NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACE DIVERSITY SURVEY 2023

DIVERSITY WORKS NZ

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INTRODUCTION

Within the rich cultural tapestry of Aotearoa New Zealand, diversity stands as a cornerstone of our collective strength. Workplaces, as a significant part of the human experience, have a fundamental role to play in fostering the inclusive conditions that are paramount in driving innovation, productivity and social cohesion.

However, with ever-evolving nuances related to personal identity and associated workplace behaviour, organisations remain under pressure to ensure that their people policies and practices mature at a pace consistent with the expectations of their employees and stakeholders.

Over the past three years, the approach to diversity management has experienced significant change in the wake of global protest campaigns related to marginalisation, combined with significant workplace disruption throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. With this, the work related to diversity and inclusion (D&I) has rapidly adapted to include equity as a primary area of focus (DEI). Looking ahead, the discourse continues to evolve through the addition of concepts such as belonging (DEIB), or through greater emphasis on equity by leading with the E in the acronym (EDI), or even through emphasising the link with social justice by adding justice as the leading concept in the acronym (JEDI).

We recognise the significance of this moment and, with this survey, seek to reflect the changing nature of the discourse. As such, a number of significant changes were made to the methodology that was applied in this year's survey. Details about the methodology are provided at the end of this report but, in brief, the most significant changes include:

- A shift from a focus on diversity management, to a more contemporary scope encompassing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

- Differentiation between responses from those who self-identified as having DEI responsibilities and those who did not self-identify as having DEI responsibilities (From here onwards referred to as "DEI respondents" and "non-DEI respondents".)

- An additional layer of granularity related to the various sub-groups in the public sector

- Additional dimensions of diversity, as well as refined descriptions in respect of established dimensions, to reflect contemporary nuances in classification

- Application of an intersectional lens in data analysis

Due to the changes in methodology, we refrain from making comparative statements in relation to findings in previous years' surveys.

One significant theme, and a key aspect of the analysis throughout this year's report, is the stark difference in responses between those with DEI responsibility, and those who do not hold DEI responsibility in their organisations. The responses from the former group reflect an informed view of the inventory of policies and practices in organisations, while responses from the latter group reflect perceptions of DEI policies and practices in their organisation. Those without DEI responsibility frequently returned less favourable responses than those with DEI responsibility.

Secondly, responses across various sections in the report indicate that initiatives with a more tactical and programmatic approach to addressing DEI are more prevalent than those that are associated with the formation of a strategic approach to DEI implementation.

Finally, the data revealed notable differences in strengths and weaknesses across the various sectors analysed, specifically in relation to inclusive leadership, allyship and dealing with socio-economic disadvantage. This presents opportunities for all sectors to learn from one another.

What follows is the report detailing the 2023 survey results.

DEI TRENDS AND PRACTICES

The first section of this report reflects the inventory of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies, practices and themes that were reported as the most important DEI dimensions and topics to organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand.

DEI dimensions most important to organisations

One of the objectives of this survey is to explore what issues and areas relating to DEI are perceived to be most important to organisations. Respondents were asked which diversity dimensions they perceive to be most important to their organisation, with the ability to select up to five options (Table 1).

This year we made some additions and edits to the selection options. Socio-economic background and migrant status were added as new options to better understand the extent to which these dimensions are perceived as being important to respondents' organisations. Meanwhile, Rainbow/LGBTQ+ was used instead of sexual orientation to be inclusive of gender diversity and minority genders, ageing and employment transition for younger staff were consolidated into the characteristic of age, and religion was broadened to faith/religion to be inclusive of spiritual beliefs beyond those of organised religions. This means that some dimensions are not able to be compared with previous iterations of the survey.

Diversity Dimensions	DEI respondents (%) N=1,406	Non-DEI respondents (%) N=282
Ethnicity	48.9	50.0
Gender	47.4	45.7
Rainbow/LGBTQ+	41.8	33.7
Age	39.0	22.6
Socio-economic background	36.3	27.0
Neurodiversity	35.1	14.9
Disability	34.5	27.7
Migrant status	31.2	18.7
Faith/religion	26.1	18.4

Table 1: Importance of diversity dimensions for organisations, by percentage

The table also shows the difference between DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents. It's evident that DEI respondents consistently show higher percentages compared to non-DEI respondents across most diversity dimensions, with the exception of ethnicity (1.1 percentage points higher). For example, the figure from DEI respondents on Rainbow/LGBTQ+ stands at 41.8 per cent, while non-DEI respondents are at 33.7 per cent. This pattern repeats for gender, age, socio-economic background, neurodiversity, disability, migrant status, and faith/religion.

There is, however, remarkable consistency between the diversity dimensions reported as being of high importance by both DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents, with the top three areas of focus being ethnicity, gender and Rainbow/LGBTQ+.

There is less consistency about the relative priority of the other dimensions of diversity, with the highest level of disagreement in the dimensions of neurodiversity (20.2 percentage points difference between DEI respondents, versus the perception of non-DEI respondents), age (16.4 percentage points difference), and migrant status (12.5 percentage points difference).

These differences between DEI and non-DEI responses highlight how crucial it is to effectively communicate DEI initiatives in bridging the gap between policy and perception. Transparent and consistent communication about DEI initiatives can foster a shared understanding of their importance, goals, and impact, reducing the likelihood of resistance or misconceptions within the workforce.

The biggest areas of opportunity in this regard are in the dimensions of neurodiversity, age and migrant status.

Communicating DEI efforts ensures that priorities are recognised for their importance but, moreover, it also creates a culture of co-design with the input of impacted communities, thus enhancing credibility around organisations' commitment to fostering diversity and equity.

DEI-related topics most important to organisations

This year, we asked respondents about what they think the most important DEI-related topics are in their organisations (Table 2). Due to the global and local expansion in breadth and depth of DEI-related topics and initiatives, we note that only four response options of earlier surveys were aligned with the topics in this survey: wellbeing, flexibility, bias, and bullying and harassment. As such, we once more refrain from a comparative analysis with earlier surveys.

DEI-Related Topics	DEI respondents (%) N=1,399	Non-DEI respondents (%) N=282
Wellbeing and mental health	39.2	42.6
Leadership development	32.0	27.7
Te ao Māori	30.0	34.8
Diverse recruitment	29.7	22.3
Flexible working	29.5	34.8
Bias awareness and mitigation	29.0	20.6
Team building and collaboration	29.0	25.2
Social impact/responsibility	27.2	25.2
Inclusive career development	27.0	20.2
Cultural intelligence	26.9	20.2
Anti-bullying and harassment	26.5	24.5
Te Tiriti responsiveness	26.0	25.9
Anti-discrimination	25.6	16.7
Allyship	18.0	8.9

Table 2: Importance of DEI-related topics for organisations, by percentage

As with the analysis on DEI dimensions, there are some areas of consistency in reporting by DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents.

Most notably, wellbeing and mental health, a critical aspect of employee welfare, received the highest response as a priority initiative by both DEI respondents (39.2 per cent) and non-DEI respondents (42.6 per cent).

DEI respondents' percentages generally align with the core principles of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Leadership development, crucial for promoting inclusivity, stands at 32 per cent for DEI respondents, however non-DEI respondents were less likely to identify this topic as being important to their organisation (27.7 per cent), identifying a gap in perception. Similarly, diverse recruitment and flexible working, pivotal components of inclusivity, were rated as important organisational topics for DEI respondents at 29.7 per cent and 29.5 per cent respectively. For non-DEI respondents, these topics were rated at 22.3 per cent for diverse recruitment, and a much higher rate of 34.8 per cent for flexible working, perhaps indicating this topic is promoted more widely.

Non-DEI respondents were more likely to rate te ao Māori as an important organisational topic at 34.8 per cent, compared to 30 per cent for DEI respondents. Te Tiriti responsiveness was similarly rated for both cohorts. Of notable interest is the difference in relative priority between te ao Māori and Te Tiriti responsiveness for both respondent cohorts. Both respondent cohorts assigned higher priority ratings to te ao Māori than Te Tiriti responsiveness (4 percentage points difference for DEI respondents and 8.9 per cent percentage points difference for non-DEI respondents), indicating that there is still a lack of understanding of the strategic relationship between these areas of focus, with an associated risk of initiatives related to te ao Māori being performative, rather than values based.

Notably, topics such as bias awareness and mitigation, team building, and social impact/responsibility show higher responses in those with DEI responsibility, highlighting a gap in awareness for non-DEI respondents.

