

**OVERVIEW OF RESULTS**

# Psychosocial survey of the retail sector

Psychosocial hazards at work can be a risk to workers' physical and mental health. WorkSafe New Zealand conducted a survey of workers in the retail sector in May 2023 to gather data on a range of psychosocial risks in retail work. The survey involved 1,036 respondents aged 18 years and over working for wages or salary or self-employed in the retail sector. **Note:** The data included below for 'all New Zealand workers' is from WorkSafe's psychosocial survey in 2021.

A range of psychosocial risks were raised by retail workers. These include high levels of offensive behaviours, such as threats of violence and sexual harassment, as well as high work pace and emotional demands.

There are also positive aspects, which we refer to as protective factors, that retail businesses can capitalise on, such as possibilities for development and support from colleagues.

**OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOURS**

Nearly 4 in 10 (39.1%) retail workers reported in the survey they had exposure (as a victim or witness) to at least one offensive behaviour in the last 12 months.

20.6%

**Report bullying** compared to 22.6% of all New Zealand workers

18.6%

**Report cyberbullying** compared to 16% of all New Zealand workers

16.2%

**Report threats of violence** compared to 14% of all New Zealand workers

14.8%

**Report sexual harassment** compared to 11.1% of all New Zealand workers

9.3%

**Report physical violence** compared to 11% of all New Zealand workers

**DEMANDS AT WORK**

Job demands refer to any physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of a job that require constant effort for the workers.

Scores are out of 100. Higher scores indicate higher risk exposure. Scores over 40 indicate moderate risk, and above 70 indicate high risk.

Retail workers report the following scores for:

44.7

**Quantitative demands** (for example, time pressure or the amount of work) compared to 47.8 of all New Zealand workers

64.7

**Work pace** compared to 61.9 of all New Zealand workers

47.7

**Emotional demands** compared to 41.8 of all New Zealand workers

**PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS**

Psychological distress is associated with fluctuations in levels of arousal and mood. High distress can be a precursor to, or part of, a more serious mental health condition.

23.4% of retail workers report experiencing at least one form of psychological distress all the time.

12.4%  
**Emotional exhaustion**

12.1%  
**Physical exhaustion**

11.3%  
**Stress**

8.5%  
**Cognitive stress**

**WELLBEING**

Retail workers self-rated a score for their mental wellbeing. They were asked how they felt in the previous 14 days. The total score ranges from 0 to 100. A score of 50 and below indicates poor mental wellbeing and increased risk of depression.

60.1

the mean score for retail workers

30.8%

report a score of 50 and below

4.0%

report a score of 20 and below, suggesting a higher risk of clinical levels of depression

**SELF-RATED HEALTH**

Self-rated health measures a person's perceptions of their overall health. 80% of retail workers rate their health as good and above, which is similar to all New Zealand workers.

**PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE**

Psychosocial safety climate refers to the shared perceptions of workers of their organisation's policies, practices and procedures for the protection of their psychological health and safety.

Published benchmarks for psychosocial safety climate indicate that a score of 41 and over is a 'best-practice standard' threshold. This is associated with performing well for worker psychological health and safety and low risk of depressive symptoms and job strain.

A psychosocial safety climate score of 37 and below is associated with higher psychosocial risk and negative outcomes such as depressive symptoms and job strain.

Most retail workers report a medium risk range of the psychosocial safety climate score. The overall psychosocial safety climate mean score differs significantly by retail sub-sector. The table below shows the psychosocial safety climate risk level of workers within retail sub-sectors.

| RISK LEVEL     | PSC SCORE RANGE                    | SUB-SECTOR   |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Very high risk | less than or equal to 26           |  |
| High risk      | greater than or equal to 27 and 36 | - Motor vehicle retailing<br>- Furniture, floor covering, houseware and textile goods retailing  |
| Medium risk    | greater than or equal to 37 and 40 | - Motor vehicle parts retailing<br>- Fuel retailing<br>- Supermarkets and grocery stores<br>- Specialised and food retailing (excluding liquor)<br>- Liquor retailing<br>- Hardware, building and garden supplies retailing<br>- Recreational goods retailing<br>- Department stores<br>- Pharmaceutical and other store-based retailing<br>- Non-store retailing<br>- Retail commission-based buying and/or selling |
| Low risk       | greater than or equal to 41        | - Electrical and electronic goods retailing<br>- Clothing, footwear and personal accessory retailing   |

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Protective factors can mitigate the impact of risk factors and may enhance mental wellbeing. By incorporating protective factors, employers can improve their workers' mental and physical health. Retail workers scores of the following protective factors were higher than for all New Zealand workers:

  
**Possibilities for development**

  
**Quality of leadership**

  
**Support from colleagues**

  
**Job satisfaction**

  
**Sense of community at work**

  
**Vertical trust**

  
**Organisational justice**