



Social Workers Registration Board

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

Annual Social Worker Workforce Survey Report 2023

Spotlight Report:
Social workers employed by
Oranga Tamariki

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He ara pūkenga, he ara tauwhiro, hei whakamana mātā waka

The many pathways of knowledge, the many pathways of social work, upholding the dignity of all

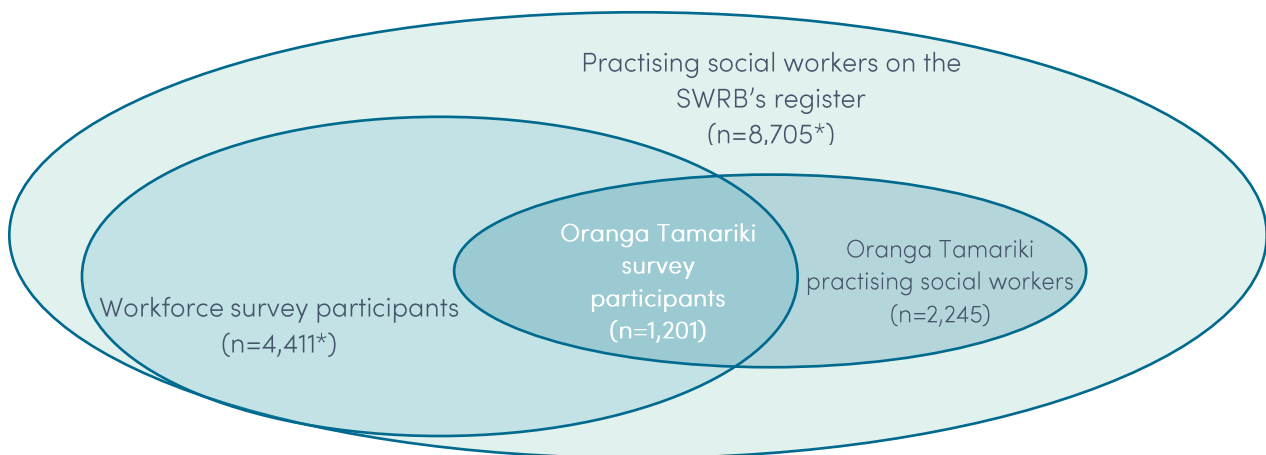
Introduction – the SWRB’s Annual Social Worker Workforce Survey

Every year, the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) collects data from the social worker workforce through the Social Worker Workforce Survey. The purpose of the survey is to understand the composition of the current practising social worker workforce. Social workers are invited to share information about their role, experiences, opinions, and beliefs. The annual survey enables us to build an evidence base to support workforce planning and decision-making.

This 2023 Spotlight report sits alongside the Annual Social Worker Workforce Report 2023¹ and covers a subset of social workers from the survey sample who report that they are employed by Oranga Tamariki. Additional Spotlight reports are available covering social workers who report working for other employers such as health/hauora and non-government organisations (NGOs).

All social workers who renewed their annual Practising Certificates from early May through to July 2023 were invited to participate in the survey. Responses were received from **4,411** social workers out of a total of **8,705** actively practising social workers on the SWRB’s register, representing a **51%** response rate.

Over a quarter of social workers in the SWRB’s survey sample (27%) reported that they work for Oranga Tamariki – a total of 1,201 participants. This closely aligns with the proportion of the full practising workforce of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki (26%, or 2,245 of the total 8,705 social workers practising in the 2022/23 financial year).



*Register totals as of 30 June 2023; survey sample collected May to July 2023

¹ <https://swrb.govt.nz/building-sustainable-workforce/>

The 2023 Annual Workforce Survey followed the same four core domains as previous years:

- Workforce composition
- Workforce sustainability
- Knowledge and skill development
- Employer support.

An additional fifth domain 'standing of the profession' was added in 2022, and for 2023 a sixth domain covering safety and conduct was also included. Tailoring these extra domains each year allows for a deeper understanding of topical issues at the time of the survey. It helps the SWRB, as an occupational regulator, to further our understanding of how registration supports public safety.

This Oranga Tamariki Spotlight Report provides responses from social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki across these six domains. Many of the survey questions invited social workers to give feedback and reasons for their answers, reflecting the social worker voice alongside statistical findings.

Summary of key findings – Social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki

This Spotlight Report focuses on the **1,201** social workers in the survey who report that they are employed by Oranga Tamariki at the time of the survey.

- Oranga Tamariki is the largest employer of practising social workers in 2023 (26%).
- Most Oranga Tamariki social workers work in urban or suburban areas (72%). Only 11% work in rural areas and 14% report that they work at a national level (covering the whole country).
- The overall salary distribution for Oranga Tamariki social workers trends higher than those for other employers. A combined total of 54% reported earning more than \$100,000 annually, over double the proportion of the full survey sample.
- Making a positive difference to people's lives remains the highest ranked motivation for entering and remaining in the profession.
- Social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki identified the challenges of recruitment and retention of social workers, the public perception of social workers and not having enough time spent with people using services at higher levels than those with other employers.
- A higher proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers identified balancing work and personal life as a barrier to entering the profession (51%) compared to those with other employers.

Our understanding of the Oranga Tamariki social worker workforce composition is growing

- In 2023, a higher proportion of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki identify as Māori (26%) than the general population (17%). Twelve percent of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki identify as Pacific peoples.
- Sixty percent of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki have been registered with the SWRB for more than 5 years.
- The Oranga Tamariki workforce trends slightly younger than the full practising workforce, with its peak at 40 – 49 years (27%) and less than 15% male.
- Three percent of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki indicated that they have a permanent disability or long-term condition that effects their ability to carry out everyday activities.
- Eighty percent of Oranga Tamariki social workers were employed in a regional or local site office. Thirteen percent indicated that they are employed by Oranga Tamariki's national office in Wellington.
- Most Oranga Tamariki social workers (77%) report that the focus of their work is care and protection, including child, youth and whānau support work. Twelve percent mainly work in the field of criminal justice, and these are more likely to be male.
- A lower proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers report that they work part-time (6%) compared to the full survey sample (20%).

Oranga Tamariki social workers are qualified and experienced.

- Most Oranga Tamariki social workers gained their registration with an NZ-approved qualification (87%).
- Eleven percent of Oranga Tamariki social workers hold an approved qualification attained overseas, and the most common countries were the United Kingdom, India, the Philippines, or South Africa.
- Only 1% were registered through the S:13 Experience Pathway².
- Most Oranga Tamariki social workers in the survey described themselves as experienced practitioners with 15% describing themselves as practice lead/team leader/line managers. Ten percent described themselves as beginning practitioners.

Workforce sustainability needs attention from employers such as Oranga Tamariki

- 16% of Oranga Tamariki social workers in the survey plan to leave the profession in the next five years, which is a loss of over 190 social workers from Oranga Tamariki. If this proportion is extrapolated out to the full practising workforce of Oranga Tamariki social workers, that would indicate a loss of over 350 social workers from Oranga Tamariki in New Zealand.
- Less than half of Oranga Tamariki social workers who intend to leave the profession cited retirement as their reason (43%). Workload pressures, lack of professional support and low workplace morale were cited as other reasons for leaving.
- Burnout was reported by fewer Oranga Tamariki social workers as a reason for leaving, compared to the full sample. Oranga Tamariki social workers were far less likely to cite poor pay and the costs of being a social worker as reasons for leaving the profession compared to other large employer types.
- Half of all Oranga Tamariki survey participants identified balancing work and personal life as a barrier to entering or re-entering the social work profession (51%).

