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People & Places

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Tourism and hospitality employment conditions in Queenstown-Lakes compared to New Zealand



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A research report based on analysis of survey data provided by Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

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2. Report overview and findings

This report puts the spotlight on worker sentiment and employment conditions in Queenstown-Lakes compared to New Zealand. The report has been prepared by Benje Patterson based on analysis of a nationwide survey of workers run by AUT in mid-2022 on behalf of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)¹. The nationwide survey resulted in 902 valid responses from tourism and hospitality employees, of which 35 have been identified as being employees in Queenstown-Lakes.

The original AUT summary report on tourism and hospitality employment conditions was widely circulated, particularly following the launch of the Tourism Industry Transformation Plan (ITP) in March 2023. At a national level, the AUT report raised significant red flags about tourism and hospitality employment conditions, particularly a concerning lack of compliance with basic legislative employment requirements and generally low levels of worker sentiment. In a Queenstown-Lakes context, there was concern that the national level results did not completely translate into the local context where many employers have been focussing on improving employment conditions to attract and retain workers amid acute labour shortages.

2.1. Key findings

- Analysis of the AUT survey data shows that tourism and hospitality workers in Queenstown-Lakes consistently reported higher levels of workplace satisfaction and better employment conditions than the New Zealand average across a range of indicators².
- Queenstown-Lakes' better performance is particularly apparent regarding employers' adherence to statutory obligations surrounding pay and employment agreements, as well as practices surrounding rostering and treating their employees with dignity and respect.
- Despite the finding that Queenstown-Lakes' employees report better workplace conditions than elsewhere in New Zealand, there are still some areas of concern highlighted in the survey where there is room for improvement. These areas of concern are echoed nationally and are particularly concentrated on things such as rest breaks, but more worryingly, there is also evidence of some employees reporting having experienced harassment while at work.

2.2. Compliance with basic employment obligations

- This section contains a summary of responses relating to employers' adherence to their statutory employment obligations.
- Responses to questions regarding compliance with basic legislative and statutory minima show higher levels of compliance across the board in Queenstown-Lakes than elsewhere in New Zealand. Nevertheless, despite these higher levels of compliance, there is still some way to go, especially surrounding rest breaks and statutory holidays, which are also reported nationwide by workers as being problematic.

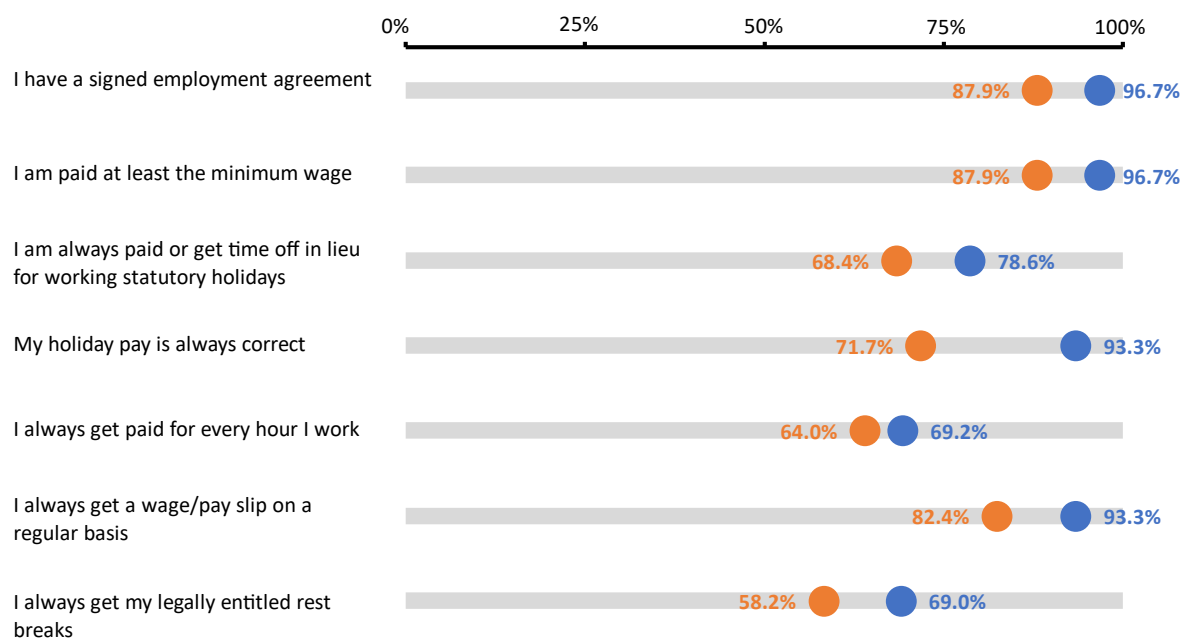
¹ AUT published the results of the survey in a research report by Dr David Williamson and Professor Erling Rasmussen entitled "A research report on tourism and hospitality employment conditions in New Zealand" ([available here](#)). Benje Patterson would like to thank Dr David Williamson for kindly making available the raw survey data for the purposes of identifying worker sentiment and employment conditions among a Queenstown-Lakes' cohort of survey respondents.

