



# Mental Health and Wellbeing Background Information



[Mental health and wellbeing](#) is paramount to the overall health of people. This year, one in five New Zealanders will experience some form of mental illness. Put into the context of a workplace. If your workplace has 50 staff, it is likely that this year, 10 of your staff members will experience some form of mental illness.

Positive mental health and wellbeing leads to positive life outcomes for staff and better results for your workplace. Staff who are mentally healthy have higher job satisfaction and self-esteem. They are more likely to be engaged with work tasks and the workplace, be more creative, make better decisions, problem solve better, experience less stress and take fewer days off work.

## Why is it Important?

Three reasons to focus on the impact of mental health in your workplace are:

1. **Good mental health benefits workplaces:** Benefits of a mentally healthy workplace include greater staff retention and engagement and higher job satisfaction. A [Harvard Business Review](#) found mentally healthy staff or happy

staff experienced 31% increased productivity. Further benefits to the organisation include reduced accidents and injuries and better customer service. [Find out more](#)

2. **Poor mental health costs workplaces:** Workplaces bottom line is affected by staff with poor mental health, through increased absenteeism—when workers are off sick and presenteeism—when workers are at the workplace but not mentally engaged with work. The average cost to New Zealand employers of absentee days is estimated at over \$1,500 per year, per staff member. It is estimated that on average, staff have nearly three times as many presentee days as absentee days resulting in much higher ‘hidden’ costs of poor mental health.
3. **It’s the law:** Workplaces are not able to discriminate against staff experiencing a mental health issue. This is outlined in [Employment Relations Act 2000](#) and [Human Rights Amendment Act 2001](#)

Workplaces must also take reasonably practicable steps to protect health and prevent harm at work, including psychological harm. This is outlined in [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#).

## Facts

[One in five](#) New Zealanders will experience some form of common mental illness in any year and 50-80% of New Zealanders will experience mental distress or addiction challenges or both in their lifetime.



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## Key Messages

1. Mental health issues will mostly affect some of your staff.
2. Creating a mentally healthy workplace makes good business sense. Happy engaged staff are good for the bottom line of your workplace.