

Pre-election survey - top issues for employers

Holidays Act reform still the top priority but Fair Pay Agreements and excessive sick leave also keeping employers awake at night.

In September 2023, we ran the fourth edition of our pre-election survey to understand what employers across Aotearoa want the incoming Government to focus on.

We received 181 responses from employer clients/HR professionals who were invited to select their top three employment priorities. For the respondents who chose Fair Payment Agreements (FPAs), we asked them to state whether they want to retain, repeal or amend the Act. This year we also asked respondents whether their organisation is looking to restructure or implement redundancies in the next six to 12 months. Here's what we found:

Summary

An overwhelming number of employers (**63%**) point to the need to simplify the Holidays Act as a top priority for an incoming government. This was followed by **33%** who want greater guidance on excessive sick leave/medical incapacity, with the third highest priority (**32%**) being a focus on FPAs (**81%** who selected this priority said they want the FPA Act repealed).

What really stood out this year though is the significant number of employers (**36%**) who say they are planning to restructure or implement redundancies within the next year.

Top priority: Simplifying the Holidays Act

For the fourth pre-election survey in a row, employers say that simplification of the Holidays Act is the top priority they want the incoming government to focus on. **63%** of respondents see Holidays Act reform as business critical. The result echoes our pre-election surveys of 2014, 2017 and 2020.

It has been four years since the government-appointed taskforce reported back with 22 recommendations for improvement and none of these have been enacted. It is clear that these recommendations to achieve an 'improved status quo' will do little to address the underlying complexity in interpreting and applying the Holidays Act.

One respondent says: *"We have to stop kicking the can down the road with the Holidays Act, it has to be a priority."*

While another says: *"It's an absolute shambles and the proposed legislation is not much better."*

Yet another: *"The Holidays Act is a nightmare to navigate with consistency and confidence, especially when for staff with variable hours."*



Greater guidance required on managing excessive sick leave

One third (**33%**) of survey respondents identified 'incapacity' as a top priority, referring to the need for more guidance from government for employers to help them manage excessive staff sick leave and medical incapacity.

One respondent says: *"Incapacity is at the top of my list because it feels like a minefield to deal with and is coming up more and more often in the workplace."*

Fair Pay Agreements: 'a fluffy academic ideal'

A third (**32%**) of respondents tell us that a top priority for the incoming government to focus on is Fair Pay Agreements. Of those who told us FPAs are at the top of their wish list, **81%** want the Fair Pay Agreements Act repealed and only **7%** want to keep it in its current form. This reinforces the results of our [survey](#) in May 2022 where **73%** of respondents were opposed to Fair Pay Agreements.

One respondent says: *"I support workers getting a fair wage and good conditions but think that FPAs alongside collective bargaining is going to create an untenable position for many employers."*

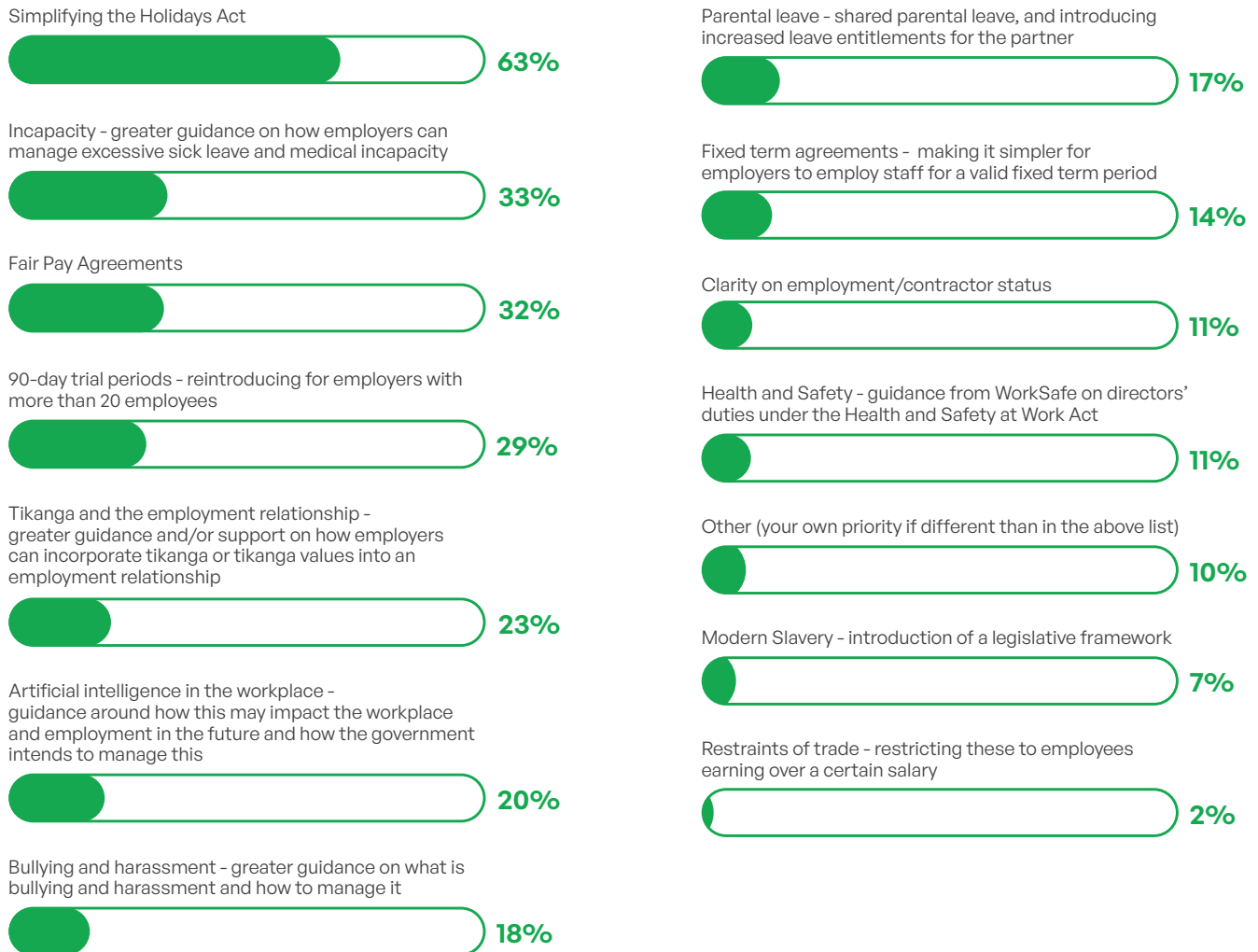
Another says: *"FPAs are a fluffy academic ideal that do not play out in real life."*