Knowledge and skill development opportunities are identified by Oranga Tamariki social workers

- Close to half of all Oranga Tamariki social workers in the survey identified the need for CPD training in social work practice with other ethnic and cultural groups (49%).
- A lower proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers said that continuing professional development (CPD) for social work practice with Māori would be most helpful compared to the full survey sample. This may indicate that they already feel proficient in this area, or that they do not consider it as important as other CPD areas.
- 41% identified the need for development in relation to skills for managing complexity and ethical practice dilemmas.

² <https://swrb.govt.nz/registration/experience-pathway-s13/>

Oranga Tamariki supports practitioners in a variety of ways

- Oranga Tamariki social workers report lower levels of employer support across all categories compared to participants from other employer types.
- Less than half of Oranga Tamariki social workers report that their employer provides a supportive and safe working environment which may need further exploration. Many social workers commented about abuse from clients as contributing to their feeling unsafe in their day-to-day work.
- The provision of training and skills development, followed by professional reflective supervision are noted as the most common form of employer support.
- Oranga Tamariki social workers reported the highest level of employer support for the payment of both registration and practising certificate fees in the survey.

Oranga Tamariki social workers believe that the standing of the profession has lifted but challenges remain.

- Close to double the proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers think media coverage has had an extremely negative impact on trust and confidence in the social work profession than the full survey sample.
- Four in ten Oranga Tamariki participants thought the profession is more respected (44%), and a further 37% said it was 'in part' since mandatory registration came into effect in February 2021.
- Oranga Tamariki social workers were more likely to identify the recruitment and retention of social workers as the biggest challenge facing the profession, followed by public perception. Both challenges were selected by a higher proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers compared to the full survey sample.
- 43% of Oranga Tamariki participants identified the deepening of social inequity as a challenge.

Oranga Tamariki employers show a growing focus on safe and accountable conduct.

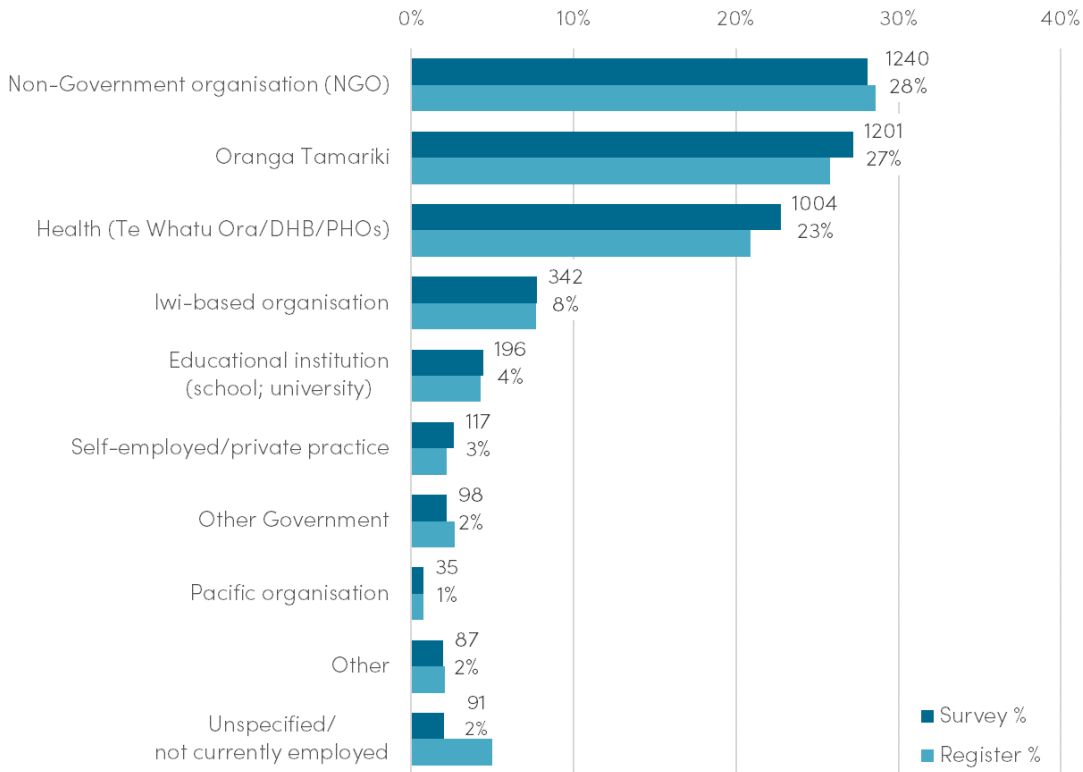
- When asked if they were confident their employer has adequate policies and procedures in place to deal with serious issues with a social worker's practice and/or conduct appropriately and safely, 87% of Oranga Tamariki participants said yes. This is slightly lower than the proportion for the full survey (91%).
- For those Oranga Tamariki participants who did not feel confident in their employer's ability to deal with serious practice or conduct issues, many referred to a negative experience when trying to address issues with a social worker's practice or conduct, and a lack of action or response from 'management'. There is a perception that staffing shortages can lead to issues being 'swept under the carpet', and policies being interpreted differently across teams.
- When asked if they would raise concerns about another social worker's practice and/or conduct with SWRB, almost all Oranga Tamariki social workers said yes (94%).

Section 1A – Oranga Tamariki workforce composition – Organisation

This report focuses on the 1,201 social workers who said they are employed by Oranga Tamariki at the time of the 2023 survey.

The chart below shows the distribution of all practising social workers by employer type, and confirms that our survey sample closely resembles the workforce distribution of practising social workers in New Zealand.

FIGURE 1. SOCIAL WORKERS BY EMPLOYER TYPE 2023



In reporting by employer type, the SWRB acknowledges the ‘real world’ overlap between employer categories. Many employer types (particularly those delivering community-based, iwi-based and services for Pacific Peoples) deliver both social and health services. For the purposes of this analysis, employers are reported as a single category which means a social worker’s place of employment is assigned to a single category which is the best fit, for example NGO or health/hauora.

Of the Oranga Tamariki participants in the workforce survey who gave sufficient detail about their employer, 80% report that they are employed in a regional or local Oranga Tamariki office (Table 1). Thirteen percent are employed by Oranga Tamariki’s national office in Wellington, and the remainder did not specify the site in which they are employed.

TABLE 1. ORGANISATION TYPE WITHIN ORANGA TAMARIKI WORKFORCE 2023

Organisation type	Number of participants employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Oranga Tamariki - National Office	156	13%
Oranga Tamariki - regional/local office	960	80%
Oranga Tamariki - site unspecified	85	7%
Total	1201	

Section 1B – Oranga Tamariki workforce composition – Demographics

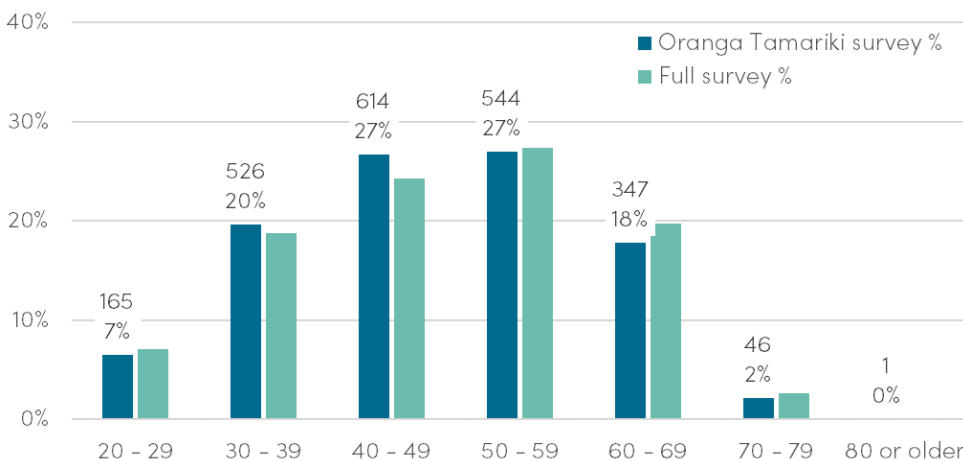
The demographic information provided by survey participants gives a picture of the current social worker workforce employed by Oranga Tamariki. This includes age distribution, gender, ethnicity, and geographic region. In 2023, questions about experience of disability were added to the survey.