The other areas of agreement between the two groups of respondents are, concerningly, at the other end of the scale. The lowest priority ratings, for both groups, were assigned to initiatives related to anti-discrimination and allyship.

Specifically, allyship was rated as important by twice as many DEI respondents (18 percent) as non-DEI respondents (8.9 per cent), while there was a nearly nine percentage point difference in anti-discrimination responses (25.6 per cent compared to 16.7 percent). While these variances are significant as they highlight gaps between those implementing and those experiencing DEI policy, it is of even higher concern that the value of allyship and anti-discrimination programmes are not being leveraged in efforts to address the highest priority diversity dimensions, specifically ethnicity.

DEI initiatives

In the survey, we wanted to learn about the prevalence of different methods of promoting DEI by asking what initiatives are used in organisations to do so. Respondents were asked to indicate what initiatives exist or operate in their organisations, with the ability to select as many options as applicable. The prevalence of each of the initiatives that were provided as response options is presented in Table 3.

DEI Initiatives	DEI respondents (%) N=1,400	Non-DEI respondents (%) N=280
Celebrations of diversity (e.g. cultural events, staff profiles, awards, etc.)	46.0	41.4
DEI-related policies (e.g. dignity at work, bullying and harassment, etc.)	45.9	39.6
Diversity employee resource/network group(s)	38.6	24.6
DEI strategy or plan	37.7	22.5
DEI committee or working group	36.6	25.4
Diversity data collection and analysis	36.0	26.1
A rationale (or business case) for DEI	34.2	17.9
DEI training	33.6	20.7
None of the above	2.4	8.9
Don't know	0.9	11.4

Table 3: DEI initiatives in organisations, by percentage

Most notably, from the above table, is that the biggest differences in responses between DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents are in respect of the rationale or business case for DEI (16.3 percentage points difference) and DEI strategy or plan (15.2 percentage points difference). This is unsurprising as one would expect DEI respondents to have a much higher level of awareness in these aspects.

However, when it comes to specific tactical interventions to build workplace inclusion, DEI respondents still report much higher awareness of various initiatives aimed at driving meaningful change.

DEI respondents reported more initiatives celebrating diversity through events, profiles and awards (46 per cent) compared to the non-DEI respondents (41.4 per cent). DEI respondents were also more likely to say they had DEI-related policies in their workplace (45.9 per cent) in contrast to the non-DEI respondents (39.6 per cent). They also reported higher rates of employee resource/network groups focused on diversity compared to the non-DEI respondents (38.6 per cent compared to 24.6 per cent respectively).

While these activities are commonplace DEI practices and may represent outputs of a strategic approach to DEI, they are not initiatives that inherently relate to, or are charged with the aim of, strategy development. This data reveals that those activities that are tactical or programmatic in nature are more reported compared with those that typically constitute or support a strategic approach to the implementation of DEI work.

While 37.7 per cent of DEI-respondents reported that their organisations have a DEI strategy or plan, fewer respondents identified the options that are usually required for strategy development, such as diversity data collection and having a rationale for DEI, as being present in their organisation.

Furthermore, while 36.6 per cent of respondents overall indicated that their organisations have a DEI committee or working group, of the 528 respondents that said they have a DEI strategy or plan, under half (258 or 48.9 per cent) indicated they also have a DEI committee or working group. This raises the question of who is deciding and feeding into the conversations that determine strategic DEI priorities in those organisations that do not.

In the same pool of respondents, only 225 and 220 respectively identified that their organisation conducts diversity data collection and analysis (42.6 per cent) and has a rationale (or business case) for DEI (41.7 per cent), which similarly raises issues as to what information/insights are being used and on what basis strategic priorities are being decided where these initiatives are not present.

As a final observation in this section, it is of concern that a considerable number of non-DEI respondents (20.3 per cent) either didn't know or answered none of the above for this question. This, again, highlights the importance of effective roll-out and ongoing communication of initiatives across the organisation. Lack of engagement with DEI initiatives across the organisation presents risks to outcomes and may have a significant adverse impact on the return of investment in DEI efforts.

Diversity data collection

Diversity data collection is an important activity for organisations progressing DEI work. It helps them to develop a more accurate picture of the diversity of employees present across their workforce, and it enables them to identify where there might be disparities in experiences and outcomes across the employee lifecycle through an equity lens.

In the 2023 survey we introduced a new question to better understand the different forms of diversity data collection within organisations. We asked respondents which diversity dimensions their organisations collected employee data on.

The results revealed some significant variations in diversity data collection practices. Our findings indicate that while diversity data collection on gender and ethnicity are reported as relatively common by DEI respondents, data collection for all other diversity dimensions listed were reported by less than one third of DEI respondents.

For non-DEI respondents, a quarter stated they didn't know what diversity data was collected. This is a considerable knowledge gap about what data their organisation may be collecting about employees.

Diversity dimensions	DEI respondents (%) N=1,397	Non-DEI respondents (%) N=281
Gender	42.5	34.9
Ethnicity	40.4	31.3
Age	32.2	32.4
Nationality/country of birth	30.4	21.7
Languages spoken	29.9	19.6
Disability	27.9	17.4
Iwi affiliation	25.2	16.7
Faith/religion	25.6	11.4
Sexual orientation	19.9	12.1
Neurodiversity	19.6	6.0
Caring responsibility	18.4	9.3
Socio-economic background	12.7	4.3
Transgender status/gender identity	9.0	6.4
Don't know	3.4	24.2
None of the above	2.9	7.1

Table 4: Diversity data collection in organisations, by percentage

The top three notable differences in data collection practices and perceptions between DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents, are in the aspects of faith/religion (14.2 per cent difference), neurodiversity (13.6 per cent difference), and disability (10.5 per cent difference).

It is important to note that data collection has complex privacy and human rights implications and should always be provided voluntarily with informed consent.
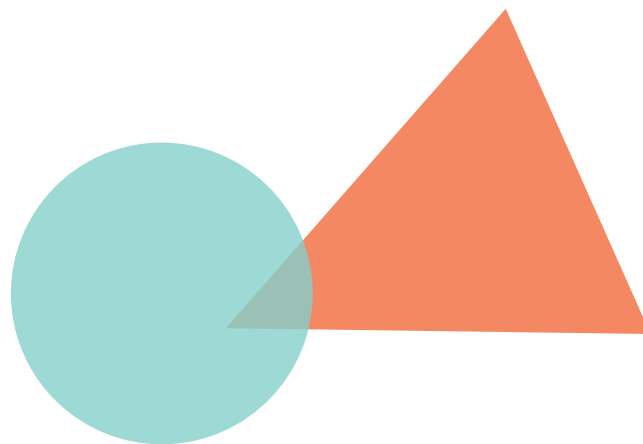
Measuring and evaluating DEI initiatives

As with previous iterations of the survey, we asked respondents whether their organisations formally measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives. Of 1,398 responses to this question from DEI respondents, 69.5 per cent said 'yes', while 23.6 per cent said 'no' and 6.9 per cent stated that they 'don't know'.

This year, we made a slight modification to the wording of this question. In the previous surveys, we asked respondents to indicate whether their organisation formally measured or evaluated the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives. This year, we asked the same question in relation to 'DEI initiatives'. This shift in terminology was made to reflect the evolving understanding of inclusion and equity efforts within organisations.

Those who said that their organisation measures and evaluates the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives were then asked what methods they apply to do so. We analysed the responses from those who have DEI responsibility in their organisation (Table 5).

Almost half of the 970 respondents (47.1 per cent) indicated their organisation uses 'employee focus groups, consultation, and other feedback mechanisms', which was the most reported selection option. Regular assessment/stocktake of DEI progress was the second most reported method of measuring effectiveness (43.4 per cent). Additionally, 42.9 per cent indicated their organisations use 'analysis of employee survey results' and 42.8 per cent indicated 'tracking of diversity data and metrics', revealing multiple data-driven methods of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

A slightly lower percentage of respondents (39.4 per cent) reported that their organisations use 'benchmarks (e.g., industry-level)' and 38.6 per cent reported their organisations participate in 'external accreditation programmes', indicating that slightly fewer organisations use external sources for DEI standards when measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of their work.

