

# Employers' Perspective on the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR)



**SNEF**

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OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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# INTRODUCTION



*Months ago, we encountered a problem. No matter what I put on job banks or on advertisement, I cannot get [a] security officer...*

*[After implementing flexi-time] when I put the advertisement out, within a month I managed to get 3 security [officers] to work for me!*



*– Real Estate & Building Services*

This quote exemplifies one key benefit of flexible work arrangements: increased job attractiveness to prospective employees<sup>1</sup>. Other possible benefits include increased productivity<sup>2</sup> and improved work-life harmony<sup>3</sup>. To achieve these benefits, the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR) came into effect on 1 December 2024 to shape the right norms and expectations around flexible work arrangements (FWAs)<sup>4</sup>.

Despite anticipated benefits, flexible work arrangements are “a delicate balancing act for employers”<sup>5</sup>, notes Edwin Ng, the Honorary Secretary for the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) and Co-Chair of the Tripartite Workgroup on FWAs. While employees generally desire FWAs, the Report of the Tripartite Workgroup on the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests notes how “employers have emphasised that in order to be sustainable, FWAs must meet business needs”. The nature of the job role, the impact on individual and team performance, and the ability to meet clients’ demands are some employer considerations noted in the Tripartite Workgroup report, and in international research<sup>6, 7</sup>.

To provide local research on FWAs and the TG-FWAR from an employer’s perspective, the Singapore University of Social Sciences’ Behavioural Insights Centre of Excellence collaborated with SNEF to survey 367 employers<sup>8</sup> with the support of the Association of Process Industry (ASPRI), Restaurant Association of Singapore (RAS), Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), and the Singapore Logistics Association (SLA). Additionally, 8 employers were selected for in-depth interviews. We explored topics ranging from employer readiness for the TG-FWAR, perceived benefits and drawbacks of FWAs, to how firm size affects FWA practices.

This report outlines our key findings and shares what employers need, and their best practices for providing sustainable FWAs. Where relevant, we included direct quotes from employers. All quotes in this report have been anonymised to ensure the confidentiality of participants and to encourage honest and open responses. We hope employers and employees find our insights useful and actionable.

<sup>1</sup> Singapore National Employers Federation. (2024). *Media statement by the Singapore National Employers Federation on the tripartite guidelines for flexible work arrangement requests*. [https://snef.org.sg/snef\\_news/media-statement-by-the-singapore-national-employers-federation-on-the-tripartite-guidelines-for-flexible-work-arrangement-requests/](https://snef.org.sg/snef_news/media-statement-by-the-singapore-national-employers-federation-on-the-tripartite-guidelines-for-flexible-work-arrangement-requests/)

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Manpower. (2019). *Article: A more flexible Singapore!* <https://stats.mom.gov.sg/Pages/A-More-Flexible-Singapore.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> U Women and Family. (2024). *Win-win outcomes for businesses and workers through thoughtful flexible work arrangement implementation*. <https://www.ntuc.org.sg/uwomenandfamily/news/Win-win-Outcomes-for-Businesses-and-Workers-through-Thoughtful-FWA-Implementation/>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Manpower. (2024). *Tripartite guidelines that shape the right norms and expectations around flexible work arrangements to come into effect on 1 Dec 2024*. <https://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2024/0416-launch-of-tripartite-guidelines-on-fwa-requests-and-tripartite-workgroup-report>

<sup>5</sup> Ng, E. (2024, September 6). Flexible work arrangements: A delicate balancing act for employers. *The Business Times*. <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/opinion-features/flexible-work-arrangements-delicate-balancing-act-employers>

<sup>6</sup> Michielsens, E., Bingham, C., & Clarke, L. (2014). Managing diversity through flexible work arrangements: Management perspectives. *Employee Relations*. 36(1), 49-69. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-06-2012-0048>

<sup>7</sup> Delbosc, A., & Kent, J. (2023). Employee intentions and employer expectations: A mixed-methods systematic review of “post-COVID” intentions to work from home. *Transport Reviews*. 44(2), 248-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2023.2259100>

<sup>8</sup> Refer to [Appendix](#) for Profile of Respondents

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

81%

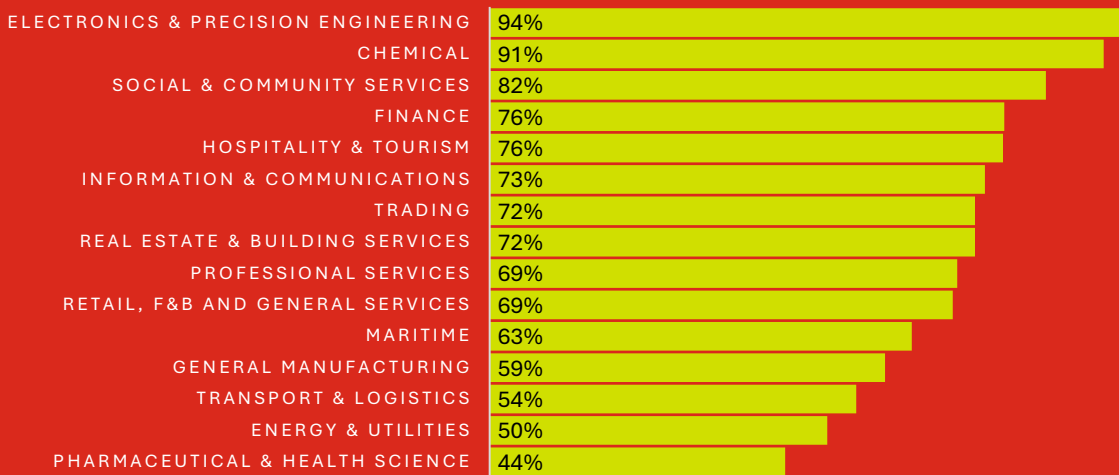
of employers report that they are ready for the implementation of the TG-FWAR

22%

of employers incorrectly think that they are required to approve all FWA requests after the TG-FWAR comes into effect

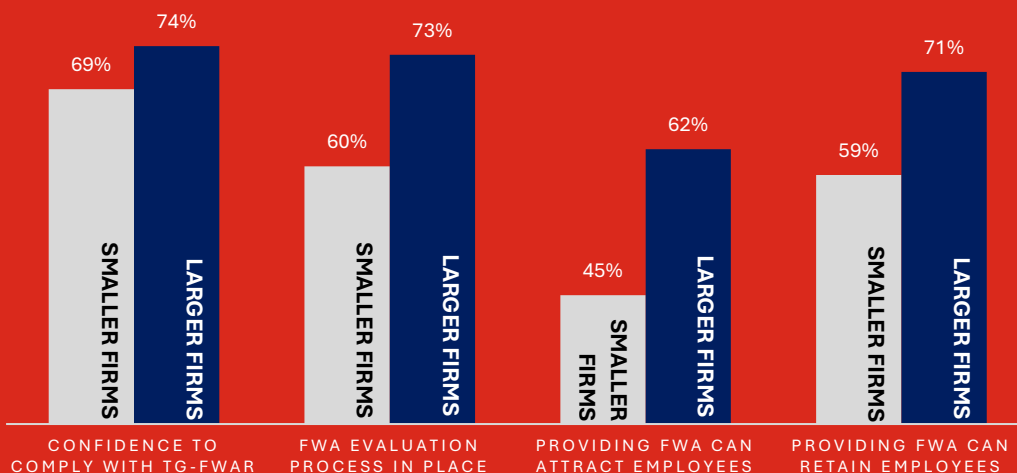
## WHEN ASKED IN SEPTEMBER 2024, 70% OF EMPLOYERS HAVE A PROCESS FOR EVALUATING FWA REQUESTS

More than half of employers have an evaluation process for processing FWA requests