² Although the sample size for Queenstown-Lakes (35 respondees) is relatively small, the consistency of results across a range of indicators increases their credibility.

Graph 1 – Employers’ adherence to employment obligations, Benje Patterson analysis of AUT survey data

Employers' adherence to employment obligations (% of employees agreeing):

New Zealand vs Queenstown-Lakes

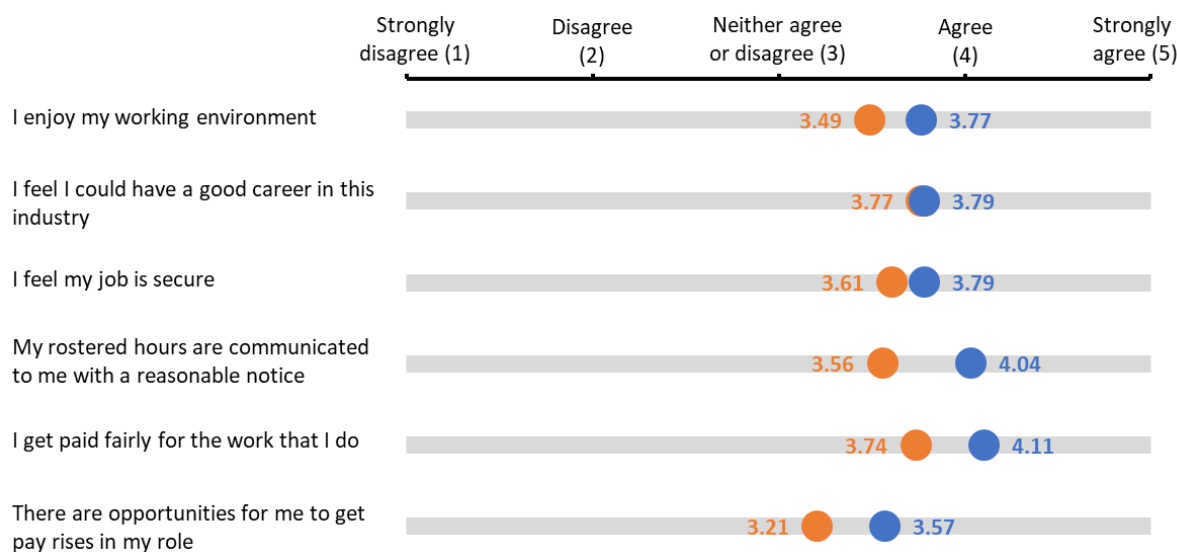


2.3. Worker sentiment and treatment in the workplace

- This section contains a summary of responses relating to employees’ treatment in the workplace and their general sentiment regarding their employment.
- Queenstown-Lakes tourism and hospitality employees reported higher levels of job satisfaction and better treatment in the workplace than nationwide across all indicators.
- The most positive responses surrounded being paid fairly, having rosters communicated well, and being treated with dignity. Nevertheless, there were concerns expressed surrounding opportunities for progression, which were also echoed in responses nationally.

