

**NOHSAC**

National Occupational Health  
and Safety Advisory Committee

*Komiti Tohutohu Mahi A-Motu Hauora me te Haumaru*

# The Evolving World of Work: Implications for Occupational Health and Safety in New Zealand

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# Evolving World of Work

- With the changes in patterns of employment and new technologies, it has become more important to anticipate different, often new, work-related hazards and risks if they are to be effectively managed.
- Many long-standing OSH concerns need to be reconsidered in the light of changing patterns of work and technologies.

# The Burden of Occupational Disease and Injury in NZ

- Each year in New Zealand there are:
  - about 700–1,000 deaths from occupational disease, particularly cancer, respiratory disease, and ischaemic heart disease
  - about 100 deaths from occupational injury
  - 17,000–20,000 new cases of work-related disease
  - about 200,000 occupational accidents resulting in ACC claims
  - \$NZ 20.9 billion social and economic cost of occupational disease and injury (2004/05).

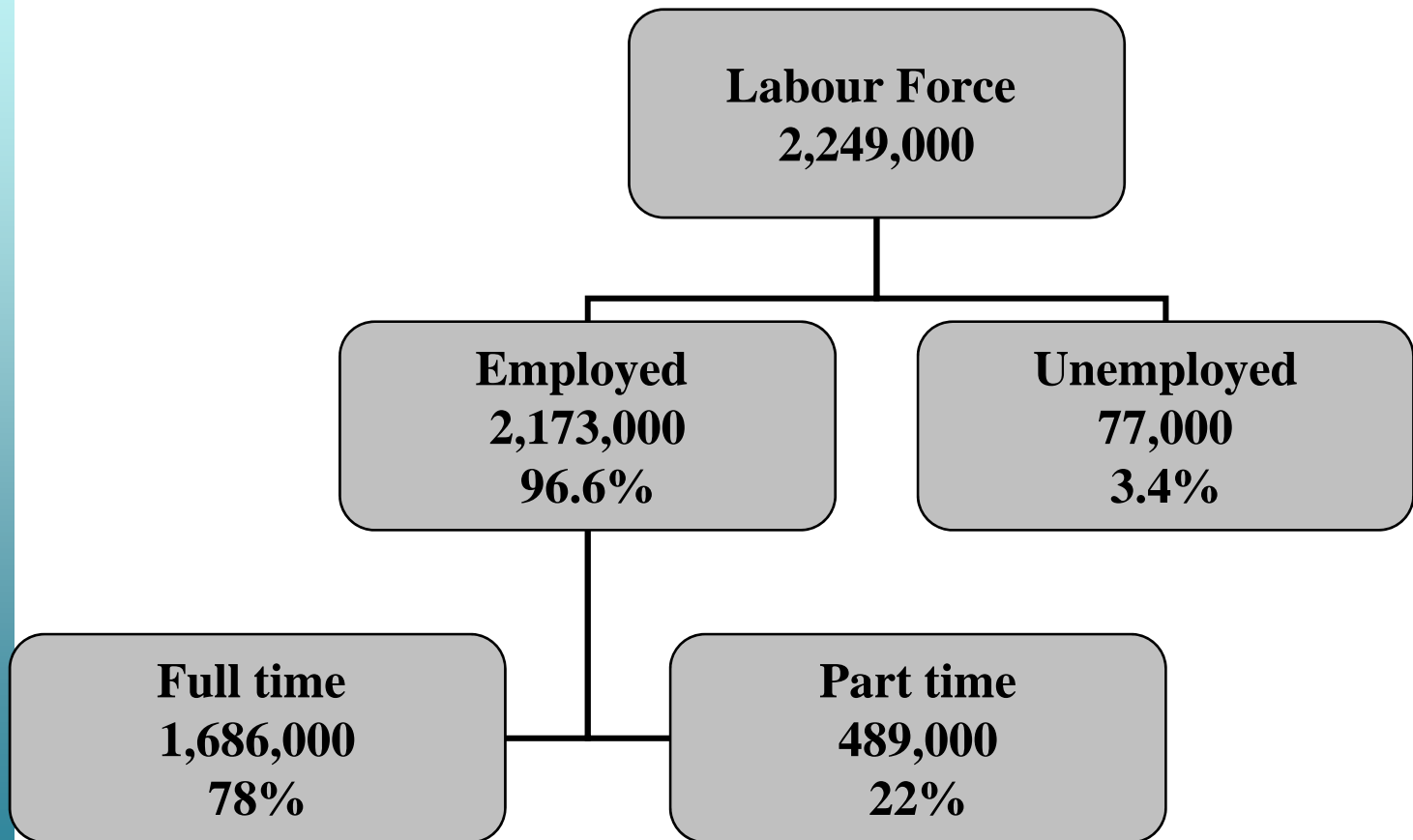
# Evolving Working Environment

- The working environment in New Zealand, in keeping with the experience of most western industrial societies, has undergone massive change in the past two decades.
- This change has been most pronounced in growth of the contingent workforce.
- There has also been dramatic change in the demographics of the labour market, particularly the growth in labour market participation by women.