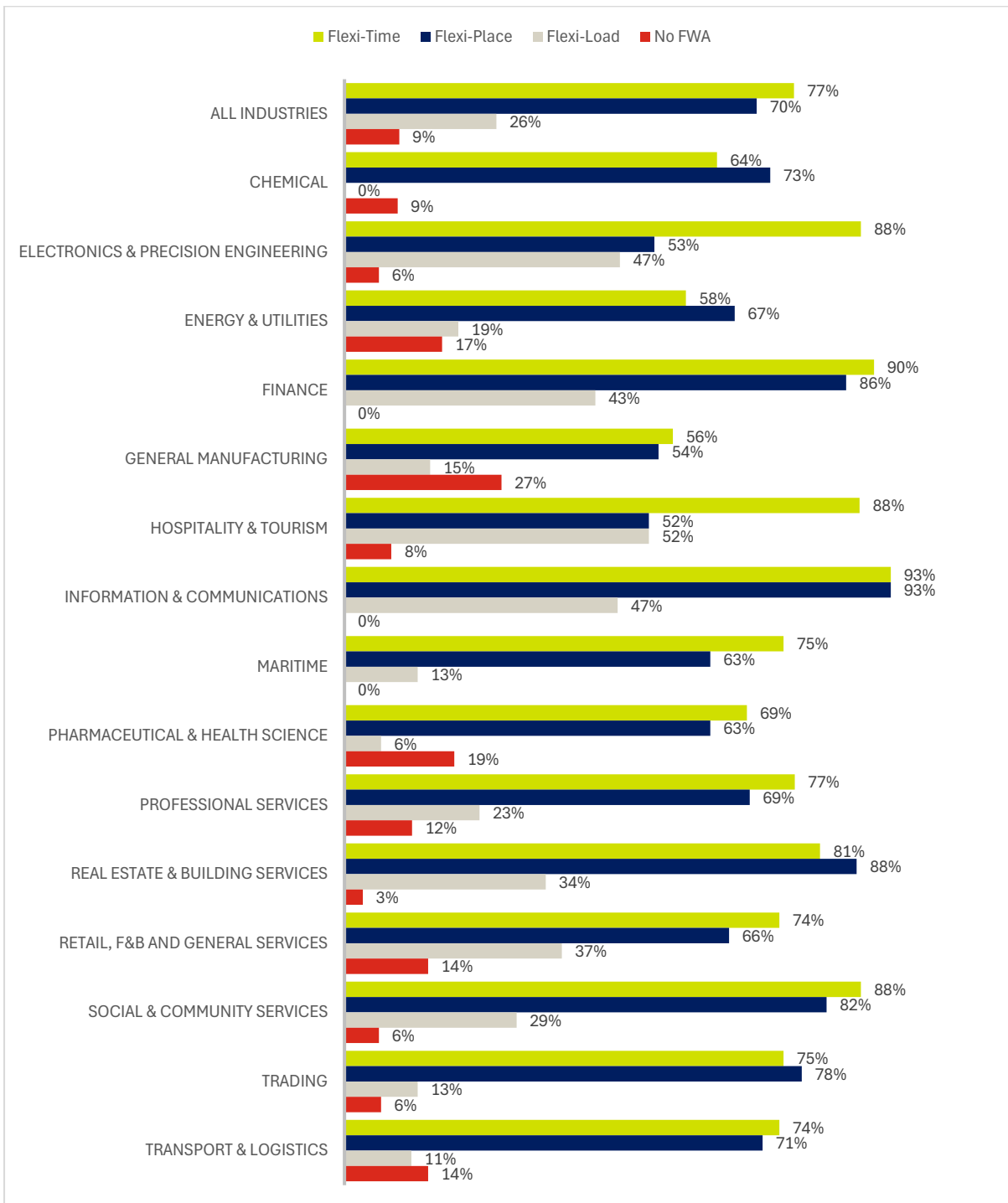
## LARGER FIRMS WITH MORE THAN 100 EMPLOYEES ARE SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY TO...

- be confident that their HR departments and line managers can comply with the TG-FWAR
- have an established FWA request evaluation process
- agree that FWAs can help attract and retain employees



# CURRENT FWA STATUS: WHAT AND WHY

## FWA Types Provided by Different Industries



Across industries, flexi-time (77%) and flexi-place (70%) are more commonly practiced than flexi-load (26%). Industries more likely to adopt flexi-load include Electronics & Precision Engineering, Finance, Hospitality & Tourism, and Information & Communications, with adoption rates exceeding 40%. The average percentages reflect the proportion of employers offering the different types of FWA, where adoption of certain types of FWA within these industries may be predominately for back-end employees, rather than front-end employees.

## Key Reasons for Providing FWAs

Industry	Number 1 Reason Cited for Providing FWAs		
	Increase Employee Well-being	Retain Existing Employees	Increase Company Flexibility and Resilience
Chemical	✓		
Electronics & Precision Engineering		✓	
Energy & Utilities	✓		
Finance			✓
General Manufacturing	✓		
Hospitality & Tourism		✓	
Information & Communications	✓		
Maritime	✓		✓
Pharmaceutical & Health Science		✓	
Professional Services	✓		
Real Estate & Building Services	✓		
Retail, F&B and General Services	✓		
Social & Community Services	✓	✓	
Trading			✓
Transport & Logistics	✓		

Note: For the Maritime and the Social & Community Services, *Increase Employee Well-being* and *Retain Existing Employees* emerged as the joint-top reason for providing FWAs.

### 1. 75% of employers provide FWAs to increase employee well-being.

*"As employers, we support it although we will have to make some adjustments to accommodate the FWA requests. We believe that it will help our employees to juggle their work and personal life."*

**– General Manufacturing**

*"When [employees] request for FWA, I saw that most are actually for caregiving "visa", whether it's for their kids or parents. So, I will work with my employees to work out the alternative or day off that we can compromise in order for them to be able to take on the caregiver duties."*

**– Transport and Logistics**

### 2. 69% of employers provide FWAs to retain existing employees.

*"The key objective is to attract and retain local workers who have other home responsibilities."*

**– Professional Services**

### 3. 66% of employers provide FWAs to increase company flexibility and resilience. Across most industries, employers indicated "increasing company flexibility and resilience" as a key reason for providing FWAs. Employers generally believe that employees who feel supported by their employers are more likely to step up and go the extra mile when the need arises.

*"If let's say I [employee on FWA] take a call over the weekend, I'm more inclined to want to work or answer those instead of drawing the line to say, okay, I'm on a 5-day workweek, please do not disturb me over the weekend."*

**– Real Estate & Building Services**

**Attracting new employees was another consistently mentioned reason why employers provide FWAs.**

*"In interviews a lot of people will ask: "Oh, how's the flexible work arrangement policy of your company?" So, especially the younger generation, if they hear "No, nothing, you're all back to office full time", then there's a tendency that they wouldn't join us." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

*"When we hire, we will keep selling our good points like, we are flexible." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

**Continuing with COVID-19 FWA practices is another common reason why employers provide FWAs.**

*"For flexi-work, we also know that we cannot remove [flexi-work policies due to COVID-19], because when we tried to do a survey to say that we want to remove flexi-work. It was a big hoo-hah in Singapore."*

**– Energy & Utilities**

*"For the rest of the team who are actually more office-based, I think that COVID actually already proved that they don't need to be physically there all the time."*

**– Transport & Logistics**



# FWA REQUESTS: WHAT DO EMPLOYERS CURRENTLY KNOW AND DO?

## Knowledge About the TG-FWAR



Respondents were asked True/False knowledge questions about the TG-FWAR. An example question is “True or False: The Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR) will come into effect on 1 December 2024.”

With an average knowledge score of 86%, employers are generally knowledgeable about the TG-FWAR.

However, three TG-FWAR questions most frequently answered wrongly were:

- 65% of employers are aware that they need to consider each FWA request based on business grounds. However, a minority of employers wrongly believe that they can reject FWA requests on non-business grounds.

