



SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index 2024

What makes New Zealand workers happy — and how employers can build a happier, more productive workplace.



About SEEK

A leader in online employment marketplaces, SEEK has been helping people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and helping organisations succeed for more than 25 years.

Founded and headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, SEEK has grown into a multinational technology company with more than 3,300 employees and is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

SEEK's presence spans Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Additionally, SEEK has minority investments in employment marketplaces in China, South Korea and Bangladesh.

In 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, SEEK was recognised as one of Australia's Top Ten Places to Work in Technology in the AFR BOSS Best Places to Work awards.

About this report

The SEEK Workplace Happiness Index provides a comprehensive look at the happiness levels of Australian and New Zealand workers. It delves into key research findings, highlighting the factors that contribute to happiness in and out of the workplace and offering practical tips for improving happiness in employees.

This research was conducted by market research agency Nature on behalf of SEEK, between April and June 2024 via an online survey. Responses were gathered from more than 2,000 individuals currently in the workforce (either employed or looking for work), aged 18 to 64, and living in Australia or New Zealand. To ensure accuracy, the data are weighted to be nationally representative of the labour force for each country, based on age, gender, location, and income.

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Foreword

In today's busy, challenging world, it is increasingly important to reflect on our happiness in the workplace and the happiness of our workers. Research tells us that happy employees are not only more engaged and more productive, but also more loyal. But what makes for a happy employee in 2024?

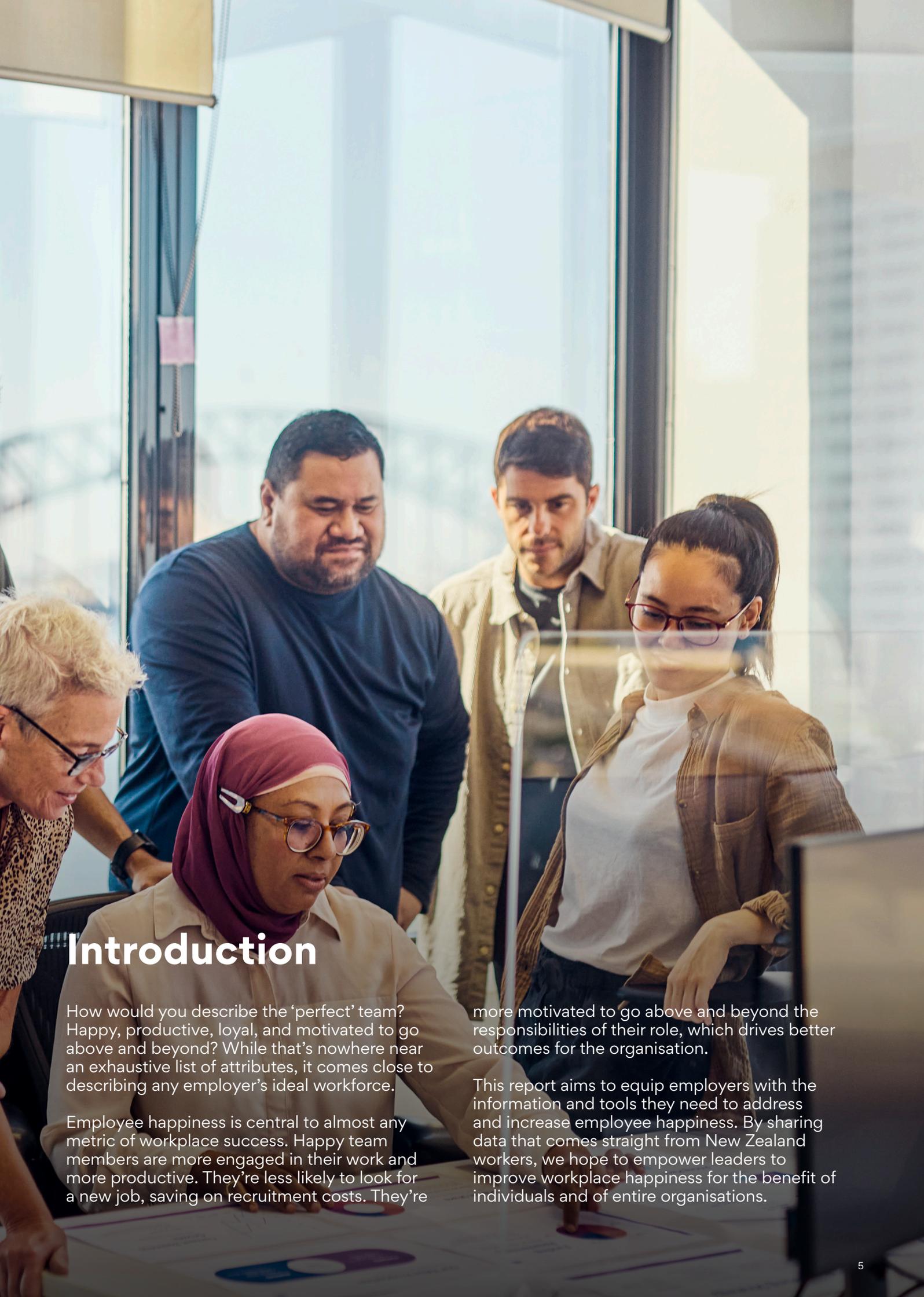
I'm excited to introduce SEEK's first Workplace Happiness Index. This report provides a 'pulse check' on the happiness levels of workers in Australia and New Zealand, uncovering the key elements that drive happiness at work. We think you will be surprised by the results!

