




Results from WorkSafe's Surveys

**UNDERSTANDING HEALTH
AND SAFETY ATTITUDES AND
BEHAVIOURS IN NEW ZEALAND
WORKPLACES**

December 2017



Understanding how attitudes and behaviours contribute to injury and harm in New Zealand workplaces is key to improving health and safety practices so everyone comes home healthy and safe.

Asking workers and employers directly about their views and what happens in their workplaces is crucial to gaining this understanding.

WorkSafe's Attitudes and Behaviours Survey (carried out annually from 2014 to 2016) allows us to track changes in workers' and employers' behaviours and attitudes about workplace health and safety. The results presented here are for workers and employers in four industries that have unacceptably high workplace fatalities and serious harm injuries - agriculture, construction, forestry and manufacturing. The survey is valuable because it gets both workers' and employers' perspectives on topics central to good workplace health and safety.

Healthy and safe workplaces result from:

- good leadership
- effective worker engagement and participation
- a skilled and capable workforce.

The survey results show the progress towards achieving these goals.

They also provide insights into what is happening in workplaces and changes being made to improve health and safety.

The role WorkSafe plays in providing information and guidance on health and safety is highlighted, as well as the extent to which workers and employers see us as an organisation they can trust and have confidence in.

Comparing results from the *Attitudes and Behaviours Survey* with those from our *Service Excellence Survey* show that direct contact with WorkSafe leads to more positive perceptions of us.

Overall, the results show signs of progress and improvement in the performance of the health and safety system. They also show that employers continue to have more positive views about many aspects of workplace health and safety than workers, and more work is needed to achieve sustained improvements and close the gap between workers' and employers' views.

The figures shown in blue and grey in the report are from the 2016 *Attitudes and Behaviours Survey*. More information about the results and the two surveys is on page 15.

Good **leadership**, a high level of **worker engagement and participation**, and a **skilled and capable workforce** are all key to achieving healthy and safe workplaces.

All of these elements are influenced by workers' and employers' attitudes to health and safety and what happens at work. Together, attitudes and behaviours shape workplace culture and performance.

Our Attitudes and Behaviours Survey allows us to understand and track changes in attitudes and behaviours, so our interventions and communications can target improvements in culture and performance.



Good leadership
comes from
everyone
prioritising
and sharing
responsibility for
health and safety.



Workers and employers prioritise health and safety but this could be even higher, especially among workers, who say they get satisfaction from a safe working environment.

● Workers

4 in 10 (39%)

workers put health and safety in their top three most important work considerations

● Employers

6 in 10 (63%)

employers put health and safety in their top three most important business considerations

ALMOST

8 in 10 (76%)
UP FROM
70% IN 2015 

workers say they get a huge satisfaction from knowing they have a safe working environment

7 in 10 (72%)
UP FROM
67% IN 2015 

employers said they were highly motivated to comply with all health and safety regulations

8 in 10 (79%)
UP FROM
74% IN 2015 

workers say their boss is genuinely concerned about the health and safety of workers (excludes self-employed)

Workers and employers have similar views about who should be responsible for health and safety but there is some way to go before health and safety is seen as a responsibility shared by everyone.

8 in 10 (83%)

workers say 'workers themselves' have a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

8 in 10 (84%)

employers say 'workers themselves' have a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

7 in 10 (69%)

workers say the 'immediate boss or supervisor' has a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

7 in 10 (71%)

employers say workers' 'immediate boss or supervisor' has a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

6 in 10 (59%)
UP FROM
54% IN 2015 

workers say 'top management' has a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

5 in 10 (54%)

employers say 'top management' has a **very big** responsibility for health and safety

Government, industry bodies and unions were the least likely to be seen as having a 'very big' responsibility by both workers and employers.



Effective worker engagement and participation means enabling workers to shape decisions that affect their health and safety at work.



Engagement

A high proportion of workers say they have input to decisions about health and safety but far fewer say they get feedback from employers about how their views are taken into account.

The 2016 results show that both attitudes and behaviours are generally more positive if workers are engaged.

8 in 10 (79%)

workers said they always have a say in decisions that affect their health and safety

8 in 10 (81%)

employers say their workers are always involved in decisions affecting their health and safety

5 in 10 (53%)

workers say that, when their boss makes decisions about workplace health and safety, workers are always told how their views have been considered

8 in 10 (79%)

employers say their business always lets workers know how their views have been considered when decisions are made about workplace health and safety

Participation

A high and increasing proportion of workers and employers say there are opportunities to participate in discussions about health and safety in their workplace and raise issues.

