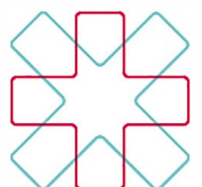




Barriers and enablers of recruitment and retention diversity

Prepared for Fire and Emergency New Zealand
Final Report

12 September 2023
Commercial in Confidence



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Preface

This report has been prepared for Fire and Emergency New Zealand by Melissa Easter and EeMun Chen from MartinJenkins (Martin, Jenkins & Associates Ltd).

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We are recognised as experts in the business of government. We have worked for a wide range of public-sector organisations from both central and local government, and we also advise business and non-profit clients on engaging with government.

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Executive summary

Employer brand research conducted by Randstad (2022) indicates that in the last 10-15 years, the number of people applying to work or to volunteer at Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) has fallen. Awareness and attractiveness of Fire and Emergency as an employer has also fallen. Fire and Emergency is also perceived as less attractive and less visible than other emergency, national security, and justice agencies.

This report covers:

- what factors may be affecting application numbers and engagement with Fire and Emergency, and
 - comparing firefighters and corporate recruitment
 - by demographic factors, like age, gender, ethnic groups
- what types of communications, campaigns, and strategies other agencies and jurisdictions have used, and "what works" and what doesn't
 - what the most effective platforms and strategies are when trying to engage with minority groups.

To understand "what works" in improving recruitment and retention diversity, we conducted:

- analysis of the characteristics of Fire and Emergency's workforce over time
- a review of literature from New Zealand and overseas on recruitment and retention within fire and emergency services, and
- interviews with seven other New Zealand agencies, chosen on the basis of similar characteristics to Fire and Emergency.

Fire and Emergency, like other public-facing agencies, is seeking to be reflective of the communities that it serves. Representation of women at Fire and Emergency is growing, but women are still a relatively low proportion of its workforce compared to other, similar agencies. In particular, women are not well represented in leadership positions – especially in the career firefighter workforce.

Ethnic diversity is increasing over time. Fire and Emergency has been able to recruit and retain more Māori firefighters over time. In 2022, 12% of firefighters identify as Māori, while 17% of New Zealand's population identify as Māori. However, growth is very slow for other ethnic groups – particularly Asian and, to a lesser extent, Pacific groups. Ethnic diversity is very low in the volunteer workforce, and in management positions.

Three key themes emerged from the interviews and literature:

- **The critical role of building broad connections with, and trust within, the wider communities from which you are seeking to recruit.** This was seen as important both for building visibility, and for changing perceptions among potential recruits and among the people who influence them.
- **Reviewing application and assessment processes to ensure that these do not put up unnecessary barriers.** Psychometric and physical fitness tests to ensure candidates have the appropriate abilities are important. These should be reviewed to ensure they reflect, and are predictive of, performance expected of a modern workforce, rather than a systematic barrier for some groups of people.
- **The importance of overall workplace culture in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion to both embed and endure.** While genuine organisational culture change is one of the greatest challenges facing fire services around the world that are looking to increase diversity, supporting inclusivity is critical to both retention of diverse staff, and broader appeal within target populations.

From this, we identified the following focus areas for Fire and Emergency to consider, noting that these two broad areas work synergistically to improve perceptions among under-represented groups:

- **Driving cultural change through an organisation-wide focus on diversity and inclusion.** For those agencies which have made significant progress toward their diversity goals, improving diversity and inclusion was a central focus for the organisation as a whole – and this focus was reflected across all levels of operations, from governance and strategy to day-to-day decision-making and routines. To support this, the following actions could be considered:
 - Identifying a Diversity & Inclusion Lead for Fire and Emergency, tasked with championing diversity and inclusion, and liaising across the organisation to drive and promote change.
 - Reviewing assessment practices to ensure these reflect contemporary needs, and that under-represented groups are supported to succeed.
 - Training for local leaders on promoting an inclusive environment for their staff, and unconscious bias.
- **Building connections with under-represented groups** through initiatives that aim to improve public perceptions, and remove recruitment barriers external to the organisation. This could include:
 - Fostering engagement with young people through youth programmes, youth volunteering opportunities, and/or cadetships. More active promotion and implementation of the School Firewise Programmes.
 - Community engagement or outreach activities that allow young people from under-represented groups to see, and engage with, firefighters who resemble them – the principle of “if I can see it, I can be it”.

- Campaigns targeting wider community perceptions about who can be firefighters, and about the fire service as a place to work.

Context

In the last 10-15 years, Fire and Emergency has experienced a decline in the number of people wanting to be part of its firefighting workforce – either as an employee or as a volunteer.

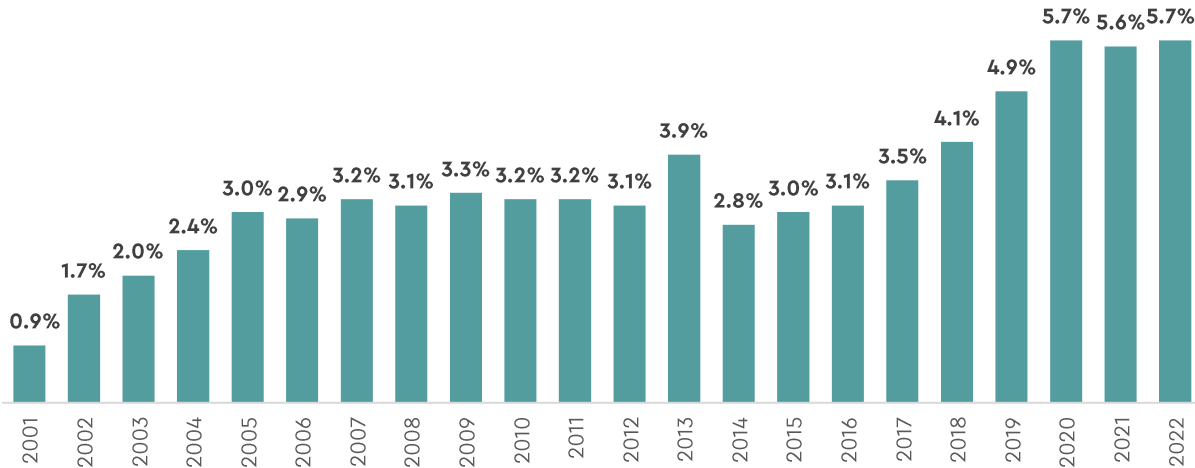
Fire and Emergency's career workforce is not as diverse as it could be

Employer brand research conducted for Fire and Emergency by Randstad (2022) found that attractiveness and awareness of Fire and Emergency as an employer for career firefighters have decreased since 2021. Fire and Emergency ranks lower in measures of attractiveness and awareness than other talent competitor agencies such as the Department of Conservation, New Zealand Police, New Zealand Army, Royal New Zealand Air Force, and the Department of Corrections.

The proportion of career female firefighters has risen, but has plateaued in the last few years

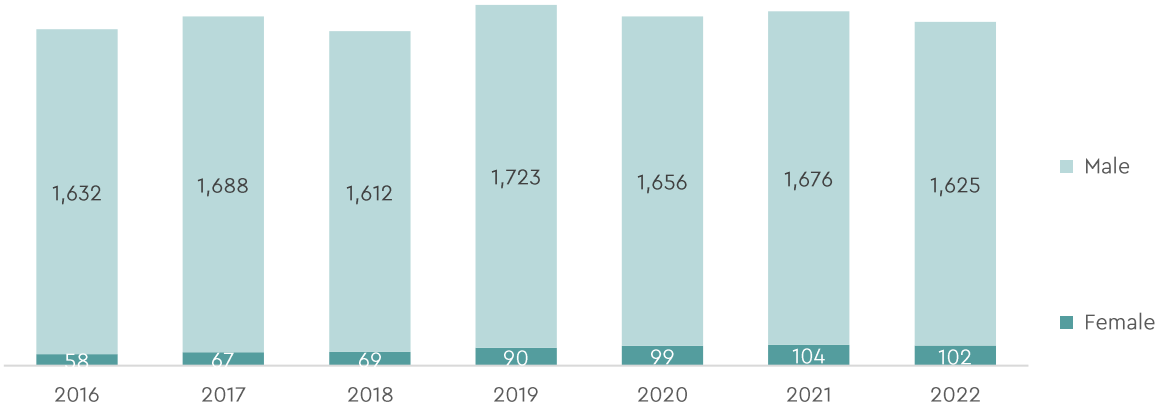
A recent research report on women firefighters, both career and volunteer, found that females are a minority in career (5.7%) and volunteering (15%) firefighting workforces (Mossman, 2023). The proportion of career female firefighters has risen marginally over time but has stagnated in the last three years (Figure 2 and Figure 2).

Figure 1: Proportion of female career firefighters, 2001-2022



Source: New Zealand Fire Service Commission (2010, 2015) and Mossman (2023)
Note: year ended 30 June

Figure 2: Number of career firefighters at Fire and Emergency, by gender, 2016-2022

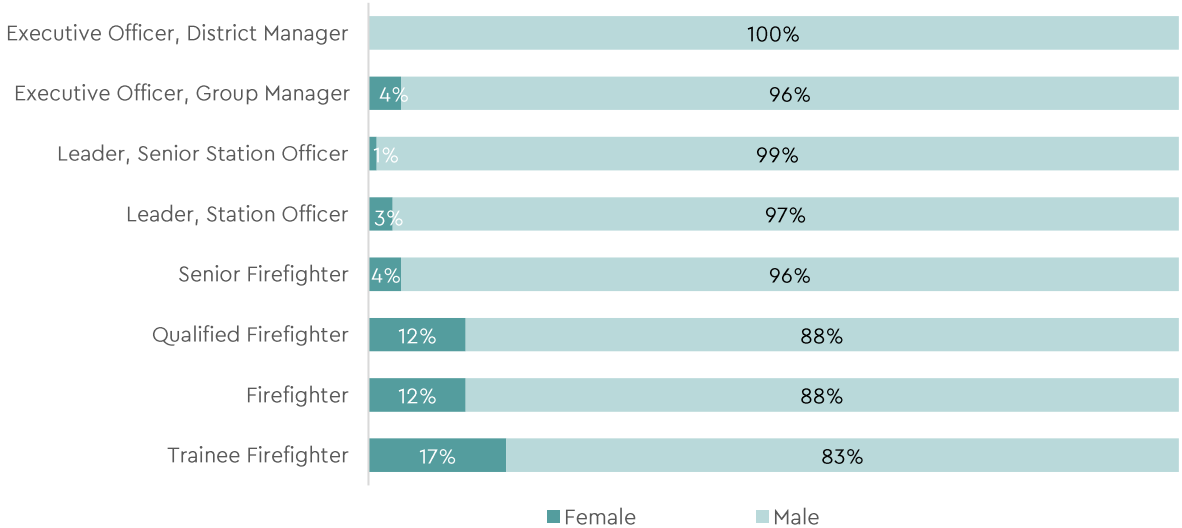


Source: Fire and Emergency
 Note: year ending 30 June

Women are not well-represented in leadership positions

Across the organisation women are under-represented in leadership roles (Mossman, 2023). However, it is the career firefighter group that has the most significant under-representation of women, where women hold just 2% of career firefighter leadership roles (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Career firefighters – representation by position, 2022