*“... [once] one employee’s [FWA] request [is] approved... the other employees [would] request the same... would greatly impact the organisation.” – Trading <Rejecting FWA requests to prevent other employees from making similar requests is an example of a non-business justification for rejection.>*

*“... [prefer having] facetime with employees” – General Manufacturing <Supervisor prefers to have direct sight of employees in office to see if they are working, despite employee’s consistent satisfactory work performance is another example of a non-business justification for rejection.>*

The TG-FWAR states that “Employers should assess requests for FWA and respond to them based on business-related grounds.”

Possible business grounds for rejecting an FWA request include a significant increase in cost burden on the employer and a negative impact on the organisation’s ability to meet customer needs.



- 2. **28% of respondents thought that the TG-FWAR required employers to also consider non-formal FWA requests (e.g. requests made over the phone).**

The TG-FWAR notes that a verbal request “is considered a non-formal FWA request as it is not made in writing. The employer can choose to process the non-formal request and respond to the employee’s request.”

At the same time, the TG-FWAR also recognises that “existing formal and non-formal practices should continue if they work well for both employees and employers.”

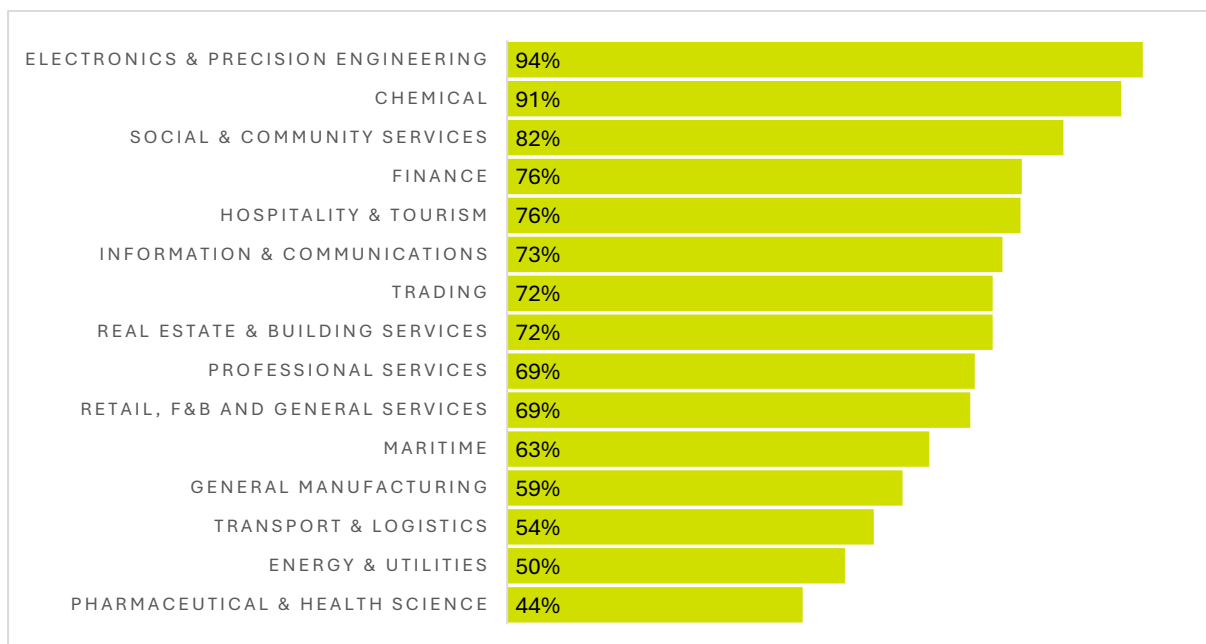
Ultimately, the TG-FWAR is useful in situations where employers may not have an established process to consider FWA requests or are uncertain about how to implement one. Similarly, if informal processes fail to provide clear resolutions from the employer, the TG-FWAR can provide guidance and support.

- 3. **22% of respondents thought that employers are required to approve all FWA requests after the TG-FWAR comes into effect.**

*“The general public is still confused that with the FWA Requests kicking in, employers will have to approve [all] their requests.” – Hospitality & Tourism*

The TG-FWAR states that “The Guidelines do not require employers to offer FWAs to employees. However, employers are encouraged to do so. There are many benefits to FWAs – for instance, employers would be better able to attract and retain talent, and employees on FWAs such as flexi-load can supplement full-time manpower planning.”

**Proportion of Respondents with a FWA Request Evaluation Process**



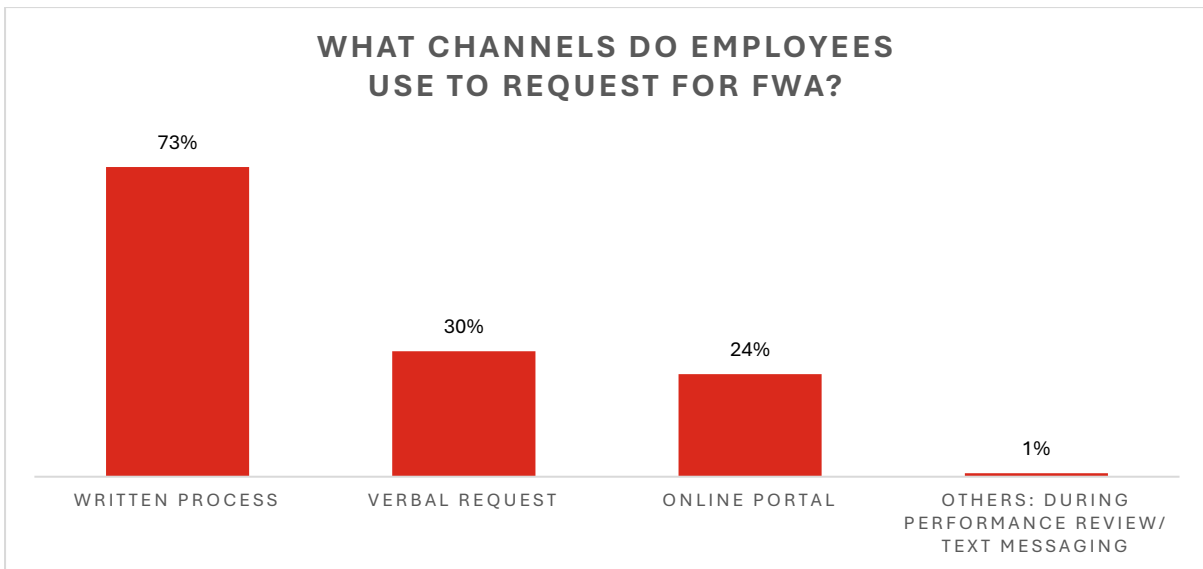
Varying between industries, more than half of employers currently have an evaluation process for FWA requests.

### Employees Mostly Direct their FWA Requests to Their Managers and Supervisors



The majority of requests for FWA are made through managers, supervisors, or the HR department. Managers and supervisors should then be empowered and trained to deal with FWA requests. Such training might involve familiarisation with company policies and how to evaluate requests fairly.

### The Majority of FWA Requests are Made Through a Written Process



The majority of requests for FWA are submitted through a written process, such as email and application forms. Approximately 30% are made through verbal requests. Employers often allow for FWA requests to be made verbally for practical reasons.

*“The requests and replies are expected to be written. But the reality in practice is a lot of physical talking and communication. So, for those who are not so well educated, you cannot expect them to be able to put up that kind of [written] request.” – Transport & Logistics*

### Confidence in their HR and Line Managers to Comply with the TG-FWAR



We asked employers, “How confident are you that your HR and line managers are familiar with and can comply with TG-FWAR?”. The average confidence ranges from 66% to 79%, varying between different industries.

### Readiness to Implement TG-FWAR

In addition to asking about their confidence in their HR and line managers to comply, employers were asked if they were ready for the implementation of TG-FWAR. Employers' readiness to implement the TG-FWAR varies across different industries.



When we examine the responses of employers who indicated that they are not ready to implement TG-FWAR, we find that 18% of them wrongly believed that they are required to approve all FWA requests. It is likely that these employers will feel ready to implement TG-FWAR once they understand that they are not required to approve all FWA requests.

