

## Covering all the bases

How leaders are managing mental  
health and wellbeing in the workplace

Health and Safety Leadership Survey  
November 2019

# Workplace mental health and wellbeing is an area of increasing focus for CEOs and directors

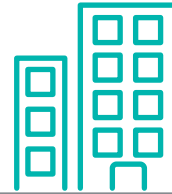
So, how are our leaders responding to this challenge? And are they doing what is needed to protect and enhance the mental health and wellbeing of workers?

How we made this survey	1
Key findings	2
Are we covering all the bases?	4
Survey results	7
How are we going: self-assessment	19
About us	21

# How we made this survey



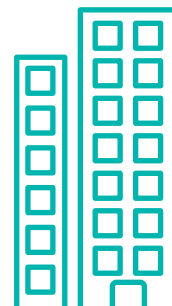
**140** people contributed to the survey in September/October 2019



**41** are from the public sector



**110** are CEOs, Managing Directors, Directors

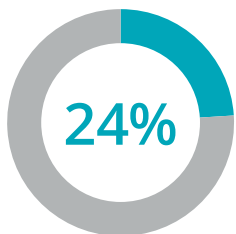


**99** are from the private sector

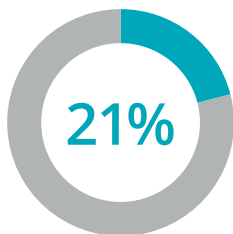


**30** are Senior Health and Safety, Human Resources, or other executives

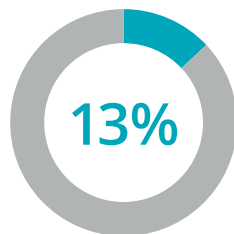
## Their organisations have revenue of:



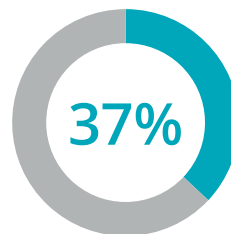
Up to \$20m



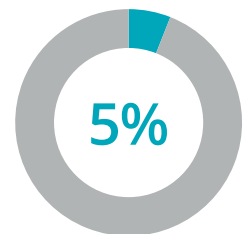
\$21m-\$50m



\$51m-\$100m

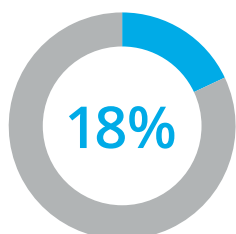


Over \$100m

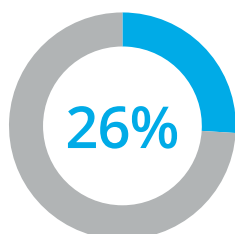


Other

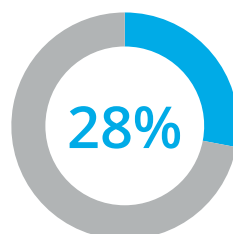
## They employ:



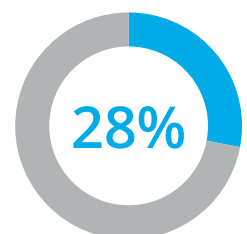
50 people or fewer



51-200 people



201-500 people



Over 500 people

## Unions representing employees:

**51%** YES

**49%** NO

# Key findings

**7.7/10**

average rating for mental health and wellbeing in the workplace

**70%**

of CEOs say mental health and wellbeing are always considered when setting timeframes.

But only  
**45%**

of HR and H&S execs share that view.

**12:00**

**71%**

say they verify that resources are in place to support mental health and wellbeing.

But only

**54%**

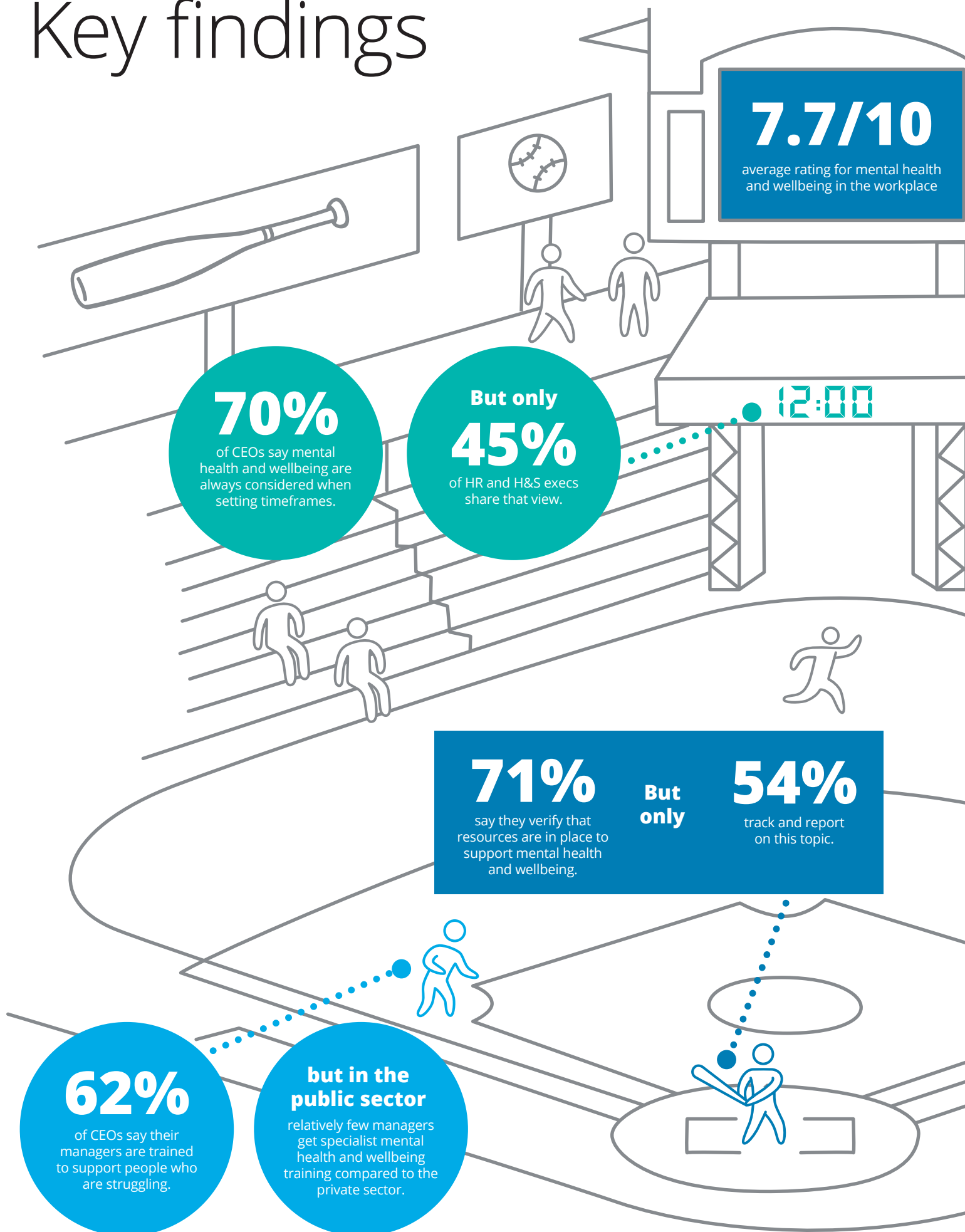
track and report on this topic.