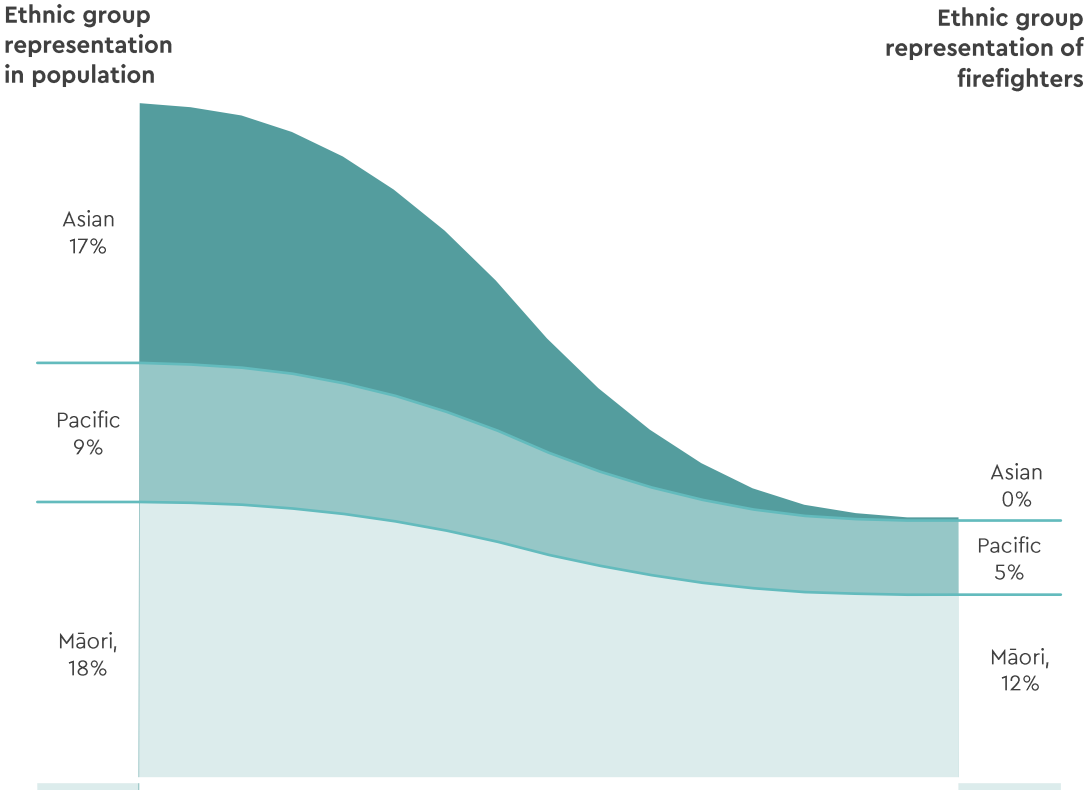
Source: Mossman (2023)
 Note: Based on data supplied by Fire and Emergency Human Resources in December 2022 and is based on head counts of those with specific job titles using their substantive role as at 30 June 2022.

Firefighters who identify as Māori are getting closer to population levels, but there is more work to do to recruit Pacific and Asian firefighters

While the proportion of Māori firefighters is much higher than the proportion of female firefighters, the proportion of Pacific firefighters is relatively low and at a similar level to the proportion of female firefighters. In the 2014/15 financial year, the Fire Service had a performance expectation target of 11.0% Māori, 4.3% Pacific people, and 5.5% females – and was unable to meet any of the targets (New Zealand Fire Service Commission, 2015).

Encouragingly, ethnic diversity is increasing over time, but is very slow for some ethnic groups – particularly Asian¹ (Figure 5). Figure 4 shows the difference between the ethnicity of New Zealanders and the ethnicity of firefighters, and highlights the lack of Asian firefighters at Fire and Emergency.

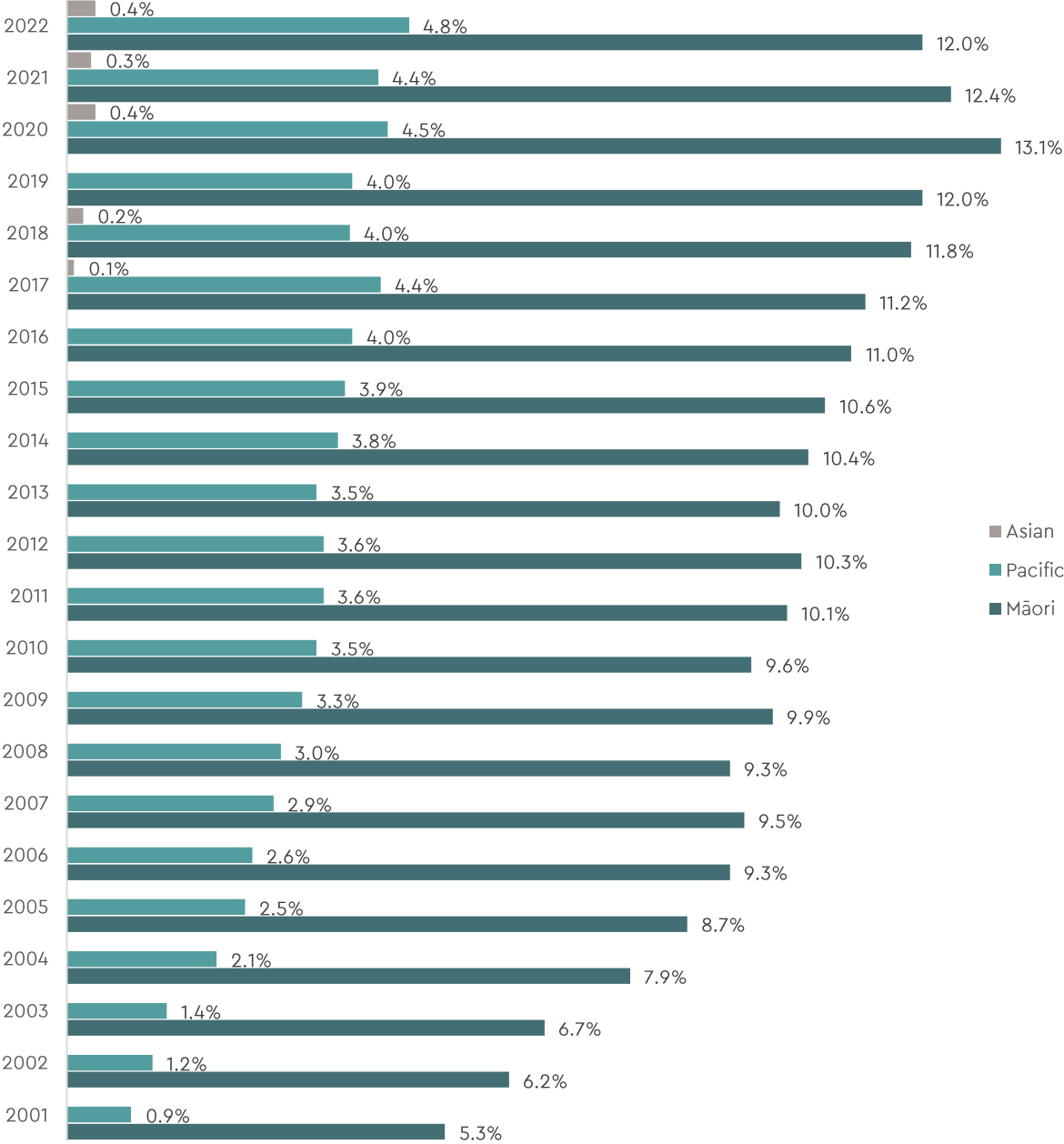
Figure 4: Ethnicity of the population versus ethnicity of career firefighters



Source: Stats NZ National ethnic population projections, 2023; Fire and Emergency, 2022

¹ In many cases, Asian was not separated out as a category that was actively reported on.

Figure 5: Proportion of career firefighters who are Māori, Pacific, or Asian, 2001 – 2022

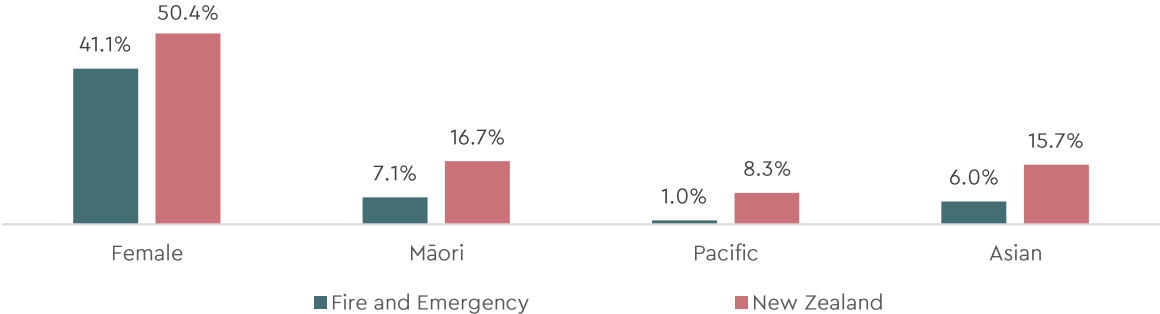


Source: Fire and Emergency, and predecessor organisations, annual reports

There is greater gender diversity in management and support roles, but limited ethnic diversity

While there is significantly greater gender diversity in career management and support roles, ethnic diversity is low – particularly for Māori and Pacific, where representation amongst career firefighters is much greater (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Diversity of employment management and support staff, compared to New Zealanders

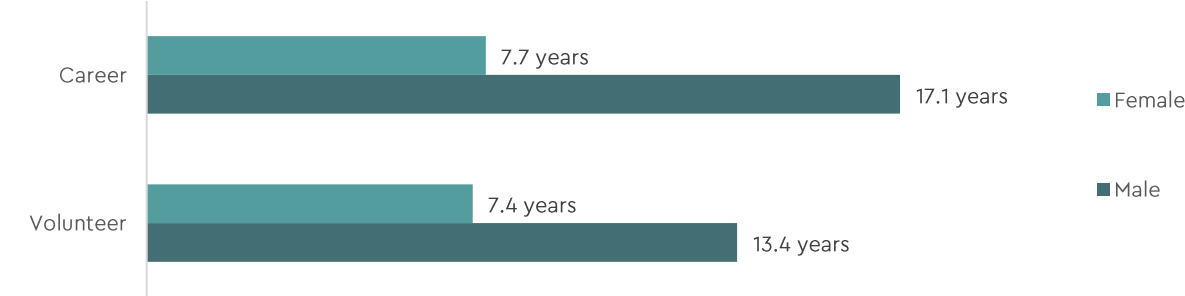


Source: Stats NZ National ethnic population projections, 2018; Fire and Emergency, 2022