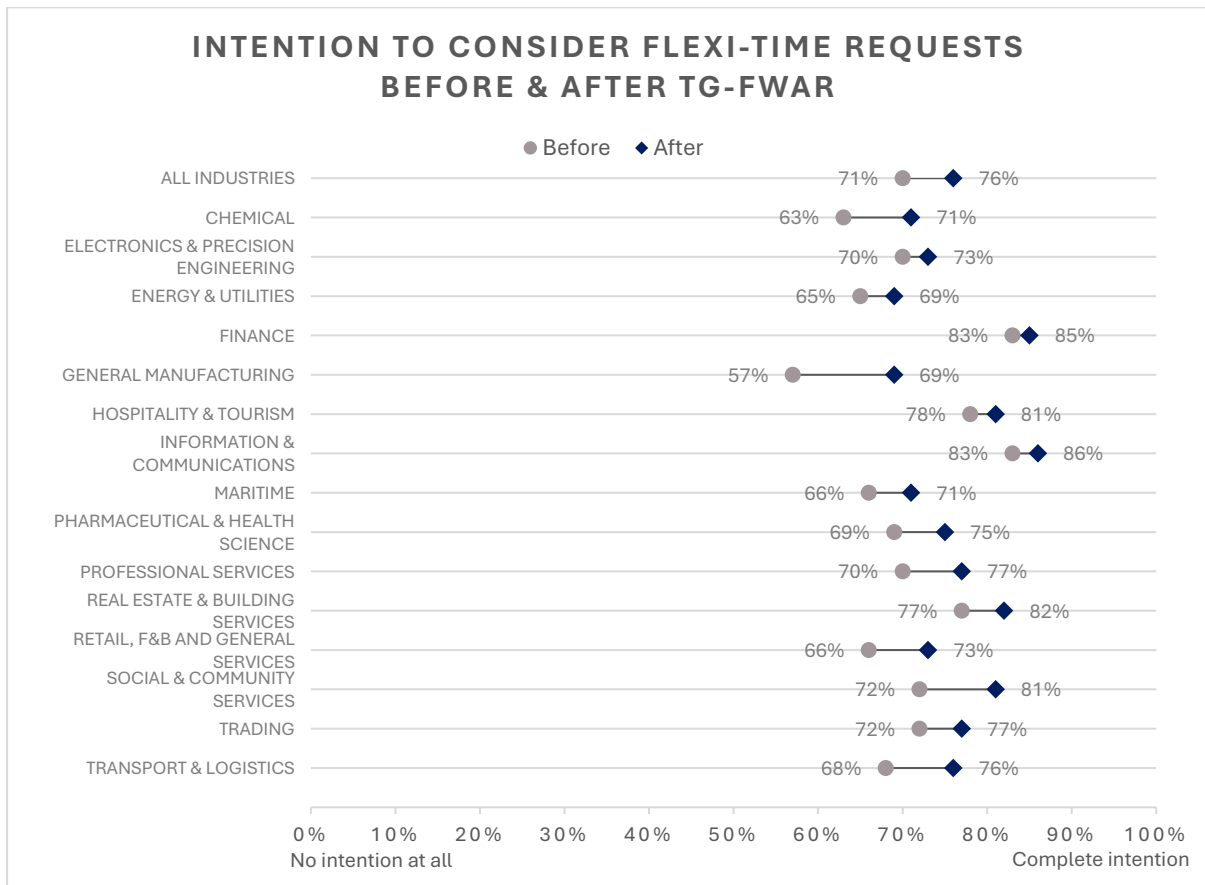
## Anticipated Effects of the TG-FWAR

Our results indicate that the TG-FWAR encourages employers to consider flexi-time, flexi-place, and flexi-load requests.

When asked how likely they are to consider FWA requests after the implementation of the TG-FWAR, employers across all industries expressed an increase in their intention to consider flexi-time, flexi-place, and flexi-load requests.

Overall, the intention to consider flexi-time and flexi-place requests are greater than for flexi-load.

The Pharmaceutical & Health Science industry expressed the greatest increase in intention to consider requests for flexi-place and flexi-load, with increases of 18% and 13% respectively. Notably, the Information & Communications industry expressed strong intention to support both flexi-place and flexi-load requests, while the Finance industry indicated strong intentions to accommodate flexi-place requests after the TG-FWAR takes effect.





## FWA REQUESTS: HOW DO EMPLOYERS EVALUATE REQUESTS?

Industry	Number 1 Consideration for Evaluating FWA Requests	
	Nature of Job Role	Impact on Organisation Productivity
Chemical		✓
Electronics & Precision Engineering	✓	
Energy & Utilities	✓	
Finance	✓	
General Manufacturing	✓	
Hospitality & Tourism		✓
Information & Communications		✓
Maritime	✓	✓
Pharmaceutical & Health Science	✓	
Professional Services	✓	✓
Real Estate & Building Services	✓	
Retail, F&B and General Services	✓	✓
Social & Community Services		✓
Trading	✓	
Transport & Logistics	✓	

Note: For the Maritime, Professional Services, Retail, F&B and General Services industries, *Nature of Job Role* and *Impact on Organisation Productivity* emerged as the joint-top consideration for evaluating FWA requests.

### Key Considerations:

- 93% of employers will evaluate the nature of the job when considering FWA requests.** This is by far the top priority across most industries as the nature of the job role determines its feasibility, taking into account factors such as whether the role can be performed off-site, the core hours during which physical presence is required, and the potential for workload sharing among employees.

*"The extent of FWA that can be implemented depends on the nature of the role – whether it is a role that can be done remotely or requires someone to be on-site in-person." – Transport & Logistics*

*"I once had a worker who could only work from 7am to 10am, but our busiest hours were from 10am to 2pm." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

*"The operation can be inefficient with decreased productivity and increased cost if a large number of employees are on flexi-load." – General Manufacturing*

- 90% of employers will assess the potential impact on organisation productivity when considering FWA requests.** Employers often prioritise this aspect as either their first or second priority when evaluating FWA requests, as they assess how accommodating the request might impact overall efficiency, team dynamics, and the ability to meet business objectives.

*"If employee productivity does not increase with FWA implementation and on the contrary if productivity declines, business suffers and becomes unsustainable" – Real Estate & Building Services*

**Taking into account the work performance and maturity of applicants is another commonly reported consideration employers have when evaluating FWA requests.** By assessing their ability to manage work and meet expectations, employers can determine the suitability of the applicant for FWA.

*“FWA is good for companies where staff are of a certain maturity, and it also demonstrates the trust and confidence that companies have on the staff.” – Finance*

*“We really just need to make sure that the employee is mature enough ... I would think track record would be one [way to assess their suitability for FWA].” – Real Estate & Building Services*

**Many employers also evaluate whether FWAs can positively impact the well-being of the requesting employee.** Employers consider whether FWAs will help the employee meet their personal needs and enable greater engagement at work.

