

The New Zealand Workplace Utilisation Report

Q2 2026

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of office attendance in the developed world. Yet we still have remarkably little evidence of what happens to that space once people arrive. This report brings the emerging international evidence on workplace utilisation together and reads it against the New Zealand market.



Each cell is a desk-hour. ■ occupied ■ lightly used ■ empty

New Zealand reports attendance near **64%** - but international sensor data shows far less of the space is actually in use across the week. The dark cells are capacity paid for and not consumed.

64%

AVERAGE NZ OFFICE UTILISATION
IN CBRE'S 2025 SURVEY - AHEAD
OF AUSTRALIA (52%) AND THE
AMERICAS (51%)

45%

GLOBAL WORKPLACE UTILISATION
MEASURED BY SENSORS, MARCH
2026 (XY SENSE) - THE GAP
SURVEY DATA CANNOT SEE

\$17k*

*ILLUSTRATIVE MODELLED COST OF
UNUSED DESK CAPACITY, PER DESK
PER YEAR, UNDER A 32% EFFECTIVE-
UTILISATION SCENARIO

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FOREWORD

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of office attendance in the developed world. Yet we still know remarkably little about what happens to the space once people arrive.

Attendance tells us that people came to work. Utilisation tells us which desks, rooms and settings they actually used - for how long, on which days, and at what intensity. After more than forty years designing and delivering New Zealand workplaces, I have come to believe this distinction is becoming one of the most important questions facing occupiers and property owners.

This report brings together the emerging international evidence on workplace utilisation and reads it against the New Zealand market. Its purpose is simple: to establish a consistent local conversation about how much workplace we actually use - and to begin building the benchmark New Zealand does not yet have.

David Gaze · Founder, Gaze Commercial

PREPARED BY	EXPERIENCE	COVERAGE	EVIDENCE BASE
David Gaze, Founder · Gaze Commercial	40+ years in workplace strategy and utilisation	New Zealand & Australia · Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Sydney, Melbourne	Leading global sensor and occupancy datasets, read against NZ & Australian property- market data

WHERE THIS SITS

A local benchmark, not a product

This report is intended to establish a continuing New Zealand benchmark for workplace utilisation. Internationally, utilisation is increasingly measured through sensor, occupancy and access data rather than attendance surveys alone. New Zealand has appeared within some international datasets, but has not yet developed a sustained local benchmark that brings utilisation, property markets and workplace design together.

This report is my contribution to that conversation. The perspective is deliberately practical: I have spent more than four decades designing and delivering workplaces for New Zealand organisations, and that experience is a useful counterpoint to the increasingly sophisticated datasets emerging internationally - because what the data says people are doing, and what that means for the workplace they occupy, are not always the same thing.

Future editions will progressively incorporate more direct New Zealand observations alongside the international datasets, allowing the benchmark to become increasingly local in character. Gaze also measures workplaces directly, through GazeSensors™, its sensor-based measurement platform, and early readings from an initial instrumented sample are used selectively in this edition for local context - never as a substitute for the international datasets, or as a representative New Zealand benchmark.

01 / GLOBAL **How offices are actually used**

Survey data tells us how organisations and employees report using the office. Sensor, access-control and portfolio-utilisation data add another layer: they show what actually happens inside the workplace over time.