9 in 10 (90%)
UP FROM 86% IN 2015



workers said their workplace had at least one of a number of ways workers can participate in health and safety

ALMOST 9 in 10 (86%)
UP FROM 77% IN 2015



employers said their workplace had at least one of a number of ways workers can participate in health and safety

6 in 10 (63%)
UP FROM 50% IN 2014



workers said there were regular health and safety meetings at their workplace

5 in 10 (51%)
UP FROM 36% IN 2014



employers said there were regular health and safety meetings at their workplace

8 in 10 (79%)

workers said their boss encourages them to speak up if they feel something is unsafe

9 in 10 (94%)

employers said they encourage workers to speak up if they feel something is unsafe



A skilled and capable workforce allows everyone to identify and manage risks to health and safety effectively.

Workers and employers acknowledge that they work in risky industries but very few expect workers to get hurt at work.

5 in 10 (53%)

workers thought the risk of someone getting seriously hurt in their industry was 'higher' than in other industries

5 in 10 (48%)

employers thought the risk of someone getting seriously hurt in their industry was 'higher' than in other industries

OVER
1 in 10 (14%)

workers thought there was at least a moderate risk of workers being seriously hurt in their workplace in the next 12 months

UNDER
1 in 10 (5%)

employers thought there was at least a moderate risk of one of their workers being seriously hurt at work in the next 12 months

Risky behaviours that can lead to injury and harm are declining but are still quite common. (A decrease here is positive)

There is a gap between what workers and employers report, with workers more likely than employers to say that most of the risky behaviours occur. This suggests that employers need to be more aware about what is happening in their workplaces.

4 in 10 (44%)
DOWN FROM 57% IN 2014

workers said they worked when sick or injured from 'time to time' or 'a lot'

2 in 10 (21%)
DOWN FROM 29% IN 2014

employers said their workers worked when sick or injured from 'time to time' or 'a lot'

4 in 10 (43%)
DOWN FROM 53% IN 2014

workers said they worked when overtired from 'time to time' or 'a lot'

2 in 10 (24%)
DOWN FROM 31% IN 2014

employers said their workers worked when overtired from 'time to time' or 'a lot'

OVER
3 in 10 (35%)
DOWN FROM 43% IN 2014

workers said they made mistakes by being careless/not having their mind on the job from 'time to time' or 'a lot'

3 in 10 (30%)
DOWN FROM 38% IN 2014

employers said their workers made mistakes by being careless/not having their mind on the job from 'time to time' or 'a lot'



A skilled and capable workforce allows everyone to identify and manage risks to health and safety effectively.

Confidence about staying safe at work is high but fewer workers are confident about staying healthy.

Workers' responses indicate that processes are in place for reporting incidents but the fact that quite a lot of employers turn a blind eye to risky behaviour is a concern.

7 in 10 (67%)

workers said they were 'very confident' that they had the knowledge and skills to stay safe at work

5 in 10 (53%)

workers said they were 'very confident' that they had the knowledge and skills to avoid long-term health problems

9 in 10 (91%)
UP FROM 87% IN 2015

workers said they know how to report a hazard, near miss or accident



2 in 10 (18%)

workers said their boss sometimes says nothing when he sees a worker taking a short-cut or risk

Training workers in health and safety is one way to improve knowledge and skills and is quite common. However, there is clearly potential to increase the level of training.

The benefits of training are evident from the 2016 results which show a strong association between positive attitudes and behaviours and recent training.

6 in 10 (58%)

workers said they'd had formal health and safety training in the last 12 months

5 in 10 (49%)

employers said at least half of their workers had had training in the last 12 months

2 in 10 (20%)

workers said they'd **never** had any health and safety training

OVER
3 in 10 (35%)

employers said **none** of their workers had had any health and safety training

Health and safety in practice:
the Attitudes and Behaviours
Survey provides information
about **what happens** in
New Zealand workplaces.

This includes the extent of workplace **incidents** and
workers' and employers' **responses** to these and
other risks, as well the degree to which employers
are making **changes** to their health and safety
systems and practices to improve performance.



Experience of workplace incidents.

Few workers and employers think there is a risk that workers will be hurt at work (see page 4) but in practice a relatively high proportion experience harm.

Near misses, which can be a precursor of harm, are also quite common. These figures have not changed over the three survey years.