# Labour Market



# Labour Market

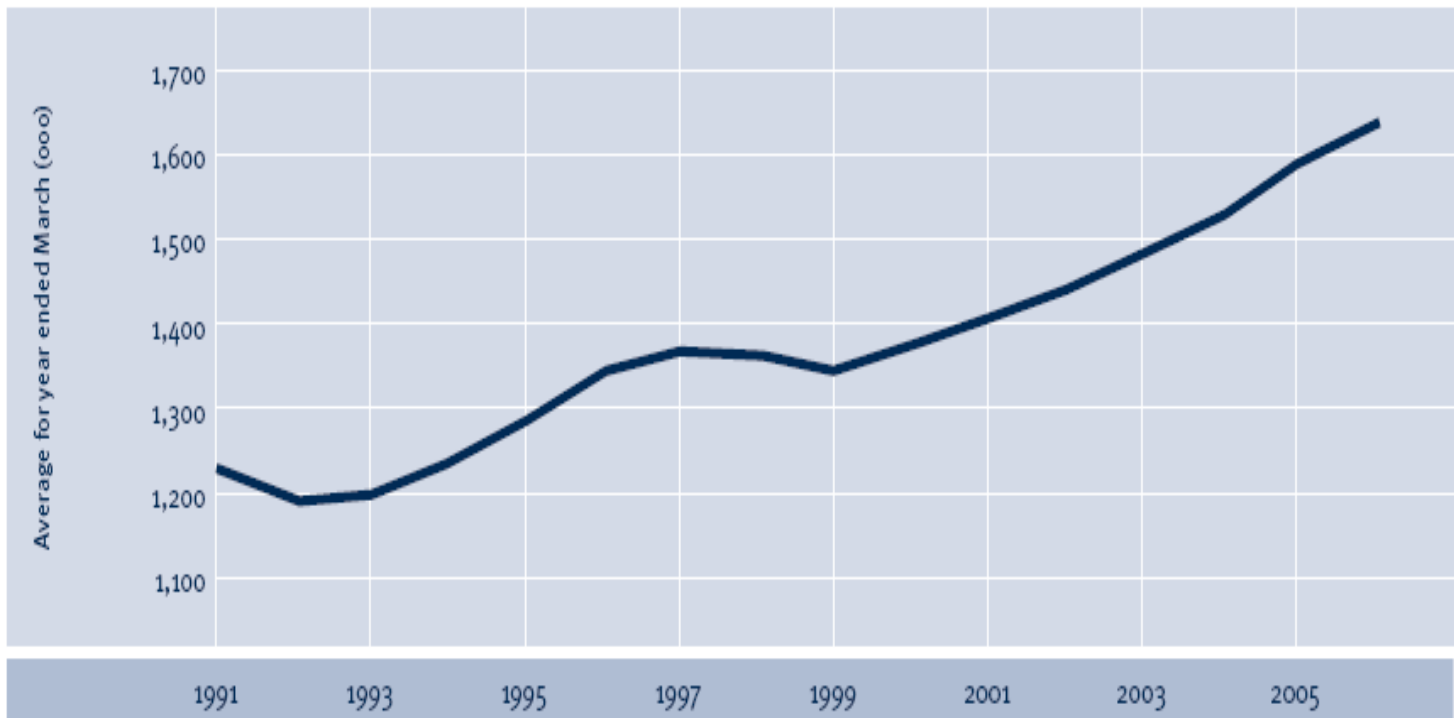


# Labour Market

- The strong growth in labour demand over the last half decade has resulted in more people being drawn into the labour force in both full-time and part-time forms of employment.
- Currently, there are about 3.3 million working age people in NZ, out of which 2.3 million are in the labour force, either engaged in paid work or looking for work.

