



# Working in construction in New Zealand





**Tip** Helpful hints.



**Advice** Things you need to know.

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# How can this guide help me?

**This guide has information to prepare you for working in construction in New Zealand.**

This guide is for people who work or want to work in construction in New Zealand, for example:

- construction workers, tilers, painters, concrete placers, plumbers
- construction project managers, site foremen
- building inspectors, building surveyors
- civil, structural, electrical or telecommunications engineers
- surveyors, surveying technicians.

New Zealand values migrant construction workers. No matter how long you stay in New Zealand, we want you to enjoy your time working here.

Because it can take time to get used to living and working in a new country, it is important that you and your family have the information and support you need, even if you are here on a temporary visa.

Working in construction in New Zealand may be different from what you are used to. For example, New Zealand's building regulations and some workplace equipment may be different from your home country. How people communicate at work will be different too.

This guide will help you understand what it is like to work in construction in New Zealand and where to get advice and support if you need it. It also explains some of the differences you may experience living in New Zealand.



# 1. Introduction

Working in construction in New Zealand may be different from what you are used to. Learn about the differences.

## About construction in New Zealand

Construction work in New Zealand includes:

- commercial building (vertical infrastructure)
- roads, network services etc (horizontal infrastructure)
- residential building (house repairs and new builds).

Construction is an important part of New Zealand's economy and so receives strong support from the New Zealand Government. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is responsible for:

- regulating employment relations and standards
- regulating building and construction.

**Visit Regulating building professional and practitioners at:**  
[bit.ly/mbie2](https://bit.ly/mbie2)

### *Growth in construction employment*

New Zealand's construction industry is growing rapidly due to increased spending on housing, offices and factories, road and rail links, sewer, power and fibre installation and water supply. This spending growth is leading to increasing demands on construction and related industries, and rising employment in construction.

Some of the projects requiring construction skills include:

- Auckland housing and infrastructure
- Canterbury and Kaikoura earthquake rebuilds
- Wellington earthquake building strengthening
- major rail and roading projects
- the government's KiwiBuild programme.

**Visit:** [mbie.govt.nz/info-services/kiwibuild](https://mbie.govt.nz/info-services/kiwibuild)

In 2017, MBIE reported that across New Zealand, the demand for construction-related occupations is projected to increase by an overall 11% between 2016 and 2022. This represents an increase of about 56,000 employees to a total of over 571,000. Occupations expected to have the largest growth to 2022 include plumbers (15%), electricians (14%), and civil engineering professionals (12%).

**View the National construction pipeline report at:** [bit.ly/mbie3](https://bit.ly/mbie3)

## About working in construction in New Zealand



The New Zealand construction workplace will be different from what you are used to. Because of this, you may need to complete extra training, learn new ways of working or gain further qualifications. Many roles will require you to have a driver licence.

Here are some things migrant workers say are different about working in construction in New Zealand:

- Materials, building methods and standards are different.
- Workers are expected to follow health and safety laws on the worksite.
- Workplace communication is less formal.
- The weather can change quickly.

### *Working with people from different backgrounds*

New Zealand's population is becoming more diverse. You may be working with people from different cultures and/or countries.

Learning and understanding how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds, including New Zealand Māori, will be an important part of your job.

## **Qualifications and registration**

### *Using overseas qualifications in New Zealand*

If you intend to use your overseas qualification to support you to get a job in construction in New Zealand, check that your qualification is recognised by the sector. If your occupation is listed on the Construction & Infrastructure Skill Shortage List (CISSL), your qualification must be comparable to the standard of the New Zealand qualification listed on the Construction & infrastructure skill shortage list.

You may need to have your overseas qualification assessed by Qualifications Recognition Services (QRS) at the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to see if it aligns with the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).

All overseas qualifications need to meet the definition of a qualification on the NZQF to be assessed and recognised by the NZQA. This requires an International Qualifications Assessment (IQA) from NZQA.

**For more information about recognition of overseas qualifications visit: [bit.ly/nzqa\\_2](https://bit.ly/nzqa_2)**

**For more information about the International Qualifications Assessment visit: [nzqa.govt.nz/iqa](https://nzqa.govt.nz/iqa)**



### **New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) assessment is different from Immigration New Zealand recognition for residence visa applications**

Recognition of a qualification by Immigration New Zealand as part of applying for a residence visa is not the same as NZQA assessing whether your overseas qualification aligns with the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Both may be required.

#### *Restricted building work and Licensed Building Practitioners*

In New Zealand, some building or design work relating to residential buildings is classified as 'restricted building work' (RBW). You must be a Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP) in the appropriate class to do or supervise this type of work.

You may need to gain experience working in New Zealand before you can apply to become an LBP. If you have an Australian licence you may be able to obtain the equivalent New Zealand Licence through a Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Application (TTMRA).

#### **Visit:**

[lbp.govt.nz/for-lbps/restricted-building-work](http://lbp.govt.nz/for-lbps/restricted-building-work)

[lbp.govt.nz/for-lbps/your-licence](http://lbp.govt.nz/for-lbps/your-licence)

[lbp.govt.nz/become-an-lbp/licensing-classes](http://lbp.govt.nz/become-an-lbp/licensing-classes)

#### *Internationally registered professionals*

New Zealand law requires migrant construction workers to register with a professional body if they are coming to New Zealand to work as:

- an architect
- a cadastral (land title) surveyor
- an electrical service technician
- an electrician
- a line mechanic
- a plumber, gasfitter or drainlayer.

**Visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/occupationalregistration](http://immigration.govt.nz/occupationalregistration)



## Visas

If you are submitting an immigration visa application based on an offer of employment in any of the above occupations, you need either full or provisional registration before you can apply for a Work visa, a Work to Residence visa or a Residence visa.

### *Chartered professional engineers (CPEng)*

In New Zealand, the titles 'Chartered Professional Engineer' and 'Registered Engineer' can only be used by engineers on the Chartered Professional Engineer (CPEng) register. The register is administered by Engineering New Zealand.

Generally, building consent authorities require Chartered Professional Engineers to certify engineering design work.

**Visit:** [engineeringnz.org/cpeng](https://engineeringnz.org/cpeng)

## Getting New Zealand training and qualifications

If you need training, you may wish to discuss support for your training needs with your employer. There are a range of options for construction-related work.

### *Industry Training Organisations*

Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) are part of a formal system for increasing and developing skills in the workplace. ITOs arrange training and set qualification standards, and work with the industry to determine skill development needs. Health and safety training is included within ITO's training programmes.

ITOs offer construction industry national qualification programmes and support, including:

- training in New Zealand building techniques
- vocational literacy and numeracy.

Organisation	Type of training and website
	Building and construction ITO <a href="https://bcito.org.nz/about-bcito">bcito.org.nz/about-bcito</a>
	Infrastructure ITO <a href="https://connexis.org.nz">connexis.org.nz</a>
	Engineering ITO <a href="https://competenz.org.nz">competenz.org.nz</a>
	Trades ITO <a href="https://skills.org.nz">skills.org.nz</a>

### *Private training establishments*

Private training establishments (PTEs) also provide training for construction work, from entry level up to post-graduate level. PTEs must be registered with NZQA and meet national standards.

**Visit:** [careers.govt.nz/courses](https://careers.govt.nz/courses) and type in “construction”.

### *Other training providers*

SiteSafe is the national provider of construction health and safety training.

**Visit:** [sitesafe.co.nz](https://sitesafe.co.nz)

Some Polytechnics also offer training in construction-related skills.



## Discuss training options with your employer

Speak to your employer if you think you need more training in any aspect of your work.



## Working conditions in construction

### Wages

Construction workers in New Zealand are usually paid an hourly wage and not a weekly salary. Some employers may pay a higher rate for overtime.

The [careers.govt.nz](https://careers.govt.nz) website has a lot of information about construction related jobs and wages.

**Visit:** [careers.govt.nz/construction](https://careers.govt.nz/construction)

### Hours of work

As a construction worker in New Zealand, you can either work part time or full time. The same work rights apply whether you work full time or part time.