*“There was this particular candidate who was so talented but unable to work full time because of family commitments. So, I will allow such flexi-load, meaning she will still be able to help the company and yet take care of a family.” – Retail, F&B, and General Services*

**Another common consideration is whether the applicant is abusing the company's FWA policy by requesting flexible arrangements for convenience rather than because of a genuine need.**

*“Employees will have many random reasons for ad-hoc FWA requests... for example their pets are sick and they need to stay home to work, when they can easily take annual leave.” – Chemical*



### Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks of Acceding to FWA Requests

#### Perceived Effects of Flexi-time

Industry	Savings on operational costs	Prompt customer response	Employee work attendance	Availability to support customer	Quality of customer experience	Employee productivity	Employee commitment to the organisation	Employee job satisfaction	Employee retention	Employee mental well-being	Organisational attractiveness to potential employees	Employee work-life balance
All industries												
Chemical	Large decrease											
Electronics & Precision Engineering			Moderate decrease									
Energy & Utilities												
Finance											Moderate increase	
General Manufacturing			Moderate decrease									Large increase
Hospitality & Tourism	Moderate decrease											
Information & Communications		Moderate decrease										Moderate increase
Maritime												
Pharmaceutical & Health Science	Moderate decrease											
Professional Services												Moderate increase
Real Estate & Building Services			Moderate decrease									
Retail, F&B and General Services		Moderate decrease										
Social & Community Services		Moderate decrease										Large increase
Trading		Moderate decrease										
Transport & Logistics	Large decrease											Large increase

Large decrease	Moderate decrease	Slight decrease	Neutral	Slight increase	Moderate increase	Large increase
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**Perceived Effects of Flexi-place**

Industry	Savings on operational costs	Prompt customer response	Employee work attendance	Availability to support customer	Quality of Customer experience	Employee productivity	Employee commitment to the organisation	Employee job satisfaction	Employee retention	Employee mental well-being	Organisational attractiveness to potential employees	Employee work-life balance
All Industries												
Chemical	Large decrease											
Electronics & Precision Engineering												
Energy & Utilities			Slight decrease									
Finance											Moderate increase	
General Manufacturing		Moderate decrease										
Hospitality & Tourism												
Information & Communications	Large decrease											
Maritime												
Pharmaceutical & Health Science												
Professional Services			Slight decrease									
Real Estate & Building Services												
Retail, F&B and General Services	Moderate decrease											
Social & Community Services	Moderate decrease		Slight decrease									
Trading												
Transport & Logistics		Moderate decrease										

Large decrease	Moderate decrease	Slight decrease	Neutral	Slight increase	Moderate increase	Large increase
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**Perceived Effects of Flexi-load**

Industry	Savings on operational costs	Employee work attendance	Availability to support customer	Prompt customer response	Quality of customer experience	Employee productivity	Employee commitment to the organisation	Employee job satisfaction	Employee retention	Organisational attractiveness to potential employees	Employee mental well-being	Employee work-life balance
All Industries	Large decrease						Slight increase					
Chemical	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Electronics & Precision Engineering							Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Energy & Utilities							Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Finance	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
General Manufacturing	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Hospitality & Tourism							Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Information & Communications		Moderate decrease					Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Maritime							Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Pharmaceutical & Health Science		Slight decrease		Slight decrease			Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Professional Services		Slight decrease	Moderate decrease				Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Real Estate & Building Services							Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Retail, F&B and General Services	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Social & Community Services	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Trading	Moderate decrease						Slight increase			Moderate increase		
Transport & Logistics	Moderate decrease			Moderate decrease			Slight increase			Moderate increase		

Large decrease	Moderate decrease	Slight decrease	Neutral	Slight increase	Moderate increase	Large increase
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We asked employers to tell us how acceding to the different FWA types would affect their company.

### Main Benefits

Employers perceive the increase in benefits of flexi-time and flexi-place to be greater than those of flexi-load.

Employers perceive a moderate to large increase for the following benefits when flexi-time and flexi-place are implemented, and a slight to moderate increase when flexi-load is implemented:

- *Employee work-life balance*  
FWAs may improve employee work-life balance by allowing employees to adjust their schedules, work locations, and workloads to better accommodate their personal needs.
- *Employee mental well-being*  
Meeting employees' personal needs through FWAs may enhance their mental well-being which is interrelated with employee work-life balance.
- *Employee retention and organisational attractiveness to potential employees*  
Organisations that can accommodate the personal needs of employees may be more attractive to prospective employees and may better retain existing employees.

*"What we can see is probably like FWA will allow us a bigger pool of employee choices, because we are now [able to employ] those groups of people who used to be unable to work due to whatever personal reasons." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

### Main Drawbacks

Some drawbacks were observed in some industries, with slight changes reported in the following areas:

- *Delays in responding to customers*  
FWAs may cause delays in responding to customers due to changes in working hours, duties, and availabilities.
- *Increase in operational costs*  
Operational costs may increase due to extensions of operation hours, the provision of remote work tools, and the hiring of additional employees to manage changes resulting from FWAs.
- *Increase in employee absenteeism*  
Employers are concerned that employees may not be working during periods of FWAs.

*"We are the contractor, so we provide service on a contract basis and there are service level agreements that we have to fulfil. Like for example, we have to receive the orders from Monday to Friday up to a certain cut-off time. So, when [employees] want to change to a 4-day workweek, there's no way that I can tell my [business counterpart]: "Sorry, I need to change my contract to 4 days." That will not work." – Transport & Logistics*

*"[In the past] Our retail staff needed to work every weekend because that's when our business is conducted. We had a 6-day workweek, weekend work and weekday off. [Since then,] we had to move to allow one weekend day [off] every 2 weeks and switch to a 5-day workweek, with the same salary. Basically, it's a cost increase by almost 20%." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

*"We allowed that, but it didn't really work very well for us because [at the] end of the day the staff still left at the same time because everybody left. So, there's nobody in the office and it was very hard to control [in-office attendance] ..."*  
– Retail, F&B and General Services

## Challenges to Acceding to FWA Requests

### Overall

The challenges to acceding to FWA requests are varied and specific to the type of FWAs. For example, while the challenge in scheduling meetings was the top flexi-time challenge, data security was the top challenge when acceding to flexi-place requests.

### Flexi-time Challenges

Industry	Number 1 Challenge for Acceding to Flexi-time		
	Scheduling Meetings	Ensuring Adequate Staffing Levels	Maintaining Consistent Communication
Chemical	✓		
Electronics & Precision Engineering			✓
Energy & Utilities	✓		
Finance	✓		
General Manufacturing	✓		
Hospitality & Tourism	✓	✓	
Information & Communications	✓		
Maritime	✓	✓	
Pharmaceutical & Health Science	✓		
Professional Services	✓		
Real Estate & Building Services	✓		
Retail, F&B and General Services	✓		
Social & Community Services		✓	
Trading	✓		
Transport & Logistics		✓	

Note: For both Hospitality & Tourism and Maritime industries, *Scheduling Meetings* and *Ensuring Adequate Staffing Levels* emerged as the joint-top challenges for acceding to flexi-time.

Most frequently cited flexi-time challenges:

**1. 63% of employers perceive scheduling meetings as a challenge for flexi-time.**

All industries identified scheduling meetings as one of the key challenges to implementing flexi-time, with 93% of Information & Communications industry respondents reporting this to be a challenge. With employees working at different hours, it can be challenging to find a common time when everyone is available.

*“Having core office work hours between 10am to 4pm [will help] so that meetings or internal communications can be scheduled within these hours.” – Trading*

*“We used to have work-from-home on Thursday [and] Friday, and we felt that people were taking really extended weekends to the point where on Friday, when you want to call for meeting, they said I'm not available. Like how is it possible you're not available when we know you have nothing else on?” – Real Estate & Building Services*

**Recommendation:**

Employers report resolving this challenge by scheduling meetings during core working hours and by arranging in-person or online meetings.

[Read More](#)

**2. 52% of employers perceive ensuring adequate staffing levels as a challenge for flexi-time.** Most industries identified ensuring adequate staffing levels as a key challenge for flexi-time, particularly for the Maritime and Social & Community Services industries, where more than 70% of employers report so. The challenge of ensuring that employees are available during specific “core hours” to maintain smooth operation, along with accommodating unrealistic schedules can disrupt workflows and affect overall productivity.

*“Manpower planning and scheduling in small F&B businesses is already a complex, time-consuming task. We have specific hours to fill, and it’s hard enough to find staff willing to work.” – Retail, F&B and General Services*

**Recommendation:** Employers, especially those in the Transport & Logistics industry, report that job redesign has the potential to address challenges with ensuring adequate staffing levels.

[Read More](#)

**3. 48% of employers perceive maintaining consistent communication as a challenge for flexi-time.** Apart from Finance and Pharmaceutical & Health Science, maintaining consistent communication is one of the key challenges across all other industries. By working at different hours, employees may have reduced opportunities to communicate and collaborate with one another.

*“The timing that this person is working does not fit most of the work schedule that other stakeholders that they interact closely with is on.” – Real Estate & Building Services*

**Recommendation:** Employers report that setting clear work expectations and requirements will ensure alignment between employees and managers. This is expected to address communication challenges.

