

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Covid 19 has had a significant impact on the region's workforce and businesses in the last 2 months.

The numbers of commuters travelling into Wellington City fell by 25,000 per day, during the red level setting. With many people working from home, Wellington CBD cafe, restaurant and bar revenue dropped by 50% plus. 4% of businesses have either gone into hibernation or closed since January 2022. Despite this 190 businesses opened while 76 businesses closed in Wellington city in February 2022.

On Kāpiti Coast, absences due to Covid 19 have hit businesses hard. Business networks report that trades and other small businesses are down 30-50% of their staff. With no staff cover available, many businesses are closing early. Local manufacturers have seen cash flow drop 10-20%.

Migrant and ethnic community owned businesses, which are often sole operator or small family businesses, have been forced to close as owners or their households self-isolate. This has caused a lot of hardship.

COVID-19 has also disrupted study for many, with over 800 students at Weltec and Whitireia being absent due to COVID. In Wairarapa, UCOL has managed to stay open for face to face learning through the peak of Omicron. Changes to vaccine requirements at polytechnic's are being considered to allow all teachers and students to be present on campus.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Median house prices fell by 5.6% across the Wellington region from February 2022 to March 2022. The number of new dwellings consented (across all dwellings) from February 2021 to February 2022 in South Wairarapa (180) and Masterton (234) is at an all time record.

Source: REINZ Monthly Report March 2022 & StatsNZ Building consents issued



Those on Jobseeker work ready benefits decreased by 2,600 from March 2021 to March 2022. The number of Māori on Jobseeker support benefits decreased by approximately 870 and the number of Pacific peoples decreased by approximately 370 from March 2021 to March 2022.

Source: MSD Benefit fact sheets March 2022



Those on Main benefits decreased by approximately 2,400 from March 2021 to March 2022. The number of Māori on Main benefits decreased by approximately 680 and the number of Pacific peoples decreased by approximately 340 from March 2021 to March 2022. *Source: MSD Benefit fact sheets March 2022*

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- The Good to Great pilot project has helped over 160 managers, owners and supervisors in Wairarapa's primary sector, develop their people management skills** to become great employers. Once the project is evaluated and has funding, there is potential to make this programme available to other sectors and other parts of the region.
- There is growing demand from employers for more information and support to include disabled people in the workforce.** More employers are using Workbridge's [Just Say Yes](#) programme to build disability confidence. Currently the regional labour force participation rate for disabled people is just 28.2% and there is considerable opportunity to lift this through better connection with employers, greater visibility of disabled people and disabled-led initiatives.
- Gaming is being used to inspire interest in digital technologies and digital skills in Wairarapa.** The Wairarapa tech skills group is helping local high schools bring a national e-sports tournament to the region, and it is planning a showcase event of new technologies used in game development, such as virtual reality, coding and design. Through gaming, the group will build a local network of support and foster Wairarapa's future digital workforce.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Rural health care providers are struggling with staff shortages.** On Kāpiti Coast, a primary health care provider has five vacant positions, 12% of its total workforce. In Wairarapa, the Emergency Department has been hard hit by shortages leading to more pressure on staff.
- Rest homes and aged care facilities in Kāpiti and Wairarapa are short of nurses and caregivers.** Previously many vacancies have been filled through immigration. Employers are trying to train staff, but there are too few nurses to supervise student placements and some students have reportedly worked unsupervised. Employers who invest in training are frustrated to see staff 'poached' by other organisations.
- As demand for people with advanced digital skills remains high**, some of the region's technology companies are outsourcing work to Sri Lanka and India, with help from New Zealand brokering firms. Other companies are reporting a loss of experienced staff to Australian companies, along with recent graduates, attracted by well-paid employment and good development opportunities overseas.
- The number of enrolment applications in vocational education programmes at Weltec and Whitireia has dropped** by approximately 7% this year, a slightly smaller drop than elsewhere in New Zealand. This could potentially be due to the tight labour market, a lack of international students and less interest in tourism and hospitality programmes.

THE WELLINGTON REGION

Total consumer spending is still down by 16%, and by much more in food, accommodation and retail.

UCOL's popular apiculture programme is starting again with both a part time option and full-time learning option.

16 people have completed Wellington Water's inaugural infrastructure skills programme, gaining 40 credits over 6 weeks. All participants were hired as permanent employees and earned while they learned. 40% of recruits are women.

Vineyards are collaborating to source pickers for this year's grape harvest and are offering grape picking as a fundraising event to community organisations

Hutt Valley councils are building a network of infrastructure companies to tackle workforce issues ahead of major infrastructure projects

OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Considering feedback and ideas from our region on our draft workforce plan
- Finalising our Regional Workforce Plan
- Building relationships with Workforce Development Councils