Different hours of employment in New Zealand	
<b>Full time</b>	Usually between 30 and 40 hours a week with guaranteed hours.
<b>Part time</b>	Usually between 10 and 15 hours a week, but can be up to 30 hours a week with guaranteed hours.
<b>Casual</b>	Casual workers are employed as and when required and do not have regular or guaranteed hours of work. Work is offered when available and there is no requirement to accept work when offered.

**To find out more about types of employee visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/types-of-employee](https://www.employment.govt.nz/types-of-employee)

Construction workers in New Zealand usually work Monday to Friday but often work on Saturdays as well. During summer months work hours can be for longer than usual. Emergency work may be required at night or in the weekend.

The hours available for doing construction work in New Zealand can be affected by the weather and by the number of daylight hours available (daylight hours in winter are much shorter than in summer). This can affect the hours you are asked to work.

Your rights relating to your working hours and your other minimum employment rights are explained in more detail in the next section

**Minimum employment rights.**



## 2. Minimum employment rights

**New Zealand has laws that protect all workers. Know your rights to ensure you are paid and treated fairly.**

As an employee in New Zealand you have minimum employment rights. These include:

- minimum wages
- working hours
- holidays
- leave and breaks.

Your employer must treat you fairly and provide you with a written employment agreement outlining what you are entitled to.

Knowing your rights will help you to settle into the workplace and avoid any potential disagreements with your employer.



### Fair process

- You are entitled to seek independent advice before signing your employment agreement.
- Your employer cannot take any action against you without a genuine or valid reason. If they believe they have a valid reason, they must work with you in good faith and follow a fair process. You are entitled to seek independent advice and have a support person present when meeting with your employer.

**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/fair-process](https://employment.govt.nz/fair-process)



### Available in 14 languages

Information on your minimum employment rights is available in 14 languages.

**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/translations](https://employment.govt.nz/translations)



### Try Employment New Zealand's learning modules

The Employment New Zealand website has a lot of useful information about employee rights, including free employee learning modules. Look at these modules to learn about your rights and obligations. It is important that you find out things you may not be aware of. The modules include links to supporting information if you need it.

**Visit:** [employment.elearning.ac.nz](https://employment.elearning.ac.nz)

## Right to join a union

In New Zealand, all workers have the right to join a union.

Unions support employees in the workplace. They bargain for collective employment agreements with employers and help employees with information and advice about work-related issues.



### Taking part in union activities

Your employer cannot discriminate against you or disadvantage you for joining a union or taking part in legitimate union activities.

The following unions represent construction workers:

- **E tū:** [etu.nz](http://etu.nz)
- **Manufacturing and Construction Workers' Union (MCWU):** [mcwu.org.nz](http://mcwu.org.nz)



### Union Network of Migrants

Union Network of Migrants (UNEMIG) is a migrant led, non-profit and non-sectarian network of migrant workers that aims to protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers in New Zealand.

**Visit:** [unemig.org.nz](http://unemig.org.nz)

## Employment agreements

Your employer must provide you with a written employment agreement stating your hours of work, what you will be paid, the leave you are entitled to, and any other conditions that you and your employer have agreed to.

If you and your employer later agree to any changes to your original employment agreement, for example hours or work, they must be recorded as a written variation to your employment agreement.

You can have an individual agreement or be part of a collective agreement.

### *Individual agreements*

If you do not belong to a union, you will need an individual agreement between you and your employer. You must both sign the agreement.

Before you sign your agreement, read it and make sure you understand it. Your employer must give you time to read it and get advice if you need any. You can discuss and agree any changes with your employer before you sign. You can have a representative or support person with you when you do this.

You are entitled to a copy of the signed agreement. If your employer does not give you a copy, ask for one. Keep the signed copy in a safe place in case there is a disagreement.

### *Collective agreements*

In New Zealand, many employers in the construction sector who hire migrant workers have collective agreements with independent trade unions. A collective agreement is an agreement worked out between a union (on behalf of the workers) and your employer.

Your employer must let you know if there is a collective agreement and how to contact and join the union that negotiates the collective agreement. If you belong to a union and there is a collective agreement, you will be automatically covered by that agreement. If you agree to any conditions that are different from the collective agreement, these should be outlined in a variation of contract or in a letter of appointment.

**For more information visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/employment-agreements](https://www.employment.govt.nz/employment-agreements)



Employees can be part of a collective agreement.

## Working hours

Your hours of work must be agreed to by you and your employer and recorded in your signed employment agreement. Any other arrangements relating to your hours of work, for example flexible working hours and compensation for overtime, must also be recorded in your signed employment agreement.



### Your rights

- Your employer must pay you at least the minimum wage for all the time that you work.
- Your employer cannot change your hours, days or times of work without your written agreement (unless you are a casual worker).
- Your employer cannot make you work more hours than you have agreed to in your employment agreement or a variation to it.

It is important to read all about your rights regarding hours of work.

**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/hours-of-work](https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-of-work)

### Workers on temporary work visas

If you are on a temporary work visa you must be paid for at least 30 hours a week and this must be written into your employment agreement.

## Flexible work arrangements

You have the right to request a change to your working arrangements. For example, you may need more time at home to care for your family.

You can ask to change:

- the days you work
- the hours you work
- your place of work.

Your employer must consider the request fairly. Make sure you get this agreed change in writing.

**For more information visit:** [employment.govt.nz/flexible-work](https://www.employment.govt.nz/flexible-work)

## 90 day trial period

When you start working, if your employer employs fewer than 20 people they may offer you a trial period of up to 90 days.

If you agree to a trial period:

- your employer must pay you during the trial period
- the details must be recorded in your signed employment agreement.

If your employer dismisses you from your job during the 90 day trial period, you cannot make a legal complaint against them for unjustified dismissal.

You **can** make a legal complaint against your employer for other reasons, for example harassment, exploitation and discrimination. These terms are explained later in this guide.

All other minimum employment rights apply while you are on a trial period.

**For more information visit:** [employment.govt.nz/trial-and-probationary-periods](https://www.employment.govt.nz/trial-and-probationary-periods)

## Minimum pay and deductions

### Pay

If you are aged 16 years or over, your employer must pay you at least the minimum hourly wage for every hour you work. The minimum wage is set by the government and reviewed each year.

Your employer must pay you in money, either directly into your bank account or with cash.

**To see the current minimum wage rates visit:**  
[employment.govt.nz/minimum-wage-rates](https://www.employment.govt.nz/minimum-wage-rates)

### Deductions

Your employer must not charge you fees or take out (deduct) money from your wages, unless they are required by law or you have agreed in writing first.

Deductions allowed by law include:

- pay-as-you-earn (PAYE) income tax
- ACC levies
- student loan repayments
- agreed KiwiSaver payments
- child support payments
- deductions ordered by a court.

**For more information on deductions and the minimum wage visit:** [employment.govt.nz/pay](https://www.employment.govt.nz/pay)

### IRD (tax) numbers

Before you begin work you need an IRD number so your income is not taxed any higher or lower than it should be. It is free to get an IRD number from the Inland Revenue website.

**To get an IRD number visit:** [ird.govt.nz/roles/employees](https://www.ird.govt.nz/roles/employees)

## KiwiSaver

KiwiSaver is a voluntary, work-based savings scheme to help New Zealanders save for their retirement.

- You must be **eligible** to join KiwiSaver.
- Workers who join have a percentage of their wages paid into the scheme each pay day.
- If you join KiwiSaver your employer must also contribute an amount equal to 3% of your wages.
- The New Zealand government may also contribute a member tax credit once a year.



### Check if you can join KiwiSaver

- Not all visa holders can join KiwiSaver. For example, temporary visa holders are **not eligible** to join.
- If you are **eligible** to join, you will be automatically enrolled into a KiwiSaver scheme when you start a new job. You can join the same scheme that your employer uses, or choose from a range of other schemes.
- If you do not wish to join KiwiSaver, you have eight weeks to “opt out” (let your employer know you do not want to join).

**To find out more about KiwiSaver and whether you are eligible to join visit: [kiwisaver.govt.nz](https://kiwisaver.govt.nz)**



All workers are entitled to set rest and meal breaks.