**62%**

of CEOs say their managers are trained to support people who are struggling.

**but in the public sector**

relatively few managers get specialist mental health and wellbeing training compared to the private sector.





**The biggest risk** to work-life balance was seen as long hours but few limit work hours or actively manage fatigue.



**Many leaders** are using strategies to support people who are unwell but fewer are using strategies to prevent harm to mental health and wellbeing, or to promote mental health.



**71%**

of private sector leaders say work would always stop if it would harm people's mental health and wellbeing.

**But only 59%**

of public sector leaders share that view.



**85%**

say they usually invest time to understand wellbeing issues in their organisation.

**But only**

**73%**

thought they were usually a role model for good mental health and wellbeing.



**74%**

seek workers' ideas on how to improve mental health and wellbeing.

**But only 46%**

recognise wellbeing contributions and achievements.

# Are we covering all the bases?

Mental health and wellbeing is an area of increasing focus for CEOs and directors. But many leaders are unsure of what they, and their organisations, should be doing in this space.

This survey explores how leaders and their organisations are managing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

This includes how they are meeting their duties to manage work-related risks to the mental health and wellbeing of their people, and how they are harnessing opportunities to ensure their people can thrive at work. It also asked them to assess their own mental health and wellbeing.

The survey aims to support CEOs and directors by including questions based on good practice. It offers an opportunity for them to reflect on their current approaches, in order to identify gaps and opportunities.

It provides a snapshot of practices being used across large organisations (82% employ more than 50 people), including differences between the public and private sectors.

Thanks to everyone who took part in this survey, particularly those who were willing to acknowledge gaps in their understanding and performance.

## How to get value from this report

You are encouraged to consider how you would answer these questions, and to discuss them with others in your organisation - such as your board, executive team, health and safety committees and key contractors. There is a list of questions at the back of the report to help you do this. To support that discussion you can download the Forum's *CEO Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work* from [www.zeroharm.org.nz](http://www.zeroharm.org.nz).

## Covering all the bases on mental health and wellbeing

This survey drew heavily on the work of organisational psychologist Dr Hillary Bennett, from Leading Safety, in partnership with the Forum.

Dr Bennett has researched the role of CEOs and directors in mental health and wellbeing. Her work suggests leaders and their organisations should be working in four areas:

- **Protect:** To identify risks to mental health and wellbeing, and eliminate or minimise these risks at source where practicable.
- **Support:** To provide access to appropriate workplace and clinical support.
- **Foster:** To develop the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams.
- **Reclaim:** To restore the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and teams.

Dr Bennett reviewed the survey results to see if the organisations that respondents lead are making use of all four approaches available to them. Her review suggests that most are focusing their efforts in the support and reclaim areas, and to a lesser extent the foster area.

Their management of mental health and wellbeing is reactive and focuses on providing help for people whose health has already been damaged, either by work-related or other factors. Relatively few use proactive strategies to protect their workers from harm.

This suggests our leaders are not 'covering all the bases' when it comes to mental health and wellbeing. As a result, they could be missing opportunities to help their people and business thrive. They could also be running the risk of breaching their due diligence obligations.

### Due diligence

The survey also explored how well directors and executives are meeting their due diligence requirements when it comes to mental health and wellbeing at work.

Encouragingly, most (86%) said the board and executive understood the mental health and wellbeing risks to workers. Four out of five said their organisation provided resources to meet the wellbeing needs of workers, and about the same number said they verify that these resources are in place.

However, that leaves a significant number (20%) who might not be fulfilling core due diligence duties to ensure that risk controls are in place.

Interestingly, nearly half of respondents said they do not track and report on this area. A third of CEOs and executives said they do not regularly keep their boards informed about mental health and wellbeing issues.

Given this lack of reporting, it is difficult to understand why so many respondents are confident that they are meeting their due diligence duties to understand and manage risks, and to verify that risk controls are in place and working. This lack of reporting could be a significant blind-spot for CEOs and directors.

On balance, discussions involving the board and executive are slightly skewed towards safety, rather than health and wellbeing. This likely reflects that health and wellbeing are still emerging areas of focus for many leaders.

### Risks and risk management

The vast majority of respondents said they provide the resources necessary for people to stay healthy and well. However, there appears to be a disconnect between the types of risks identified and the risk controls being put in place.

By far the most commonly identified risk was work demands (job content, workload, schedules, etc.) – mentioned by 95% of leaders. About 60% also identified risks relating to change management, relationships (including bullying) and work-life balance.

However, the most common resource provided to keep people safe and healthy was Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) / other support. While EAP is an important part of the wellbeing toolkit, it is an 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff'. Few leaders appear to be using more relevant and proactive strategies to eliminate or minimise the risks posed by work demands before they cause harm.