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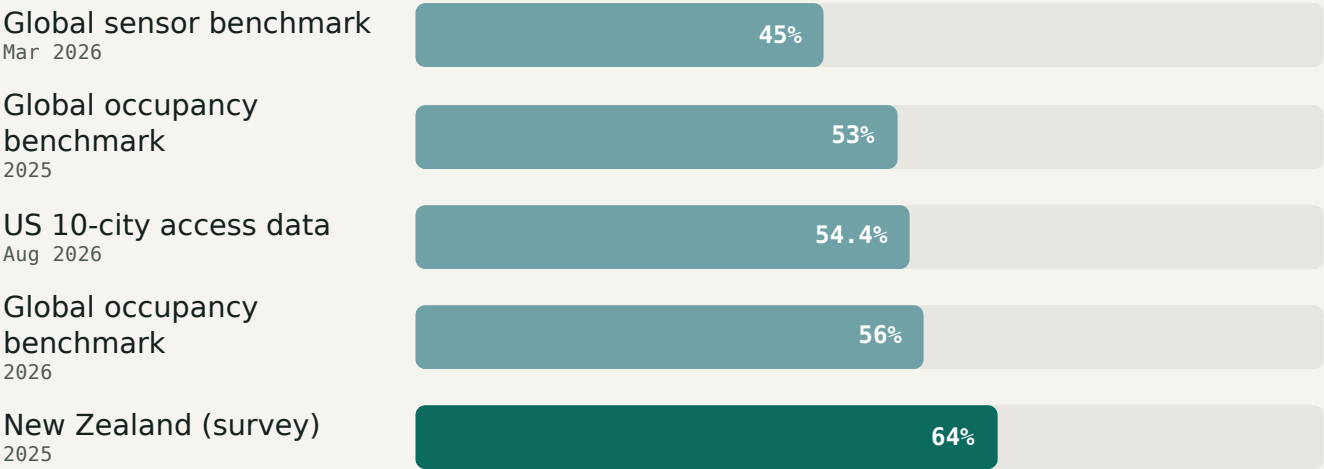
I've read a lot of these datasets over the years, and what strikes me is how little they actually disagree. The methodologies differ and the headline numbers wobble, but the shape is always the same - busy on Tuesday, hollow on Friday, and full of rooms nobody booked. That consistency is the point: it means the pattern is real, not an artefact of one company's sensors.

Several major global benchmarks now provide this view at scale. Their precise methodologies differ, but they consistently show three characteristics of the post-pandemic office: utilisation remains materially below full capacity; demand concentrates into particular days and settings; and the traditional desk-heavy office is increasingly misaligned with how people actually work. The numbers vary by dataset. The pattern does not.

Utilisation remains well below full capacity

Latest published global benchmarks, 2025-2026

Different methodologies and populations - shown together for range, not as a single series.



SOURCES, TOP TO BOTTOM: XY SENSE; CBRE; KASTLE; JLL; CBRE NEW ZEALAND. DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES AND POPULATIONS - SHOWN FOR RANGE, NOT AS ONE SERIES.

The most important point is not the decimal. It is that even the higher global measures sit materially below full-time capacity - and that the New Zealand survey figure, the highest on the chart, measures something different from the rest: reported attendance, not sensor-measured space use.

Calm averages, strained peaks

Weekly averages conceal the problem that matters most to planners: when demand arrives. XY Sense records global utilisation at 52% on Tuesday and 51% on Wednesday, against just 30% on Friday. HubStar, measuring more than 300 million square feet across 173 buildings in 13 countries, finds the same shape independently - Tuesday its busiest day at 58.6%, Friday its quietest at 34.5% - a pattern it reports as broadly consistent across three years of data.

52%

Tuesday utilisation, globally - the busiest day of the week

XY SENSE · Q1 2026

30%

Friday utilisation, globally - the quietest, a 22-point swing from peak

XY SENSE · Q1 2026

58.6%

Tuesday peak in HubStar's index - the same midweek concentration, measured separately

HUBSTAR · 2025

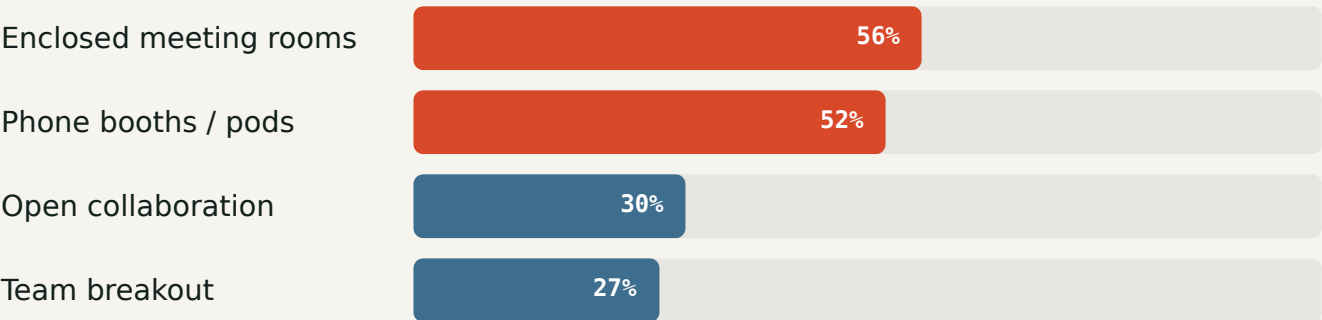
The practical consequence is a workplace that can read as half-empty across a week while running short of the right rooms and desks on a Tuesday morning. Averages justify consolidation; peaks constrain it. Both are true - and only measurement at the building and floor level resolves the tension.