## Breaks

Construction work often involves hard physical labour, long days and working outside in extremes of temperature. Regular breaks help you to stay fresh and alert and avoid workplace accidents. They also allow time to rest, refresh and take care of any personal matters.

All workers are entitled to set rest and meal breaks. The number and length depends on how many hours you work. The minimum length of breaks required by law is 10 minutes for rest breaks and 30 minutes for meal breaks.

Your employer does not have to pay you for your meal breaks but rest breaks are paid time.

**For more information, including a table showing minimum rest and meal breaks, visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/rest-and-meal-breaks](https://www.employment.govt.nz/rest-and-meal-breaks)



### Working during a scheduled break

From time to time, your employer may require you to work during a scheduled break. For example, if there is an emergency situation to deal with or if there is no one to cover your job. If this happens, you must be allowed a break at a quieter time.

## Public holidays

Public holidays (also known as ‘statutory holidays’) are paid holidays that all workers are entitled to in addition to their annual leave. New Zealand has 11 public holidays.

### *Rules about public holidays and your entitlements*

The following table shows some of the rules about public holidays and what you are entitled to.

If...	then...
a public holiday is on a day you would normally work	you are usually entitled to have the day off and still be paid for it
you and your employer agree you will work on a public holiday	you are entitled to be paid at least one and a half times your usual hourly rate (‘time and a half’) for the hours you work on that day
you agree to work on a public holiday and it is a day you would normally work	you are entitled to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be paid time and a half, and</li> <li>• take another day off on full pay (an ‘alternative day’ or a ‘day in lieu’)</li> </ul>
a public holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday and you do not normally work on those days	you usually get a paid holiday on the following Monday or Tuesday instead. This is called <b>‘Mondayisation’</b>

### *Transferring a public holiday*

You can ask to transfer a public holiday to another working day. For example, you may wish to celebrate a religious or cultural holiday that is not a New Zealand public holiday.

Your employer must consider the request fairly. Your employer can also ask you to transfer a public holiday to another day to meet the needs of the business.

Any agreement to transfer a public holiday must be in writing.

**For more information visit: [employment.govt.nz/public-holidays](https://www.employment.govt.nz/public-holidays)**



All workers are entitled to New Zealand's public holidays, as well as annual leave.

## Types of leave

### *Annual leave*

All workers except casual workers are entitled to at least four weeks of paid holidays a year after working for their employer for 12 months.

Most employers will let you take annual leave as you earn it. You can take at least two weeks off at a time.

If you work **part time**, you get four weeks of annual leave based on what a working week is for you. For example, if you work three days a week you will be entitled to 12 days of annual leave.

- You and your employer must agree on when you will take your leave.
- Your employer can require you to take annual leave but they must give you advance notice and the chance to discuss it with them first.
- Your employer cannot make you exchange your annual leave for money.
- Your employer must pay you the holiday pay you have earned but not yet taken when your employment ends.
- Your employer must show your holiday pay as a separate amount on your pay slip.

**For more information visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/annual-holidays](https://www.employment.govt.nz/annual-holidays)



### Work with your employer when planning leave

- It is a good idea to have written confirmation from your employer before you finalise arrangements for leave that are difficult or expensive to change or cancel.
- Let your employer know if you plan to be overseas during your annual leave so they can contact you if needed.
- If you are on annual leave and you need to stay away longer than planned, you must get your employer's approval first. For example, if you have a family emergency to deal with. If you do not get prior approval, you could put your employment at risk.



### Casual workers

Depending on their pattern of work, **casual** workers may be entitled to either four weeks' annual leave **or** 'pay-as-you-go' annual holiday pay (8% of their gross earnings as holiday pay on top of their wages).

- If the pattern of your work hours is predictable you are entitled to four weeks' annual leave.
- If your pattern of work hours is unpredictable you may agree to be paid annual holiday pay with your pay. This is called 'pay as you go' for fixed term or changing work patterns.

**To find out more about different types of employee visit:**  
[employment.govt.nz/types-of-employee](https://www.employment.govt.nz/types-of-employee)

## Sick leave

All workers are entitled to at least five days of paid sick leave each year after being employed by the same employer for six months. Check your employment agreement to find out what you are entitled to.

You can request sick leave when:

- you are sick or injured
- you need to look after someone who depends on you because they are sick or injured. For example, your husband or wife, partner, child or elderly parent.

The New Zealand Holidays Act allows you to carry over unused sick leave to the next year, up to a maximum of 20 days. Your employer may allow you to carry over more than 20 days.

### Medical certificate

You are not required to get a medical certificate for sick leave, but your employer may ask you for one. The certificate should state that you are unfit for work but not the reason why. If the sick leave is for **less than three days** your employer must reimburse you for the costs of getting a medical certificate. For three days or more, you may have to pay the costs.

**For more information visit:** [employment.govt.nz/sick-leave](https://www.employment.govt.nz/sick-leave)



### Talk to your employer if you have questions about sick leave

If you need to take sick leave before you have worked six months, or you are unsure if you have enough sick leave available, talk to your employer about your options.

## Bereavement leave

All workers are entitled to paid bereavement leave after being employed by the same employer for six months. Collective agreements generally have bereavement leave available from the start of employment.

The amount of leave you are entitled to must be recorded in your employment agreement.

### Bereavement leave entitlements

The following table shows the **minimum** entitlements for bereavement leave. Check your employment agreement to find out exactly what you are entitled to.

If...	you are entitled to...
a member of your immediate family dies who is your: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• husband, wife, civil union or de facto partner</li> <li>• child or grandchild</li> <li>• brother or sister</li> <li>• parent or grandparent</li> <li>• husband, wife or partner's parent</li> </ul>	3 days
more than one family member dies at the same time	3 days for each person
someone outside your immediate family dies	up to 1 day

If you request bereavement leave for someone outside your close family, your employer needs to agree that you have a close relationship with the person and/or responsibilities relating to the death, eg cultural and/or supportive responsibilities.

**For more information visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/bereavement-leave](https://www.employment.govt.nz/bereavement-leave)



### **Talk to your employer if you have questions about bereavement leave**

When close family or friends die it may be very difficult for you if you are living far away. If you need to take bereavement leave and are unsure if you have enough available, talk to your employer about your options.

### *Parental leave*

If you have a new baby or child to care for you may be eligible for paid parental leave and up to one year unpaid extended leave, if you are the primary carer.

The parental leave payment is a weekly payment for one continuous period of up to 22 weeks.

You should not be disadvantaged in your work for taking paid or unpaid leave that you are entitled to.

**For more information visit: [employment.govt.nz/parental-leave](https://www.employment.govt.nz/parental-leave)**

### *Domestic violence leave*

Workers affected by domestic or family violence have the right to:

- up to 10 days paid domestic violence leave per year
- ask for short-term flexible working arrangements, for up to two months.

Domestic or family violence means all forms of violence in family and intimate relationships. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

Domestic violence rights apply even if the domestic violence happened in the past.

Employers must not treat workers badly or unfairly for experiencing domestic violence.



### **Who qualifies for domestic violence leave?**

Workers qualify for domestic violence leave if they have worked for their employer for at least six months and meet other criteria around the hours they have worked. Employers may ask for some form of written proof, like a letter from a support person or organisation, a report from your doctor or court documents.

**For more information visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/domestic-violence-leave](https://www.employment.govt.nz/domestic-violence-leave)



### **Leave summary**

You are entitled to:

- at least 4 weeks paid holiday each year
- public (statutory) holidays
- at least 5 days' paid sick leave each year
- bereavement leave
- parental leave, if you are eligible
- domestic violence leave, if you are affected.

## Your employment record and payslips

Your employer must keep full and accurate records to show that they have given you all your minimum employment entitlements. These records must include your:

- hourly pay rate
- hours worked and what you were paid
- holiday and leave information (including leave taken and leave balance).

Your employer does not have to provide you with a payslip, unless this is stated in your employment agreement. But they do have to give you a written breakdown of how your pay is made up, if you ask for it.

If you do not understand something on your employment record or payslip, you can ask your employer to explain it to you.