Methods of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of DEI initiatives	%
Employee focus groups, consultation, and other feedback mechanisms	47.1
Regular assessment/stocktake of DEI progress	43.4
Analysis of employee survey results	42.9
Tracking of diversity data and metrics	42.8
Use of benchmarks (e.g., industry-level)	39.9
Participation in external accreditation programmes	38.6

Table 5: Methods of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of DEI initiatives (N=970)

Analysing the extent to which organisations measure and evaluate their DEI initiatives by sector revealed some disparities. Those from public service and private sector organisations were the most likely to report that their organisations measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives (74.8 per cent and 74.3 per cent respectively). Respondents from local government responded positively at 70.7 per cent, while a smaller proportion of respondents (62.9 per cent) from the wider public sector reported the same thing.

Respondents from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were least likely to report that their organisation measures and evaluates the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives at 35.9 per cent – almost 39 percentage points lower than those from the public service and private sector.

KEY THEMES AND INSIGHTS

The second section of this report explores specific themes of interest in more detail. These themes are selected either based on a three-year rotational cycle in our methodology, or to further explore findings from a previous report, or to obtain insights related to emerging themes in DEI practices.

Inclusive leadership

In last year's report we noted that leadership in the private sector was viewed as being more inclusive than in the public sector. We wanted to explore this in more detail, as the previous data collection methodology did not provide for disaggregation across the various sub-sectors in the public sector, and it also did not provide for disaggregation based on DEI responsibility.

Respondents were asked how inclusive they perceived the leadership style of their organisation to be, with a scale of Likert responses from very inclusive to very exclusive. We analysed these responses by DEI responsibility, as well as by sector. Figure 1 shows the differences in sectors between the 1,520 respondents with DEI responsibility, and the 337 respondents without DEI responsibility.
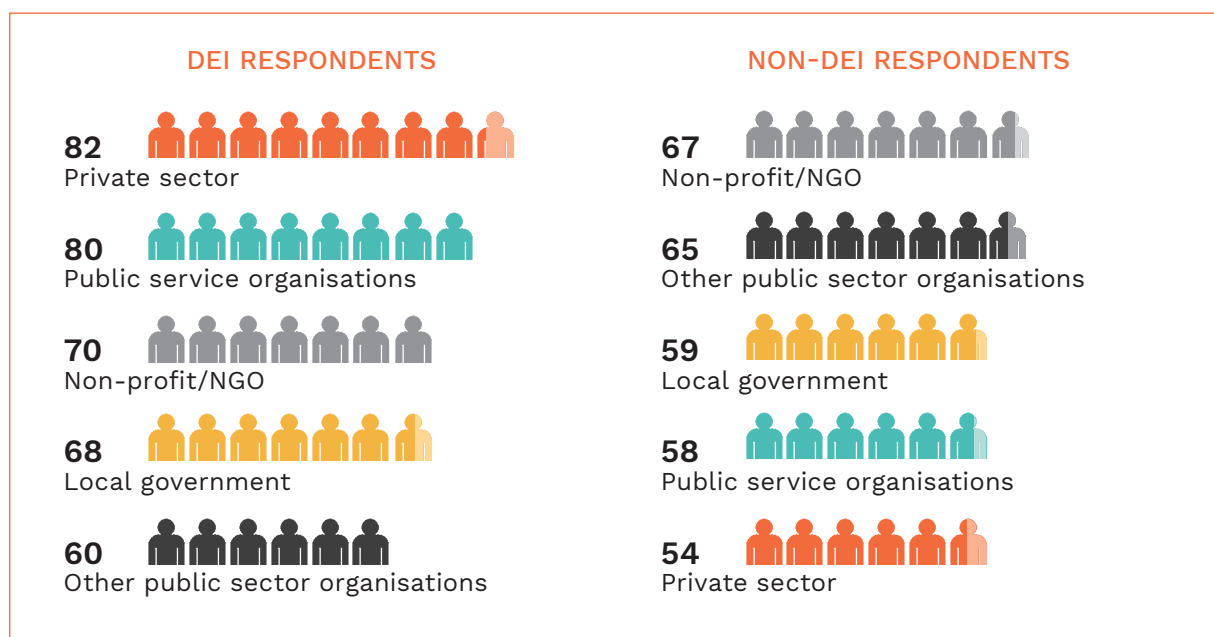

Figure 1: Inclusive leadership, by DEI responsibility

In the group of DEI respondents, the majority of people working in private sector and public service organisations thought the leadership style of their organisation was fairly or very inclusive (82 and 80 per cent respectively). This was, however, offset by the views of non-DEI respondents.

Across the sectors researched, the private sector and public services results show a complete inversion in perception between DEI respondents and non-DEI respondents. Public service organisations and the private sector were perceived to be substantially less inclusive according to non-DEI respondents (58 per cent and 54 per cent respectively) than what was reported by DEI respondents.

Both of these sectors also had far more employees expressing their organisation had an exclusive leadership style, more than one fifth in both cases.

This finding does, however, need to be contextualised within the respondent profile, which reflects that, of the private sector and public services responses, only 12.4 per cent (127 respondents) and 12.1 per cent (31 respondents) respectively were from non-DEI respondents. The results could, therefore, reflect the views of a vocal minority, however, the challenge of DEI is to understand and improve the employment experience of exactly these respondents in order to make progress.

Of the DEI respondents in the non-profit/NGO sector, 70 per cent thought that the leadership style was inclusive, while 11 per cent perceived the leadership style as fairly or very exclusive. DEI respondents in local government were less certain with 68 per cent regarding the leadership style as inclusive, 23 per cent stating neither, and nine per cent reporting exclusive leadership styles. Other public sector organisations also had high responses of "neither" (29 per cent) or exclusive (11 per cent), with leadership teams within these organisations needing to do some work to increase inclusivity in their organisations.

While, overall, lower rates of inclusive leadership were reported in the non-profit/NGO sector, local government and other public sector organisations, there was more alignment between the views of DEI respondents versus non-DEI respondents. Additionally, the participation rates from non-DEI respondents from these sectors were higher, at 30.3 per cent, 29.6 per cent, and 36 per cent respectively, providing a higher level of confidence in the findings.

Non-DEI respondents working in the non-profit/NGO sector reported the highest levels of inclusivity in their organisation (67 per cent), reflecting very similar responses to DEI respondents.

Local government leadership was perceived to be much less inclusive by non-DEI respondents, with only 59 per cent reporting inclusive leadership, which is nine percentage points fewer than DEI respondents in local government.

The only sector where non-DEI respondents reported more inclusive leadership than DEI respondents, is other public sector organisations, with 65 per cent of their non-DEI respondent workforce perceiving their leadership style as inclusive, against 60 per cent of DEI respondents reporting inclusive leadership. While this needs further investigation, this could be attributed to higher levels of homogeneity in operational teams, with most of the diversity in these organisations located in Human Resources and/or DEI teams.

Perceiving leadership style as inclusive has wide-ranging positive impacts on organisational culture, productivity, innovation, and overall success. A lack of real inclusive leadership hinders organisational performance and reputation, but more importantly, it has a negative impact on employees. They are more likely to feel undervalued and uncomfortable expressing unique ideas, with potential knock-on impacts on mental health, wellbeing, and job satisfaction.

Ways leadership are held accountable

Given that leadership commitment is an essential ingredient in addressing DEI, we wanted to gain greater insight into the factors that contribute to inclusive leadership and the extent to which leaders are demonstrating their support to DEI. As a result, in the 2023 survey we introduced a new question that explores the prevalence of different forms of leadership accountability for DEI. Specifically, we asked respondents in what ways senior leaders are scrutinised and held formally accountable in their organisations for their commitment to DEI.

Respondents were able to choose multiple options. DEI respondents are more likely to have accurate information on leadership accountability measures. Therefore, we analysed their responses (1,391) according to how inclusive or exclusive they perceived their organisation's leadership to be.

