

NEW ZEALAND DIVERSITY SURVEY

2017 Bi-Annual Report – April



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This report was commissioned by Diversity Works New Zealand. It was produced by Dr Jessica Terruhn and Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley at Massey University.

Introduction

Michael Barnett, as Chair of Diversity Works New Zealand, noted in the programme for the 2016 Diversity Awards that:

...we have been able to champion work practices that recognised individual difference, allowed for flexibility, promoted the role of the family and the whole of life, not just work life, helping reshape employment behaviour – for the better.

In more recent times our investment in tools that allow firms and individuals to analyse their behaviours and implement change for future employment practices, signals our future focus on continued improvement.

One of those tools is this survey of organisations which provides information on the issues and policies that these New Zealand organisations see as important. As Bev Cassidy-MacKenzie (Chief Executive, Diversity Works New Zealand) has noted, we (organisations and individuals) need to acknowledge that New Zealand has become a truly diverse society and it is important to help organisations, big and small, to achieve their potential on “their diversity journey”.

That journey has become more challenging. There are significant shifts occurring in the age profile of New Zealand’s communities while high inward migration continues to underline the growing ethnic diversity of the workforce and client/customer communities. There is widely articulated expectation that firms should respect the different abilities and gender of their workforce and community in their policies and practices and that the well-being of workers is important to the well-being of companies.

This report provides a snapshot of the way in which public and private sector organisations see these various diversity issues – what are the most important, how are they responding to these issues. The 2016 Diversity Awards help underline the passion and innovation that some organisations bring to such matters in the workplace. In Michael Barnett’s words, this survey is one “tool” to help explain what is happening in the New Zealand workplace in 2017 – and to raise awareness.

Respondent characteristics

The total sample size for the April 2017 New Zealand Diversity Survey is 302, significantly down from the most recent survey conducted in October 2016 (N=909).

Participating organisations operate in a variety of industries (Table 1). More than one-quarter of all respondents (25.8%) operate in 'Other Services' followed by 'Professional, Scientific and Technical Services' (17.5%) and organisations in the 'Education and Training' industry (12.3%).

Of the 302 respondents, 164 (54.3%) are private sector organisations and 138 (45.7%) operate in the public sector.

Organisations from all regions of New Zealand are represented in the survey (Table 2). The largest number of respondents is located in the Wellington Region (N=91 or 30.1%), followed by 71 organisations in the Auckland region (23.5%) and 55 in the Northland region (18.2%).

Large organisations with 200+ employees constituted the biggest share of respondents with 41.7 percent (N=126), followed by small organisations with up to 19 employees (N=115 or 38.1%). The remainder were medium-sized organisations (N= 61 or 20.2%).

Table 1: Industries in which organisations operate in

Industry	Number	Percent
Other services	78	25.8%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	53	17.5%
Education and Training	37	12.3%
Public Administration and Safety	24	7.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	23	7.6%
Financial and Insurance Services	21	7.0%
Information Media and Telecommunications	15	5.0%
Retail Trade	14	4.6%
Wholesale Trade	13	4.3%
Administrative and Support Services	10	3.3%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	8	2.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	5	1.7%
Arts and Recreation Services	1	0.3%
Total	302	100%

Table 2: Location of organisations

Region	Number	Percent
Wellington Region	91	30.1%
Auckland Region	71	23.5%
Northland Region	55	18.2%
Waikato Region	12	4.0%
Otago Region	10	3.3%
Canterbury Region	9	3.0%
Area outside Regions	9	3.0%
Nelson Region	8	2.6%
Manawatu-Manganui Region	7	2.3%
Bay of Plenty Region	6	2.0%
Gisborne Region	6	2.0%
Hawke's Bay Region	5	1.7%
Taranaki Region	5	1.7%
Tasman Region	4	1.3%
Marlborough Region	3	1.0%
Southland Region	1	0.3%
Total	302	100%

Diversity issues that are most important to organisations

In this survey, respondents were asked to identify the diversity issues that are most important to their organisation. They were able to choose more than one response option. Respondents identified wellbeing, flexibility, and bias as the three most important diversity issues (66.9%, 54.6%, and 48.3% respectively).

In looking at the trends across surveys (Table 3), two things are of particular note. Firstly, wellbeing, flexibility, and aging have been consistently identified as the three most important diversity issues in previous surveys. In this survey, however, bias has replaced aging in third place. Even though a slightly higher percentage of organisations saw aging as a diversity issue than in the previous survey (up 3.2%), the percentage of organisations stating that bias is an important diversity issue jumped by 18.2 percent, from 30.1 percent to 48.3 percent. This is a significant change which signals a growing concern about bias as a diversity issue.