A similar disconnect appears in responses relating to work-life balance. About two thirds (64%) said their working conditions promote a healthy work-life balance. The most common barrier to work-life balance was identified as long hours. However, the most common strategy being used to promote work-life balance is flexible working arrangements. Very few organisations are using strategies like hours or fatigue management, which would more directly address the biggest risk they identified to work-life balance.

### Organisational and personal practices

While 70% of CEOs and directors said mental health and wellbeing are always considered when setting work timeframes, only 45% of Human Resources (HR) and Health and Safety (H&S) executives thought this was the case. CEOs and directors are also more likely to agree that work would stop if it would harm the mental health and wellbeing of people (71%) than HR and H&S executives (55%).

62% of CEOs and directors said their organisation developed the capability of managers to recognise and support people struggling at work.

Only 50% of HR and H&S executives shared that view. Private sector organisations are much more likely to give managers specialist mental health and wellbeing training than public sector organisations (about 40% versus 15% respectively).

Three-quarters of leaders think they are usually role models for good mental health and wellbeing practices (73%). About four in five (79%) usually participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives alongside staff. Nearly two out of three (61%) say they always or often ask people how they could support their mental health and wellbeing.

Consider how EAP is being used and question whether it is addressing the risks impacting on mental health and wellbeing

## Framework for managing risks to mental health and wellbeing at work

The Forum commissioned the development of an evidence-based framework to help CEOs understand what they can do to manage risks to the mental health and wellbeing of workers.

The framework suggests CEOs and their organisations should be working in four areas to protect workers and ensure they can thrive in their roles.

An effective mental health and wellbeing plan should include initiatives from all four areas.

The framework can be used to assess current activities, and to identify if an organisation is making full use of all the approaches available to help manage risks to workers.



**Protect/Foster:** Use **proactively** to build resilience.



**Reclaim/Support:** Use **reactively** once harm has occurred to restore health and wellbeing.

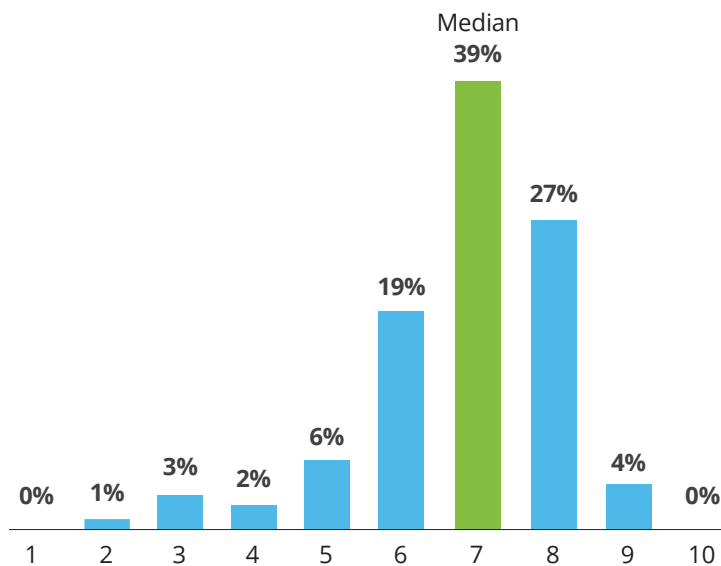


# Survey results

## Overall rating of the workplace



*How would you rate the overall mental health and wellbeing of people working in your workplace? (10 being the most positive)*



*Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%*

Average score

**7.7/10**

Median score

**7/10**





## Governance and due diligence

### Understanding risks and verifying they are controlled

85% said the board and executive understand the mental health and wellbeing risks to both contractors and employees. 80% said funding is provided to meet workers' mental health and wellbeing needs.

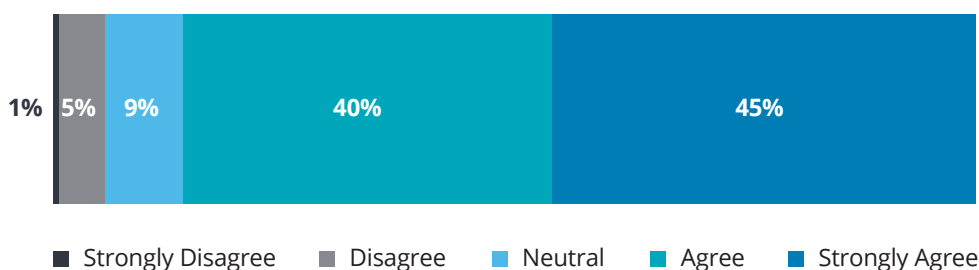
71% of CEOs and directors said the board and executive verify that resources and processes required to support the mental health and wellbeing of workers are in place, while only 60% of HR and H&S executives held that view.

82% said mental health and wellbeing are included in the strategic health and safety plan.

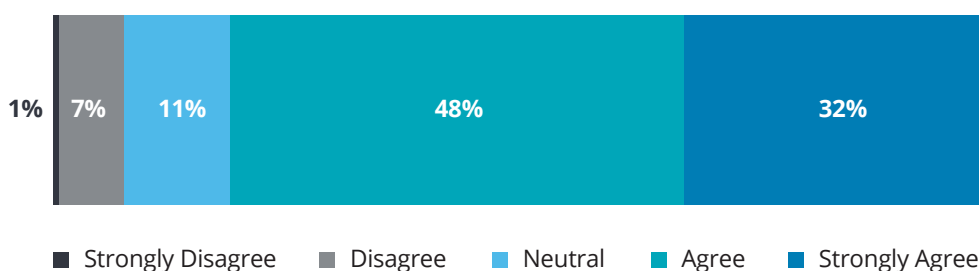
When asked how contractors were managed, 38% said risks to contractors' mental health and wellbeing are managed the same way, and 41% said they are managed differently. The remainder appear to be unsure how risks to contractors are managed.



*The board and executive understand the mental health and wellbeing risks to all people that work in the organisation, i.e. staff and contractors*



*The board and executive provide the funding and resources to effectively meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of all employees and contractors*



Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%

### Information flow and reporting

Overall, 54% said the board and executive track and report on mental health and wellbeing. This rose to 63% in public sector organisation and fell to 50% in private sector organisations. The most common way of reporting is through board reports and health and safety reports. About 17% prepared an annual wellbeing report.

