



Mental Safety at Work – New Research and What It Means for Your Organisation

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Mental safety is at the foundation of psychological health and safety, making it of utmost importance for health and safety practitioners, business leaders, and managers to prioritise. In this presentation, we share research from a study aiming to better understand mental safety in Aotearoa New Zealand workplaces.

Data was collected from 2021 to 2023 using the Umbrella Wellbeing Assessment to survey over 7,000 working New Zealanders across 29 organisations. We explore two proposed components of mental safety: how committed an organisation is to protecting the mental health of workers (psychosocial safety) and how safe individuals feel raising mistakes or issues in the workplace (psychological safety).

We find that the majority of New Zealand workers report working in teams that are generally psychologically safe. Despite this, a sizeable minority report that their teams are lacking when it comes to psychological safety, leading to greater odds of reported bullying, job turnover, experiencing psychological distress, and poor performance. Coupled with the finding that nearly half of all workers do not agree that the psychological wellbeing of staff is a priority in their workplace (poor psychosocial safety), we are presented with a core challenge for businesses and senior leaders to tackle: How do we meet psychological health and safety obligations when many workers feel unable to raise concerns in the first place, and half are not confident that psychological wellbeing is a priority in the workplace?

In this presentation, Dr Dougal Sutherland expanded on key findings from the study, with recommendations for strengthening mental safety in organisations.