**For more information visit:**

[employment.govt.nz/payslip](https://www.employment.govt.nz/payslip)

[employment.govt.nz/keeping-accurate-records](https://www.employment.govt.nz/keeping-accurate-records)

### *Your privacy*

Your employer can only collect personal information about you for valid work purposes or where directed to by the law. They must protect the privacy of your personal information and not disclose or use it for any other purpose.

You can ask your employer for access to your personal file and other information they have about you. They must either give you access or tell you why you cannot see it. They must respond to your request as soon as possible and within 20 working days (or ask for an extension). You can also ask for information to be corrected if it is not accurate.

**For more information visit:** [employment.govt.nz/privacy](https://www.employment.govt.nz/privacy)



### 3. Protecting yourself from exploitation

**Workplace exploitation is a serious crime in New Zealand. Learn what support is available.**

If you are a migrant worker you have the same rights as New Zealand workers and it is a crime for employers to exploit you. Your employer cannot take away your employment rights.

Most New Zealand employers do not exploit their workers but a small number may take advantage of people who are not familiar with their minimum employment rights.

You can find helpful information on the Immigration New Zealand website, including examples of exploitation, what to do if your employer exploits you and ways to keep yourself safe.

**For more information visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/exploitation](https://immigration.govt.nz/exploitation)

## Ways to get help

If you think you are being exploited, support is available. It is important to get help as soon as possible.



**Here are some things you can do if you think your employer is exploiting you.**

- Make a note of the incidents that offend you.
- Talk about it with someone you trust. They may be able to help you or direct you to someone who can.
- Discuss it with your union delegate.
- Use the free mediation service offered by MBIE. A mediator can help you and your employer resolve the problem.

## Who to contact for free help and advice

Who to contact	Help they can provide	How to get help
The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)	Confidential help and advice on employment issues, pay and holidays	<b>Call the Contact Centre:</b> <b>0800 20 90 20</b>
MBIE Mediation service	Help to resolve a dispute with your employer	<a href="https://employment.govt.nz/mediation">employment.govt.nz/mediation</a>
NZ Police	If you think you are a victim of migrant exploitation you can contact the New Zealand Police	<a href="https://police.govt.nz/contact">police.govt.nz/contact</a> <b>Call 105</b> for non-emergencies <b>If you are in immediate physical danger, call 111 and ask for Police</b>
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	Advice on dealing with complaints and disputes  <b>This service is for everyone, not just New Zealand citizens</b>	<a href="https://cab.org.nz/find-a-cab">cab.org.nz/find-a-cab</a> <b>Call: 0800 367 222</b>
Community Law	Free legal advice, if you are eligible	<a href="https://communitylaw.org.nz/free-legal-help">communitylaw.org.nz/free-legal-help</a>
Unions	Help with exploitation and getting fair treatment  Unions can also negotiate with your employer on your behalf	<a href="https://etu.nz">etu.nz</a> <a href="https://mcwu.org.nz">mcwu.org.nz</a>



## Employee Assistance Programme

Some workplaces have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

EAP is a **free** service where you can talk to an independent professional counsellor in private about problems you are facing. You can get advice on many issues, including:

- employment
- health and safety at work
- personal health issues
- relationship issues
- budgeting
- legal issues.

EAP is completely confidential. There is no need to tell your supervisor or employer if you are receiving this service.

Contact your workplace human resources (HR) team to find out if your workplace provides this service.

**Visit:** [bit.ly/eap\\_assistance](https://bit.ly/eap_assistance)

## The role of employment authorities

There are several organisations that oversee employment standards in New Zealand. We call them employment authorities.

There are three main authorities:

- Labour Inspectorate
- Employment Relations Authority (ERA)
- Employment Court.

The New Zealand employment authorities are here to help you. Do not be afraid to report a complaint to these authorities, even if you are worried about your immigration status. They will treat you fairly.

### *The Labour Inspectorate*

The Labour Inspectorate has a team of inspectors that visit New Zealand businesses to make sure their owners are providing the minimum employment rights to their employees.

**For more information visit:**

**[employment.govt.nz/labour-inspectorate](https://employment.govt.nz/labour-inspectorate)**

### *Employment Relations Authority (ERA)*

The ERA helps to put right employment relationship problems. Examples of issues they can help with include:

- unpaid wages
- employers who fail to meet the terms of an employment agreement
- unjustified dismissal (being dismissed without a good reason).

**For more information visit: [era.govt.nz](https://era.govt.nz)**

### *Employment Court*

The most serious employment disputes go to the Employment Court. This can happen if someone does not agree with what the ERA determines.

**For more information visit: [employmentcourt.govt.nz](https://employmentcourt.govt.nz)**



## 4. Health and safety

Keeping healthy and safe at work is everyone's responsibility.

### Your health and safety rights

Under New Zealand law, you have the right to:

- work in a place where risks to health and safety are managed
- adequate facilities at work, for example toilets, washing facilities and first aid equipment
- free protective equipment, for example safety glasses, work boots and hearing protection
- safety training, information and support
- have your say on health and safety issues and decisions
- ask for a workplace safety representative or a health and safety group
- refuse to do work that puts you or others at risk.



## **You can have your say on health and safety decisions**

It is against the law for anyone to treat you differently or take steps against you for being concerned about workplace health and safety.

### *Everyone is responsible for health and safety*

Under New Zealand law, both employers and employees have a duty to ensure that the workplace is healthy and safe.

#### **Your employer must...**

- look after your health and safety and provide a healthy and safe workplace
- give you the training, supervision and equipment that you need to do your job safely
- tell you how to raise concerns or make suggestions about staying healthy and safe at work

#### **All workers must...**

- know the health and safety procedures and how to keep themselves and those around them healthy and safe
- follow health and safety instructions carefully and wear or use the safety equipment provided
- report all accidents and near misses



Your employer should provide equipment training.

### *Keeping you healthy and safe*

Some of the things your employer must do to keep you healthy and safe include:

- give you health and safety information when you start your job
- tell you about workplace risks and hazards and how they are managed to reduce harm
- give you personal protective equipment and show you how to use it
- explain what to do in a medical emergency or other unexpected event
- show you where emergency equipment and first aid kits are kept
- tell you how to manage risk and report hazards and accidents, including a 'near miss'
- explain how to raise concerns and make suggestions about workplace health and safety.



#### **What is a 'near miss'?**

A 'near miss' is an event that could have caused injury but did not.

## Hazards in the construction workplace

### Know the dangers

There can be lots of hazards in the construction workplace. Some of the hazards to be aware of include:

- working at heights or in confined spaces
- being hit or crushed by moving objects and machinery
- loss of control of machinery or equipment or using equipment incorrectly
- lifting and moving heavy objects without appropriate equipment
- exposure to hazardous substances, eg chemicals or asbestos
- electrocution
- fatigue
- exposure to sunburn and weather conditions / not wearing suitable outdoor clothing
- environmental hazards, eg loud noise, dust, wind
- slips, trips and falls.

The level of risk from these hazards will vary depending on the individual business. Be sure to ask what the most important risks are for you. Your manager or supervisor should identify the top risks in your work and what you must do to keep healthy and safe.



Someone should explain site risks and hazards to you.



## STAYING SAFE AT WORK

### Working safely at height

Falls from heights are the most common cause of deaths in New Zealand's construction industry. Even falls from one or two metres can be deadly - half of all dangerous falls in New Zealand are from three metres or less.

The New Zealand Government wants to reduce fatal and serious non-fatal work-related injury by 25% by 2020. To support this target they have created a toolkit to help prevent falls from height. The toolkit is for people working on both tall and short structures.

**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz/working-at-height](https://worksafe.govt.nz/working-at-height)

### Changes in the weather

Construction work happens all year round and much of it is outdoors. You will have to work outside in all types of weather. If working outdoors, you should be prepared for changes in the weather and make sure you have clothing that will protect you. If the weather changes, you may be asked to do different work from what you were expecting.

### Sunburn

Sunburn can cause skin cancer. Sunburn can happen quickly in New Zealand, even on a cloudy day or when it feels cool. It is important to use sunscreen and/or suitable clothing to protect yourself from the sun.