Women firefighters don't stay at Fire and Emergency for long, compared to men

When analysing the tenure of firefighters, women work with Fire and Emergency for about 7 to 8 years, while men stay for, on average, 17 years for career firefighters, and 13 years for volunteer firefighters (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Average length of service of firefighters, by sex, 2022

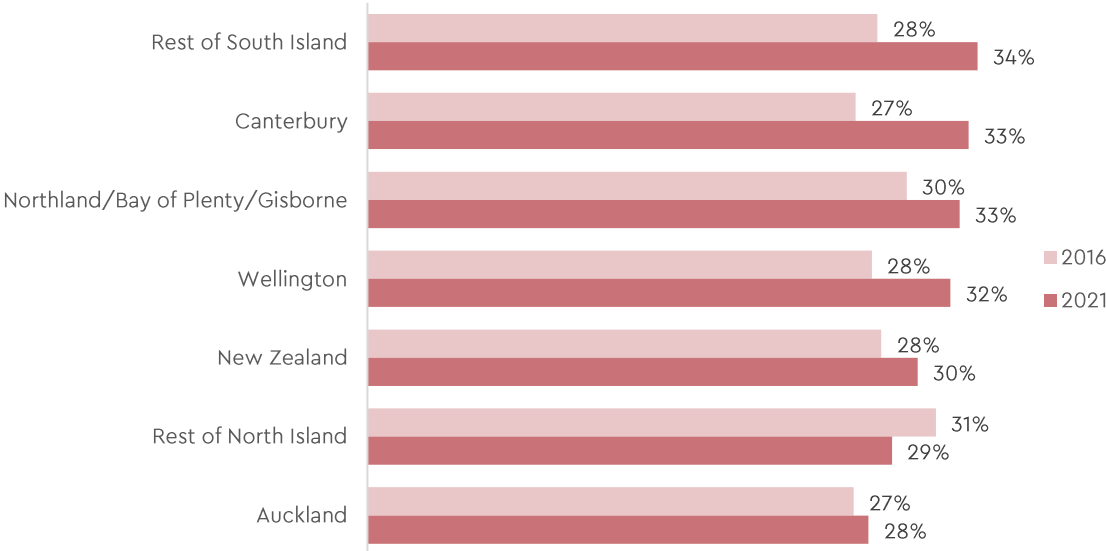


Source: Mossman (2023)

The rate of organisational volunteering in New Zealand has grown over time

More New Zealanders are choosing to volunteer through an organisation. Between 2016 and 2021, the proportion of New Zealanders that volunteered through an organisation grew from 28% to 30% (Figure 8). This trend was consistent across most regions, other than the "rest of North Island" where volunteering through an organisation fell from 31% in 2016, to 29% in 2021.

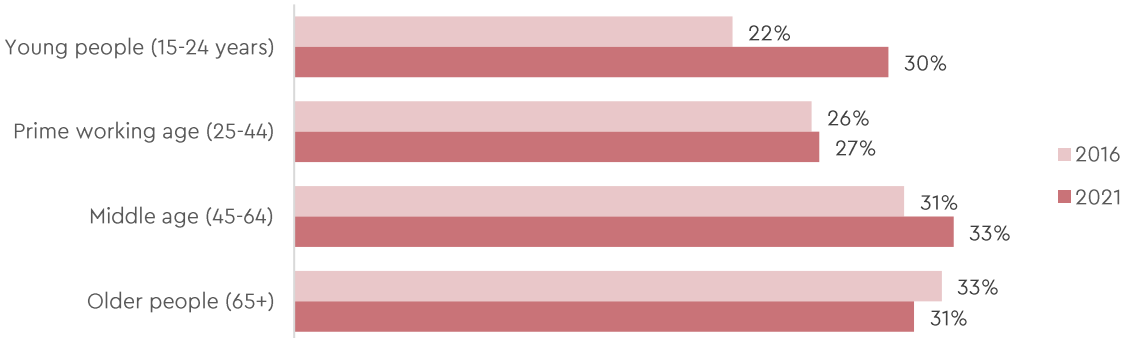
Figure 8: Percentage of New Zealanders that volunteered through an organisation, in the last four weeks, by region



Source: Stats NZ, NZ General Social Survey

There has also been a shift in the life stages of those who volunteer for an organisation. Traditionally, older people were more likely to volunteer. In the last few years, the proportion of older people volunteering for an organisation has fallen, while all other life-stages have increased, particularly younger people (Figure 9). Between 2016 and 2022, the proportion of young people volunteering for an organisation grew from 22% to 30%.

Figure 9: Percentage of New Zealanders that volunteered through an organisation, in the last four weeks, by life stage



Source: Stats NZ, NZ General Social Survey

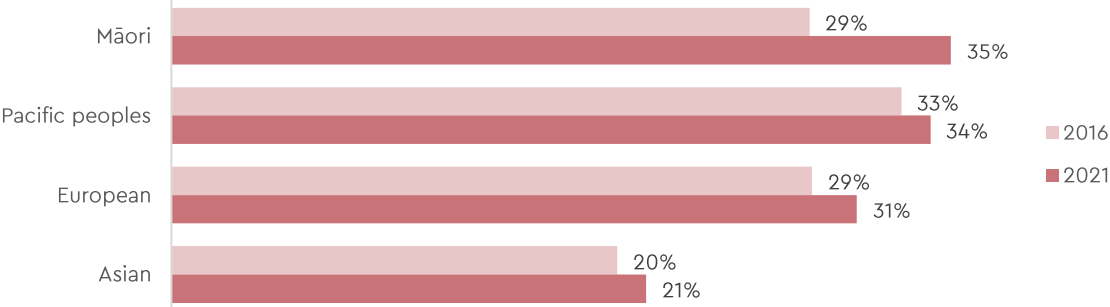
Stats NZ data from the NZ General Social Survey shows that females, Māori, and Pacific peoples are those who are most likely to volunteer for an organisation (Figure 10 and Figure 11). However, Fire and Emergency finds recruiting from these groups to be challenging.

Figure 10: Percentage of New Zealanders that volunteered through an organisation, in the last four weeks, by gender



Source: Stats NZ, NZ General Social Survey

Figure 11: Percentage of New Zealanders that volunteered through an organisation, in the last four weeks, by ethnic group

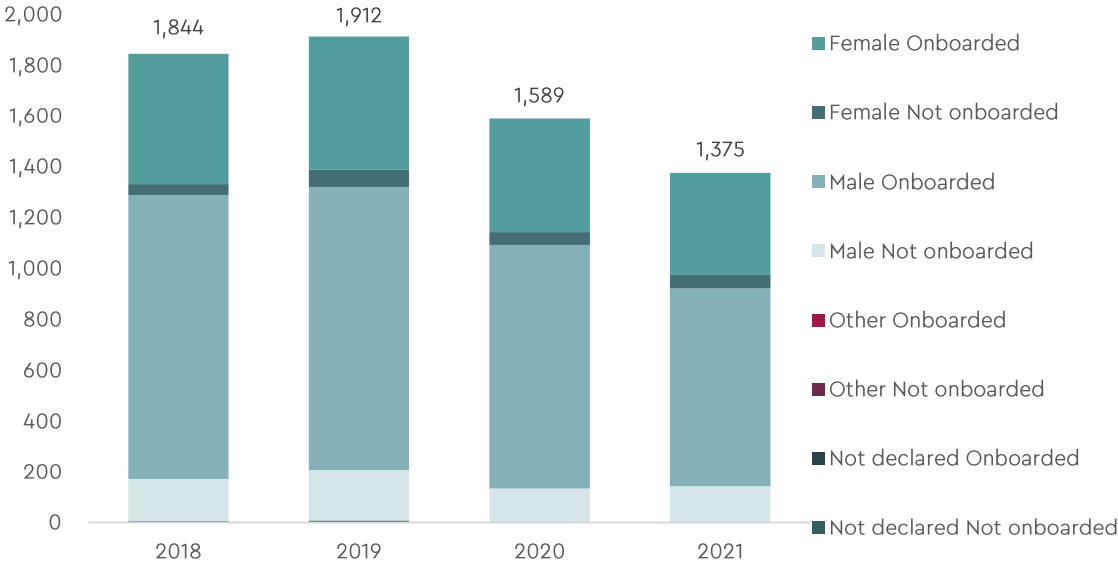


Source: Stats NZ, NZ General Social Survey

But fewer New Zealanders are choosing to volunteer with Fire and Emergency as firefighters

In 2022, 14% of New Zealanders said they were “somewhat” to “extremely likely” to volunteer with Fire and Emergency (Kantar Public, 2022). The number of applications Fire and Emergency receives from prospective volunteers wishing to be firefighters has fallen over the last few years (Figure 12). Note that this is likely related to COVID-19 pandemic effects on recruitment, and we understand that recruitment has since bounced back.

Figure 12: Volunteer firefighter recruitment, 2018-2021



Source: Fire and Emergency
 Note: Calendar year

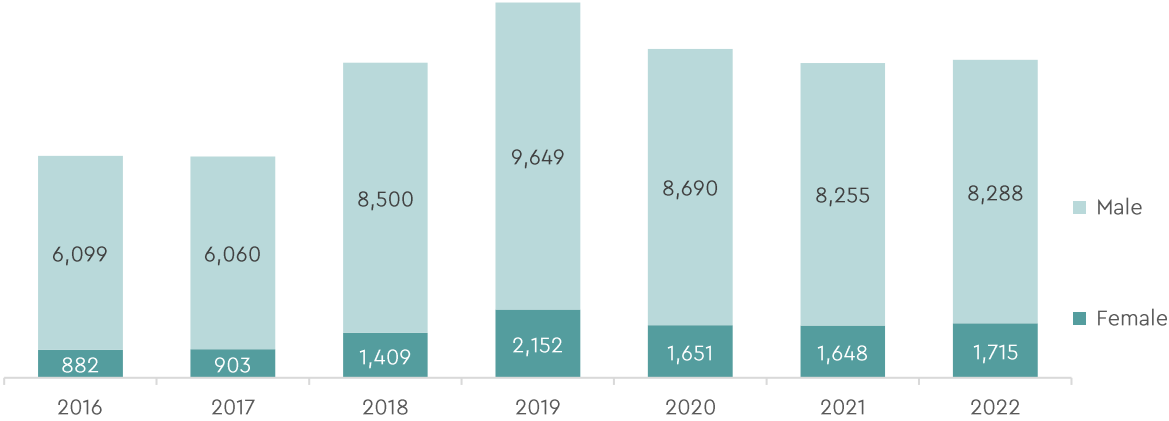
Women are better represented in the volunteer workforce but are still underrepresented

The proportion of female applicants have increased slightly over time – making up 30% of applications in 2018 and increasing to 33% by 2021. Females have greater success in being onboarded as a volunteer firefighter – around 90% of applicants are recruited, compared to 85% of males.

While the proportion who proceed through the recruitment processes are relatively consistent, the quantum of applications has declined, and the decline has been consistent across genders (Figure 13).

While women are a greater proportion of volunteer firefighters than career firefighters, representation is still relatively low.