At SEEK, our purpose is to help people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and to help organisations succeed. We know that workplace happiness has a positive impact on your business outcomes, and through our research, we want to foster thriving environments for all by sharing ways to enhance happiness at work.

I hope this report inspires you to reflect on what brings you and your team happiness at work and how we can all contribute to creating a happier, healthier work environment.

Best regards,
Rob Clark, Country Manager,
New Zealand





Introduction

How would you describe the ‘perfect’ team? Happy, productive, loyal, and motivated to go above and beyond? While that’s nowhere near an exhaustive list of attributes, it comes close to describing any employer’s ideal workforce.

Employee happiness is central to almost any metric of workplace success. Happy team members are more engaged in their work and more productive. They’re less likely to look for a new job, saving on recruitment costs. They’re

more motivated to go above and beyond the responsibilities of their role, which drives better outcomes for the organisation.

This report aims to equip employers with the information and tools they need to address and increase employee happiness. By sharing data that comes straight from New Zealand workers, we hope to empower leaders to improve workplace happiness for the benefit of individuals and of entire organisations.

The state of workplace happiness in 2024

To gauge the levels of happiness in New Zealand workplaces, our survey asked respondents how happy they are in their jobs and how happy they are with different elements of their work life. The results provide a broad view of workplace happiness and its key drivers overall, across different industries, income levels, locations and age groups.



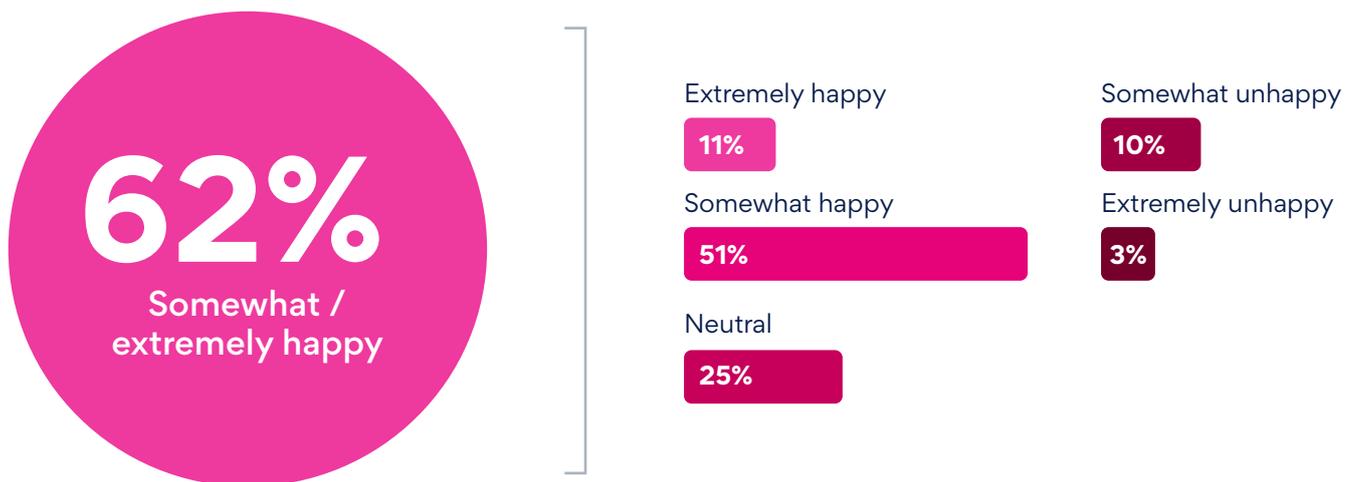
KEY FINDING 1:

Nearly two-thirds of Kiwi workers are currently happy in their jobs

We asked respondents “How happy are you at work, generally?” to which 62% responded they are somewhat or extremely happy. While the majority of people are happy, there’s still room for improvement, with 38% saying they feel neutral, somewhat unhappy or extremely unhappy at work.

What this means for employers is that there is plenty of opportunity to increase their employees’ feelings of happiness – and increase all the positive outcomes, such as productivity, loyalty and motivation, associated with happier teams.

Overall workplace happiness



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Thinking back over your working life so far, what advice would you give your younger self to be happier at work?

KEY FINDING 2:

Workers are most happy with the location of their work, their colleagues and their day-to-day responsibilities

Following the first question, the survey delved into more detail, asking: “Specifically, how happy are you with the following elements of your working life?”

Most Kiwis are happy with the location of their workplace, their team members, and their day-to-day responsibilities. At the bottom of the list are salary, career progression opportunities and their organisation’s commitment to ESG (environmental, social and governance initiatives).

