



# Workplace Wellness in New Zealand

*A study into the attitudes and perceptions of Workplace Wellness in New Zealand organisations*

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## About Seed

Seed is a provider of Workplace Wellness services.

Our focus is on developing partnerships with the workplace that help clients achieve a safe, healthy and productive work environment.

A pioneer in the field, we have more than 30 years' experience in providing innovative programmes for people in New Zealand's workplaces, enhancing the well-being of organisations and individuals.

Seed is a not-for-profit organisation, motivated by values of integrity, respect and equity. We are a professional organisation with highly qualified staff and proven business systems. More information about Seed is available at [www.seed.co.nz](http://www.seed.co.nz)



## Foreword

**Doris Cuthell – Chief Executive, Seed**



Hello, and welcome to the findings of our research into Workplace Wellness in New Zealand, the first and only survey of its kind!

Seed has gathered key information from 200 HR professionals drawn from New Zealand's top 1000 companies. We believe this represents a highly relevant and valuable body of opinion on the topic of Workplace Wellness.

*Doris has been in Senior Management positions for over 15 years. She has experience in Human Resource Management, Training & Development, Operations Management and Counselling.*

Seed has more than 30 years experience in providing innovative programmes for people in New Zealand's workplaces, enhancing the well-being of organisations and individuals.

Over this time, through our direct experience of delivering employee assistance programmes and other services in workplaces around New Zealand, we have witnessed a steady growth in the commitment of employers to invest in the well-being of their employees and in the health and safety of their workplaces. The results of our survey indicate that this trend is set to continue.

In addition, our survey shows that a significant number of organisations have recently implemented initiatives to improve their Workplace Wellness.

This is all good news, but we can still improve our workplaces further and get a return in the process. We found that a large number of Workplace Wellness initiatives have been undertaken on an ad hoc basis. In addition, there seems to be a lack of clarity around measurement which would imply that the effectiveness of some Workplace Wellness initiatives is in doubt.

Seed advocates a holistic approach to Workplace Wellness, with integrated, targeted, managed programmes rather than individual initiatives. We believe programmes can be more effective if they address all dimensions of the workplace, in particular physical, psychological and socio-cultural.

This survey has helped us understand better the past, present and future of Workplace Wellness in New Zealand. We are extremely grateful to the participants for dedicating so much time and effort to answering all our questions, and for offering so many valuable insights into their own experiences of Workplace Wellness.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doris Cuthell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Key Findings

The following provides a summary of the key findings from our research into Workplace Wellness in New Zealand.

Greater detail regarding each of the elements is included further in the report.

## Workplace Wellness – What is it?

One of the key objectives of the research project was to determine a market-based definition of Workplace Wellness. It was revealed that most organisations believed that Workplace Wellness refers to the physical and psychological well-being of their employees.

The initiatives that organisations used to promote Workplace Wellness were broad but could be categorised into two distinct groups. Those initiatives that focused on the physical well-being of employees and initiatives that focused on the psychological well-being of employees.

### Physical Initiatives

- Massages
- Gym Subsidies/Exercise Facilities
- Nutrition Seminars
- Physical Health Checks
- Health Education Sessions
- Flu Jabs
- Health Insurance
- Ergonomics/Physical Environment
- Health & Safety Seminars

### Psychological Initiatives

- Quit Smoking Initiatives
- Drug & Alcohol Initiatives
- Stress Management
- Work/Life Balance Initiatives
- EAP Programmes
- Social/Cultural Programmes

## Is Workplace Wellness important?

We wanted to get an understanding of the degree of importance that organisations place on Workplace Wellness. One thought was that perhaps Workplace Wellness was just a passing fad.

This notion was dispelled by the results that said over 95% of organisations believed that Workplace Wellness was of importance to their organisations and 81% of organisations saying that Workplace Wellness was a priority for their organisations.