Figure 13: Number of volunteer firefighters at Fire and Emergency, by gender, 2016-2022

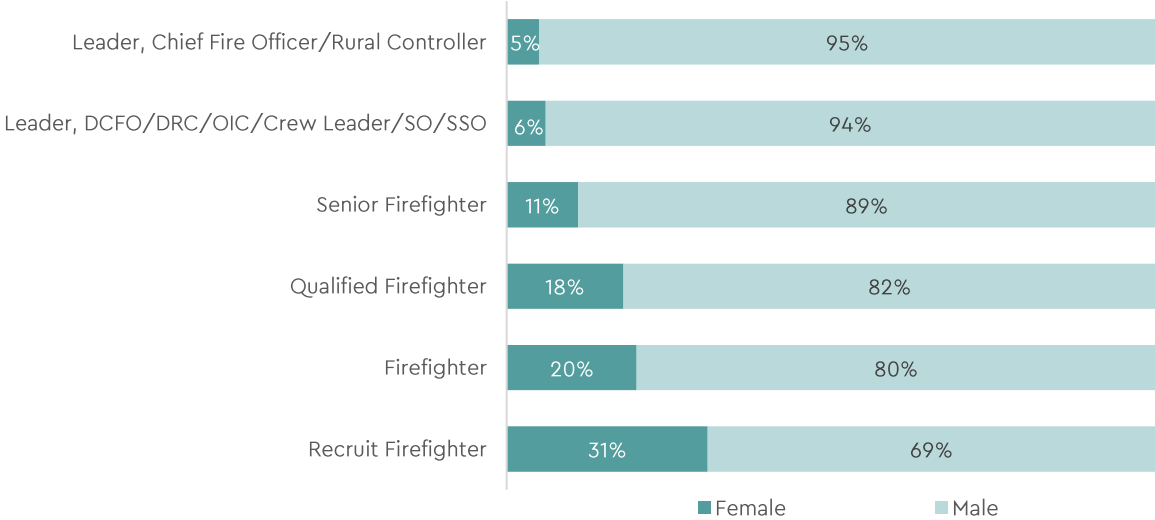


Source: Fire and Emergency
 Note: year ending 30 June

Women are also under-represented in volunteer firefighter leadership positions

Again, women are under-represented in leadership positions (Figure 14), but there are proportionately more volunteer firefighter leaders who are women than career firefighter leaders.

Figure 14: Volunteer firefighters – representation by position, 2022

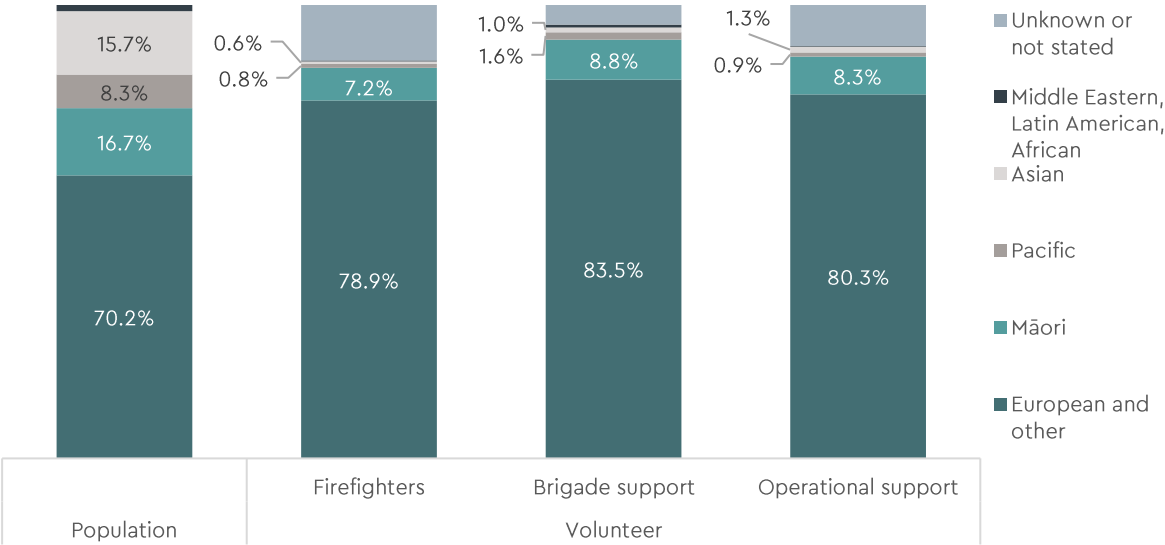


Source: Mossman (2023)
 Notes: Head counts of job title descriptions as of 30 June 2022.
 RC=Rural Controller, DCFO = Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DRC = Deputy Rural Controller, OIC=Officer in Charge, SSO=Senior Station Officer, SO=Station Officer.

There is low ethnic diversity amongst the volunteer workforce

Unfortunately, levels of ethnic diversity in the volunteer workforce are even lower than the career workforce, and much less than the general population (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Ethnic group of volunteers compared to general population



Source: Stats NZ National ethnic population projections, 2018; Fire and Emergency, 2022

Approaches to improving diversity

To understand “what works” in improving recruitment and retention diversity, we conducted a literature review, and interviewed seven similar agencies

We conducted a review of literature from New Zealand and overseas on recruitment and retention within fire and emergency services. We placed emphasis on literature that dealt with recruitment and retention among priority populations, and increasing diversity in the fire and emergency workforce.

We also conducted interviews with seven² other New Zealand agencies, chosen on the basis of similar characteristics to Fire and Emergency:

- Department of Conservation (DoC),
- Department of Corrections (Corrections),
- Hato Hone St John,
- New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF),
- New Zealand Police (Police),
- New Zealand Security & Intelligence Service (NZSIS), and
- Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB).

In these interviews, we sought to understand:

- the characteristics of the agency's workforce, including current levels of diversity across a range of spectrums (gender, ethnicity, sexual and gender identity, disability) and how these have changed over time,
- the agency's approach to recruitment and assessment of applicants, and what changes (if any) have been made to these in order to improve diversity,
- how the agency promotes diversity, including any formal strategies, and
- any challenges each agency faces in relation to recruiting diverse populations, and how they have sought to address these.

Each agency operates in a unique recruitment and retention environment, and experiences different challenges. While some had a primary focus on attracting recruits from underrepresented populations (for example, Police and Corrections), others remained focused on addressing barriers to recruitment more generally.

² One person representing NZSIS and GCSB was interviewed.

Our interviews covered the approaches that agencies have introduced to address these various challenges, and to build diversity within their workforces.

Agencies interviewed had varying levels of diversity within their workforces

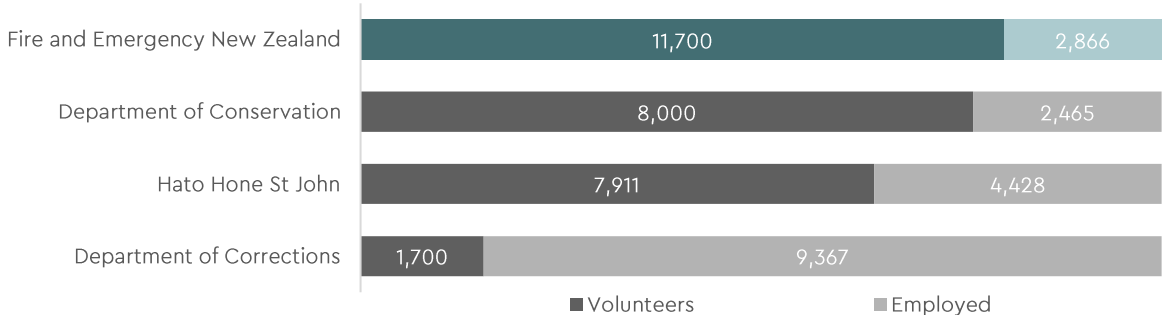
Workforces had clear distinctions between frontline or operational workers, and corporate or head office functions

All the agencies we interviewed had a significant front-line/operational component to their workforce. For most agencies, the proportion of staff with front-line or customer-facing responsibilities was two to three times the size of their corporate, or back-office, function.

Volunteer workforces are a significant part of frontline operations for some agencies

Three of the agencies we interviewed had a substantial volunteer workforce as part of their frontline operations: DoC, Corrections, and Hato Hone St John. Proportionately, Fire and Emergency had the largest proportion of its workforce comprising volunteers, while DoC had the least (Figure 166).

Figure 16: Volunteer and career workforces, Fire and Emergency and interviewed agencies, 2022



Source: Annual reports and websites (Department of Conservation, 2020; Department of Corrections, 2023; Fire and Emergency New Zealand, 2022; Hato Hone St John, 2022a; Public Service Commission, 2022a)

Notes: Department of Conservation volunteer numbers are from their 2020 annual report; Fire and Emergency employed workforce refers to FTEs not headcount.

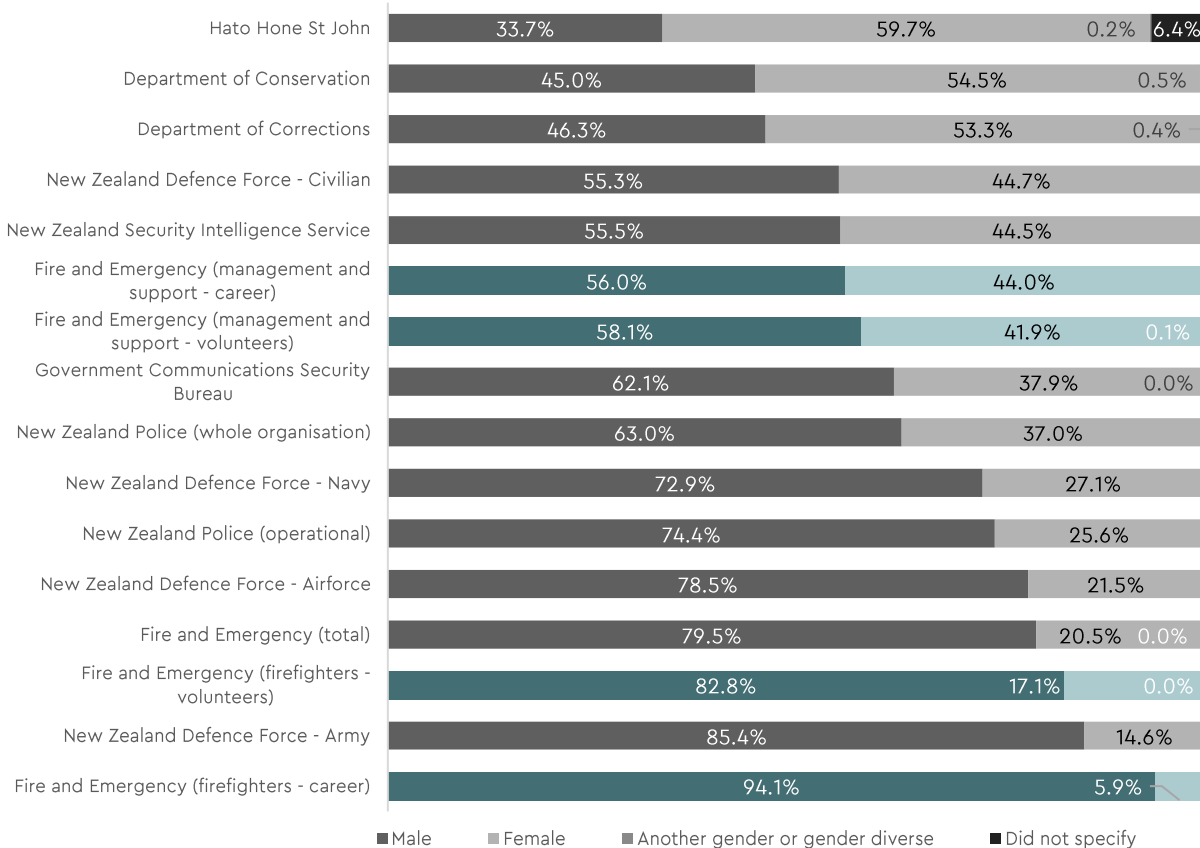
While no agency had exact figures for how many of their paid employees had first started their involvement with the agency through volunteering, both Police and Hato Hone St John indicated that this was a notable pathway for their career workforces. For Hato Hone St John, their youth programmes – discussed further below – were a key pathway into both volunteering and paid roles within the organisation.

