

Stats NZ

Work Life Balance

New Zealand's official data agency is creating an inclusive environment through a focus on flexible, activity-based working that embraces different personal working styles.

Stats NZ employs more than 1,000 staff, made up of a mix of technical and corporate employees. It is responsible for collecting information from a range of people and organisations through censuses and surveys, and then uses that information to publish insights and data about New Zealand.

Stats NZ's staff work across the country; some work in the field, and all have specific needs in terms of how they work best. Acknowledging this, Stats NZ put in place a number of policies that empower staff to work on their own terms through flexible working. The aim of these policies is to make flexibility the norm in the organisation, and to further encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work.



One of the core policies in flexible working is Stats NZ's flexi-time policy, which encourages employees to create their own work hours in consultation with their manager. Employees are also enabled to work from home when needed, and new parents are provided the option to temporarily decrease their hours as they readjust to work after parental leave.

Stats NZ also provides flexibility within the physical workspace. The organisation is constantly looking at ways to make spaces work better for the individuals that are using them, instead of being prescriptive with its workspaces.

These policies are visible at all levels of the organisation, and senior leadership and managers make use of the policies. Staff are consulted regularly about what they want from flexible working, to ensure that everyone is happy and has the tools they need.

When the Wellington office of Stats NZ was damaged in the Kaikōura earthquake in November 2016, these policies allowed employees greater ownership of how they structured their work in the new temporary accommodation, and managed working from home. Teams organised meetings in their homes and cafes to share information, and this was driven by staff rather than management, which shows how the flexible working culture has been embedded in the organisation.

The Leesman Index examines the difference between the importance employees place on workplace activities and their satisfaction with how well those activities are supported. In an examination using this Index, Stats NZ employees rated 15 out of 21 activities as either the same or higher percentage of satisfaction as the importance placed on them.

Stats NZ was recently named as a top 10 mum-friendly workplace based on nominations from mothers who work there. One employee says, "At Stats NZ we've got flexi-time so can work from home if required and get extra leave to care for children, which is useful for appointments or unexpected school closures."

It's not just parents who appreciate the flexible environment, though. An employee survey in 2017 found that flexibility and work-life balance are what employees like most about working at Stats NZ.

One comment says, "I like that Stats is a people-focused organisation and that it actively promotes having a good work-life balance. There is no expectation or brownie points awarded for working early or late, however if the need arises, there is flexibility to balance this out somewhere along the line.

"It's a give and take relationship which I really appreciate."



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