Two of the elements of work Kiwis are happiest with are things they have control over. Location

of work and daily responsibilities are factors they would have considered during the interview stage and decided on when first accepting the job. Many respondents were also happy with their workplace relationships, another aspect they have some control over.

In contrast, employees have little to no control over organisational aspects like career progression, ESG and salary – things that employers do have control over and can potentially leverage to improve workplace happiness.

What Kiwi workers are currently happiest to least happy with at work:



KEY FINDING 3:

The main drivers of happiness at work are purpose at work, day-to-day responsibilities and company culture

While you might expect salary to be the top driver of workplace happiness, our research shows that while it is important, it isn't the most impactful. Instead, the most impactful aspects on workplace happiness are purpose at work, daily duties and company culture.

The top three drivers all speak to individual needs. Purpose is derived from work that has personal meaning. Daily responsibilities relate to the individual's contributions to that work. Company culture is about working with people who support and value the individual and their contributions.

Having purpose is the #1 driver of happiness at work

Drivers of happiness



The Why, Who and What

We can distill the top three drivers of employee happiness into the Why, Who and What of work.



TAKEAWAYS

- Nearly two-thirds of Kiwi workers are happy in their jobs (62%).
- Workers are generally most happy about location of work (71%), team/colleagues (65%), and their day-to-day responsibilities (64%)
- The top three drivers of happiness in the workplace equate to the why, what and who of work.



“

Find something you enjoy doing, the money isn't as important.

The happiest workers

Happiness is not equal across the spectrum of New Zealand workers. Our report shows variances in levels of happiness between income brackets and industries, while there was no significant variance between regions. To break down the specific drivers of happiness and how they shift across these demographics, the following findings group the data by salary, sector and region.



KEY FINDING 4:

Happiness with key elements of work life tends to trend upwards as income grows

Responses show that higher-income workers are happier with many elements of their work. For example, 71% of those earning more than \$100,000 report being happy with flexibility

of their work conditions – understandably, this group were happiest with their salary out of all brackets.

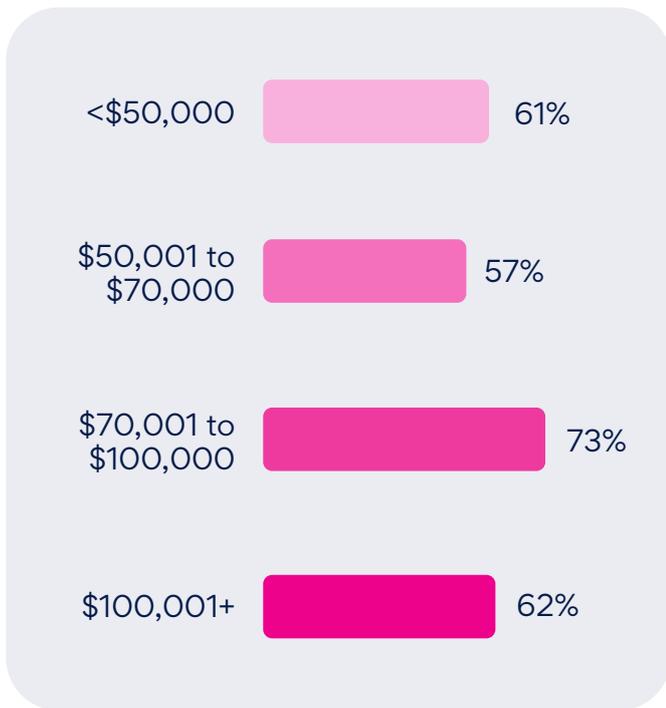
Happiness with elements of work by income bracket



However, when grouped by income, there is only marginal difference in overall workplace happiness between the brackets, with the highest and lowest brackets reporting similar happiness levels.

This tells us there may be a 'sweet spot' where jobs with certain incomes bring unique stressors that may not affect the other brackets as significantly. The data doesn't indicate why, but it does suggest that higher income earners worry about job security more than those in the bracket below.

Overall workplace happiness by income bracket



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Chase job satisfaction and not just a larger salary.



KEY FINDING 5:

Financial services workers are the happiest in their jobs, while healthcare workers are the least happy

Certain sectors are generally happier than others. When sorted by industry, banking and finance workers reported overall happiness at work at a rate of 78%. People working in accounting were the next happiest group at a rate of 71%, followed by workers in education and training at 70%.

Employers in healthcare, hospitality/tourism and construction may find opportunities to increase worker happiness by addressing the top happiness drivers for their employees, based on demographic. (See page 20.)

Overall workplace happiness by industry

*Note: Several industries hidden due to small sample size (n<30)



KEY FINDING 6:

Workplace happiness is equal across the North Island and the South Island

Our report also shows little variance between the North and South Islands of New Zealand, with the latter showing only slightly less workplace happiness. Employers in either location can assume there is plenty of opportunity for improvement when it comes to increasing their employees' happiness.

SEEK data shows that of all the jobs advertised in New Zealand currently, 77% of those vacancies are in the North Island compared to 23% based in the South. This may indicate a greater sense of security for workers in the North as there is a higher volume of job opportunities.