[Read More](#)



Two other challenges for flexi-time commonly identified by employers include challenges in meeting operational needs when staff are unavailable during ‘core hours’ and challenges in effective communication among employees because of varying work schedules.

*“[We have] challenges in ensuring customers’ needs are met promptly, or that staff can be contacted by clients.”*  
- Energy & Utilities

### Flexi-place Challenges


Industry	Number 1 Challenge for Accessing to Flexi-place	
	Ensuring the Security of Company Data and Information	Monitoring Employee Performance
Chemical	✓	
Electronics & Precision Engineering	✓	
Energy & Utilities	✓	
Finance	✓	
General Manufacturing	✓	
Hospitality & Tourism	✓	
Information & Communications	✓	
Maritime	✓	
Pharmaceutical & Health Science		✓
Professional Services		✓
Real Estate & Building Services	✓	✓
Retail, F&B and General Services	✓	
Social & Community Services		✓
Trading		✓
Transport & Logistics		✓

Note: For the Real Estate & Building Services industry, *Ensuring the Security of Company Data and Information* and *Monitoring Employee Performance* emerged as the joint-top challenges for accessing to flexi-place.

Most frequently cited flexi-place challenges:

**1. 61% of employers perceive ensuring the security of company data and information as a challenge for flexi-place.** All industries identified challenges in ensuring the security of company data and information as one of the top challenges for flexi-place arrangements as public spaces may not provide a secure environment for handling confidential or sensitive data. This concern is particularly pronounced for the Chemical and Hospitality & Tourism industries, where over 80% of respondents reported this as a challenge for their industries.


*“Companies should have the liberty to define flexi-place as office/home for confidentiality/security reasons. For example, employees should not be doing work in a public place over open network.” – Retail, F&B and General Services*

**Recommendation:**  Enable remote access to company networks through secured systems like VPNs or cloud infrastructure.

[Read More](#)

**2. 58% of employers perceive monitoring employee performance as a challenge for flexi-place.** With the exception of the Chemical industry, all other industries identified monitoring employee performance as one of their top challenges, especially in Hospitality & Tourism, with 84% of employers reporting so. With flexi-place arrangements, managers or supervisors may need to regularly check in with the employees to stay updated on their work progress.

*“Staff might feel stress as managers/supervisors need to constantly ensure workers have completed their job on time. If mishandled, it will become a micromanaged system and staff will instead leave the organisation.”*  
**– Transport & Logistics**

**Recommendation:**  Setting clear work expectations on performance ensures alignment between employees and managers.

[Read More](#)

Another key challenge for flexi-place commonly reported by employers is the need for certain jobs to be performed on-site.

*"If the person who is manning the bubble tea shop is on flexible place arrangement, how [would] that [work]? [There would be] nobody to open the shop."* – **Retail, F&B, and General Services**

*"For ground workers ... due to the nature of the work, you cannot ask them to drive somewhere else and they might have to be at the [worksite] physically."* – **Transport & Logistics**

Flexi-place can also create challenges in collaborating with colleagues who are working from different locations. Certain tasks require in-person coordination or oversight.

*"...the location cannot be divorced from the delivery of [our] services as medical and professional specific equipment is needed to offer the service... While the admin staff can be cited as opportune to adopt some of these practices, in reality, admin support works hand in hand with clinical and care delivery."* – **Pharmaceutical & Health Science**



### Flexi-load Challenges

Industry	Number 1 Challenge for Acceding to Flexi-load	
	Balancing Workload Among Employees	Maintaining Accountability
Chemical	✓	✓
Electronics & Precision Engineering	✓	
Energy & Utilities	✓	
Finance	✓	
General Manufacturing	✓	
Hospitality & Tourism	✓	
Information & Communications	✓	
Maritime	✓	
Pharmaceutical & Health Science	✓	
Professional Services	✓	
Real Estate & Building Services	✓	
Retail, F&B and General Services		✓
Social & Community Services	✓	
Trading	✓	
Transport & Logistics	✓	

Note: For the Chemical industry, *Balancing Workload Among Employees* and *Maintaining Accountability* emerged as the joint-top challenges for acceding to flexi-load.

Most frequently cited flexi-load challenges:

**1. 77% of employers perceive balancing workload among employees as a challenge for flexi-load.** All industries identified balancing workload among employees as the main challenge for flexi-load as other employees will have to take on extra tasks and share the workload to cover employees on flexi-load. This concern is particularly pronounced for Finance and Pharmaceutical & Health Science industries, where more than 90% of employers report that flexi-load may negatively impact work productivity.

*"[There are] challenges in finding a willing party to take on the portion of workload if one employee requests for flexi-load" – Trading*

**Recommendation:**

Employers recommend using trials to assess the feasibility of FWAs and periodic reassessments to ensure their ongoing viability.

[Read More](#)

**2. 61% of employers perceive maintaining accountability as a challenge for flexi-load.** The challenge in maintaining accountability was more frequently reported to be a challenge by employers in industries such as Chemical and Retail, F&B and General Services compared to other industries. When workloads are shared, dividing responsibilities among employees may become challenging, leading to reduced accountability.

*"Flexible workload have [sic] work scope and responsibility and liability issues. I give an example, employee A and employee B want to share a workload. But sometimes the workload cannot be defined so clearly by responsibility. So, this flexible workload doesn't really make any accountability sense."*

**– Energy & Utilities**

**Recommendation:**

Setting clear work expectations on accountability ensures alignment between employees and managers.

[Read More](#)



Other key flexi-load challenges commonly identified by employers include difficulty in tracking work progress and the need to hire additional employees to accommodate flexi-load. Challenges in tracking work progress arises from the difficulty to track work task effectively with multiple point of contacts. Workloads may increase when an employee is on flexi-load, thus requiring additional manpower to provide coverage.

*“Challenges in ensuring employees who share a task [include] keeping each other properly updated on task progress and list of to-dos. Follow-ups with clients may also become messy as there might be more than one Point-of-Contact.” – **Energy & Utilities***

*“[Agreeing to flexi-load] likely would result in increase in manpower costs as more people need to be hired to cover the requesters' responsibilities” – **General Manufacturing***



## Other Commonly Cited Organisational Challenges:

### 1. Buy-In from Senior Management.

Some senior leaders are resistant to adopting FWAs, believing that it could lead to decreased productivity, hinder communication, and disrupt team collaboration.

*“There is often a misconception among senior leaders that physical presence in the office equates to productivity, while remote work implies a lack of commitment. A shift in this mindset is essential to recognise that performance should be measured by output and results, not merely by attendance.”*

**– Retail, F&B and General Services**

### 2. Concerns Over Misuse of FWA Requests.

Some employers are worried that some employees will exploit their right to request for FWAs by making unreasonable demands that disrupt business operations. Additionally, there is a possibility of misuse where employees might use FWAs for personal convenience rather than for legitimate personal needs.

*“However, certain challenges exist such as measuring the employee's work output as most of the time they may be uncontactable and put the fault on the connection at home. Other challenges such as a handful of employees, going for a personal holiday and not applying any leave.”* – **General Manufacturing**

*“Abuse of early start time or late end time when no one else is in the office.”*

**– General Manufacturing**

### 3. Challenges in Ensuring Fairness and Equity Among Employees.

Ensuring fairness in providing FWAs can be challenging, as some positions cannot accommodate flexible arrangements due to the nature of the work. This may lead to envy among colleagues who feel that those on FWAs are enjoying greater benefits.