We're building for the wrong room

The evidence also points to a change in the type of space people want. Enclosed and private settings consistently outperform the open zones that dominated a decade of fit-outs.

Utilisation by space type

Daily utilisation by setting, global sensor data.



SOURCE: XY SENSE, LATEST INDEX.

HubStar sharpens the same point from the other end. It finds that rooms designed for one to three people run only 43.8% full when occupied - a sign they are typically holding a single person on a call, a category it now calls the 'Zoom room'. And it estimates that 30 to 40% of booked meeting rooms are never actually used at all. The estate is oversupplied with the room nobody books and undersupplied with the one everyone fights over.

Smaller meetings dominate

XY Sense reports that 94% of meetings involve six people or fewer, with nearly 40% of meeting-room sessions holding a single person. HubStar independently finds 80% of meetings take place in rooms built for six or fewer. A portfolio designed around occasional large meetings carries a great deal of low-demand space while under-supplying the small rooms people need every day.

The empty desk, measured

The desk remains the largest single element of most workplace portfolios. The latest sensor data shows how little of it is consumed.

25%

of desks go completely unused on any given day

XY SENSE

65%

are occupied for less than three hours a day

XY SENSE

17%

are used for five or more hours a day

XY SENSE

These figures do not, on their own, support a single precise average-hours number without assumptions about how desks sit within each band - so this report does not invent one. Read transparently, and treating the published bands as mutually exclusive, they imply an evidence-bounded range of roughly 1.4 to 3.4 desk-hours across a 7.5-hour day, or about 19% to 45% effective desk-hour utilisation. The midpoint is approximately 32%. That 32% is a modelling assumption, carried openly through the cost model in Section 03 - not a measured New Zealand utilisation rate.

The office isn't simply half-empty. It's **unevenly full - concentrated into particular days, particular rooms and particular hours.**

THE REPORTING GAP IS NOT ATTENDANCE. IT IS CONSUMPTION.

02 / NEW ZEALAND The local picture

New Zealand is an outlier on office attendance. That changes the strategy. The lever is not getting people back - they are already here. It is understanding how a relatively high-attendance workforce occupies a relatively expensive portfolio.

DAVID GAZE • FOUNDER

New Zealand's high attendance has, I think, quietly let us off the hook. When the office looks full, nobody asks the harder question - not how many people came in, but how much of the building they actually used once they did. Making that the normal question to ask is, more than anything, what this benchmark is for.

Attendance is high - and steady

New Zealand's reported office utilisation runs at 64% across a typical week - up from 62% the year before, with employees reporting about 3.3 days a week in the office (CBRE's 2025 survey). The corresponding figures are 52% for Australia and 51% for the Americas. CBRE's definition matters: this is the percentage of office space occupied during a typical working week, drawn from survey responses - highly useful for understanding attendance, but not a sensor reading of every desk and room.

64%

New Zealand's reported
office utilisation

SURVEY • 2025

52%

Australia

CBRE • 2025

51%

Americas

CBRE • 2025

Attendance is not utilisation

This is the distinction at the heart of the report. The latest publicly verifiable XY Sense country-level data records New Zealand at 41% workplace utilisation during Q4 2024 and Q1 2025, described by XY Sense as steady through that period. That should not be read as a current 2026 sensor figure, or subtracted mechanically from CBRE's 64%. The two datasets answer different questions - one captures reported attendance across a working week, the other measures physical space use through sensors. The distinction is more valuable than the arithmetic.