Secondly, we see marked increases in importance for most diversity issues relative to the last survey. Apart from bias (see above), gender, and ethnicity also registered particularly strong increases of 16.1 percent (from 28.9% to 45%) and 14.4 percent (from 27% to 41.4%) respectively. While disability, sexuality, and religion remained of least concern to organisations, these issues recorded increases relative to the previous survey. The only exceptions are flexibility and employment transition for younger staff which remain at previous levels. This development stands in stark contrast to the continuous decreases (or stagnation) of most items over the last three surveys, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Importance of diversity issues for organisations 2015-2017

Diversity issues	April 2017	October 2016	April 2016	October 2015
Wellbeing/wellness	66.9%	62.3%	63.3%	65.9%
Flexibility	54.6%	53.1%	55.4%	59.2%
Bias	48.3%	30.1%	34.7%	37.2%
Aging	47.0%	43.8%	46.2%	46.9%
Gender	45.0%	28.9%	31.5%	33.9%
Ethnicity	41.4%	27.0%	28.1%	37.5%
Bullying and harassment	35.8%	25.6%	30.6%	32.4%
Employment transition for younger staff	27.5%	27.6%	26.1%	33.5%
Disability	24.2%	16.2%	16.2%	19.3%
Sexuality	17.9%	11.0%	12.3%	13.4%
Religion	12.3%	7.7%	6.9%	9.0%

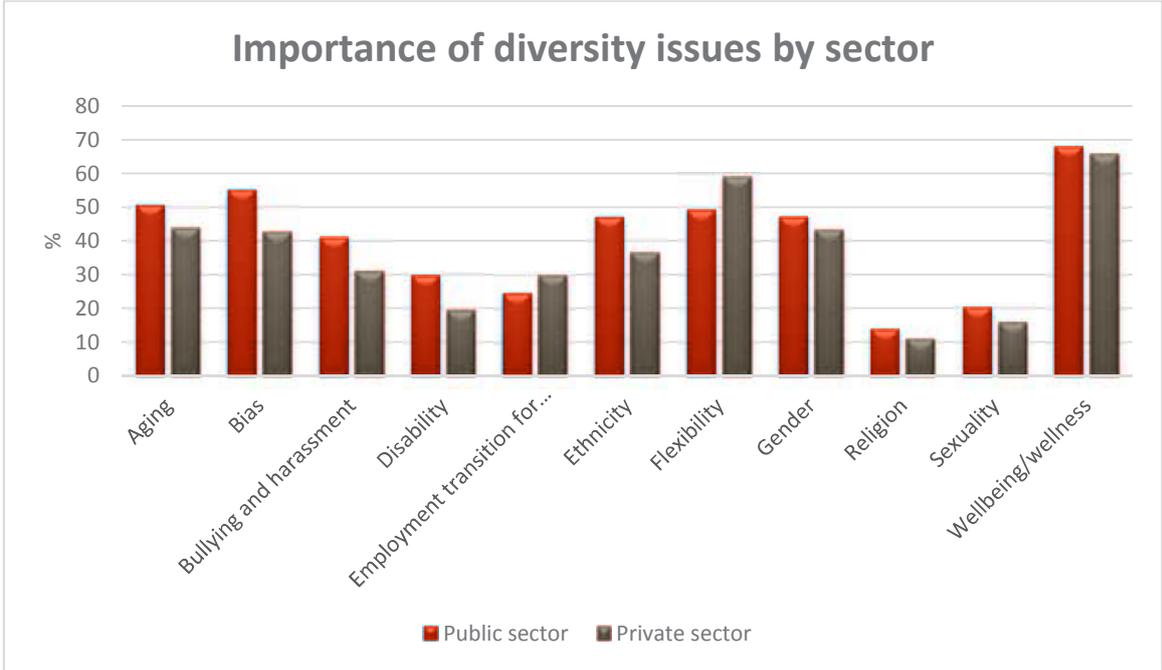
Importance of diversity issues by sector

The new data on **sector** shows a number of noteworthy differences (Figure 1). Public sector organisations accorded greater importance to all diversity issues, with the exception of employment transition for younger staff and flexibility.

The data also shows that bias is a much bigger concern for public-sector organisations than it is for those in the private sector. More than half (55.1%) of all public-sector respondents ticked the response option bias, making it their second most important diversity issue after wellbeing/wellness; by comparison, 42.7 percent of private sector organisations chose bias, making it the fifth most important issue.

Conversely, flexibility is of greater importance to organisations in the private sector. With 59.1 percent of private organisations indicating that flexibility is a key issue, it is second only to wellbeing/wellness. By comparison, slightly less than half (49.3%) of all public-sector organisations see flexibility as an important diversity issue.