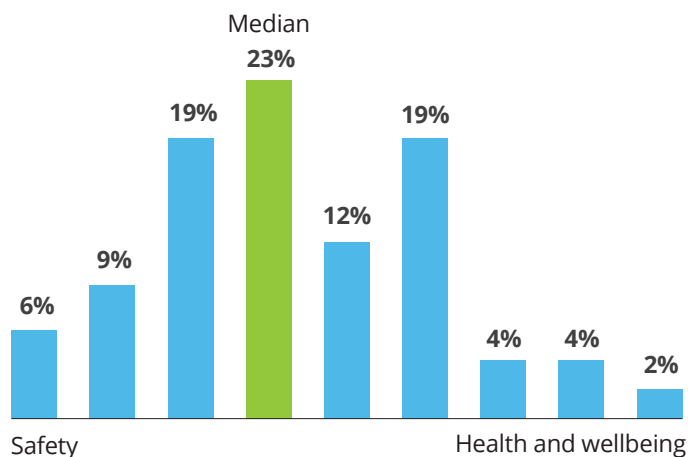
83% do not have personal Key Performance Indicator (KPIs) for the CEO and executive linked to mental health and wellbeing. However, when those who do have CEO KPIs were asked to detail them, most of the measures given were actually measures of organisation (rather than individual) performance. This suggests there is very little effective measurement of CEO performance in this area.

Asked whether discussion within the leadership team is more focused on safety, or health and wellbeing, there appears to be a greater focus on safety. For smaller organisations (fewer than 200 people and revenues less than \$50 million a year) there is a more even spread in focus between safety, and health and wellbeing, but the median score still sits on the safety side.



### *When your executive/senior leadership team discuss health and safety, do they focus more on one than the other?*

The majority of organisations said discussions about mental health and wellbeing are more focused on the opportunities to help people thrive than on legal obligations. Overall spending on mental health and wellbeing is viewed as an investment rather than a cost.



## Key due diligence duties



Know the risks workers face.



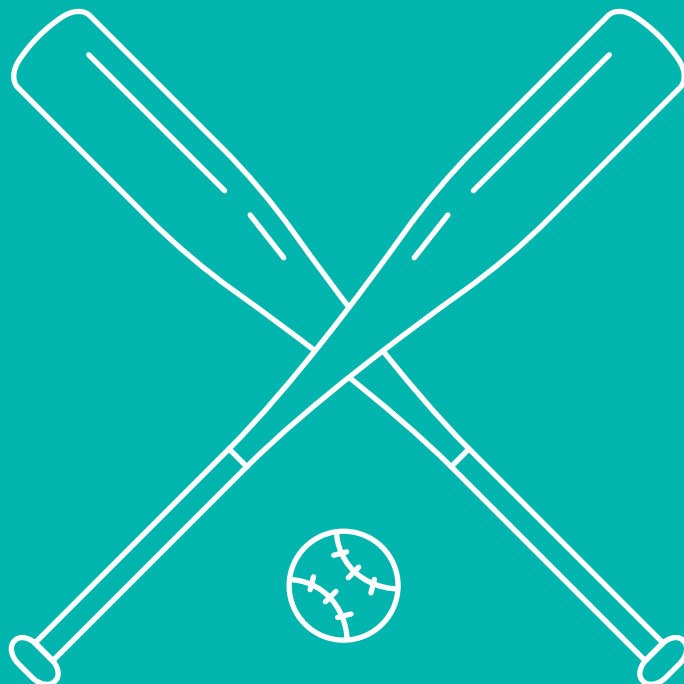
Verify there are processes and resources available to manage these risks.



Verify that these risks controls are being used.



Verify that there are processes to communicate, and to respond to, information about H&S.





## Organisational practices

More than half (56%) have a wellbeing plan to support good mental health and 74% said they develop an awareness of mental health through tools, information and workshops. Only 39% said they allocate enough time to discuss mental health and wellbeing matters adequately.

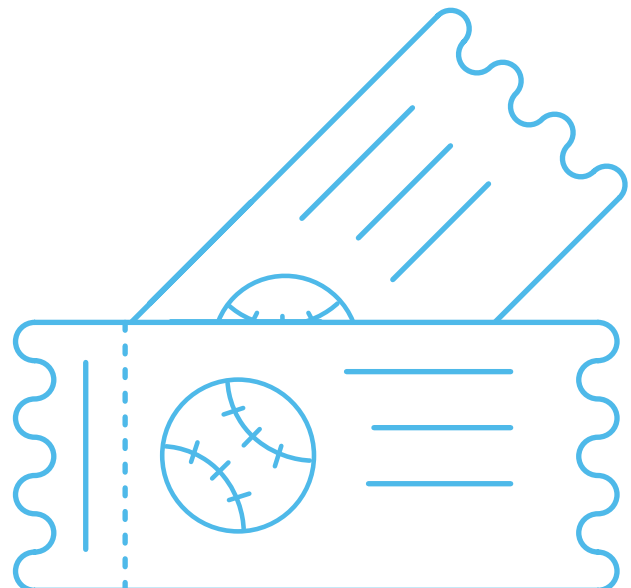
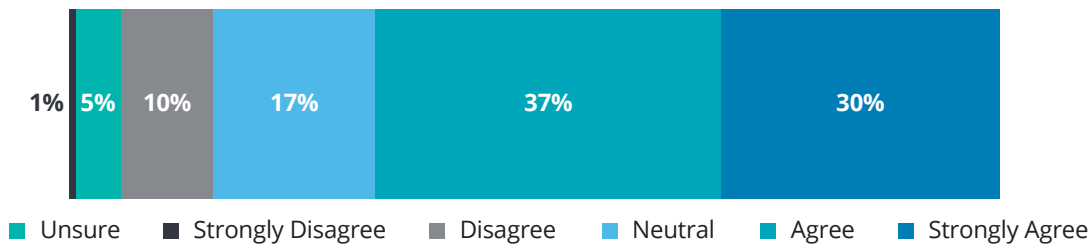
### Work practices and resourcing

70% of CEOs and directors said the mental health and wellbeing of staff is always considered when setting work timeframes. However, only 45% of HR and H&S executives agreed that happens.