Figure 2 reflects the percentage of respondents who reported exclusive or very exclusive leadership styles on the vertical axis, with those who reported inclusive or very inclusive leadership styles on the horizontal axis.
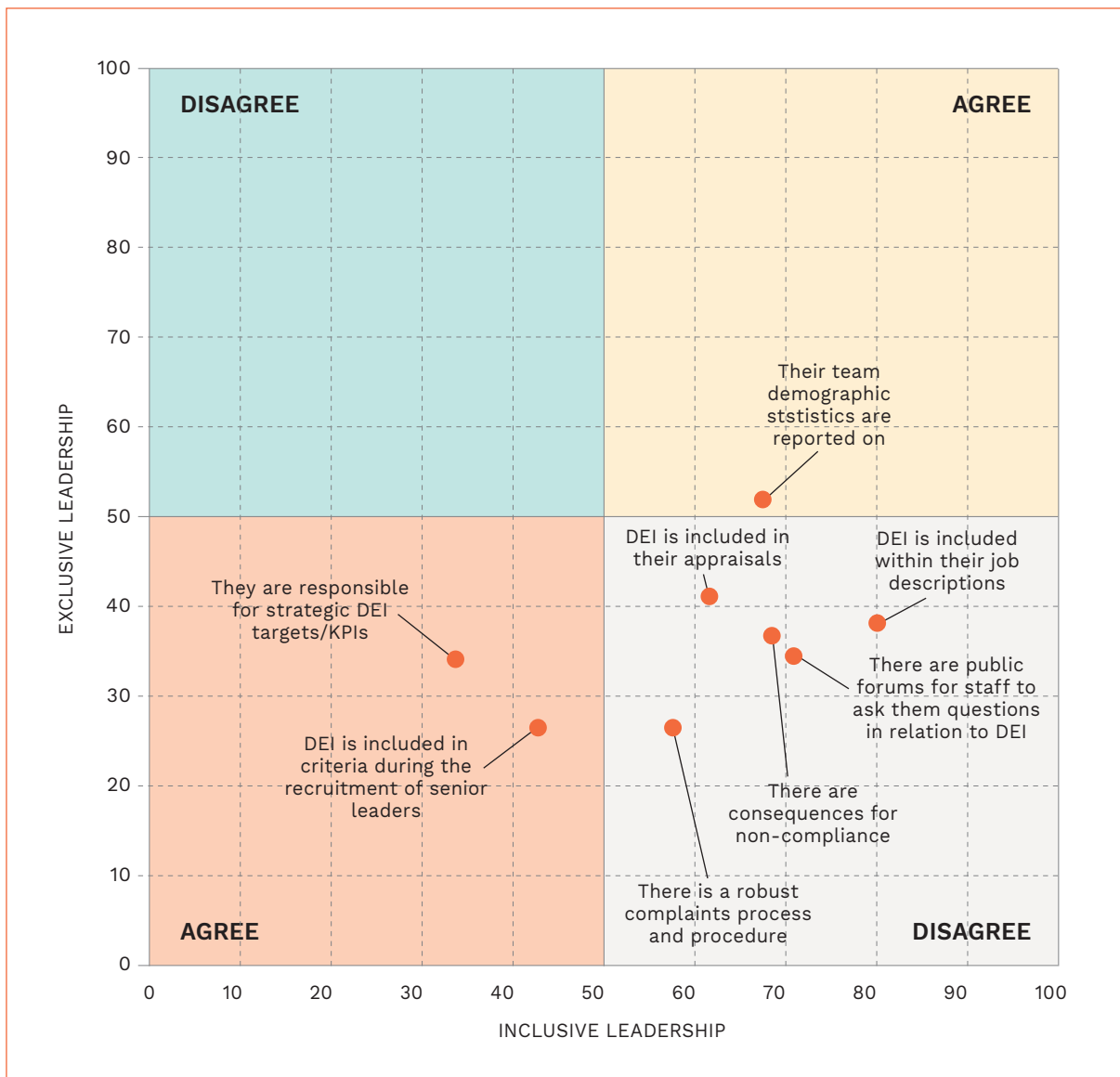

Figure 2: Commitment to DEI as a percentage of leadership style (N=1,391)

The top right and bottom left quadrants reflect areas of agreement between those who report inclusive and those who report exclusive leadership. Both cohorts indicated higher than 50 per cent agreement that team demographic statistics are reported on, while both cohorts indicated less than 50 per cent agreement that leaders are responsible for strategic DEI targets/KPIs, or that DEI is included in recruitment criteria of senior leaders.

The top left and bottom right quadrants reflect areas of disagreement. There are no accountability measures where those who report exclusive leadership record higher prevalence than those who report inclusive leadership. The biggest area of disagreement between these two cohorts is in the bottom right quadrant where those who report inclusive leadership indicated higher than 50 per cent agreement with the statements, and those who report exclusive leadership indicated less than 50 per cent agreement.

Those that perceive their leadership to be inclusive were far more likely to note that DEI is included in leadership job descriptions, with 80 per cent of "inclusive leadership" responses compared to 38 per cent of "exclusive leadership" responses. Around 70 per cent of inclusive leadership respondents replied that: their team demographic statistics are reported on, there are consequences for non-compliance; and there are public forums for staff to ask them questions in relation to DEI. While half of exclusive leadership respondents chose reporting on team demographic statistics as an accountability option, closer to a third selected consequences for non-compliance (37 per cent) and public forums for staff (35 percent).

While relatively high numbers of both groups said DEI was included in appraisals of their leadership (62 per cent inclusive, 41 per cent exclusive), it was curious to note that low numbers of both also reported DEI being included in the criteria for recruitment (43 per cent inclusive, 26 per cent exclusive). This suggests that organisations prioritise recruitment on criteria other than inclusive leadership, with the intention to develop inclusive behaviours post recruitment, rather than to screen candidates out on the basis of inclusive leadership skills.

There was also a difference in response about robust complaints processes (58 per cent inclusive, 26 per cent exclusive). An equal number across both groups said their leadership were responsible for strategic DEI targets (34 per cent).

Notably, those perceiving their leadership as exclusive were less likely to see these leaders being held accountable for DEI initiatives, suggesting a need for increased accountability measures, or for increased transparency about such measures implemented.

Holding leaders accountable is vital for an organisation to be authentically supporting DEI initiatives. Demonstrating a genuine commitment to DEI includes demonstrating transparency and accountability, such as sharing these measures with the entire organisation.
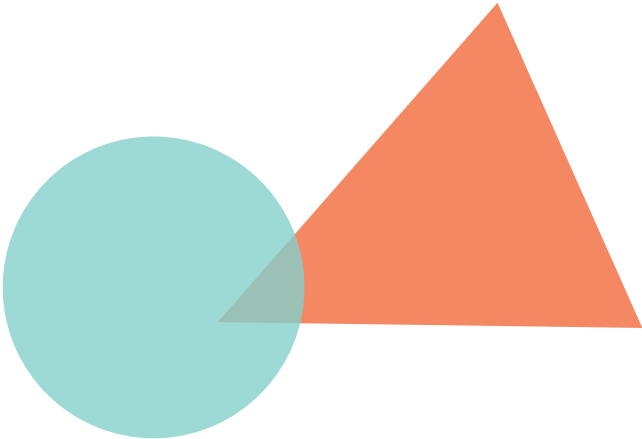
Allyship

In this survey, we took a closer look at allyship as an emerging topic in workplace DEI. This section asked of respondents:

- whether their organisation promotes or talks about allyship in the workplace
- what activities are undertaken in their organisation to promote allyship

In recognition that the term "allyship" is an emerging one in workplaces and that people may not share a common understanding of the concept, we also provided a definition to clarify what we mean by this term. The definition that was provided was: 'allyship is when a person takes ongoing action to support those belonging to a marginalised group that they themselves do not belong to'. In doing so, allies can help to challenge biases, dismantle systemic inequities and build empathetic relationships among employees, which we argue are key ingredients for building inclusive workplace cultures.

When asked whether their organisation promotes or talks about allyship in the workplace, of 1,339 DEI respondents, 71.4 per cent said 'yes', while 21.7 per cent said 'no' and a further 7.0 per cent said they 'don't know'.

There were notable differences between sectors in response to this question. Those from public service organisations were most likely to report that their organisation promotes or talks about allyship, with 77.5 per cent indicating 'yes' and only 18 per cent indicating 'no'. While those responding positively from the private sector (72.6 per cent) and the wider public sector (69.6 per cent) were not far behind, it was respondents from NGOs who were much less likely to say that their organisation promotes or talks about allyship at only 53.1 per cent. This means there was a difference of almost 25 per cent between those from public service organisations and NGOs.

Those respondents who indicated that their organisation promotes or talks about 'allyship' were then asked what activities are undertaken to promote allyship.

Of the 963 respondents, the most reported activity was 'mechanisms for different groups/ networks to connect and support each other' at 40.2 per cent reporting frequency, followed by 'allyship talks and training sessions' (38.4 per cent) and 'bystander campaigns and initiatives' (36.3 per cent).

Meanwhile, symbolic gestures, such as having an 'ally email signature available to use' (17.8 per cent) and 'visible signals (such as badges and lanyards) provided' were the least common activities used in organisations to promote allyship that were identified by respondents, along with 'formal ally programmes' (17.9 per cent).