*“It is a challenge to manage fairness in flexible work arrangements (FWA), especially in organisations where certain departments require physical presence.”*

**– General Manufacturing**

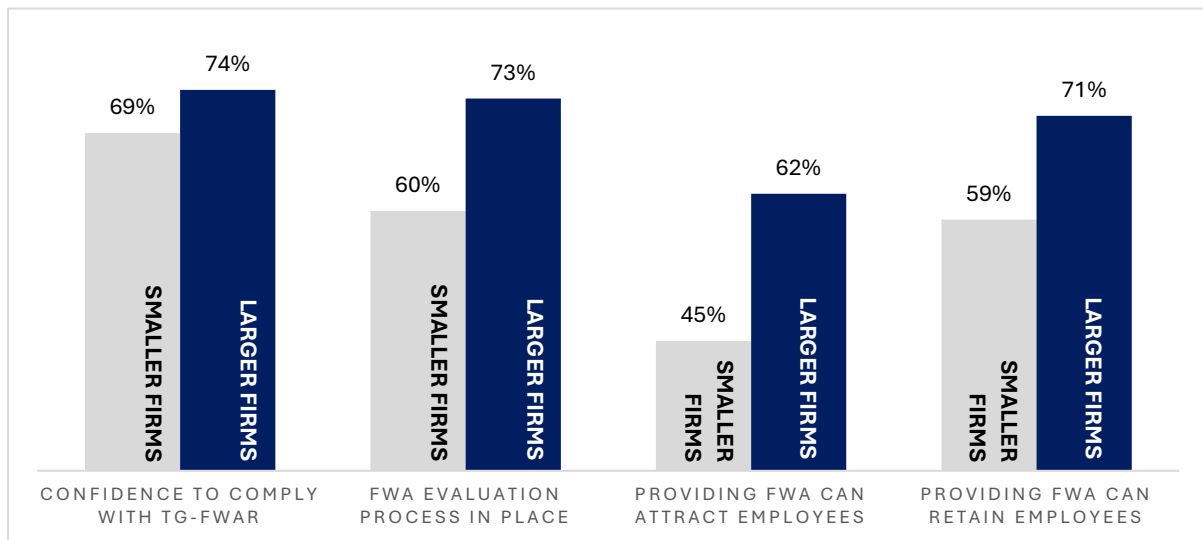


## Company Firm Size

### On the TG-FWAR...

- Compared to smaller-sized companies with 100 or fewer employees, larger companies have on average, 5% greater confidence that their HR departments and line managers can comply with the TG-FWAR.
- This increased confidence may be linked to the finding that larger companies are more likely to have an established evaluation process for considering FWA requests.

- 28% of larger companies have considered redesigning employee jobs to facilitate FWAs, whereas only 13% of smaller companies have done so.
- Additionally, larger companies are more confident that job redesign allows them to offer flexi-place and flexi-load options without sacrificing productivity, which may explain their greater confidence to comply with the TG-FWAR.
- Notably, 11% more of smaller companies stated they require support to help create the FWA request application/submission forms.



### FWA Adoption Across Company Size

With the exception of Energy & Utilities and Hospitality & Tourism industry companies, larger companies were more likely to believe that providing FWAs, particularly flexi-load options, can attract potential employees.

- 12% more of larger companies believe that FWAs help retain employees.

*“[Larger companies] have a big pool of maintenance team, so maybe they can do [FWA]. But for contractors like medium enterprises like us from the process sectors, with the local workforce being very scarce, it's very hard to implement FWA on the ground.” – Energy & Utilities*

### Additionally...

- 9% more of larger companies report a greater ability to resolve challenges relating to balancing workloads among their employees. This might be due to their larger workforce.
- Large companies also believe, by a margin of 4%, flexi-time is less likely to increase organisational expenditure.
- In contrast, 14% more of smaller companies indicated that they need support in tracking employee work performance.

Our findings indicate that larger companies may have more resources and established systems in place, enabling them to implement flexi-time without incurring significant additional costs.

## FWA REQUESTS: WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO MANAGE REQUESTS

12% of employers indicated that they do not require any support.

Those who require support need:

- 1. 46% of employers require support in establishing policies/guidelines to consider formal FWA requests.** Employers seek guidelines on how to reject FWA requests due to business concerns. They seek to understand the implications of such rejections.

*“The employee must have a valid reason. But how valid is valid? [The guideline] is not clear on that. And then the employer can reject but it must be business [purpose]. But the thing is how? How we counter that is also up to individual employers. There's no mandatory guideline [on] what can reject, what cannot.” – Real Estate & Building Services*

- 2. 40% of employers would like case studies on FWA implementation.** Employers seek case studies on successful TG-FWAR implementation and common mistakes to avoid, especially those regarding the approval or rejection of FWA requests.

*“The risk lies with how a company/manager/HR handles and responds to FWA requests. The behavioural do's and don'ts are hard to define and control and when not handled appropriately, the employee could lodge a complaint to TAFEP. Hence, having case studies or common mistakes to avoid will be very helpful to educate HR and managers.” – Chemical*

- 3. 37% of employers require government funding to support FWA and FWA requests.** Employers seek funding support for expenses related to the provision of remote work tools (e.g., security systems and hardware) and training costs.

*“Funding [will be] needed to cover, manpower cost, IT cost, infrastructure, training cost, counselling.” – Chemical*

Other support needs commonly identified are training for employees on managing the TG-FWAR. Providing training for supervisors and managers handling such requests and related workplace grievances would help ensure equity and fairness.

*“I have to remind my managers of what FWA are and how they should be managing it because [employees] may say that it is now an entitlement. Some managers refuse to be the bad guy, or they find it hard to have those difficult conversations.” – Energy & Utilities*

*“Managers struggle with dealing with other team members' perception of them being unfair/biased when FWA is approved for some and not others, and they do not know how to manage such communication.” – Pharmaceutical & Health Science*

Furthermore, employers seek support to educate employees that the TG-FWAR does not require employers to grant FWAs but instead requires them to consider employees' formal requests, with the feasibility of such requests being dependent on business-related considerations.

*“The employee should be educated on the FWA to avoid any misconceptions that FWA request is a given and that the employer has to approve it... More needs to be shared on the dos and don'ts with the employee side.” – Hospitality & Tourism*

## BEST PRACTICES

**We asked employers for their best practices when handling FWA requests. These are their suggestions:**

### 1. Establish Company Guidelines

Employers say having clear company policies for FWAs are essential for providing employees with clear guidelines for requesting and utilising FWAs. These policies should outline the protocols that employees are expected to follow under different work arrangements to ensure work efficiency. Additionally, these guidelines need to be clearly communicated to all employees to ensure they understand the policy guidelines and expectations.

*“My HR Team will work to set clear [guidelines]. What are the reasons, grounds that we can accept for FWA allowance.” – **Real Estate & Building Services***

*“Making sure that our employees or managers understand what the policy conveys. [That will take] a lot of education, a lot of communication.” – **Real Estate & Building Services***

### 2. Set Work Expectations

In addition to establishing policy guidelines for FWAs, it is also important to set clear expectations regarding work requirements. This will ensure alignment between employees and managers when it comes to work expectations.

*“You need to be very clear what kind of objectives and milestones you need your people to actually achieve while working from home [or under other flexible work arrangements].” – **Energy & Utilities***

### 3. Trial and Review Feasibility of FWAs

Some employers suggest the use of trials to test the feasibility of implementing FWAs with requesting employees. They also recommend periodic reassessments of FWAs to determine its ongoing viability.

*“Both the employee and the employer must have open communication and work out possible options before rejecting [the request]. I feel like it can be a trade-off and negotiation between the employee and employer is also very important.” – **Transport & Logistics***

*“We start a trial for one month and then sit down in the second month to review. In the review, we want to hear whether there is any complaint or feedback from operations staff and administration staff. Are there any things they want to voice out?” – **Energy & Utilities***

*“You review again case by case, employee by employee, whether you know it's possible. I don't think it's unfair if you really just ask to monitor for a period of time before you start allowing people to go back on their flexibility.” – **Real Estate & Building Services***

## Best Practices for Resolving Key FWA Challenges:

1. 26% of employers report resolving the challenge of scheduling meetings with staff on FWAs.

Employers who resolved this challenge reported that they would schedule meetings in advance or set fixed regular dates and times. To support employees on flexi-time, meetings are scheduled during 'core hours' where all employees are available and for those on flexi-place, online meetings are arranged. Additionally, online meetings are also provided for employees who are unable to join in person.

