

Manufacturing Health Intelligence Report 2026

Understanding the Health Risks Shaping NZ's
Manufacturing Workforce

Period 2021 - 2025

lifecare.co.nz

Executive Summary

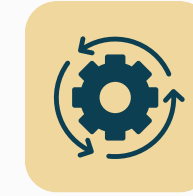
While Manufacturing businesses invest heavily in engineering controls, machinery, training and safety systems, one of the greatest risks often remains less visible: the health of the workforce itself.

LifeCare analysed anonymised workplace health assessment data collected between 2021 and 2025 across:

- **29,000+ workplace health assessments**
- **274 manufacturing worksites**
- **8,884 employees assessed in 2025 alone**, compared with 2,849 in 2021



29,000+
Workplace health assessments



274
Manufacturing Worksites



2,849
Employees assessed in 2021



8,884
Employees assessed in 2025



Manufacturing Workforce Snapshot

Although the number of **employees assessed** has more than **tripled over five years**, the **overall health profile** of the manufacturing workforce **has not improved**.

Several **indicators** have remained **unchanged**, while **others have deteriorated**, suggesting many **organisations** are successfully **identifying health risks** but are **yet to reduce them**.

This presents an **opportunity to move beyond compliance** and use workforce health **data to make more informed business decisions**.

	Trend
Overall Workforce Wellness	↘ 78.1% → 75.6%
High Cardiovascular Risk	↗ 10.8% → 15.3%
Employees Outside Health BMI Range	~80%
Possible Noise-Induced Hearing Changes	~22%



274

Manufacturing Worksites



8,884

Employees assessed in 2025

Insight One

The Rising Cardiovascular Risk Manufacturing Can't Ignore



The finding

#1

Employees classified as high cardiovascular risk increased by **41%** over five years, rising from **10.8% in 2021** to **15.3% in 2025**.

This represents the most significant trend identified across the dataset.

Why This Matters

Cardiovascular disease is not simply a personal health issue. Within manufacturing, it becomes an operational risk. Employees performing physically demanding work, operating machinery, driving forklifts, working at heights or undertaking safety-critical tasks rely on good cardiovascular health to safely perform their duties.

Undiagnosed cardiovascular conditions may contribute to:

- Sudden medical events
- Reduced physical capacity
- Fatigue
- Slower recovery after injury
- Increased absenteeism
- Increased ACC exposure
- Greater insurance and replacement labour costs



Questions Manufacturing Leaders Should Consider



- Which **roles** within our business carry the **highest consequence** if a worker experiences a **cardiovascular event**?
- Are employees **aged over 50 concentrated** in **these roles**?
- Are we **identifying risks early** or only **after incidents occur**?
- Could **health trends explain** some of our **absenteeism or injury patterns**?

Insight Two

Five Years, Same 80%



The BMI Plateau

#2

Approximately **80% of the manufacturing workforce assessed sits outside the normal BMI range**, with little variation across the five-year period. This is not an isolated statistic. It is one of the strongest underlying contributors to multiple health risks observed across the industry.

Business Implications

Higher BMI is associated with increased risk of:

- Musculoskeletal injury
- Reduced physical endurance
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Longer recovery times
- Reduced work capacity

Rather than viewing BMI in isolation, organisations should recognise it as one indicator within a broader workforce health profile.

Questions Manufacturing Leaders Should Consider



- Is this **trend reflected** within our workforce?
- Which **departments** show the **greatest concentration of metabolic risk**?
- Are we seeing increased **injury recovery times**?
- Could **preventative** interventions **reduce future health costs**?



Insight Three

The Hearing Risk That Won't Go Away



The finding

#3

Approximately **22% of employees continue to demonstrate possible noise-induced hearing changes**. Importantly, this figure has remained largely unchanged across five years.

What This Suggests

A stable trend indicates that exposure continues despite existing controls. This does not necessarily mean hearing protection is ineffective.

It suggests organisations should continually review:

- Noise controls
- Hearing protection compliance
- Worker education
- Exposure duration
- Engineering controls

Business Impact

Potential consequences include:

- Hearing loss claims
- Reduced communication
- Increased safety risk
- Reduced situational awareness
- Compliance challenges

Connecting the Dots

None of these findings should be viewed independently. Cardiovascular risk, BMI, hearing health, fatigue, and musculoskeletal capacity frequently overlap. Employees with multiple risk factors may experience:

- Higher injury rates
- Longer recovery periods
- Reduced productivity
- Increased absenteeism
- Greater likelihood of long-term health claims

Understanding these relationships allows organisations to prioritise interventions where they can have the greatest impact.

