

## glide time



New Zealanders with caring commitments now have the legal right to ask their employer for the option to work flexibly. Recent surveys undertaken by the Department of Labour have found that flexible work is a common practice in Kiwi workplaces, whether employees have caring responsibilities or not.

**By John Jurman**

### FlexWork Is Routine!

The Department's review of flexible working arrangements in New Zealand workplaces was carried out last year.

Thousands of employers and workers participated in the review, which revealed that overall, 70% of New Zealand employers report having some or all of their employees working flexibly.

The remaining 30% of employers reported that they did not have any employees working flexibly.

The review found that:

Large employers were much more likely to have none or only a small proportion of staff working flexibly; small firms were much more likely to have all staff working flexibly.

Among employers who have some of all of their staff working flexibly, 76.1% reported they incurred no costs. A majority of employers who said they incur some costs associated with flexible work said these were reasonable.

Among employers who had flexible work arrangements of some form in their workplace, 86.9% said these have had a positive impact.

In-depth interviews offered further insight into why employers utilise flexible working, with business reasons such as improved productivity, staff retention, and recruitment and morale emerging.

Employee-driven requests for flexible work arrangements, whether for caring responsibilities or for other reasons, are common. Among employees in their current jobs, 42.8% reported that they have made a request for flexible work arrangements to their employer; a majority of these requests (94.2%) were approved.

Despite the presence of legislation providing eligible employees with a right to request flexible work arrangements for caring responsibilities, a majority of employee-reported requests were accepted by employers without needing the formal process provided for under Part 6AA of New Zealand's Employment Relations Act.

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first to care

Overall, 55.6% of all requests for flexible work arrangements reported by employees in their current jobs related to caring responsibilities. So while a small majority of these requests related to caring, a high number were for other reasons.

Last year the Department of Labour carried out several telephone and online surveys, as well as interviews with both employees and employers.

The surveys found that 73.6% of employers and 75.2% of employees believe the legal right to request flexible work arrangements should be available to all employees, not just those with caring responsibilities. A key theme emerging from the interviews was that extending the right to request flexible work arrangements should occur for reasons of fairness, recognising that flexibility may be needed for a range of reasons.

Awareness of New Zealand's flexible work legislation is relatively low: 27.5% of employers and 19.8% of employees.

Larger businesses with more employees were significantly more likely to be aware of the legislation than smaller businesses, and employees on incomes over \$40,000 were more likely to be aware of the legislation than employees on low incomes.

If you are a family carer and would like to better understand your right to ask your employer to consider flexible working arrangements, phone us at (0800) 777 797 or download helpful articles at [www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz)

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# Flex Works

Employment for Caring

AOTEAROA



## CARING LEADERSHIP

### Bryan Dyson, former CEO of Coca-Cola

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. They are work, family, health, friends, and spirit, and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends, and spirit - are made of glass. If you drop one of those, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for it. Work efficiently during office hours, and leave on time. Give the required time to your family and friends, and have proper rest.

**Value has a value only if its value is valued.**

## FAMILY CARE FOR WORKPLACES!

You can request copies of our magazine to distribute in your workplace, or soon we can offer a 'digital edition' so carers and colleagues can read *Family Care* online. Flex Works Aotearoa's Employment for Caring Group includes Accelerating Aotearoa, Bupa, Business NZ, Carers NZ, the Ministry of Social Development, the NZ Carers Alliance, the NZ Council of Trade Unions, and Work and Income. Our Group supports family carers, those returning to paid employment, and employers. All of our articles and information from past issues of *Family Care* can be downloaded free at [www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz)



**FEEDBACK!** Share your workplace ideas, flexible work experiences, or stories about retraining or returning to paid employment with other readers! Your comments and suggestions can help others, and inform the work of our Employment for Caring Group!

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