Compared to other agencies, Fire and Emergency had low gender diversity

Data on the diversity of workforces is not collected in a consistent manner across agencies interviewed. Agencies that are required to report quarterly and annually on the composition of their workforce had the most complete and standardised data. For example, DoC, Corrections, GCSB and NZSIS, report quarterly and annually to the Public Service Commission on workforce data and are required to participate in Te Taunaki Public Service Census.

Fire and Emergency's firefighting workforce is one of the least gender diverse workforces of the sector – for both the career and volunteer workforces (Figure 17). In contrast, Hato Hone St John, as a whole organisation, was the most gender diverse, with females outnumbering males. For headquarters and management/support roles, Fire and Emergency were in the top half of agencies for gender representation. At an organisational level, Fire and Emergency was the least gender diverse of all agencies interviewed (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Gender representation at Fire and Emergency, compared to interviewed agencies, 2022

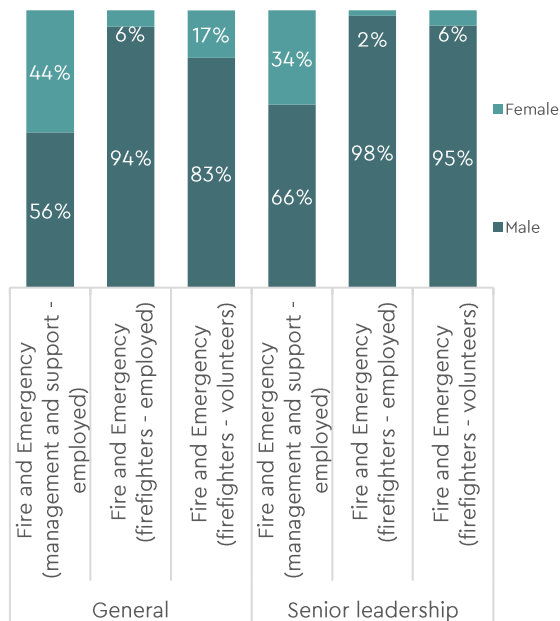


Source: Fire and Emergency customised data and annual reports; annual reports from agencies and Public Service workforce data (Hato Hone St John, 2022a; New Zealand Defence Force, 2022; Public Service Commission, 2022a)

Fire and Emergency has some way to go in gender diversity at senior leadership levels

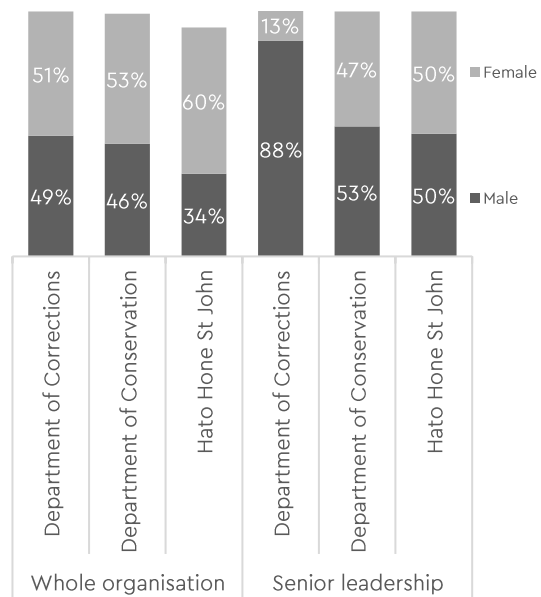
In the interviews, agencies noted that gender balances tended to be more skewed at senior management level. Agencies reasoned that this was a reflection of the lower numbers of people in senior management cohorts. However, the data available suggests that agencies are, in general, performing well in gender diversity at senior leadership levels (Figure 19). Fire and Emergency (and Corrections) appear to be outliers in this area of gender diversity, with few women in leadership positions (Figure 18 and Figure 19).

Figure 18: Gender representation at Fire and Emergency, comparison to senior leadership, 2022



Source: Fire and Emergency customised data

Figure 19: Gender representation at Corrections, DoC, and Hato Hone St John, comparison to senior leadership, 2022



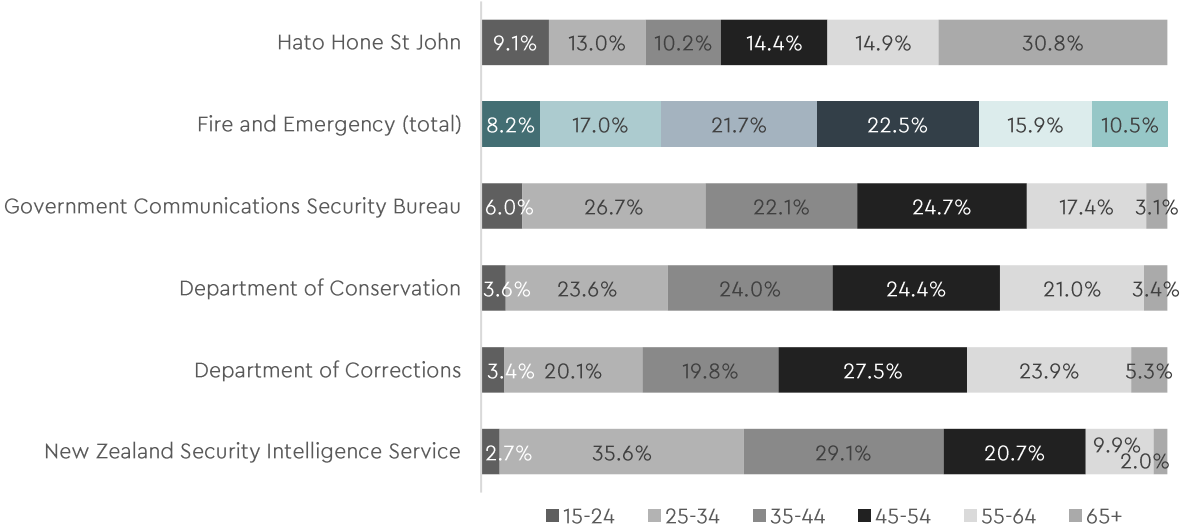
Source: Annual reports and Public Service Commission Workforce data (Hato Hone St John, 2022a; Public Service Commission, 2022a)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% as "another gender or gender diverse" and "not specified" are not included.

A more balanced workforce also means recruiting younger workers

Agencies are concerned about aging workforces, and in continuing to ensure their workforces reflect the people they serve, younger cohorts are a focus of recruitment and retention efforts. In 2022, of the data we were able to access, Hato Hone St John had proportionately the youngest workforce, and also the oldest (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Age bands of workforces of interviewed agencies, 2022



Source: Public Service Commission (Public Service Commission, 2022a); reports (Hato Hone St John, 2022b)
 Notes: Fire and Emergency data was not provided using the same age groups of other agencies. Data was manipulated to provide rough proxies.
 For Hato Hone St John, the large group of those aged 18 years old and below were removed from analysis.

In 2008, Police wanted to recruit a more balanced workforce. They wanted the workforce to be younger, include more women, and people from the Māori, Pacific, and Asian communities. Police used traditional advertising, and social media, to create a dialogue with potential recruits. Additionally, Police formed a working group of people from different departments, including recruitment, communications, and public affairs. The working group operated closely with the Māori, Pacific and Ethnic Services Team, district recruitment officers around New Zealand, and front-line officers. The working group liaised closely with external communications partners (Office of the Auditor-General, 2023).

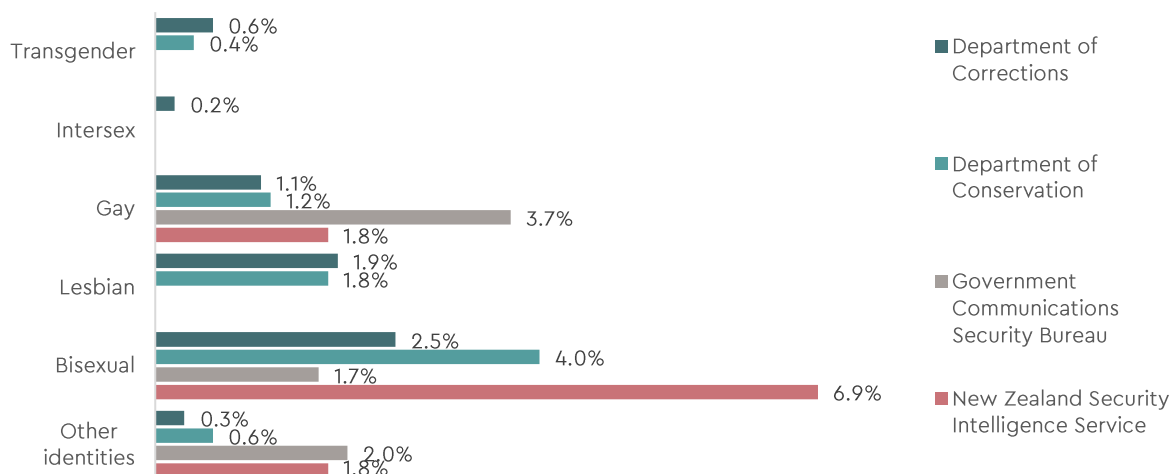
Despite the ambitious nature of the campaign, Police reported that it had been successful. The target of 600 extra recruits was met and the cost to attract each recruit was 29% lower than it was from 2008 to 2010. They also learnt that it was important to analyse the experience and metrics, and to make changes if it is not working as intended. For example, the campaign was not quite as successful with Pacific people, so the approach was modified to better target this audience.

Fire and Emergency does not yet collect data on its rainbow communities in a systematic way

"Rainbow" is a broad umbrella term that covers a diversity of sexual orientations as well as gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics. Rainbow communities make up 9.4% of the Public Service (Public Service Commission, 2022b). Again, while Public Service departments are required to

report on their rainbow workforce (Figure 21), those same requirements do not apply to some of our interviewed agencies, such as, Police, Hato Hone St John, and NZDF. While some of these agencies do collect data on their rainbow workforce, they noted that the voluntary nature of identity data collection meant that data was mostly incomplete and unreliable.