The Oranga Tamariki survey sample closely resembled the demographic profile of the full survey and of the ‘active’ workforce of social workers with a current practising certificate for the 2022/23 financial year, as shown in Appendix 1. This gives confidence that the results of this survey are representative of practising social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki across Aotearoa New Zealand.

1.1 Age

The chart below shows the distribution of Oranga Tamariki social workers across age groups. This subset of the workforce trends slightly younger than the full practising workforce, with its peak at 40–49 years (27% of the Oranga Tamariki workforce) compared to the full practising workforce that peaks at 50–59 years.

FIGURE 2. AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



1.2 Gender

The majority of workforce survey participants working in Oranga Tamariki identified as female (85%), consistent with the gender distribution of all practising social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

FIGURE 3. GENDER DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

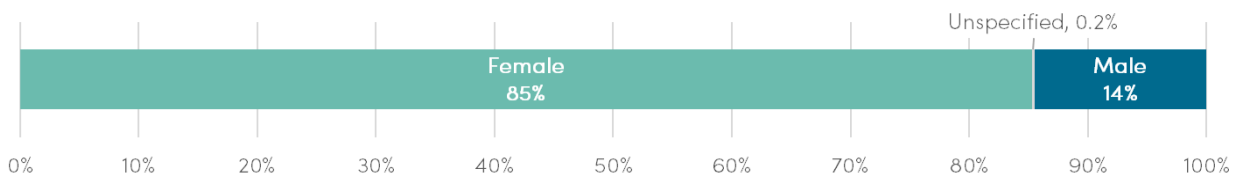


TABLE 2. GENDER DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Gender	Number of participants employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Female	1024	85%
Male	174	14%
Another gender	0	0%
Unspecified	3	0.2%
Total	1201	

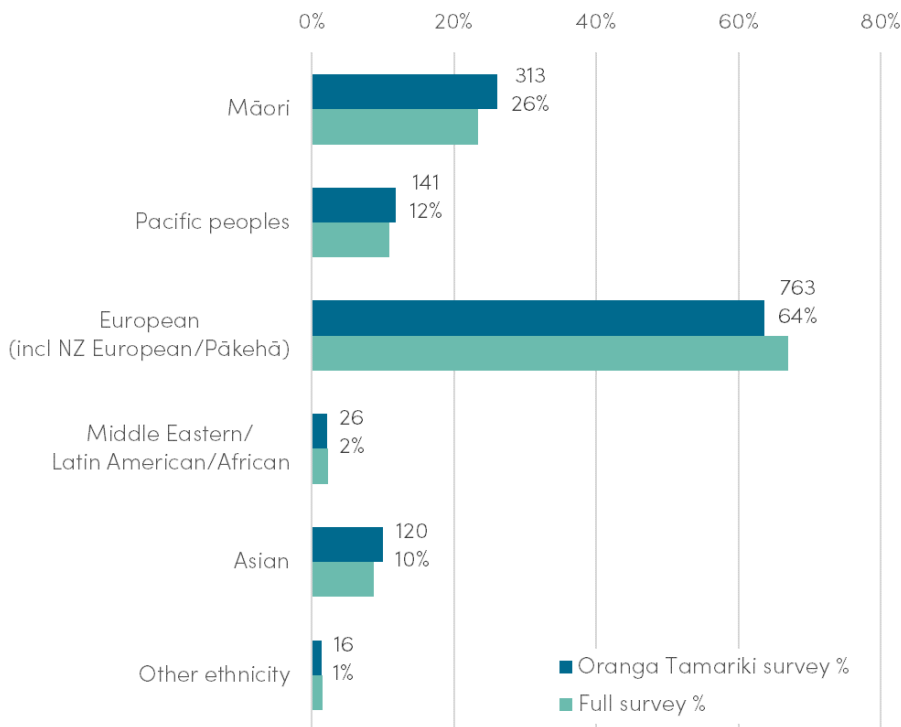
1.3 Ethnicity

The largest ethnic group for Oranga Tamariki survey participants was European (64%), which includes NZ European/Pākehā (47%) and other European (19%). Over one quarter of social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki identify as Māori (26%), which is slightly higher than the proportion of the full practising workforce who identify as Māori (24%), and higher than other large employers (17% of social workers in health identify as Māori; 18% of NGO social workers identify as Māori).

Twelve percent of Oranga Tamariki social workers identify as Pacific Peoples.

The ethnic distribution of Oranga Tamariki social workers who participated in the survey closely resembles that of all practising social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki, which gives us confidence in the representativeness of our sample (see Appendix 1 for a full description of the Oranga Tamariki workforce and survey data representativeness).

FIGURE 4. ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



* Participants can identify with more than one ethnic group, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

The table below shows the ethnic distribution of the Oranga Tamariki practising workforce compared to the full practising workforce and the most recent census of the NZ population (2018). This comparison shows that in 2023, social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki and the wider practising workforce have a higher proportion of Māori and Pacific peoples than the general population.

TABLE 3. ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS, COMPARING TO FULL SAMPLE, WORKFORCE 2023 AND POPULATION CENSUS 2018

Ethnicity	2023 Oranga Tamariki-based workforce	2023 Full practising workforce	2018 Census ³
Māori	25%	24%	16.5%
Pacific peoples	13%	12%	8.1%
European (incl. NZ European)	61%	64%	70.2%
Middle Eastern / Latin American / African	2%	3%	1.5%
Asian	11%	10%	15.1%
Other ethnicity	1%	2%	1.2%

* Both Census and workforce survey use 'total response' ethnicity calculations, allowing participants to identify more than one ethnic group. Totals will add to more than 100%.

1.4 Disabilities

In 2023, to better align with Government target populations, the SWRB added a survey question about disability. This builds an understanding of how the workforce reflects the general population, and how those with specific needs might be better supported.

In 2023, three percent of Oranga Tamariki survey participants indicated that they have a permanent disability or long-term condition that effects their ability to carry out everyday activities. This corresponds to a total of 34 participants in the Oranga Tamariki sample.

³ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/ethnic-group-summaries-reveal-new-zealands-multicultural-make-up/>

1.5 Region

The geographic distribution of survey participants is shown in Table 4 below. As shown in Appendix 1, these closely align with the geographic distribution of all practising social workers on the SWRB's register. The geographic distribution of the survey sample also closely aligns with the NZ population, except for Auckland which has a slightly lower proportion in the sample (Table A5, Appendix 1).