Figure 1: Importance of diversity issues by sector

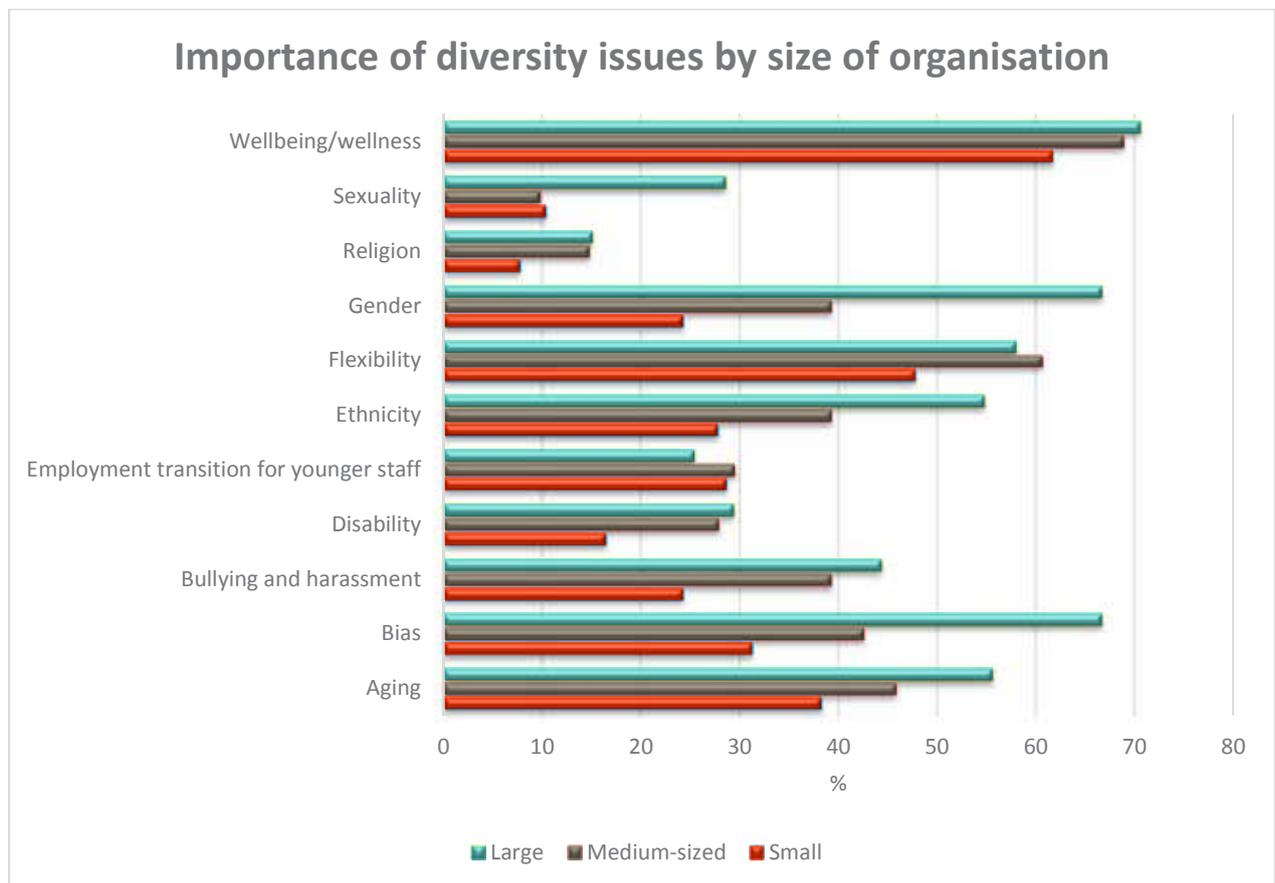


Importance of diversity issues by size of organisation

In analysing the effect of organisation size on which diversity issues are regarded as important, we see some commonalities and differences. Wellbeing/wellness is the most important diversity issue for all organisations irrespective of size. Flexibility and aging come second and third for small and medium-sized organisations. For large organisations, however, both bias and gender are more important (66.7% each), sharing second place before flexibility (58%) and aging (55.6%).

As shown in Figure 2 below, the importance of most diversity issues increases with the size of the organisation. Such differences between small, medium-sized, and large organisations are especially pronounced for gender, sexuality, bias, and ethnicity.

Figure 1: Importance of diversity issues by size of organisation



Addressing diversity issues

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their organisation had a formal policy, a programme or initiative, or neither of these in place for each of the diversity issues they had marked as important in the previous question. The findings are shown in Table 4. The three diversity issues for which participating organisations were most likely to have either a formal policy or a programme and/or initiative in place are wellbeing/wellness (80.6%), bullying and harassment (80.3%), and flexibility (68.5%).

Aging stands out as the one diversity issue for which organisations have the least formal structures in place. In fact, more than half of all respondents (51%) indicated that they had neither formal policy nor a programme or initiative in place. This seems surprising given the public attention given to aging and the extent of the demographic transition to an older society where age-friendly workplaces will be of growing importance. The finding also does not sit well with the fact that organisations indicate that aging is an important diversity issue for them.

Please note that comparisons with the previous survey are difficult as respondents had an added 'don't know' response option in this survey. To take the example of aging, we see a marked decrease of nearly 16 percent for the response 'neither formal policy nor programme/initiative' (from 66.9% to 51%) from the last survey. However, this does not translate into an increase in the response options 'formal policy or programme/initiative'. Instead, 16.2 percent of respondents indicated that they did not know what structures are in place for aging in their organisation.

Table 4: Diversity policies and programmes/initiatives

Diversity issue	Formal Policy or programme/initiative	Neither formal policy nor programme/initiative	Don't know
Wellbeing/wellness	80.6%	13.9%	5.5%
Bullying and harassment	80.3%	12.0%	7.7%
Flexibility	68.5%	23.7%	7.8%
Gender	58.2%	28.4%	13.4%
Ethnicity	56.7%	30.9%	12.4%
Disability	55.1%	29.6%	15.3%
Bias	54.2%	35.8%	10.0%
Sexuality	43.0%	36.8%	20.2%
Employment transition for younger staff	39.6%	39.7%	20.7%
Religion	37.9%	39.1%	23.0%
Aging	32.8%	51.0%	16.2%

As illustrated in Figure 3, public and private-sector organisations are most likely to have either formal policies and/or programmes and initiatives in place for wellbeing/wellness, bullying and harassment, as well as flexibility. There are no distinct differences between public and private-sector organisations with respect to implementing formal policies and/or programmes and initiatives around diversity.