OVER

1 in 10 (15%)

workers said they had personally experienced a serious harm incident at work in the last 12 months

Top three types of serious harm reported by workers:

- 4% reported having a deep wound that required stitches
- 3% reported having serious but temporary hearing loss
- 2% reported having long-term breathing problems

2 in 10 (19%)

employers said at least one of their workers had been seriously harmed at work in the last 12 months

Top three types of serious harm reported by employers:

- 8% of employers said their workers had a deep wound that required stitches
- 4% said their workers had a broken bone or fracture
- 4% said their workers had an eye injury

ALMOST

5 in 10 (46%)
UP FROM 42% IN 2015



workers said they had personally experienced another type of harm at work in the last 12 months

Top three types of other harm reported by workers:

- 30% reported having a sprain, strain or dislocation
- 12% reported having short-term breathing problems (up from 9% in 2015)
- 11% reported having a stress-related or mental illness

4 in 10 (38%)

employers said at least one of their workers had experienced another type of harm at work in the last 12 months

Top three types of other harm reported by employers:

- 29% of employers said their workers had a sprain, strain or dislocation
- 8% said their workers had a skin condition
- 6% said their workers had a stress-related or mental illness

3 in 10 (31%)

workers had had one or more near miss incidents in the last 12 months

3 in 10 (33%)
UP FROM 28% IN 2014



employers said their workers had had a near miss in the last 12 months



Responses to incidents and risks.

There is evidence of improving awareness of specific harms and hazards and responses to these. However, more focus is needed on positive actions in the workplace to improve health and safety.

5 in 10^(51%)

workers experiencing **serious harm** said follow-up action was taken (eg discussed how to stop happening again/changed ways things were done)

7 in 10^(72%)

employers whose workers experienced **serious harm** said follow-up action was taken (eg discussed how to stop happening again/changed ways things were done)

6 in 10^(60%)

workers experiencing a **near miss** said follow-up action was taken

- response levels to serious harm have not changed
- fewer workers said they didn't tell anyone about their near miss (in 2016 than in 2014)
- more workers said that near misses were recorded and reported (in 2016 than in 2015)

9 in 10^(91%)

employers whose workers had a **near miss** said follow-up action was taken

- more employers said that serious harm incidents were **recorded and actioned** (in 2016 than in 2014)
- more employers also said that near misses were **recorded** (in 2016 than in 2014)

7 in 10^(74%) UP FROM 68% IN 2014

workers said they'd noticed a new hazard

- almost 5 in 10 (46%) workers said something was done immediately (eg work stopped) when a hazard was noticed (up from 40% in 2015)

The extent to which workers took a number of **positive health and safety actions** 'always' was not particularly high, ranging from:

- machinery and equipment is fully checked before use (39%) to
- safety devices are fitted to equipment (61%)
- only a half (52%) of workers said PPE (personal protective equipment) was used 'always', although this has increased since 2014 (45%)

OVER 6 in 10^(65%) UP FROM 56% IN 2014

employers said they'd noticed a new hazard

- over 3 in 10 (35%) employers said something was done immediately when a hazard was noticed (this figure hasn't changed)

For employers too, the extent to which **positive health and safety actions** were taken by their workers 'always' was not particularly high, ranging from:

- machinery and equipment is fully checked before use (41%) to
- safety devices are fitted to equipment (70%)
- just under a half (49%) of employers said PPE was used 'always'



Changes to systems and practices.

There are signs that health and safety performance is improving, with a year-on-year increase in the proportion of employers reporting changes to improve health and safety.

OVER
6 in 10 (65%)
UP FROM 50%
IN 2015 AND
40% IN 2014 

employers said they had made significant **changes** to their health and safety systems or practices in the last 12 months

- 8 in 10 (82%) employers making changes said there were **ongoing improvements** but
- 6 in 10 (59%) said **learning more about best practice** prompted the change
- 1 in 10 (8%) employers said a change was made in response to a worker's suggestion (new response in 2016)

4 in 10 (43%)
UP FROM
35% IN 2014 

employers said changes were made to processes to eliminate, isolate or minimise hazards

WorkSafe provides a wide range of **guidance** and **information** on workplace health and safety for businesses and workers.

For this to be effective, employers and workers need to know about WorkSafe's role and use our resources. The Attitudes and Behaviours Survey allows us to track people's **knowledge and awareness** of WorkSafe and **use of our guidance**. The survey also helps us understand people's views of WorkSafe by asking about their **perceptions** of us and if we are an organisation they can **trust** and have **confidence** in.



Users' experience of WorkSafe is increasingly positive.

Over time, more workers and employers say they are aware of/know about WorkSafe and we are increasingly a source of advice on health and safety. For employers, satisfaction with frequently used guidance is high.