### **How do organisations approach Workplace Wellness?**

We wanted to get an understanding of the 'approach' that organisations took to Workplace Wellness. We were aware that many organisations implemented initiatives with the aim of increasing the wellness of their staff but were unsure whether these initiatives were part of a greater holistic outlook with tools used to measure the effectiveness or were merely a bundle of 'ad hoc' initiatives.

The approach that organisations took to Workplace Wellness in their organisations was mixed.

- 55% said they took an 'Ad Hoc' approach to the initiatives they implemented while 45% said they took a holistic approach.
- 50% of organisations said that they measured the wellness of their workplace. The most common form of measuring Workplace Wellness was surveying staff.
- 50% of organisations said that they measured the effectiveness of their Workplace Wellness initiatives. Surveying staff was also the most popular method for doing so.

### **What do organisations do to improve their Workplace Wellness?**

Education around health & safety in the workplace was the number one tool that organisations used to promote Workplace Wellness. 99% of organisations said that they implanted some form of education around Health & Safety policies.

92% of organisations said that they conducted studies of the physical work environment to ensure that the workplace environment was safe for staff.

88% of organisations offered Health insurance to staff either through a discounted group scheme or complete cover.

### **What is keeping Human Resource professionals awake at night?**

Recruitment was identified as the top human resource related issue currently facing organisations.

## Methodology

Two hundred HR professionals took part in survey which was conducted by in-depth telephone interviews. Participants were selected from a list of New Zealand's top 1000 companies and represent a wide geographic and industry spread.

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in this study. Initially a qualitative survey was used in order to understand the broader issues and provide guidance for the quantitative study.

The quantitative approach was then used so that conclusive findings could be drawn regarding the approach New Zealand organisations take to Workplace Wellness.

All information provided by participants has been kept anonymous.

## Workplace Wellness – What is it?

One of the main objectives of the survey was to gain an understanding of the market definition of Workplace Wellness.

The qualitative survey revealed the following themes:

- Healthy Staff
- Happy Staff
- Well Staff
- Things that employers do to make their staff well
- Work/life balance
- Health & Safety

Using these themes as a guide the following four definitions were drafted and presented to participants:

- Workplace Wellness is ensuring your staff are physically and emotionally well.
- Workplace Wellness is ensuring that you have happy healthy staff.
- Workplace Wellness is ensuring your staff are physically well
- Workplace Wellness is following health & safety policies to ensure that staff are safe at work.

54% believed that Workplace Wellness was ensuring that staff is physically and emotionally well.  
35% believed that it was having happy healthy staff.

Both definitions refer to both the physical and psychological health aspects of the employee

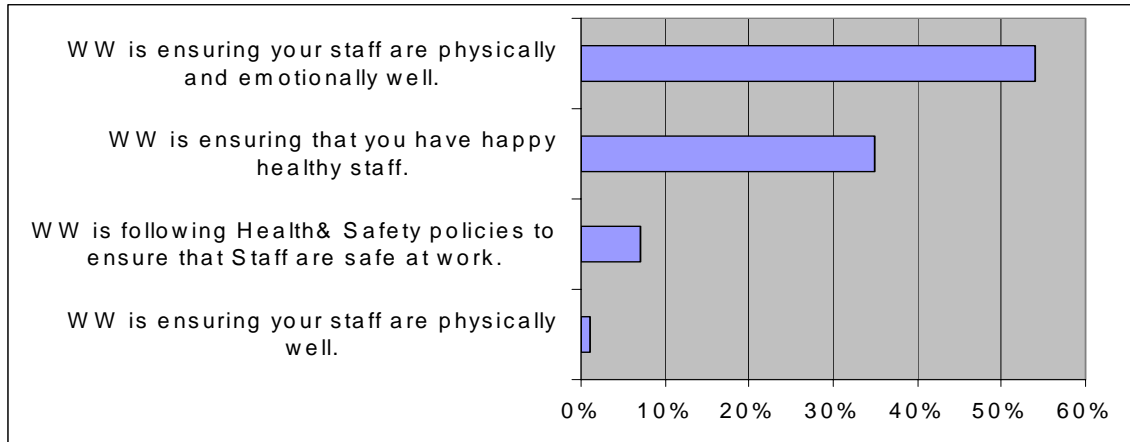


Figure 1

## Is Workplace Wellness important?

Survey results indicate that Workplace Wellness is certainly not a fad or a buzzword, with over 95% of participants giving Workplace Wellness a ranking of importance.