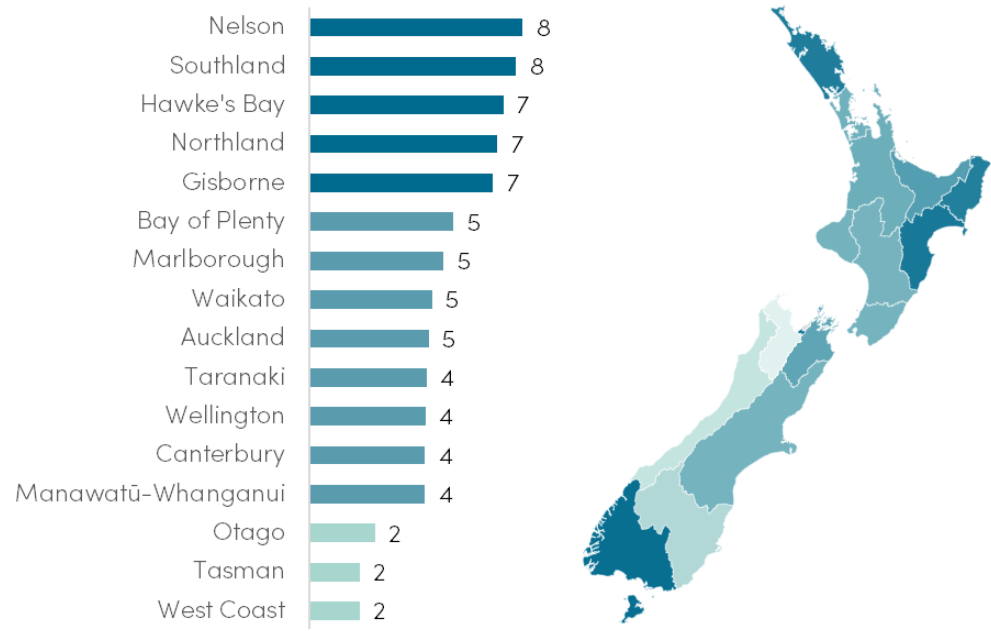
Please note, this geographic distribution is based on social workers' residential addresses as recorded in the SWRB's register. This may not always reflect the full coverage of area(s) where they work.

TABLE 4. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Region	Oranga Tamariki survey %	Full survey %	Full practising workforce %	Number of Oranga Tamariki survey participants	Number of full survey participants	Number of full practising workforce
Northland	6%	5%	5%	70	227	450
Auckland	32%	28%	29%	379	1251	2538
Waikato	10%	8%	8%	116	363	711
Bay of Plenty	8%	8%	8%	91	336	692
Gisborne	1%	2%	2%	13	64	143
Hawke's Bay	6%	4%	4%	66	192	369
Taranaki	3%	3%	3%	34	118	215
Manawatū-Wanganui	5%	5%	5%	56	237	408
Wellington	10%	11%	12%	116	498	1006
Tasman	0%	1%	0%	2	26	38
Nelson	2%	2%	2%	21	91	167
Marlborough	1%	1%	1%	16	42	66
West Coast	0%	1%	1%	4	23	49
Canterbury	12%	15%	14%	141	656	1225
Otago	4%	4%	3%	45	191	249
Southland	3%	2%	3%	30	93	264
Unspecified/International	0%	0%	1%	70	3	115
Total				1201	4411	8705

The figure below shows the geographic distribution of practising social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki in New Zealand. This uses data from the full SWRB register, and calculates the number of practising social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki per 10,000 population. This sits alongside the per capita geographic distribution of all practising social workers in New Zealand, as shown in the full workforce survey report⁴.

FIGURE 5. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION 2023 – PRACTISING SOCIAL WORKERS EMPLOYED BY ORANGA TAMARIKI PER 10,000 POPULATION



⁴ <https://swrb.govt.nz/building-sustainable-workforce/>

Section 1C: Workforce Composition – Qualifications, level of experience and role

This section describes the composition of Oranga Tamariki social workers by registration pathway, and time since registration. It includes information about Oranga Tamariki social workers' current role and employment situation, their primary client group and field of practice.

1.6 Pathway to registration and qualifications

Most Oranga Tamariki social workers gained their registration with a NZ-approved qualification (88%), and the remainder have an overseas-approved qualification (11%) or were registered through the S13 Experience Pathway⁵ (1%). Of those Oranga Tamariki social workers with qualifications received overseas, the most common countries were the United Kingdom, India, the Philippines or South Africa.

TABLE 5. PATHWAY TO REGISTRATION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Pathway	Number of participants employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
NZ-approved qualification	1051	88%
Overseas-approved qualification (incl. Australia)	133	11%
S13 Experience pathway	17	1%
Total	1201	

Almost all survey participants working in Oranga Tamariki held a qualification in 2023 (98%), with 75% of participants reporting up to a level 7 Bachelor's degree. Thirteen percent of Oranga Tamariki social workers who participated in the survey hold a Master's degree.

TABLE 6. QUALIFICATIONS – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Tertiary qualification level	Number of participants employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
1-6 Certificates/diplomas ⁶	238	20%
7 Grad certificates/diplomas/Bachelors	663	55%
8 PG Cert/Dip/Bachelors(Hons)	123	10%
9 Masters	157	13%
10 Doctoral	0	0%
Unspecified/None	19	2%
Total	1201	

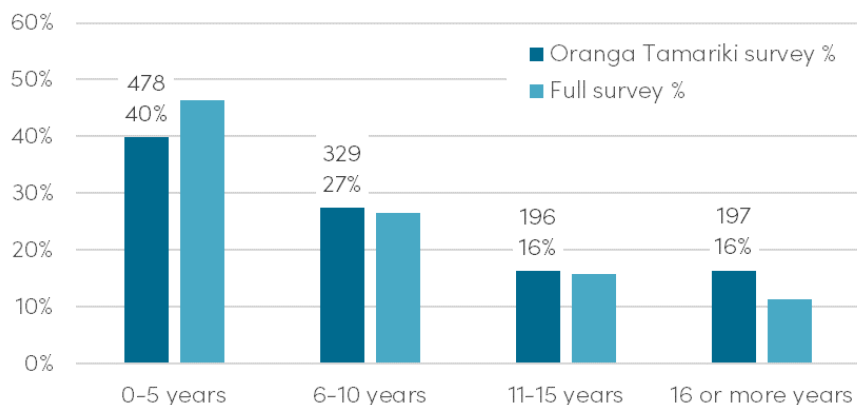
⁵ <https://swrb.govt.nz/registration/experience-pathway-s13/>

⁶ The SWRB's register includes a number of specific historic certificates and diplomas which were recognised in the time before registration became mandatory in February 2021.

1.7 Years since joining the SWRB register

Six out of ten of Oranga Tamariki survey participants have been registered with the SWRB for more than five years (60%), which is higher than the full survey (54% of whom have been registered for six or more years, see figure below). The remainder have been registered for five years or fewer. Of those who registered in the last five years, a significant number registered when it became mandatory in February 2021. They may have been practising for some time beforehand.

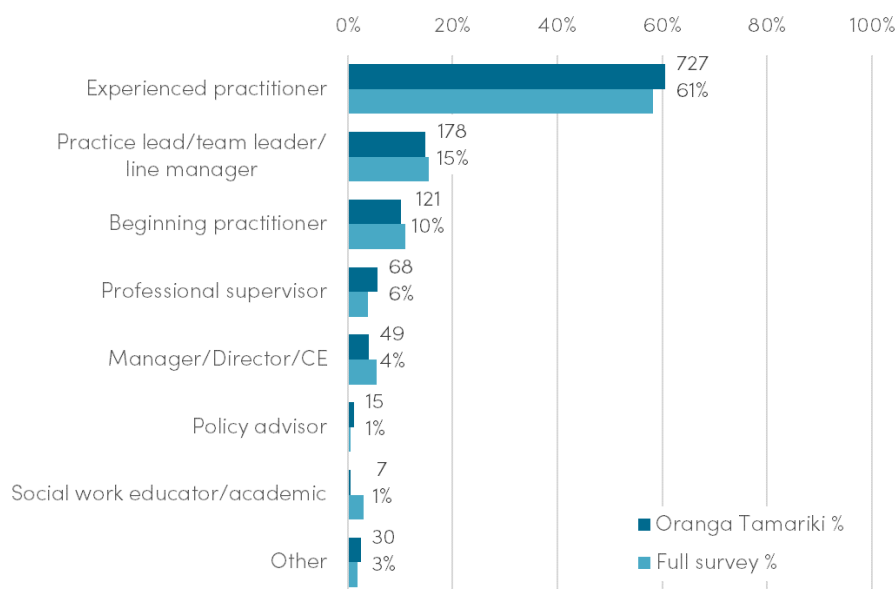
FIGURE 6. YEARS SINCE JOINING THE SWRB REGISTER – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



1.8 Level of experience and responsibility

Social workers were asked which category in the chart below best describes their level of experience/responsibility. Six in ten Oranga Tamariki survey participants described themselves as ‘experienced practitioners’ (61%), and ten percent described themselves as ‘beginning practitioners.’ Fifteen percent of participants described themselves as practice lead/team leader/line managers.