Redundancies loom

For the first time in our pre-election survey we asked respondents whether they have plans to restructure or implement redundancies in their organisations within the next six to 12 months. While **47%** say they have no plans to restructure, over a third (**36%**) of respondents say they do have plans to restructure or implement redundancies within a year. Meanwhile **16%** preferred not to respond to this question.

Summary of all responses

Q1. Please rank up to three employment priorities that you would like the incoming government to focus on.

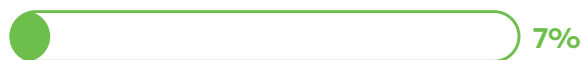


Q2. If you selected Fair Pay Agreements as one of your top three priorities, please specify whether you seek to:

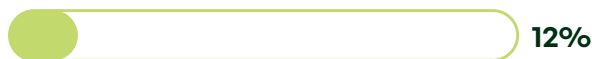
Repeal; or



Retain in the current form; or



Retain but refine/amend the framework



Q3. Is your organisation planning to restructure or implement redundancies in the next 6-12 months?

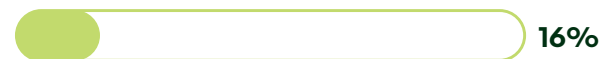
Yes



No



Prefer not to say



Methodology

The Simpson Grierson employment survey was conducted over ten days in September 2023, with responses from 181 respondents across New Zealand. We provided 13 potential employment priorities and asked respondents to select their top three, with the option to identify other areas of priority that were not listed.

Contacts



Phillipa Muir | Partner

DD +64 9 977 5071 M +64 27 593 5402
 phillipa.muir@simpsongrierson.com



Rebecca Rendle | Partner

DD +64 9 977 5208 M +64 21 302 476
 rebecca.rendle@simpsongrierson.com



John Rooney | Partner

DD +64 9 977 5070 M +64 21 499 365
 john.rooney@simpsongrierson.com



Bronwyn Heenan | Partner

DD +64 4 924 3557 M +64 21 809 959
 bronwyn.heenan@simpsongrierson.com



Ashleigh Inder | Senior Associate

DD +64 3 968 4040 M +64 21 348 194
 ashleigh.inder@simpsongrierson.com



India Townsend | Senior Associate

DD +64 9 977 5018 M +64 21 729 933
 india.townsend@simpsongrierson.com



Lucy Jenkins | Senior Associate

DD +64 4 924 3407
 lucy.jenkins@simpsongrierson.com



Rachael Judge | Senior Associate

DD +64 9 977 5446 M +64 21 241 5921
 rachael.judge@simpsongrierson.com



Mike Mercer | Senior Associate

DD +64 4 924 3530 M +64 27 313 1379
 mike.mercer@simpsongrierson.com



Jessica Greenheld | Senior Associate

DD +64 9 977 5409 M +64 21 280 5520
 jessica.greenheld@simpsongrierson.com