*"Meetings are scheduled on a fixed day and time so that most employees will be present in office. For those WFH, they are required to log in online for the meeting." – **Trading***

2. 25% of employers report resolving the challenges of providing remote work tools and software.

Employers indicated that to resolve remote work tools and software issues, they invested in IT infrastructure and support. This includes providing laptops instead of desktops, providing high-quality internet access to employees, and installing collaboration software to conduct online meetings. Employers also ensured that employees experiencing IT issues can access support from virtual assistants.

*"IT has been able to provide employees who can remotely work with the necessary work tools and software without compromising on data security." – **Professional Services***

3. 23% of employers report resolving the challenges of accessing computer data and information.

Employers reported that they enabled remote access to the company network through secure systems, such as VPN or utilise cloud infrastructure for storage and communication to ensure employees can access data and information even when they are not in the office.

*"Bandwidth of remote working VPN has been increased to accommodate more employees. Cloud communications channels have been improved and made available to employees." – **Finance***

## Job Redesign

The potential of job redesign to enable the successful provision of FWAs varies across industries.

Transport & Logistics employers express a strong belief that job redesign can boost the uptake of all forms of FWAs, particularly flexi-time. 63% of employers stated the key challenge with flexi-time in this industry is ensuring adequate staffing levels, suggesting that job redesign could potentially address this issue.

## FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

We asked employers to share their future expectations regarding FWAs and the effects of the TG-FWAR.

### Greater Employee Expectations for the Availability of FWAs

In general, employers predict that employee desire for FWAs will continue to increase, especially among younger employees in their 20s to 40s who desire FWAs to meet personal needs, such as caregiving responsibilities, and to achieve greater work-life balance. As a result, offering FWAs may soon become an important consideration for attracting and retaining talent. Employers that have not adopted these arrangements may find themselves at a disadvantage in a tight labour market.

*"I see some of the fellow mates still don't want to move [on taking up FWA]. But as time moves, by right they'll lose out to the market forces." – Real Estate & Building Services*

*"I think for the young generation, they would be looking more into [flexi-time] for the balance of me time and work time." – Real Estate & Building Services*

*"Flexi-work is definitely there to stay, and it definitely will help to retain talents." – Energy & Utilities*

### FWA Requests

Employers expect an increase in requests for FWA following the implementation of the TG-FWAR. However, the volume of FWA requests is expected to normalise within a few months, eventually being integrated into company policy like any other standard practice.

*"Like after COVID, when we come back to work, it may take maybe a month's hoo-hah. After that everything will settle down because we are easily adaptable..." – Real Estate & Building Services*

*"I think what will happen is for the first couple of months, there will be an uptick of requests just because it's announced. People will start [requesting] and then, after maybe 3 to 6 months, things will start stabilising and it would be the norm already... Once it's stabilised, when the newcomers come in... [things] will fall in place, because that is the organisational culture." – Retail, F&B and General Services*

### Impact on Companies

Employers believe that the impact of the TG-FWAR might be greater for companies that do not have any FWA precedents or processes in place.

*"There could be companies who totally say no to any form of flexible work arrangements. They don't even want to hear, ask, or talk about it or even consider it at all. So, there are many companies that are like this and I feel what the government is doing is to address [such] companies... to at least consider." – Real Estate & Building Services*

*"I do admit that other organisations that don't practise flexi-work will probably have a problem." – Energy & Utilities*

Additionally, there may be a need to hire more employees to cover those utilising FWAs. Employers believe that offering FWAs can enhance talent attraction.

*"For operations wise, I do foresee the requests will increase, hence I need to recruit more people to cover all this flexibility." – Electronics & Precision Engineering*

*"We also realise that [FWA] has become a way to attract people to join the organisation." – Energy & Utilities*

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## ABOUT SINGAPORE NATIONAL EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

The Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) is a trade union of employers. Our mission is to advance tripartism and enhance labour market flexibility to enable employers to implement responsible employment practices for sustainable growth. SNEF has a membership of more than 3,800 companies with more than 860,000 employees. For more information, please visit [www.snef.org.sg](http://www.snef.org.sg)

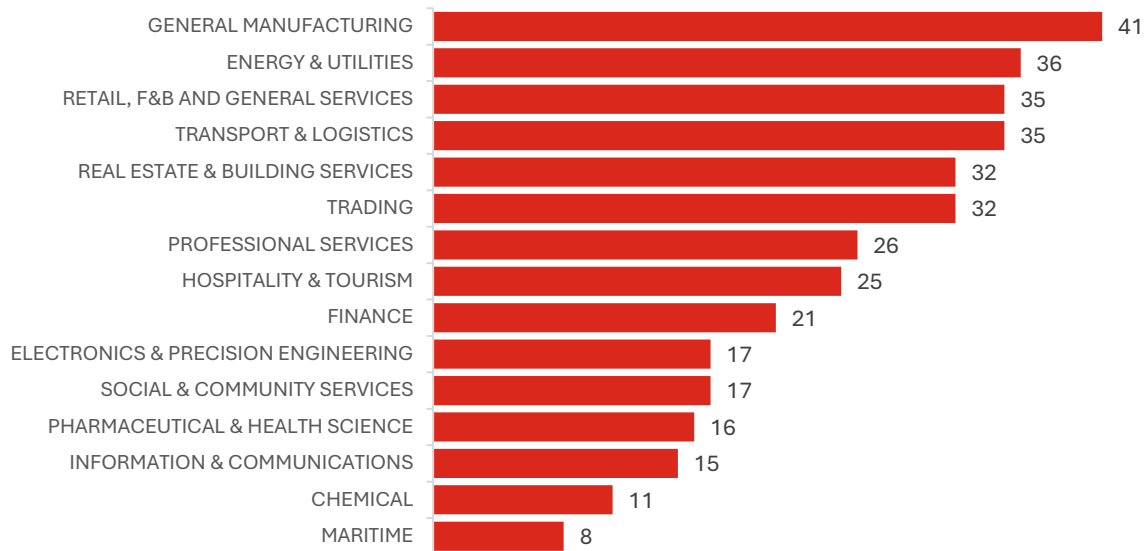
To find out how to implement the TG-FWAR effectively, please join the SNEF workshop on implementing FWAs. You may contact the SNEF Member and Corporate Relations Hotline at **6290 7696** or email [mcr@snef.org.sg](mailto:mcr@snef.org.sg) to register.



# APPENDIX: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

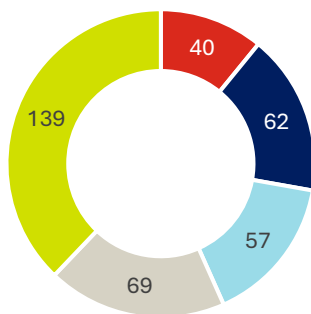
367 employers from a representative mix of industries, company sizes, and revenue types took part in the survey. Respondents came from diverse industries such as *General Manufacturing, Finance, and Retail, F&B, and General Services*. 57% of respondents had workforces exceeding 100 employees. Companies are also evenly distributed across various annual revenue brackets.

**NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY INDUSTRY**



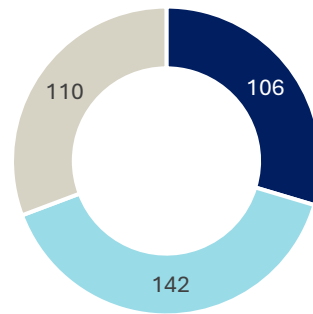
**NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY COMPANY SIZE**

- Less than 20
- 20 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101 to 200
- More than 200



**NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY ANNUAL REVENUE AMOUNT**

- Less than 10 Million
- 10 Million to less than 100 Million
- 100 Million or more



9 respondents did not disclose their company annual revenue

Further insights were obtained through one-on-one interviews with eight employers. Interviewees came from the Energy and Utilities, Real Estate and Building Services, Retail, F&B, and General Services, and Transport and Logistics industries and represented companies ranging from 20 to more than 200 employees.