It is encouraging to see that organisations are reportedly focusing on outputs, such as training and bystander campaigns, that aim to result in behaviour change, given that these activities most likely to foster connection and understanding and thus is fundamental to the action-oriented nature of allyship. On the other hand, these findings could raise concerns about the long-term viability of allyship activities that do not stand in context of a holistic approach and where formal programmes and branding are lacking.

However, when we look again across the different sectors, there are significant differences in allyship initiatives and some notable opportunities for growth at sectoral level. These results are reflected in Figure 3.
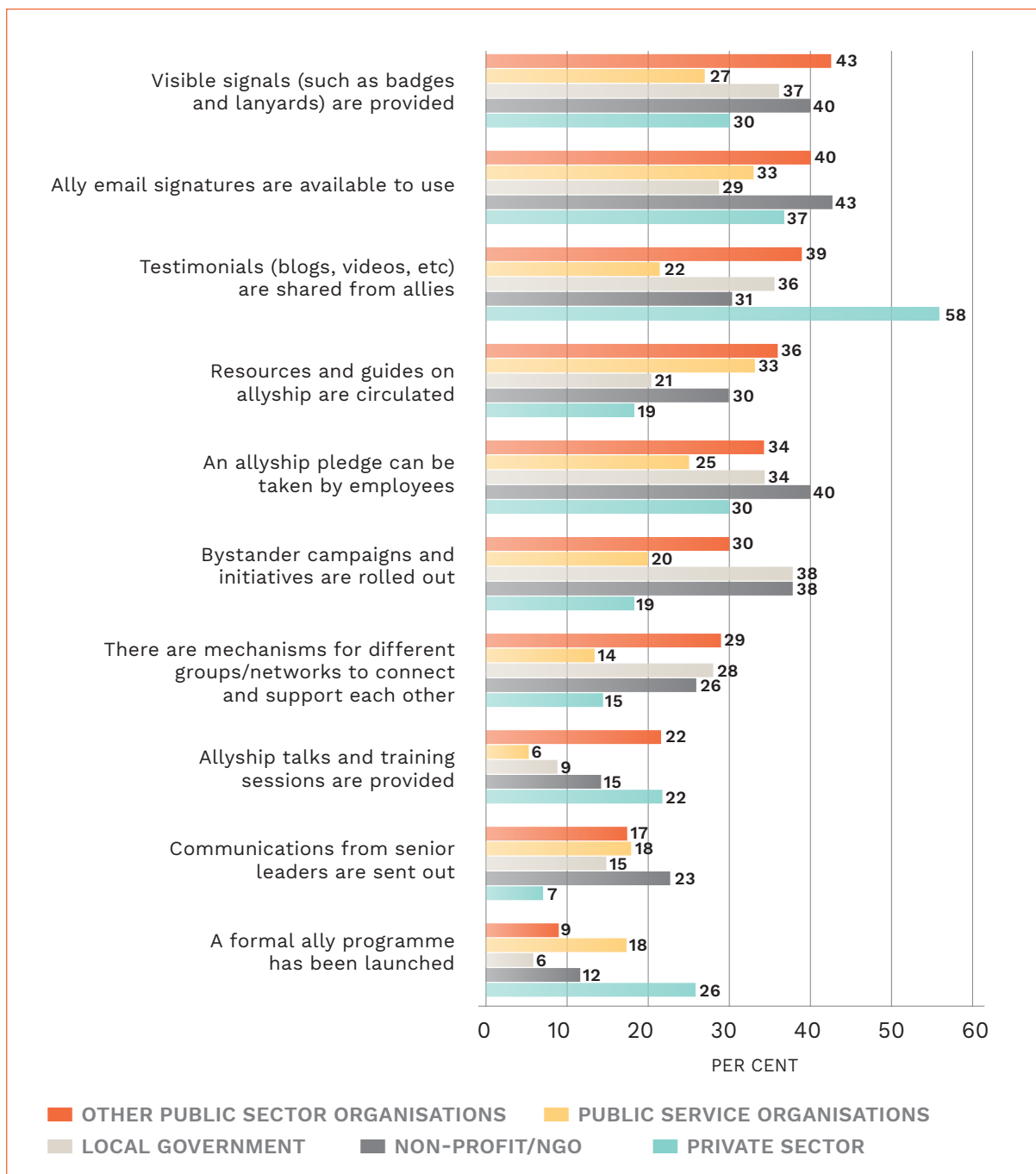
Figure 3: Allyship activities reported by those with DEI responsibility, by sector (N=963)

In the private sector, for instance, the most common initiative is providing visible signals such as badges and lanyards (43 per cent), closely followed by ally email signatures (40 per cent). The least common initiatives related to launching a formal ally programme (9 per cent), and executive support through communications from senior leaders (17 per cent). This profile of initiatives suggests an approach that leans towards being performative in nature, rather than intentionally designed to challenge systemic injustices, or to change hearts and minds.

Conversely, the overall distribution of efforts across the various allyship initiatives in public services seems to suggest a more balanced approach than in the private sector, even though the least reported activity is still launching a formal ally programme.

The provision of allyship talks and training sessions are areas where improvement can be made across all sectors, indicating the potential for more visible commitments to allyship in the workplace.

Notably, only 57 non-DEI respondents answered the question on allyship activities – this was not enough of a response rate for us to make generalisations with any level of confidence. This is not surprising when considering responses to the question on what DEI-related topics are important to organisations, and only 8.9 per cent of these respondents indicating that allyship was important to their organisation (Table 2).

In conclusion, the limited responses related to formal ally programmes indicate that there is still a high level of immaturity in DEI programmes regarding strategic allyship, with most of the initiatives being tactical and potentially reactive in nature.

Challenging behaviour

Respondents were asked about whether they thought people in their organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour, with 1,857 people answering this question. We analysed their responses with an intersectional lens, looking across gender, age, and ethnicity.

The findings reveal significant variations in respondents' perceptions regarding the willingness of individuals in their organisations to challenge inappropriate behaviour.
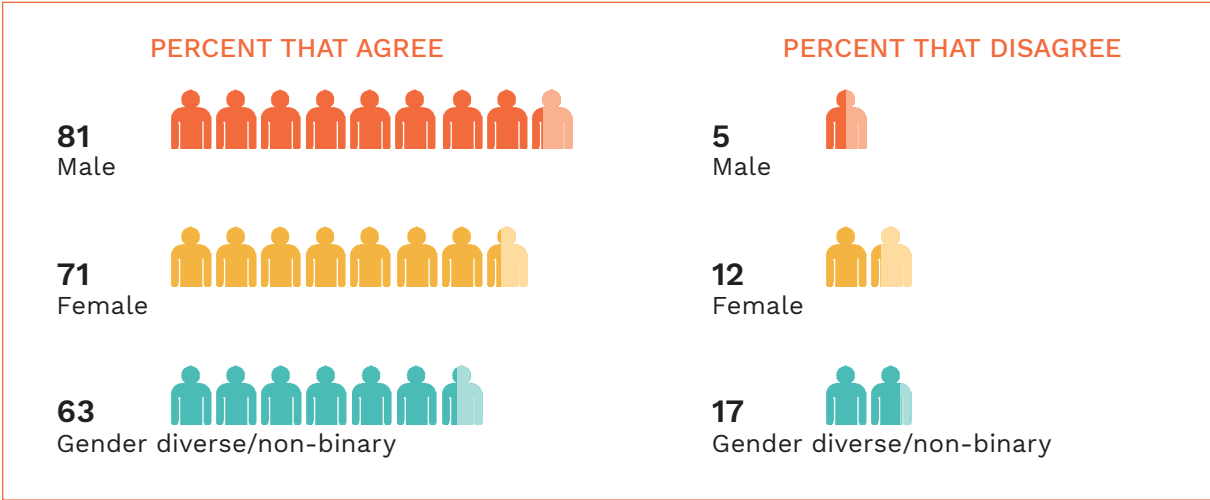

Figure 4: Challenging inappropriate behaviour in organisations, by gender

Across age and ethnicity, males (N=729) are far more likely to agree or strongly agree (81 per cent) that people in their organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour, with only five per cent disagreeing (Figure 4). Meanwhile, for females (N=784) 71 per cent agree, 12 per cent disagree, and 17 per cent are neutral.

Gender diverse people are more likely to be neutral (19 per cent) or disagree (18 per cent) with the statement.

Females exhibit a more diverse range of responses across demographic subgroups. This emphasises the complexity of attitudes towards addressing inappropriate behaviour, influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity and age.