About two thirds (67%) said work would always stop if it would harm the mental health and wellbeing of people. Private sector leaders are more likely to agree that work would stop (71%) than public sector leaders (59%). CEOs and directors are more likely to agree (71%) than H&S and HR executives (55%). Leaders of organisations with fewer than 200 employees are more likely to agree (77%) than those running bigger businesses (60%).



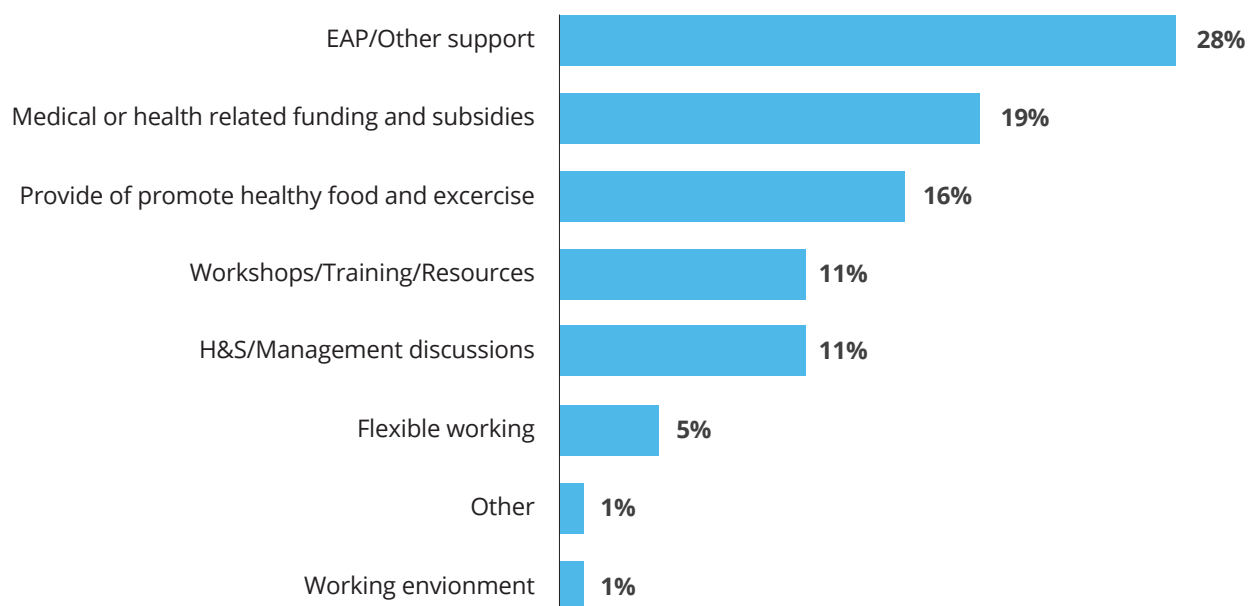
*We always stop work if it will harm the mental health and wellbeing of people*





*Please provide examples of how you provide the resources necessary for people to stay healthy and well*

76% said they provide the resources necessary for people to stay healthy and well. The most common resource provided is EAP / other support, followed by medical and health-related funding and promoting healthy eating and exercise.

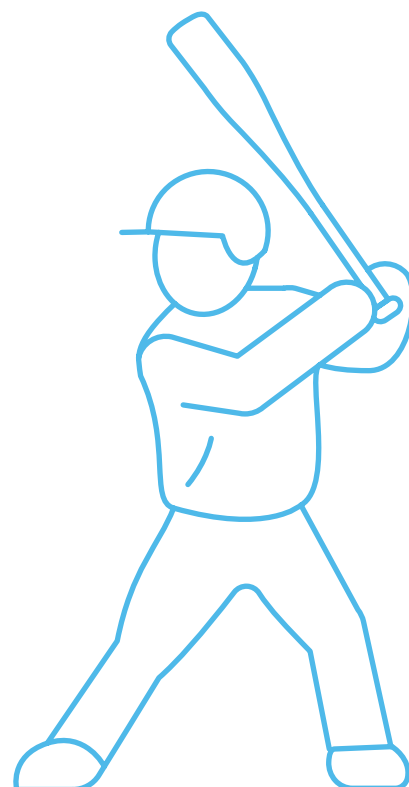


*Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%*

### Management capability and worker engagement

62% of CEOs and director said their organisations develops the capability of managers to recognise and support people struggling at work. But only 50% of HR and H&S executives share that view.

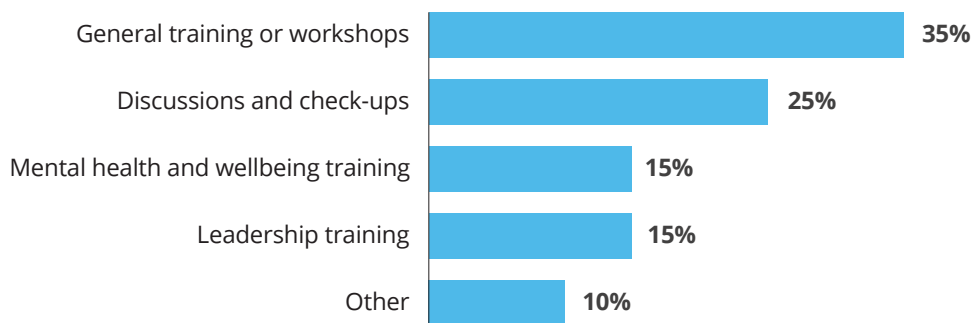
Mental health and wellbeing training is the training most commonly given to managers in the private sector. The most common training given to public sector managers is general training / workshops or discussions / check-ins.