By contrast, the size of the organisation has a clear effect. Figure 4 shows that large organisations are significantly more likely to have formal policies and/or diversity programmes and initiatives instituted. Gender, bias, ethnicity, and sexuality stand out as diversity issues that large organisations are significantly more likely to have provisions for. This corresponds with the greater emphasis of large organisations on the importance of these diversity issues.

Figure 3: Diversity policies and programmes/initiatives by sector

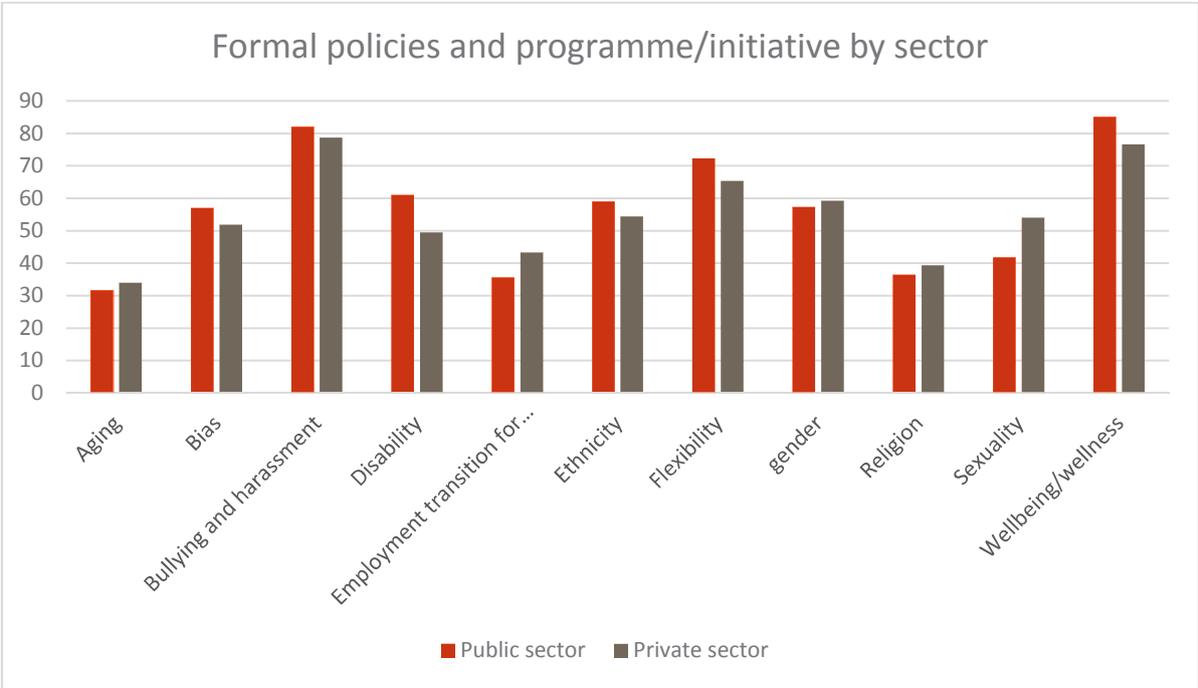
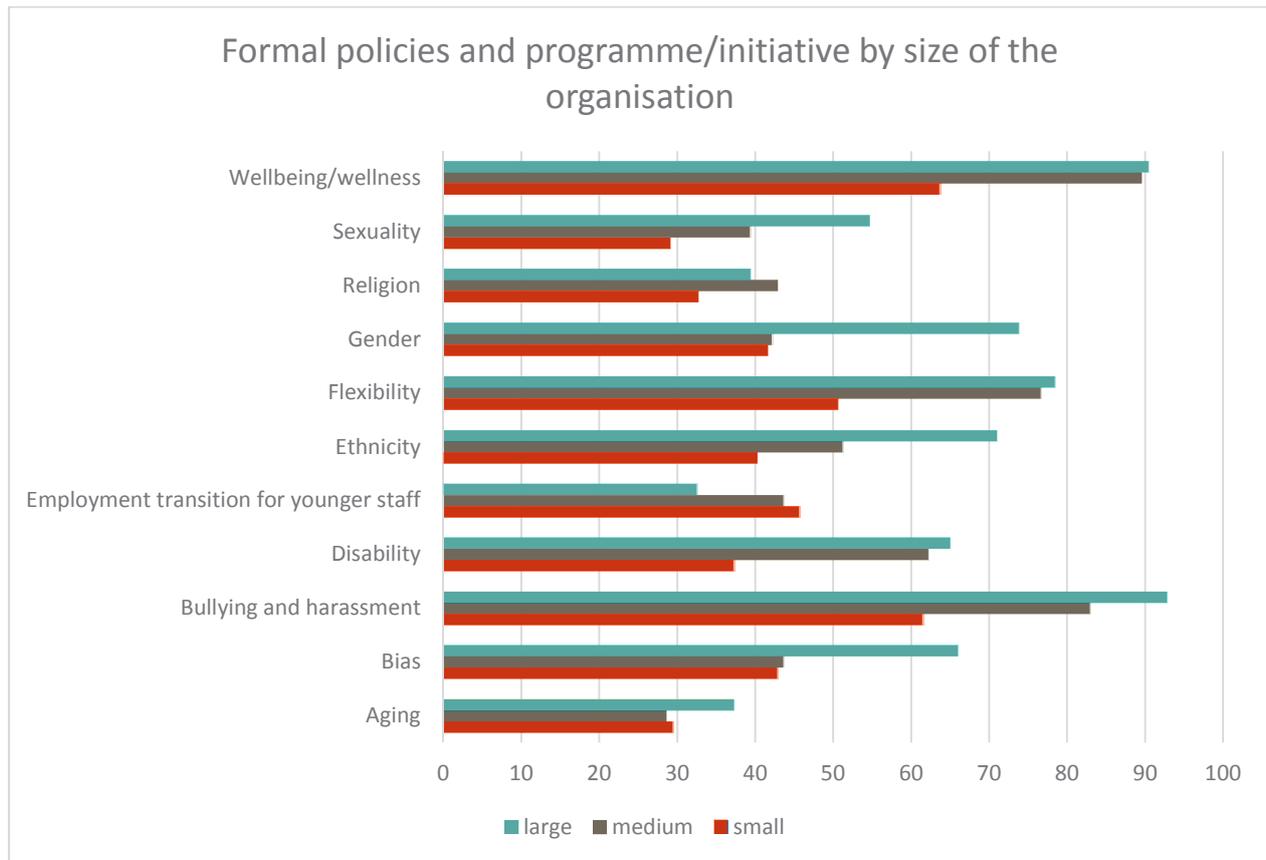