64%

NZ reported office utilisation

SURVEY · 2025

41%NZ workplace utilisation recorded by
XY Sense

SENSOR DATASET · Q4 2024-Q1 2025

DIFFERENT DATASETS, DIFFERENT METHODS

Not a like-for-like gap - but a revealing difference between what people report and what sensors measure. CBRE / XY Sense

Whichever measure is used, the same conclusion holds: a meaningful share of the space an organisation pays for is not being actively consumed. What New Zealand lacks is a continuous local dataset that would show, building by building, when people arrive, which desks they use, which rooms are under pressure and which settings sit idle. That is the local evidence gap this benchmark exists to close.

A market splitting on quality

The property market provides the second piece of the picture: a clear divergence between prime and secondary stock.

CENTRE (Q2 2026)	VACANCY	PRIME RENT	SIGNAL
Auckland CBD	15.8%	~NZ\$620/m ² net	Premium grade extremely tight (~2.1%); secondary soft at 21.7%. Strong flight to quality.
Wellington	18.4%	~NZ\$756/m ² gross	Public- and private-sector rationalisation lifting vacancy and tenant choice.
Christchurch	9.8%	~NZ\$420/m ² net	Tightest of the three; a development pipeline is expected to add supply.
Sydney CBD	13.9%	~A\$1,135/m ² gross eff.	Recovery underway; premium and A-grade demand driving rental growth.
Melbourne CBD	18.9%	~A\$773/m ² prime net face	Australia's highest CBD vacancy, but improving demand for better buildings.

NZ centres in NZ\$, Australian centres in A\$. The rents are quoted on each market's standard basis - net, gross, gross effective or prime net face - which treat building outgoings and tenant incentives differently, so they cannot be read like-for-like. Sources: JLL Q2 2026 (all vacancy and rents except Melbourne rent); Knight Frank Q2 2026 (Melbourne prime net face rent); PCA July 2026 (Australian vacancy cross-check).

The message is consistent: the market rewards quality while carrying substantial secondary capacity. For occupiers, that makes measurement more valuable, not less. If you are paying a premium for prime space, you need to know whether it is actually being used.

Hybrid has settled, not swung

The evidence supports neither extreme. CBRE reports 93% of New Zealand organisations support hybrid working, at about 3.3 office days a week. JLL's 2026 global benchmark finds hybrid has become more structured, with 62% of organisations requiring a fixed number of in-office days and 70% of employees attending three to five days a week. The implication for property is stability, not reversal - and the open question is whether the physical workplace is configured for the pattern that has settled.

Every idle square metre has a price

Auckland office outgoings averaged about NZ\$137/m² last year, up 6.8% year on year (Bayleys' 51-building benchmark). Occupancy cost is not rent alone: it carries rates, utilities, cleaning, facilities, fit-out, technology and maintenance. So the real question is not simply how much space is empty, but how much capacity an organisation is paying to maintain, service and condition that its actual pattern of use does not require. That is a measurement question.

03 / COST **The cost of under-used desks**

This section deliberately separates published evidence from modelling assumptions. It does not claim that we have measured a New Zealand desk and found a specific dollar wasted. It shows what the published global desk-use distribution implies when applied to a transparent New Zealand cost scenario.