**Visit:** [bit.ly/NZ\\_sunsafe](https://bit.ly/NZ_sunsafe)

**Drugs and alcohol**

Using drugs or alcohol while at work can put you and others at risk. Drugs and alcohol can cause poor concentration, carelessness, risk-taking behaviour and errors in judgement and can result in injuries, fatalities and absence from work. They can also affect work performance and productivity.

Employers may have policies and processes to manage and prevent the risks of drugs and alcohol in the workplace. They may also use pre-employment testing when employing workers in safety sensitive workplaces, or require employees to take alcohol or drug tests if this is part of the worker's employment agreement.

**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/drugs-alcohol-and-work](https://www.employment.govt.nz/drugs-alcohol-and-work)

**Fatigue**

Fatigue is a state of physical and/or mental exhaustion. It can reduce your ability to perform work safely and can lead to workplace accidents and injuries. Causes of fatigue include long or irregular work hours and night work, physically demanding work, working outside in winter, exposure to loud noise, and handling vibrating tools for long periods of time.

**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz/fatigue-quick-guide](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/fatigue-quick-guide)

### *Report workplace hazards*

Make sure you report all workplace hazards and accidents, including near misses. Reporting dangers and suggesting safety ideas helps keep everyone healthy and safe.

If you have a suggestion or concern, but do not feel comfortable raising it at work, you can:

- talk to your Health and Safety representative, if you have one
- ask a workmate to raise an issue for you
- contact a union delegate, if you have one.

If you do not have enough information or training to do a task safely, talk to your employer or supervisor immediately.

### *Use the protective clothing and equipment provided*

Your employer must give you personal protective equipment (PPE), including protective clothing, to do your work safely. What they give you will depend on the tasks you are expected to do. All workers must use the clothing and equipment provided to them.



Someone should show you how to use safety equipment.

The following list has some examples of personal protective equipment and safety gear used in construction.

- **Eyes** – Safety glasses, goggles, face shield
- **Ears** – Ear plugs, ear muffs
- **Breathing** – Masks, respirators, cartridge filters
- **Head** – Hard hat
- **Body** – Overalls, safety harness, high visibility clothing, gloves, wet weather gear, specialist protective equipment
- **Feet** – Steel capped boots or shoes
- **Safety at heights** – Harnesses (installed anchors or restraining cables) and roof edge barriers
- **Visibility** – High visibility vests, jackets

## Health and safety support

WorkSafe regulates health and safety in New Zealand workplaces and monitors and enforces compliance with health and safety law.

**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz/building-and-construction](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/building-and-construction)

To help you stay safe at work, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) provides information and advice on how to prevent injuries in the workplace and what to do if you are injured.

**Visit:** [acc.co.nz/for-business/workplace-health-safety](https://www.acc.co.nz/for-business/workplace-health-safety)



**Call WorkSafe if you are worried about an unsafe or unhealthy work situation**

You can contact WorkSafe by phone on **0800 030 040** (24 hours). Your concerns will be treated confidentially. Ask for Ezispeak if you need an interpreter.

WorkSafe also has information to help you deal with sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.

**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz/sexual-harassment](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/sexual-harassment)



## Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

EAP services can help you resolve health and safety issues. Contact your workplace human resources (HR) team to find out if your workplace provides this service.

Visit: [bit.ly/eap\\_assistance](https://bit.ly/eap_assistance)





## INJURIES AT WORK – ACC

New Zealand has an accident compensation scheme (called “ACC”). The scheme provides cover for personal injuries for everyone in New Zealand, including residents, visitors and migrant workers. ACC replaces the right to sue for personal injury. It is a blame free scheme, meaning it does not matter who caused the injury or where and when it happened.

If you are injured (at work, at home or anywhere in New Zealand) your injury is likely to be covered by ACC. You may be able to get help with costs like doctor’s fees and treatment.

If you are unable to work because of your injury, you may be able to get compensation for loss of earnings (weekly compensation) while you are off work. The amount you receive and when you start to receive it will depend on your particular situation.

All employees pay a levy (tax) to help fund the cost of the ACC scheme. The money is automatically taken out of your wages by your employer as part of your PAYE tax. The amount you pay depends on how much you earn and your individual levy rate.

Make sure you know what cover ACC can provide before you consider taking out income replacement insurance.

The ACC website has information on preventing injury and how to make a claim.

**Visit:** [acc.co.nz](https://acc.co.nz)



## 5. Workplace culture and communication

**Learn how New Zealanders communicate and work together.**

Some New Zealand workplaces can be quite informal. The way New Zealanders communicate at work may also be different from what you are used to.

### Workplace culture

In New Zealand construction workplaces, you may work with people from many different cultures. It will help if you understand some of the differences between New Zealanders and people from other countries.

## Management and work style preferences

People from different countries often prefer to be managed in different ways. Some like to be told exactly what to do, others do not.

Compared to some migrant workers, New Zealanders are more likely to:

- expect everyone to be treated fairly
- make suggestions to their manager or supervisor
- enjoy working without close supervision
- expect to be asked to do a range of tasks
- prefer to be left to do the job.



### Fitting into the workplace

Knowing about the differences between cultures can help make it easier for you to fit into a new workplace. It can also help everyone work better as a team.

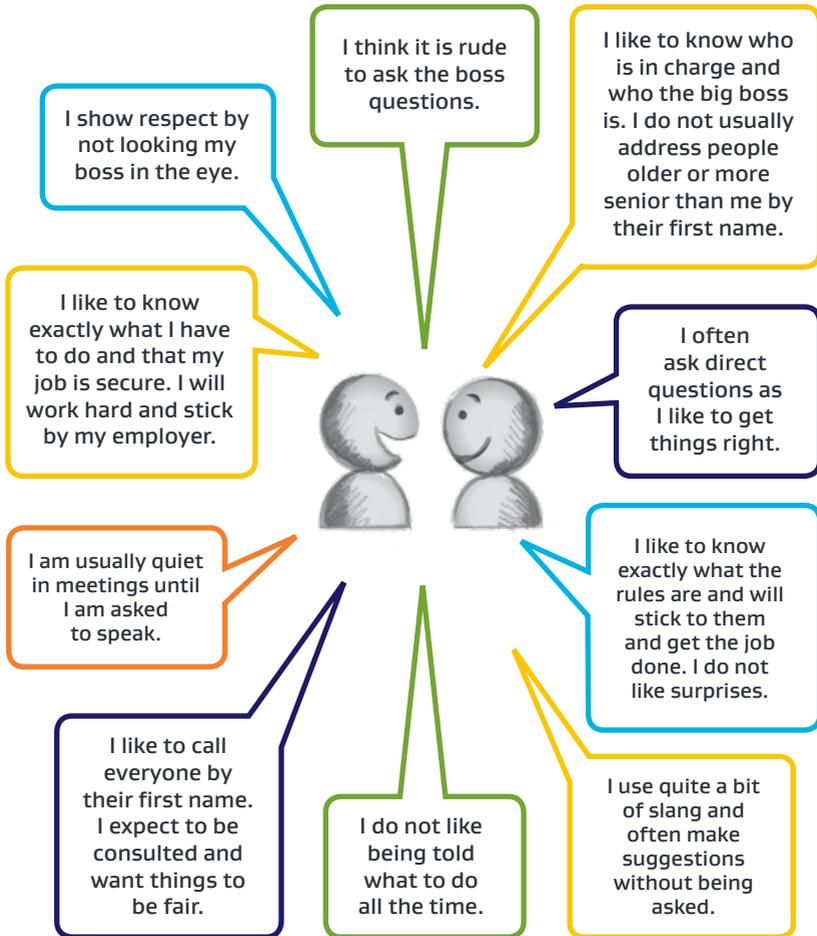


## Workplace differences

Workers from different countries may also have different ways of working and talking with their workmates.

Here are some of the things that workers from different cultures say about how they work. How do you like to work?

## How I like to work



## Workplace communication

### *Keeping it clear*

In construction, it is important that you can give clear instructions and understand instructions you are given so you do not put yourself or others at risk of harm.

It is also important that you:

- can be understood by those you are working with
- can understand what they say to you.

