



## Health and safety reporting in New Zealand: How senior leaders are (slowly) moving away from TRIFR and lag indicators

Francois Barton, Chief Executive, Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum

Email: [Francois.barton@forum.org.nz](mailto:Francois.barton@forum.org.nz)

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### From lagging indicators to leading indicators

In a world of acronyms, health and safety is not immune – LTIs, RAMs, ISO, IOSH, SoPs, HSNO – the list could continue. Perhaps the one referred to most frequently by Boards and Executives is TRIFR – total recordable injury frequency rates. It's a measurement tool which has its place, but there is a growing view among many in health and safety that TRIFR alone as a lag indicator is not sufficient for Officers to take an informed view of health and safety performance across a business or operation.

It's for this reason that in early 2024 the Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum (Forum), a membership group of 400+ CEOs focused on improving health and safety leadership, officially paused its annual benchmarking project<sup>1</sup>. This project, run for more than a decade saw participating organisations who belong to the Forum submit their annual TRIFR data, enabling them to compare their organisation's performance against those in the same industry. For some members this was a key benefit of joining the Forum.

Research, including the Construction Health and Safety NZ resource on Leading Indicators<sup>2</sup> found that injury frequency rates such as TRIFR and Lost Time Injury Frequency Rates (LTIFR) were not predictors of future accidents, and that there was no discernible association between TRIFR and fatalities at work.

Understanding however that many organisations within the Forum wanted to benchmark or compare their health and safety performance with others, we ran an inaugural CEO survey in 2024 to understand from leaders what their lag and lead indicators were telling them, and also how they're engaging their people and leading their supply chains – to better understand the levels of health and safety maturity across the Forum.

### H&S performance dashboard – two years of data

In May 2024 the Forum produced a Dashboard<sup>3</sup> which reported on these indicators for the first time – providing a way for organisations to benchmark themselves against others. While it was self-reported data, so too was the original Benchmarking project. For the first time this gave us a new dataset we could use to compare in future years.

We repeated the survey a year later, and the 2025 Dashboard reports on a survey of 137 CEOs and their teams, offering a snapshot into economic confidence, workforce strategies, supply chain collaboration, and the evolution of health and safety thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forum.org.nz/resources/benchmarking-project/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://secure.chasnz.org/downloads/resources/ConstructionLeadingHealthSafetyandWell-BeingIndicators\\_CHASNZ\\_.pdf](https://secure.chasnz.org/downloads/resources/ConstructionLeadingHealthSafetyandWell-BeingIndicators_CHASNZ_.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.forum.org.nz/resources/2024-health-safety-and-wellbeing-performance/>

2025

## Health, Safety and Wellbeing Performance Dashboard

Business Leaders' Health & Safety Forum

### Key performance highlights

Rates of serious work-related accidents in the previous 12 months:

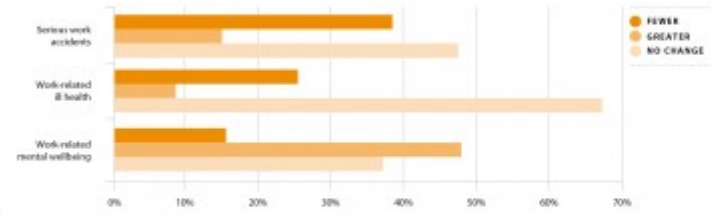
- 38% had fewer serious work incidents
- 66% had no change in the number of work-related ill health incidents
- 48% had a greater number of work-related mental wellbeing incidents

80% of organisations are involving their workers and representatives in conversations about health, safety and wellbeing six or more times a year.

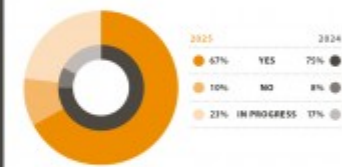
62% of organisations have a clear and shared understanding with their supply chain partners of their respective roles in delivering health, safety and wellbeing outcomes.

67% of organisations have developed a suite of lead and lag indicators – with 23% of organisations getting this work underway.

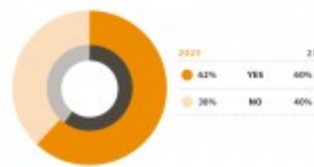
What change have you seen to the following over the past 12 months?



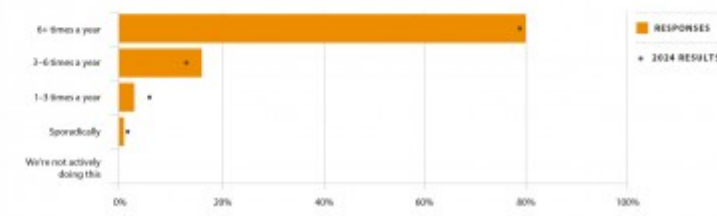
Has your organisation developed a suite of lead and lag indicators that reflects your business and the changes you wish to see?



