

Continuing the Conversation: Mental Wellbeing in the Insights Sector in New Zealand 2022



Summary of Findings



85% have struggled with their mental health to some degree in the previous 12 months (*vs. 84% in 2021 and 86% in 2020*)



58% who have suffered from mental health problems in the past 12 months have not told their workplace about it (*vs. 69% in 2021 and 48% in 2020*)



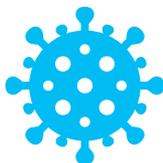
Impending deadlines and targets are the most common causes of stress among market researchers (**40%**) (*vs. 31% in 2021 and 43% in 2020*). In 2021, workload and having too much to do was the most common cause of stress (47%).



73% feel their mental wellbeing wasn't bad enough for them to take a day off work (*vs. 51% in 2021*)



A quarter (24%) do not feel that their workplace is doing enough to help employees with their mental health and wellbeing (*vs. 33% in 2021 and 34% in 2020*)



53% have contracted Covid-19 (*vs. 0% in 2021*)



70% feel more relaxed when working from home (*vs. 83% in 2021 and 69% in 2020*)



50% feel that working from home has improved their mental wellbeing (vs. 57% in 2021 and 49% in 2020)

Introduction

We designed our Workplace Mental Wellbeing Audit to help organisations understand the mental health of their employees and in turn take steps to help them.

Since 2020, we have partnered with the Research Association New Zealand (RANZ) to understand the mental wellbeing of those working in the market research industry in New Zealand and how they are coping in the context of the pandemic. For this year's study, we surveyed 62 RANZ members in September: The research took place over the following dates:

- 16th July 2020 – 17th August 2020
- 23rd July 2021 – 26th August 2021
- 1st September – 20th September 2022

In this report, we will summarise the findings of this year's study and cover the overall wellbeing of market researchers in New Zealand, their mental health at work and the impact of Covid-19 on wellbeing levels. Whilst these findings are incredibly important, the ways in which employers can help their staff improve their mental wellbeing are even more so – suggestions for how to do this are included throughout the report.

Note that in the report we refer to "market researchers" as a general term to cover the industry sector as represented through RANZ membership.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

A key element of our audit is the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale*; a rigorous and scientific method designed by the University of Warwick with funding from NHS Health Scotland. Looking at the scores of the scale, the mental wellbeing of an individual can be determined in terms of whether it falls above or below the national average. The scale enables us to quantify mental wellbeing, thus promoting wider understanding of mental wellbeing. A further use of the scale is to encourage effective improvement of mental wellbeing for the individual, by tracking scores over time, and to equip organisations and wider society to support the enhancement of mental wellbeing.

*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) © University of Warwick, NHS Health Scotland, and University of Edinburgh, 2007, all rights reserved. If you would like to use the scale, please visit the University of Warwick website for more details: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

Overall wellbeing

Over four in five researchers have struggled with mental health problems in the last year

Within the last year, market researchers are more likely to have experienced a physical health problem (90%) than a mental health problem (85%).

The most common mental health problems have remained prevalent among market researchers over the past 12 months:

	2020	2021	2022	Difference ('21 vs '22)
• Stress	68%	69%	76%	+7%
• Anxiety	60%	62%	45%	-17%
• Feeling low/down	71%	60%	58%	-2%
• Exhaustion/burnout	42%	53%	45%	-8%

The proportion of those who have experienced anxiety has decreased by 17% over the past year, with the proportion experiencing exhaustion or burnout decreasing by 8%. However, the proportion who have experienced stress in the last year has increased by 7%.

Despite the number of market researchers suffering from a mental health problem being marginally higher than last year (85% vs 84% in 2021), fewer people are taking time off to rest and recover (21% in 2022 vs 33% in 2021). However, more people are taking time off to recover from physical health problems (71% in 2022 vs. 60% in 2021).

Two in five do not feel their mental health problem is a valid reason to take time off work

Reasons for not taking time off work (mental health problems)



When thinking about the barriers preventing individuals from taking a day off for mental health problems vs physical health problems, the perception that mental health issues are not bad enough continues to be the most common barrier – this has increased from half last year (51% in 2021). Having too much to do at work to take time off for mental health reasons is the second biggest barrier, also having increased year-on-year – from 46% in 2021 to 52% in 2022. Whilst we still see the same types of barriers preventing individuals from taking a day off for mental health problems vs physical health problems, there has been a downward trend with these year-on-year. For example, in relation to mental health; wanting to keep the issue to themselves (43% in 2021 vs 41% in 2022), not feeling as though it is a valid reason to take time off work (43% in 2021 vs 23% in 2022), and not wanting to ask for time off work (24% in 2021 vs 18% in 2022).

As we have seen earlier in the report, market researchers are more likely to not take time off work for a mental health reason, so it is interesting to see the decrease in the number of people not thinking that taking time off work for a mental health problem is a valid reason.

