



December 2020

## WORKFORCE SEGMENTATION AND INSIGHT PROGRAMME

# Construction

### What we have learned

For New Zealand construction<sup>1</sup> workers, the top three most important factors for safe and healthy work are: having a good work/life balance (67%), having a regular income (59%) and taking pride in doing a good job (52%). Staying healthy and safe at work is a high priority for two-thirds of construction employers (66%), but only 45% of construction workers. Here's what else we now know:

#### Employer attitudes towards safety

<b>52%</b>	have a 'mature' attitude (care for others/ protect me or mine). <sup>2</sup>	Some 83% of construction firms state they are fully aware of their health and safety obligations as an employer.
<b>36%</b>	are 'all talk, little walk' when it comes to health and safety.	However, they vary broadly in their approach to the health and safety of their workers. While 52% proactively work on it, 48% are passive, reactive operators. And 11% have an 'it's all just common sense' style of engagement.
<b>51%</b>	talk about health and safety regularly at site meetings.	Some 27% of employers say they have a noticeboard, website or other source of reliable, up-to date health and safety information for staff, and 30% have elected health and safety representatives.
<b>90%</b>	state they understand how to comply with health and safety regulations.	While 59% of employers say they organise formal training on health and safety, only 39% of workers say this happens - a significant gap.

#### Worker engagement in safety

<b>75%</b>	always have a say in decisions that affect their health and safety (5% better than the average across all industries).	Not only do 90% of New Zealand construction workers feel they know how to stay safe at work, but 84% are confident in their knowledge and ability to avoid long-term health problems from work.
<b>40%</b>	are either 'advocates' or 'attainers' when it comes to safety engagement.	Around 18% of construction workers actively encourage their fellow workers to act safely on the job. But 26% say they don't or won't speak up about health and safety issues.
<b>60%</b>	are 'flustered', 'followers' or 'deniers' when it comes to safety engagement.	Some 60% are unlikely to let health and safety requirements get in the way of 'getting the job done' sometimes.
<b>86%</b>	have the confidence to speak up and say no, if asked to do something risky at work.	About 80% say their boss would support them if they suggest stopping work because of a potential hazard, and 70% say their boss acknowledges workers who make an awesome contribution to safety at work.
<b>100%</b>	believe their boss would take seriously, and act appropriately, on any concern they raised about health and safety at work.	

<sup>1</sup> Most of the construction employers surveyed reported that they had less than 20 workers (with 64% having less than 5 employees).

<sup>2</sup> 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 or injury (last 12 months)

<b>35%</b>	of workers report experiencing 'serious physical harm or injury' on the job.	Construction workers report the highest number of serious injuries of any New Zealand higher risk sector.
<b>42%</b>	of workers report experiencing 'non-serious physical harm or injury' at work.	Some 44% say they often or always work when sick or injured, and 28% say they work when over-tired. Workers reported work-related physical health problems include noise-related hearing loss (21%), short-term breathing problems (14%) and skin conditions (17%).
<b>28%</b>	report suffering strains, sprains or dislocations on the job.	

## Psychological harm (last 12 months)

<b>60%</b>	of workers report suffering from work-related stress.	Construction workers report a significantly lower rate of work-related depression and anxiety than the average across all industries (26% compared to an average of 35%) but it is unclear why.
<b>26%</b>	of workers report experiencing work-related depression or anxiety.	By contrast, construction workers report levels of harm caused by stress, bullying and harassment similar to the average across all industries.
<b>14%</b>	of workers report they have been bullied or harassed at work.	In the last 12 months across all industries 60% of workers said they experienced work-related stress and 15% were bullied or harassed at work.

## Workplace exposures

<b>76%</b>	of workers say they are exposed to physical hazards at work.	While three-quarters of construction workers say they are exposed to physical hazards at work, 98% of construction employers say their staff are.
<b>70%</b>	of workers say they are exposed to chemical hazards at work.	Toxic chemical or substance exposure is reported by 45% of construction workers.
<b>63%</b>	of workers say they use tools that vibrate, and 62% report exposure to loud noise.	In the last 12 months, a quarter of all workers state they are exposed to asbestos, and a fifth reported exposure to silica dust.
<b>60%</b>	of employers report their workers sometimes have to work in an awkward posture.	Some 72% of workers say they work in environments where objects can fall on them from a height, 61% work at heights, and 52% work with electricity.

## Safety practices

<b>87%</b>	of workers say they use personal protective equipment when it should be 'always' or 'most of the time'.	While 85% of construction employers say that their machinery or equipment is fully checked before use 'always' or 'most of the time' only 72% of workers agree. Where 90% of employers say machinery or equipment is well maintained, 76% of workers agree.
<b>78%</b>	of workers state safety devices are fitted to machinery when they should be 'always' or 'most of the time'.	A perception gap also exists around machines and equipment being used without modifications or shortcuts 'always' or 'most of the time' (85% of employers versus 77% of workers).
<b>64%</b>	of workers say action is taken to prevent harm from awkward or repetitive body movement, or long periods of standing 'always' or 'most of the time'.	And 95% of employers say they act straight away when a potential hazard is identified. Some 86% of workers agree that this happens 'always' or 'most of the time'.