# Full time employment

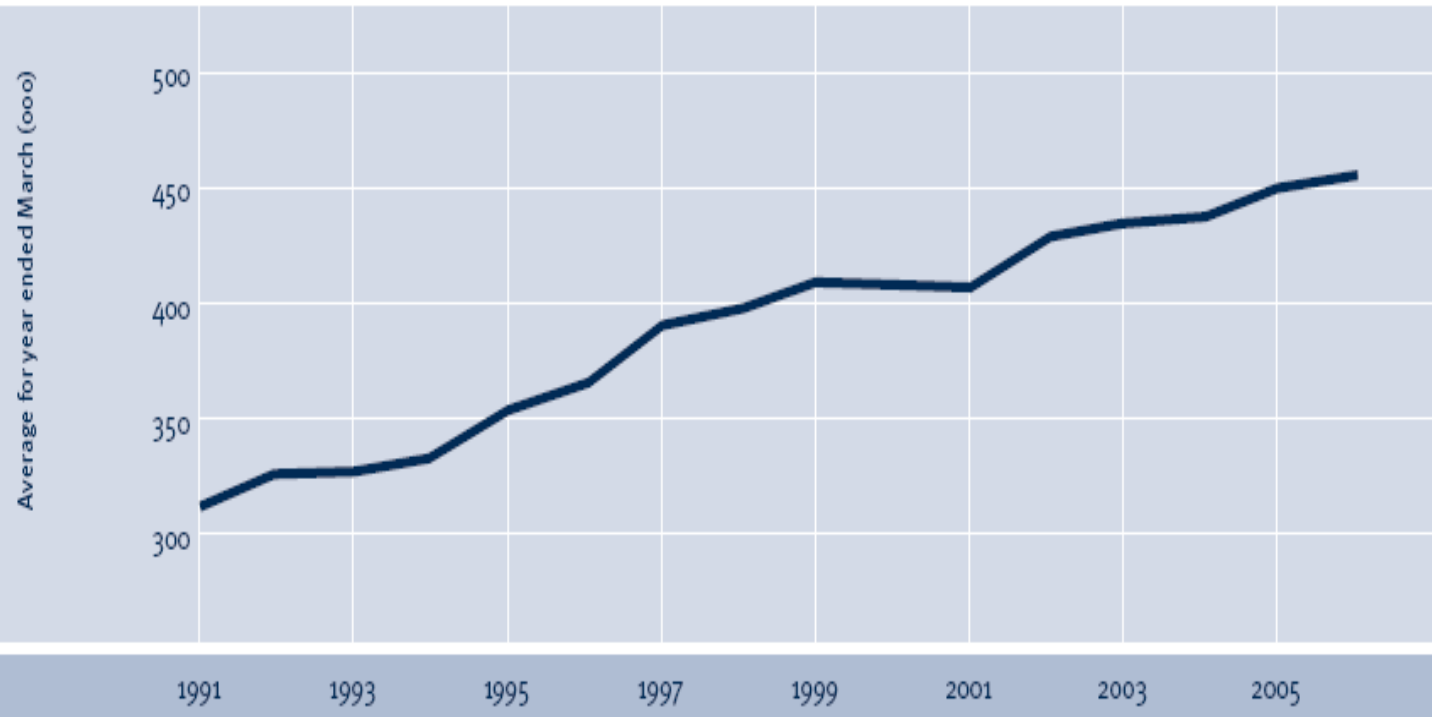
**FIGURE 3.3** People employed full-time, 1991–2006<sup>18</sup>



# Part time employment

**FIGURE 3.4**

People employed part-time, 1991–2006<sup>18</sup>



# Labour Market trends

- There is not only an increase in earlier trends in labour force participation (such as the continuing growth in labour force participation of women), but a redrawing of traditional boundaries of the labour market (especially the strong growth of older workers in the paid workforce).

# Labour market trends

- Analysis of the Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) indicates that the growth in the labour force participation rate is coming primarily from people who were previously absent from the New Zealand tax system, rather than people moving from being on benefits into the labour force.
- This is attributed to four groups:
  - young people transitioning into the labour market
  - older people coming out of retirement
  - people returning to the labour force after child rearing
  - people migrating into New Zealand.

# Modes of Production

- Underlying these changes in the labour market have been associated structural change in modes of production in many industries with the:
  - emergence of new technologies
  - outsourcing of elements of production
  - reduction in the size of units of production
  - emergence of new forms of work organisation.

