



WORK-RELATED WELLBEING

What good looks like for manufacturing 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 the views of those participants who were invited and opted to participate in the study. This advice is a starting point.

A more detailed summary of the research approach and general findings can be found [here](#).

Manufacturing workers identified the following protective factors which support their work-related wellbeing. Business types represented in this research included national and multinational food production companies, glass and packaging production and skincare production. Roles included senior management, IT support, designers, customer service and operations. Low-skilled workers were represented as well as those with tertiary qualifications. The following section highlights things an organisation can change in their immediate environment.

Protective factors of work-related wellbeing for manufacturing workers

Organisational culture

- Manufacturing workers identified the importance of an organisational culture which promotes health and safety.
- Workers appreciate environments where comprehensive health and safety practices are emphasised and rules and regulations are adhered to. This helps them to feel safe at work and provides them with peace of mind.
- Workers appreciate having supervisors and leadership who are open and available to raise health and safety issues with and follow through on issues raised. This promotes workers' feeling of safety at work by reducing their anxiety about the potential for injury and helps to build trust in management.

“We needed to wear gloves. After mine ran out I had to go back and ask the guys in the office for some... it took a month to get new gloves.”

Career development

- Manufacturing workers appreciate having sufficient levels of training to undertake the responsibilities associated with their role. This provides them with a greater sense of confidence in their work.
“I felt stressed because I hadn’t been given enough training.”
- Manufacturing workers say ongoing professional development opportunities, mentorship, having goals at work, and being challenged contributes positively to work-related wellbeing. This can help to make work feel more meaningful and rewarding.

Physical work environment and equipment

- Manufacturing workers appreciate having access to the right technology and equipment on-the-job, which is in good condition and well maintained. This supports them to perform their work more effectively and can reduce the stress associated with breakdowns or malfunctioning.
- Having access to good quality staff facilities is important for workers, including having an appropriate number of bathrooms, separate bathroom facilities for all genders, well-equipped lunchrooms, and reasonably sized changing room facilities. This makes coming to work more enjoyable and shows employers care about their staff.

Workload

- Workers appreciate having workloads and expectations that are reasonable, and which are suited to their knowledge and skill set. This can help to reduce workers’ stress and feel motivated in their work.
“If a job is designed to allow an individual to use his or her talent, it’s a good design”.

Interpersonal relationships

- Friendly and supportive relationships with co-workers and a good team culture help manufacturing workers to feel happy at work.
“It’s a really buzzy, happy environment.”

Leadership

- Manufacturing workers appreciate supervisors and leadership who are supportive and understanding, regularly check-in with staff, recognise the conflicting demands of home and work, and provide flexibility help workers to feel heard and supported.
“Having open and understanding managers. So when there’s something going on in your life, you can just say, ‘Hey, can I do this because I’ve got something going on”.