

New research highlights gap between rising mental health needs and employer support

Auckland, New Zealand, 23 July 2025 – New research from Peninsula Group shows that while many New Zealand businesses are aware of the importance of mental health in the workplace, there remains significant opportunity to strengthen the support available to employees.

The insights come from a global survey of more than 79,000 small to medium-sized businesses conducted by the global HR, employment law and health & safety consultancy across its client base in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Ireland and Canada.

Awareness and openness around mental health is on the rise, however, 73% of New Zealand employers said they do not currently offer mental health days in addition to standard leave – and are not planning to introduce them in the next 12 months. Additionally, 57% said they are not planning to roll out new mental health initiatives over the same period.

This comes at a time when many businesses are observing increased demand for support. Nearly a third (30%) of New Zealand employers reported a rise in mental health-related sick leave, and more than half (52%) said they have noticed more employees experiencing mental health challenges.

Kayleigh Frost, Associate Director of Operations at Wisdom Wellbeing ANZ, Peninsula New Zealand’s Employee Assistance Program provider, said the findings highlight an opportunity for employers to evolve their approach in step with changing needs.

“We’re seeing more openness and honesty from employees about mental health which is a positive shift,” said Frost.

“Many employers are already taking steps to support staff, but our data shows there is still plenty of opportunity to expand that support further. Even small changes, like basic training for managers, can make a meaningful difference.”

The research also revealed that only 25% of New Zealand employers currently offer an Employee Assistance Program, and just 28% have introduced new wellbeing measures in the past year. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents said they are not fully confident that employees would feel safe disclosing a mental health issue to their manager, indicating that stigma remains a challenge in some workplaces.

By comparison, Peninsula Group observes that employers in countries such as Canada were more likely to have introduced new mental health initiatives, including mental health days, in the past 12 months.

Frost noted that support strategies don't need to be complex or costly to be effective.

“Support needs to be accessible and meaningful, not a tick-the-box exercise. Poor mental health is estimated to cost New Zealand employers approximately \$1.3 billion a year. We cannot afford for mental health to be the thing that is talked about in policy but missed in practice. The opportunity lies in translating this awareness into consistent and tangible support for employees.”

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Notes to editor

Download the full report [here](#).

Media contact

Suhanna Yazami (Senior Account Manager, We. Communications):
syazami@wecommunications.com | +61 434 749 231

Demitra Ardisa (Account Manager, We. Communications):
dardisa@wecommunications.com | +61 424 450 905

Wisdom Wellbeing Press Office
pressoffice@wisdomwellbeing.au

Method of survey

The survey was conducted from 12-23 May 2025 across Peninsula Group's global client base.

About Peninsula New Zealand

Peninsula New Zealand's leading workplace advisory firm for SMEs, advising more than 6,500 clients in New Zealand on workplace relations and workplace health & safety issues. Its advice line allows businesses to speak with its team of workplace relations specialists, and through onsite visits to their business.