Figure 21: Rainbow workforce in public service departments, 2022



Source: Public Service Commission (2022b)

Note: Missing data indicates no data or suppressed data

Ethnic diversity is a key priority for New Zealand Police

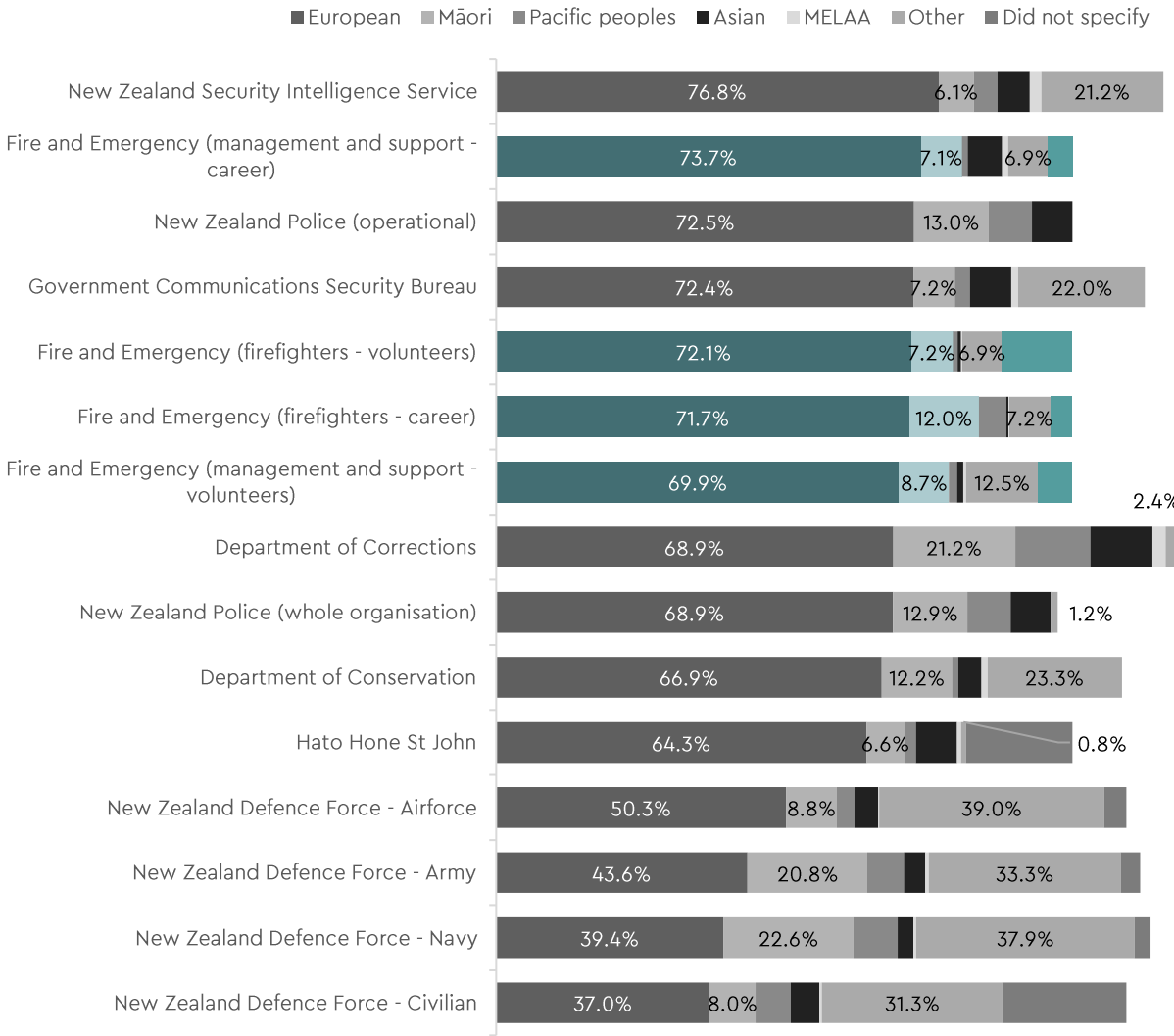
Ethnic diversity of the agencies interviewed varies (Figure 22), and Fire and Emergency's workforce is one of the least diverse. Note that there are also large proportions of workers indicating "other" in some agencies, which is skewing the results.

At Police, diversity priorities are driven by targets aiming for the frontline workforce to mirror the people they serve (that is, at a high level, 50% female, 25% Māori, 14% Asian, and 11% Pasifika). Police reported that the ethnic diversity targets had largely been met for male officers. However, while significant progress had been made in recent years for female officers – increasing from 25% to 45% overall, and with women currently making up more than half of applicants – there is still significant room for improvement in relation to the number of female officers from non-Pākehā ethnic groups. The low representation of wāhine Māori – 8.4% of the population but only 3.7% of the constabulary – has been a particular area of focus for recruitment; actions taken to address this are discussed further below.

A literature review for Fire and Emergency on recruitment strategies highlighted that targets and quotas can be a double-edged sword. Unions are often in disagreement with their use, and targets can sometimes be counter-productive (MacDonald, 2019). However, a study conducted for Fire and Rescue New South Wales concluded that "Australian fire agencies could adopt quotas, targeted

recruitment. And social-change programs to recruit, retain and promote women and ethnic diversity within the service" (Mackintosh, 2018, p. 20). The research included 21 fire departments in eight countries, over 100 interviews and meetings, and document review of policy and process documentation. MacDonald (2019) reminds us that if targets are to be used, they must be realistic and achievable, and they need strong leadership and infrastructure support.

Figure 22: Ethnic group identity of workforces interviewed, 2022



Source: Fire and Emergency, Public Service Commission (2022b) and annual reports and strategies (Hato Hone St John, 2022b; New Zealand Defence Force, 2022)

Notes: Where respondents were able to select more than one group, total percentages add up to more than 100%
 Percentages shown in the figure relate to European/Pākehā, Māori, and other

DoC highlighted the challenges of improving diversity within the context of an organisation that has a strong focus on retaining and upskilling existing staff, and supporting internal promotion.

For Hato Hone St John, diversity, equity, and inclusion sits at the core of their operations, and this has led to diversity in the demography of their staff. However, a current key recruitment challenge is qualified paramedics, with present efforts focused on ways to attract trained staff from Australia and the UK, and to build the pipeline for this workforce through apprenticeship/residential models.

GCSB indicated that their general recruitment efforts were challenged by other sectors recruiting for the same (small) pool of technical skill sets. GCSB requires applicants to meet rigorous security clearance requirements, and lengthy recruitment processes mean that applicants could be waiting six months or longer before finding out whether they had been successful or not. These factors limited their ability to focus on improving workforce diversity, but it was noted that it had improved over time.

Approaches to improving diversity through recruitment and retention

Evidence from both overseas jurisdictions, and other agencies domestically, emphasised first and foremost the critical role of **building broad connections** with, and trust within, the wider communities of interest.

Engaging with communities helps not only to build visibility, but also to change perceptions, both among potential recruits and among the people who influence them. This is particularly relevant for communities where family and peer perceptions of a particular career play an important role in potential recruits' decisions.

Others have found it important to **ensure that application and assessment processes do not put up unnecessary barriers** – in particular, eliminating or modifying screening practices, such as physical and psychometric testing, that may be adding minimal value to the selection process and are not predictive of future success.

What happens on the job also has a critical role, not only in retaining people once they've joined, but also filters back into broader appeal within target populations. Employees of any organisation are typically the biggest recruiters—they tend to promote job openings to their friends and family. Low diversity in an organisation or team can therefore create a negative reinforcing cycle, as can poor experiences by those recruits who do make it into the service. This is particularly so for Fire and Emergency where high proportions of its volunteers and career firefighters were motivated to join because they knew someone else who already worked at Fire and Emergency (Aiko, 2022; Lin et al., 2021; Litmus, 2021b).

These three key themes are discussed further below.

1. As part of recruitment: Building broad connections with communities

A common theme across both the literature, and the experiences of other agencies in New Zealand, was the critical role of building broad connections with the wider communities from which you are seeking to recruit.

This engagement sometimes took the form of dedicated programmes in specific settings, for example, working with schools, or with youth more broadly. Examples from Hato Hone St John are its youth cadet programmes, and St John in Schools programme where pre-school, primary and intermediate school-aged children are provided with basic first aid training.

A strong and consistent message is that "you can't be what you can't see" (MacDonald, 2019; Mossman, 2023) – that the visible presence of diverse firefighters at community events, and out in the community more generally, is a key factor in whether others from those groups will consider the fire service as a genuine career path for themselves (Aiko, 2022; Hulett et al., 2008). The belief that people need to first see someone like them in a role before they will themselves aspire to join underpins the deliberate use of diverse images in recruitment campaigns across a number of industries and agencies. Evidence suggests that it is beneficial for these processes to start early. For example, surveys of firefighters and fire departments in the US found that aspiring firefighters who had wanted to be a firefighter since childhood typically first formed that ambition at around 11 years old (Hulett et al., 2008).

The literature noted a number of examples in the US of fire departments fostering close relationships with local schools, ranging from appearances at careers days and sporting events, through to offering study/supper clubs for high schoolers (Pulvermacher, 2021). These relationships were intended to boost both the visibility of the fire service for young people as they made decisions about their future career paths, and to build positive perceptions of the wider role that the fire service plays in the community (Litmus, 2019). Others, in recognition of young women being less likely than young men to acquire firefighting experience that would both expose them to the service as a career option, and prepare them for job-based selection processes, sought to encourage young women's participation in pre-career experiences such as volunteer firefighting, and "fire cadet" programmes for students and scouts (Hulett et al., 2008).

Locally, Hato Hone St John has a strong focus on engaging youth in volunteering. Their youth programmes (Example 1) run across the country. In our interview, it was noted that many long-term volunteers, as well as career staff, at Hato Hone St John had first begun their involvement with the organisation as youth.

Example 1: Youth programmes – Hato Hone St John

Hato Hone St John's youth programmes are aimed at teaching young people important first aid, leadership and life skills while also encouraging involvement in volunteering from a young age.

The programmes cover a wide range of ages:

- The Penguin programme (for 6- to 8-year-olds) has participants meet once a week during the school term to learn basic first aid and other practical life skills. Participants work towards badges, and for each badge that is completed, the child is awarded a colourful sew-on badge along with a certificate. The programme is advertised as encouraging "common sense, honesty, self-control, courage and a sense of fair-play".
- For older children (8-to 18-year-olds), the Cadet programme offers training in first aid and emergency skills, as well as developing leadership and decision-making skills. Cadets wear a uniform, similar to that for the St John workforce, and meet once a week during the school term. All cadets participate in the Grand Prior's Award Scheme, where they work towards badges in various subjects.
- For those over 18, Hato Hone St John also offers training to become a Youth Leader, delivering the above youth programmes. There are some 900 active youth leaders across New Zealand.