New Zealanders speak very fast and their accent is different from other English speakers. If you do not understand something, ask the person to speak more slowly and repeat it back to them to make sure you have understood correctly. Employers do not mind if you ask them to repeat an instruction many times as you need to make sure that you understand the instruction.

**Visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/keepingitclear](https://immigration.govt.nz/keepingitclear)



### **Do people have trouble understanding you?**

Some people may find it hard to understand your accent. Try to remember to speak more slowly if someone is having trouble understanding you.



Migrant workers need to give and receive clear instructions.

### *Talking to the boss*

In New Zealand, it is usually okay to speak to a supervisor or manager in a casual or informal way. It is not seen as disrespectful. Workers do not usually have to wait to be invited to speak. It is also okay if you need to challenge or question instructions or complain about something, as long as you do it in a polite way.

It is also common for workers to call their boss by their first name. They do not usually mind.



### Do not be shy to talk to your boss

If you are unsure how your boss likes to be spoken to, you could ask them or ask one of your workmates.



### Try our WorkTalk tool

Our free online tool WorkTalk is designed to help improve communication in the workplace.

**To try the tool visit:** [worktalk.immigration.govt.nz](https://worktalk.immigration.govt.nz)

## *Talking with your workmates*

Being able to communicate well with your workmates helps you to work better as a team. It can also help you make friends. You will find it helpful if you take time to learn how the people in your team like to communicate with each other.



### Small talk

In many New Zealand workplaces, people like to have some casual talk from time to time. This is called “chat” or “small talk”.

- Workers will greet each other in the morning and chat about things like the weather, the news, sport, traffic, tv programmes etc.
- Managers and supervisors will usually greet workers in the morning and chat with them from time to time too.

You will soon learn if this is okay in your workplace.



Most New Zealanders, including the boss, like to be called by their first name.



### How New Zealanders make requests

New Zealanders often ask people to do things in an indirect way. When someone asks for something it may sound like a suggestion. It is important to remember this when you are talking with your workmates and your boss. Here are some examples:

- **“Would you mind getting me a wheelbarrow?”**  
= “Please get me a wheelbarrow.”
- **“Do you think you could move that plank?”**  
= “Please move that plank.”

## Workplace language

### Construction jargon

Construction workers in New Zealand may use some technical terms (jargon) or other words that you are not used to. You may need to quickly learn some new terms. If you are not sure what something means, ask a workmate or your supervisor.

**Visit:** [buildingguide.co.nz/glossary](https://buildingguide.co.nz/glossary)

### A few examples of New Zealand construction jargon

Jargon	What does it mean?
Bobcat	Small front loader tractor
Brickie	Bricklayer
Chippy	Builder, carpenter
Dwang	A horizontal spacer fitted between two studs (also called “nogs” or “nogging”)
F and T	Pre-made timber frame and truss
Four by Two	Timber size also known as “100x50” (millimeters)
Gib board	Plasterboard
Gib stopper	Person who puts plaster finish on gib board
Planed and gauged	Timber machined to a specific size
Plant	Machinery on site
Precast concrete	Sections of formed concrete ready for use
Rough sawn	Timber that is not smooth
Sawhorse	A support workbench
Skip	Large waste bin
Sparkie	Electrician
Subbie	Tradesperson hired by main contractor to do specific work, like plumbing, wiring or painting
Tool box talk	A health and safety talk held on site

## Māori language

Along with English, Māori is an official language in New Zealand. You will probably hear some Māori words being used around you in everyday conversation, including in the workplace. Some signs in New Zealand are written in both English and Māori. You may see signs in both languages in your workplace too.

The following table has some common Māori words that you may hear.

Māori	English translation
Ata mārie / Mōrena	Good morning
Haere mai	Welcome! Enter! Come here!
Hui	Meeting, conference, gathering
Kai	Food, meal
Ka pai	Good, no problem, that is fine
Kei te pai	I am fine
Kia ora	Hello! Cheers! Thank you
Mahi	Work
Manuhiri	Visitor, guest
Mōrena / Ata marie	Good morning
Rangatira	Supervisor
Tapu	Sacred, restricted, forbidden
Whānau	Family group
Whare kai	Lunch / tea room
Whare paku	Toilet

Māori are sometimes referred to as 'Tangata whenua' ("people of the land").

**To learn more about Māori culture and language visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/maori](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/maori)



## The Treaty of Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi is a bi-cultural partnership between The Crown (embodied by the government) and Tangata Whenua. The Treaty is the founding document of New Zealand.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/Waitangi](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/Waitangi)

### *New Zealand slang*

Most countries have words and phrases that only people who live there use. This is called 'slang' or 'colloquial language'.

Some New Zealand words may be hard for you to understand when you first hear them. Ask a workmate if you are not sure what something means.

### Examples of New Zealand slang

Slang term	What does it mean?
Dairy	Small convenience store selling groceries, newspapers and other basics
Don't muck around	Do it quickly
Kiwi	New Zealander
Munted / Knackered	Broken

## Swearing

Swearing (using rude or offensive words) is common in some New Zealand workplaces, and especially common on a construction site. Try not to be offended if you hear some swearing during normal workplace conversation.

Swearing does not always mean the person is angry or telling you off. Some New Zealanders swear when they are in a good mood or joking with others.

It is never acceptable to swear at your boss or in front of clients.



### Swearing may be harassment

If swearing is making you feel uncomfortable or is causing you distress, it may be harassment, which is against the law.

If swearing or teasing makes you feel uncomfortable, try asking the person to stop doing it. You can also speak to your supervisor about it.

## Teasing and banter

In some New Zealand workplaces, workmates may tease each other in a friendly way. This type of talk is called 'banter'.

Banter is usually between people who know each other well. For example, someone may make fun of a person's new haircut in a playful and friendly way. Like swearing, teasing or banter can become offensive.

### *Getting English language support*

Improving your English can help you in the workplace and with your settlement into New Zealand life. There is help if you need to improve your English. Some is provided by community groups.

**For information on learning English and finding English classes visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/English](https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/English)

**For help with workplace communication try our Worktalk tool. Visit:** [worktalk.immigration.govt.nz](https://worktalk.immigration.govt.nz)

## **Discrimination, harassment and bullying**

When someone treats a person unfairly because they are different from them, this is **discrimination**. It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone based on their current, past or assumed:

- sex, gender identity or sexual orientation
- marital, family or employment status
- religious or ethical belief
- colour, race, ethnic or national origin
- disability, age, political opinion
- family violence experience.

When someone repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards a worker or group of workers, this is **workplace bullying**. It can lead to physical or psychological harm.

When someone repeatedly makes offensive sexual or racial comments, or behaves in an offensive way towards someone at work, this is **harassment**. Sexual and racial harassment are taken very seriously in New Zealand. Your rights are protected by the Human Rights Act 1993.

**For more information visit:** [employment.govt.nz/bullying](https://www.employment.govt.nz/bullying)



**Here are some things you can do if you think you are experiencing discrimination, harassment or bullying at work.**

- Make a note of the incidents that offend you.
- Talk about it with someone you trust.
- Discuss it with your union delegate.
- Bring it to the attention of the person doing it. You could write to them or ask someone to talk to them on your behalf.
- Speak to your supervisor or boss about it, eg if a workmate is bothering you.



**Need help?**

You can make a complaint to the Human Rights Commission.

**Visit:** [hrc.co.nz/enquiries-and-complaints](https://www.hrc.co.nz/enquiries-and-complaints)

Look at WorkSafe's advice on what to do if you are being bullied.

**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz/what-to-do-if-being-bullied](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/what-to-do-if-being-bullied)

Use the free mediation service offered by MBIE - a mediator can help you and your employer to resolve the problem.

**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/mediation](https://www.employment.govt.nz/mediation)

Contact your union:

**E tū:** [etu.nz](https://www.etu.nz)

**Manufacturing and Construction Workers' Union (MCWU):**  
[mcwu.org.nz](https://www.mcwu.org.nz)



## 6. Getting to New Zealand

**Explore visa options for you and your family.**

If you plan to move to New Zealand for work, there are different visas that you can apply for. Each has its own rules and application process.