Figure 4: Diversity policies and programmes/initiatives by size of organisation



Respondents were also asked how their organisation addressed diversity more broadly speaking. For that purpose, they were given several response options. Respondents indicated that they most commonly addressed diversity through consideration of diversity in relevant HR policies (69.6%), top management commitment to and involvement in diversity issues (54.0%), as well as through the communication and promotion of diversity to internal stakeholders and a diversity plan or strategy (31.8% each).

Most noteworthy in this survey are the strong increases across all methods of addressing diversity relative to the last survey. As shown in Table 5, eight methods registered increases of between 10 and 20 percent, and one method more than 20 percent. While the October 2016 Report had noted decreases relative to April 2016, the figures in the current survey exceed those reported one year ago.

Table 5: Trends in methods of addressing diversity in organisations

Methods of addressing diversity	April 2017 Percent	Oct 2016 Percent	Increase Percent
Consideration of diversity in relevant HR policies	59.6%	36.0%	23.6%
Top management commitment to and involvement in diversity issues	54.0%	37.3%	16.7%
Communication and promotion of diversity to internal stakeholders	31.8%	20.8%	11.0%
Diversity strategy or plan	31.8%	19.8%	12.0%
Diversity support networks	25.8%	13.6%	12.2%
Diversity education and training for people managers	24.8%	13.9%	10.9%
Diversity education and training for existing employees	24.5%	14.6%	10.9%
Monitoring and reporting diversity performance	23.5%	12.7%	10.8%
Diversity council, committee, team or taskforce	22.8%	9.9%	12.9%
System or mechanisms for reporting diversity-related concerns	18.9%	12.1%	6.8%
Communication about diversity-related issues to external stakeholders	16.9%	9.8%	7.1%
Diversity education and training for new employees	16.2%	11.6%	4.6%
Other	13.6%	5.2%	8.4%
Diversity-related employment benefits	9.6%	6.5%	3.1%
Diversity-related managerial incentives	4.6%	3.6%	1.0%

Measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of diversity initiatives

Just over one-fifth of all organisations (20.9%) indicated that they formally measure or evaluate the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives. This represents a 5 percent increase from the previous survey.

As reported previously, there is a strong correlation between the size of the organisation and the likelihood to monitor the effectiveness of diversity initiatives. Thirty five percent of all large organisations that responded to this survey monitored the effectiveness of their initiatives, compared to 16.4 percent of medium-sized organisations and less than 8 percent of small organisations.

Public-sector organisations are somewhat more likely to monitor their initiatives than private-sector organisations (23.2% and 18.9% respectively).

Diversity issues under the spotlight

This section reports the results from those survey questions that were designed to learn more about some of the diversity issues broadly outlined in the previous sections. Respondents were asked about gender representation in their organisation, in what ways ethnicity constitutes a diversity issue and how it is addressed, incidents of bullying and harassment, forms of flexibility employed in the organisation and, lastly, how organisations cater for workers over the age of 55 years.

Female representation

Respondents were asked two questions about gender representation in their organisation at the level of governance and at the level of leadership.

Nearly 80 percent of respondents indicated that women were represented at the governance level of their organisation, while 10 percent said they were not. A further 10 percent indicated that this question was not applicable to their organisation. Public-sector organisations were somewhat more likely to have female representation at governance level than private-sector organisations (84% and 76% respectively).

Taking into account the organisation's size, it is interesting to note that medium-sized organisations were less likely to have female representation at the governance level than both small and large organisations (72.1% compared to 75.6% for small organisations and 87.3% for large organisations). Indeed, 18 percent of medium-sized organisations do not have female representation at the governance level which contrasts with much smaller percentages for both small and large organisations (both just under 8%).

More than 90 percent of all respondents indicated that women were represented at the level of leadership and in decision making roles.

As above, public-sector organisations were slightly more likely to have female representation at the leadership level than organisations operating in the private sector (92.7% and 88.4% respectively).

With respect to the size of the organisation, a similar picture emerges with medium-sized organisations having less female representation at the leadership level than both small and large organisations (83.6% compared to 89.6% for small organisations and 94.4% for large organisations).

Ethnicity

In this survey, we introduced two new questions about ethnicity. From previous surveys, we knew that between 27 and 37 percent of all organisations (October 2016 and October 2015 respectively) identified ethnicity as a diversity issue. This has increased to more than 40 percent in this survey (see above). Given the increasing importance placed on ethnic diversity in the workplace in New Zealand and elsewhere, we aimed to find out more about the ways in which ethnicity constitutes a 'diversity issue' for organisations and how it is addressed.

Respondents were given the opportunity to write - in their own words - in what ways ethnicity was a diversity issue for their organisation; 230 out of 302 responded to this question. The results are presented in Table 6 below.

The largest share of all respondents – more than one-third – indicated that ethnicity was not a diversity issue for their organisation. A further 13 percent stated that the workforce of their organisation was ethnically diverse. Interestingly, there was a significant overlap between these two statements which suggests that organisations to some extent equate having a diverse workforce with 'solving' the issue of ethnicity.

Respondents (11.3%) also highlighted the need to have a team that represents the clientele and/or community that the organisation engages with. In most cases, this was framed as a responsibility of organisations and, in some cases, a goal still to be met. This was further reflected in the 10.4% of respondents who indicated that their organisation grappled with a lack of diversity amongst staff. A number of respondents referred specifically to the under-representation of Maori (8.3%) and Pasifika (5.2%) in their organisation, particularly at senior levels.

Others raised the topic of hiring practices, with 5.2% stating that ethnicity was a focus in the recruitment and retention of staff. Others mentioned bias in recruitment and promotion but it was not always clear what respondents meant. As discussed below, respondents are somewhat polarised between those who advocate hiring based on skill alone and those who promote hiring practices that are designed to increase ethnic diversity. In this context, respondents also highlighted the challenge of finding candidates of diverse backgrounds who had 'the right skills'.

Smaller numbers referred to institutional practices, such as a lack of cultural competence and openness to difference amongst staff (3.5%), a focus on inclusion, equity, and respect in the workplace (2.6%), as well as the challenge of delivering culturally appropriate services (1.3%).

Table 6: Ethnicity as a diversity issue for organisations

Ethnicity as diversity issue	Number (N=230)	Percent
Not an issue	82	35.7%
Employ a diverse workforce	30	13.0%
Team needs to represent community/clientele	26	11.3%
Lack of diversity in the organisation	24	10.4%
Underrepresentation of Maori in the organisation	19	8.3%
Underrepresentation of Pasifika in the organisation	12	5.2%
Focus in recruitment and retention of staff	12	5.2%
Bias in recruitment and promotion	9	3.9%
Finding diverse candidates with the rights skills for the job	8	3.5%
Lack of acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity amongst staff	8	3.5%
Focus on inclusion, equity, and respect	7	3.0%
Skills and qualifications matter most	6	2.6%
Language barrier	4	1.7%
Culturally appropriate service delivery	3	1.3%
Employing a Maori worldview and values in the organisation	3	1.3%

In the same explorative manner, respondents were asked to outline how their organisation addressed ethnicity as a diversity issue (Table 7). In line with the results discussed above, nearly a third of respondents (30%) indicated that they did not address ethnicity as a diversity issue. This was followed by a group of respondents who indicated that their organisation aimed to increase the ethnic diversity of their employees through hiring practices. Conversely, 8.3% of respondents took the opposite approach, aiming to eliminate perceived bias through hiring practices based solely on skills and qualifications.

Even though institutional practices were not frequently mentioned as an issue with respect to ethnic diversity in the organisation (see above), a number of respondents explained that they provided cultural competence and anti-bias training (12.9%) and that their organisation thought it important to institute a culture that ensures inclusion, equity, and respect. This also included networking opportunities for employees (5.5%) and ensuring representation through Maori advisory liaison groups.

Table 7: Methods of addressing ethnicity as a diversity issue

Methods of addressing ethnicity as a diversity issue	Number (N=217)	Percent
Not at all	65	30.0%
Increasing ethnic diversity through hiring practices	33	15.2%
Training (cultural competence, bias)	28	12.9%
Institute an organisational culture that ensures inclusion, equity and respect	25	11.5%
Hiring based on skills alone	18	8.3%
Networks for employees	12	5.5%
Maori advisory group or liaison	6	2.8%

Bullying and harassment

Just under 30% of all respondents reported that their organisation had recorded incidents of bullying or harassment over the past 12 months which is within the range of 26 to 31.5 percent which was reported in previous surveys.

Notably, bullying and harassment occur more frequently in public-sector organisations (37%) than in private-sector organisations (23%). In addition, size clearly matters. Close to half of all large organisations (45.2%) had recorded incidents of bullying and harassment, compared to 37.7% of medium-sized and only 8.7% of small organisations.

Wellbeing/wellness

The survey asked respondents about the major wellbeing/wellness challenges for their organisation in order to better understand why wellbeing/wellness is the single most important diversity issue for organisations. As in October 2016, most respondents referred to the health and wellbeing of employees with some specific concerns about fitness, mental health, and nutrition etc. (Table 8). Also consistent with the previous survey, respondents listed ensuring a healthy work-life balance and minimising stress caused by long hours and excessive workloads, as well as other pressures, as challenges for their organisation. In all three of the above issues, but especially work-life balance, we see noticeable increases relative to the previous survey.

In this survey, we found that more than 10 percent of respondents referred to the challenge of implementing wellbeing/wellness measures. This was not highlighted in previous surveys but is an interesting finding which suggests that organisations sometimes struggle to find the time, cover the costs, or find an attractive approach to implement wellbeing measures successfully.

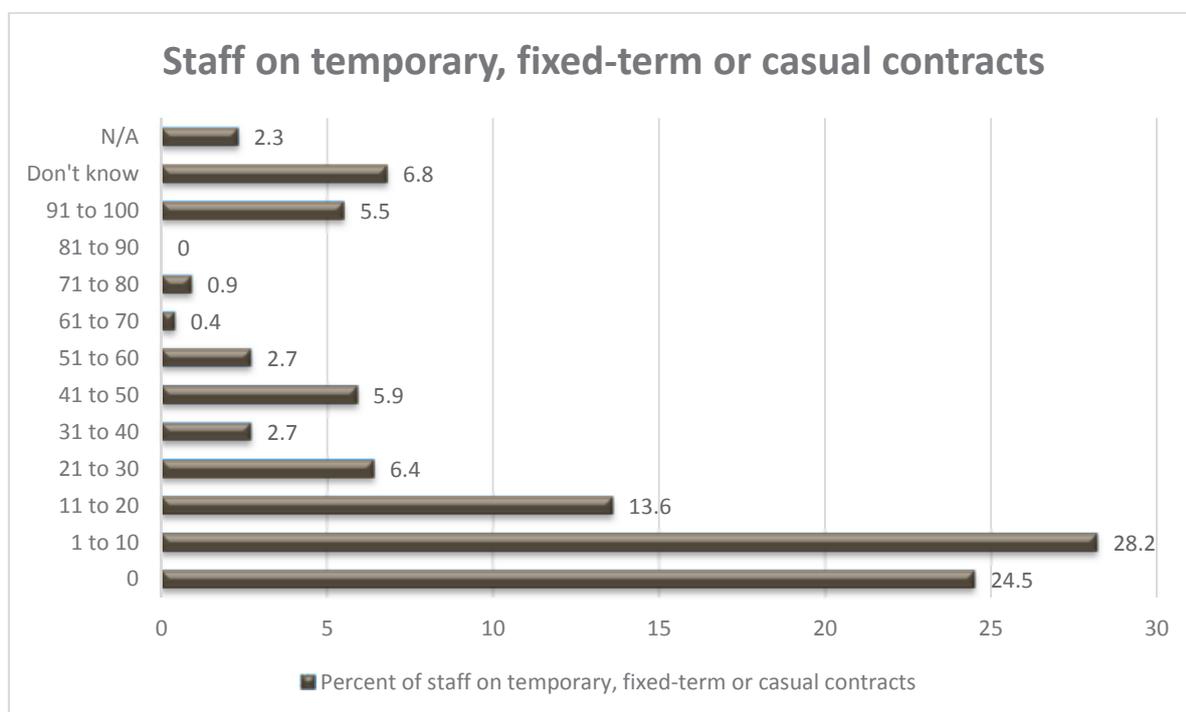
Table 8: Wellbeing/wellness challenges, April 2017 and October 2016

Wellbeing/wellness issues	Number (N=235)	Percent	Percent October 2016
Health and wellbeing	73	31.0%	25.3%
▪ Fitness	9	3.8%	4.4%
▪ Physical	12	5.1%	2.9%
▪ Mental	17	7.2%	2.9%
▪ Nutrition	11	4.7%	1.3%
▪ Smoking, alcohol, drugs	7	3.0%	0.7%
▪ Obesity	3	1.3%	0.6%
Work/Life balance	72	30.6%	12.8%
Stress	65	27.7%	21.6%
Implementing wellbeing/wellness measures	26	11.1%	n/a
None	22	9.4%	7.5%
Aging	21	8.9%	5.8%
Sedentary work	14	6.0%	3.0%
Workplace health and safety and injuries	13	5.5%	5.2%
Flexibility	11	4.7%	3.6%
Illness and absenteeism	4	1.7%	3.3%
Cultural inclusion/diversity	2	0.8%	1.2%
Disability	1	0.4%	0.8%

Temporary, fixed term and casual contracts

One area that was explored in this survey was the percentage of staff on temporary, fixed term, and casual contracts across organisations. More than half of all respondents indicated that they had either no staff (24.5%) or less than ten percent of staff on non-permanent contracts (28.2%). Yet, more than 8 percent of organisations have between 41 and 60 percent of their workforce on non-permanent contracts and in more than 5 percent of organisations, nearly all staff are employed on a temporary, fixed term, or casual basis.

Figure 5: Staff on temporary, fixed term and casual contracts



Flexibility

Respondents were given the opportunity to outline what forms of flexibility their organisation provided; 215 responses were counted, most of them listing several forms of flexibility. As shown in Table 9, the three most common forms were flexible time (68.4%), the option to work remotely (40.5%), and part-time contracts or reduced hours (21.4%). Family-friendly measures and leave arrangements were also frequently mentioned. Only 6 out of the 215 respondents said that their organisation did not employ any forms of flexibility with a further 8 stating this questions was not applicable or they did not know or did not understand the question.

Table 9: Forms of flexibility in organisations

Forms of flexibility	Number (N=215)	Percent
Flexible time	147	68.4%
Working remotely	87	40.5%
Part time/reduced hours	46	21.4%
Family-friendly arrangements	27	12.6%
Leave arrangement	23	10.7%
Job share	10	4.7%
Not applicable/Don't know/Don't understand	8	3.7%
Time in lieu	7	3.3%
None	6	2.8%
Flexible workload	5	2.4%
Flexible roles	5	2.4%
Phased return to work	5	2.4%
Flexible roster	4	1.9%
Work/life balance	4	1.9%
Flexible/extended breaks	3	1.4%

Aging

Respondents were asked whether their organisation encouraged the recruitment of workers over 55 years of age and how they engaged with staff over the age of 55.

Overall, 60 percent of respondents stated that they encouraged the recruitment of workers over the age of 55, whereas 40 percent did not. We noted only slight differences by sector with 61.8 percent of private-sector organisations encouraging older workers compared to 57.4 percent of organisations in the public sector.

With respect to organisation size, medium-sized organisations stand out as less likely to encourage the recruitment of workers over the age of 55. With 41.1 percent, they are more than 20 percent less likely to recruit older workers than large organisations (62.1%) and small organisations (67.6%).

In addition, we asked respondents how their organisation engaged with workers over age 55. One hundred and seventy responses are included in the analysis. More than half of all respondents (52.4%) indicated that their organisation did not have a specific strategy for engaging with older workers. More specifically, respondents stated that recruitment was solely based on skill and that all employees were treated equally, regardless of age. This finding mirrors the earlier discussion of how organisations address ethnicity as a diversity issue. The second biggest group (11.8%) felt that the question was not applicable because their organisation did not employ any older staff.

Of those who indicated that their organisation did specifically engage with workers over 55, most said they valued the experience of older workers and gave them mentoring roles (10.6%). Other strategies were offering flexible hours, part-time work, and phased retirement plans (7.6%) as well as retirement seminars (5.3%).

Table 10: Forms of engagement with workers over the age of 55

Forms of engagement with workers over the age of 55	Number (N=170)	Percent
No specific strategy / treat everyone equally	89	52.4%
Not applicable	20	11.8%
Value experience / mentoring roles	18	10.6%
Flexible, reduced hours and phased retirement plans	13	7.6%
Retirement seminars	9	5.3%
Don't know	8	4.7%
Networking	4	2.4%
Fitness	3	1.8%

Concluding comments

The first Diversity Survey for 2017 provides an indication of how private and public sector firms see, and are responding to, diversity issues. Some of these issues – such as wellbeing and flexibility – have remained significant for organisations for some time in these surveys and many organisations indicate that they have formal policies and programmes or initiatives in place to address these issues

This survey draws attention to bias and aging. In particular, bias has replaced aging as a key diversity issue. This rise in the importance of bias is noteworthy and requires further exploration. Is it because of recent media attention or a greater sensitivity to its importance amongst HR practitioners?

While the issue of aging remains of high importance and registered a slight increase, we would note that we are surprised that aging and its implications for organisations is not getting more attention in organisational practices. As the survey shows, aging is the one diversity issue for which organisations are least likely to have formal policies or programmes or initiatives in place. The aging of the population generally and the workforce in particular (a quarter of all over 65s are in paid work now) reflect a transformative shift which raises fundamental questions about an ‘age friendly workplace’ or an ‘age friendly organisation’. Perhaps the realisation of how significant this shift is has yet to come.

In relation to the way in which organisations address diversity, it is good to see the growing evidence that more firms are considering diversity in HR policies (44% to 59.6% in the last year), the commitment of top management to diversity (43% to 54%) and communicating to employees about diversity (23% to 34%). However, the fact that less than a third (31.8%) have a diversity strategy or plan must be of concern.

This survey indicates that organisations are ensuring that female representatives are now to be found at governance (80%) or leadership/decision-making level (90%).

Two questions were added to this survey to test whether organisations saw ethnic diversity as an issue and how they might address it. Given that New Zealand is one of the most super-diverse countries in the world and that Auckland is the fourth most diversity city (see the World Migration Report, 2016), it is surprising to see that a third of respondents did not see ethnic diversity as an issue. Notably, the findings suggest that many organisations equate having an ethnically diverse workforce with solving the issue of ethnicity.

Some organisations were addressing the issue of ethnic diversity – through HR policies, advertising, or cultural competency training – but almost a third said that nothing was being done. It does suggest that the ethnic diversification of society and the labour force is still not seen as a relevant or significant issue for a significant group of organisations.

The annual Diversity Awards provide examples of how some organisations are responding in innovative ways to preparing tomorrow’s workforce, celebrating cultural diversity, promoting staff wellbeing, enhancing skills, encouraging inclusion, addressing diversity and diversity leadership. The checklist that is used to assess applicants is a useful measure for those seeking to address diversity issues.

There is good practice and the Diversity Awards highlight the possibilities and innovation. This survey indicates that more could be done.