Overall workplace happiness by region



TAKEAWAYS

- Income is not a strong indicator of workplace happiness.
- The happiest employees work in banking and finance, with 78% of respondents from that sector reporting happiness.
- The North Island and South Island report equal levels of workplace happiness, at around 60%.

The happiness effect

SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index reveals a strong correlation between workplace happiness and happiness in everyday life.

Three out of four New Zealanders report being happy outside of work – but there's more to the story. The research shows that the happier they are at work, the happier they are at home too. This relationship underscores the importance of workplace happiness to overall happiness.

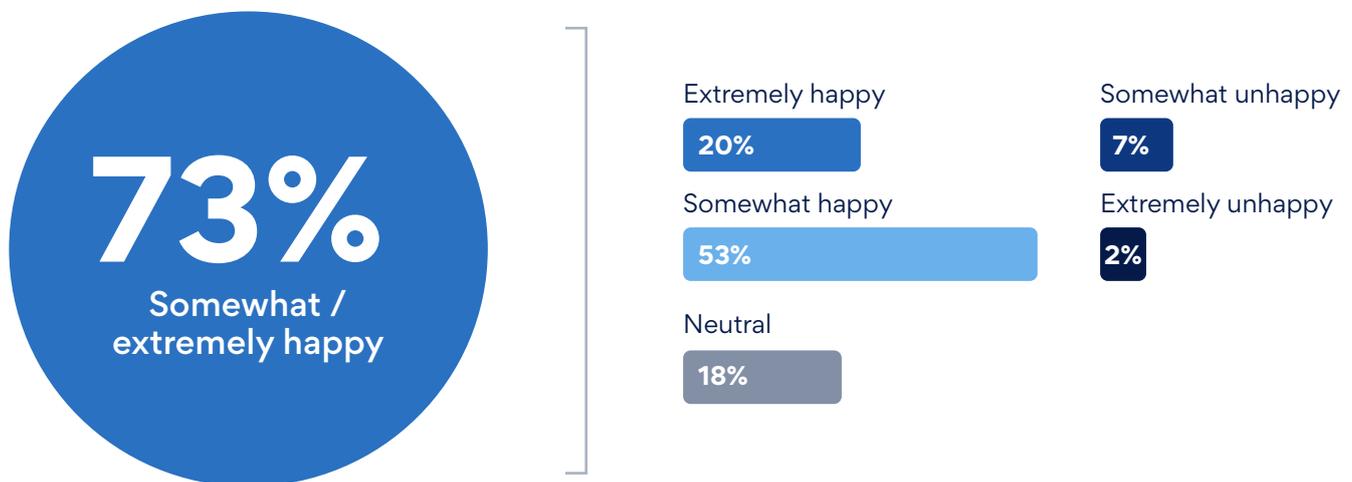


The happier people are at work the happier they are outside of work, too.

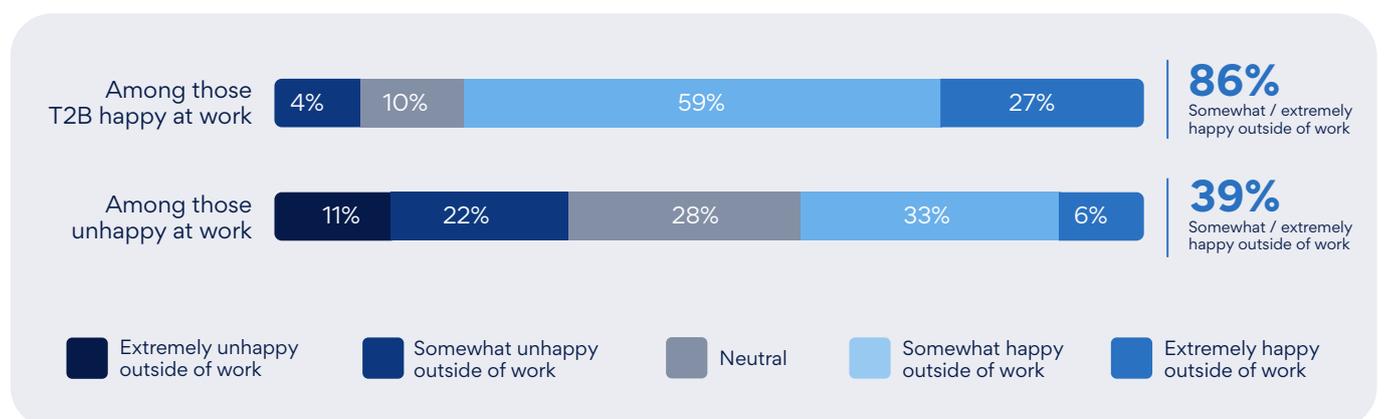
The research shows that from the group of people who reported feeling happy at work, 86% were also happy outside of work. When we look at the group of people who said they were unhappy at work, only 39% said they were happy outside of work.

Our research doesn't show if there is any causation, but it is safe to assume that for most people, happiness at work plays a role in general happiness.