FIGURE 7. LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



1.9 Sector or setting of work

Almost all Oranga Tamariki participants in the workforce survey report that their role is in the Oranga Tamariki sector of service delivery (97%).

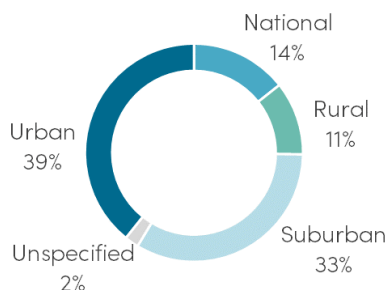
TABLE 7. ORANGA TAMARIKI SETTING TYPES – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Setting/sector of service delivery	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Oranga Tamariki	1166	97%
Community based organisation/NGOs	5	0.4%
Kaupapa Māori/Iwi Social Services	4	0.3%
Other Govt agency (such as Manatū Hauora (MOH), Corrections, Police, MBIE and others)	2	0.2%
Hospital-based health services	2	0.2%
Other setting/sector	1	0.1%
Unspecified	20	2%
Total	1201	

1.10 Current role – rural/urban and full-time/part-time

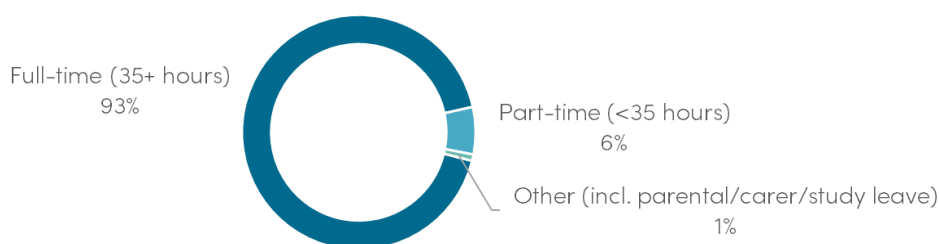
In 2023, most Oranga Tamariki social workers in the survey reported working in urban (39%) or suburban areas (33%). One in ten reported working in rural areas (11%), and fourteen percent report that they work at a national level (covering the whole country).

FIGURE 8. POPULATION AREA OF WORK – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



In 2023, 93% of Oranga Tamariki social workers report that they work full-time, that is 35 or more hours a week. Six percent work part-time (less than 35 hours a week). A lower proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers report that they work part-time (6%) compared to the full survey sample (20%).

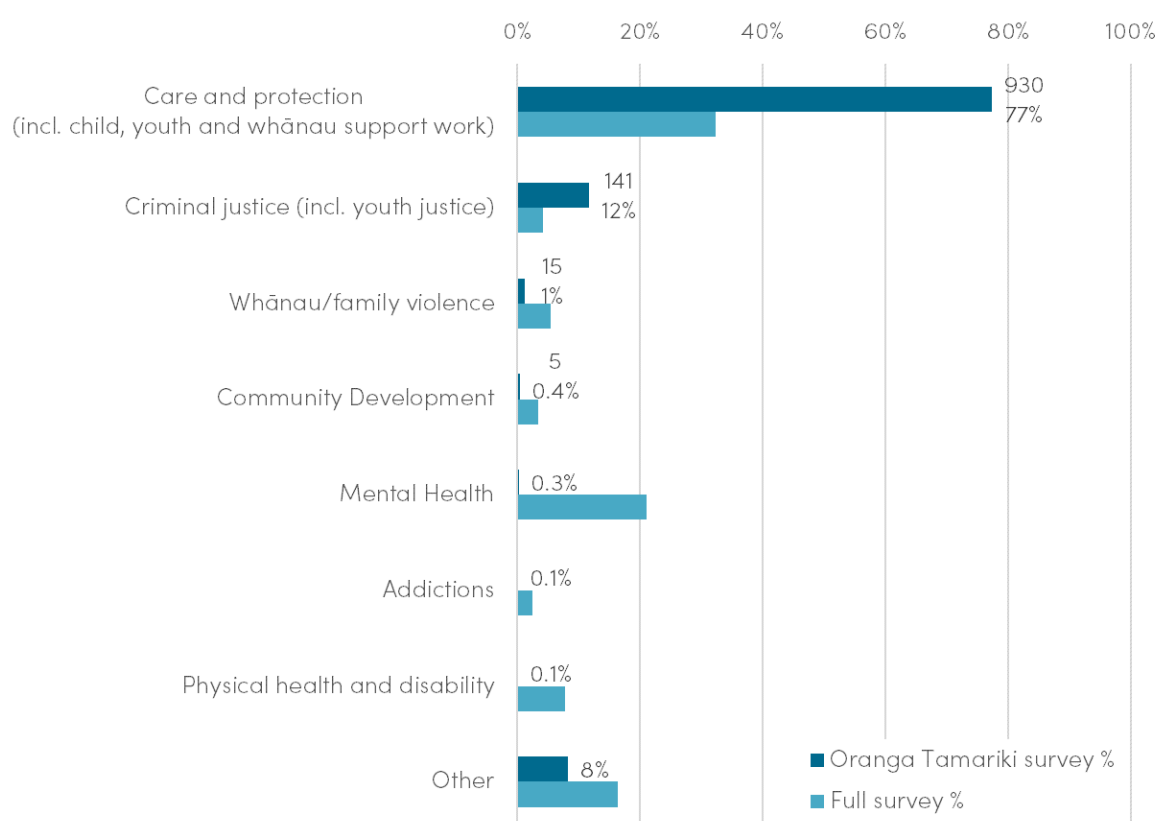
FIGURE 9. CURRENT WORK STATUS – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



1.11 Field of practice

Survey participants were asked about the main focus of their work. Three-quarters of Oranga Tamariki social workers report that the focus of their work is care and protection, including child, youth and whānau support work (77%). Twelve percent mainly work in the field of criminal justice (including youth justice). Eight percent of Oranga Tamariki social workers indicated 'other' for their main field of practice, and many participants considered their work to be too wide in scope to limit to one of the categories provided. The SWRB continues to refine its survey questions and will use this year's findings to review and update these categories for future surveys.

FIGURE 10. FIELD OF PRACTICE – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

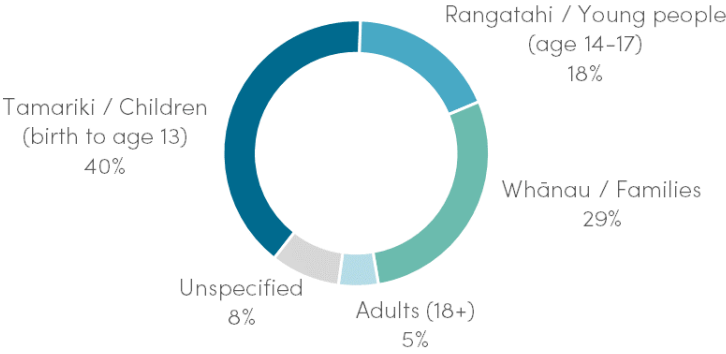


Those working in criminal justice were more likely to be male (32% male compared to 14% of the Oranga Tamariki sample), while 12% of Oranga Tamariki social workers in care and protection identify as male. The number of survey participants was too small to make comparisons by gender across other fields of practice.

1.12 Primary client group

When asked about their primary client group or focus of their practice, social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki said tamariki/children (40%), and whānau/families (29%). A combined total of 58% of Oranga Tamariki social workers mainly work with rangatahi and tamariki, which is higher than the combined total for the full survey sample (32% of whom work with rangatahi and tamariki).