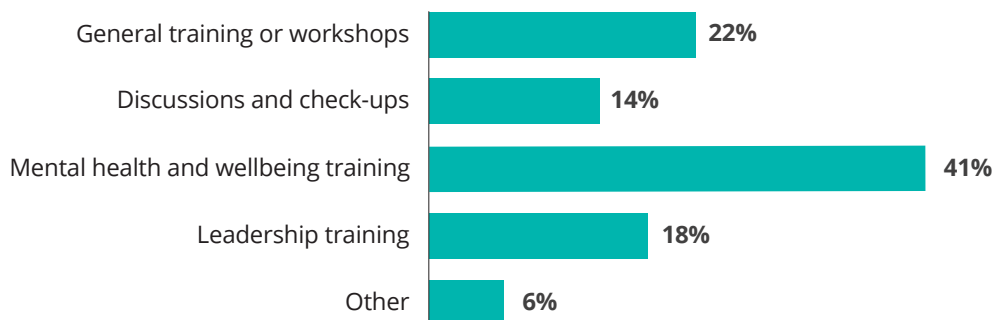
*Please provide examples of how you develop the capability of managers to recognise and support people struggling at work*

#### Public sector organisations



#### Private sector organisations

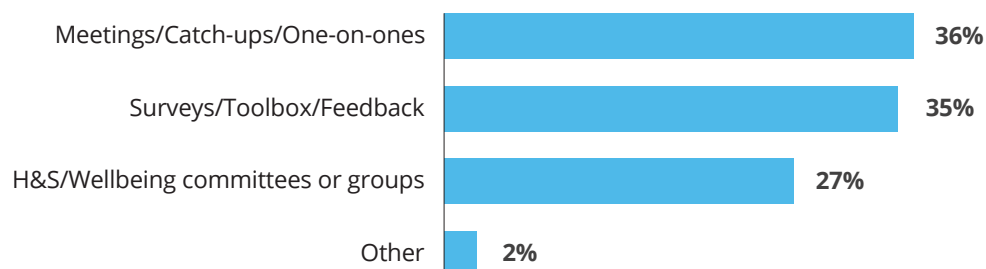
*Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%*



Three quarters (74%) said they asked for, and listened to, worker ideas on how to improve mental health and wellbeing. They used a variety of methods to engage workers, including surveys, meetings and health and safety groups.



*In what way does your organisation consult with workers*



46% of CEOs and directors said their organisation recognised wellbeing contributions and achievements. Only 25% of HR and H&S executives shared that view. This recognition was most commonly given through rewards and incentives or internal recognition.

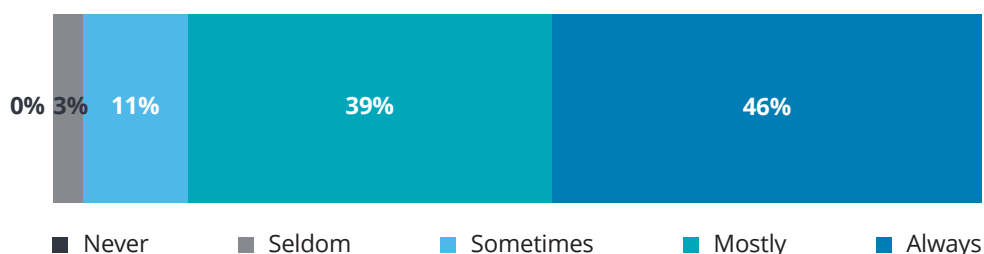


## Personal practice

Most respondents (85%) said they usually invest time and effort into understanding wellbeing in their organisation. 67% said they always or mostly keep their board informed about risks to the mental health and wellbeing of people in the organisation. 11% said they rarely or never did this.



*I invest time and effort in understanding the wellbeing in my organisation*

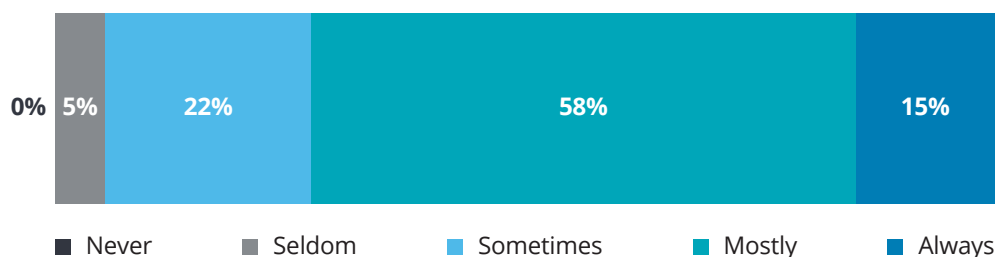


### Role modelling

73% thought they were always or mostly role models for good mental health and wellbeing practices. 79% said they usually participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives alongside staff, with a third saying they always did this.



*I am a role model for good mental health and wellbeing practices*



66% said they always or often start conversations about mental health and wellbeing with workers. 61% said they always or often ask workers how they could support their mental health and wellbeing.