DAVID GAZE • FOUNDER

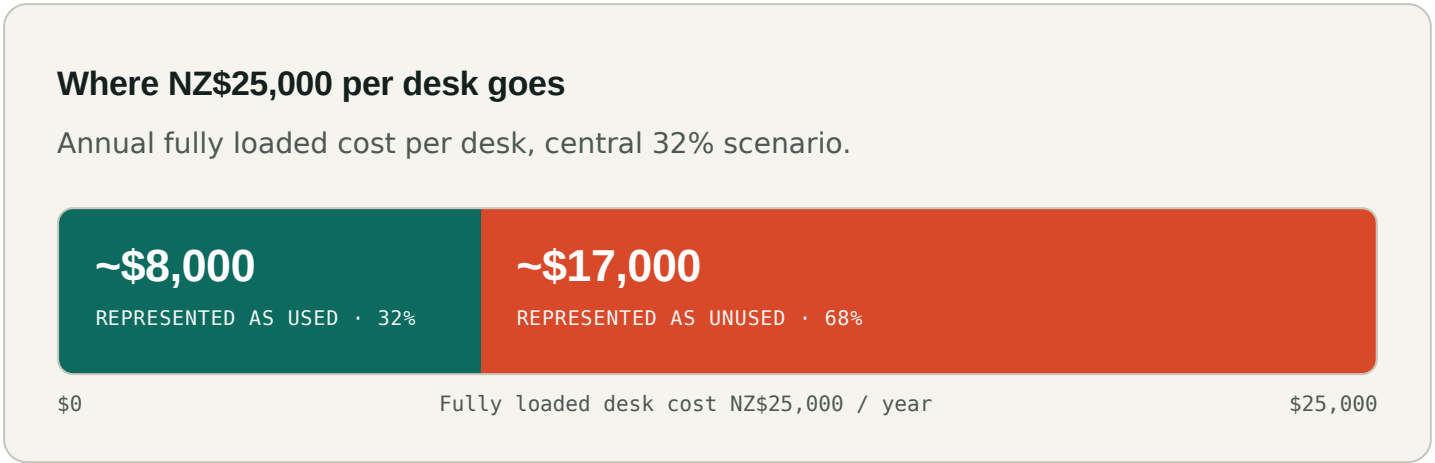
I've deliberately not dressed up the numbers here as a measured New Zealand finding, because they aren't one. This is a transparent scenario: pick a realistic desk cost, apply the global evidence, and look at the scale. The precise dollar isn't the point - it's that once you've seen the order of magnitude, you can't unsee it in your own floorplate.

The evidence, and its limits

XY Sense reports 25% of desks unused on a given day, 65% used for less than three hours, and 17% for five hours or more. Those bands do not, by themselves, yield one exact average duration. Treated as mutually exclusive, they imply roughly 1.4 to 3.4 hours per desk per day - about 19% to 45% effective desk-hour utilisation on a 7.5-hour day. The midpoint is approximately 32%, used below as an explicitly illustrative central scenario. It is not a measured New Zealand result.

The model, in one line

Take a fully loaded desk cost of NZ\$25,000 a year - lease, fit-out amortisation, services, energy and cleaning - across 240 working days and a 7.5-hour day, and apply the 32% central scenario.



The scenario indicates roughly NZ\$17,000 of annual capacity cost per desk not represented by active desk-hour use. This is a modelled capacity figure - not a claim that an organisation can simply remove NZ\$17,000 of cash per desk. Some capacity is deliberately held for peak days, resilience and future demand.

An evidence-bounded range



Across a 500-desk portfolio, that is an illustrative capacity-cost range of roughly NZ\$6.9m to NZ\$10.2m a year, with a central scenario near NZ\$8.5m. These are capacity-cost scenarios, not predicted cash savings - the distinction is the whole point.

What can realistically be released

This report makes no universal "\$3-5m saving" claim. Instead it models explicitly. If a 500-desk portfolio moved from the central 32% scenario toward 45% effective utilisation, the theoretical reduction in required capacity is about 147 desks - roughly NZ\$3.7m of annual capacity cost. Toward 50%, about 181 desks, or roughly NZ\$4.5m. So NZ\$3.7-4.5m is an illustrative capacity-release scenario, not a forecast of cash savings. Actual recovery depends on leases, floorplates, fit-out, timing, relocation costs and how much space can genuinely be surrendered. That is exactly why local measurement matters.

04 / STRATEGY

What it means for New Zealand organisations

DAVID GAZE • FOUNDER

After four decades designing New Zealand workplaces, one thing has become increasingly clear to me: the workplace people say they want and the workplace they actually use are not always the same thing. We have spent much of the last decade designing around headcount rather than behaviour. The mistake now would be to conclude that this simply means fewer desks. It doesn't. It means we need better evidence about which space people need, when they need it, and why.

Right-size to real demand, not headcount

With premium space tightening and secondary space soft, the opportunity is to consolidate into fewer, better-located workplaces sized around measured peak demand rather than historic headcount. The objective is not maximum occupancy - it is the right amount of capacity in the right places.