FIGURE 11. PRIMARY CLIENT GROUP – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



Section 2 – Workforce Sustainability

This section explores factors related to the sustainability of the social worker workforce, including why people join, and remain in, the social work profession. The survey asks social workers about their plans for the next five years, and reasons for planning to leave the workforce. Salary levels and distribution are also included as possible determinants of workforce sustainability.

2.1 Reasons for joining the social work profession

The three most selected reasons attracting Oranga Tamariki social workers to the social work profession were making a positive difference to people’s lives (77%); serving/working with/for/supporting whānau and community (73%); and an interest in social justice, advocacy and welfare (72%). These results closely resemble those of the full survey sample.

TABLE 8. REASONS FOR JOINING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Reason	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Making a positive difference to people’s lives	922	77%
Serving/working with/for/supporting whānau and my community	874	73%
An interest in social justice, advocacy, and welfare	866	72%
Sense of purpose	468	39%
Using my own personal/lived experience to help others	445	37%
To become part of a recognised profession	197	16%
Career opportunities	168	14%
Salary	123	10%
A known need for social workers	109	9%
Work flexibilities	83	7%
Other	10	1%

*Participants can select more than one reason for joining the profession, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

2.2 Reasons for staying in the social work profession

The most selected reason for staying in the profession is the same reason most participants initially join the profession – making a difference to people’s lives (78%). Again, these closely resemble the results from the full survey sample.

TABLE 9. REASONS FOR STAYING IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Reason	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Making a difference to people's lives	936	78%
Serving/working with/supporting whānau and my community	796	66%
Positive client relationships	697	58%
Varied nature of the role	651	54%
Continuous learning/professional development	458	38%
Being part of a profession	404	34%
Salary	349	29%
Positive working environment	315	26%
Peer support	313	26%
Career growth opportunities	303	25%
Culturally safe environment	168	14%
Other	6	1%

*Participants can select more than one rewarding factor, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

2.3 Barriers to entering the profession

Half of all Oranga Tamariki survey participants identified balancing work and personal life as a barrier to entering or re-entering the social work profession (51%). Over a third felt that the perception of social work as a career was a barrier (39%).

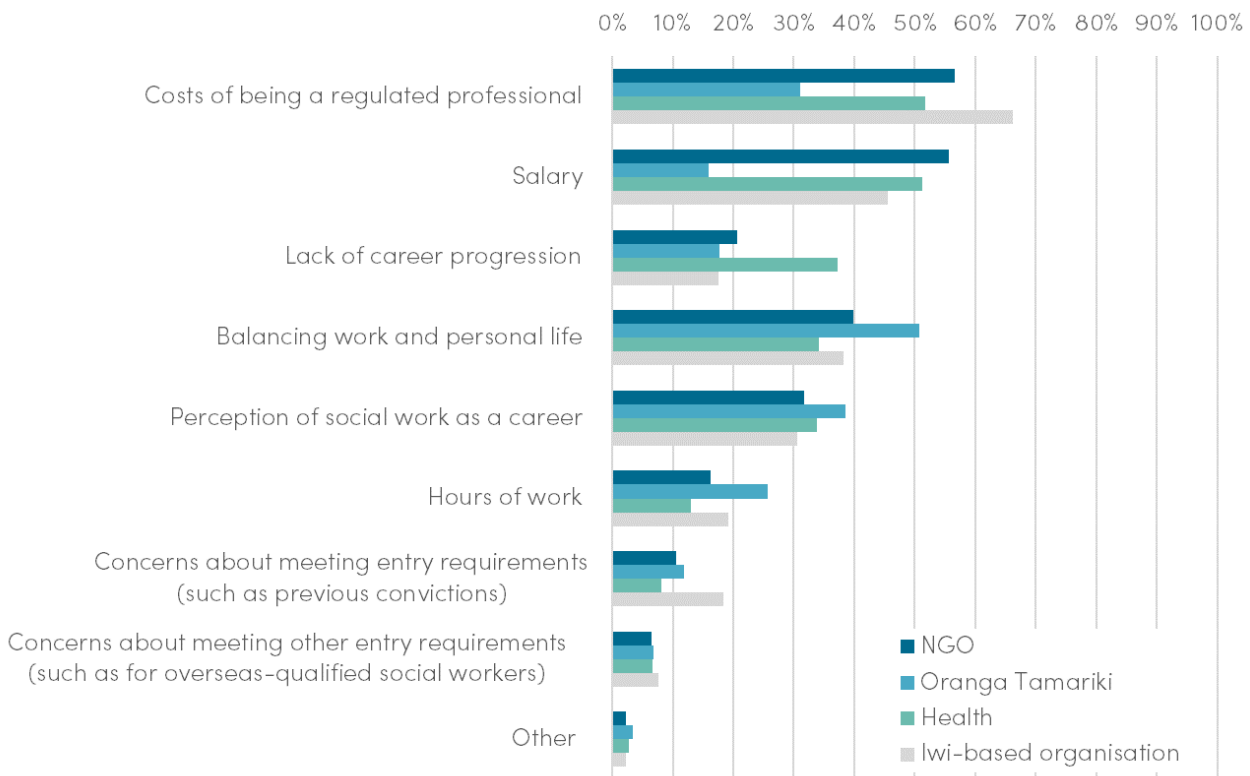
TABLE 10. BARRIERS TO ENTERING OR RE-ENTERING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Barriers to entering or re-entering profession	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
Balancing work and personal life	609	51%
Perception of social work as a career	462	39%
Costs of being a regulated professional	373	31%
Hours of work	309	26%
Lack of career progression	213	18%
Salary	192	16%
Concerns about meeting entry requirements (such as previous convictions)	142	12%
Concerns about meeting other entry requirements (such as for overseas-qualified social workers)	82	7%
Other	40	3%

*Participants can select more than one barrier, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

Compared to the full survey sample, social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki were less likely to identify the costs of being a regulated professional and salary as barriers to entering or re-entering the profession. This aligns with higher levels of employer support received by Oranga Tamariki social workers for paying fees and higher salary levels. The chart below shows how results for Oranga Tamariki social workers compare to the other top three employer types (NGOs, health and iwi-based organisations).

FIGURE 12. BARRIERS TO ENTERING OR RE-ENTERING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION – BY TOP FOUR EMPLOYER TYPES 2023



2.4 Five-year plan for staying in the workforce

Over two-thirds of Oranga Tamariki social workers who took part in the survey plan to remain in the social work profession over the next five years (68%). Sixteen percent of survey participants plan to leave the profession in the next five years, which is a loss of over 190 social workers from Oranga Tamariki. If this proportion is extrapolated out to the full practising workforce of Oranga Tamariki social workers, that would indicate a loss of over 350 social workers from Oranga Tamariki in New Zealand.

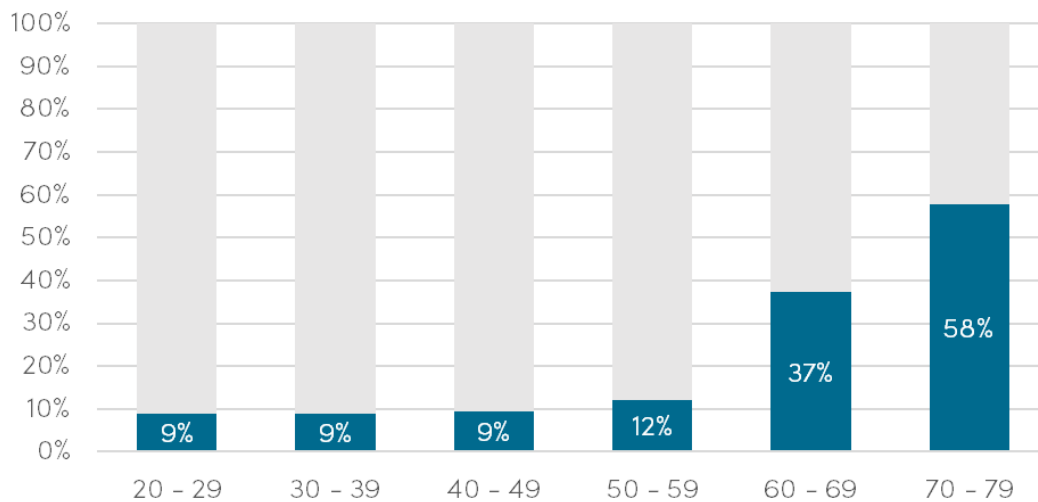
The proportion who plan to leave the profession is the same as that for the full sample (table below). A higher proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers did not answer this question compared to the full survey sample, which may indicate that they are undecided about their plans for the next five years.