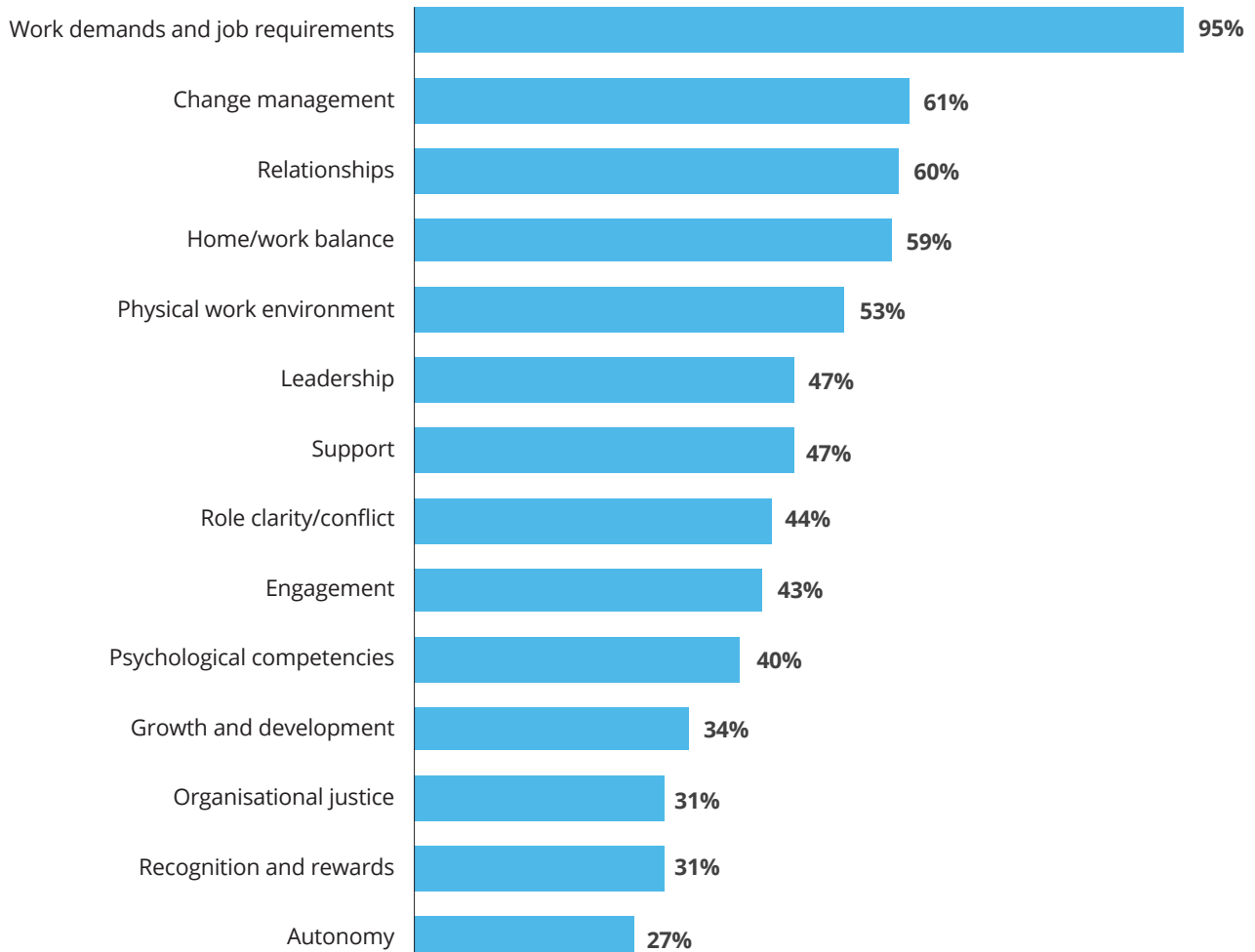




## Risk and risk management



Select the key risks to the mental health and wellbeing of your employees (tick all that apply)



*Note: Two-thirds of respondents said these are the same key risks faced by their contractors. The main difference identified was having less contractual influence over contractors.*

### Work demands and job requirements:

The most commonly identified risk to mental health and wellbeing, listed by nearly all survey participants.

**Change management:** The communication and management of organisational change, including restructuring.

**Relationships:** The nature of interpersonal interactions, including social isolation, bullying and harassment.

**Home/work balance:** A good balance between work and home demands.

**Physical work environment:** The physical work arrangements (e.g. layout, lighting, space, ventilation, temperature and humidity).

**Leadership:** Clear expectations of organisational goals; objectives and values set and communicated.

**Support:** The level of support a person receives from the organisation, their managers and co-workers.

**Role clarity/conflict:** The degree to which tasks and duties are clearly defined and not in conflict with other roles.

**Engagement:** People are valued and involved in decisions related to their work.

**Psychological competencies:** There is a good fit between personal competencies and job requirements.

**Growth and development:** Encouragement and support to develop interpersonal, emotional and job skills.

**Organisational justice:** A work environment characterised by fairness and consistency.

**Recognition and rewards:** Appropriate acknowledgment and appreciation of efforts in a fair and timely manner.

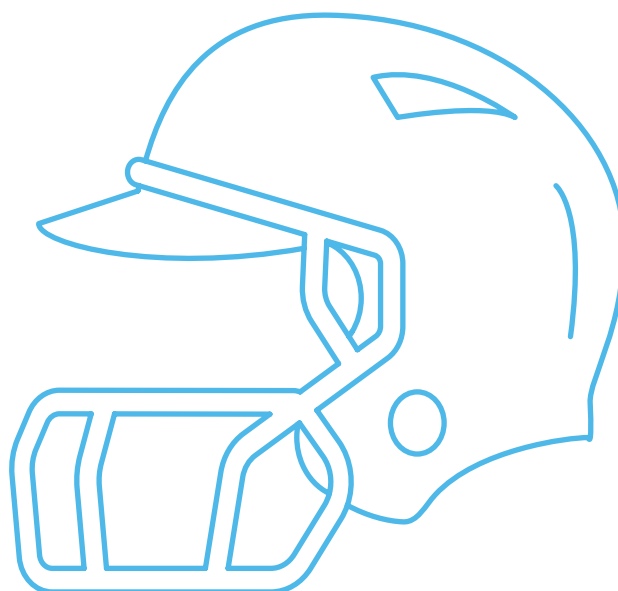
**Autonomy:** The amount of input and authority a person has over the way their work is done.



*Describe how your organisation manages the mental health and wellbeing risks you identified previously*



*Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%*



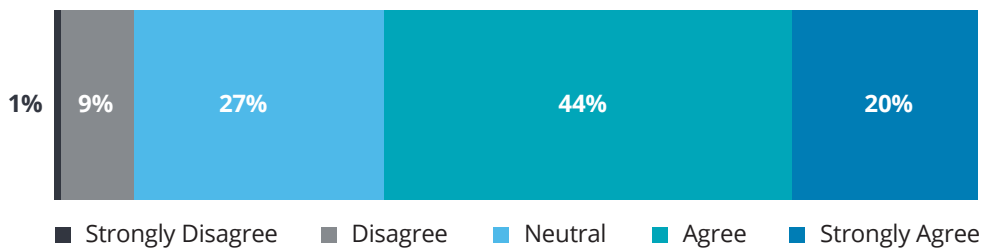


## Work-life balance



*Our current working conditions promote a healthy work-life balance for all employees*

