

Improving Work-Related Health: Mentally Healthy Work

Work can have a negative or positive impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. Mentally healthy work is about preventing negative impacts from work, which can cause mental harm, by creating work conditions to support positive mental health and wellbeing. This can be achieved by businesses and workers working together to design work and foster a positive workplace culture.

Mentally healthy workplaces are good for everyone

Workplaces which support and sustain mentally healthy work are good for workers, businesses and communities. When workplaces are mentally healthy there is reduced absenteeism, increased motivation and commitment and higher productivity. Mentally healthy work has also been shown to reduce harm to workers such as mental harm, pain or discomfort, injuries, diseases and illnesses.

17%

WorkSafe estimates of the burden of work-related harm in New Zealand shows 17% links to work-related mental ill health.¹

1 in 10

New Zealand workers surveyed by Statistics New Zealand reported experiencing discrimination, harassment or bullying in the previous 12 months.²

1 in 5

New Zealand workers reported always or often being stressed by work.²

1 in 7

New Zealand workers reported always or often being too tired to enjoy life outside of work.²

What challenges do we face?



Knowledge

We need to learn more about the scale and distribution of mental harm at work and what makes work mentally healthy.



Capacity & capability

We need to influence businesses to assess and manage risks to mental health and wellbeing at work.



Effective controls

We need to create a co-ordinated range of interventions, tools and resources to guide businesses and workers to create and sustain mentally healthy work.



Co-ordination

We need to connect across different organisations to influence and share resources to enhance mentally healthy work.

¹ WorkSafe New Zealand. (2019). Revised work-related burden of disease estimates for New Zealand.

² Statistics New Zealand. (2019). Survey of Working Life: 2018.

WorkSafe's actions by 2025 to prevent harm

Our aim

Build our knowledge of the factors influencing mentally healthy work and the causes and impact of mental harm in New Zealand.

Enhance WorkSafe's interventions around mentally healthy work including appropriate tools and resources.

Prioritise interventions addressing systemic factors which contribute to the design and management of mentally healthy work.

Support businesses, workers and the public to improve their understanding of mentally healthy work and how to prevent and manage mental harm.

Influence and support complementary initiatives across health and wellbeing programmes.

Increase the collection, use and sharing of evidence and information to support and enable mentally healthy work and guide our practice as a regulator.

What we'll do



Develop a mentally healthy work framework including standard definitions to assist businesses to understand and implement good practices.



Engage with and learn from workers, communities, whānau, unions and iwi to understand barriers and enablers for mentally healthy work.



Carry out surveys and research on New Zealand businesses and workers' experience of mentally healthy and unhealthy work practices and how to implement good practices.



Develop a suite of resources on risk identification, assessment, and mitigation, to support the development and improvement of mentally healthy work practices.



Focus activities to achieve equitable outcomes in areas where workers have greater exposure of risks to mental health and wellbeing.



Continue to grow WorkSafe's capacity and capability to support mentally healthy work, including our Kaimahi Hauora team.



Make it easier for small businesses and organisations to get information about mentally healthy work.



Support businesses to create and promote mentally healthy work environments (physical, remote and virtual) which positively impact people, businesses and the wellbeing of communities.