### **Which visa do you need?**

Which visa you need depends on:

- the type of job
- your skill level
- your level of English
- whether your qualification is recognised in New Zealand.

#### *Visa options for working in New Zealand*

Visa options fall into two categories – Resident visas and Temporary work visas.

Visa type	These visas allow you to...
Resident visas	<p>work and live in New Zealand for as long as you like</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled Migrant Category</li> </ul> <p><b>Visit:</b> <a href="https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/smc">newzealandnow.govt.nz/smc</a></p>
Temporary work visas	<p>work and live in New Zealand for a set period of time</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential Skills Work Visa (up to 5 years, depending on the skill level of your job)</li> <li>• Work to Residence visas (up to 30 months, with the potential to apply for Residence after 24 months)</li> </ul> <p><b>Visit:</b> <a href="https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/temp">newzealandnow.govt.nz/temp</a></p>

**To explore visa options visit:** [immigration.govt.nz](https://immigration.govt.nz)

**For information on working in New Zealand visit:**  
[immigration.govt.nz/work](https://immigration.govt.nz/work)

## Applying for a visa

There are three main ways to apply for a New Zealand visa.

You can either:

- complete the application form yourself
- hire a licensed immigration adviser
- consult a New Zealand registered lawyer, a Community Law Centre, or an authorised person who is exempt from licence requirements.

**For more information visit:**  
[newzealandnow.govt.nz/immigrationadvice](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/immigrationadvice)

## Advice for temporary workers

Temporary workers may only work within the conditions of their visa. If you come to New Zealand on a temporary visa, the conditions of your visa will specify your position, your employer and the location of your employment. Make sure you understand the requirements and processes for your visa.

If your situation or plans change, for example if you want to change your employer, you may need to apply for a 'Variation of Conditions' or a new visa.

**Visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/worksituationchanged](https://immigration.govt.nz/worksituationchanged)



### Temporary visas

Workers on temporary visas must leave New Zealand or apply for a new visa **before** their visa expires.



Your family needs to prepare for living in a new country.

## Bringing family to New Zealand

You may be able to bring family members to New Zealand, if they meet the immigration requirements. It also depends on which visa you have and the skill level of your job.

Family members you may be able to bring are your:

- husband, wife, civil union or de facto partner
- dependent children **up to the age of 24** who are single with no children of their own.

Your family will need to be prepared to live in a different country and adapt to a new culture. Your employer may be able to support you better when you arrive if you let them know that you intend to bring your family to New Zealand.

**For more information on bringing family visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/familyvisas](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/familyvisas)

**For more information on preparing for life in New Zealand visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz)

### *School age children (temporary workers)*

School age children of temporary workers may be issued a student visa (domestic) if the temporary visa holder is earning the New Zealand minimum annual income. It also depends on which visa you have and the skill level of your job.

To avoid any delay that could lead to having to pay international student fees for schooling, apply for a Dependent Child's Student Visa before you arrive in New Zealand.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/education](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/education)



## Help with planning

NZ Ready is a free online planning tool for people moving to New Zealand. It creates a personalised task list where you can add notes and check things off as you prepare for your move.

**To try the tool visit: [nzready.immigration.govt.nz](https://nzready.immigration.govt.nz)**



## 7. Living in New Zealand

Get prepared for living in New Zealand.

### Accommodation – where will you live?

When you arrive in New Zealand you will need to find a place to live. Some options are:

- boarding with a New Zealand family
- staying in a bed and breakfast (B&B) or a hostel
- flatting (sharing a house or apartment with others)
- renting or buying a house.

To learn more about where you might live in New Zealand visit:

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions)

## Renting in New Zealand

If you are renting a house in New Zealand, it is important that you know your rental rights and responsibilities. The Tenancy Services website provides videos, tools, resources and information to help you learn more about tenancy law.

The cost of renting differs depending on where you live. Generally it costs more to rent in larger cities than in smaller ones, and if you rent closer to the city centre.

Rental properties are usually unfurnished.

**For more information visit: [newzealandnow.govt.nz/rent](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/rent)**



### Renting advice

The Tenancy Services website has a tool to help you make decisions about where you could afford to live in New Zealand.

**Visit: [tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/market-rent](https://tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/market-rent)**

### Download the 'Renting and you' guide

The 'Renting and you' guide (available in different languages) has information on tenancy agreements and legal requirements, including things your landlord must provide, like insulation and working smoke alarms.

**Visit: [tenancy.govt.nz/key-rights-and-responsibilities](https://tenancy.govt.nz/key-rights-and-responsibilities)**



## Heating your home

Some houses in New Zealand can be very cold, especially those in mountainous regions. Many houses are not insulated or do not have heating built into every room. You should be prepared to provide your own heating solution.

Landlords must provide ceiling and under floor insulation in all rental homes where it is reasonably practical to install.

To ensure your accommodation is warm, dry and safe:

- dry your clothes outside
- open windows each day to air the rooms
- use extraction fans when cooking and showering
- open curtains during the day to let in the sun and close them at night to keep in the warmth.



Be prepared for cold weather in New Zealand.

## Cost of living

People new to New Zealand can be surprised by the high cost of goods and services here. However, the cost of living in New Zealand compares well with other OECD countries.



### Try the Cost of living calculator

Use the Cost of living calculator to find out what it might cost to live in New Zealand.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/costs](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/costs)

## Driving in New Zealand

### *Driver licence requirements*

To drive in New Zealand, you must have either a current driver licence from your home country or a New Zealand Driver licence.

You can drive in New Zealand on a foreign driver licence for 12 months after arrival. After that, you must apply for a New Zealand driver licence.

You may need an international driving permit or a translation of your licence if it is not written in English.

**Visit:** [nzta.govt.nz/converting-to-nz-driver-licence](https://nzta.govt.nz/converting-to-nz-driver-licence)



## NEW ZEALAND'S ROAD RULES

New Zealand's road rules are there to keep everyone safe on the roads. Here are some of the most important road rules in New Zealand.

- Drive on the **left-hand** side of the road.
- Everyone travelling in a car must wear seatbelts.
- All children up to the age of 7 must use an approved child restraint.
- All vehicles must have a current registration and warrant of fitness (WoF).
- All drivers must carry their driver licence when driving.
- It is illegal to use a handheld cell phone (mobile phone) while driving.
- All cyclists must wear a cycle helmet.

**For more information on driving requirements in New Zealand visit:**

[nzta.govt.nz/driving-on-nz-roads](https://nzta.govt.nz/driving-on-nz-roads)

[nzta.govt.nz/using-child-restraints-in-new-zealand](https://nzta.govt.nz/using-child-restraints-in-new-zealand)

[drivesafe.org.nz/home/on-the-road](https://drivesafe.org.nz/home/on-the-road)



### Take care when driving on New Zealand roads

- Remember that we drive on the left- hand side of the road.
- Drive to the changing conditions, eg ice, snow, rain.
- Be extra careful driving on country roads – many are unsealed (covered in gravel or stones). Unsealed roads are often called 'metal' roads.

### *Do not drive after taking alcohol and drugs*

Driving while influenced by alcohol or drugs is unsafe and can result in large fines, a driving ban and even prison.



#### **Alcohol, drugs and driving**

- It is illegal to drive if the amount of alcohol in your blood or on your breath exceeds the legal limit.
- It is illegal to drive while impaired by certain drugs (including some prescription medicines).

**To learn more about being safe on the road visit the NZ Police website [police.govt.nz](https://www.police.govt.nz) and search for “road rules”.**

## **Public transport**

You may need to use public transport if you have no other way of getting around. Most towns and cities have a bus service and some have trains as well.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/transport](https://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/transport)

## **New Zealand’s climate**

New Zealand has four seasons with different temperature ranges.

Weather and temperatures vary from region to region. It is generally warmer in the north and cooler in the south.