### Awareness of Workplace Wellness

Respondents were asked if Workplace Wellness was a term that they were familiar with. 95% were aware of Workplace Wellness while only 5% said they were not aware of Workplace Wellness

Are you familiar with the term Workplace Wellness?

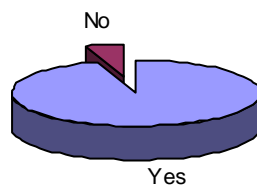


Figure 2

### Importance of Workplace Wellness

95% of respondent believed that Workplace Wellness held a degree of importance to their organisation.

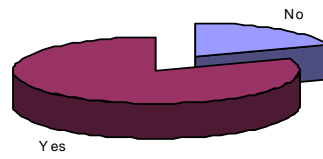
Of these, 54% believed that it was 'very important', 30% said it was 'important' and 16% said 'moderately important'.

Only 5% believed that Workplace Wellness was not important to their organisation

If respondents indicated that they believed that Workplace Wellness held some importance to their organisation, they were then asked if Workplace Wellness was a priority for their organisation.

81% of organisations believed that Workplace Wellness was a priority

**Is Workplace Wellness a priority for your organisation?**



**Figure 3**

**How high a priority is Workplace Wellness?**

Respondents that identified Workplace Wellness as a priority were then asked how high a priority Workplace Wellness was to their organisations.

86% believed that Workplace Wellness was a moderately high to a high priority.

# What do organisations do to improve their Workplace Wellness?

Participants were presented with a list of components that were considered to fall under the Workplace Wellness umbrella.

These components were categorised as being either physical or psychological wellness tools.

The list consisted of the following:

## Physical

- Massages
- Gym Subsidies/Exercise Facilities
- Nutrition Seminars
- Physical Health Checks
- Health Education Sessions
- Flu Jabs
- Health Insurance
- Ergonomics/Physical Environment
- Health & Safety Seminars

## Psychological

- Quit Smoking Initiatives
- Drug & Alcohol Initiatives
- Stress Management
- Work/Life Balance Initiatives
- EAP Programmes
- Social/Cultural Programmes
- Team Building Activities

The objective was to discover whether resources were available to staff that were related to these various components. The options available to participants were:

- Currently using.
- Not using – but would consider using
- Would never consider using
- Never thought about or,
- Have used but decided to stop using.

Health and Safety topped the list with nearly all business surveyed providing resources to employees on health and safety in the workplace

### Physical Components

It should come as no surprise that health & safety initiatives should feature highly in organisations promoting Workplace Wellness.

The key reason for this is that legislation dictates that all employers have a responsibility to provide a safe workplace.