Do you have a clear and shared understanding with your supply chain partners of your respective roles in delivering safety, health and wellbeing outcomes?



How often are you involving your workers and their representatives in conversations about health, safety and wellbeing?



This data was provided by 139 CEOs and their teams as part of the Forum's annual CEO survey in March 2025. Data for 2024 was provided by 133 CEOs and their teams.

### Key performance data

The first question any Board or Executive team wants to know about health and safety performance is rates of serious work-related accidents. This Dashboard provides that snapshot across the circa 140 businesses. It also shows similar trends, across two years. We know that as of May 2025, businesses are reporting:

- **Work-related mental wellbeing incidents** are growing – for two years organisations have reported a greater number of these incidents than each year prior.
- Organisations are reporting fewer, or no change to the number of **serious work accidents** reported year on year.
- Very few organisations are reporting a rise in **work-related ill health** across each year.

The reported increase in mental wellbeing incidents at work across two years indicates this is a very real issue for many business leaders and their teams.

### Health and safety reporting

In 2024 we were pleased to see three quarters of all businesses reporting they had developed a suite of lag and lead indicators that reflect their business and the changes they wish to see. A positive sign given the move away, or sole focus on the likes of TRIFR and LTIs to a more holistic and curious approach to the work happening.

So while it was slightly disappointing in 2025 to see a slight change, backwards, on those numbers – with 67% indicating they had developed a suite of indicators, reassuringly 23% reported that this was work in progress.

CEOs commented:

- “Have removed TRIFR and working on a new suite of lead and lag indicators.”

- “Changing to make lead indicators mandatory.”
- “Moving the business to more proactive measures like number of staff actively involved in training etc.”

Over time we would want to see this number continue to rise – closer to 85% and above – which would be a sign of increased maturity in health and safety reporting, as well as a strong culture within organisations.

### **Supply chain leadership – a work in progress**

One of the Forum’s strategic pillars is its 2021-2031 strategy<sup>4</sup> is *building supply chain and sector leadership*.

Leaders, particularly those of large to medium sized businesses have the ability to influence the work that is done throughout the supply chain, and enable good work design so that people and businesses can thrive. We want to ensure we’re able to measure how Forum organisations are thinking about and doing this work.

Between 2024 and 2025 we saw a slight increase in the percentage of CEOs noting that they have a clear and shared understanding with supply chain partners around roles in delivering safety outcomes – from 60% in 2024 to 62% in 2025. Yet 38% still lack that clarity—highlighting room for improvement. The survey's qualitative responses offered detailed insights:

- Effective practices include joint safety forums, mutual audits, contractor prequalification, and shared performance metrics.
- Many leaders are working toward greater alignment through mechanisms like PCBU (Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking) agreements, authority-to-work systems, and collaborative safety protocols.
- However, inconsistency remains. Several respondents noted “work in progress” efforts, particularly with subcontractors and long-standing partners where informal habits may undercut formal expectations.

### **Worker engagement – positive signs**

It’s now close to ten years since the Health and Safety at Work (Worker Engagement, Participation, and Representation) Regulations came into force in New Zealand to enhance worker involvement in health and safety matters. It’s therefore pleasing to see the survey results across both years showing encouraging signs. Almost 80% of CEOs report engaging with workers or their representatives on health and safety **six or more times a year**. This frequent interaction facilitates learning, builds trust, and ensures that frontline voices shape decision-making. Moreover, many CEOs attributed concrete workplace changes to these interactions. These included:

- Elevating critical risk assessments.
- Prioritising "work as done" vs. "work as imagined."
- Enhancing executive visits to site and safety visibility.

This emphasis on continuous engagement suggests that leaders increasingly recognise that systems alone cannot deliver safety—people must feel seen, heard, and involved in shaping the systems that affect them.

### **Continuing to monitor progress in future years**

Two years into this new model of reporting on health and safety performance, we’re starting to see some trends emerge. Particularly around the increased incidents of mental wellbeing

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.forum.org.nz/assets/about-us/Forum-Strategy-2021-2031.pdf>

at work, a growing understanding towards the need for a range of lag and lead indicators in health and safety reporting, and a high-level of worker engagement. While the data is not independently verified, we know it is largely reflective of the themes we're also hearing from members directly and anecdotally.

A foundational mindset of the Forum and our CEO leaders is that health and safety is a positive outcome of work done well. There will always be limitations around the value and impact of benchmarking the statistical outcome, that's why the Forum is here to foster and encourage organisations and senior leaders to also benchmark their approach to health and safety.

As we continue this annual survey and Dashboard in 2026 and into future years we'll be working with members, and indeed the wider leadership community in New Zealand to continue to push for an environment around health and safety reporting and culture that recognises not just a reduction in harm, but transforming systems, and shaping cultures where people and businesses can thrive.