



WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN NEW ZEALAND

A snapshot of employee and employer attitudes and experiences

This fact sheet summarises the key findings of the first national surveys on work-life balance in New Zealand.

HOW GOOD IS OUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

A majority of New Zealand workers (52%) rate their work-life balance as good to excellent.

But 40% have some or a lot of difficulty getting the balance they want.

And 46% experience some degree of work-life conflict.

WHAT DO NEW ZEALAND WORKERS WANT?

Workers want flexible start and finish times, and more leave – both paid and unpaid.

They also want more choice about the way they work, including having more input into rosters and shifts, and choosing the number of hours they work.

Workers understand business imperatives facing their workplaces.

WHAT INITIATIVES ARE THE MOST HELPFUL?

Workers said the most helpful initiatives they have access to and use are:

- Having flexible start and finish times (79%)
- Knowing they could leave in an emergency (50%)
- Having minor variations in start and finish times (39%)
- Using sick/domestic leaves to look after family members (39%).

The single most helpful arrangement was having flexible start and finish times.

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS COMMONLY OFFER?

The most common work-life initiatives offered by employers are:

- Being able to occasionally vary start and finish times to cope with a problem
- Using personal sick leave to care for others
- Flexible break provisions
- Study leave

Senior staff or management are the most likely workers to be offered work life initiatives.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT WORK THAT MAKES WORK-LIFE BALANCE HARD?

- Working long hours, varied hours, and rotating shift work makes work-life balance a lot harder (19% work more than 50 hours pw).
- When hours are worked also makes a difference, especially when they are worked at night.
- Frequently working extra hours in your own time ie without pay makes work-life conflict worse (37% frequently do this).

WORKPLACE CULTURE

- It's not just about hours – it's also about workplace culture. Almost 60% of employees said aspects of their workplace culture made work-life balance harder to achieve, particularly the expectations of colleagues, workmates, managers and supervisors.
- There was a strong relationship between positive workplace culture and work-life balance. There was also a strong relationship between employees' ratings of productivity practices in the workplace, and their own work-life balance.



WHAT SORTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE INITIATIVES DO EMPLOYEES USE?

Have access to a phone and/or phone messages	93
Have minor variations in start and finish times occasionally to cope with a problem	79
Know you can go if there is a family emergency	79
Choose your own lunch break	67
Use your sick/domestic leave to look after family members	57
Have flexible start and finish times	55
Have input or be able to change your rosters or shifts	43
Use annual leave in small blocks e.g. 2 hours	39
Have extra unpaid leave	39
Choose how many hours you work	35
Have access to a shower (for after exercise or getting dirty during work)	34
Work less than full time work hours	32
Take school holidays off	31
Choose your own rosters or shifts	29
Buy or negotiate additional annual leave (more than 3 weeks per year)	24
Occasionally work your normal hours from home	20
Regularly work your normal hours from home	11

We asked about what might put employers off implementing flexible work arrangements:

- 74% said cost/expense is not an issue
- 62% said it is not too complicated to do
- 54% said needing to have everyone at work at the same time is not an issue

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING WORK-LIFE INITIATIVES?

While the majority of employers (55%) said there were no barriers that could 'put them off' having flexible working arrangements, some said that they needed to have everyone in the workplace at the same time (40%), or that these arrangements were too complicated (33%) or too expensive (17%).

THE SURVEYS

Two national surveys were conducted in 2005. One involved 1100 employers and the other 2000 employees. The results of the surveys are summarised in the Department of Labour report: Work-Life Balance in New Zealand: A snapshot of employee and employer attitudes and experiences.

- The employer survey asked about work-life balance initiatives offered to employees, which employees have access to each initiative, and attitudes to such initiatives.
- The employee survey asked people about their work-life balance, working arrangements, and responsibilities outside of work.