Overall out-of-work happiness



Overall out-of-work happiness by level of happiness at work



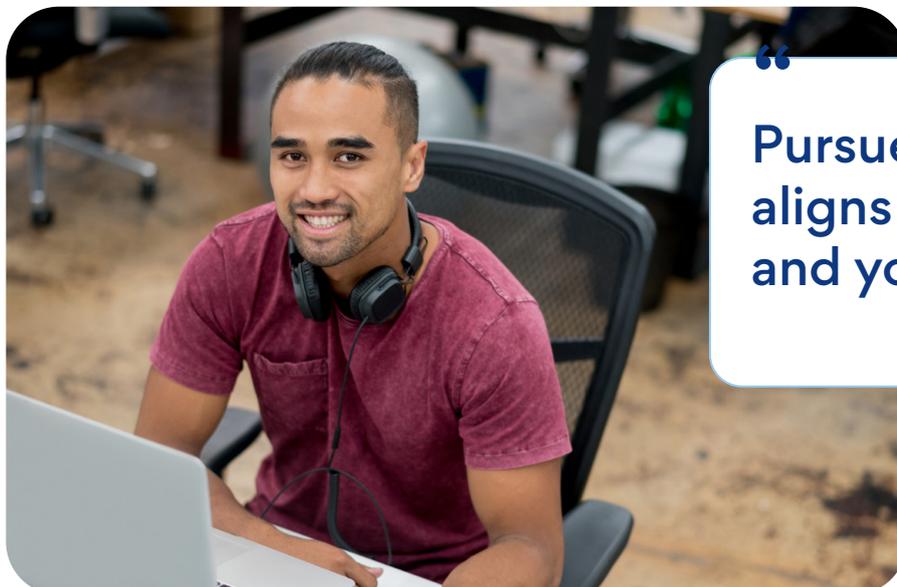
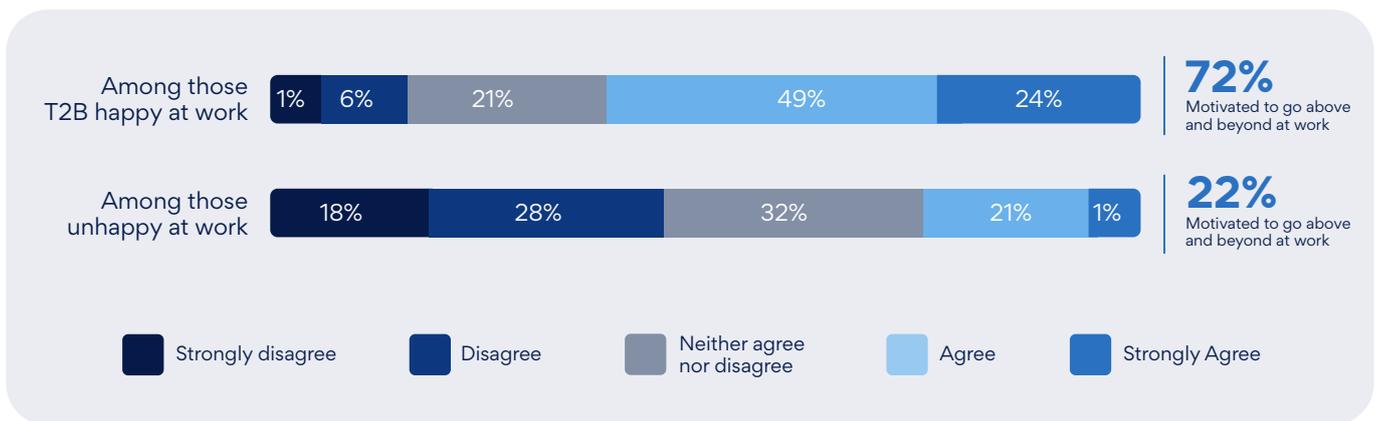
KEY FINDING 7:

Happy employees are motivated to go above and beyond at work

It makes sense that people who are happier at work are more likely to exceed the expectations of their roles. Our survey confirms that among the people who are happy in their jobs, more than two-thirds are motivated to go above and beyond at work.

This finding is consistent with the theory that engaged employees are more productive. But going 'above and beyond' is not just about productivity, it can also mean mentoring and supporting teammates, filling in for absentees, training new joiners and taking initiative.

Motivated to go above and beyond at work by level of happiness at work



“Pursue a career that aligns with your values and you enjoy the most.”