It should be noted that the evaluative evidence of the success of youth-focused programmes in expanding recruitment diversity in the fire and emergency sector internationally is weak (MacDonald, 2019). Few have been critically evaluated and there are concerns that the return on investment in such activities can be poor (MacDonald, 2019). Hato Hone St John mentioned in the interview that the Cadet programmes usually rely on the passion and time of volunteers in local communities, with many local areas struggling to maintain momentum.

Other approaches were aimed at a wider section of the population than just potential recruits. For example, holding training sessions in public places, so that community members and prospective volunteers can observe members in action, was one method noted as a useful tool for engagement (Siefken & Glynn, 2010). This is consistent with research commissioned by Fire and Emergency which found that most volunteers became aware of Fire and Emergency because they had seen other volunteers in action, or they were directly approached by volunteers (Lin et al., 2021).

A recent survey of fire departments in Canada to understand opportunities for indigenous recruitment similarly found a gap between who is represented in fire departments and the general population (Maxim et al., 2022). A key recommendation from the study was to address the weak outreach links that department had with their communities. Activities such as publicising success stories, engaging in road shows, and having a strong social media and online presence were suggested.

A previous review of recruitment strategies for Fire and Emergency found that targeting of specific communities needs to be carefully planned, and deliberate, in order to deliver intended outcomes (MacDonald, 2019). Police discussed in an interview that only four applications followed the Big Day Out, despite a huge Police presence. Police found that more successful initiatives appear to be those that are more deliberately targeted, such as Police recruitment open days held across 50 stations with

a focus on women (MacDonald, 2019). This example also shows the importance of measuring and monitoring the success, or not, of initiatives, to understand what works and what doesn't.

A key theme in these broader approaches was the importance of building a positive profile within the community more broadly – “influencing” the families and wider networks who would influence potential recruits – and, in some cases, changing existing perceptions within wider communities of what working in the fire (or other emergency) service entailed. In support of this, some research noted that popular perceptions of fire service culture, while acting as a positive influence on recruitment from some demographics, often acted as a barrier for recruiting those who did not fit with the existing stereotype of a firefighter – and consequently felt that the culture would exclude them (Beatson & McLennan, 2005; Litmus, 2019). While frequently discussed in the context of female firefighters specifically, in New Zealand, the low rate of Māori within the fire service, and therefore low visibility of Māori, is also a recognised recruitment barrier (Aiko, 2022).

Police's Puhikura programme with wāhine Māori provides a good local example of a recruitment approach aimed at altering perceptions in a wider community (Example 2).

Example 2: Puhikura – New Zealand Police

Established in 2022, Police's Puhikura programme is designed to address the low numbers of wāhine Māori at the frontline. Māori wāhine form 8.4% of the general population, but constitute only 3.7% of the constabulary workforce.

The programme seeks to build the Police's profile within the wāhine Māori community, with a focus on building both trust within that community, and greater visibility of the role that wāhine Māori play within the Police workforce. It features a series of documentary videos in which five wāhine Māori speak about their motivations and aspirations in joining Police, and is designed to support significant on-the-ground engagement with communities.

A key goal for the programme is to build trust and visibility within the wider wāhine Māori demographic, not just potential recruits. A challenge that Police have faced is the legacy of a poor historical relationship with Māori, and the impact this has on perceptions of Police as both an acceptable and a viable career path for young people.

The Puhikura programme is a recognition of the fact that engaging with communities helps not only to build visibility, but also to change perceptions, both among potential recruits and among the people who influence them. This is particularly relevant for communities where family and peer perceptions of a particular career play an important role in potential recruits' decisions. The programme aims to help build a sense within the community that working for the Police is something wāhine Māori can do, and will be welcomed into.

2. Recruitment and assessment process: Remove barriers to selection

A further theme from both the interviews and the literature was the value of reviewing the application and assessment process to ensure that these remain fit-for-purpose, and do not put up unnecessary barriers for potential recruits from diverse backgrounds.

This included ensuring that assessment and screening practices (such as physical fitness tests and psychometric tests) reflect the modern demands on the workforce, rather than outdated stereotypes, and acknowledge the particular strengths that applicants from diverse groups can bring.

Currently, recruitment of career firefighters includes (Litmus, 2020, 2021b):

- an application form,
- unsupervised cognitive testing,
- supervised cognitive testing,
- a physical pre-entry test (PPT), which includes a fitness test, strength test, a ladder drill (to ensure candidates can handle heights), and Breathing Apparatus Training Building (BATB, to ensure candidates can move through a confined space under stress),
- a practical assessment centre (PAC) day, which involves a series of tasks that test teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and public speaking,
- interviews, and
- due diligence.

Cognitive testing

Statistical validation of the recruitment process found that the best predictors of overall firefighter performance were the application form, one of the cognitive tests, and the interview – not the PPT (Wright & O'Driscoll, 2009). However, the researchers recommended continuing with the PPT as it rounds out the recruitment process, and it provides potential firefighters with a realistic preview of the physical and health requirements of the role.

Fire and Emergency has made recent changes to the cognitive testing, both due to this study and subsequent data analysis which found that the approach disadvantaged some under-represented groups for reasons other than their cognitive ability (Lin et al., 2021; Litmus, 2021b), for example, favouring those who were used to testing technology, had English as a first language, and who excelled in a classroom environment.

Physical fitness assessments

A review of the Fire and Emergency firefighter selection process noted that between 2000 and 2003, only 17% of potential recruits failed the PPT (Cerno Limited, 2003), and that the PPT was also aligned with physical tests used in other countries. However, that review recommended that Fire and Emergency:

- regularly review the PPT to determine whether the strength and endurance tests and job-related scenarios adversely impact female applicants' performance on the PTT, and
- regularly review the cut-off scores to make sure the test is not excluding people who could successfully perform the firefighter role.

American research (as cited in Litmus, 2019) indicates that pass rates for both men and women on physical abilities tests are strongly influenced by whether job candidates train prior to being tested. In one state, where recruits underwent 14 weeks of physical training prior to the examination, females' strength increased an average of 21% and fitness by 29%. This meant that by the end of training, the females' combined size, strength, and fitness averaged 96% of that of their male counterparts (Hulett et al., 2008). New Zealand studies highlighted that significantly fewer female applicants (26%) passed the PPT on the first try, compared to male applicants (84%) (Litmus, 2020, 2021b). However, the proportion passing improved once female applicants realised they would need to put in training in order to pass.

This suggests that the representation of women could be enhanced by incorporating training for the physical assessment process into the overall recruitment approach. This could be supported by placing testing later in the overall training programme. The Kansas City Fire Department, for example, does not administer its physical test (the CPAT) until job applicants have been in the fire academy for eight weeks. Trainees are first given the test for practice on their second day at the academy, after which a personal trainer develops individual exercise programs for recruits. The recruits then spend one hour each day on physical development, and can check their progress by re-taking the CPAT every Saturday if they wish (Hulett et al., 2008).

Example 3 shows how Police has modified its approach to physical fitness testing to focus on overall physical ability, rather than achievement of particular standards, to make its selection processes more inclusive.

Example 3: Physical fitness assessment – New Zealand Police

In 2018, Police shifted its physical fitness assessment from an approach based on requiring candidates to perform to a set level in each of the required speed, strength, and other fitness tests, to a "total score assessment" which allowed for candidates to demonstrate overall fitness in a variety of ways.

This involved setting a (lower) bar for minimum required achievement in each specific test, but assigning points for higher levels of achievement on each, meaning that candidates who demonstrate, for example, strength well above the average might only need to meet the minimum required standard for running speed.

This means that while the assessment retains a focus on ensuring recruits are appropriately fit to do the job, it no longer privileges one form of fitness over another, with potentially disadvantageous effects for recruits who don't fit the traditional stereotype.

A different approach to medical and physical testing may be needed in order to recruit and retain volunteers. A New Zealand interview-based study of rural fire officers (RFOs) in 2014 found the following (Scion, 2014):

- Volunteers who were not physically fit enough were not turned away, and were instead assigned to different, more suitable roles.
- Many RFOs did not see the need for any physical testing for their crews as they were mainly called out to flat land vegetation fires, roadside fires, or urban assists.
- A majority of RFOs thought medical assessments provided the best indications of heart and lung capacity, and most supported this as a necessary step for all rural fire force personnel.
- Almost all RFOs thought that if a minimum fitness requirement was applied to all volunteers, half of their fire force would leave.

The study recommended a three-tier minimum fitness test:

- Tier 1: Voluntary medical testing for all firefighters by GPs or other medical professionals
- Tier 2: A voluntary moderate pack test for all frontline firefighters and pump operators
- Tier 3: An arduous pack test that is compulsory for all paid rural firefighters but voluntary for other frontline firefighters.

Realistic job preview and setting perceptions

An additional benefit of ensuring testing and assessment processes are both inclusive and aligned with the modern needs of the roles in question is that this may help promote a longer-term shift in perceptions among diverse groups about the skills and attributes they need in order to become a firefighter, and whether they can live up to these.

Various reviews have noted the significant impact of assumptions about "what it takes" to be a firefighter on whether potential recruits consider applying (Aiko, 2022; Litmus, 2019). Experiences of those who have been through the process – whether they have been successful, unsuccessful, or have chosen not to continue – filter through to their peers and wider circles, influencing the beliefs these groups hold about whether they would be successful within the service (alongside their beliefs about whether they would be welcome, as discussed in the next section).

At Fire and Emergency, the various stages of the assessment and selection process potentially allow multiple opportunities to reinforce what qualities are important in firefighters. Ensuring tests align with practical requirements, and putting in place support to help recruits understand what will be required of them, has the potential over time to improve perceptions among groups who have not traditionally considered themselves candidates for firefighting roles.

3. On the job: Supporting an inclusive workplace culture

A final, but significant theme was the key role of overall workplace culture in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion to both embed and endure. Recruiting diverse team members does not drive change in and of itself – it must be underpinned by wider change in the organisation, and strategies to support this change. Without systemic change, recruits from diverse groups are likely to face a challenging path.

Addressing overall workplace culture is also a critical element in improving wider community perceptions of the fire service as a career. As outlined in the sections above, perceptions among potential recruits – largely formulated from what they see in the community, and what they hear from their peers and family – are a key driver for whether those from diverse groups ever consider the fire service as a career option. Developing a supportive culture and policies that retain diverse staff consequently helps over time in building a solid public image, which assists in improving recruitment.

The challenge of meaningful organisational culture change

The literature almost universally identified genuine cultural change as one of the greatest challenges facing fire services around the world that are looking to increase diversity. Firefighting has long been an overwhelmingly male occupation, as well as being often monocultural. In this environment, being a part of the minority can have implications on integration, belonging, and trust – as one researcher put it, "hyper-masculinized homogenous environments do not create a neutral space for outsiders to enculturate" (Marques, 2022, p. 20).