# Regulatory Framework

- All of these shifts have occurred relatively shortly after the transition to performance based regulation of occupational health and safety.
- The New Zealand OHS regulatory framework is largely designed to deal with a permanent workforce in large organisations, rather than those engaged in casual, temporary, and precarious forms of employment.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

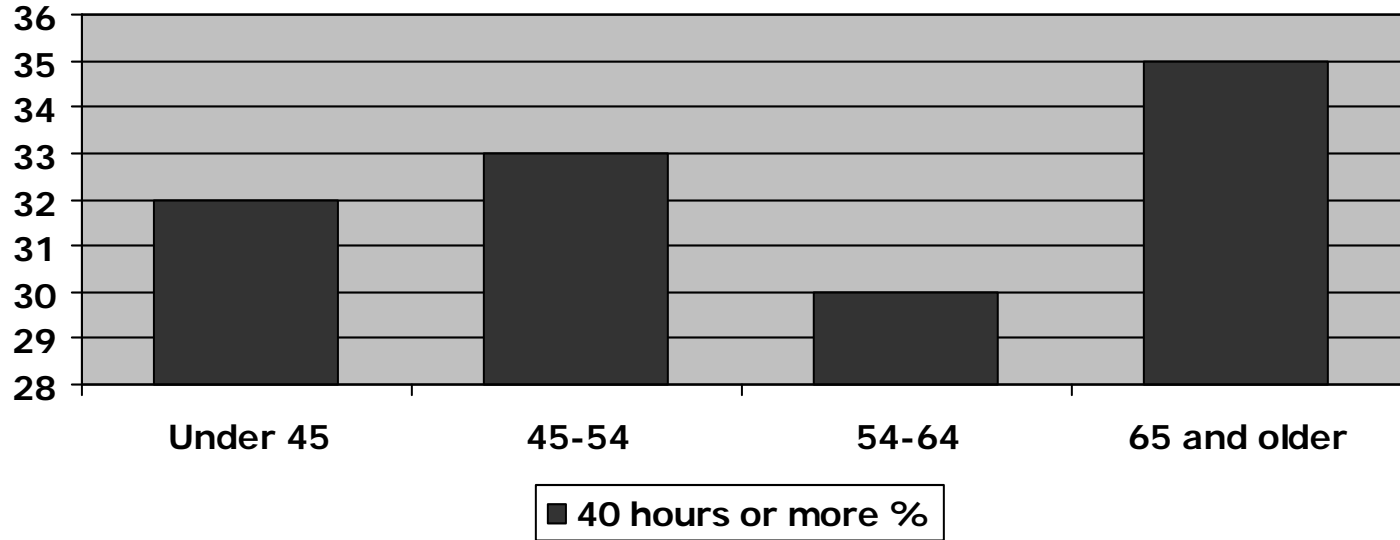
- An increasing need to engage with a more demographically diverse working population (especially female, Maori and Pacific Island workers, younger and older workers).
- Physical risks - long established ergonomic and other risk factors such as noise, vibration will be accentuated by:
  - poor job security
  - fear of the future
  - longer working hours
  - increased work pace
  - older working age.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- Hazardous Substances
  - Because of different physiological sensitivities, young workers, pregnant women and women of child bearing age are more vulnerable to exposure to hazardous substances than the standard healthy 70 kg male worker, who is usually taken as a model for toxicological research and the development of occupational exposure limits.
  - The fact that vulnerable workers represent an increasing proportion of the world's workforce will eventually lead to a major reconsideration of the methodology currently used to determine such limits.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- The re-emergence of hazards such as fatigue arising from the long hours worked by many employees.



# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- A study into working hours in 2002 found several external and internal pressures on individuals to work excessive hours. Some reasons for this include:
  - money
  - job insecurity
  - under-staffing
  - commitment to work
  - ‘nature of the job’
  - expectation of voluntary work as part of the job.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- While men may work longer in paid employment, women work longer unpaid hours, so that when the two are combined, men and women work quite similar hours.
- The combination of paid and unpaid work can lead to long hours that may be otherwise overlooked. Especially in terms of OHS risks, scrutiny of long hours should clearly examine the total load of paid and unpaid work.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