Mental health at work

One in six market researchers feel their job is highly stressful – down from last year

The proportion of researchers that find their job highly stressful (giving it a rating of 8-10, with 10 being extremely stressful) has fallen this year from almost a quarter (24%) last year, to 15% of researchers this year. This is almost in line with the high levels of stress felt in 2020 – 18%. The aspects of working life which market researchers find stressful most regularly (NET: Often/all the time) are impending deadlines and targets (40%), the risk involved in projects going wrong (37%), and workload and having too much to do (35%).

When probed on what makes them feel stressed at work, the top five issues were:

- Impending deadlines/targets **40%**
- The risk involved in projects going wrong **37%**
- Workload/having too much to do **35%**
- Demands from clients **32%**
- Not feeling I'm good at my job **32%**

Confrontation continues to be an issue faced by only a minority in the market research industry at just 5% however, this has increased from 3% in 2021.

Almost a quarter of market researchers do not feel their workplace is doing enough to help employees with mental health and wellbeing

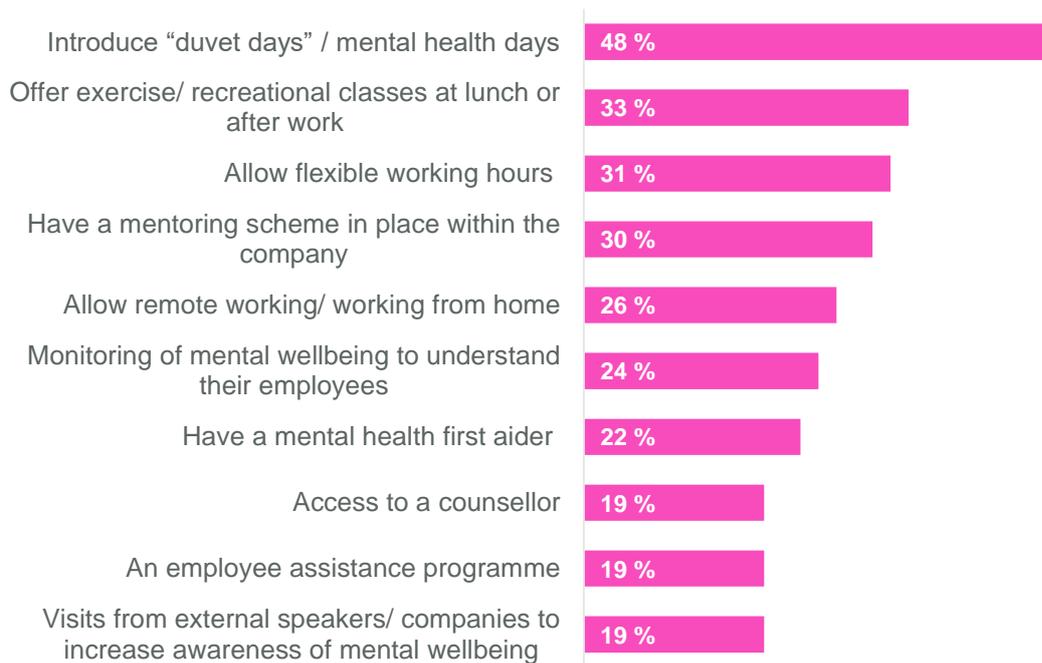
Whilst organisations within the market research industry must be there to support its employees with their mental health problems, this seems to have become less important than last year. In 2021, 98% of market researchers agreed that their workplace has a role to play in looking after the mental wellbeing of its employees, but in 2022 this dropped to 87% - although this is still a high number.

If they were struggling with their mental health or wellbeing, 81% feel their colleagues would be supportive of them. Whilst positive, this is down slightly in 2021 where 84% said they felt this (although still up from 2020 at 75%). Market researchers talking to their manager openly about their mental health and wellbeing, however, has improved since 2021 - 67% in 2022 vs 53% in 2021.

However, there is still much work to be done when it comes to supporting market researchers with their mental health problems. Almost a quarter (24%) feel their workplace is not doing enough to help employees with their mental health and wellbeing (compared to 33% in 2021), and a similar proportion (26%) would not know how to approach the topic of mental health or wellbeing if they were struggling at work - (compared to 29% in 2021).