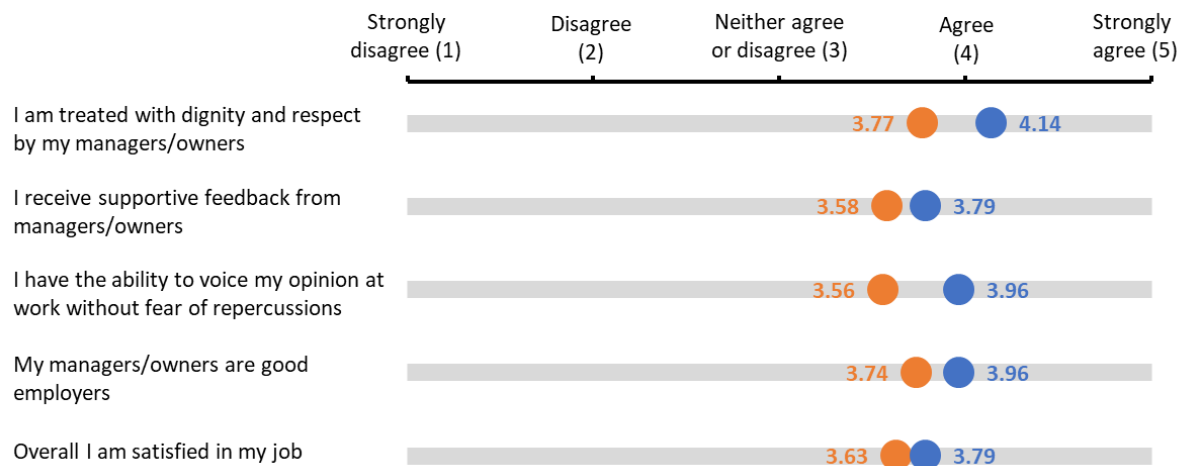
Graph 2 – Employees’ sentiment regarding job satisfaction, Benje Patterson analysis of AUT survey data

Job satisfaction (scale of 1-5): New Zealand vs Queenstown-Lakes



Graph 3 – Employees’ sentiment regarding their workplace treatment, Benje Patterson analysis of AUT survey data

Workplace treatment (1-5 scale): New Zealand vs Queenstown-Lakes

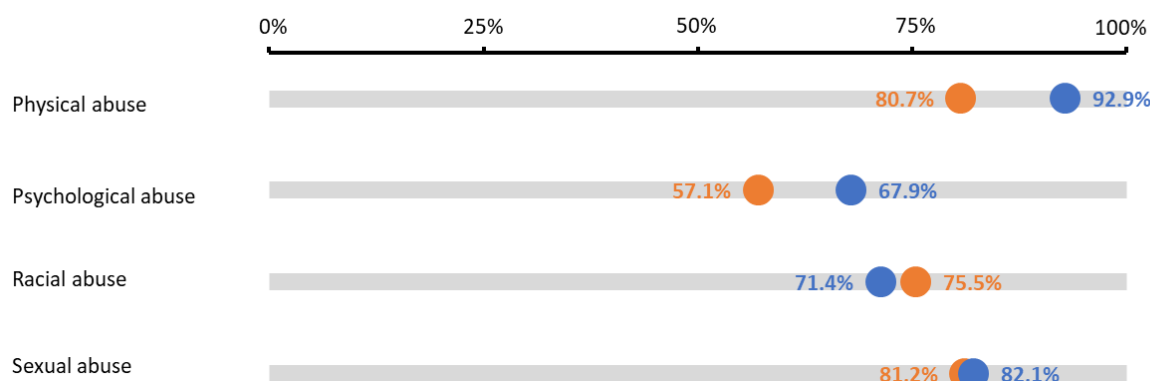


2.4. Bullying and harassment

- This section contains a summary of responses relating to whether tourism and hospitality employees have experienced any form of harassment while at work over the past 24 months.
- Although Queenstown-Lakes tourism and hospitality employees generally report being less likely to experience abuse than the nationwide average, it is still clear that many staff are faced with bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- Psychological abuse is the predominant form of workplace abuse, while racial abuse was more commonly reported among Queenstown-Lakes tourism and hospitality workers than nationwide.

Graph 4 – Employees’ experience of harassment while at work, Benje Patterson analysis of AUT survey data

Percentage of employees who have not experienced any form of abuse in the past 24 months: New Zealand vs Queenstown-Lakes





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