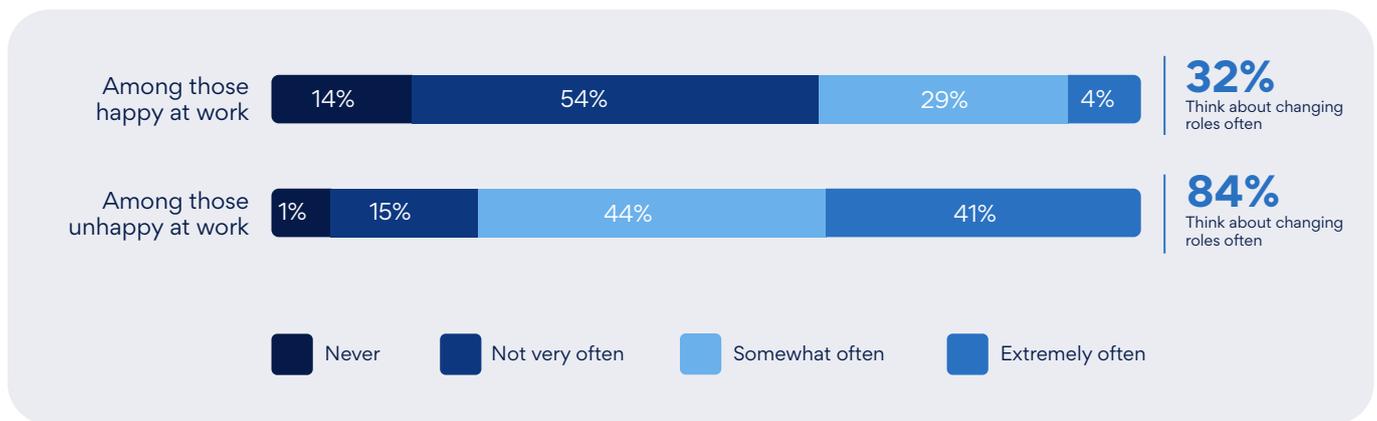
KEY FINDING 8:

Happy employees are less likely to search for a new job

Within the group of employees who are happy at work, less than a third said they often think about changing roles, while the vast majority (84%) of those who aren't happy at work often think about looking for a new job.

It can cost up to 200% of an employee's wage to replace them*, so it's worthwhile for employers to reduce staff turnover by increasing workplace happiness. Then there are the effects of staff turnover unrelated to recruitment costs, like low team morale, reduced quality of output, and higher stress due to increased workloads.

Likelihood of searching for a new job by level of happiness at work



TAKEAWAYS

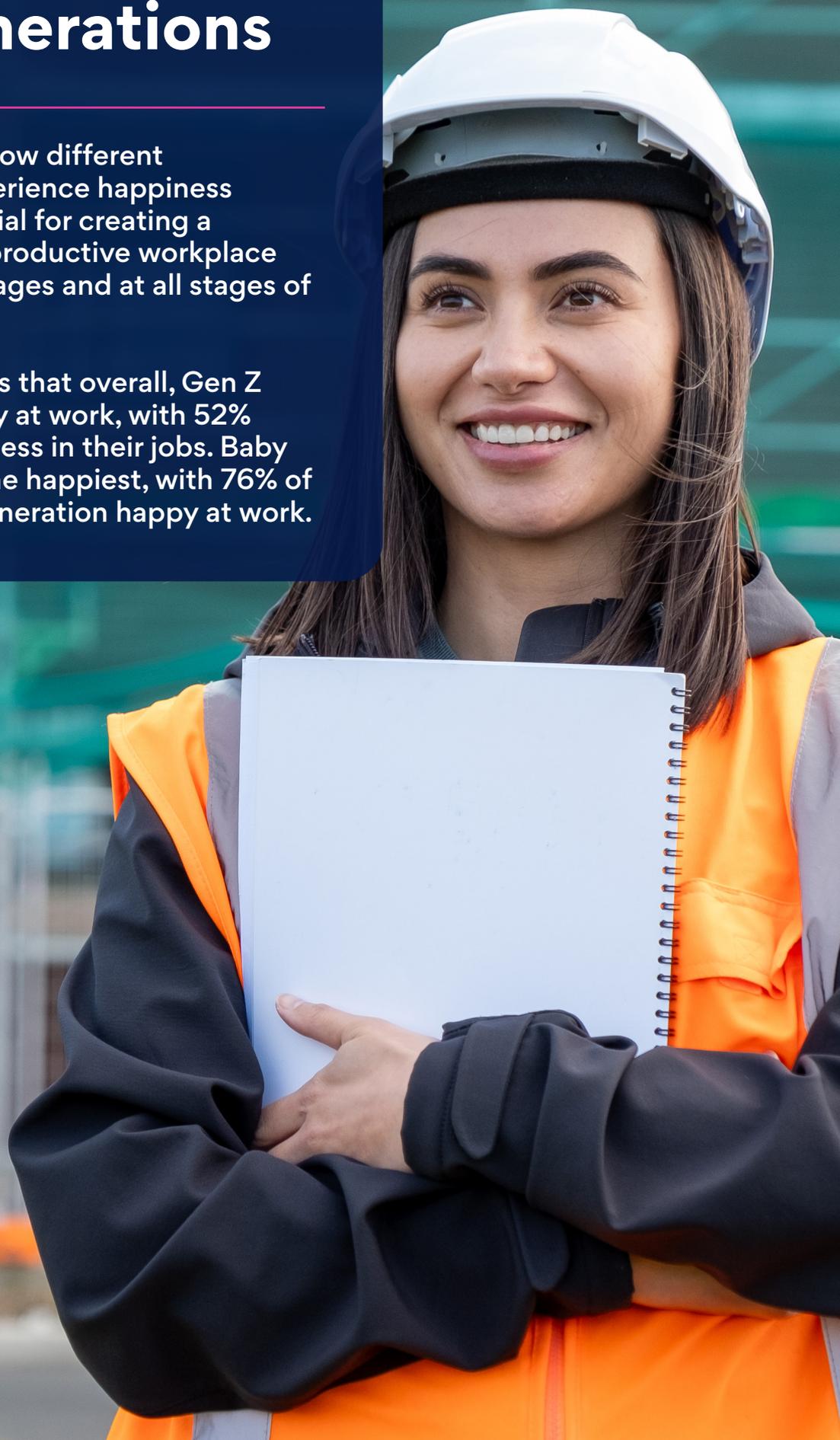
- Happiness at work correlates to happiness outside of work.
- Happy employees are more likely to go above and beyond.
- Happy employees are less likely to look for a new job.