In respect of ethnicity, people of Māori or Asian descent are likely to be neutral or disagree with the statement (12 and 13 per cent respectively). However, when we look deeper, this finding is skewed by Māori or Asian women, who are far more likely to disagree that people in their organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour (19 and 18 per cent respectively). Conversely, Māori or Asian males do not respond significantly differently from European men. Pasifika/Pacific Peoples males also largely agreed that people in their organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour and only four per cent reported disagreement with the statement.

When looking at the intersection with age, European females across all age groups are more likely to disagree than Asian females. Māori and European females aged 45-54 have the same levels of disagreement (20 per cent), however, younger Māori females (25-44yrs) are twice as likely as European females of the same age to disagree (19 per cent compared to 9 per cent) and have higher levels of neutrality also. This indicates that younger Māori women, specifically, are feeling very vulnerable in the workplace.

The perception gap between men and women regarding the likelihood of people challenging inappropriate behaviour could be attributed to a variety of social, cultural, and psychological factors. Societal conditioning and gender norms may lead some men to believe that their peers are more likely to address inappropriate behaviour. However, this perception may not align with the actual experiences of many women, who might encounter such behaviour more frequently and may feel that it often goes unaddressed.

Additionally, there may be a lack of awareness or understanding among some men about the prevalence and impact of inappropriate behaviour towards women. This could result in a skewed perception of the actions and attitudes of their colleagues. Moreover, cognitive biases and selective attention can play a role. If a man personally witnesses or engages in challenging inappropriate behaviour, he might generalise this experience to assume that others in his workplace will be similarly proactive.

Ultimately, bridging this perception gap requires open dialogue, education and a concerted effort to create environments where everyone feels empowered to address inappropriate behaviour, regardless of gender.
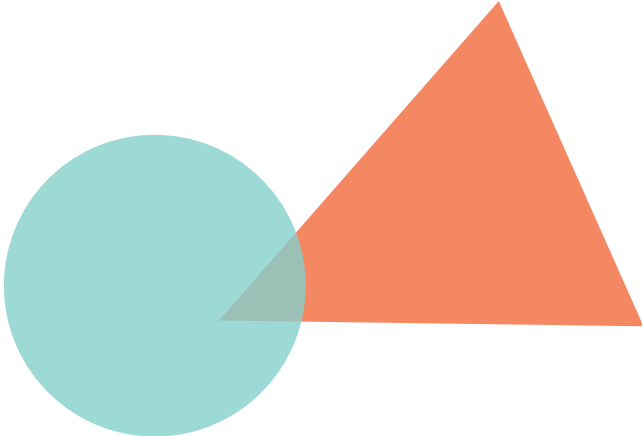
Socio-economic disadvantage

Cost of living is one of the most pressing concerns in the current political discourse and we wanted to understand if and how organisations are engaging with those who have limited access to the essential resources that support wellbeing.

While socio-economic status is difficult to measure, the concept is widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of life opportunities, influencing access to education, healthcare, employment, and overall wellbeing. This survey assumes that the available proxies, such as education level, occupation, and income, provide a sufficient basis of understanding to explore general workplace DEI approaches in this respect.

Table 1, earlier in this report, showed how socio-economic disadvantage is perceived to be one of the five most important diversity dimensions in respondent's workplaces. We wanted to understand how recruitment policies might then support that priority and asked what recruitment initiatives organisations had in place to support socio-economic diversity.

Of the 973 people who provided responses, only 49 were non-DEI respondents, and the answers of the two cohorts of respondents have therefore been combined for analysis. We looked at responses with both a sector and an intersectional lens. The most notable differences are across sectors (Figure 5).

The results illustrate the diverse approaches taken by organisations in different sectors to foster inclusivity and diversity by actively recruiting individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. While some initiatives are more widely adopted across sectors, others show more variation in their implementation.

Across various sectors, offering targeted sponsorship and scholarships is the most common initiative to promote diversity and inclusion for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. The public service and local government lead in this category with 55 per cent, followed closely by the private sector at 54 per cent and the non-profit/NGO sector at 51 per cent.

Targeted internships are another prevalent approach, with the public service leading at 55 percent, followed by local government and private sector at 52 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively. These internships provide opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain valuable work experience and make professional connections to improve social mobility.

The third most reported strategy to deal with socio-economic disadvantage, is to remove qualification barriers as an important step to build equity into the recruitment process. This is the strategy most reported by the non-profit/NGO sector (54 per cent), but all sectors are actively engaged in this.

The biggest variance in responses related to data collection about applicants' backgrounds, with 48 per cent of the private sector respondents indicating that they collect this data, compared to only 20 per cent of local government respondents. Understanding applicants' backgrounds is essential for designing effective diversity recruitment strategies.

Collaborating with community organisations is another strategy to reach potential employees from disadvantaged backgrounds. There was little variation in the responses from the various sectors, with all recognising the importance of building community partnerships.

Overall, the responses highlight some awareness of socio-economic disadvantage across various sectors, and a range of initiatives are implemented, aimed at recruiting individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
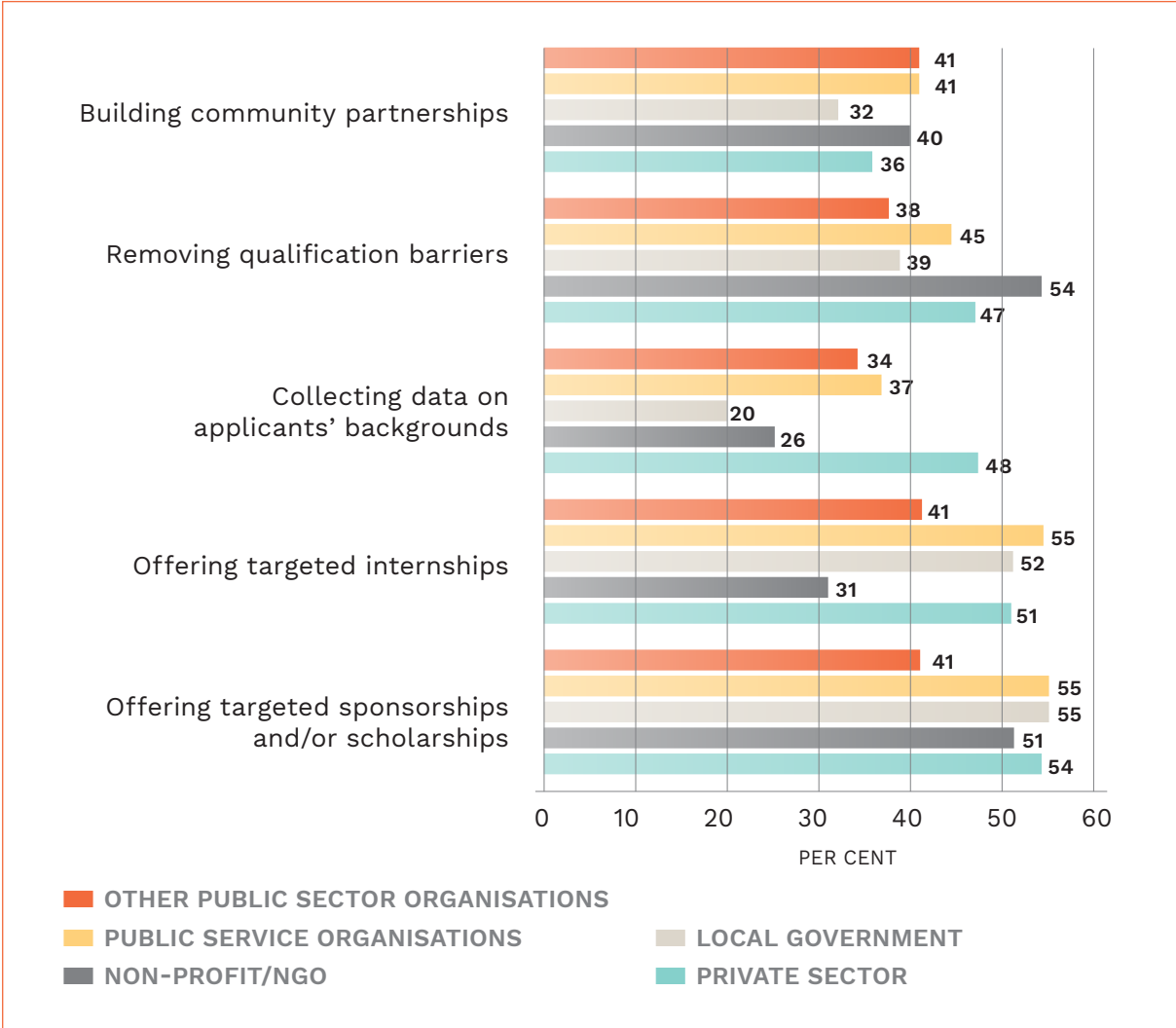

Figure 5: Initiatives to recruit employees from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (N=973)

When we explored this data with an intersectional lens, there were a few nuanced differences that may warrant further investigation in subsequent reports:

- Male respondents more frequently reported that their organisations collected data on applicants' backgrounds (48 per cent) than females (33 percent), and Asian people are more likely to respond that their organisation collects data on applicants' backgrounds (45 per cent).