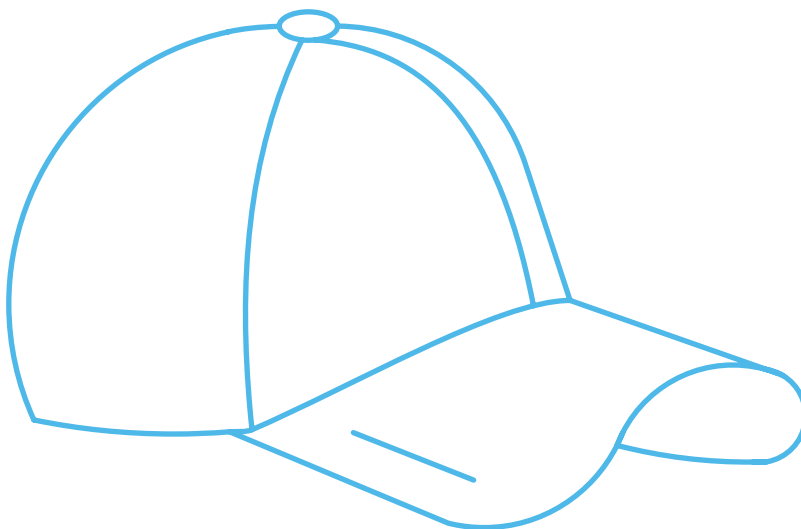
64% said current working conditions promote a healthy work-life balance for employees.



Organisations with fewer than 50 employees were the most positive about their working conditions, with 80% saying they promote a healthy work-life balance. However, among organisations with more than 500 employees, fewer than half (48%) said work conditions support work-life balance.

67% said long hours are the biggest challenge to work-life balance. A third of public sector leaders also cited under-funding as a challenge.

Although long hours were identified as the most common challenge, only 18% use strategies to limit working hours and 7% use fatigue management. Flexible working arrangements are the most common way organisations promote work-life balance, used by 50% of respondents.



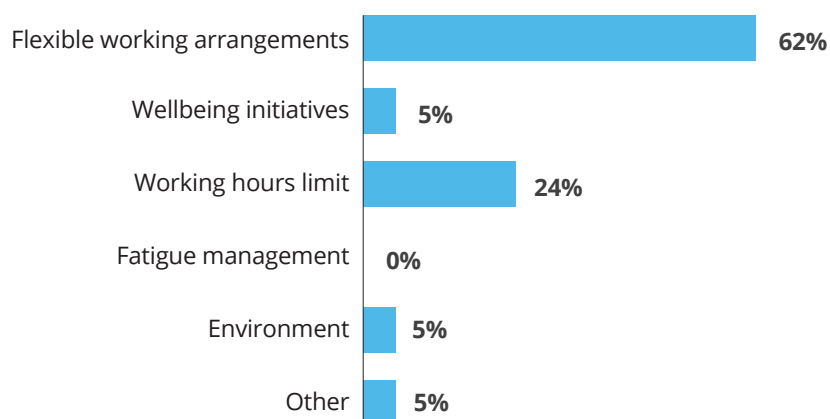


*Provide examples of how your current working conditions promote a healthy work life balance for all employees*  
*Public vs Private sector*

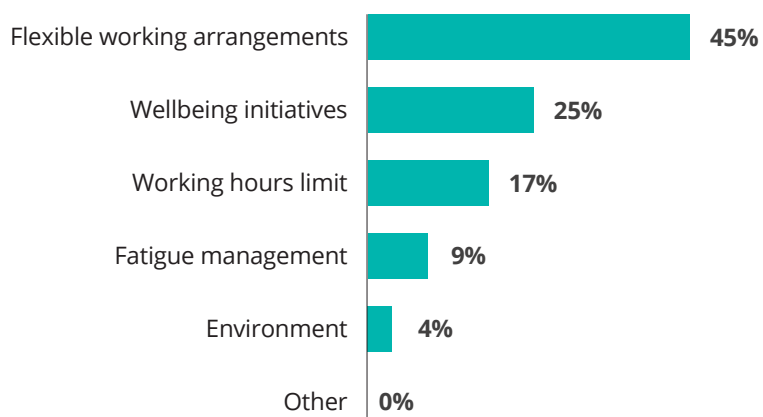
There are noticeable differences in the approaches to promoting work-life balance taken by the private and public sectors – particularly where it comes to wellbeing initiatives, fatigue management and working hours limits.

### Public sector organisations

*Note: Due to rounding, figures don't add up to 100%*



### Private sector organisations



# How are we doing: self-assessment

Use this adapted version of the survey questions to reflect on your organisation's approach to mental health and wellbeing.	I'm confident this occurs	
	Yes	No
<b>Governance</b>		
The board and executive understand the mental health and wellbeing risks to all people that work in the organisation, i.e. employees and contractors?		
The board and executive provide the funding and resources to effectively meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of all employees and contractors?		
The board and executive track and report on mental health and wellbeing so they can verify that resources and processes required to support the mental health and wellbeing of employees and contractors are in place?		
<b>Risk Management</b>		
We have a mental health and wellbeing plan that supports good mental health, that is communicated to all employees?		
We always consider the mental health and wellbeing of workers when planning and setting work timeframes, and our working conditions support a healthy work-life balance?		
We develop the capability of managers to recognise and support people struggling at work?		
<b>CEO practices</b>		
I am a role model for good mental health and wellbeing practices?		
I participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives alongside my staff?		
I start the conversation about mental health and wellbeing with employees and contractors?		

How well do your risk controls match your risks

List the three key risks to the mental health and wellbeing of your workers

List the three key resources/strategies your organisation invests in to protect and support the mental health and wellbeing of workers

Looking at the above, is your investment focused on things that will help control the greatest risks to your workers?

Rate your workplace

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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How would you rate the overall mental health and wellbeing of people working in your workplace? (10 being the most positive)

# About us

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## **Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum**

The Forum was set up in 2010 to motivate and support chief executives and managing directors to become more actively involved in improving health and safety in their workplaces and supply chains. The Forum has about 370 members, most of them larger companies or companies working in high risk sectors.

**Visit [www.zeroharm.org.nz](http://www.zeroharm.org.nz)**

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