### Differences between seasons in New Zealand

Season	Months	Temperature (Celcius)
<b>Summer</b>	December to February	Usually warm or hot, eg 20–30 degrees
<b>Autumn</b>	March to May	Getting cold, eg 15–20 degrees
<b>Winter</b>	June to August	Cold or very cold, eg below 0–15 degrees; there could be snow!
<b>Spring</b>	September to November	Getting warm again, eg 15–20 degrees

**For more information on New Zealand’s regional climates visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions)

[niwa.co.nz/node/112151](http://niwa.co.nz/node/112151)

## Healthcare services

New Zealand has a publicly funded health service. If you are here on a visa that qualifies you for publicly funded healthcare, you will be eligible for these services. Note that not all services are free.

When you arrive in New Zealand, you will need to enrol or register with a GP (general practitioner). A GP is a fully trained medical doctor who can give you medical advice and refer you for further tests or specialist treatment if needed. If you need medical help and it is not an emergency, the first point of contact is a GP.

**Visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/healthcare](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/healthcare)

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/doctors](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/doctors)



### Find out if you are eligible for healthcare services

If you are **not eligible**, you should have comprehensive travel insurance that includes health insurance.

**Visit:** [moh.govt.nz/eligibility](http://moh.govt.nz/eligibility)

## Your safety

New Zealand is generally a peaceful and safe country to live in. Crime rates are lower than in many other countries and we have low levels of corruption. There are no dangerous animals and only two rare types of poisonous spider.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/safety](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/safety)

But there are some unseen risks that you should know about. These include:

- changeable weather
- sea conditions
- sunburn
- natural disasters, like earthquakes.

These differences are explained below.

### Weather

New Zealand weather can change very quickly. Check the weather forecast and dress for the conditions before you go out.

**Visit:** [metSERVICE.com/national/home](https://metSERVICE.com/national/home)



#### Planning a day outdoors?

It is also important to check weather conditions before doing outdoor activities like walking, cycling, hiking, swimming or boating. Always carry your cell phone, warm clothing, food and drink with you. Let people know where you are going and when you expect to return.

## Sunburn

The sun in New Zealand can burn your skin very quickly. Sunburn can cause skin cancer. Protect yourself from the sun, even on cloudy days.



### To avoid sunburn:

- wear a hat and light clothing that covers your skin
- put on sunscreen (SPF 30+) where your skin is not covered (including your face)
- wear sunglasses that wrap around your eyes.

Visit: [sunsmart.org.nz](https://sunsmart.org.nz)

## Sea conditions

In New Zealand, the sea can be cold and dangerous. Sea and weather conditions can change quickly.

If you plan to swim or fish in the sea or go out in a boat, make sure you always check the weather forecast first. Wear a life jacket and take safety equipment in your boat.

For more information visit: [watersafety.org.nz](https://watersafety.org.nz)



### Take care when in or near water

Most drownings in New Zealand happen at beaches and when people are out in boats.

Visit: [newzealandnow.govt.nz/resources/stay-water-safe](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/resources/stay-water-safe)



The sea in New Zealand can be cold and dangerous.

### Earthquakes

New Zealand has earthquakes! These happen in some places more than others. Most earthquakes are so small you do not feel them, but they can be big and cause injuries and damage, especially in areas with lots of buildings.



**Make sure you know what to do in an earthquake and have a disaster safety plan**

A disaster safety plan will help you and your family cope if a big earthquake happens.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/naturaldisasters](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/naturaldisasters)

### Meeting people

People from overseas say New Zealanders are very friendly and sociable. But it can be hard to know how to meet people when you move to a new country.



## HOW TO MEET PEOPLE

There are lots of ways to meet up with New Zealanders and other migrants. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Visit your local library – most have community noticeboards with information about community groups, sports clubs, cultural groups etc.
- Talk to other migrants about their experiences. Meet up with your local migrant group if you have one.
- Meet other parents through your child's school or playcentre activities.
- Join Neighbourly or a Meetup group.
- Look on the community noticeboard at your local supermarket.
- Talk to your employer about your religious needs – they may be able to help you find your closest religious community or worship centre.
- Talk to your employer and workmates about your interests and hobbies – they may be able to help you find a sports club or other groups.

Try volunteering – it is a really good way to meet people, make friends and learn New Zealand English.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/volunteer](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/volunteer)

There are Meetup groups all around New Zealand where you can meet people interested in lots of different topics.

**Visit:** [meetup.com/cities/nz](http://meetup.com/cities/nz)

Neighbourly is a private website designed to help people in neighbourhoods to connect, share information and improve the local community.

**Visit:** [neighbourly.co.nz](http://neighbourly.co.nz)

You can find more advice about meeting people on the New Zealand Now website.

**Visit:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/meetpeople](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/meetpeople)

## New Zealand law

Newcomers to New Zealand have the same rights and responsibilities as people already living here.

Everyone living in New Zealand must obey New Zealand law. New Zealand law applies to all migrants with temporary or permanent residence and to all temporary workers.



### **Do not put your visa status at risk**

Breaking the law can put your visa status at risk, and your family's. Immigration New Zealand can require someone to leave the country if they commit a serious offence and they are not a New Zealand citizen. A serious offence is any criminal offending, including driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

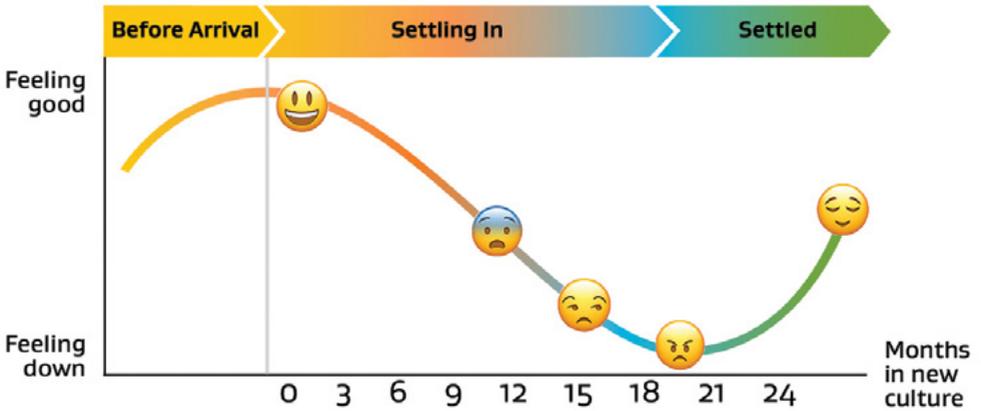
## Settlement support

When you arrive in a new country, it takes time to settle. There is a lot to learn and a lot that is different. It can take quite a long time to feel settled and at home in New Zealand.

People often feel happy and positive when they first arrive but then find it harder to get settled than they expect. Over time, people learn more about the New Zealand way of doing things and start to feel at home.

Immigration New Zealand’s Settlement Curve shows how your feelings may change as you start living in a new country.

## The Settlement Curve



	You are excited about moving to a new life in a new country.
	You might have a bad experience, large or small, that frightens you.
	You are not sure if you want to stay – you may decide to leave.
	You fight against the bad feelings and decide to make the most of the opportunities here.
	You start to feel settled and comfortable in your new life (some people will feel settled sooner than others).

For more information about the stages of settling in visit:  
[newzealandnow.govt.nz/settlestages](http://newzealandnow.govt.nz/settlestages)



### There is support for you if you feel lonely or very unhappy

There are free phone services that offer help with mental health issues. These include:

**Depression Helpline:** **0800 111 757**

**Lifeline:** **0800 543 354**

The Ministry of Health has more information on what to do in a mental health emergency and lists other helplines and support services. **Visit:** [health.govt.nz/your-health](https://health.govt.nz/your-health)

**To find healthcare services near you visit the Healthcare page for your region:** [newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/regions)

#### *Information, resources and services for you*

Immigration New Zealand provides settlement information, resources, programmes and services to help you settle into your new life.

**Visit:**

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz)

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/accesshelp](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/accesshelp)

[newzealandnow.govt.nz/languagehelp](https://newzealandnow.govt.nz/languagehelp)



### InfoNOW...in your language

InfoNOW...in your language is a free service that makes it easy for migrants to find settlement information in their preferred language. This service is currently available in 17 languages.

**Visit:** [infonow.nz](https://infonow.nz)

# Acknowledgements

This guide was collaboratively developed with the following organisations:









