NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACE DIVERSITY SURVEY 2024 REPORT

DIVERSITY WORKS NZ

CONTENTS

TABLES AND FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a core part of the social and cultural fabric in Aotearoa New Zealand. When organisations embrace diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), they create workplaces that are not only fair and respectful but also draw on the strength of different identities and perspectives. In short, we thrive most when we cherish our differences and work together inclusively.

Understanding how organisations can leverage DEI effectively has never been more critical. The volatility of recent events, both domestically and internationally, continues to present challenges: political uncertainties and unrest, shifting economic climates, polarising media and other external factors are shaping employee experiences and expectations. Recognising these contextual influences is key to understanding and interpreting the results of this survey.

The end of 2023 saw the national election which resulted in a change in government, followed by spending cuts and large-scale job losses across the public sector. The new administration has also introduced shifts in policy focus and funding priorities, which impacted how various agendas, including the DEI agenda, are supported and implemented.

This survey was in the field for data collection during the height of the public sector downsizing and economic downturn, and the response rate was adversely impacted as a result. The survey was completed by 594 respondents, compared to 1,857 in 2023, which means that disaggregation of results and comparisons with the previous year could in many cases not be done, due to the sample size.

In addition to the impact on response rate, the global and local volatility has also had an impact on the specific themes emerging from the survey.

With conflicts raging across the world, employees who have whānau and relationships in affected regions are profoundly impacted. How employers facilitate conversations on these highly emotive topics can be challenging – particularly where discourse is eminently polarised.

Senior leaders are therefore facing a real test of leadership, from the stances they take on key issues, to how they handle dissent while keeping their teams united, and finding creative ways to support their people, who may be dealing with various challenges, both personal and contextual. This year's survey highlighted the importance of equipping senior leaders to make meaningful progress on workplace inclusion, and the need for organisations to create environments that promote wellbeing and psychological safety—two closely connected priorities.

The polarisation of public opinion at large also represents a threat to the discipline of diversity, equity and inclusion itself, as we witness public attitudes among certain populations harden in their resistance to this kaupapa. As with last year, this year's survey continued to reveal a disparity between the perceptions of DEI practitioners and of those without any DEI responsibilities, which warrants attention.

What follows is the report detailing the 2024 survey results.

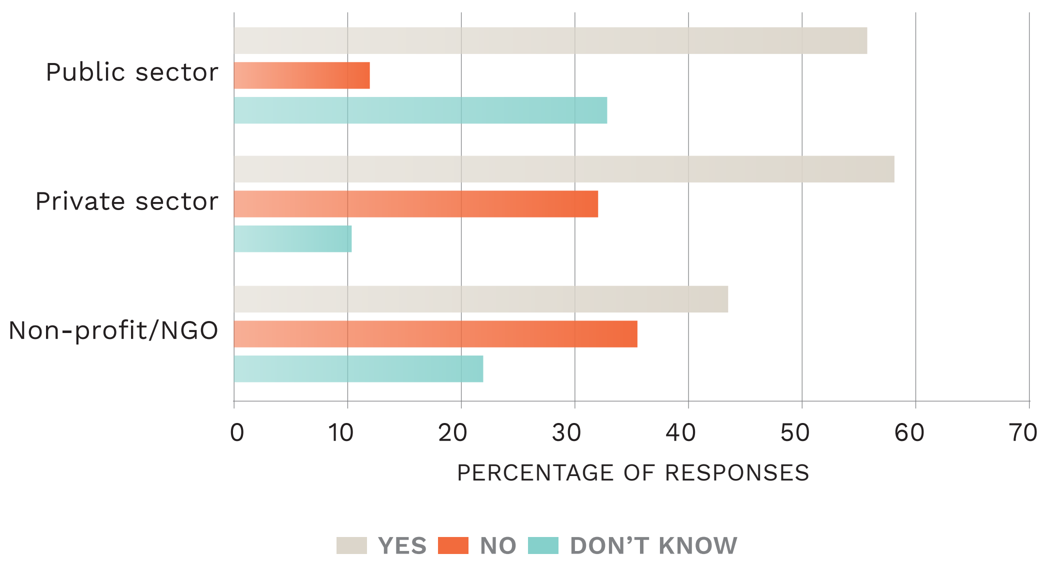
DIVERSITY DATA – MEASURING AND REPORTING

Collecting DEI data is vital for organisations advancing work on diversity and inclusion. Better data allows them to use an equity lens to determine potential areas of disparity in experiences and results throughout the employment lifecycle. Better diversity data also enables organisations to understand the diversity of their workers, and the needs of these workers.

We asked a new question in the 2024 Workplace Diversity Survey on whether respondent's organisations collected diversity data. More than half (55 per cent, N=227) said yes, while 24 per cent (N=99) said no, and 21 per cent (N=86) didn't know. Looking at the sectors of those who answered yes or don't know, respondents reported differing practices regarding the collection of employee diversity data.

Within the public sector, 55 per cent of organisations engage in diversity data collection efforts, with 12 per cent reporting otherwise, and a 33 per cent expressing uncertainty. In the private sector, a larger proportion collect employee diversity data (58 per cent), although a substantial number (32 per cent) do not, and 10 per cent are unsure. Meanwhile, in the non-profit/NGO sector, 43 per cent of respondents report their organisation collects such data, while 35 per cent do not, and 22 per cent are uncertain. These responses highlight the varying approaches to diversity data management across sectors, reflecting challenges faced by organisations in addressing diversity and inclusion within their workforce.

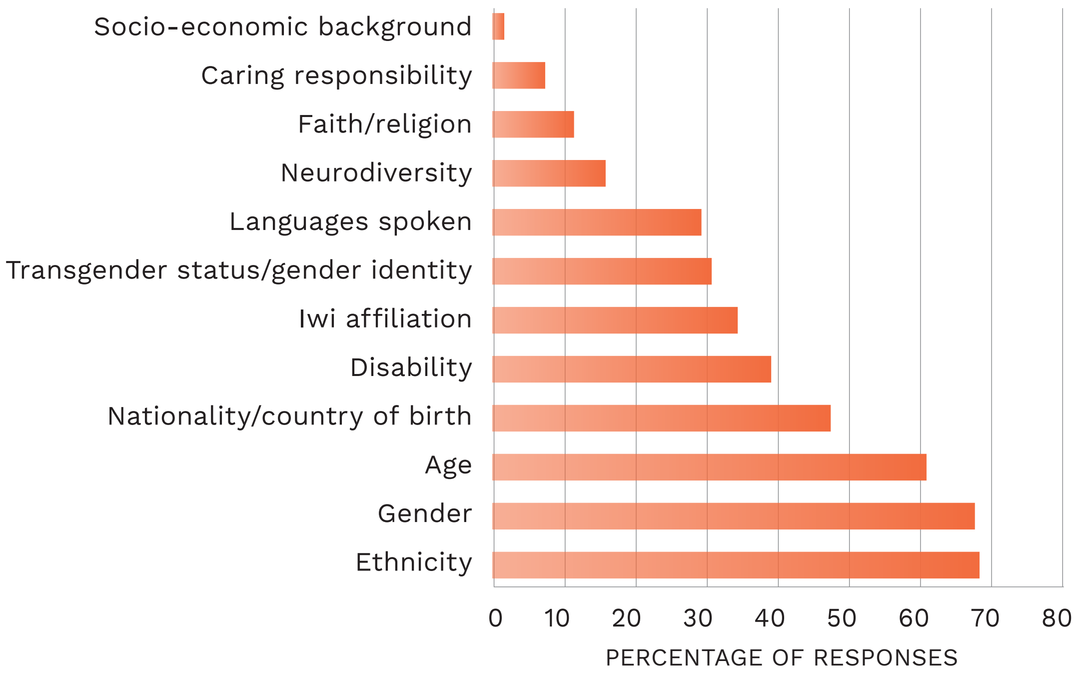
Figure 1 Diversity data collection in organisations across sectors, by percentage (N=412)



We then asked what dimensions of diversity their organisation collected data on (Figure 2). This question was similar to the 2023 question on diversity data collection.

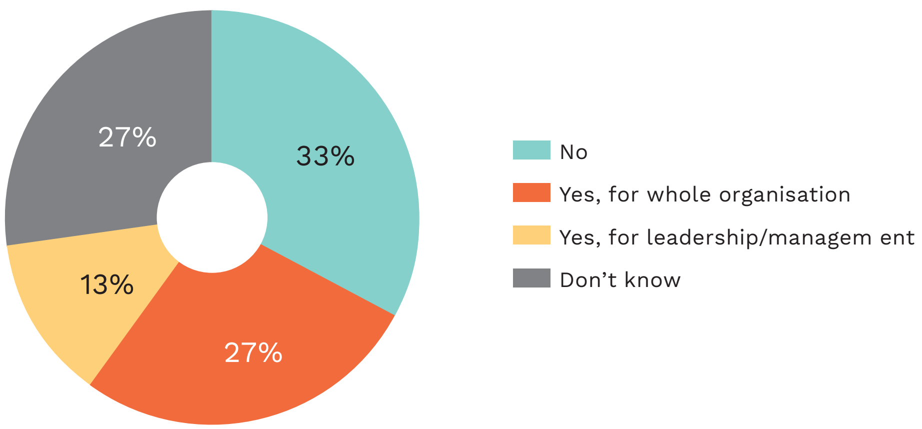
Diversity data collection on ethnicity and gender are the two highest reported by respondents (69 and 68 per cent respectively), with age reported by 61 per cent. Nationality or country of birth data is collected by 48 per cent of respondent's organisations, while disability status is collected by 40 per cent. These four dimensions were also the highest in the 2023 results. In 2024, iwi affiliation was reported by 35 per cent of respondents, an increase from 2023. All other diversity dimensions listed were reported by less than one third of respondents.

Figure 2 Diversity dimensions in data collection, by percentage (N=412)



Reporting on representation

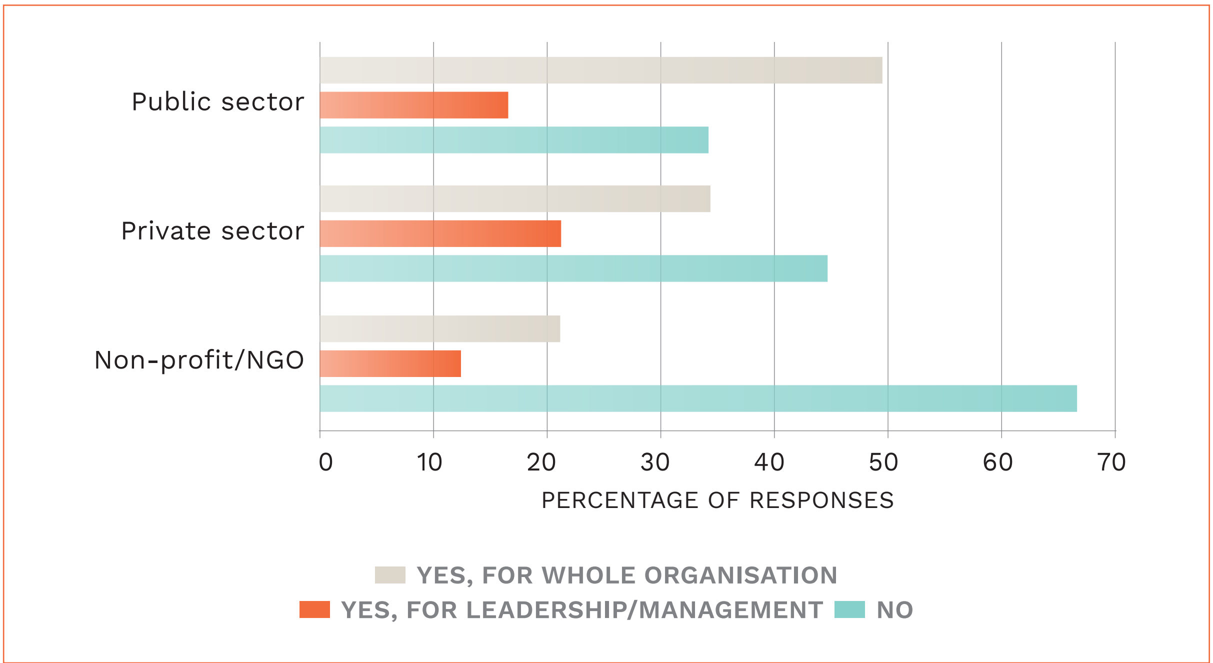
Figure 3 Reporting employee diversity representation, by percentage (N=412)



Collecting diversity data is a precursor to then reporting on diversity in an organisation. A new question for 2024 asked respondents whether their organisation reported on employee diversity representation (Figure 3). One third answered no (33 per cent, N=137), and 27 per cent (N=109) did not know. Of the respondents who answered yes, 27 per cent said representation was reported for their whole organisation (N=112), while 13 per cent said it was reported for leadership only (N=54).

Respondents working in non-profits/NGOs were more likely to say no (67 per cent), than those working in the private sector (45 per cent) or public sector (34 per cent) (Figure 4). Those working in the public sector were more likely to report diversity data being reported on for the whole organisation (50 per cent) than the private sector (34 per cent) or non-profits/NGOs (21 per cent). Leadership diversity was more likely reported on by the private sector (21 per cent), than the public sector (17 per cent) or non-profits/NGOs (12 per cent).

Figure 4 Reporting employee diversity representation across sectors, by percentage (N=303)



DEI PERCEPTION GAPS

In examining the perceptions of respondents in relation to DEI-related priorities, notable disparities emerge between respondents who hold DEI responsibilities and those who do not. In many cases, those with DEI roles are significantly more likely to view DEI dimensions and topics as being important to their organisations.

The divergence highlights a “perception gap” which was also one of the most significant findings of last year’s survey. Although the sample is smaller this year, this continued theme is important for DEI practitioners to reflect on further because it highlights that their views may be misaligned with those from the broader workforce. When positive perceptions towards the DEI work being undertaken in their organisations are not shared by the wider workforce this can, on the one hand, perpetuate an impression of DEI as a futile pursuit and, on the other, it can lead to perceptions of non-inclusive workplaces despite significant investment.

This section delves into these perception gaps, exploring variations in the responses between those with and without DEI responsibilities across various diversity dimensions and DEI-related topics.

Most important diversity dimensions

Understanding which DEI-related topics and issues are most relevant to organisations is one of the goals of the New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey. Respondents could choose up to five answers when asked about the diversity dimensions they believe are most important to their organisation (Table 1).

Table 1 Importance of diversity dimensions for organisations, by percentage

Diversity dimensions	DEI responsibility (%) N=378	Non-DEI responsibility (%) N=174
Ethnicity	74.5	65.1
Gender	67.8	57.8
Rainbow/LGBTQ+	51.4	41.3
Disability	40.6	44.0
Age	42.0	35.8
Neurodiversity	39.9	22.9
Socio-economic background	15.0	20.2
Migrant status	14.7	16.5
Faith/religion	9.1	10.1

In 2023, DEI respondents consistently reported higher levels of importance compared to non-DEI respondents across most diversity dimensions. This pattern is not as uniform, however, in 2024, with four diversity dimensions now reported higher in importance in non-DEI respondents (disability, socio-economic background, migrant status, and faith/religion).

Percentages across several of the dimensions have also increased since 2023. For example, ethnicity and age have increased 25.6 and 20.4 percentage points respectively for DEI respondents and 15.1 and 12.1 percentage points respectively for non-DEI respondents. Some dimensions have decreased in importance, including socio-economic background (21.3 and 6.8 percentage points for DEI and non-DEI respondents respectively) and faith/religion (17 and 8.3 percentage points for DEI and non-DEI respondents respectively).

Most important DEI-related topics

In 2024, we asked respondents again about what they think the most important DEI-related topics are in their organisations (Table 2). Some of the options were the same as in 2023, however, some we added several new options.

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

DEI-related topics	DEI responsibility (%) N=378	Non-DEI responsibility (%) N=174
Inclusive workplace culture	57.3	40.4
Te ao Māori	50.3	45.9
Mental health support	41.3	33.9
Leadership development	40.6	30.3
Anti-bullying and harassment prevention	40.6	23.9
Pay equity	39.2	35.8
Te Tiriti responsiveness	36.7	42.2
Equal opportunities in recruitment	32.9	19.3
Bias awareness and mitigation	31.8	24.8
Cultural intelligence	28.7	29.4
Diverse representation	28.7	27.5
Anti-discrimination	28.0	18.3
Inclusive career development	25.9	17.4
Training and education on DEI	25.2	14.7
LGBTQIA+ inclusivity	23.8	24.8
Accessibility and accommodations	14.7	11.9
Allyship	11.5	13.8
Intersectionality awareness	7.0	5.5
Microaggressions awareness	6.3	7.3
Supplier diversity	4.5	4.6

The most important DEI topic for organisations in 2024, as indicated by respondents, is fostering an inclusive workplace culture, with 57.3 per cent of DEI respondents and 40.4 per cent of non-DEI respondents highlighting its importance. Te ao Māori, highlighting the inclusion of Māori perspectives, shows significant growth and importance, as noted by 50.3 per cent of DEI respondents (up 20.3 percentage points from 2023) and 45.9 per cent of non-DEI respondents (up 11.1 percentage points). Notably, Te Tiriti responsiveness shows a substantial increase as a topic of importance in organisations for respondents with both DEI (36.7 per cent, up from 26 per cent in 2023) and non-DEI (42.2 per cent, up from 25.9 per cent in 2023) roles.

Leadership development, mental health support, pay equity, and equal opportunity in employment are also top priorities. These trends underscore a strong emphasis on creating inclusive, supportive, and equitable environments within organisations. They also continue the trend of differences between those with and those without DEI responsibility in their roles. As with 2023, those non-DEI respondents answer consistently lower than DEI respondents. There are significant gaps between the cohorts in the importance of DEI topics, particularly inclusive workplace culture (17 percentage points), anti-bullying and harassment prevention (16.7 percentage points), equal opportunities in employment (13.6 percentage points), and leadership development (10.3 percentage points). These variances highlight gaps between those implementing and those experiencing DEI policy in what is important.

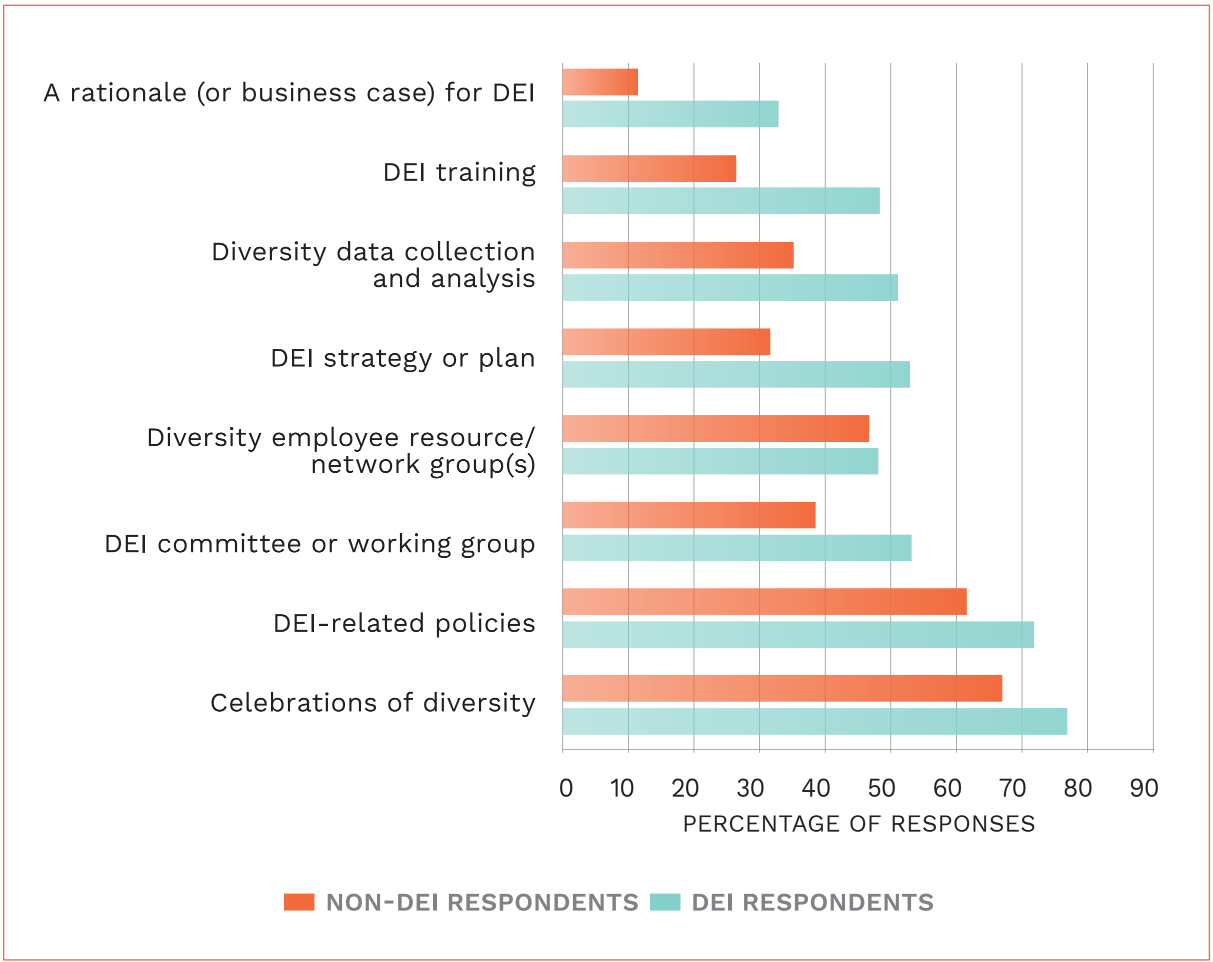
Allyship

Allyship, however, decreased across both cohorts as a topic of importance in their organisation – from 18 per cent in 2023 for DEI respondents to 11.5 per cent, and from 8.9 per cent in 2023 to 4.9 per cent for non-DEI respondents. In 2024, we asked respondents whether their organisation promoted or talked about allyship in the workplace and nearly half said no (49 per cent), while 37 per cent said yes, and 14 per cent did not know. Visible activities were more likely to be reported. These include providing visible signals, such as badges and lanyards (32.9 per cent), circulating resources and guides (26.5 per cent), and communications from senior leaders (25.6 per cent).

DEI initiatives

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 Figure 5.

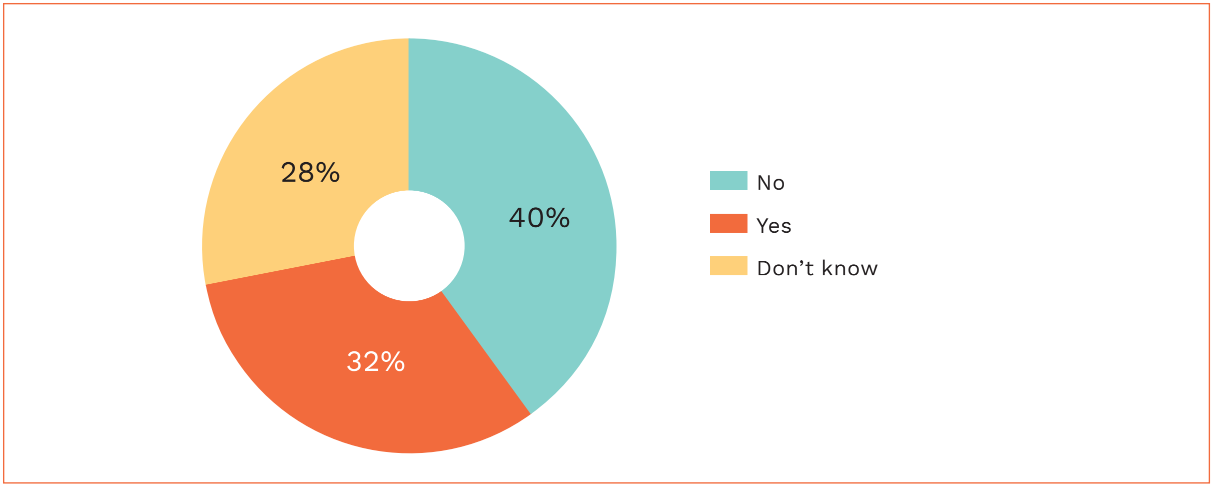
Figure 5 DEI initiatives in organisations, by percentage



The prevalence of various DEI initiatives within organisations highlights significant engagement levels. Celebrations of diversity are the most common, accounting for 73.7 per cent of the total responses; however, they are more readily reported by DEI respondents (76.8 per cent) than by non-DEI respondents (66.9 per cent). Similarly, DEI respondents are reporting higher prevalence of DEI-related policies, at 72.2 per cent, compared to 61.9 per cent of non-DEI respondents. Committees or working groups focusing on DEI are also more readily reported by DEI respondents, with 53.3 per cent compared to 38.8 per cent by non-DEI respondents.

Diversity employee resource/network groups and DEI strategies or plans are slightly more prevalent among DEI respondents, showcasing a commitment to inclusivity. Notably, while DEI training and diversity data collection and analysis show significant gaps between DEI and non-DEI respondents, the most substantial disparity lies in the existence of a rationale or business case for DEI, with 32.9 per cent among DEI respondents compared to a mere 11.9 per cent among non-DEI respondents. The results underscore the varying degrees of DEI initiative implementation, with some strategies more widespread than others.

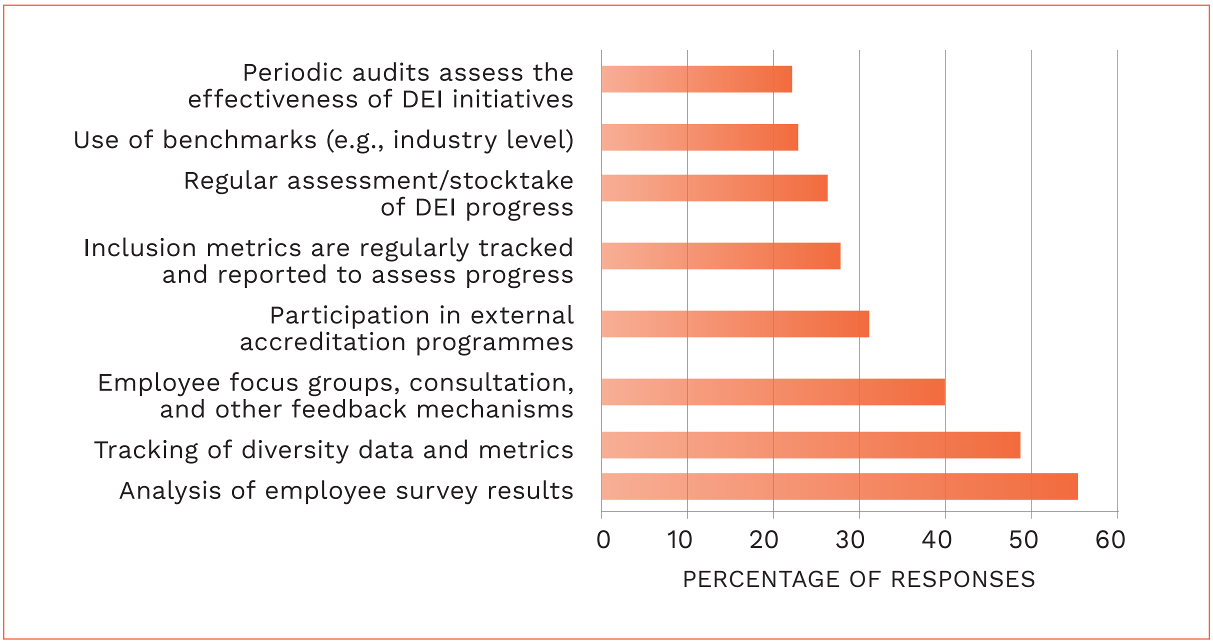
Figure 6 Formal measuring or reporting of DEI initiatives in organisations, by percentage



When looking at the ways that organisations measured and reported on the impacts of DEI initiatives, the most utilised method is the analysis of employee survey results (55.8 per cent), indicating its importance in understanding employee perspectives and identifying areas for improvement (Figure 7). However, this figure is heavily weighted by those with DEI responsibility (65 per cent compared to 38.5 per cent). Tracking diversity data and metrics follows closely at 48.9 per cent (57.8 per cent DEI versus 32.3 per cent non-DEI), reflecting the emphasis on quantifiable measures to monitor diversity efforts. Employee focus groups, consultations, and other feedback mechanisms were used by 39.9 per cent of organisations (47.8 per cent DEI, nearly double the non-DEI respondent rate of 25.0 per cent).

Participation in external accreditation programmes was lower at 30.8 per cent, showing a significant but lower reliance on external validation. This rate was the only one where non-DEI respondents answered at a higher rate (57.3 per cent compared to 16.7 per cent of non-DEI respondents), perhaps because external accreditation programmes are very visible indicators of reporting.

Figure 7 Ways DEI outcomes/impacts are formally reported and measured, by percentages



Equal employment opportunity initiatives

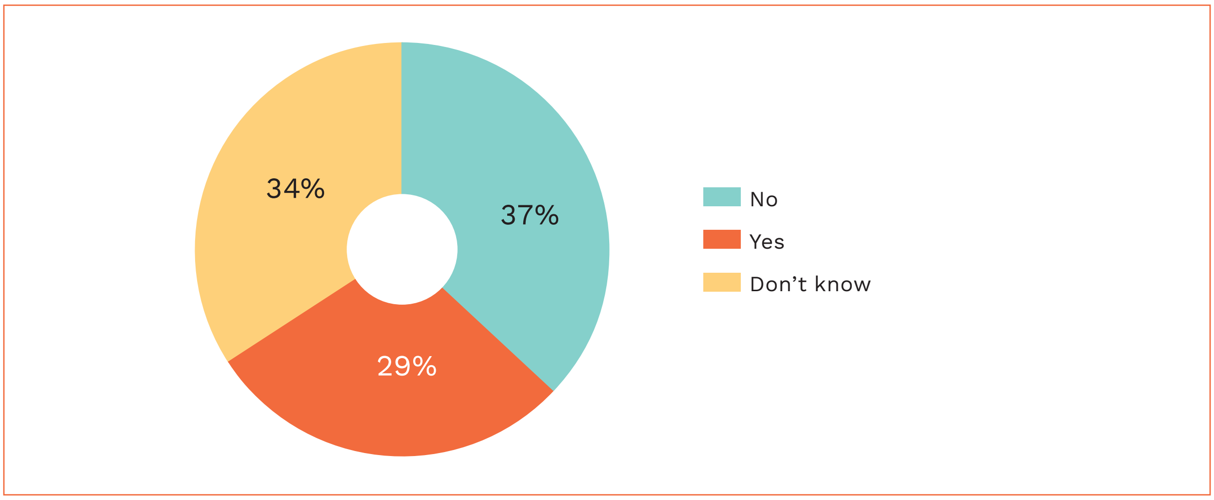
Less than half of the survey respondents said their organisation had any equal employment opportunity initiatives in place aimed at increasing diversity and representation (44 per cent). The vast majority (82.7 per cent) of these have DEI responsibility, which makes sense as they are more likely to have more in-depth knowledge about human resource practices, such as unbiased job descriptions (76 per cent), flexible work arrangements (64.9 per cent), workplace adjustments (51.7 per cent), and offering a living wage (47.4 per cent).

Figure 8 Equal employment initiatives in place

Economic hardship initiatives

Most respondents said their organisation did not offer anything to support employees facing economic hardship (37 percent), with 34 per cent being unsure, and just 29 per cent saying yes (Figure 9). Financial advice is the most common form of support with 46.9 per cent reporting this initiative (50.5 per cent DEI versus 37.5 per cent non-DEI), and a further 21.2 per cent offering financial education and resources (24.5 per cent DEI compared to 12.5 per cent non-DEI). Direct financial support is less common, with salary advance payments (17.4 per cent overall, 21.2 per cent DEI compared to 7.5 per cent non-DEI) and hardship funds (13.2 per cent, 15.9 per cent and 6.3 per cent) being among the initiatives offered. The gap between DEI and non-DEI respondents is concerning because it highlights a disparity in awareness and access to organisational support for economic hardship, with more awareness of the availability of financial advice, education, and direct financial support initiatives among DEI respondents compared to their non-DEI counterparts.

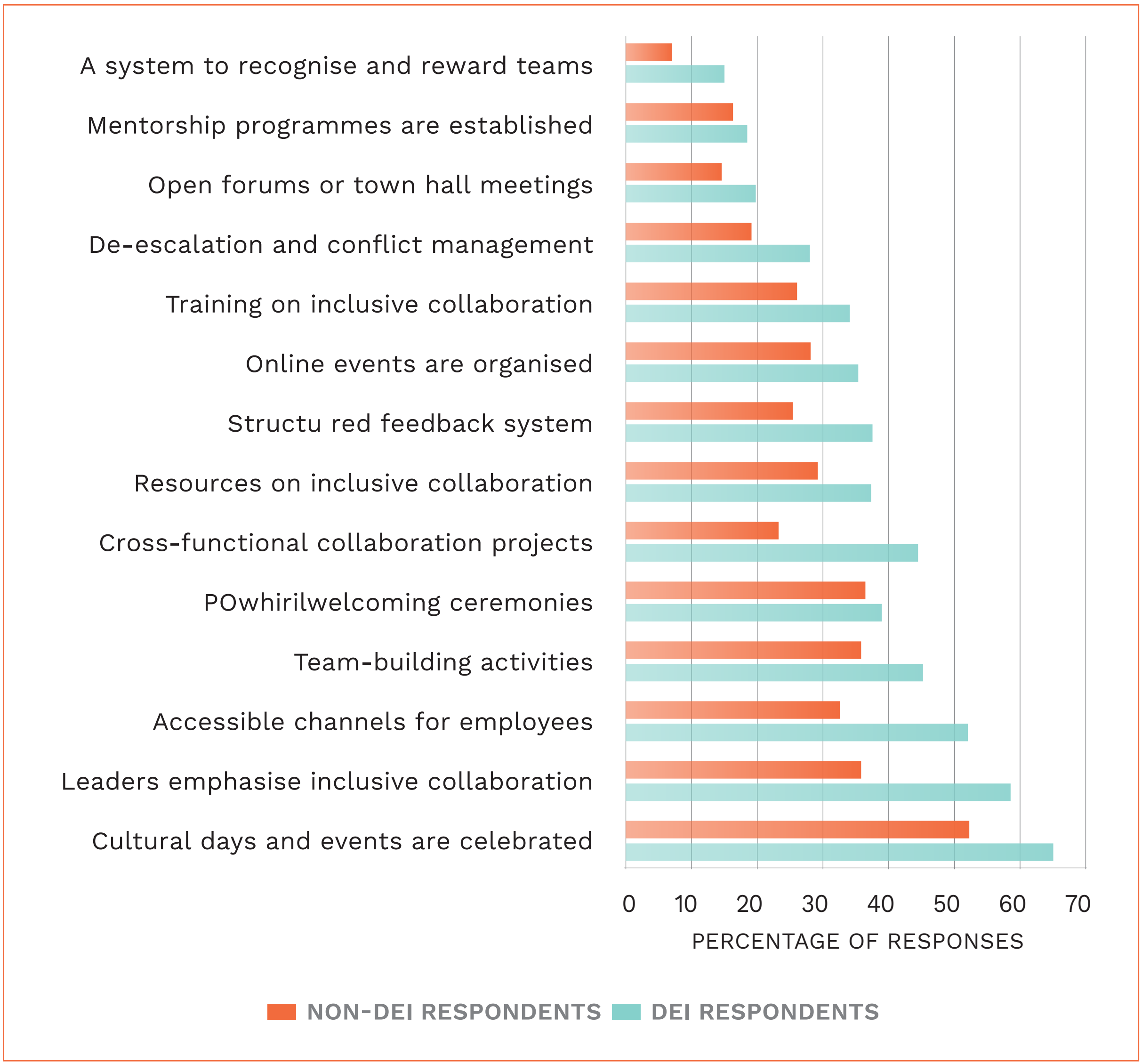
Figure 9 Organisations offering economic hardship support initiatives, by percentage



Inclusive work environments

Organisations employ a variety of practices to foster collaboration and ensure the inclusion of diverse voices (Figure 10). Celebrating cultural days and events is the most prevalent practice reported, with 65.5 per cent of DEI respondents and 52.5 per cent of non-DEI respondents highlighting this practice. Leaders emphasising inclusive collaboration are significantly more reported by DEI respondents (59.1 per cent) compared to non-DEI respondents (36.2 per cent). Accessible channels for employee communication are also more prominently stated by DEI respondents (52.4 per cent versus 32.6 per cent).

Figure 10 Ways organisations foster collaboration and inclusion, by percentage



Team-building activities and pōwhiri/welcoming ceremonies are similarly reported across both groups. There is also a smaller gap in responses between DEI and non-DEI respondents in awareness of mentorship programmes. Cross-functional collaboration projects are notably higher among DEI respondents (44.8 per cent versus 23.4 per cent), indicating a stronger awareness of interdepartmental synergies. Resources and training on inclusive collaboration, structured feedback systems, and organised online events are also more frequently cited by DEI respondents.

CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP

The effectiveness of leaders in advancing the DEI agenda depends on their commitment, combined with the technical expertise and capability required to drive meaningful progress. In addition, leadership teams themselves should be diverse and role model inclusive practices, embodying the principles they advocate for.

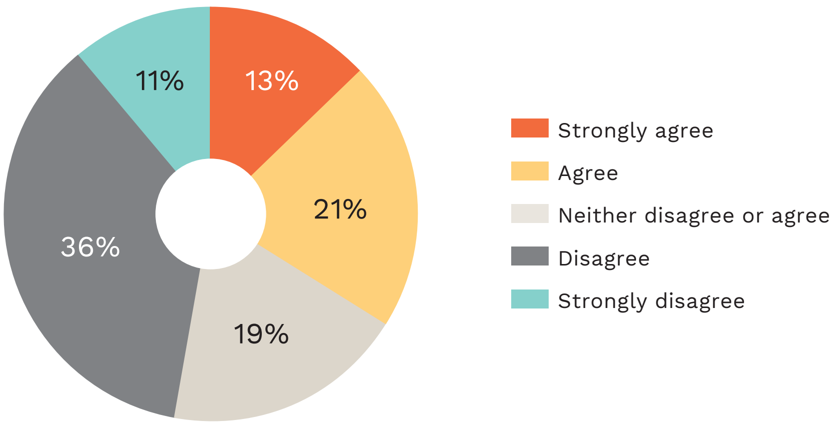
However, even with strong commitment and support, the DEI agenda will be vulnerable to de-prioritisation if it is perceived solely as an ideological pursuit rather than a strategic imperative with clear, measurable objectives and demonstrable outcomes. Furthermore, leadership accountability for DEI outcomes can be challenging to enforce when leaders are not adequately prepared for this role. Overcoming these challenges is essential to ensure that DEI programmes are effectively integrated to achieve meaningful impact within organisations.

Responses to the survey reveal various shortcomings in DEI leadership through several key points: a significant portion of respondents (36.8 per cent) are unaware of how senior leaders are supported in learning about DEI, indicating a lack of transparency and communication within organisations. Additionally, 39.1 per cent of respondents are unsure about the accountability measures for senior leaders' DEI commitments, highlighting a gap in formal accountability systems which undermines trust and motivation among employees. What's more, the perception that nearly half (46.5 per cent) of the workforce sees a lack of diversity within leadership, coupled with low inclusivity ratings in the public sector, suggests that leadership is not effectively representing or supporting diverse and inclusive environments.

Leadership diversity compared to broader workforce diversity

There are significant disparities in perceptions regarding the diversity of leadership compared to the broader workforce within organisations (Figure 11). Only 12.8 per cent of respondents strongly agree that their organisation's leadership is as diverse as the workforce, while 21.4 per cent agree, totalling 34.2 per cent with a positive view. Conversely, a substantial 35.6 per cent disagree, and 10.9 per cent strongly disagree, showing a significant 46.5 per cent of respondents with negative perceptions. The remaining 19.3 per cent neither agree nor disagree, reflecting ambivalence or uncertainty. This data suggests that nearly half of the workforce perceives a lack of diversity within leadership, highlighting a critical area for organisational improvement in fostering inclusive leadership that mirrors the diversity of the broader employee base.

Figure 11 Extent to which leadership is as diverse as workforce, by percentage

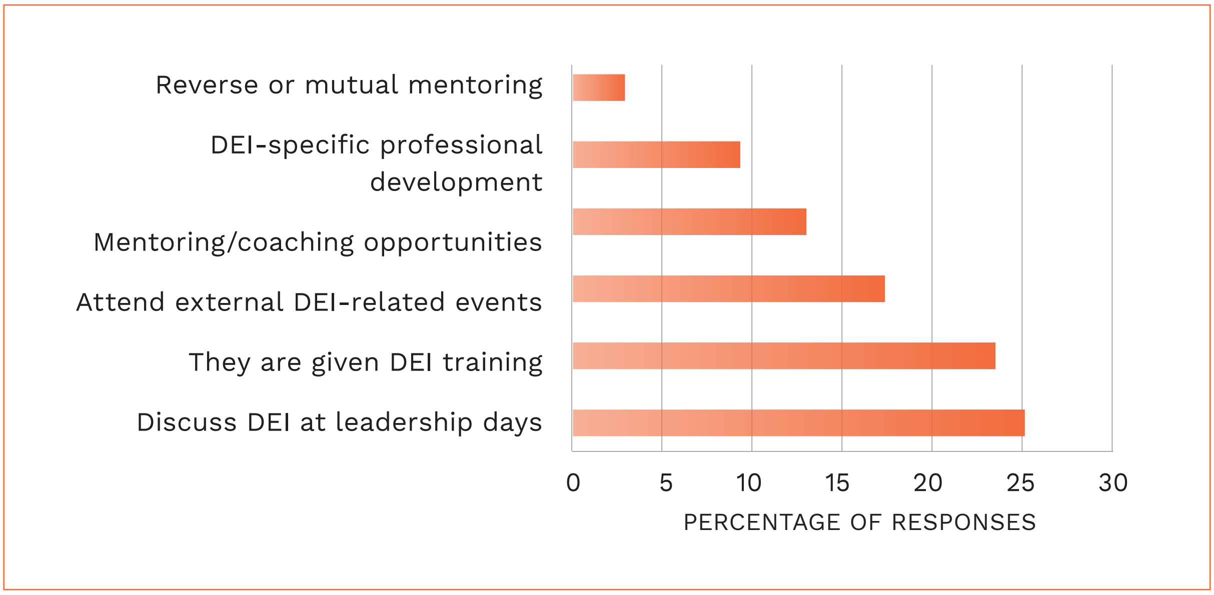


Ways senior leaders are supported to learn about DEI

Supporting senior leaders to learn about DEI is vital for fostering inclusive workplace culture, strategically aligning actions with DEI goals and enabling informed decision-making. Additionally, DEI knowledge at the leadership table enables effective talent management, while also reflecting a commitment to social responsibility and ethical leadership, contributing to a positive organisational and societal impact.

The survey offered various methods by which senior leaders could be supported to learn about DEI (Figure 12). The data reflected that the most common approach, utilised by 25.1 per cent of respondents' organisations, is discussing DEI topics during leadership days. Close behind, 23.5 per cent of senior leaders receive dedicated DEI training. Attending external DEI-related events is a method employed by 17.4 per cent of respondents' organisations. Mentoring and coaching opportunities are provided to 13.1 per cent of leaders, while 9.3 per cent engage in DEI-specific professional development programmes. The least common approach, used by only 2.9 per cent of respondents' organisations, is reverse or mutual mentoring. Over one-third (36.8 per cent) of respondents said they didn't know how their senior leadership was supported to learn about DEI, while a further 15.8 per cent said none of the listed approaches were used in their organisations.

Figure 12 Ways senior leaders are supported to learn about DEI, by percentage

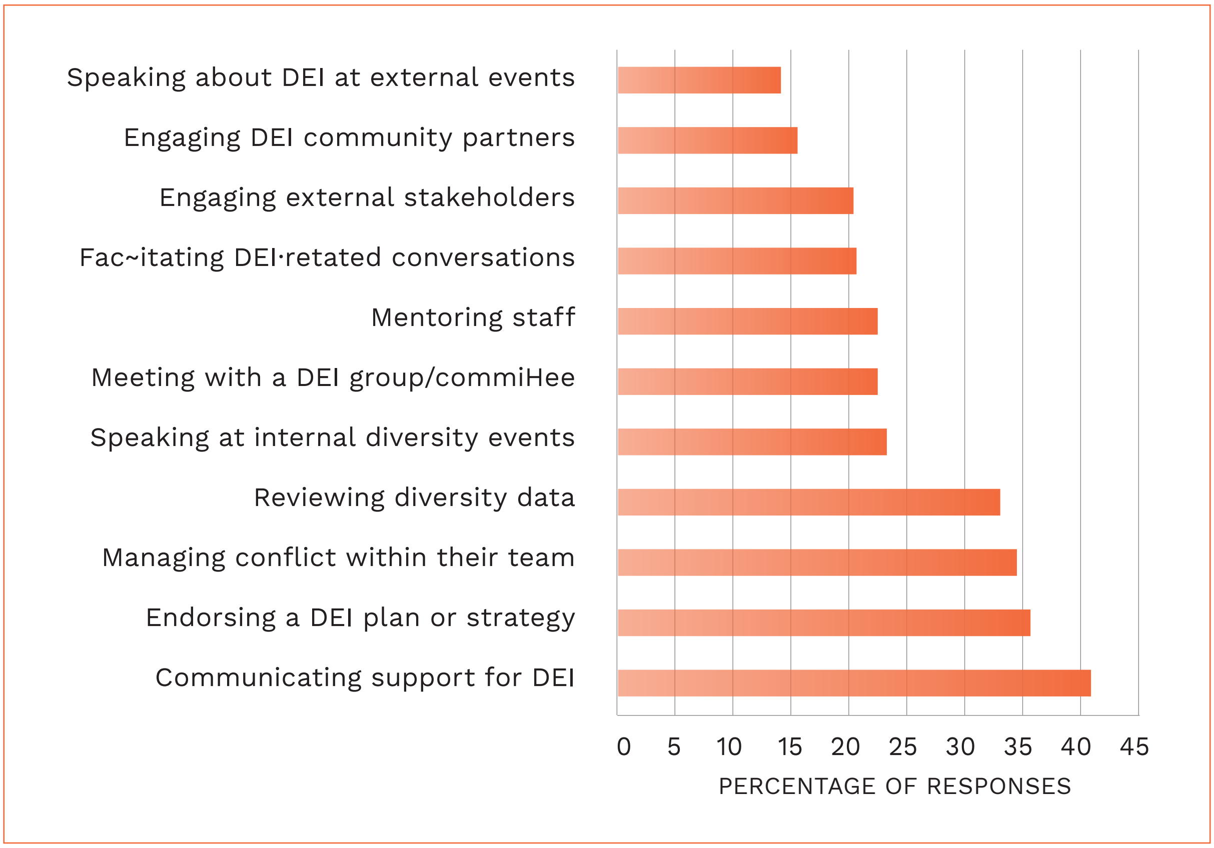


Actions senior leaders take to support DEI in organisation

Actions by senior leaders to support DEI are vital as they set the tone for how the organisation approaches DEI as role models for inclusive behaviour. Their DEI actions also show how DEI aligns with strategic goals and organisational performance.

The data revealed various actions through which senior leaders support DEI, with the most common action being communicating support for DEI (40.9 per cent) (Figure 13). Endorsing a DEI plan or strategy is practiced by 35.7 per cent, while 34.5 per cent manage conflict within their teams to foster an inclusive environment. Reviewing diversity data is undertaken by 33 per cent of leaders to ensure accountability. Speaking at internal diversity events, meeting with DEI groups or committees, and mentoring staff each engage 22.6 per cent of senior leaders. Facilitating DEI-related conversations and engaging external stakeholders both see participation from 20.5 per cent of leaders. Engaging DEI community partners is an activity for 15.6 per cent, and the least common action is speaking about DEI at external events, with 14.2 per cent involvement. One-fifth of respondents didn't know what actions their leaders took to embed DEI principles in organisational culture (19.9 per cent).

Figure 13 Actions senior leaders take to support DEI, by percentage

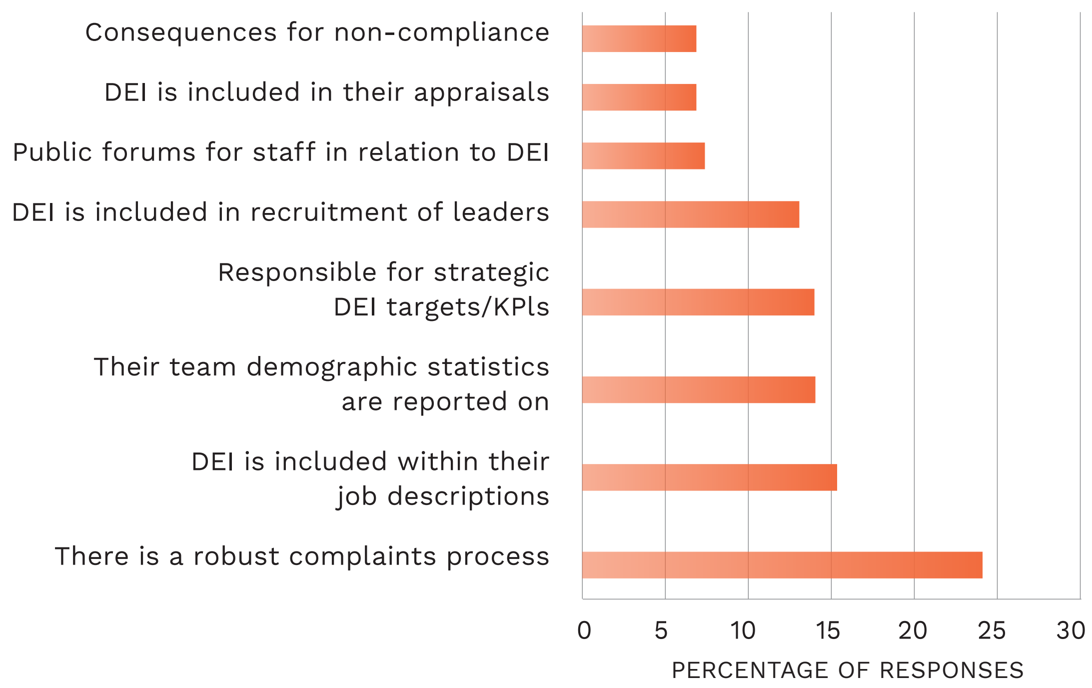


Ways senior leaders are held formally accountable for commitment

Notably, 39.1 per cent of respondents are unsure about the accountability measures in place for their senior leader's commitment to DEI in their organisations. A robust complaints process is the most recognised method, cited by 24.2 per cent of respondents who did know (Figure 14). DEI is included within the job descriptions of 15.3 per cent of senior leaders, while 14.0 per cent report on their team's demographic statistics and are responsible for strategic DEI targets or KPIs. DEI considerations are included in the recruitment process for 13.1 per cent of leaders. Public forums for staff to discuss DEI are available in 7.4 per cent of organisations, and only 6.8 per cent include DEI in their appraisals or have consequences for non-compliance. Nearly a fifth (18.5 per cent) indicate that no formal accountability measures exist.

The survey responses reveal a large gap in senior leadership's formal DEI accountability systems. Formal accountability measures ensure senior leaders uphold diversity commitments, signalling the organisation's dedication to inclusion. By tracking progress and fostering transparency, these measures motivate leaders to advance diversity goals and build trust among employees.

Figure 14 Ways senior leaders are held accountable for commitment to DEI, by percentage



Leadership inclusivity

The majority of respondents perceive their organisation's leadership style to be inclusive to some extent, with 68.2 per cent of respondents viewing leadership as very or fairly inclusive. When looking at sectors, similar rates of those working in the non-profit/NGO or private sectors saw their leadership as inclusive (70.7 per cent and 69.4 per cent respectively), while only 55.1 per cent of public sector respondents felt the same way. Neutral perceptions are highest in the public sector at 30.5 per cent, compared to 19.4 per cent in the private sector and 18.7 per cent in the non-profit/NGO sector (20.2 per cent overall).

Notably, perceptions of non-inclusive leadership are relatively low across all sectors (11.6 per cent), with the non-profit/NGO sector the lowest at 10.6 per cent, followed closely by the private sector at 11.2 per cent, and the public sector slightly higher at 14.4 per cent. Only, 8.8 per cent feel that the leadership is fairly exclusive, and a small minority of 2.8 per cent view it as very exclusive. These figures highlight that while inclusivity is largely recognised, there is still a notable portion of the workforce that sees room for improvement, particularly in the public sector.

The public sector restructuring happening at the time of the survey may be diminishing perceptions of leadership inclusivity due to their impact on morale, trust and diversity. Employees experiencing job insecurity may perceive leadership as less inclusive, leading to a loss of trust, particularly if inclusive practices are not evident in decision-making processes. Additionally, job cuts may disproportionately affect certain demographic groups, reducing workforce diversity and further contributing to a perception of less inclusive leadership.

TEAM COHESION AND WELLBEING

Wellbeing in a workplace context refers to the health (in all its forms) of individual employees, as well as the overall workplace culture - including the social cohesion that bonds teams and the psychological conditions necessary for fostering safety, inclusion and fulfilment. The two are interconnected: when employees feel included and equitable practices are upheld, this culture contributes to their overall wellbeing, supporting individuals' health and job satisfaction, strengthening relationships and creating a more resilient, harmonious and productive workplace.

The need for workplace wellbeing is ever more salient against the current backdrop of job scarcity and insecurity, economic uncertainty and political instability. When resources are constrained, employers may instinctively reduce programmes and initiatives that support employee and workplace wellbeing to cut costs. However, this is precisely when it is crucial to strengthen protective measures to counteract the negative effects of the prevailing circumstances.

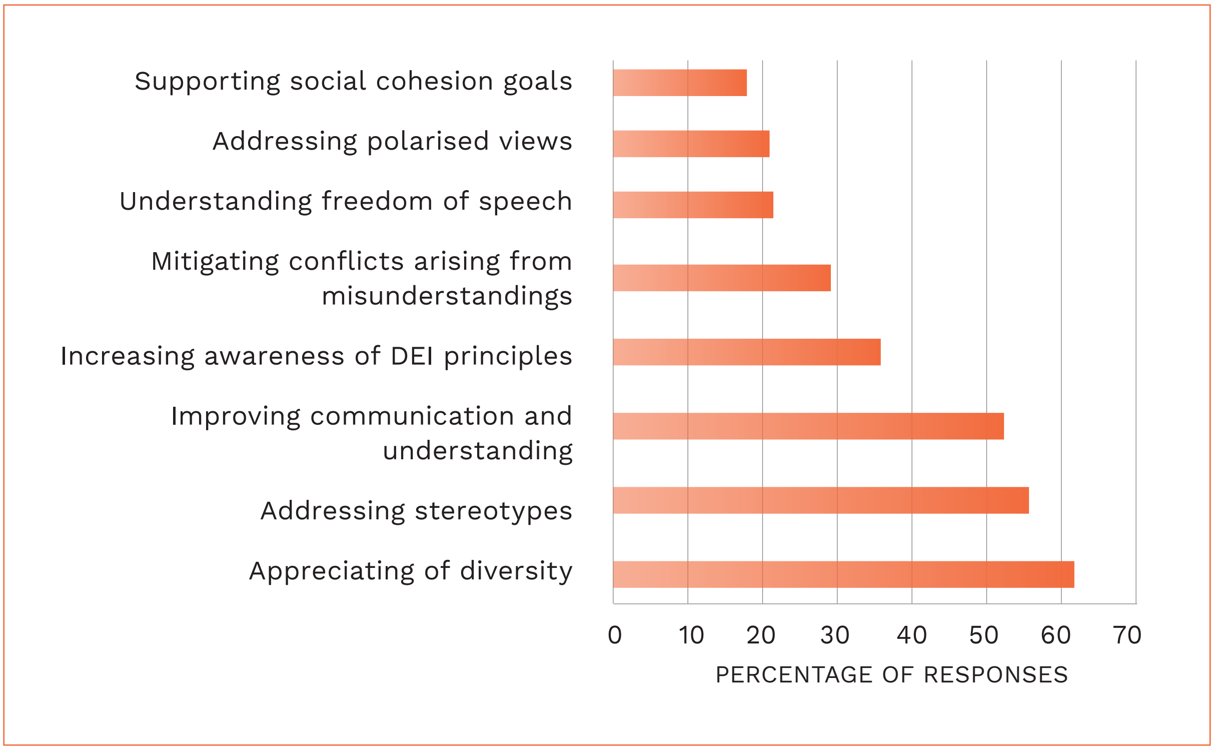
The 2024 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey provides insights into the effectiveness of DEI training in addressing social cohesion challenges and the importance of psychological safety in the workplace. Additionally, survey responses also show the range and effectiveness of mental health benefits and initiatives offered by organisations, and the satisfaction levels of employees with these initiatives, highlighting the need for a stronger focus on creating cohesive and supportive workplace cultures across different sectors. A more holistic approach to DEI and mental health strategies is needed to promote a cohesive and healthy workplace environment, particularly for those working in the public sector.

Training on addressing social cohesion challenges

Including social cohesion challenges in DEI training is crucial because fostering an inclusive environment requires more than DEI awareness. By tackling social cohesion issues, such as stereotypes, communication barriers, and conflicts arising from misunderstandings, DEI training can enhance workplace collaboration and foster understanding between colleagues with diverse perspectives.

A new question for 2024 asked respondents to indicate which aspects of social cohesion challenges were addressed in their DEI training (Figure 15). Many respondents (61.5 per cent) noted that their training covered appreciation of diversity, while 55.4 per cent said addressing stereotypes was tackled. Additionally, 52 per cent reported that their DEI training looked at improving communication and understanding. A lower percentage of respondents, 35.8 per cent, indicated an increase in awareness of DEI principles, followed by 29.1 per cent who felt the training helped mitigate conflicts arising from misunderstandings. A smaller proportion, 21.6 per cent, mentioned understanding freedom of speech, and only 20.9 per cent addressed polarised views. Lastly, only 17.6 per cent said that their DEI training supported social cohesion goals.

Figure 15 Social cohesion challenges addressed by DEI training, by percentage



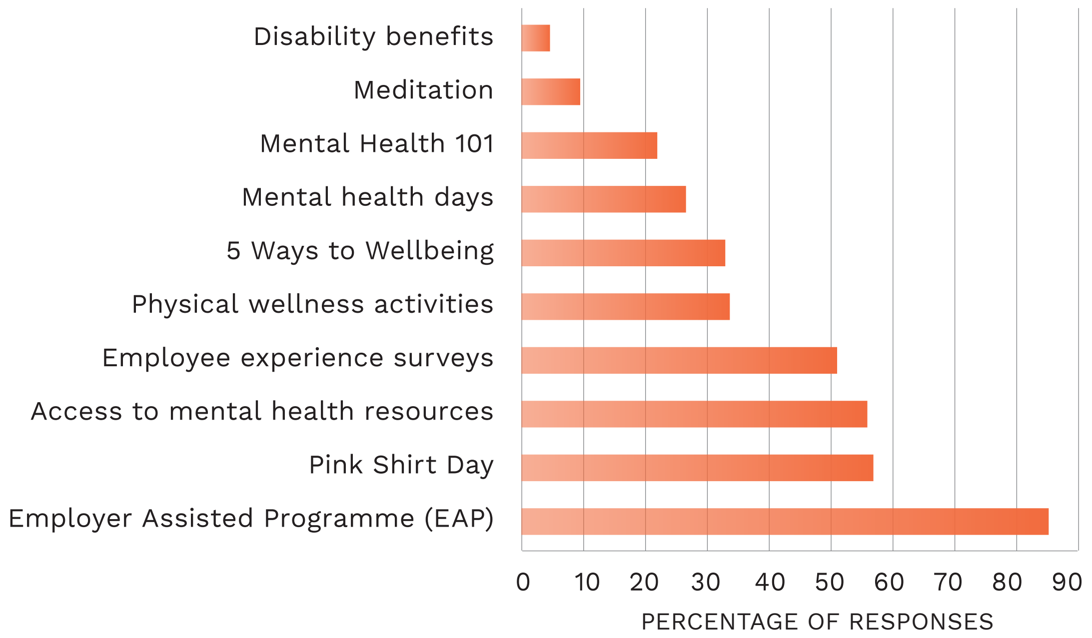
Psychological safety in the workplace is closely linked to social cohesion as it encourages an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their true feelings, opinions, and ideas without fear of negative consequences or judgment. When people feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to engage in open communication, collaboration and mutual support with their colleagues, contributing to a positive work culture and stronger social bonds within the team.

The survey data provides insights into the experiences of respondents in expressing their true feelings at work. The majority of respondents report feeling comfortable or very comfortable (74.2 per cent) in expressing themselves. However, 11.1 per cent indicate feeling neither uncomfortable nor comfortable, and a further 14.6 per cent feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable to express their true feelings at work. Psychological safety fosters an environment conducive to social cohesion by encouraging inclusive behaviours and promoting diversity of thought. A quarter of respondents not feeling psychologically safe at work presents an opportunity for organisations to be placing a stronger focus on a more cohesive workplace culture.

Mental health benefits and initiatives

Another new question for the 2024 Survey focused on the range of mental health benefits and initiatives offered by organisations (Figure 16). The most widely implemented initiative is the Employer Assisted Programme (EAP), with 85 per cent of respondents indicating its availability. Additionally, Mental Health 101 workshops and Pink Shirt Day celebrations are prevalent, with 56.8 per cent and 55.6 per cent participation rates, respectively. The “5 Ways to Wellbeing” programme follows closely behind at 51.2 per cent. However, access to mental health resources and mental health days, whether integrated into sick leave or provided separately, are slightly less common, with 34 per cent and 33.3 per cent implementation rates, respectively. Further initiatives such as meditation and physical wellness activities are also offered, albeit to a lesser extent, with 26.7 per cent and 22.1 per cent of respondents reporting their availability. Interestingly, fewer organisations offer disability benefits, with only 4.4 per cent providing such support.

Figure 16 Mental health benefits and initiatives offered by organisations, by percentage

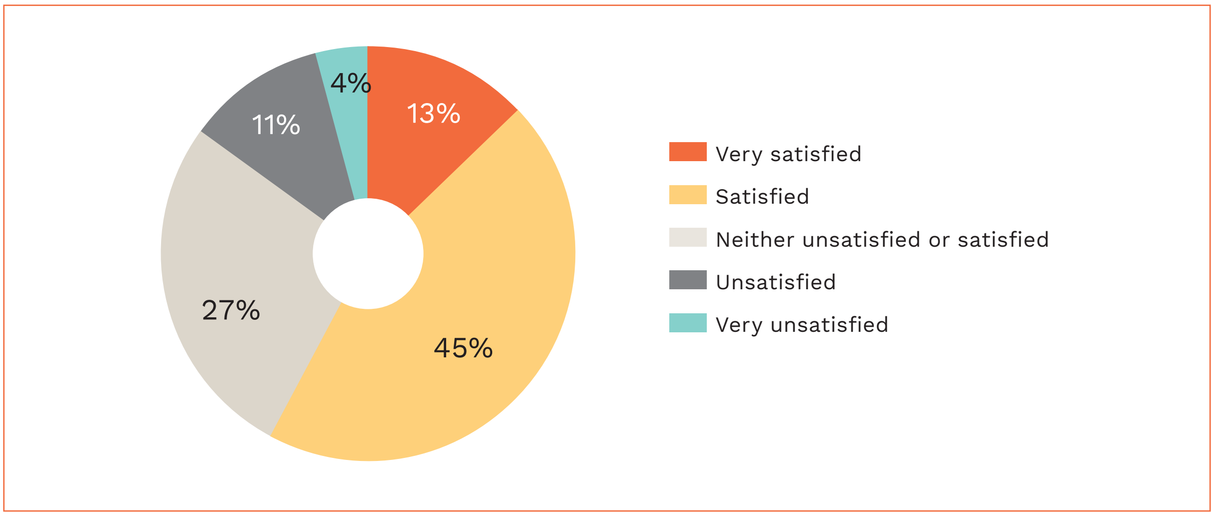


We also asked survey respondents about their satisfaction levels with the mental health benefits and initiatives offered (Figure 17). While many were satisfied to some degree (58 per cent), more than a quarter of respondents expressed a neutral opinion (27 per cent). This proportion raises the question of how well we are meeting mental health needs.

This question is even more relevant when looking at the data across sectors where responses varied. Those who reported being satisfied or very satisfied were more likely to work in the private or non-profit/NGO sectors (66.9 per cent and 56.8 per cent respectively), while 48.5 per cent of those working in the public sector were satisfied or very satisfied. Private sector employees were the least likely to be unsatisfied at any level at 8.3 per cent, compared to 17.6 per cent for non-profit/NGO workers and 22.5 per cent of public sector employees. The proportion of those neutral about their satisfaction levels was similar for private and the non-profit/NGO sector (24.9 per cent and 25.7 per cent respectively), and higher for the public sector (29 per cent).

The varying satisfaction levels with mental health benefits and initiatives presents an opportunity for organisations to further engage and understand the concerns and preferences of their employees. This is particularly relevant for the public sector where job cuts and redundancies are significantly impacting the mental wellbeing of employees due to increased job insecurity, stress and financial concerns. Having effective mental health initiatives becomes crucial in this context to support affected employees, offering resources for coping strategies, counselling and stress management.

Figure 17 Satisfaction with mental health benefits and initiatives, by percentage



Mental health plays a critical role in shaping an individual's sense of belonging within the workplace. When employees face mental health challenges, they often experience feelings of isolation, disconnection, and alienation, which can significantly hinder their ability to form meaningful connections with colleagues and fully engage in their work. This sense of exclusion not only affects their personal wellbeing but also has broader implications for team cohesion and overall workplace morale.

Prioritising mental health, through relevant policies, access to resources and skilled leadership support, is essential for maintaining a thriving, cohesive, and engaged workforce, ultimately enhancing organisational performance and employee satisfaction.

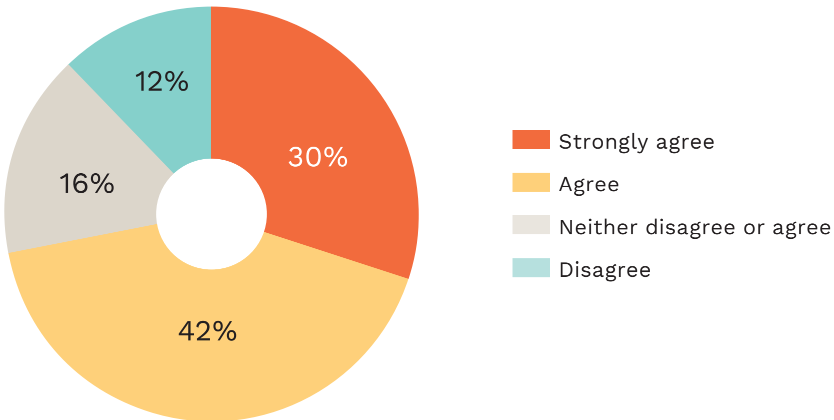
Challenging inappropriate behaviour

Respondents in this survey were again asked about whether they thought people in their organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour (Figure 18). Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (62 per cent), with only 12 per cent disagreeing.

There is, however, varying levels of agreement regarding the likelihood of challenging inappropriate behaviour within different sectors, with responses from the public sector workforce more likely to be neutral or negative. In the non-profit/NGO sector, 81.3 per cent strongly agree or agree that people in their organisation would challenge such behaviour, while 9.3 per cent neither disagree nor agree or disagree. Conversely, in the private sector, 79.9 per cent express agreement with challenging inappropriate behaviour, with 14.2 per cent neutral and 5.9 per cent disagreeing. In the public sector, 58.6 per cent agree or strongly agree, while 21.9 per cent hold a neutral stance and a significant 19.5 per cent disagree that inappropriate behaviour would be challenged in their organisation.

These notable disparities in perceptions across sectors is not a positive sign for the public sector. It may be that the current environment of job uncertainty for many public servants is also discouraging open communication or there is a fear of retaliation. Either way, the results underline the need to promote a culture of accountability and proactive response to inappropriate behaviour.

Figure 18 Extent to which people in organisation would challenge inappropriate behaviour, by percentage



APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The 2024 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.

For the second year, the survey asked respondents whether they had DEI responsibility in their organisation (either as part of their role or in addition to other responsibilities).

Some new questions were added, and some previous questions were restructured for consistency and clarity and to ensure construct validity—or are we measuring the construct we think we're measuring. We have continued alignment with the Aotearoa Inclusivity Matrix, which is the national framework designed to assess the maturity of organisations' DEI practices.

Because of these changes, direct comparison with survey responses from previous years may not be possible across all questions, due to the number of changes made to questions and response options.

We also expanded our demographic categories for individuals to include sexual orientation, highest academic qualification, disability status, neurodiversity, and faith or religious affiliation. These additions aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the representation across survey respondents and organisations.

Despite a reasonable rate of 594 responses, participation in the 2024 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey was significantly lower than in 2023, when 1,857 respondents participated. The significant decrease in participation impacts the generalisability of the survey results and hampers our ability to disaggregate results effectively.

The most obvious explanations for reduced participation relate to observable contextual factors arising from the period of economic downturn facing Aotearoa New Zealand, the subsequent public spending cuts, and their knock-on effects across industries. Resource constraints, turnover of key personnel and shifting priorities are all factors which are likely to have impacted the ability and mindset required to engage with the survey.

Our survey distribution relies heavily on our collaborators, who share the survey within their networks. We also observed a decrease in support from several of them, potentially for similar reasons as noted above, which impacted our overall response numbers. These variations in response rates highlight the importance of our collaborators in our survey distribution strategy and the impact they have on our data collection. We will continue to explore ways to increase participation and ensure a diverse and representative sample in future surveys.

Data analysis and reporting was provided by Amanda Reid from Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL).

APPENDIX B: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 594 respondents participated in the 2024 Workplace Diversity Survey, including 378 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 174 who did not identify as having DEI responsibility.

Due to the relatively smaller sample size this year, meaningful disaggregation of the data by individual demographics was not possible, and in some cases disaggregation by organisation demographics was also limited.

While the survey findings can be generalised to understand the experiences and perspectives of the broad population of respondents involved in DEI work, they may not be fully representative of all organisational sub-groups. Where findings specific to organisational categories are statistically significant, they are reported on; otherwise, caution should be exercised when interpreting findings across specific organisational categories.

Organisation demographics

Sector

The largest number of respondents work in local government, public service organisations, and the wider public service (41 per cent, N=244). This is followed closely by those working in the private sector (40 per cent, N=238), while 112 respondents work in the non-profits/NGOs (N=112).

Industry

A broad range of industries are represented, although more than half of respondent's organisations were from five industries: health care and social assistance (15 per cent, N=85), professional and scientific services (12 per cent, N=64), education and training (9 per cent, N=50), public administration and safety (9 per cent, N=49), and construction (8 per cent, N=42). All other industries were represented by five per cent (N=26) or less of respondents. These figures reflect the significant employment in service-oriented and professional sectors.

Location

Two thirds of respondents are located in Wellington (34 per cent, N=189) or Auckland (31 per cent, N=172). Seven per cent (N=41) were located in Waikato or Canterbury, with six per cent (N=34) located in Manawatū-Whanganui. Other regions returned three per cent or less of responses, but there were responses from all regions.

Organisation size

We asked for the approximate size of respondents' organisations, to understand whether organisations of all sizes were represented by the survey. Five per cent (N=29) of respondents were employed by organisations with five or less employees, while 11 per cent (N=64) were employed by small organisations with six to 19 employees. Organisations with 20-99 employees were represented by 92 respondents (17 per cent), with the largest number of respondents (36 per cent, N=198) working in organisations with between 100 and 999 employees. Finally, 31 per cent (N=169) of respondents were employed by large organisations with 1,000 or more employees.

Respondents working in large organisations were over-represented in the survey: two thirds of respondents (67 per cent, N=3670) were employed by organisations with at least 100 employees. This may be accounted for by the fact that in smaller organisations it is typically those that occupy leadership roles that lead this mahi and are therefore usually the ones to respond to the survey. In the current climate, there is a heightened possibility that their attention was focused elsewhere.

Individual demographics

We asked a wider range of demographic questions for the 2024 survey; however, it's important to note that these demographic categories were optional, and respondents could choose not to disclose this information if they preferred. Our goal is to create an inclusive and comprehensive research environment while respecting the privacy and comfort of our respondents.

Gender representation

The vast majority of respondents (80 per cent) who disclosed their gender identified as female (N=302), while 17 per cent identified as male (N=66), and three per cent of respondents identified as gender-diverse or non-binary (N=11).

Age representation

The ages of respondents ranged across all available age categories, from 18-24 to 65+ years. The largest shares of respondents were from 35-44 age group, with 27 per cent of respondents (N=104). Similar percentages were found in the 25-34 (21 per cent, N=82), 45-54 (22 per cent, N=86), and 55-64 (21 per cent, N=80) age groups. Just four per cent of respondents were aged 18-24 (N=13), with five per cent of respondents over 65 (N=20).

Ethnicity representation

The respondents constituted a range of ethnicities. The majority of respondents (67 per cent) selected New Zealand Pākehā (N=262), while 17 per cent were Other European (N=67), 13 per cent were Māori (N=49), seven per cent were Asian (N=29), four per cent were Pasifika/Pacific Peoples (N=17), and three per cent were Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (N=12).[1]

Sexual orientation

The first of the new questions for 2024 asked about sexual orientation. Of the respondents who answered the question, 83 per cent identified as heterosexual or straight (N=291), nine per cent as bisexual (N=31), and eight per cent as gay or lesbian (N=30).

Academic qualifications

The data provides insights into the distribution of educational qualifications among respondents. A significant proportion of respondents possessed higher qualifications, with Bachelor's Degree or Level 7 Qualification being the most prevalent at 108 individuals, accounting for 29 per cent (N=108) of the total. Bachelor Honours Degree and Master's Degree were held by 86 (23 per cent, N=86) and 89 (24 per cent, N=89) individuals, respectively. Lastly, 16 respondents possessed a PhD or other doctoral degree (4.3 per cent). Smaller numbers of respondents held Level 5 or 6 Diplomas (4 per cent, N=15 and 5 per cent, N=19 respectively), and Level 1, 2, 3, and 4 Certificates (1 per cent, N=4; 0.5 per cent, N=2; 3 per cent, N=11; and 4 per cent, N=16 respectively).

1 Totals add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to select more than one ethnic category.

Disability

The survey question regarding self-perception of disability yielded diverse responses. The majority of respondents indicated that they do not perceive themselves as disabled (80 per cent, N=312). Fifteen per cent of respondents (N=57) acknowledged identifying as disabled or having a disability. Additionally, five per cent (N=19) expressed uncertainty regarding their self-perception of disability.

Neurodiversity

The majority of respondents did not consider themselves to be neurodiverse (65 per cent, N=250), while more than one fifth did (22 per cent, N=86). A significant number of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding their neurodiversity status (13 per cent, N=49).

Faith/religious affiliation

Our final new question asked respondents about their faith or religious affiliation. The majority of respondents reported having no religious affiliation (66 per cent, N=258). Among those who identified with a specific faith, Christians accounted for 20 per cent (N=79), while Hindus and individuals with other affiliations each represented two per cent (N=8). Small numbers of respondents identified as Pagan/Wiccan, Buddhist, Muslim, and Sikh, with one per cent or less of respondents (N=5/3/2/1 respectively).

CONTACT US

info@diversityworksnz.org.nz or
0800 DIVERSITY (348 377)

DIVERSITY WORKS NZ