Awareness and advice

OVER
3 in 10 ^(35%)
UP FROM 14% IN 2014

workers said they know about WorkSafe (*know a lot or quite a lot*)

4 in 10 ^(43%)
UP FROM 22% IN 2014

employers said they *know about* WorkSafe

4 in 10 ^(44%)
UP FROM 39% IN 2015

workers said they would go to WorkSafe for health and safety advice

ALMOST
7 in 10 ^(66%)
UP FROM 59% IN 2015

employers said they would go to WorkSafe for health and safety advice

Use of WorkSafe guidance

7 in 10 ^(73%)
UP FROM 62% IN 2015

employers said they had used one or more types of WorkSafe's guidance materials (workers weren't asked about this)

- The most frequently **used** and usefulness ratings were:
- Best/good practice guidelines (38% used, 70% said 'very useful')
 - Fact sheets (36% used, 66% said 'very useful')
 - Checklists (35% used, 74% said 'very useful')
 - Use of the **new online tools** was lower, as was the usefulness rating
 - Quizzes (3% used, 59% said 'very useful')
 - Interactive tools (2% used, 60% said 'very useful')
 - Animated videos/ice breakers (2% used, 37% said 'very useful')

Paper booklets/brochures was the preferred format for health and safety messages (for workers) for both workers (59% 65% in 2015) and employers (56%).

Influence through our information, guidance materials and online resources is also increasing. Use of our website is tangible, with workers and employers downloading content, rather than just browsing pages.

Online and other resources

3 in 10 ^(27%)
UP FROM 14% IN 2014

workers said they visited our website

6 in 10 ^(57%)

workers said they downloaded documents to read or save

5 in 10 ^(50%)
UP FROM 32% IN 2014

employers said they visited our website

7 in 10 ^(69%)

employers said they downloaded documents to read or save

ALMOST
5 in 10 ^(46%)
UP FROM 41% IN 2014

workers said they had seen materials/information produced by WorkSafe

6 in 10 ^(58%)
UP FROM 49% IN 2014

employers said they seen materials/information produced by WorkSafe

Direct contact with WorkSafe leads to more positive perceptions of WorkSafe.

Perceptions of WorkSafe among workers and employers in our four priority sectors are at an acceptable level but are noticeably higher among workers and employers who have direct contact with our inspectors (eg during an assessment or investigation).

Trust and confidence in WorkSafe are also higher among workers and employers in direct contact with us.

NEW IN 2016

Perceptions of WorkSafe

	FOUR PRIORITY SECTORS ²	PEOPLE INTERACTING WITH INSPECTORS ³
Workers¹	Agree/strongly agree⁴	
WorkSafe helps workers in their industry understand the health and safety issues and risks they face	64%	72%
WorkSafe is doing a good job helping workers to be safe at work	60%	76%
WorkSafe is doing a good job helping workers to be healthy at work	54%	65%
WorkSafe is making a real difference to workplace health and safety in New Zealand	53%	63%
Employers	Agree/strongly agree⁴	
WorkSafe helps businesses understand their health and safety issues and risks	69%	83%
WorkSafe is doing a good job helping businesses improve workplace safety	59%	76%
WorkSafe is doing a good job helping businesses keep people healthy at work	57%	69%
WorkSafe is making a real difference to workplace health and safety in New Zealand	50%	68%
WorkSafe works effectively with businesses like mine	41%	71%

Trust and confidence

	WORKERS		EMPLOYERS	
	Four priority sectors	People interacting with inspectors	Four priority sectors	People interacting with inspectors
WorkSafe	Agree/strongly agree			
Is a trustworthy organisation	56%	77%	53%	75%
Is an organisation I can have confidence in	54%	71%	50%	73%

¹ Workers include self-employed people.

² Results from the 2016 Attitudes and Behaviours Survey. Note: some workers and employers in the four priority sectors said they had been in contact with a WorkSafe inspector but the majority had not.

³ Results from the 2016-17 Service Excellence Survey – Health and Safety Inspectors' Survey. People includes workers and self-employed, and employers.

⁴ Other people did not necessarily 'disagree' with a statement. For the Attitudes and Behaviours Survey between 2 and 3 out of 10 workers and employers said they did not have a view (ie were neutral).

What have we learned from the surveys?

Overall

- The results show signs of progress and improvement in the performance of the health and safety system. They also show that employers continue to have more positive views about many aspects of workplace health and safety than workers.
- More work is needed by everyone with responsibility for workplace health and safety to achieve sustained improvements and close the gap between workers' and employers' views.





Leadership

- Health and safety needs to be more of a priority and responsibility shared by everyone if better leadership is to drive improvements in health and safety.



Worker engagement and participation

- There are increasing opportunities for workers to influence health and safety in their workplaces but a lack of feedback loops to communicate to workers how their input is shaping decisions.
- The benefits of good engagement are clear from the survey, with engaged workers generally having more positive attitudes and behaviours to health and safety.



