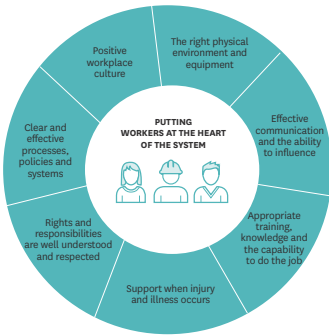


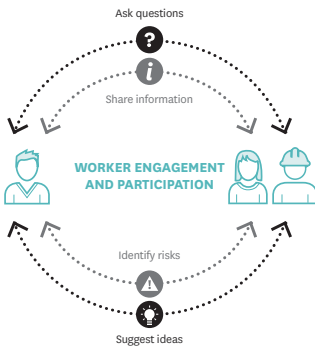
# WORKER ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION



## Why focus on worker engagement, participation and representation?

Putting workers at the heart of the work health and safety system makes for good health and safety. When workers are engaged in work health and safety, then everyone benefits. Your business is a healthier and safer place for everyone, and performance and productivity increase.

Work has a positive influence on a person’s health and wellbeing when it is stimulating and potential risks are managed well. When workers are healthy and well they more likely to be productive and engaged. The costs of poor health and safety are often not borne just by workers themselves but also their whānau and communities.



## What is worker engagement, participation and representation?

Businesses should engage with their workers and enable them to participate in improving health and safety. They must ensure that they ask for and take into account workers’ views on health and safety matters, and have clear, effective, and on-going ways for workers to suggest improvements or raise concerns on a day-to-day basis. Together with their workers, the business should determine the best way to do this for their particular situation.

Further work is needed to make sure this is being done well across the board, as perceptions of how well this is working vary.

**96% of employers** thought that employees were encouraged to speak up if they feel something is unsafe, while only **75% of employees** thought the same.

**81% of employers** thought employees were always told how their views have been considered in reaching health and safety decisions, while only **53% of employees** thought the same.

*2017 Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey*

## How can workers get involved?

Workers can actively get involved in and influence health and safety systems, processes, and practices at work, working with your teammates, worker representatives or union to get involved in making sure your work is healthy and safe.

## How can I use the strategy?

**CHECK OUT THE PRIORITY AREAS IN THE STRATEGY BELOW FOR ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO ENGAGE WELL WITH YOUR WORKERS.**



### Enable your workers to be represented, engaged and to participate

A genuine commitment to involving workers at all levels is critical to create healthier, safer and more engaged work and workplaces. It means:

- All workers are able to participate, be engaged and represented, including in small businesses, and if they are working remotely or from home.

- Leaders understand the value of involving their workers to create healthy and safe systems of work, and ensure this happens in a meaningful way.
- Workers and their representatives play a key role in the management of risk evaluation and control, and receive the training and support they need to do this.
- Workers are empowered to say ‘no’ where work is unsafe, have permission to make changes, and have no fear of speaking up about workplace risks.
- Workers are clear about how their feedback has been responded to or addressed.
- Businesses have specific resources dedicated to supporting and improving worker engagement, participation and representation to enable workers to have a voice in health and safety in their workplaces.



## Workers with greater need: Māori and other workers at greater risk

The system needs to work for everyone – we need to lift outcomes for groups such as Māori, Pasifika, migrants, younger and older workers. Migrant workers, especially if seasonal or temporary, can find it harder to speak up, as:

- they may not be familiar with their employment rights and may be fearful of complaining
- they may be prepared to put up with poor working conditions, because the situation is preferable to the employment conditions available to them in their home country.

Workers in temporary and precarious employment tend to carry out hazardous work, work in conditions with less control over their work, and are less likely to receive training. As they may be less inclined or able to take sick leave, minor injuries and illnesses can become aggravated.

Businesses will find the benefits of worker engagement are felt most strongly if they are engaging their workers in a way that meets their workers' needs – including developing appropriate models of engagement, participation and representation that make sense and resonate with workers from different cultural backgrounds.

Achieving and sustaining changes in work health and safety for Māori requires a holistic approach to both understanding and addressing health, safety and wellbeing, including working with whānau and not just with individuals. Businesses and sectors can engage with local iwi, with trust boards, Māori businesses and businesses with a high Maori workforce, to build tailored and collaborative approaches to improve outcomes for Māori workers and to build the capability of Māori workers. WorkSafe's Maruiti pilot shows successful results can be achieved by using a tikanga approach to improve health and safety for Māori workers involving whānau and community concepts.

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/the-toolshed/case-studies/wepr-case-studies/wellington-pipelines-tikanga/>

For more information on:

- **Maori Workers:** <https://worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/who-we-are/our-priorities/maruiti/>
- **Migrant workers:** [www.immigration.govt.nz/employment/migrants/settle-migrant-staff](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/employment/migrants/settle-migrant-staff)
- **Young workers:** <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/businesses/young-people-at-work/>



## Better management of work-related health, including physical and mental health

A genuine commitment to involve workers will be critical to creating healthier workplaces because it can be harder to spot the risks that may lead to long term health issues. Managing health at work is more effective if workers are involved with developing and carrying out the solutions. Workers and their reps need to be trained and supported to understand the health risks at their work and empowered to speak up e.g. worker reps ensuring that health is always on the agenda for discussion.



## Businesses with greater need: sectors with highest harm and small businesses

Sectors with highest harm should make sure they engage with their workers as they are at the centre of the work and are well placed to identify risks and provide good suggestions on how to address them effectively. Sector bodies have a key role in driving the behaviour of businesses at an industry level.

Small businesses don't need to have formal ways of engaging with workers, and they are likely to have a good understanding of their workforce and can be well placed to engage in a way that meets their workers' needs.



## Encouraging leaders at all levels to integrate health and safety

Getting better outcomes will require everyone, from workers and business through to sectors and unions, using their influence, expertise and insights. Business leaders should set the overall tone for engagement in their business by ensuring workers are involved. Questions as simple as 'what are our workers saying about this issue?' or 'how do our workers feel about it?' can bring a new dimension to the discussion.

For workers, leadership means contributing to processes which create healthy and safe systems of work. Unions have a key leadership role in supporting good worker engagement, representation and participation, and can contribute expertise on health and safety matters and support worker engagement, participation and representation.



## Lift capability of health and safety practitioners

Specialist advice and support is a key way of ensuring businesses and workers have the capability to know what good worker engagement and participation looks like. Specialists can bring their expert knowledge and skills to assist businesses in involving workers effectively.



## Develop and share data and insights to improve decision making

WorkSafe's Attitudes and Behaviours survey has a number of key insights that can help businesses understand what's working and what's not in worker engagement, representation and participation, particularly in sectors with highest injury rates:

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/data-and-research/research/attitudes-and-behaviours-survey-2017/>

## Where can I get further information or support?

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/workers/your-rights-and-obligations/>

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/health-and-safety-representatives/>

[www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/health-and-safety-at-work/](http://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/health-and-safety-at-work/)