*Source: Gallup Employee retention and attraction study, May 2024

Happiness across the generations

Understanding how different generations experience happiness at work is essential for creating a supportive and productive workplace for people of all ages and at all stages of their careers.

Our survey shows that overall, Gen Z is the least happy at work, with 52% reporting happiness in their jobs. Baby boomers were the happiest, with 76% of people in this generation happy at work.



Live well to work well

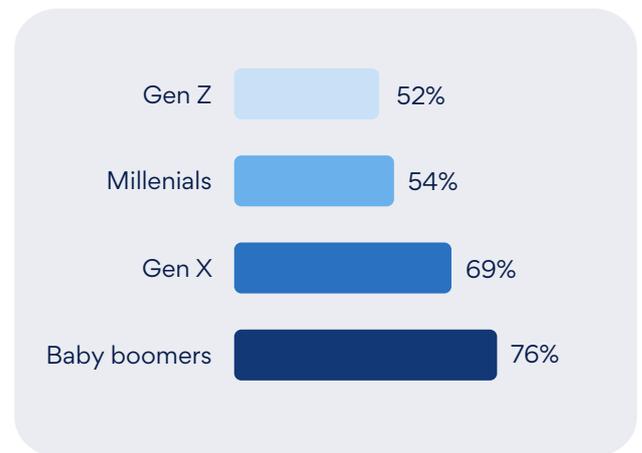
Justine Alter, registered organisational psychologist and co-founder and managing director of Transitioning Well, believes there's a strong connection between living well and working well.

“Many Australian and New Zealand workers are struggling with financial uncertainty, and many of us are still grappling with the constantly changing way we work, so it's unsurprising to see only two-thirds of people are happy at work,” she says.

“We need to acknowledge this intersection, as it's just as important to support workers to live well, as much as it is to support them to work well. From an individual point of view, we know that happiness can be a protective mental health factor, and can lead to a longer, healthier life. At an organisational level, there are numerous studies to suggest that happier workers are more productive, highlighting its importance.”



Overall happiness at work by generation



How drivers of happiness change across ages and career stages

Each age and life stage brings unique priorities and challenges that shape overall workplace and out-of-work happiness. This section delves into the drivers of happiness for each generational group, examining how factors such as stress, work-life balance, managerial relationships and career progression opportunities impact employee happiness.

*Baby boomers were not able to be included in the happiness drivers' analysis due to sample size restraints.

“

Don't stress over what you can't control.

Happiness drivers for Gen Z (1997–2012)

Compared to older generations, Gen Z workers are less happy overall, though they do feel happy with the location of their work, their responsibilities and their job security. They are the only generation to have ESG appear as a main driver of workplace happiness, second only to salary.



Most important drivers of happiness for Gen Z:

- Salary
- Company commitment to ESG
- Purpose at work
- Workload demands
- Work-life balance

Gen Z are still early in their careers, so their general dissatisfaction with salary is likely a result of earning an entry-level wage. They may feel stressed due to the lack of confidence that comes with being relatively new to the workforce and the demands of their roles. They feel unhappy with their company’s commitment to ESG, which is common across the generations.

“

Take it easy on yourself – it takes time to learn.

What Gen Z are currently happiest to least happy with:



Happiness drivers for millennials (1981–1996)

Millennials are marginally happier than their Gen Z colleagues, with 54% reporting overall happiness at work. They're happiest with the location of their work, their teammates and the flexibility of their working conditions, but generally unhappy with their salary.



Most important drivers of happiness for millennials:

- Company culture
- Their manager
- Stress levels
- Senior leadership
- Work-life balance

Overall happiness for millennials is linked to their work environment: the company culture, their managers and their stress levels. At this life stage, it is common for millennials to have young families to care for, so it makes sense that they value a supportive work setting where their desire for work-life balance and flexibility is accommodated.

“

Have a strong work-life balance. Work for a company who values you and your work-life balance.

What millennials are currently happiest to least happy with at work:



Happiness drivers for Gen X (1965–1980)

Typically at a more senior stage in their careers, just over half (52%) of Gen X workers report that they are happy in their jobs. Purpose at work, their responsibilities and job security are the top three things that strongly impact their happiness. They're most unhappy about career progression.