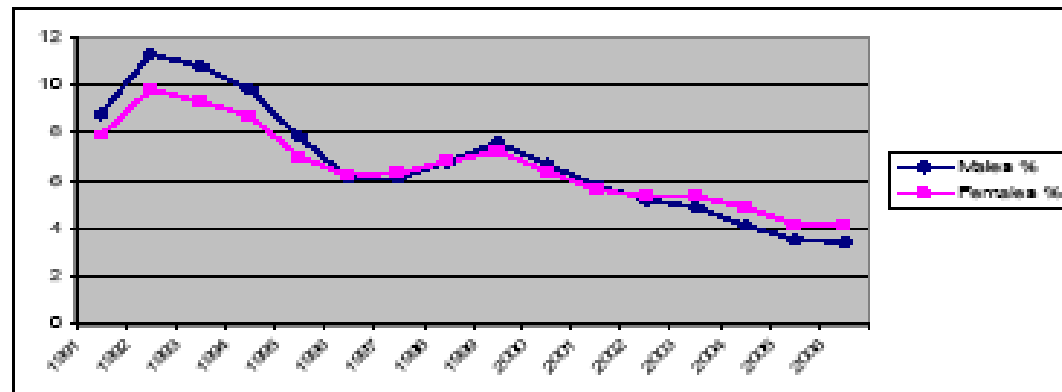
- Increased risks arising from poorer training, shorter employment periods and decreased reporting of incidents amongst employees engaged in more precarious work arrangements.
- These arrangements are often associated with risk shifting manifested in outsourced and supply chain arrangements.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- Contingent Work
  - There is now compelling evidence that job insecurity and a number of contingent work arrangements (notably subcontracting, home-based work and temporary employment) have serious and often long-term effects on worker health and wellbeing.
  - When assessing net health effects it should be noted that in New Zealand, and indeed most industrialized countries, far more persons occupy contingent jobs or experience job insecurity than are unemployed.

# OHS challenges in New Zealand

- Overall, it appears probable that any health gains from reduced unemployment will or have been swamped by the losses associated with job insecurity and contingent work.



# Challenges for regulatory agencies

- Arrangements that once worked for a more homogenous workforce engaged by clearly distinct, formal workplaces need to become more sensitive to the risks associated with an increasingly fragmented labour market.
- Examples of this are contained within NOHSAC's review of the Efficacy of OHS Instruments.

# Challenges for regulatory agencies

- Contingent work presents two overlapping sets of challenges for regulators:
  - There is evidence that these arrangements lead to an overall deterioration in OHS outcomes and as such offset efforts to improve these outcomes over time.
  - The growth of flexible work also weakens or undermines the very regulatory regimes designed to:
    - protect workers from injury and disease and
    - provide compensation and rehabilitation/return to work of those who suffer injury or disease through their employment.

# Challenges for regulatory agencies

- The more vulnerable labour market position of many contingent workers may impair their capacity to take time off for non-work injuries.
- Premature retirement due to chronic disabling injury or the inability to retain employment is likely to have spill over effects on family and other dependents, as well as the broader community, even where other forms of social safety nets are in place.

# Challenges for regulatory agencies

- There is a need to develop better monitoring and surveillance of:
  - Hours of work to better capture both fatigue (arising from duration) and stress (associated with who determines hours and intensity of work).
  - The operation and impact of employment situations where workers are engaged on the basis of non-standard employment contracts.
  - Risks of 'softer' (but no less problematic) injury such as:
    - stress
    - obesity
    - musculoskeletal disorders
    - hazards associated with nano and bio-technology.

# Challenges for regulatory agencies

- Develop new protocols built on data collected from better surveillance arrangements. Protocols are especially needed for new regimes of working time and precarious forms of employment.
- Protocols need to note how hazards are often compounded.
- The emerging demographic groups in the workplace are disproportionately represented in non-standard hours and precarious employment settings. Their disadvantaged status in the labour market limits their bargaining power and makes them vulnerable to unsafe or hazardous working situations.

# Challenges for regulatory agencies

Supplement established enforcement structures with new arrangements:

- The changing structure of businesses means greater attention needs to be devoted to engaging more effectively with supply-chain and similar arrangements.
  - (While 70 percent of employees are engaged by four percent of businesses, the remaining 30 percent are not necessarily randomly scattered amongst isolated business units).
- Engaging with supply chains and other production/service provision networks can provide an effective way of monitoring and enforcing OHS standards. Such arrangements are important for protecting the self-employed in particular.

# NOHSAC Reports 2008/09

- The Evolving Work Environment – December 2008
- Occupational Health and Safety in Small Businesses – December 2008
- Work relatedness of Occupational Disease and Injury – December 2008
- Women's Occupational Health and Safety – April 2009