TABLE 11. PLANS TO LEAVE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN NEXT 5 YEARS – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Are you planning to leave the social work profession in the next five years?	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Number in full survey	Full survey %
No	818	68%	3254	74%
Yes	192	16%	714	16%
Unspecified	190	16%	443	10%
Total	1201		4411	

The chart below shows the proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers from each age group planning to leave the workforce in the next five years. The peak in the older age groups is consistent with retirement as the highest reported reason for leaving the profession in section 2.5 below.

FIGURE 13. PLANS TO LEAVE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN NEXT 5 YEARS – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023 BY AGE GROUP



2.5 Reasons for leaving the profession

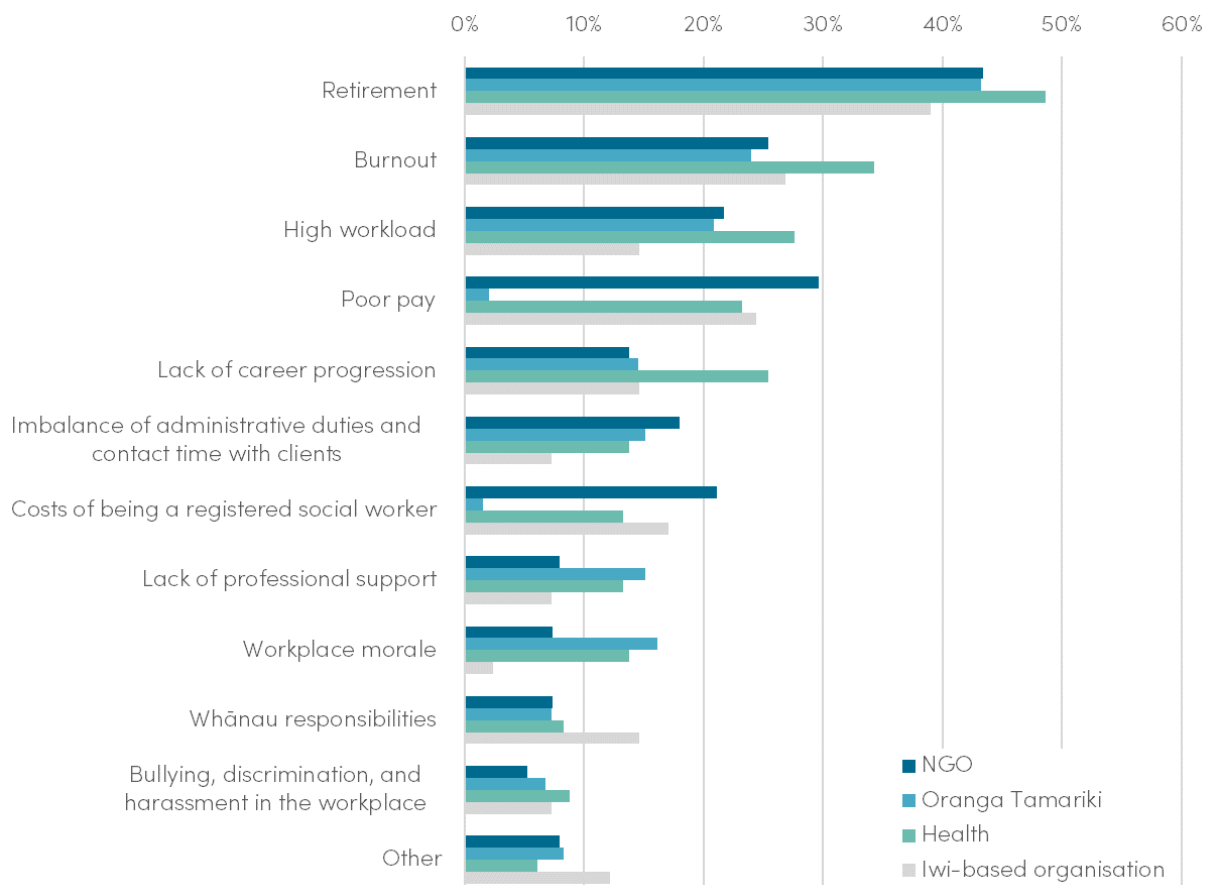
Of the 16% (or 192) of Oranga Tamariki social workers surveyed who indicated that they plan to leave the social work profession in the next five years, the main reason for leaving was retirement (43%). A quarter of those planning to leave cited burnout as their reason for leaving the profession (24%), and one in five said high workload was their reason for leaving (21%). Burnout was reported by fewer Oranga Tamariki social workers as a reason for leaving, compared to the full sample. Figure 13 following the table below shows that Oranga Tamariki social workers were far less likely to cite poor pay and the costs of being a social worker as reasons for leaving the profession compared to other large employer types.

TABLE 12. REASONS FOR LEAVING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN NEXT 5 YEARS – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Reason	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Number in full survey	Full survey %
Retirement	83	43%	331	46%
Burnout	46	24%	242	34%
High workload	40	21%	197	28%
Workplace morale	31	16%	101	14%
Imbalance of administrative duties and contact time with clients	29	15%	129	18%
Lack of professional support	29	15%	103	14%
Lack of career progression	28	15%	142	20%
Whānau responsibilities	14	7%	71	10%
Bullying, discrimination, and harassment in the workplace	13	7%	63	9%
Poor pay	4	2%	152	21%
Costs of being a registered social worker	3	2%	112	16%
Other	16	8%	58	8%

*Table denominator is 192 participants who said 'yes' to previous question about leaving profession in next five years. Participants could give more than one reason for leaving, so totals exceed the sample subset of 192

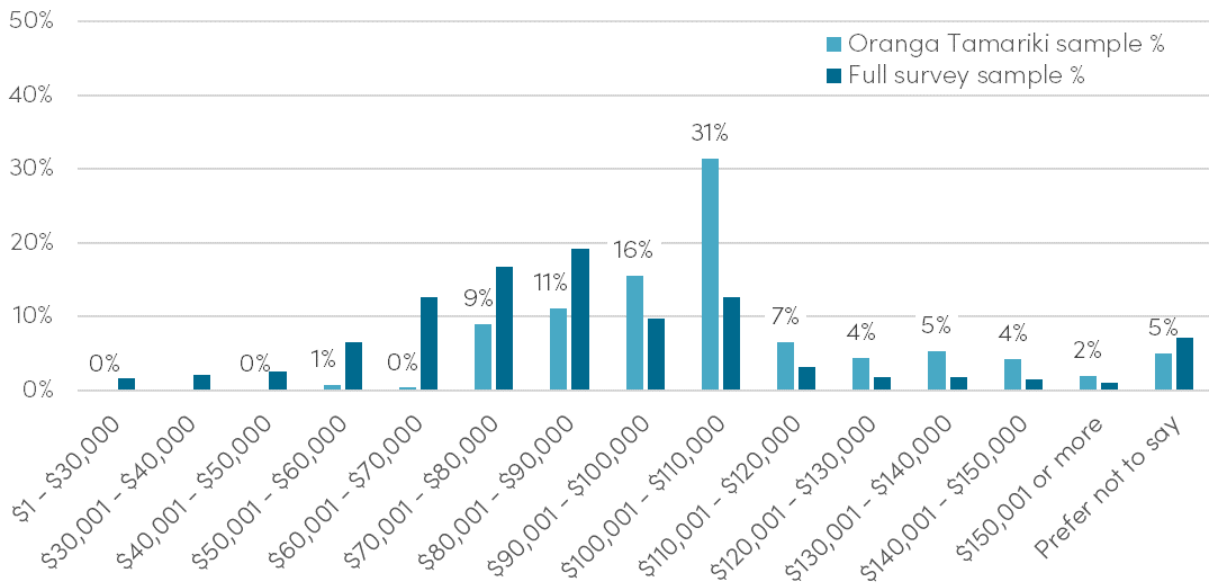
FIGURE 14. REASONS FOR LEAVING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN NEXT 5 YEARS – BY TOP FOUR EMPLOYER TYPES 2023



