

Under Embargo: 12:01AM NZDT, 4 DECEMBER 2025

SEEK research reveals 64% of Kiwis are happy at work, but major shifts in job security and management are shaping overall happiness

- 64% of New Zealand workers are happy at work right now, with purpose being the number one driver of workplace happiness for Kiwis, followed by day-to-day responsibilities.
- Direct managers have become more influential to workplace happiness (3rd place, up from 9th in 2024), however, only 56% of workers are currently happy with their managers.
- Job security has grown in importance as a workplace happiness driver (7th place, up from 10th in 2024), yet satisfaction in this area has seen the largest year-on-year decline of all drivers - just 54% in 2025, down from 61% in 2024.
- Nearly a third of Kiwi workers (29%) often dread going to work, rising to 40% among Gen Z workers.

NEW ZEALAND, 4 December, 2025 - New Zealand's leading employment platform, SEEK, has released the second edition of its Workplace Happiness Index, offering a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of New Zealanders happiness levels at work.

Surveying over 1,500 New Zealand workers across a broad range of industries, locations, and generations*, SEEK reveals that having purpose remains the most important driver of New Zealander's happiness at work. This is followed by day-to-day responsibilities, and a newcomer into the top three most important drivers - your manager.

The Index revealed that happiness at work has held steady in 2025, with 64% of New Zealanders saying they feel happy in their jobs. While this is a small improvement on last year's result (62%), the report shows some key shifts in the drivers of workplace happiness.

Job security, for example, has become more important for New Zealand workers, yet satisfaction in this area has declined (54% in 2025, down from 61% in 2024). The importance of an employee's manager has also risen significantly, climbing to the third most important driver of workplace happiness - up from ninth place in 2024.

Rob Clark, SEEK's Country Manager, comments: *"It's encouraging to see that overall workplace happiness in New Zealand has held steady this year. At the same time, it's no surprise that happiness levels with job security have declined, with many Kiwis feeling the impact of the current economic climate on the jobs market."*

"What stands out is that even with these pressures, New Zealand workers remain remarkably resilient and clear about what matters most. Purpose at work continues to be the strongest driver of workplace happiness, and the importance of one's manager has risen significantly this year."

"There is a clear opportunity here for businesses. While you may not love every aspect of your job at every life stage, happiness at work has a powerful impact on both individual wellbeing and organisational performance. Happier employees are more likely to be engaged and productive, and far less likely to be looking for another role. By focusing on wellbeing, purpose

and supportive management, employers can make a meaningful difference to how people feel at work."

"The aim of the SEEK Workplace Happiness Index is to help identify the key areas where businesses can have the greatest impact, and ultimately build a more engaged, resilient and productive workforce."

New Zealand workers reveal mixed happiness across key workplace factors

SEEK's research reveals that when it comes to what New Zealanders are currently happiest with at work, their location of work (68% happy), team/colleagues (66%) and purpose at work (63%) top the list. Happiness levels in these areas have remained relatively stable since 2024, showing that New Zealanders are still happy with these key workplace factors.

On the other hand, career progression opportunities (37% happy) ranks lowest in happiness, as was the case in 2024 (39%). Happiness with company commitment to ESG has shown no movement (41% in 2024 & 2025) - suggesting that these are some of the more challenging areas for employers to address.

The research also highlights a notable shift in job security, with happiness levels declining from 61% in 2024 to 54% in 2025, suggesting many workers are likely feeling less certain about their employment prospects amid the current economic environment.

Top 5: What New Zealanders are most happy with at work	Bottom 5: What New Zealanders are least happy with at work
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Location of work (68% happy)2. Team/colleagues (66% happy)3. Purpose at work (63% happy)4. Work-life balance (62% happy)5. Day-to-day role responsibilities (62% happy)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Career progression (37% happy)2. Company commitment to ESG (41% happy)3. Salary (42% happy)4. Stress levels (44% happy)5. Senior leadership (48% happy)

Purpose at work remains the ultimate workplace happiness driver

In addition to revealing what workers are currently most and least happy with, SEEK's *Workplace Happiness Index* analyses what is the most important to Kiwi worker's happiness levels - an impactful way to pinpoint the most crucial areas to address to meaningfully bolster workplace happiness.

