**It's time
to act.**

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.healthyworkers.gov.au/internet/hwi/publishing.nsf/content/industry>.