



## WORK-RELATED WELLBEING

# What good looks like for young 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.

Thirteen young workers (aged 18–24) were included in this research, representing a range of sectors, roles, and skill levels. Workplace experiences for young workers were extremely varied due to this diversity. Some of the young workers we spoke with saw their work as a short-term 'means to an end', whilst they decided on a career path, saved for tertiary study, or pursued other more suitable job opportunities. The following section highlights things an organisation can change in their immediate environment.

### Protective factors

#### Recognition and reward

- Having their ideas, suggestions, and creativity recognised by managers and employers is important to young workers and helps them to feel motivated and trusted.

**“If there’s something wrong, [employer] won’t mind if we just fix this ourselves.. It shows that they trust you. It makes you more motivated at work.”**

- Opportunities for development and progression in the organisation, as well as receiving an appropriate level of remuneration for this effort will contribute to young workers feeling valued and recognised.
- Young workers cite the availability of workplace perks (for example, gym memberships, on-site baristas, or table tennis), high quality work facilities and comfortable environments as helping them to feel valued and contributing positively to their work-related wellbeing.

## Job control

- Young workers appreciate being given appropriate levels of responsibility, autonomy, and scope to own their roles without being micro-managed. This helps young workers to feel supported and motivated and contributes positively to their work-related wellbeing.

**“They really trust in my abilities and have faith that I can do my job. And I feel really encouraged and supported in my work as well.”**

## Interpersonal relationships

- Having supportive and friendly relationships with co-workers, and channels available to connect socially with them is important for the young workers we spoke with. This supports young workers to feel understood and supported in their work.

**“I enjoy the team dynamic. They’re really open and understanding. Not everyone enjoys the job but it kind of kept people around because you want to stay and hang out with essentially your friends. It’s like a family, the openness that I could reach out to someone and be heard”.**

## Leadership

- Young workers appreciate having leaders and supervisors who provide a non-judgemental space for them to speak up about issues in relation to their health, safety, and wellbeing. By doing so, young workers feel less pressure to compromise on health and safety, are more likely to address issues, and less likely to leave their jobs.

**“[The boss] is just very easy going and you can, if you had a problem at work you could tell him and you know he’d do something about it. I think he cares for his staff quite a lot”.**