To help employees improve their mental health and wellbeing, there are a number of initiatives that, when probed, feel would help. The ten most sought-after suggestions were as follows, and are broadly in line with findings in the 2021 audit:

Initiatives employees would like to see their workplace introduce



Impact of Covid-19 on wellbeing

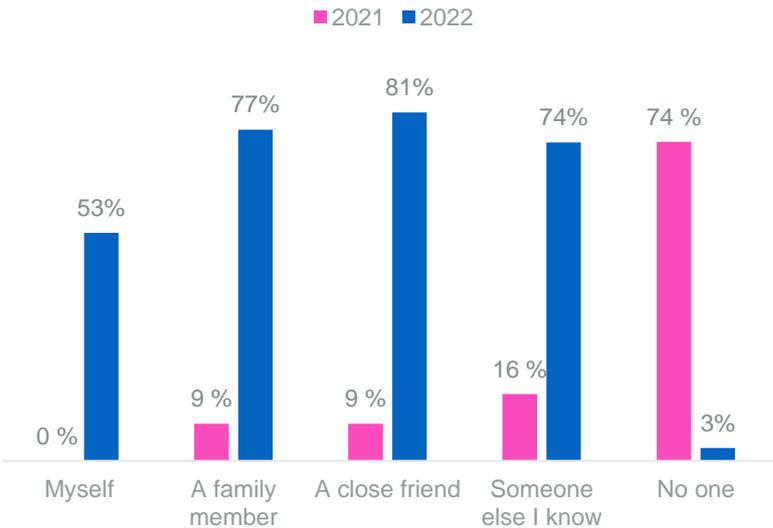
Over half of market researchers have had Covid-19

Since 2021, there has been a significant increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in New Zealand. Over half (53%) of market researchers claim to have contracted Covid-19. This increases to 77% of their family members and 81% of their close friends. Whilst this likely explains the high levels of market researchers saying they have suffered with a physical health problem in the last year, it's also continued to have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Positively, almost nine in ten (87%) of those in the market research industry felt their organisation handled the pandemic well – compared to 90% year-on-year. In line with last year, 94% of those who are not sole traders felt supported by their employer during the pandemic.

Working from home has become even more commonplace over the last year, with nine in ten market researchers working from home at least some of the time (93%) compared to 88% in 2021. Whilst 20% are working from home full time, this has increased from 8% in 2021.

Have you personally, or has anyone you know, contracted coronavirus?



Seven in ten feel more relaxed when working from home – down from eight in ten last year

Whilst Covid-19 cases have been on the rise, the impact of working from home on mental wellbeing is not as profound as previous years. Seven in ten (72%) market researchers feel they have a better work life balance when they work from home – this is a marginal improvement from 2021 where 71% felt this. However, this year, the benefits of working from home are not felt as strongly by researchers.

The negative impacts of working from home on mental wellbeing have slightly increased over the past year, with 20% who feel that working from home has worsened their mental wellbeing (compared to 17% in 2021). While seven in ten (70%) market researchers feel more relaxed when working from home, this has decreased from 83% in 2021, and whilst the majority of those working from home feel

that not having to commute to work has improved their mental health, this has reduced compared to 2021 (68% compared to 74% in 2021).

The social aspect of working from home continues to be the biggest issue facing workers, with almost half feeling isolated when working from home (48% vs 29% in 2021). In 2021, a quarter (24%) said they struggled to stay in contact with their colleagues when working from home which has increased significantly to half (50%) this year.

As was the case last year, there are some negative implications of working from home which still exist but are felt to a lesser extent. Fewer now feel they are working longer hours when working from home (22% in 2022 vs 26% in 2021), and almost the same amount as last year feels worried about the impact that prolonged working from home will have on their mental health (22% in 2022 vs 21% in 2021). Slightly less claim that working from home has made them feel more anxious (8% in 2022 vs 10% in 2021).

However, some issues caused by working from home have improved slightly since 2021, for example less workers now find it difficult to draw boundaries between work and rest (42% in 2022 vs 50% in 2021).

Conclusion

Organisations across our sector are re-adjusting their approaches to mental health after Covid-19. Overall, the proportion of market researchers suffering with mental health issues in NZ has remained high over the last 3 years, so it continues to be a crucial time to consider ways to help improve mental wellbeing. This comes as Covid-19 continues to effect New Zealanders. In the past year, New Zealanders have had more experience with Covid-19 and cases have risen. This means that market researchers must assess mental health challenges in a post-Covid world.

Many of these challenges are being met. Fewer market researchers are taking time off with mental health issues or find our jobs highly stressful. More of us feel comfortable talking about mental health with our managers and we continue to feel that our colleagues would be supportive of our mental health challenges. Altogether, this indicates that the companies we work for are continuing to take notice about mental health, building on the good work that we found they were doing last year.

However, there are areas that can be improved. A large portion still feel that their workplaces could be doing more to tackle mental health, and many have quite tangible ideas of what could help, like mental health days. Working from home is still a highly valuable way of working, but (compared to last year) more feel that it has worsened their wellbeing and fewer think it has helped. Working from home is incredibly useful but is not a panacea. With mental health there are few simple answers but listening to our colleagues can teach us what mental health approaches work best.

Overall, the market research sector is still at a fork in the road. We recommend that the industry continues to create an open environment when it comes to mental health and ensure workloads are manageable.

Author



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Isobel is passionate about mental health and has worked on Opinium's mental health audits for the last 3 years. She works within the PR team across a range of sectors and industries. Isobel is involved in Opinium's wellbeing team and is also a trained Mental Health First Aider as well as supporting new joiners to the company.

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