Skilled and capable workforce

- Workers are confident they know how to stay safe but this is not translating into awareness of risks and actions to manage risk effectively. Employers also have low awareness of risks to workers in their businesses.
- Workers are less confident about avoiding risks that lead to health problems. Increasing their confidence will only be achieved by increasing awareness of the attitudes and behaviours that will reduce risks that lead to work-related ill health.
- Training has a strong association with positive attitudes and behaviours and is one way to increase the skills and capability of workers.



Health and safety in practice

- More employers report making changes to health and safety practices and responses to specific hazards are improving, but this is not leading to a reduction in the overall harm reported by workers.



Recognition of WorkSafe and its role

- The Attitudes and Behaviours Survey shows both workers and employers are becoming increasingly aware of WorkSafe, seeing us as a source of advice about health and safety, and becoming aware of and using our information and guidance materials.
- These positive trends all suggest that communicating messages about good health and safety practice will become increasingly effective for a growing number of workers and employers.
- Employers tend to be more aware of WorkSafe and make more use of our resources than workers and more work is needed to raise our profile with workers.
- Our new online resources are just beginning to get traction but feedback from other sources suggests these will be much more popular in future. Future surveys will track the use of these resources against the 2016 baselines.



Perceptions of WorkSafe

- Both our Attitudes and Behaviours and Service Excellence Surveys provide new information about how workers and employers perceive WorkSafe.
- Results show that workers and employers interacting directly with WorkSafe (eg during assessments and investigations) are more likely to have positive views about us, think we 'do a good job' and have trust and confidence in us than those who may or may not have had direct contact (ie those in the four priority sectors).
- These results are good indicators of the positive impact our interactions have on the way people see us.

About the surveys

Attitudes and Behaviours Survey

WorkSafe's Attitudes and Behaviours Survey is carried out by the research company Nielsen. It focuses on WorkSafe's four priority sectors (agriculture, construction, forestry and manufacturing) but also includes workers and employers from other occupations for comparison.

Workers are selected from the Electoral Roll and employers from ACC's Levy Payers' database. Forestry employers are also selected from a WorkSafe database.

Results shown here are for the four priority sectors. The figures shown in blue and grey are from the 2016 survey. Year-to-year increases or decreases that are statistically significant (at the 95% confidence level) are flagged by the arrows. The arrows show statistically significant changes from 2015 to 2016 or in some cases from 2014 to 2016.

Surveys have been completed in 2014, 2015 and 2016, with over 9,400 workers and 5,200 employers (excluding self-employed people who take part in the workers' survey) taking part in the three surveys (over 6,600 workers and 4,100 employers from the four priority sectors).

Workers and self-employed people answer questions about themselves and their bosses/supervisors. Employers answer questions about their workers and what happens in their workplaces. Self-completion questionnaires are completed online or on a paper copy.

In 2016, for workers in the priority sectors, response rates ranged from 22% (forestry) to 32% (agriculture). For employers they ranged from 22% (construction) to 29% (agriculture). Based on the 2016 samples of 2,190 workers and 1,237 employers, the maximum sampling error is $\pm 2.1\%$ and $\pm 2.8\%$, respectively (at the 95% confidence level).

Data were adjusted (or weighted) to make sure that survey respondents were representative of the populations they were selected from.

The survey allows us to track changes in workers' and employers' behaviour and attitudes about workplace health and safety. It also provides performance indicators for WorkSafe's corporate reporting and baseline indicators for a number of WorkSafe's interventions.

The 2014 and 2015 surveys took place before the 2015 Health and Safety at Work Act came into effect. The 2016 survey took place around six months after the new Act was in effect, providing the first opportunity to assess attitudes and behaviours in the new legislative environment.

Further results from the survey are available on WorkSafe's website.

Service Excellence Survey

Results shown here are from WorkSafe's 2016-17 Health and Safety Inspectors' Service Excellence Survey. People who had had a recent interaction with an inspector during an assessment or investigation were surveyed. 472 people were interviewed in 2016-17. The response rate was 28.6% and the maximum margin of error at the 95% confidence level was $\pm 4.5\%$.

The Service Excellence Survey is carried out for WorkSafe by Research New Zealand.

Results from the Service Excellence Survey shown here have been analysed to be comparable with the Attitudes and Behaviours Survey results and so may be different from Service Excellence Survey results reported elsewhere.

Other results from the Service Excellence Survey are in WorkSafe's Annual Report which is published on our website.

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PO Box 165, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

www.worksafe.govt.nz



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