Rebalance the space mix

The global evidence points consistently toward stronger demand for smaller, enclosed and private settings than for generic open space. It is a pattern I see directly in our own work: across the fit-outs we deliver, the rooms clients ask to add back are almost always the small enclosed ones - the quiet room, the focus booth, the four-person meeting room - while the space that quietly stops being used is the large open zone. The New Zealand market is already moving this way, taking less floor area and putting more of the budget into the parts of the office people actually use.

Design hybrid policy from data, not mandate

High attendance does not mean every day is equally busy; demand concentrates midweek. Organisations should understand their own peak days and hours before deciding how many desks, rooms and floors they need. The right answer may differ building by building.

Condition only what is occupied

Where building systems allow, occupancy information can drive more responsive management of HVAC, lighting, cleaning and room availability. The principle is simple: do not condition, clean or service space blindly when actual demand can be measured. The scale of any energy saving should be established building by building, not assumed.

Five questions every workplace leader should be able to answer

Most organisations cannot answer these from evidence today. That, in one list, is the gap this report argues New Zealand needs to close.

1. On your busiest day, do you have enough of the *right* rooms - or just enough total floor area?
2. What share of your desks were used for a full day last week - and what share for less than three hours?
3. When your enclosed rooms are occupied, how many are holding a single person on a call?
4. If attendance runs around 60%, is the rest of the floor genuinely held for peaks - or simply unmeasured?
5. Which is the bigger number in your portfolio: the space you run short of on Tuesday, or the space nobody touches on Friday?

If these cannot be answered from evidence, the organisation is managing its largest fixed cost by assumption - which is precisely the gap this report argues New Zealand now needs to close.

05 / THE GAP **Toward a New Zealand benchmark**

Global sensor-based indexes have established the category. New Zealand has strong attendance data and strong commercial-property data. What it does not yet have is a recurring, independently reported local sensor benchmark built from a sufficiently broad New Zealand dataset. That is the gap.

This report establishes the methodology and the evidence base for that benchmark: the international patterns that persist across datasets, read against the New Zealand market. Future editions will progressively fold in more direct New Zealand observations as the local measurement base grows - the ambition being a recurring national read on weekly and daily utilisation, peak patterns, city and sector differences, and the cost of under-used space. The destination is a New Zealand benchmark measured from local data. This edition is the case for building it.

ABOUT GAZE

The company behind this report

For more than forty years, I have designed, fitted out and delivered New Zealand workplaces through Gaze Commercial. That gives me an unusual vantage point on the utilisation question: I have spent decades helping organisations decide how much space they need, how it should be configured, and how people work within it. The next step is to measure what happens once the workplace is built.

GazeSensors™ is a privacy-first workplace-intelligence platform that brings real occupancy data into workplace strategy - not to replace workplace expertise with technology, but to give it a better evidence base. The readings shown in this report come from an initial instrumented sample; their purpose is local context, not a stand-in for the larger international datasets. The long-term aim is a New Zealand dataset that can sit alongside the country's existing property, workplace and economic benchmarks.

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APPENDIX A

Global benchmark snapshot

PUBLISHER	DATASET	COVERAGE	HEADLINE	KEY FINDING
XY Sense	Workplace Utilization Index, Q4 2025 + Q1 2026	63,000+ workspaces; 9 countries	45%	Tue 52%; Fri 30%; 25% desks unused daily
HubStar	Hybrid Occupancy Index 2025-26	300M sq ft; 173 buildings; 13 countries	-	Tue 58.6%; Fri 34.5%; 80% of meetings in rooms for ≤6
CBRE	Global Workplace & Occupancy Insights 2026	303M sq ft	53%	Peak utilisation ~80%
JLL	Global Occupancy Planning Benchmark 2026	84 organisations; 716M sq ft	56%	Actual-to-target gap narrowed to 18 points
Kastle	Back-to-Work Barometer	US 10-city index	54.4%	Tuesday peak above weekly average
CBRE New Zealand	Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025	NZ occupiers	64%	~3.3 office days/week
XY Sense - NZ	Q4 2024 + Q1 2025	NZ within country dataset	41%	NZ steady at 41% through the period

These datasets use different definitions, samples and methodologies. They are contextual benchmarks, not one harmonised series.

APPENDIX B

Cost-of-under-used-desk model

Gaze modelling · illustrative scenario, not a measured result.