For the second consecutive year, having purpose at work takes the top spot as the most important contributor to workplace happiness for Kiwis, followed by day-to-day responsibilities. Most notably, there is a newcomer to round out the top three, with your manager rising from 9th place last year to the third spot in 2025.

The ranking of some of the wider factors has shifted in importance year on year. This includes company values climbing up from 12th place in 2024 to 6th place this year. On the

flipside, salary has become far less influential to overall happiness at work (dropping from 4th to 13th place), suggesting that while pay remains a key motivator when changing jobs, it doesn't necessarily drive long-term happiness once people are in a role.

Top 5: What factors are more important to New Zealanders happiness at work	Bottom 5: What factors are less important to New Zealanders happiness at work
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purpose at work 2. Your day-to-day responsibilities 3. Your manager (<i>up from 9th in 2024</i>) 4. Company culture 5. Senior leadership 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company commitment to ESG (17th) 2. Location of work (16th) 3. Career progression (<i>down from 11th in 2024</i>) (15th) 4. Team / colleagues (14th) 5. Salary (<i>down from 4th in 2024</i>) (13th)

"This strong climb in importance placed on people's direct manager could be for a variety of factors, however, amid change and disruption, workers naturally turn to the person they interact with most for clarity, support and a sense of stability," says Justine Alter, Organisational Psychologist at [Transitioning Well](#). *"With only 56% of Kiwi workers currently happy with their manager, there is a clear mismatch to be addressed. The fact that unhappy employees are more than twice as likely to look for new roles compared to happy ones¹, sends a powerful message to leaders - it's crucial for businesses to not only be aware of unhappiness in the workplace, but be equipped to address it."*

Gen Z's workplace happiness improves, yet they remain the least happy generation

Gen Z's happiness at work has improved in the past 12 months (45% in 2024 to 58% in 2025), however they are still the least happy generation in the workplace (vs. Millennials 62% and Gen X 69%).

Most notably, Gen Z workers report the greatest workplace challenges, with feeling the least valued (51% vs. Millennials 60% and Gen X 71%) and the generation that most dread going to work often (40% vs. Millennials 33% and Gen X 22%), and along with millennials, more than a third (36% vs. Gen X 27%) feel burnt out or exhausted in their job, highlighting a clear generational divide.

The research shows Gen Z are the happiest at work when they are recognised for their efforts (41% vs. Millennials 31% and Gen X 34%), showing this is key to improving their workplace happiness. Other top factors for Gen Z include being productive (35%), finding their work interesting (29%), feeling listened to or valued (29%), and having the freedom to work independently (23%).

Navigating unhappiness at work

Organisational Psychologist, Justine Alter from [Transitioning Well](#), acknowledges the pressures many New Zealand workers are navigating: *"If you're among the nearly one in three Kiwis dreading work, start by identifying what's within your control. Look for small ways to make your work more meaningful - volunteer for projects that align with your interests, mentor*

a colleague, or suggest process improvements. And remember, sometimes a simple conversation about workload or stress levels may lead to practical solutions you hadn't considered."

"For employers", Alter adds, "Creating a psychologically safe and supportive culture can help reduce stress factors in the workplace. Not everybody is going to love their job – employers can't control that," she says. "But what they can control is the environment workers show up to every single day. If people feel supported at work, that can go a long way in addressing some of the risk factors raised in the Workplace Happiness Index."

For more information on ways to navigate evolving priorities in the workplace and career decision-making, head to [SEEK Career Advice](#). For the full SEEK Workplace Happiness Index, please see [here](#).

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Media Contact:

Nikki Lombaard, nikki.lombaard@adhesivepr.nz, 021 117 8667

Notes to Editors

[1] Unhappy employees are now more than twice as likely as happy workers to frequently consider changing roles (87% vs 39%)

***About SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index**

This research was conducted by Nature between July 2025 - October 2025. Sample size was up to 1,561 working-age New Zealanders.

About SEEK

SEEK is a market leader in online employment marketplaces that span 8 countries across Asia Pacific. SEEK invests heavily to create innovative technology products to help people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and help organisations succeed.