Most important drivers of happiness for Gen X:

- Purpose at work
- Day-to-day responsibilities
- Job security
- Company values
- Workload demands

With higher levels of seniority and experience, more Gen X respondents feel happy with their purpose and day-to-day responsibilities. However, fewer report happiness with their salary and career progression opportunities, which may be related to reaching a career plateau. They're also less happy with the success of their company, which they may feel affects their salary and internal career prospects.

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Believe in yourself and your abilities more.

What Gen X are currently happiest to least happy with at work:



Summary of top happiness drivers by generation

The **#1 driver** of happiness at work differs between the generations



Gen Z
Salary



Millennials
Company culture



Gen X
Purpose at work

Baby boomers were not able to be included in the happiness drivers' analysis due to sample size restraints



What this means for leaders

Happiness at work benefits everyone. It translates to a productive and loyal workforce, reduced staff turnover and employees who feel motivated to go above and beyond. Happy employees foster positivity in the workplace and help create a supportive culture, creating a positive feedback loop.

Based on the findings of SEEK's Workplace Happiness Index, here is a summary of practical actions leaders can take to help improve employee happiness.

Actions for creating a happier workplace

1. Create a sense of purpose

Leaders can lean into one of the most important drivers of happiness: a sense of purpose. Justine Alter suggests communicating to employees how their day-to-day responsibilities align with the broader mission and values of the organisation, and helping employees understand how their work contributes to the business.

ACTION POINTS

- **Reflect on and define your organisation's mission and values.** To give employees a purpose, you first need to define your organisational purpose.

- **Align employees with your mission and vision.** Draw a clear connection between employees' roles and the organisation's objectives.
- **Connect employees to their own vision and values.** Consider offering opportunities for people to engage in projects that resonate with their personal values and foster professional growth.
- **Make sure employees see how their contributions help the business.** Draw a clear connection between an employee's role and the company's success.
- **Match roles with individuals' skill sets and passions.** Roles and responsibilities that play to people's strengths are often more engaging.
- **Re-evaluate your ESG initiatives.** McKinsey reports that strong ESG propositions can create value for organisations, and ESG commitments are often a reflection of an organisation's values and purpose. Stronger ESG initiatives may positively affect employees' happiness at work.



2. Foster a supportive company culture

One of the most important drivers of workplace happiness for New Zealanders is company culture. People want to work in an environment that is supportive, in an organisation that is invested in their individual growth. They want to feel valued and empowered to excel.

As Justine explains, “Culture is more than a list of values posted in the break room.” She urges leaders to prioritise modelling the organisation’s values and behaviours, promoting diversity and inclusivity, encouraging work-life balance, recognising contributions, and fostering collaboration and teamwork.

ACTION POINTS

- **Hold regular meetings and 1:1 sessions.** Provide a safe space where employees can openly discuss concerns and share feedback.
- **Understand your own management style and what your team responds best to.** Justine recommends having transparent conversations about workers’ individual management preferences and expectations, ensuring a clear understanding of working styles. “When we understand each other’s working styles, we build stronger teams,” says Justine.
- **Develop a supportive team culture.** If you want to create a happy workplace, culture needs to be on your radar.
- **Model your organisation’s values and behaviours.** Culture comes from the top, so it’s essential that managers model the type of behaviours they wish to see in their people.

“

**Manage stress effectively.
Find meaning in your work.
Embrace positivity. Celebrate successes. Take ownership of your happiness.**

3. Listen to generational needs

Different generations need different things to be happy; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Aimee Hutton, Head of Customer Insights and Strategy at SEEK, suggests paying attention to what’s important to workers of different age groups. “For Gen Z, salary is the top priority, while millennial workers place company culture at the forefront, and Gen X views a sense of purpose as the key driver of workplace happiness. As a leader, it’s important that you tailor your approach to each generation’s needs” says Aimee.

ACTION POINTS

- **Understand potential generational differences.** The first step is looking at the different priorities, motivations and stressors of your workers. By understanding these generational differences, you can address their varied needs
- **Tailor workplace practices to your employees.** Are your team members mostly junior workers or do you manage a mix of seniors and entry-level staff? Consider your employees’ career stages to create a more supportive and engaging environment for employees across the spectrum.
- **Pair more experienced employees with juniors.** Leaders can consider capitalising on the high satisfaction levels of mid-level employees by pairing them with juniors to provide training or mentorship programs, as well as day-to-day support.

Evergreen happiness maintenance

Creating a happy and engaged workforce takes ongoing effort. To help maintain workplace happiness, leaders should schedule regular audits at their organisations. These can be done through:

- Anonymous ‘pulse’ surveys
- Yearly 360-degree reviews
- Regular 1:1 check-ins
- Looking at absentee rates
- Calculate your Employee Net Promoter Score

This study was led by SEEK's Customer Insights team.

We are the voice of our customers.

We diligently listen to their experiences and expectations, delving deep into the underlying reasons behind their feedback.

By understanding what our customers truly need and want, as well as pinpointing their pain points, we actively influence business decisions and drive change.

Our unwavering dedication to understanding and advocating for our customers empowers us to make a meaningful impact.

LEARN MORE

Reach out to Nicola Laver, SEEK Workplace Success Manager for more information, if you're interested in a Workplace Happiness Index industry deep dive or training for people leaders.

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