Importantly, firefighting is an occupation where team dynamics and trust play a critical role in successful performance, so being accepted as one of the group is a key part of professional success. International research indicates female firefighters are more likely to be perceived as "other", and to experience bullying, abuse, and harassment based on their gender, along with limited career advancement (Adams et al., 2018; Hulett et al., 2008). New Zealand research notes that while experiences of overt structural racism are reducing, culturally ignorant and racist behaviour is still

commonly encountered by Māori firefighters, and many still felt the system favoured non-Māori in terms of leadership development (Aiko, 2022).

Fire and Emergency is making progress, but there is room for further action

We note that Fire and Emergency is already making dedicated efforts to address culture within the organisation at national level. A recent review of enculturation among career firefighters (Lin et al., 2021; Litmus, 2021b) notes that this is having positive results. For example, recruit career firefighters said they were not treated differently because of gender or cultural background at National Training Centre, and recruits "felt positive that everyone was subject to the same standards and given the same opportunities" (Litmus, 2021b, p. 18); that there was an emphasis on tikanga in the course; and that gender neutral language was encouraged.

However, the researchers also noted several examples of recruits finding differences between their experience at National Training Centre – where they felt efforts had been made to promote inclusion and to build cultural sensitivity – and what happened once they arrived at station. New female and Māori career firefighters reported experiencing pressure to conform and adapt to the existing culture. They felt they could not speak out, which was particularly challenging when they took issue with the established norms (Litmus, 2021a). Similarly, Aiko (2022) found that both new and more experienced Māori career firefighters working in predominantly Pākehā communities were prone to suppressing parts of their identity in order to fit in to a culture that rarely gave much thought to tikanga. One example described new Māori career firefighters performing a karakia privately to themselves after a fatal purple call.

These experiences mirror findings from the international literature that recruits from minority groups typically have low levels of confidence in their ability to successfully challenge norms within the workplace, even when those norms were exclusionary or otherwise harmful (for example, Hulett et al., 2008).

Making psychological space, as well as physical

One means of promoting greater inclusion of team members from minority groups – identified in the literature and echoed in conversations with Police – is a focus on identifying where the needs of these groups may be different to those of the majority, and putting in place processes and structures to accommodate these needs, even where only a small proportion of the workforce is affected. One researcher described this as "making psychological space" (Hulett et al., 2008, p. 200). Examples mentioned included ensuring that female recruits had access to uniforms that fit; adequate bathroom facilities; and staff policies that recognised circumstances specific to women (Allen & Clarke, 2016; Dyer et al., 2022; Litmus, 2017; UMR Research, 2003). For example, policies to enable on-site breastfeeding, even where such policies were not likely to be frequently utilised.

In our interview, Police discussed their policy of ensuring wāhine Māori were placed on residential training cohorts where they would have peers, in response to feedback that previous recruits who had

gone through training alone had sometimes felt culturally unsafe. Other examples aimed at embedding cultural diversity might include policies requiring certain elements of tikanga to be observed, regardless of whether it was specifically requested by a team member.

The benefit of these policies and processes is twofold: acknowledging the minority group's presence as full members of the team, whose needs and preferences are important; and reinforcing awareness across the organisation of the cultural shifts that are expected.

"Belonging" is described in relation to Fire and Emergency as both a push and a pull factor. Volunteers and career staff often describe the sense of belonging as a source of pride and a key benefit of joining Fire and Emergency (Lin et al., 2021; Litmus, 2017, 2021b). The camaraderie at the brigade and station level, and the involvement of family and whānau in station social activities are recognised as significant positive aspects of Fire and Emergency. But not having a sense of belonging, or not seeing yourself, your beliefs, and your heritage, acknowledged or made space for can lead to potential recruits not seeing Fire and Emergency as an organisation for them, or for existing staff to leave.

Hato Hone St John is one organisation that has embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion, and it has become a core part of what the organisation is about, how it portrays itself, and the people who work and volunteer there. This includes in-depth reviews of the language and imagery that is used on the website to make sure it is inclusive, the change in its name, and priority is placed on diversity, equity, and inclusion, demonstrated by a diversity, equity, and inclusion lead who has a direct reporting line to the Chief Executive (Example 4).

Example 4: Organisational diversity, equity, and inclusion – Hato Hone St John

Hato Hone St John stood out from our interviews as having a strong organisational emphasis on being inclusive, equitable and diverse, underpinned by the desire to reflect the community they serve and empower their people to be their authentic selves.

To support this, the organisation has a series of teams and groups dedicated to advancing their diversity goals, including:

- A Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging team who work closely with all parts of the organisation to support cultural change, and ensure that the organisation's aspirations in the diversity and inclusion space are being reflected. These efforts spanned a wide range of activities, from organising formal leadership training for women, to reviewing website changes to ensure inclusive language was being used.
- A Māori governance group (Tahuhu Komiti) and a network of advisors for hauora Māori (Kahuhi Mauaka) who have a key role shaping policy and procedures and educating staff.
- An active Diversity and Inclusion Network, chaired by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lead and with portfolios including Māori, Pasifika, Rainbow, Youth, Women, Asian, Faith, Other Ethnic Minorities, Mature Workers, and People with Access Needs.

This focus is underpinned by *Aka kanorau*, Hato Hone St John's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. *Aka kanorau* seeks to:

- Promote diverse recruitment and growth opportunities

- Champion an inclusive leadership and culture
- Demonstrate a genuine commitment to biculturalism, including commitment to Māori talent as tangata whenua, the unique role of Māori expertise in health equity, and promoting recruitment and career development opportunities
- Gather accurate data to support knowledge of diversity, equity and inclusion, ensure policies, processes and systems are inclusive, and ensure best practice.

Celebrating our women leaders

Six leaders were honoured as part of the Council of Ambulance Authorities (CAA) Women in Ambulance campaign this year. They were among 56 women profiled from the 11 ambulance services across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea that the CAA represents.



Working across our organisation, from paramedicine to clinical audit, and operations to management, the women share high standards of excellence and dedication to their role.



Anne-Maree Harris
Nelson Bays Territory Manager, co-facilitator for Everyday Heroes and positive leadership



Bridget Dicker
Head of Clinical Audit and Research, developer of the New Zealand out-of-hospital cardiac arrest registry



Jo Stuart
Emergency Medical Technician, Auckland



Monique Le Roux
Paramedic, West Auckland



Nichola Cunneen
Paramedic, Westport



Norrie Meauli
Duty Centre Manager, South Auckland

Growing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Our Diversity and Inclusion Network has been developing our first ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy, which will ultimately be embedded across all our strategies and initiatives at Hato Hone St John.

Aroha ki te tangata. Ahakoa ko wai, ahakoa nō whea. Love for all people. Regardless of who they are and where they are from

- › **Formation of a National Youth Advisory Network (NYAN)** to provide a youth perspective to committees, working groups, leadership teams and boards
- › **Accreditation for Rainbow Tick for the fifth year running.** The Rainbow Tick certification assesses how well a workplace understands and welcomes sexual and gender diversity. We are the only emergency service to have the Rainbow Tick in Aotearoa New Zealand. 🌈

Other key achievements over the past year include:

- › Establishment of a **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group**, chaired by our Deputy Chief Executive of People & Organisational Strategy, Emma Butler
- › Membership of **Diversity Works NZ**
- › An **active LGBTQI portfolio** achieving reaccreditation and award consideration
- › The formation of a **Women in Leadership in Ambulance Group (WILIA)**
- › **Strong Kia Rongo (staff survey) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion results** against national engagement benchmark indicators
- › **Finalists in NZ Rainbow Excellence awards** and contender for Diversity Works 2021 Rainbow Award
- › **A range of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion modules** added to our Learn@StJohn staff portal, including Rainbow and Unconscious Bias

Chief Executive, Peter Bradley with Julie Watson, Programme Manager from Rainbow Tick



Source: Hato Hone St John (2022a)

A call to action

This research has identified that while progress has been made in recent years, there are still a number of areas where representation of diverse groups at Fire and Emergency lags behind that of comparable agencies. However, it should be noted that our engagement with other agencies indicated that, for many, they too were on a journey to improve the degree to which their agencies reflect the populations they serve. Even those agencies with relatively strong diversity representation, such as Hato Hone St John and Police, still felt they had areas which needed improvement.

On the basis of the findings above, we have identified the following key focus areas for action which Fire and Emergency may wish to consider.

1. Driving cultural change through an organisation-wide focus on diversity and inclusion.

For those agencies which have made significant progress toward their diversity goals, it was clear that improving diversity and inclusion had been made a central focus for the organisation as a whole – and that this focus was reflected across all levels of operations, from governance and strategy to day-to-day decision-making and routines. This mirrors international findings that suggest that enduring improvements in diversity result from genuine cultural change within an organisation, with corresponding changes in workplace culture as experienced by individuals from diverse groups.

While Fire and Emergency has a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Fire and Emergency New Zealand, 2018) it would benefit from active, visible, and sustained commitment at the leadership level, and across the organisation.

Concrete actions to support this focus area could include:

- Identifying a Diversity & Inclusion Lead for Fire and Emergency, tasked with championing diversity and inclusion, and liaising across the organisation to drive and promote change. Note that diversity and inclusion is not the Lead's responsibility, but it is the responsibility of everyone at Fire and Emergency to model desired behaviours.
- Within the recruitment process, reviewing assessment practices to ensure these reflect contemporary needs, and that under-represented groups are supported to succeed.
- Training for local leaders on promoting an inclusive environment for their staff, and unconscious bias.

While these actions are largely not focused specifically on the recruitment process, they do work to support recruitment by, over time, changing perceptions among diverse groups about working for Fire and Emergency.

2. Building connections with under-represented populations

Once this groundwork has been laid, focused initiatives that aim to improve public perceptions, and remove recruitment barriers external to the organisation, can help build on and support change.

Both internationally and locally, such initiatives have typically had a strong focus on youth; but it is also important to acknowledge and respond to the role that wider communities play in influencing the career decisions of young people.

Examples of actions to support this focus area include:

- Fostering engagement with young people through youth programmes, youth volunteering opportunities, and/or cadetships. More active promotion and implementation of the School Firewise Programmes.
- Community engagement or outreach activities that allow young people from under-represented groups to see, and engage with, firefighters who resemble them – the principle of "if I can see it, I can be it".
- Campaigns targeting wider community perceptions about who can be firefighters, and about the fire service as a place to work.

These focus areas work together to boost diversity

These two focus areas are synergistic: in order to be successful, promotional initiatives and campaigns should build on and reflect shifts already happening within the organisation, rather than being relied on to drive changes purely from the outside in. These shifts need to be supported and championed across the organisation in order to have a meaningful impact on the experiences of diverse team members, and the perceptions of diverse communities.

Likewise, where shifts are already emerging, active engagement – and particularly that which seeks to assure potential recruits from diverse backgrounds of their place within the fire service – can provide potential recruits with both insight into the opportunities available, and the additional "nudge" required to pursue these opportunities.

Further action in these areas can help build on the progress Fire and Emergency has already made in promoting a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Finally, diversity recruitment and retention strategies must be continually measured and monitored to evaluate the extent to which they are successful (MacDonald, 2019), and to course-correct if they are not working as intended. It is critical that Fire and Emergency continue to invest in measuring and evaluating the success of recruitment and retention strategies, processes, and systems.

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