- Offering targeted sponsorship and/or scholarships is the most common response from those aged 18-24 years (83 per cent), Pasifika/Pacific Peoples (67 per cent), Asian (57 per cent), and Middle Eastern, Latin American or African (56 per cent).

- Removing qualification barriers is a more common response from those aged 35-44 years (47 per cent), Māori (55 per cent) and Pasifika/Pacific Peoples (58 per cent).

Supporting employee hardship

We also asked whether organisations offered anything to support employees facing economic hardship: 1,028 respondents (972 DEI respondents and 56 non-DEI respondents) indicated that their organisations were offering support across a range of options. We looked at their responses by gender, ethnicity and sector, combining different types of support.
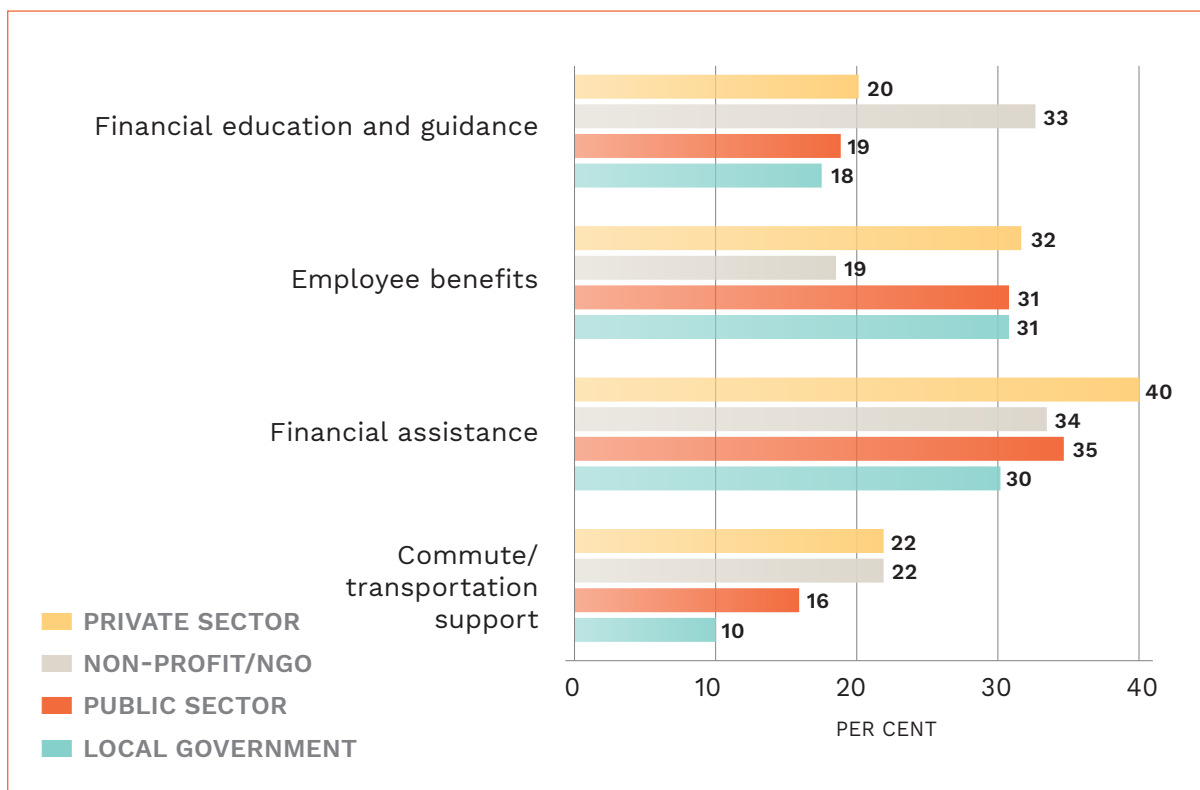

Figure 6: Support offered for employees facing economic hardship (N=1,028)

Exploring this by sector, financial assistance is the most common form of support across most sectors (Figure 6)[1]. This includes salary advance payments/loans and hardship funds. It was definitely favoured by the private sector (40 per cent), the public sector (35 per cent), and non-profits/NGOs (34 per cent). Employee benefits, including additional insurance, childcare support, grocery packages, free meals at work and discount vouchers are narrowly preferred as means of support by respondents from local government.

Financial education and guidance, which includes financial education and resources and financial advice and guidance (e.g., through an EAP), is a standout from the non-profit/NGO sector (33 per cent). This is a proactive offering well ahead of any other sector in this area and, perhaps, an area of growth for the rest as this indicates a more holistic response with potential for sustained impact beyond the current economic climate.

Transport support is provided by 22 per cent of respondents from the private sector and non-profit/NGO organisations, with the lowest responses for this type of support reported from public sector and local government organisations.

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1 Public service organisation and other public sector organisation have been combined in the figure.

When we explore this data by gender, financial assistance is prominent across males and females (39 and 36 per cent respectively). While the reported difference is not significant, the recent prominence of pay gaps as a measure of inequity draws attention to the three percentage points difference in financial assistance in favour of males, while females are the leading demographic in terms of support through financial education and guidance (25 per cent). Financial education and guidance for males are only 17 per cent.

Māori and Pasifika/Pacific Peoples are more likely to work for organisations that provide financial education and guidance (24 and 25 per cent respectively), while Europeans are more likely to work for organisations that offer transport support (20 per cent). Pasifika/Pacific Peoples and Middle Eastern, Latin American or African are more likely to respond that their organisation provides employee benefits (39 per cent).

Overall, the data reflects the various support initiatives organisations implement to assist employees facing economic hardship, with certain initiatives being more prevalent in specific sectors, among different genders and across diverse ethnicities. This comprehensive approach caters to the diverse needs of their workforce, but in a cost-of-living crisis, there is considerable room for organisations to be stepping up to support their employees.

Implementing initiatives to assist employees facing economic hardship not only benefits the employees directly but also contributes to a more positive, productive, and socially responsible workplace. This ultimately leads to a more resilient and successful organisation, as employees are more likely to stay with an organisation that shows genuine concern for their welfare and wellbeing.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

To wrap up this report, we briefly highlight the key results and consider some of the core implications and questions that arise from them.

As mentioned in the introduction, throughout the report we noted a stark difference in responses between DEI respondents, compared to non-DEI respondents, with the latter group frequently returning less favourable responses.

From time-to-time DEI efforts are criticised for lack of efficacy and ability to facilitate change, however, the findings in this report would suggest that the concern is not with the efforts per se. Rather, the issue seems to be with transfer of information about such efforts across the organisation. Effective roll-out and ongoing communication of initiatives across the organisation is of critical importance, and need to be specifically and generously resourced, as lack thereof has a significant adverse impact on the return of investment in DEI efforts.

Furthermore, we saw that respondents were more likely to say that their organisation undertakes initiatives that are tactical and programmatic in nature, compared with activities that will support a longer-term focused and strategic approach to DEI implementation. And, while responsibility for DEI was often reported to be included within the job descriptions of leaders, fewer respondents said that practices are in place to ensure that leadership competency is scrutinised against such responsibility (i.e., in recruitment criteria and appraisals) or held accountable for the organisation's progress on DEI, including a lack of accountability for driving outcomes against strategic targets and KPIs specifically.

With the increased complexity in work related to DEI, as noted in the introductory comments of this report, leaders run the risk of not realising the benefits of diversity if programmes aren't strategically embedded in their organisations, with accountability for outcomes reflecting in strategic targets and leadership KPIs.