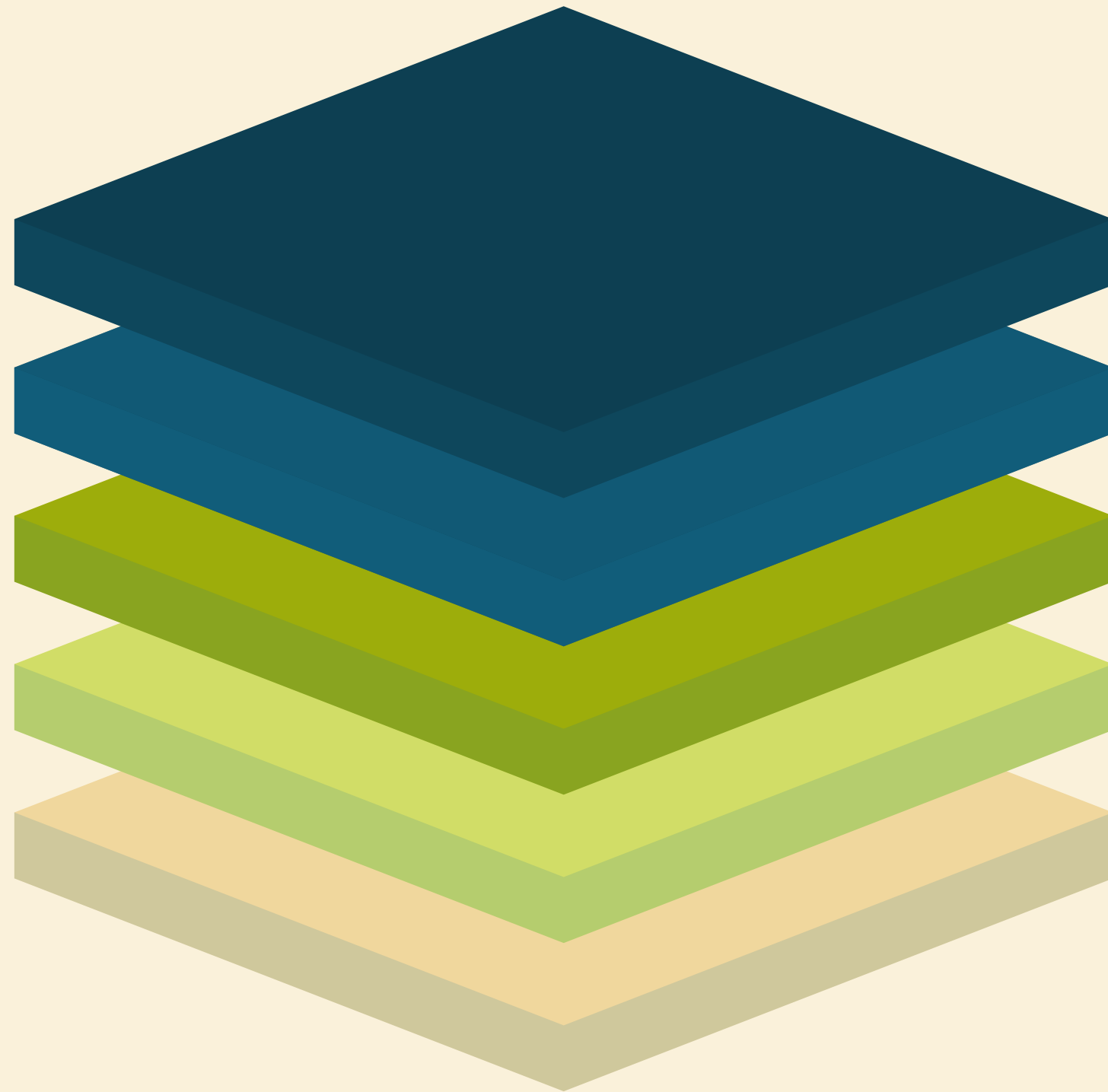
From Data to Action

Leading manufacturers are increasingly using workforce health data to:

- Identify emerging risks before injuries occur
- Prioritise high-risk departments
- Inform wellbeing investment
- Support ageing workforces
- Improve Fitness for Work decisions
- Reduce preventable absence
- Strengthen operational resilience



Questions Manufacturing Leaders Should Consider



01

How does our workforce compare with the wider manufacturing sector?

02

Which health risks are increasing within our organisation?

03

Which departments require targeted intervention?

04

Are we using health data proactively or simply for compliance? Can we demonstrate improvements over time?

05

Are our current programmes delivering measurable outcomes?



Why LifeCare?

LifeCare supports organisations across NZ with **integrated occupational health solutions** that combine **clinical expertise** with **actionable workforce intelligence**. Rather than delivering isolated health assessments, we help organisations **understand the trends behind the data** and prioritise interventions that improve both employee wellbeing and business performance.

Our services include:

- Workplace Health Monitoring
- Pre-employment Medicals
- Functional Capacity Assessments
- Random Drug & Alcohol Testing
- DL9 Driver’s Medicals
- Respirator Fit Testing
- Mental Health Training
- Fatigue Assessments
- Flu Vaccinations
- Nationwide Mobile Clinics

Benchmark Your Workforce

Every manufacturing workforce is different. The most valuable question is not whether these trends exist across NZ. It is whether they exist within your organisation.

LifeCare can help benchmark your workforce against manufacturing health trends, identify emerging risks and provide practical recommendations tailored to your operations. **Understanding your workforce today is one of the most effective ways to reduce tomorrow's health, safety and productivity risks.**

We are where you are!

The LifeCare team is based all over the country. We bring our staff as required to service our clients in any location.

LifeCare Mobile Clinics





Thank you!

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