

# **MATES IN CONSTRUCTION NZ**

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## **INDUSTRY WELLBEING SURVEY RESULTS**



# **SEPTEMBER**

# **2022**



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## INTRODUCTION

**The construction industry loses more workers to suicide every year than any other industry in New Zealand. On average, one construction worker takes their own life every week.**

Our industry is vibrant, exciting, and integral to the New Zealand economy, but it can also be a challenging industry to work in with long hours, transient working conditions, and masculine stoic beliefs that can impact on our people's mental health and wellbeing.

The current context is exacerbating these pressures. CoreLogic recently reported that construction costs have risen at their fastest pace since 2012 and businesses across the industry are reporting that they are experiencing severe labour shortages according to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Our people are also feeling the pressure at home with annual inflation hitting a 32-year high of 7.3% in July 2023, the biggest financial squeeze for households seen in over three decades.

MATES in Construction are seeing the impacts of this in our mahi on the ground and have sought to gather information about the mental health and wellbeing of our industry in order to effectively tailor services to the needs of the community.

### METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The MATES Industry Wellbeing Survey was co-designed with Allen and Clarke in late 2021, following the arrival of the Delta variant on New Zealand shores. The original survey was run from the 15 December 2021 to 17 January 2022 and received 1202 valid responses. For ease of reading, we refer to this survey throughout this report as the 2021 survey. The original survey was run from 15 December 2021 to 17 January 2022 and received 1202 valid responses. For ease of reading, we refer to this survey throughout this report as the 2021 survey.

MATES in Construction re-ran this survey from 11 May to 12 June 2022 following the arrival of the Omicron variant on New Zealand shores and received 696 valid responses.

The Industry Wellbeing Survey's target population was all people working in the construction industry in New Zealand and utilised a "census" approach (complete enumeration survey method) wherein everyone who is registered in MATES NZ's database was selected for the study. Given that the survey was also shared via industry networks, it is not possible to assign a response rate. Incomplete responses were not included as valid responses, nor were responses from those not working in the construction industry.

A prize draw with a chance to win one of three \$200 Prezzy Cards and one of three personalised hoodies were offered as an incentive to complete survey study. At the end of the survey, respondents had the opportunity to enter their contact details which were not used for any other purpose than to contact prize winners.

If you would like any more info about this survey or the methodology used, please contact [info@mates.net.nz](mailto:info@mates.net.nz).

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results from this year's Wellbeing Survey show that despite the end of lockdowns and the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, our industry is still in crisis. Respondents are reporting similar or higher levels of anxiety and suicidal ideation compared to last year and lower levels of resilience when it comes to managing stress. While it is positive that we have not seen a significant increase in the wellbeing issues experienced by those working in our industry since the arrival of the Omicron variant, the results do demonstrate that we have significant work to do to support our most important asset – our people – to ensure that their mental health is adequately supported while they are at work.

## YEAR ON YEAR INSIGHTS

- In 2021, **43%** of respondents reported that their mental health had been worse than usual and in 2022, this increased to **47%**.
- Problems and areas of concern remained fairly stable between the two survey periods. For example, in 2021, **65%** of respondents reported feeling down depressed or hopeless in the four-month period and in 2022, this increased slightly to **66%**.
- There was an increase in the percentage of respondents who advised that the last 12-months had been the most difficult time of their life, from **38%** in 2021, to **41%** in 2022.
- There was a reduction in the percentage of participants who felt like they could manage stress most of the time, from **79%** in 2021, to **74%** in 2022.
- The percentage of respondents who reported seriously thinking about ending their own life in the four-month period increased from **4.5%** in 2021, to **5.5%** in 2022.
- The percentage of respondents who had made a plan or an attempt to end their own life was the same in 2021 and 2022 at about **1.5%**.
- Unsurprisingly, the percentage of respondents who reported having to go into managed isolation increased from **13%** in 2021, to **51%** in 2022.
- The proportion of respondents who reported feeling uncomfortable thinking about COVID-19 and who could not sleep because they were worried about getting COVID-19 remained more or less the same over the two periods (less than 5% in 2021 and 2022).

## WORK LIFE & WORK LOCATION INSIGHTS

56% of respondents reported working onsite, 34% worked in an office and 9% reported working offsite.

- **Two out of every ten** respondents reported feeling dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their work life over the last four months.
- **39%** of onsite staff agreed that the last 12 months had been amongst the most difficult times of their lives. This was slightly higher in office-based staff at **43%**.
- There was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that reported being satisfied with their work life over the last four months – onsite (**80%** satisfied), office-based (**68%** satisfied).
- The responses were too low to draw conclusions about suicidal ideation in relation to work type, however we can see that the majority of respondents who reported seriously thinking about taking their own life were site-based workers and that this group had the highest proportion of people who answered yes to this question.
- Those who work offsite and in an office, reported that their employers checked in on their wellbeing more often than their site-based counterparts. Almost half of all office-based respondents said that their employer checked in on them more than once a week – for on-site workers this was just over **25%**. Around **30%** of site-based workers reported that their employer didn't check-in on them at all during their isolation period.

## GENERAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

- Respondent reports of mental health at the time of taking the survey was positively correlated with age. Those in higher age brackets reported excellent, or very good mental health, at the time of taking the survey than those in lower age brackets.
- The top-5 areas of concern for respondents were: (1) Physical Health, (2) Sleep, (3) Time for Self-Care, (4) Relationship and, (5) Worries about Job-Loss.
- A majority of respondents reported key concerns being an issue in the last four months. 74% reported having little interest in things that they normally like doing, 66% reported feeling down/depressed/hopeless, 88% reported feeling tired and having little energy.
- 41% of respondents reported that the last 12-months have been among the most difficult times of their life.
- A minority of respondents reported feeling unable to manage things that stress them out most of the time (8%).

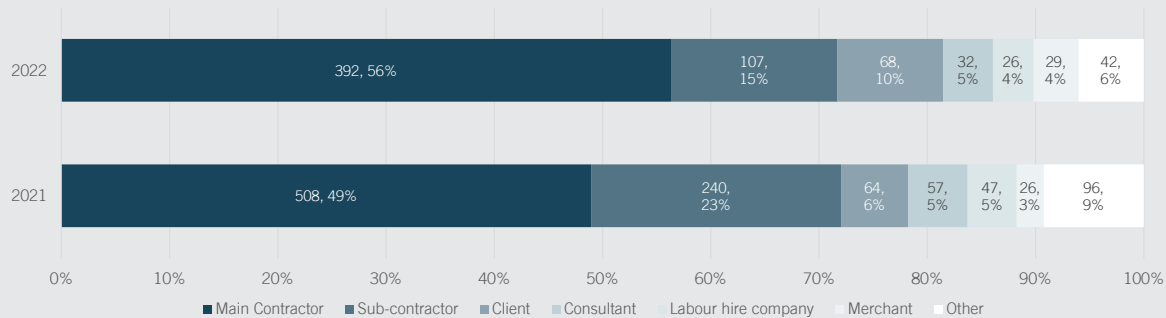
# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2021, the MATES Industry Wellbeing Survey received 1038 responses. This year there was a slightly lower response to the survey at 696 responses. Respondent types were fairly similar this year, with slightly more respondents representing the main contractor and slightly less from sub-contractors. The representation of age was similar in both surveys with highest proportion of participants falling into the 35-44 year old age group. Representation of relationship type was also very similar in both surveys, with the majority of respondents either married or living with their partner. Respondent location followed the same pattern with the majority of respondents coming from Auckland and Canterbury in both the 2021 and 2022 surveys. Overall, these were very comparable survey responses with similar respondent demographic makeup.

## HAVE YOU HAD MATES ON SITE

YES	64%
NO	36%

RESPONDENT TYPE X SURVEY DATE

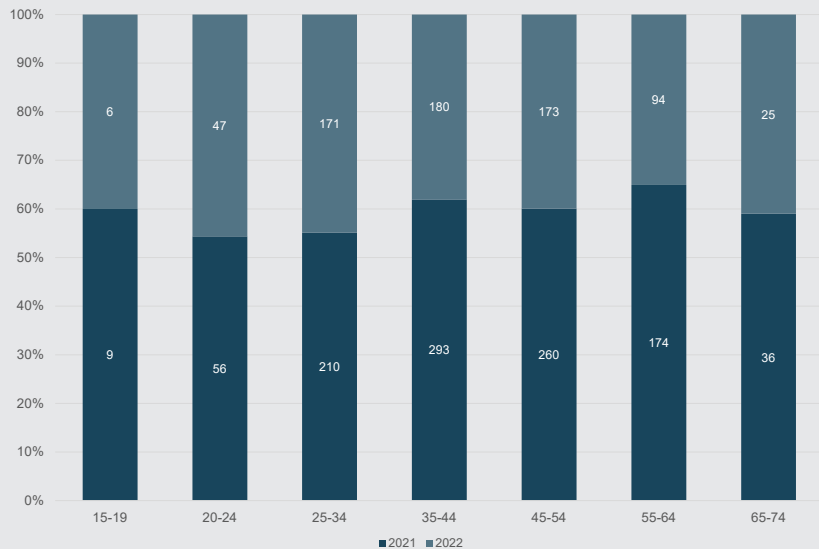


	2021	2022
MARRIED/CIVIL UNION	58%	54%
LIVE WITH MY PARTNER (NOT MARRIED)	22%	25%
SINGLE LIVE WITH OTHERS	10%	10%
DIVORCED	2%	2%
SEPARATED	2%	3%
SINGLE LIVE ALONE	5%	6%

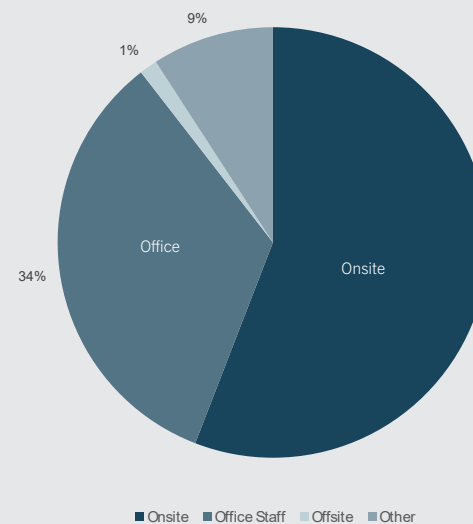
	2021	2022
AUCKLAND	56%	47%
CANTERBURY	10%	15%
OTAGO	5%	6%
WAIKATO	6%	7%



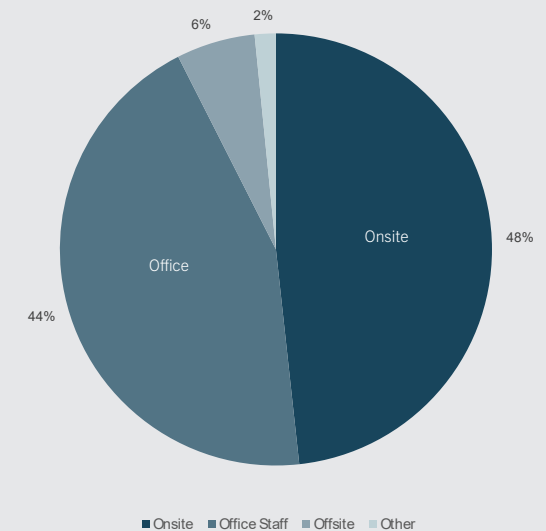
PERCENTAGE RESPONDENT AGE X SURVEY DATE



RESPONDENT WORK LOCATION - 2021








RESPONDENT WORK LOCATION - 2022

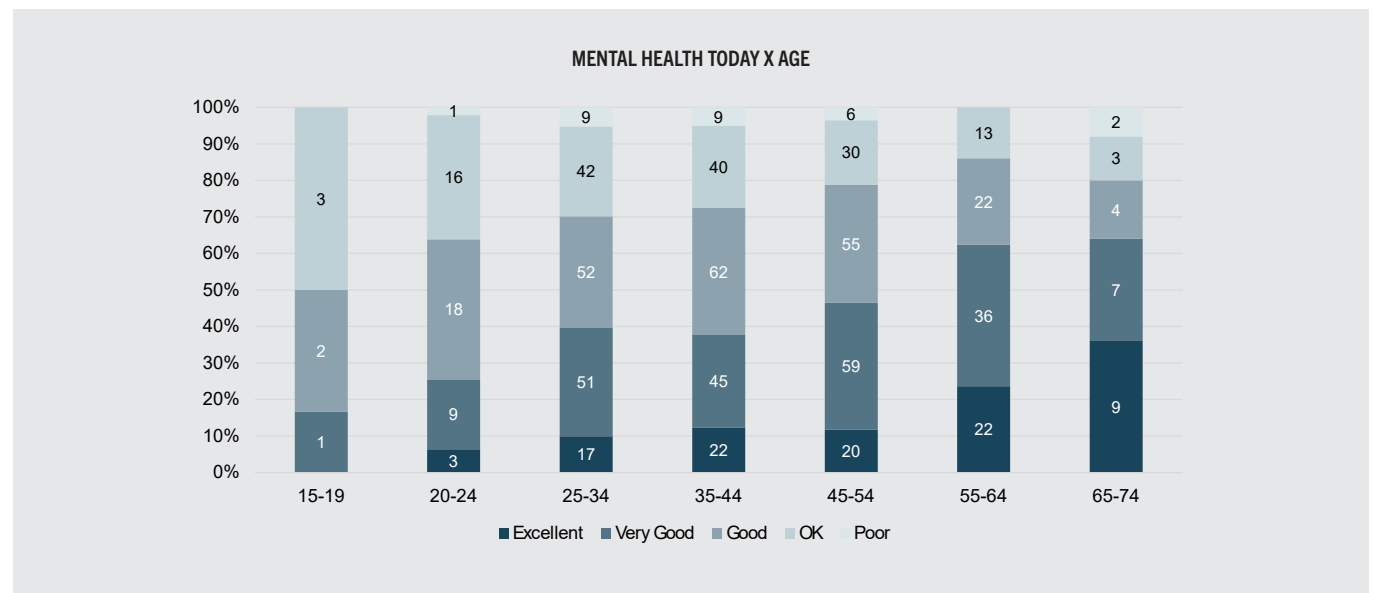
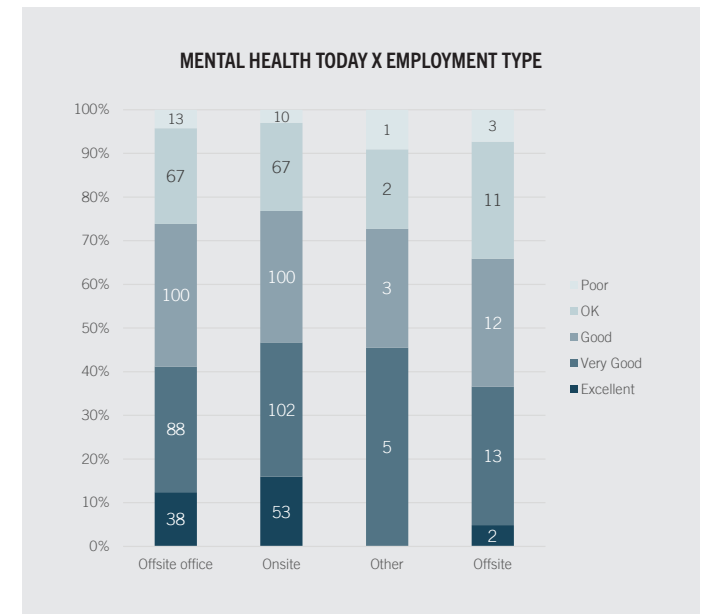
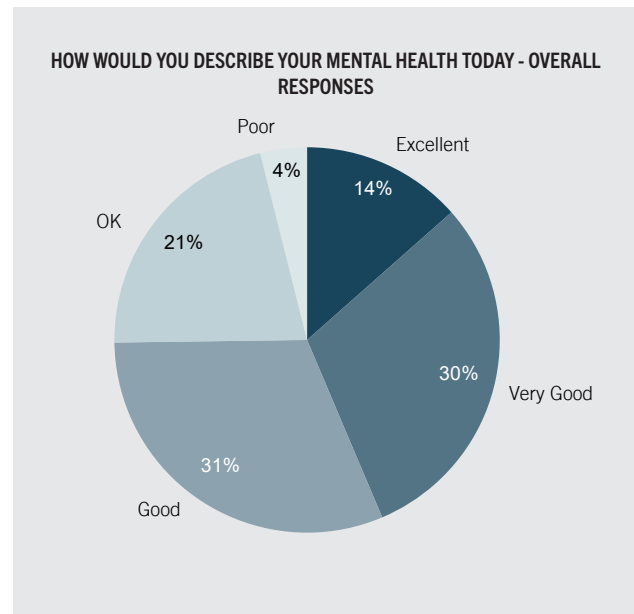


# HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH TODAY?

75% of respondents rated their mental health at the time of taking the survey positively (excellent, very good or good). 21% rated their mental health as okay and 4% said that their mental health was poor.

There is a clear relationship between age and mental health at the time of taking the survey, with the youngest clients generally rating their mental health less positively than those in higher age groups. 50% of respondents in the 15-19 age group described their mental health as "okay".

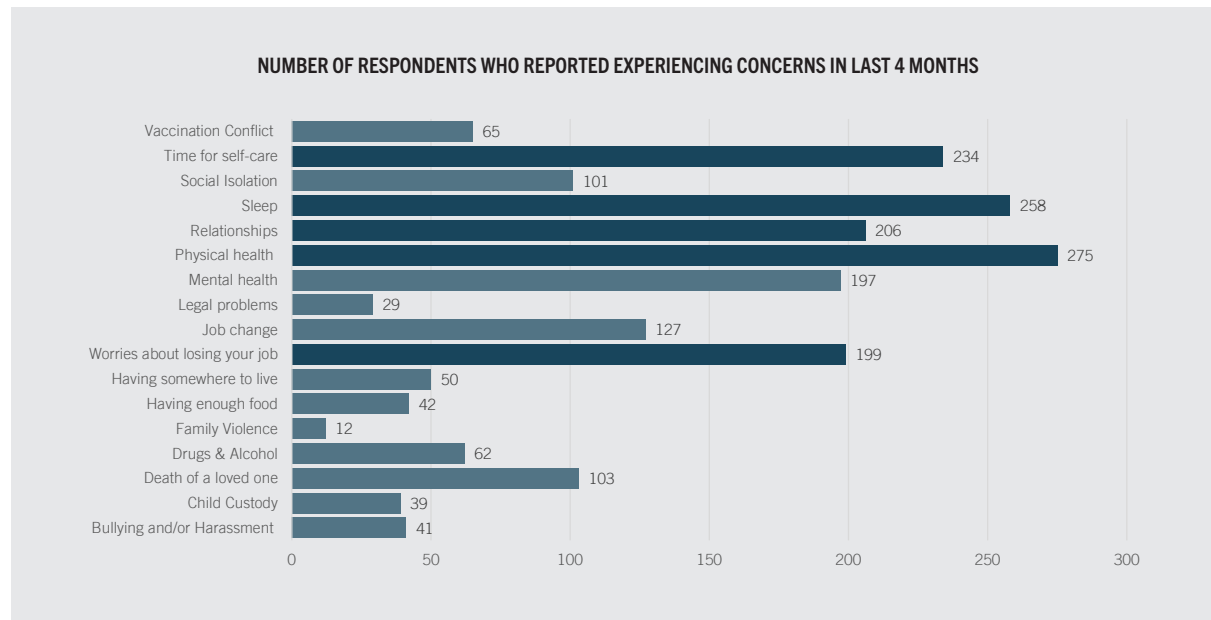
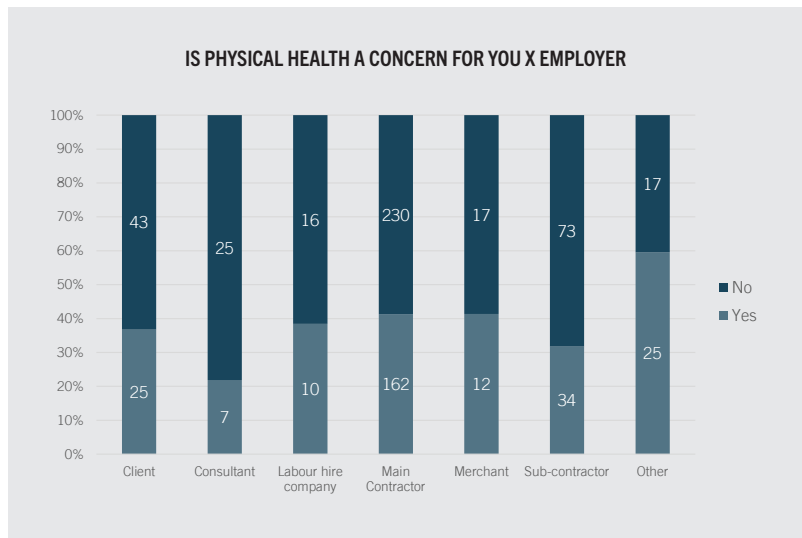
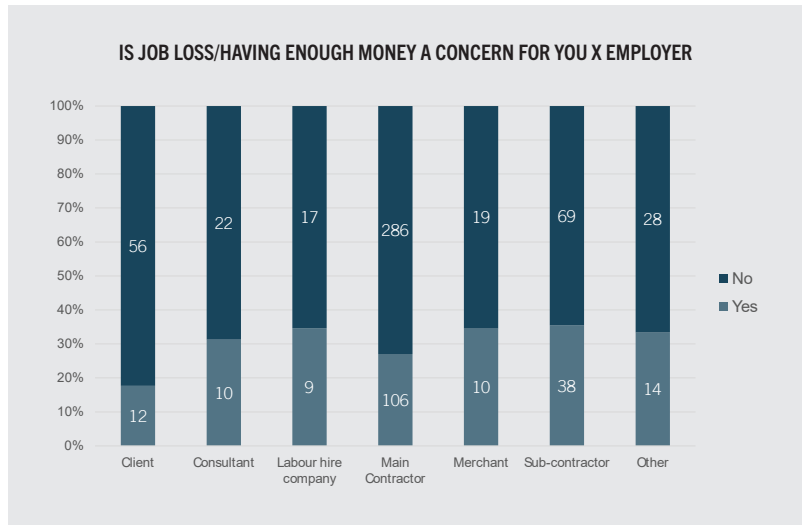
	2021	2022
 EXCELLENT	14%	13%
 VERY GOOD	25%	30%
 GOOD	31%	31%
 OK	25%	21%
 POOR	6%	4%



# IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS ?

Responses to this section in 2022 were very closely aligned with those received in 2021, which indicates that despite the easing of restrictions, workers are still struggling with issues such as energy levels, sleep, and low-mood. 56% of respondents in 2021 were feeling like a failure to self/family was more prevalent in respondents working for the sub-contractor and main-contractor. Those working for the client reported feeling this way in the last four months the least (30%). The top five areas of concern for respondents were: Physical Health, Sleep, Time for Self Care and Fear of Job Loss/Financial Concerns. Over 40% of Merchant and Main Contractor respondents advised that Physical Health was a key concern for them.

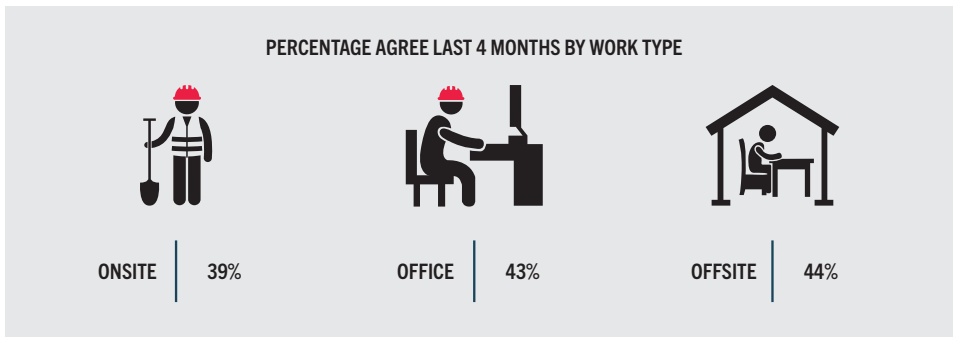
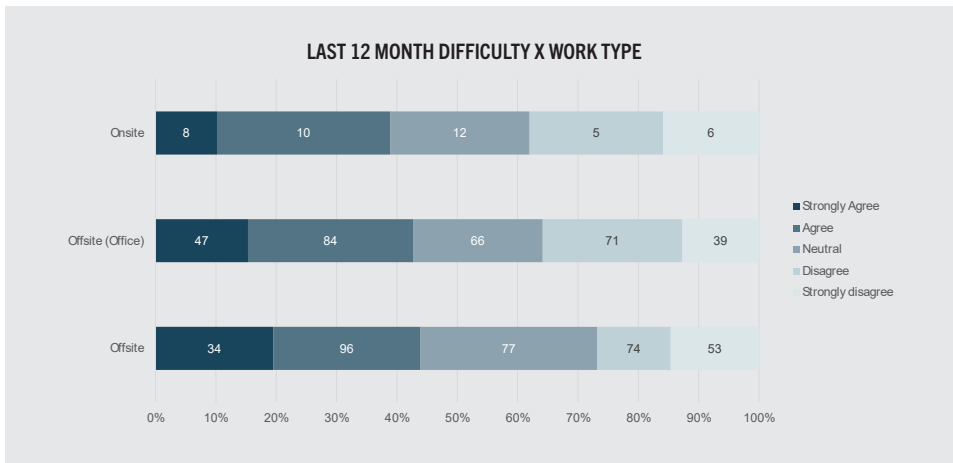
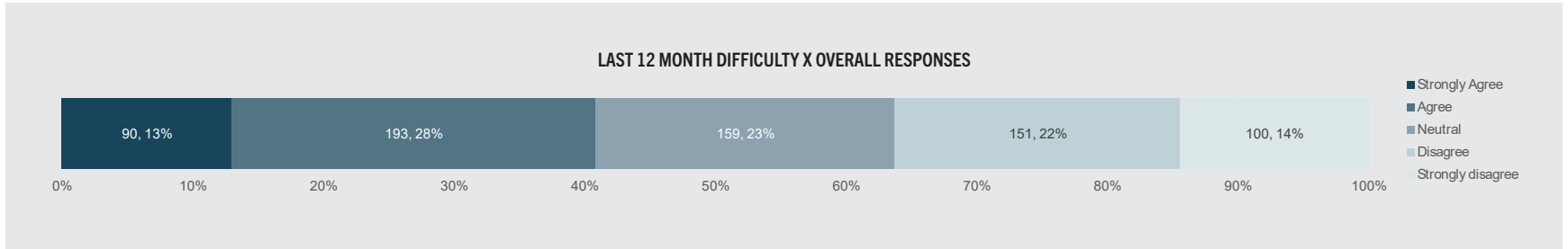
	2021		2022	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>LITTLE INTEREST IN DOING THINGS THAT I NORMALLY LIKE DOING</b>	74%	26%	74%	26%
<b>FEELING DOWN, DEPRESSED, OR HOPELESS</b>	65%	35%	66%	34%
<b>TROUBLE FALLING OR STAYING ASLEEP, OR SLEEPING TOO MUCH</b>	73%	27%	72%	28%
<b>FEELING TIRED OR HAVING LITTLE ENERGY</b>	89%	11%	88%	12%
<b>FEELING THAT YOU ARE A FAILURE OR HAVE LET YOURSELF/FAMILY DOWN</b>	54%	46%	56%	44%
<b>MOVING OR SPEAKING SO SLOWLY THAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE NOTICED.</b>	30%	70%	33%	67%



# THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE BEEN AMONG THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES OF MY LIFE

41% of respondents in 2022 agreed that the last 12 months have been among the most difficult of their lives - up from 38% in 2021. Agreement to these questions was similar across work types, although those who work offsite had the highest rate of agreement at (44%). Agreement was similar across regions as well with Otago having the highest agreement rate (45%) and Wellington having the lowest agreement rate (29%).

2021	2022
38%	41%









# I AM ABLE TO MANAGE THINGS THAT STRESS ME OUT MOST OF THE TIME

A relatively small percentage of respondents (8%) reported that they feel unable to manage stress most of the time. There was a very small shift in responses to this question across the two surveys. In 2021, 79% of respondents agreed that they were able to manage things that stress them out most of the time, compared to 74% in 2022. Those in higher age brackets reported a greater ability to manage things that stress them out (note, younger age groups have a smaller response size). Responses to this question were similar across employee type, although Merchants had the highest percentage of disagreement (note small group size).

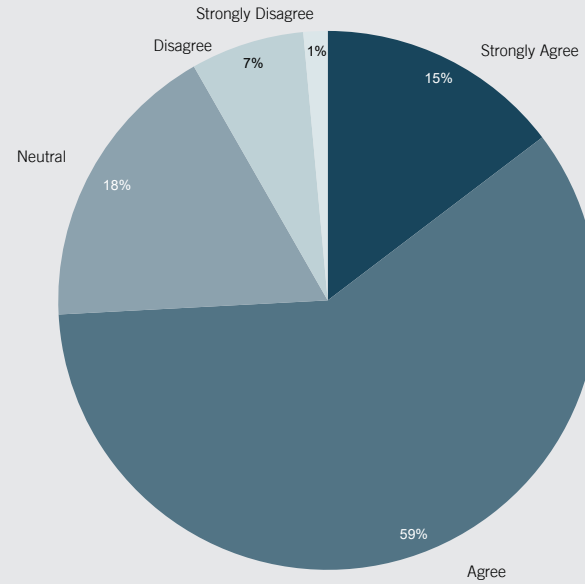
	2021	2022
<b>AGREE</b>	79%	74%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	6%	8%

## PERCENTAGE AGREE THAT THEY CAN MANAGE THINGS THAT STRESS THEM OUT X RELATIONSHIP STATUS

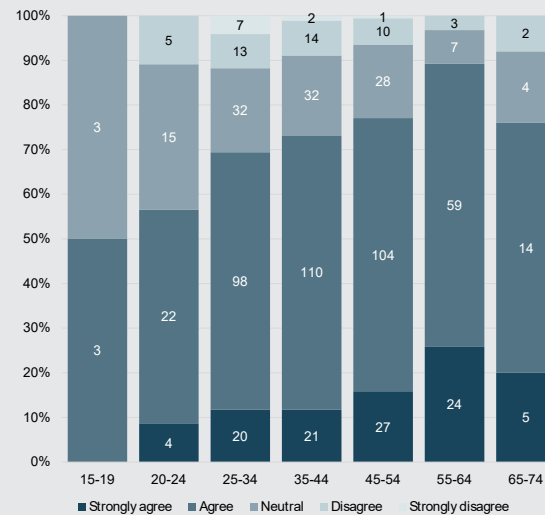
2022

	<b>MARRIED/CIVIL UNION</b>	77%
	<b>LIVE WITH MY PARTNER (NOT MARRIED)</b>	71%
	<b>SINGLE LIVE WITH OTHERS</b>	73%
	<b>DIVORCED</b>	77%
	<b>SEPARATED</b>	55%
	<b>SINGLE LIVE ALONE</b>	71%

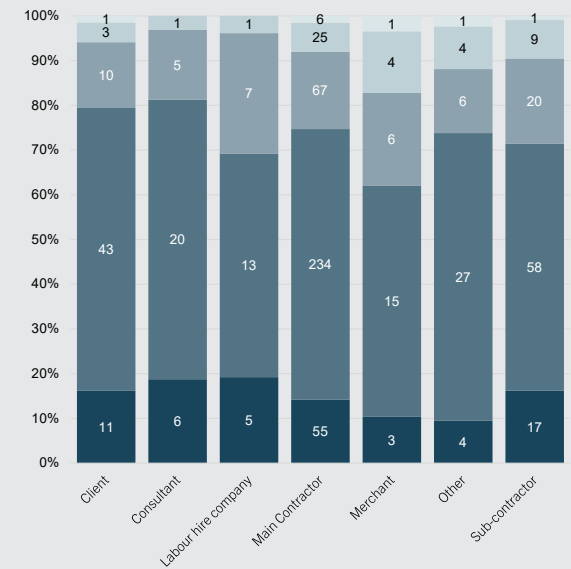
## ABLE TO MANAGE STRESS - OVERALL SUMMARY



## ABLE TO MANAGE STRESS X AGE GROUP



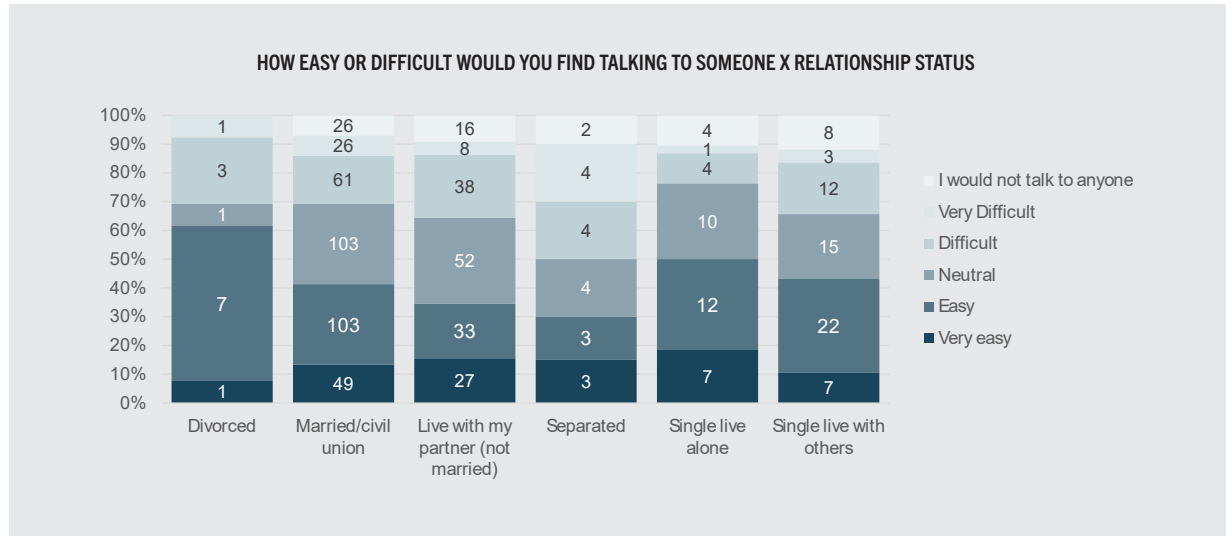
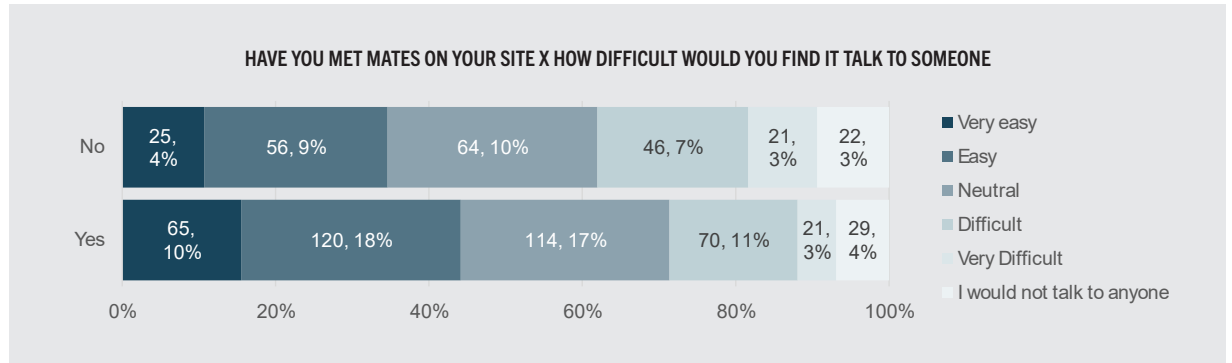
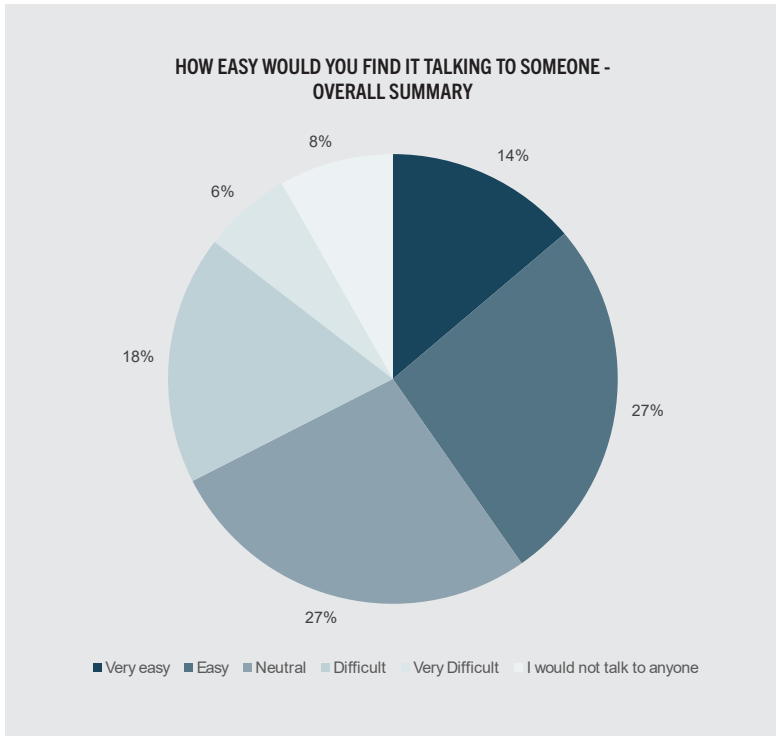
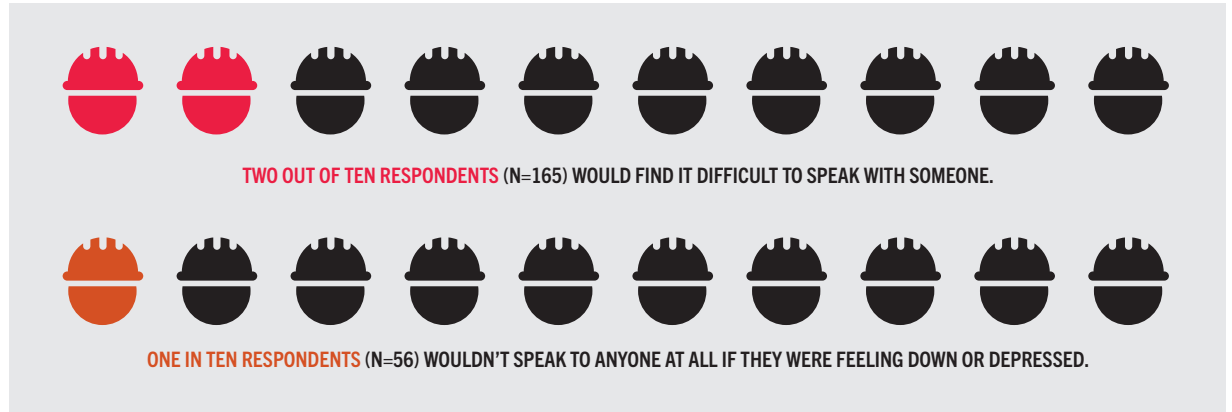
## ABLE TO MANAGE STRESS X EMPLOYER TYPE





# HOW DIFFICULT OR EASY WOULD YOU FIND IT TO TALK TO SOMEONE AT WORK ABOUT FEELING DOWN OR BEING DEPRESSED?

Two in ten respondents agreed that they would find it difficult to speak with someone if they were feeling down or depressed. One in ten respondents agreed that they wouldn't speak to anyone at all if they were feeling down or depressed. The rate of respondents that reported that they would find it difficult to speak to someone was higher in those that are separated and lower in those that are divorced (please note relatively low response rates across these two relationship types). Those respondents who had met MATES on site were more likely to report that they would find it easy to reach out and talk to someone (28%) than those who had not met MATES on site (13%).



# HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR WORK LIFE OVER THE LAST 4 MONTHS?

Respondents who work for labour hire companies reported the highest levels of satisfaction and lowest rates of dissatisfaction with their work life over the four month period. Those who work for Merchant/Supply companies reported the lowest levels of satisfaction and highest levels of dissatisfaction (note low responses in group types Onsite, Office, and Offsite). Those who work Onsite reported higher work satisfaction (80%) than those based in Office (68%).



OVER TWO OUT OF EVERY TEN RESPONDENTS REPORTED FEELING DISSATISFIED OR VERY DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK OVER THE LAST FOUR MONTHS.

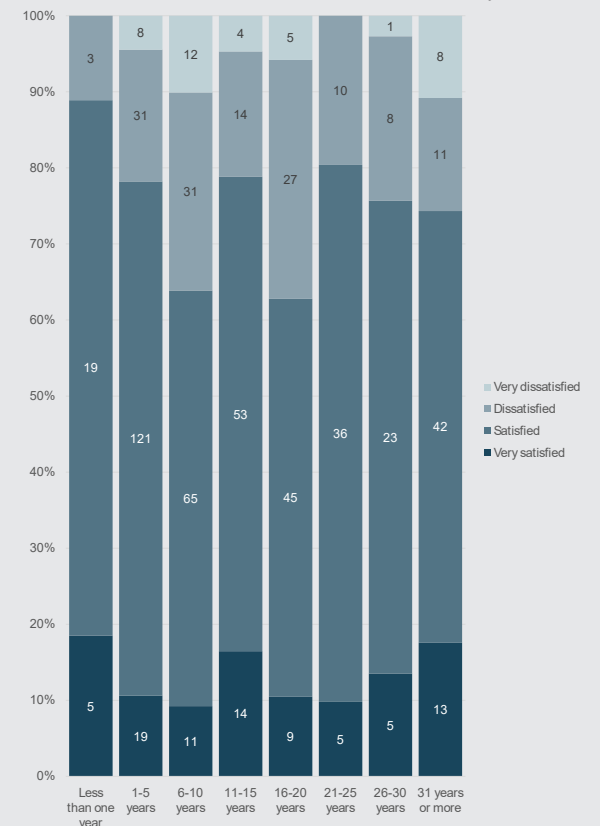
SATISFACTION WITH WORK LIFE LAST 4 MONTHS X EMPLOYER

	SATISFIED		DISSATISFIED	
	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number
Client	68%	46	28%	19
Consultant	69%	22	31%	10
Labour hire company	77%	20	19%	5
Main Contractor	73%	283	22%	86
Merchant	61%	17	36%	10
Other	64%	27	33%	14
Sub-contractor	67%	70	28%	29

SATISFACTION WITH WORK LIFE X SURVEY DATE

	2021	2022
Very satisfied	13%	12%
Satisfied	55%	59%
Dissatisfied	21%	20%
Very dissatisfied	6%	6%
Don't know	5%	4%

SATISFACTION WITH WORK LIFE X TIME IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORTED BEING SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK LIFE OVER LAST FOUR MONTHS



ONSITE | 80%



OFFICE | 68%



OFFSITE | 70%

# SUICIDE AND SUICIDAL IDEATION

There has been an increase in the percentage of participants who seriously thought about ending their own life in the four months leading up to completing the survey - from 4.5% in 2021, to 5.5% in 2022. 6.4% of all onsite workers had seriously considered taking their own life in the four months prior to completing the survey, compared to 5% of office staff and 5% of offsite workers. One in four respondents reported having thoughts that they would be better off dead at least once per month in the four months prior to the survey.

How often in the last four months have you had thoughts that you would be better off dead?

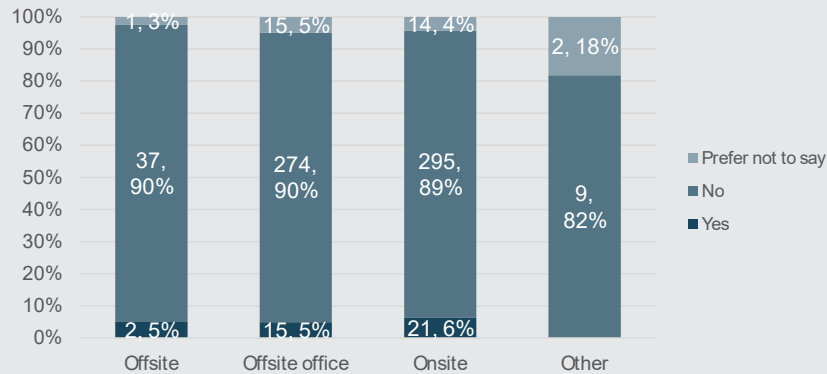
Nearly everyday	1% (n=9)
Weekly	2% (n=15)
Every other week	3% (n=18)
Monthly	3% (n=19)
Less frequently than monthly	9% (n=60)
Not at all	82% (n=552)

In the last four months have you...	Yes, 2021	Yes, 2022
SERIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT ENDING YOUR OWN LIFE	4.5% (n=45)	5.5% (n=38)
MADE A PLAN TO END YOUR OWN LIFE	1.5% (n=17)	2% (n=19)
MADE AN ATTEMPT TO END YOUR OWN LIFE	1.5% (n=14)	1.5% (n=9)

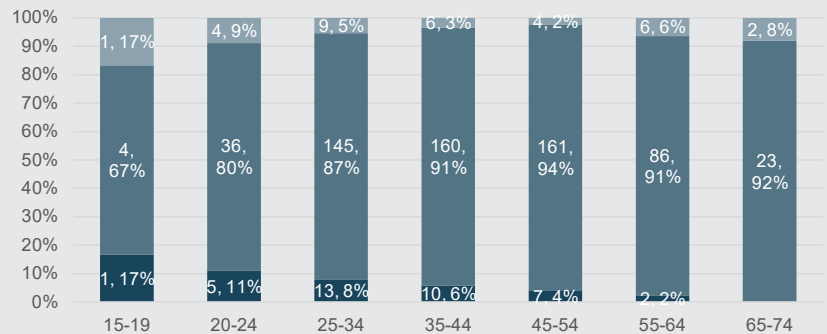


**1 IN 10 RESPONDENTS** REPORTED HAVING THOUGHTS THAT THEY WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEAD AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH IN THE FOUR MONTHS PRIOR TO TAKING THE SURVEY

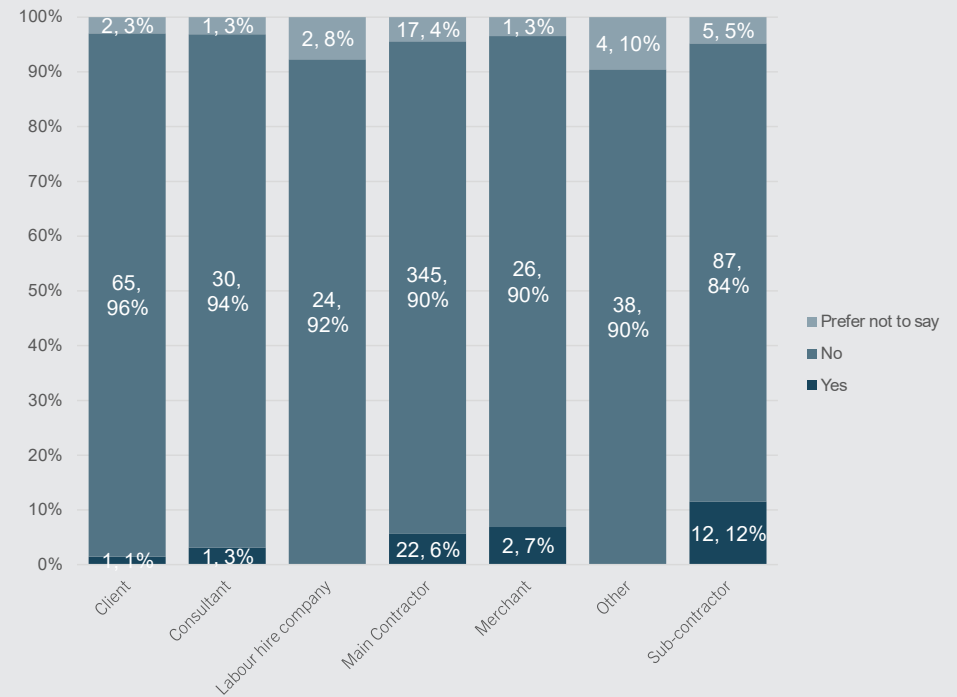
SERIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT TAKING YOUR OWN LIFE X WORK TYPE



SERIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT TAKING YOUR OWN LIFE X AGE

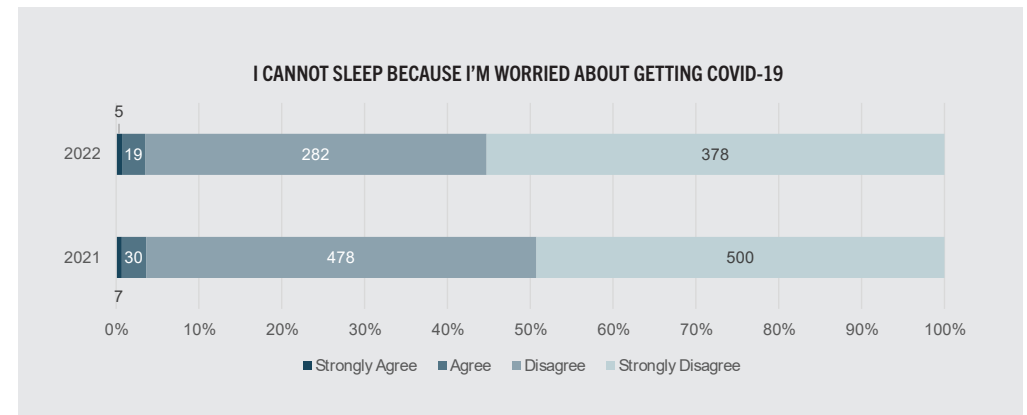
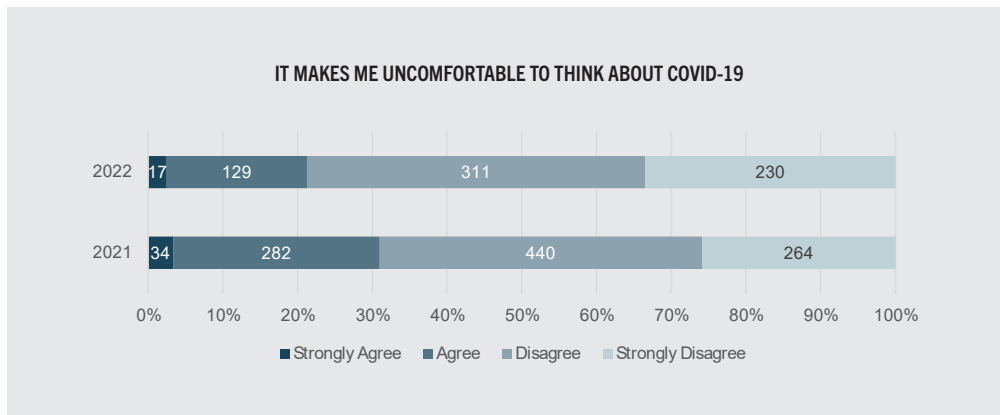
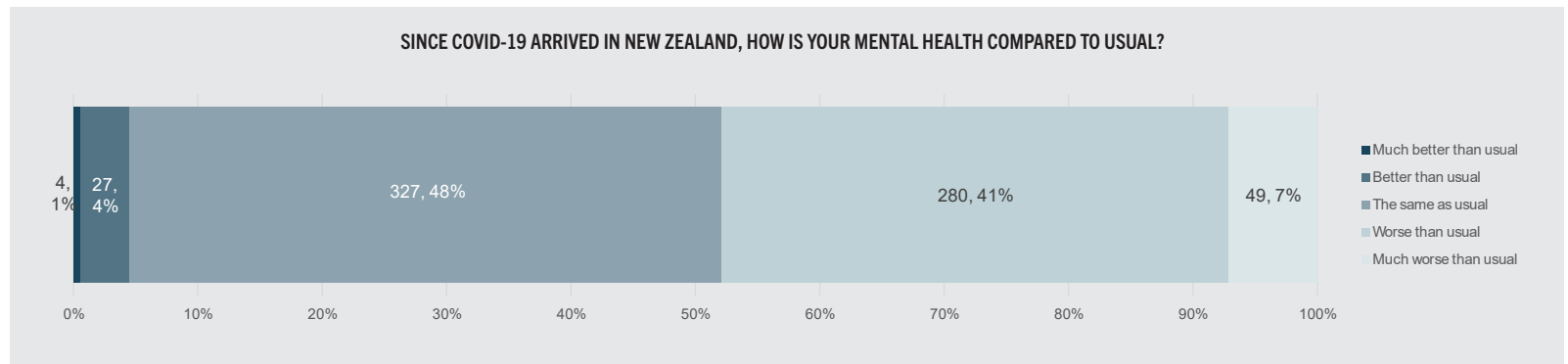


SERIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT TAKING YOUR OWN LIFE X EMPLOYER TYPE



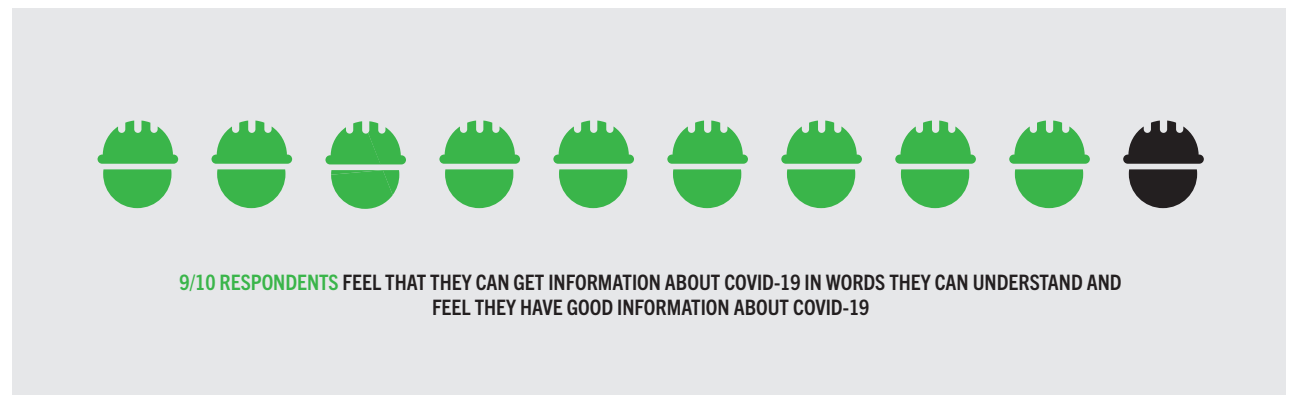
# COVID-19 - STRESS AND INFORMATION

Almost half of all respondents believe that their mental health has been worse than usual since COVID-19 arrived in New Zealand. There has been a decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported that COVID-19 makes them feel uncomfortable between 2021 (31%) and 2022 (22%). Similarly, there has been a decrease in the proportion of participants who report that they are unable to sleep because of COVID-19. It is encouraging to see that nine out of ten respondents feel that they can get information about COVID-19 that they understand.



**HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND LOOKING AT COVID INFORMATION PER DAY X SURVEY DATE**

	2021	2022
Less than an hour a day	81%	89%
1-2 hours per day	15%	8%
2-4 hours per day	3%	2%
4-8 hours per day	1%	1%
More than 8 hours a day	1%	0%



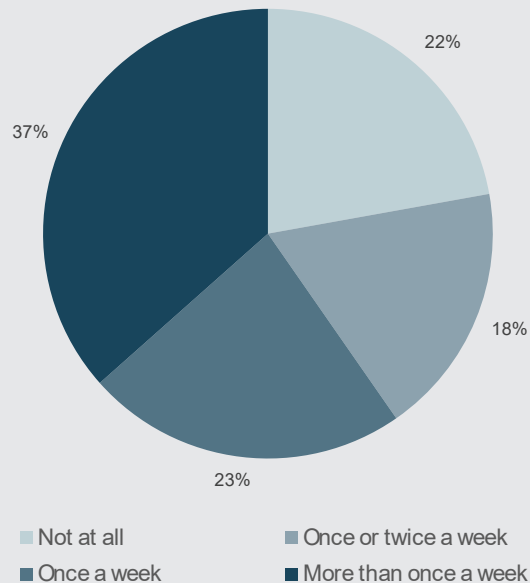
# COVID-19 - MANAGED AND SELF-ISOLATION

There has been an increase in the proportion of respondents who have had to go into managed or self isolation since 2021 - from 13% to 51%. For those who have had to self-isolate, over half had employers who checked in on them at least once a week. 22% of respondents who had to isolate reported that their employer did not check on them at all during this period. The majority of respondents who had to isolate and reported that their employer did not check on them were site-based workers. 28% of female respondents reported that their employer did not check on their wellbeing at all while they were isolating - this is higher than the proportion of males who reported this (19%).

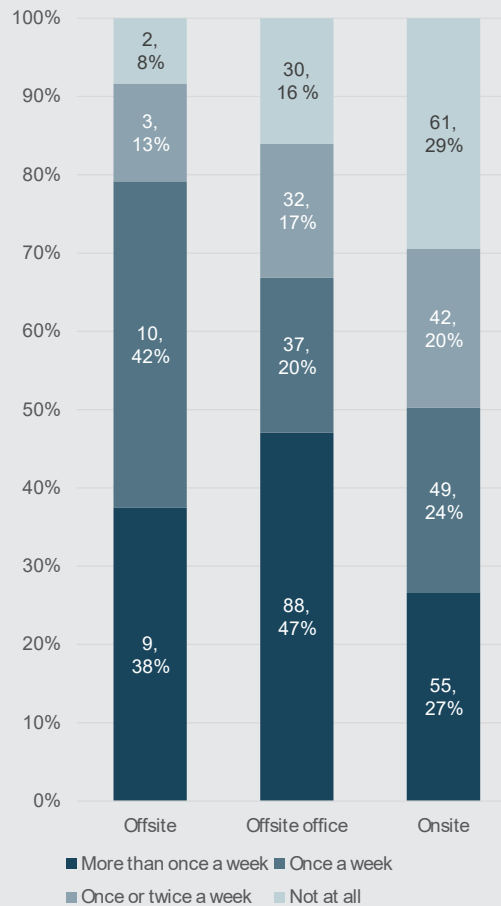
HAVE YOU HAD TO GO INTO MANAGED OR SELF ISOLATION?

	2021	2022
Yes	13%	51%
No	87%	49%

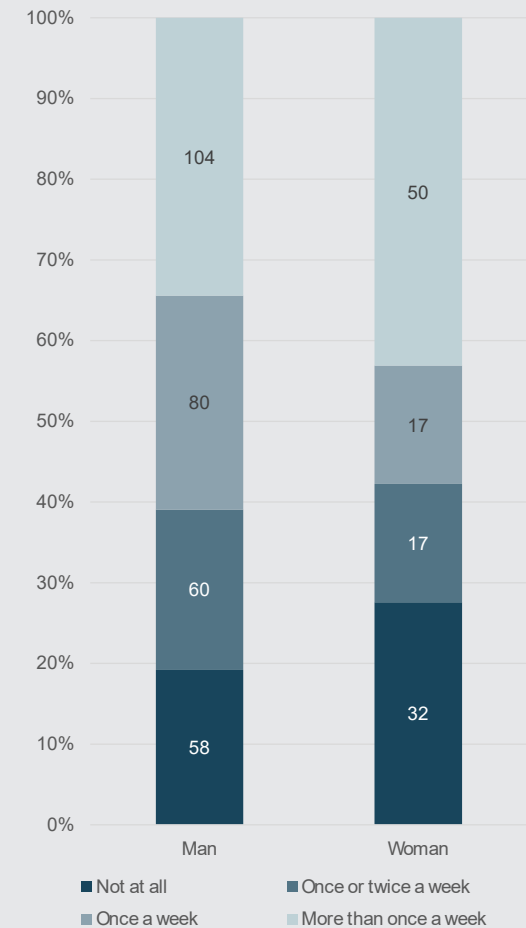
IF YOU HAVE HAD TO SELF-ISOLATE BECAUSE OF COVID-19, HOW OFTEN DID YOUR EMPLOYER CHECK IN ON YOUR WELLBEING?



HOW OFTEN HAS YOUR EMPLOYER CHECKED IN ON YOUR WELLBEING WHILE ISOLATING X WORK TYPE



HOW OFTEN HAS YOUR EMPLOYER CHECKED IN ON YOUR WELLBEING X GENDER



*“It is impossible to take on  
any fight unless you know  
how big your opponent is.”*

---

*Dr Gabrielle Jenkin, 2021*