Finally, the data revealed notable differences in strengths and weaknesses across the various sectors analysed, specifically in relation to inclusive leadership, allyship and dealing with socio-economic disadvantage. For instance, the distribution of efforts across the various allyship initiatives in public services is the most balanced approach of all sectors, while the non-profit/NGO sector leads in the area of holistic support in instances of financial hardship, and the private sector leads in the area of data-informed programme development. This presents opportunities for all sectors to learn from one another.
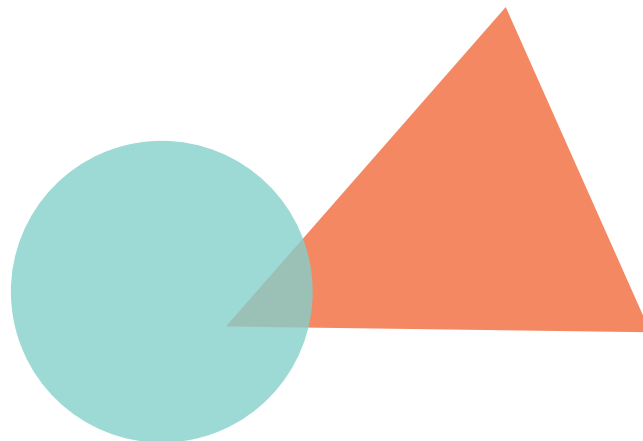
APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The 2023 edition of the New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey continues Diversity Works New Zealand's regular exploration and monitoring of trends in workplace diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The annual survey is constructed in two parts. The first part of the report reflects on trends and changes related to policies and practices in organisations, while the second part of the report explores specific themes of current interest.

The overall structure of the survey remains broadly similar to previous iterations; however, this year we introduced substantial changes to the survey design. The alterations made to the survey were implemented to gain closer alignment with the Aotearoa Inclusivity Matrix, which is the national framework designed to assess the maturity of organisations' DEI practices. It should also be noted that direct comparison with survey responses of previous years could not be made across all questions, due to the number of changes made to questions and response options in the 2023 survey.

In the demographic questions, we introduced new options for the sector question. In addition to the private sector, we added the option of non-profit/NGOs. Where the public sector is concerned, respondents were able to identify as being in the public service or the wider public sector, within which respondents were able to specify whether they work in local government or other public sector organisations (such as education, health and police). Public service organisations were defined explicitly as central government bodies, such as ministries, departments and crown agents. This helped us to obtain a more detailed level of data disaggregation and gain deeper insights into the subsectors of the public sector.

We also asked respondents whether they had DEI responsibility in their organisation (either as part of their role or in addition to other responsibility).

Finally, we made a subtle shift in our reporting towards a more applied research approach, with more emphasis on immediate practical relevance and actionable outcomes.

This report was written by Dr Nata Tolooei and Pete Mercer from Diversity Works New Zealand, with external support in terms of data analysis and quality review provided by Amanda Reid from Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL).

APPENDIX B: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 1857 respondents participated in the 2023 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey, including 1,520 who self-identified as having responsibility for DEI work in their organisation (either as part of their role or in addition to other responsibility) and 337 who did not identify as having DEI responsibility.

Respondents across the sector cohorts analysed in this report are reflected in the table below.

	DEI respondents	Non-DEI respondents	Total	% non-DEI respondents
Private Sector	894	127	1021	12.4%
Public Services	225	31	256	12.1%
Local Government	224	94	318	29.6%
Other Public Sector Organisation	64	36	100	36%
Non-profit / NGO	113	49	162	30.24%
TOTAL	**1520**	**337**	**1857**	

Table 6: Respondents by sector and DEI responsibility

Sector

Of the 1,520 DEI respondents, more than half were in the private sector (58.8 per cent, N=894), while 18.9 per cent (N=288) were from the wider public sector, 13.8 per cent (N=225) were from public service organisations and 7.4 per cent (N=113) worked in non-profit/NGOs.

Of the 337 non-DEI respondents, 37.7 per cent worked in the private sector (N=127), while more than a quarter were in local government (27.9 per cent, N=94), 14.5 per cent were from non-profit/NGOs (N=49), 10.7 per cent from the wider public sector (N=36) and 9.2 per cent worked in public service organisations (N=31).

Demographic information

Over half of respondents (53.2 per cent) who disclosed their gender identified as female (N=978), while 43.5 per cent identified as male (N=800), and 3.4 per cent of respondents identified as gender-diverse or non-binary (N=62) (Figure 7).

The ages of respondents ranged across all available age categories, from 18-24 to 65+ years (Figure 8). The largest shares of respondents were from the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups, each representing more than one third (34.2 and 36.4 per cent respectively) of the total respondents. While just under one fifth (19.3 per cent) of respondents were aged 45-54, significantly fewer respondents (2.1 per cent) belonged to the 18-24 age group, and only 7.0 per cent and 1.0 per cent were aged 55-64 and 65+, respectively.
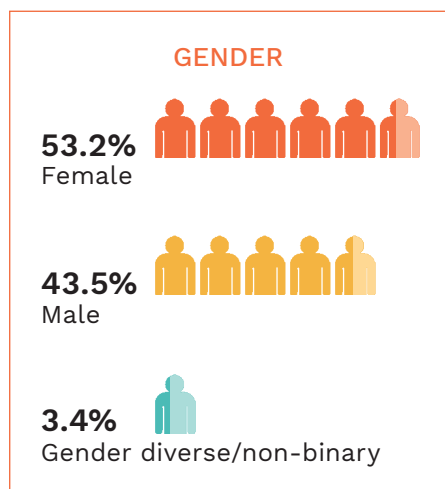

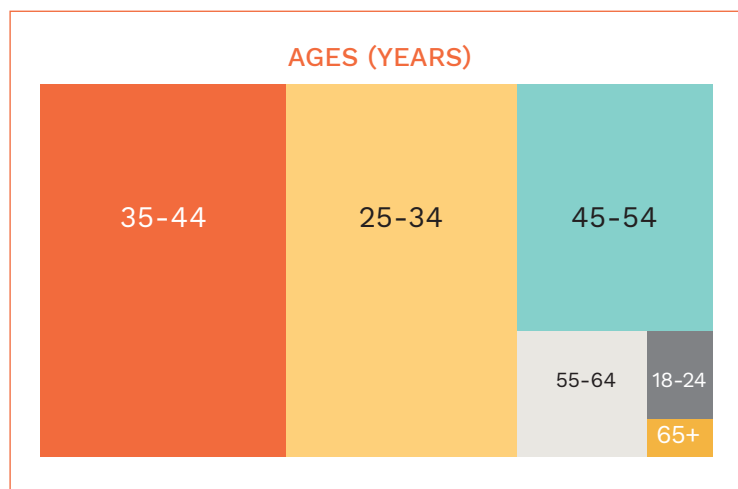*Figure 7: Distribution of respondents' genders (N=1,840)*

Figure 8: Distribution of respondents' ages (N=1,849)

The respondents constituted a range of ethnicities (Figure 9). The majority of respondents (57.2 per cent) selected New Zealand Pākehā (N=1,063), while 21.1 per cent were Other European (N=392), 17.1 per cent were Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (N=318), 14.5 per cent were Māori (N=269), 10.5 per cent were Pasifika/Pacific Peoples (N=195), and 6.2 per cent were Asian (N=115). Totals add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to select more than one ethnic category.
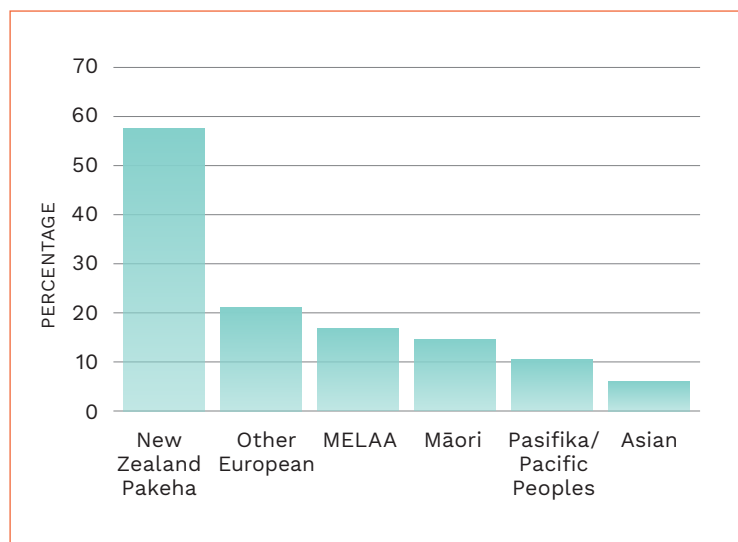

Figure 9: Distribution of respondents' ethnicities (N=1,857)