



December 2020

WORKFORCE SEGMENTATION AND INSIGHT PROGRAMME

Agriculture

What we have learned

WorkSafe’s Workforce Segmentation and Insights Programme (WSIP) was conducted during 2019. It included 384 agriculture employers and 788 agriculture workers. Around two-thirds of the employers stated that their main business activity was livestock farming, and over 70% of workers stated they worked with animals. For New Zealand agriculture workers, the top three most important factors for safe and healthy work are: having a good work/life balance (61%), enjoying their work (53%) and staying healthy and safe while at work (52%). Staying healthy and safe at work is a high priority for 52% of agriculture employers, too. Here’s what else we now know:

Employer attitudes towards safety

34%	have a ‘mature’ attitude (care for others/protect me or mine). ¹	Agriculture employers collectively have the least proactive response of any New Zealand industry when it comes to the health and safety of their workers.
41%	are ‘all talk, little walk’ when it comes to health and safety.	Agriculture has the highest prevalence of the ‘all talk, little walk’ employer style of engagement at 41%.
41%	talk about health and safety regularly at staff meetings.	A further 26% of agriculture employers demonstrate a less engaged ‘it’s just common sense’ approach.
30%	have a noticeboard, website or other source of reliable, up-to date health and safety information for staff.	Some 92% state they understand how to comply with health and safety regulations.
		However, only 83% state they are fully aware of their health and safety obligations as an employer.

Worker engagement in safety

86%	of workers always have a say in decisions that affect their health and safety (16% above the national average).	Just 18% of New Zealand agriculture workers report they actively encourage their fellow workers to work safely on the job.
31%	of workers are highly engaged when it comes to working safely (the least of any New Zealand higher-risk sector).	More than two-thirds (69%) are unlikely to let health and safety requirements get in the way of ‘getting the job done’ sometimes.
93%	are confident they have the right knowledge and skills to keep safe at work.	A total of 89% are confident in their knowledge and ability to avoid long-term health problems from work.
87%	believe their boss would take seriously, and act appropriately, on any concern they raised about health and safety at work.	Around 87% state they have the confidence to speak up and say no if asked to do something risky at work, and 83% say their boss would support them if they suggest stopping work because of a potential hazard.
		Having a boss that acknowledges workers who make an awesome contribution to safety at work is a reality for 73%.

¹ Mature safety culture means being active in all facets of health and safety, accepting health and safety legislation, viewing health and safety as an evolving concept, more engaged workers and good two-way communication between workers and employers.

Physical harm (last 12 months)

20%	of workers report experiencing 'serious physical harm or injury' on the job.	Other work-related physical health problems reported by workers include skin conditions (12%), breathing problems (9%), loss of hearing due to loud noise (7%), and heat stroke, heat strain or hypothermia (3%). Some 27% of New Zealand agriculture workers say they often/always turn up at work when they are sick or injured, and 8% usually work when over-tired.
37%	of workers report experiencing 'non-serious physical harm or injury' at work.	
23%	of workers state that they have suffered sprains, strains or dislocations at work.	

Psychological harm (last 12 months)

46%	of workers report suffering from work-related stress.	New Zealand agriculture workers report less psychological harm caused by work in the last 12 months than almost any industry. By comparison, around 60% of workers across all industries report damaging work-related stress, 35% have experienced work-related depression or anxiety, and 15% have been bullied or harassed at work in the last 12 months.
25%	of workers have experienced work-related depression or anxiety.	
5%	of workers report they have been bullied or harassed at work.	

Workplace exposures

90%	of workers say they are exposed to physical hazards at work (employers say 95% are).	There are some statistically significant differences in perception between agricultural employers and workers about their physical hazard exposure.
78%	of workers say they are exposed to temperature extremes at work (employers say 49% are).	Notable perception gaps include exposure to loud noise (74% of workers report this versus 49% of employers) and exposure to ultra violet radiation (78% of workers versus 68% of employers).
86%	of workers say they are exposed to chemical hazards at work (employers say 75% are).	Around two-thirds of workers report diesel and pesticide exposure at work, and just under one-third report asbestos exposure.
64%	of workers say they are exposed to infectious diseases at work (employers say 31% are).	Some 82% of New Zealand agricultural employers report that their staff work outside.
47%	of workers say they are exposed to organisational hazards at work (employers say 5% are).	Perception gaps in organisational hazards include working at night (21% of agriculture workers report this versus 5% employers) and using tools that vibrate (73% of workers versus 30% of employers). Almost a third of workers say they work over 50 hours a week.

Safety practices

89%	of workers say they use personal protective equipment when it should be used 'always' or 'most of the time'.	Employers and workers report similar perceptions about safety practices. This includes: machinery or equipment is well maintained (92% of workers versus 94% of employers agree), machinery/equipment is fully checked before use (82% of workers versus 86% of employers agree), and machinery/equipment is used as instructed in the manual (83% of workers versus 88% of employers agree). A statistically significant perception gap exists around preventing harm from awkward or repetitive body movement, or long periods of sitting or standing (67% of workers say they take measures, 'always' or 'most of the time' while employers state 75% do).
87%	of workers say action is taken straight away when a potential hazard is identified 'always' or 'most of the time'. 'always' or 'most of the time'	
88%	of workers say safety devices are fitted to machinery or equipment 'always' or 'most of the time' when they should be.	