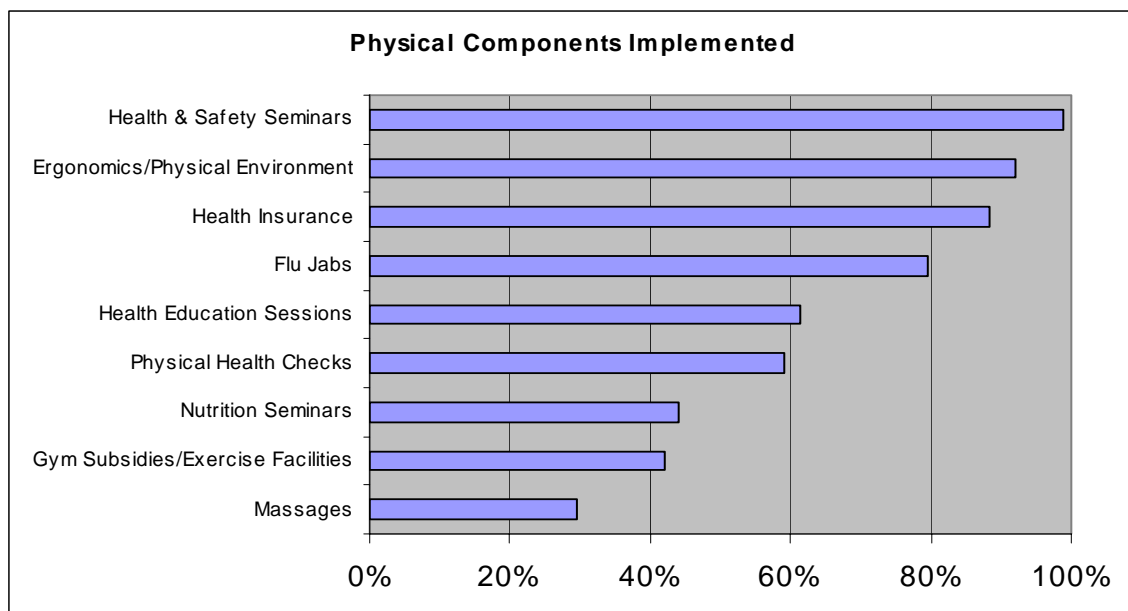


Figure 4

## Psychological Components

Team building activities topped the list when it came to psychological tools that businesses used to increase the well-being of their staff.

85% of organisations are using some form of team building initiatives in the workplace.

Social/cultural programmes and EAP also featured highly with both sitting around the 80% mark.

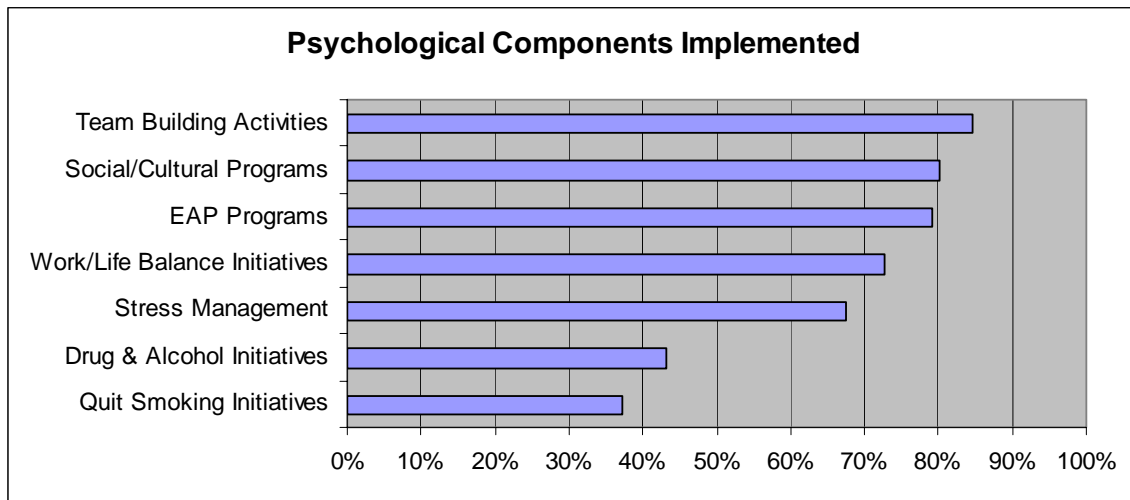


Figure 5

The list below outlines other Wellness initiatives that organisations had implemented:

- Safety in the home
- Community Work
- Family Involvement
- Numeracy & Literacy
- Outward Bound
- Motivational Speakers
- Budgeting Advice
- Parenting Advice
- Income Protection
- Life Insurance

- Superannuation
- Unlimited Sick Leave
- Wellness Weeks
- Employee Empowerment Programmes
- Yoga
- Fruit bowls
- Wellness Advisory Group
- Healthy Sleeping Advice
- Harassment Training

# How do organisations approach Workplace Wellness?

## Measurement of Workplace Wellness

50% of organisations said that they measured their Workplace Wellness while 50% said they did not.

Surveying staff was the most common method in how organisations measured their wellness, as 45% of organisations are using this method.

Physical health checks were also popular with 17% of organisations monitoring the physical health of their staff. Often this took the form of group study with organisations measuring the overall health of their employees.

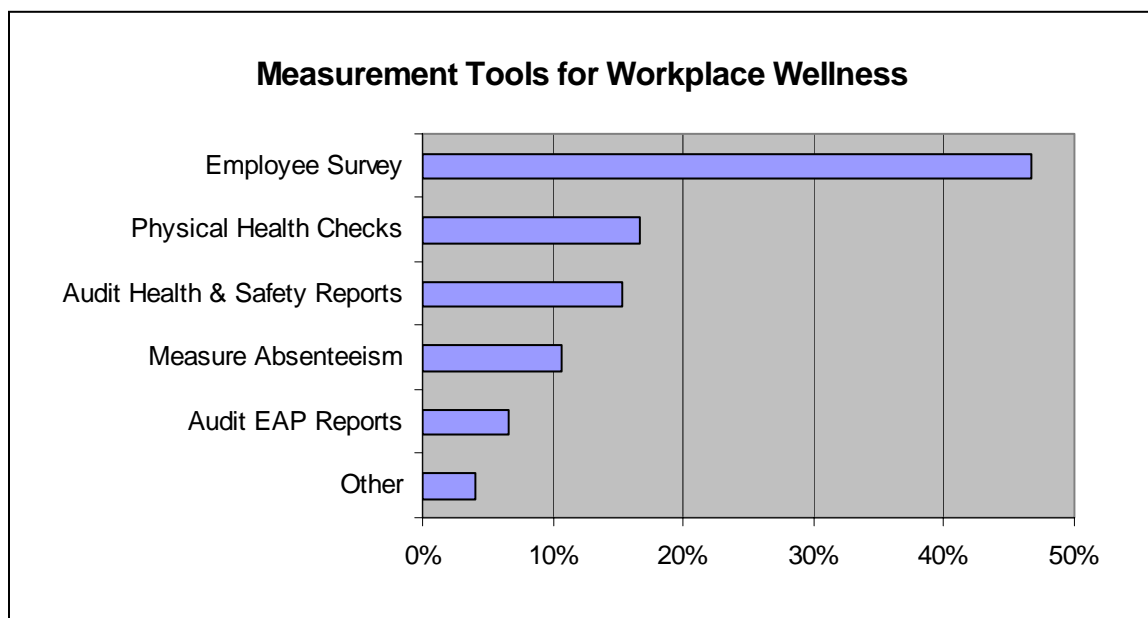


Figure 6

Some organisations talked about measuring the group cholesterol count of the workplace. Aggregated statistics were made available so the organisation could track any changes in the cholesterol levels of the workforce as a whole.

15% of organisations actively audit the health and safety statistics that are available. These would be tracked over a given time period to identify strengths and weaknesses.

11% of organisations measured the absenteeism of staff. This tool was also used in a number of instances to measure the effectiveness of flu jabs.

7% of organisations monitored reports from their EAP providers. Statistics were provided by their EAP supplier, which would then enable the employer to identify any worrying trends.

Also mentioned by organisations was an audit that had been completed by ACC.

Some also use their staff turnover figures as a measure of how well their workplace is.

## What is keeping Human Resource professionals awake at night?

- 25% of respondents identified recruitment as their top issue.
- 20% identified retention and 18% identified both recruitment and retention as their key issues.
- Staff development was the next issue at a distant 10%.
- 6% of respondents said that the welfare of their employees was their top issue at the moment.
- 22% of respondents answered with other issues that fell outside of the top five.

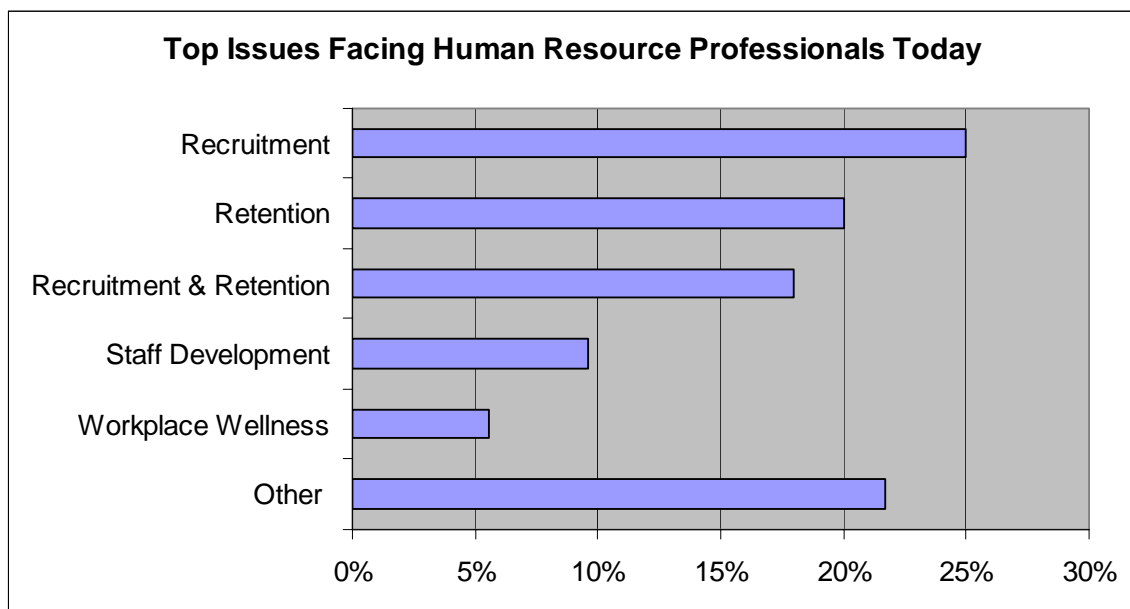


Figure 7

Issues that were noted as 'other' included;

- Productivity
- HR Strategy
- Ageing Workforce
- Stress Management

- Change Management
- Staff Issues
- Lack of Resources
- High Cost of Human Resources
- Don't Know
- Absenteeism
- Work/life Balance
- Staff Satisfaction, Morale
- Shift Management
- Internal Restructuring
- Payroll

## Conclusion

Workplace Wellness is not a buzzword, nor is it a fad. It is a reality in the New Zealand market and it is here to stay. Workplace Wellness is regarded as an important priority by most HR professionals and it is currently manifest as a series of discrete initiatives addressing the physical and psychological needs of people in the workplace.

We have witnessed the growth of Workplace Wellness in many markets around the world and our research prior to this survey indicated that the New Zealand market was early in the introductory stage of market development.

The penetration of Workplace Wellness initiatives in New Zealand workplaces would indicate a slightly more mature market development. However, it is our view that the integration of initiatives into holistic programmes is necessary in order for Workplace Wellness to deliver significant payback in terms of improvements for employees and return on investment for employers.

As companies grapple with key issues such as the aging workforce, career development, skill shortages, recruitment and retention, as well as an increasingly complex socio-economic environment, the need for a philosophy and a company culture which addresses the complex needs of today's workforce is becoming paramount for employee welfare and for competitive advantage.

These challenges, and how they are addressed, are part and parcel of the everyday working lives of HR professionals and other managers throughout New Zealand. There are many innovative approaches already in place creating better working environments and improving the well-being of workers.

A fully integrated holistic Workplace Wellness programme can improve productivity, reduce absenteeism and create the sort of workplace environment which is attractive to staff and to potential employees.

For some New Zealand workplaces this is already a reality and for many it is within reach. Whilst HR professionals regard Workplace Wellness as an important priority, this view needs to be shared in the boardroom and throughout the management team.