



WORK-RELATED WELLBEING

What good looks like for Māori workers

Factors which protect workers' wellbeing are important to consider when developing mentally healthy work. Too many New Zealanders suffer ill-health as a result of work.

WorkSafe New Zealand has carried out research to understand what work-related factors are perceived to contribute most to the wellbeing of New Zealand workers across different industry and worker groups. WorkSafe has developed this information to guide businesses in the design of initiatives to support mentally healthy work, and demonstrate the benefits of this for workers, businesses, whānau, and the wider community.

The findings from this research reflect only the views of those participants who were invited and opted to participate in the study. Due to the small sample size, the results are not intended to be generalisable and should only be regarded as a starting point for further consideration.

Fourteen Māori workers were included in this research, representing a range of industries and roles. Compared to non-Māori, Māori participants were more commonly juggling multiple jobs, running small businesses, or doing voluntary work on top of their primary role. The following section highlights things an organisation can change in their immediate environment.

Protective factors

Interpersonal relationships

- The Māori workers we spoke with strongly value the relationships they develop with co-workers and often consider them like whānau. This helps workers to feel supported, and makes coming to work more enjoyable.

"I love the people, they're great. That's my taha whānau, that part of my wellbeing that gets lifted when I go in and see my workmates and I feel awesome. And then doing my work, it makes me feel mentally strong, doing work that I'm passionate about. It gives me spiritual fulfilment as well."

Organisational culture

- Workplaces that have an inclusive culture that acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi, recognises and incorporates kawa, tikanga (pōwhiri, pepeha, karakia, etc), and champions the use of te reo Māori make whānau Māori feel welcome, comfortable, and valued. By incorporating elements of kawa and tikanga into the workplace, an effective foundation can be created in order to allow the workplace to continue to grow in its understanding of te ao Māori (Māori worldview) and how to best support Māori workers. Taking this approach can also help to create an environment where Māori are less likely to experience racism in the workplace.

- The Māori workers we spoke with appreciate it when managers and leadership do not assume their workers' competence levels with te reo Māori and tikanga, or automatically expect Māori workers to undertake additional duties, for example, undertaking 'de-facto' tikanga duties, or educating the organisations they work for regarding te ao Māori. This can help workers to feel comfortable and respected.

"I've been [asked for input on tikanga] and I feel quite embarrassed because I have no clue. I sometimes think because my name's [Māori name], that they expect more from me."