Fully loaded desk cost	NZ\$25,000 / year
Working days	240
Working day	7.5 hrs
Evidence-bounded effective desk-hour utilisation	~19-45%
Central modelling scenario	~32%
Central modelled unused capacity	~68%
Unused capacity / desk / year	~NZ\$17,000
500-desk modelled capacity cost	~NZ\$8.5m

~32% is a central modelling assumption, not an observed NZ sensor result. XY Sense's published desk-use bands (25% unused; 65% under three hours; 17% over five hours) evidence the underlying pattern but do not themselves publish a single average.

APPENDIX C

Illustrative capacity-release scenario (500 desks)

Gaze modelling · illustrative scenario, not a forecast of cash savings.

147

Desks-equivalent released moving 32% → 45% effective utilisation · ~NZ\$3.7m/yr

SCENARIO

181

Desks-equivalent released moving 32% → 50% effective utilisation · ~NZ\$4.5m/yr

SCENARIO

Not a forecast of cash savings.

Actual recovery depends on leases, floorplates, fit-out, timing and how much space can be surrendered

ILLUSTRATIVE

METHODOLOGY & SOURCES

How this was built

Evidence base

This report draws on published workplace-utilisation and occupancy datasets from XY Sense, VergeSense, HubStar, CBRE, JLL, Kastle and Freespace, alongside New Zealand and Australian property-market data. It also draws on early observations from GazeSensors™, Gaze's sensor-based measurement platform, used selectively for local context.

The datasets are not treated as interchangeable. The purpose of bringing them together is to identify the patterns that persist across datasets, and then consider what those patterns mean in the New Zealand market. Where a source provides a New Zealand-specific figure, its reporting period is stated. Where datasets use different definitions, they are not mathematically combined. Where the evidence does not support a precise point estimate, the report uses a range or an explicitly identified modelling assumption. This is particularly important in comparing CBRE's survey-based New Zealand office utilisation with sensor-derived XY Sense utilisation.

Selected references

XY Sense. Workplace Utilization Index, Q4 2025 + Q1 2026 (global utilisation, weekday and desk patterns, meeting-size and space-type data); and Q4 2024 + Q1 2025 (New Zealand country-level utilisation of 41% through the period).

HubStar. Hybrid Occupancy Index 2025-2026 - 300M sq ft; 173 buildings; 13 countries. Tue 58.6%; Fri 34.5%; 80% of meetings in rooms for six or fewer; 1-3 person rooms 43.8% full when occupied; 30-40% of booked rooms unused.

Kastle. Back-to-Work Barometer - US 10-city index; 54.4% average.

Bayleys. Auckland Office Outgoings Benchmarking Report 2025 - 51 buildings; average outgoings NZ\$137/m²; 6.8% annual increase.

Knight Frank. Melbourne CBD Office Market 2026 - prime net face rent ~A\$773/m².

Property Council of Australia. Office Market Report, July 2026 - Melbourne CBD 18.9%; Sydney premium-grade vacancy 7.7% (cross-check).

Inland Revenue. Home-office square-metre rate 2025-26 - NZ\$57.30/m² (a tax-calculation rate, not used as a commercial occupancy-cost input here).

CBRE New Zealand. Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025 - 64% average office utilisation; 3.3 days/week; Australia 52%; Americas 51%.

CBRE. 2026 Global Workplace & Occupancy Insights - global utilisation 53% in 2025; peak ~80%.

JLL. Office Market Dynamics Q2 2026 (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Sydney vacancy and rents); and Global Occupancy Planning Benchmark 2026 (56% global utilisation; 84 organisations; 716M sq ft).

BEFORE PUBLICATION

The report distinguishes three categories of evidence: published external evidence (figures directly reported by the cited source); Gaze modelling (transparent calculations using published evidence and stated assumptions); and GazeSensors™, a source of directly measured New Zealand data. No external benchmark in this report should be read as a Gaze sensor reading, and the GazeSensors™ material reflects an initial instrumented sample rather than a national deployment. The report's objective is to establish the evidence base and methodology for the future New Zealand Workplace Utilisation Benchmark.



The New Zealand Workplace Utilisation Report · The Quarterly Workplace Utilisation Benchmark ·
Q2 2026 · Inaugural edition

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