2.6 Salary distribution

The most common salary category selected by Oranga Tamariki survey participants was \$100,001 - \$110,000 annually (31%). A combined total of 54% reported earning more than \$100,000 annually, over double the proportion of the full survey sample (22% of whom earn more than \$100,000 annually). The chart below shows the distribution of salaries for Oranga Tamariki social workers compared to the full survey sample, where the peak for social worker salaries is lower at \$80,001 - \$90,000 annually.

FIGURE 15. SALARY DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023



It should be noted that the shape of the curve (and peak at \$100,001 - \$110,000 annually) does not change when analysed by full-time and part-time status, implying that participants provide their full-time equivalent (FTE) salary when answering this survey question.

TABLE 13. SALARY DISTRIBUTION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Salary band	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)
\$1 - \$30,000	1	0%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	0	0%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	1	0%
\$50,001 - \$60,000	8	1%
\$60,001 - \$70,000	4	0%
\$70,001 - \$80,000	107	9%
\$80,001 - \$90,000	134	11%
\$90,001 - \$100,000	187	16%
\$100,001 - \$110,000	376	31%
\$110,001 - \$120,000	78	7%
\$120,001 - \$130,000	53	4%
\$130,001 - \$140,000	64	5%
\$140,001 - \$150,000	51	4%
\$150,001 or more	23	2%
Prefer not to say/unspecified	113	9%

Section 3 – Knowledge and skills development

This section includes survey results about social workers' knowledge and skill development, to better understand areas where social workers need additional support and continuing professional development (CPD). It is not the SWRB's role to deliver CPD for social workers. However, it is important to support and understand the needs of the workforce as part of the SWRB's guidance for professional standards and regulatory expectations.

3.1 Continuing Professional Development needs

Survey participants were asked CPD areas would be most helpful for furthering their knowledge and skill development. They were able to select as many options as applied to them. Close to half of all Oranga Tamariki participants said that CPD in social work practice with other ethnic and cultural groups would be most helpful (49%), and four out of ten said that CPD in skills for managing complexity would be helpful (41%).

A lower proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers said that CPD for social work practice with Māori would be most helpful compared to the full survey sample. This may indicate that they already feel proficient in this area, or that they do not consider it as important as other CPD areas – the survey does not distinguish between different reasons for answering the question in this way.

TABLE 14. AREAS OF CPD IDENTIFIED AS MOST HELPFUL – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

CPD area	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Number in full survey	Full survey %
Social work practice with ethnic and cultural groups	583	49%	2110	48%
Skills for managing complexity	490	41%	1829	42%
Social work practice with Māori	455	38%	2215	50%
Ethical practice/dilemmas	455	38%	1747	40%
Legislation and policies affecting social work practice	422	35%	1562	35%
Skills for conflict management	353	29%	1311	30%
Working with whānau living with addiction and substance misuse	334	28%	1207	27%
Professional supervisor training	325	27%	1257	29%
Critical thinking	316	26%	1089	25%
Working with whānau who have experienced family harm	283	24%	1097	25%
Decolonisation and te Tiriti o Waitangi	256	21%	1096	25%
Professional boundaries	253	21%	940	21%
Working in partnerships	239	20%	718	16%
Report writing	198	17%	676	15%
Case management	172	14%	619	14%
Supporting students on field placements	159	13%	717	16%
Other	30	3%	126	3%

*Participants can select more than one CPD area, so totals exceed the Oranga Tamariki sample of 1,201

Section 4 – Employer support

This section describes results from survey questions about the support provided to social workers by their employers, for their social work practice, and financial support for the payment of registration and annual Practising Certificate (PC) renewal fees.

4.1 Employer support for social work practice

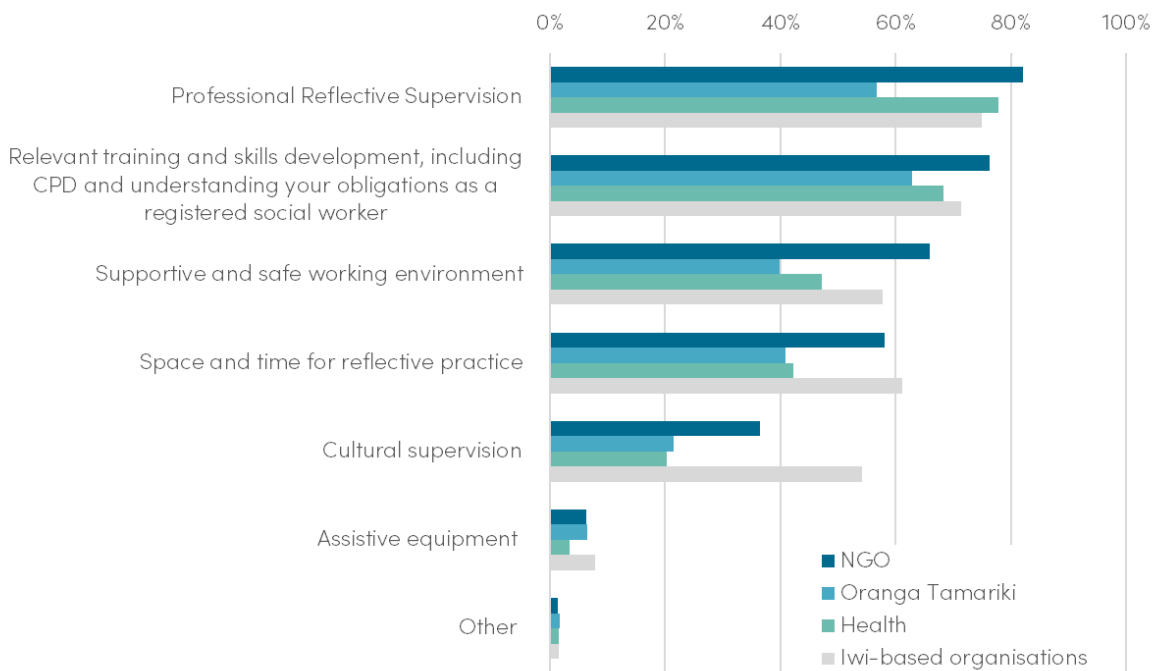
The most common categories of employer support that Oranga Tamariki social workers say they receive for their social work practice are training and skills development (63%) and professional reflective supervision (57%). Across all categories of employer support, Oranga Tamariki social workers report lower levels than other employers (Figure 15). Just 40% of Oranga Tamariki social workers said that their employer provides a supportive and safe working environment, which may need to be explored further. Many social workers commented about abuse from clients as contributing to their feeling unsafe in their work.

TABLE 15. EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Employer support	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Number in full survey	Full survey %
Relevant training and skills development, including CPD and understanding your obligations as a registered social worker	754	63%	2950	67%
Professional Reflective Supervision	680	57%	3102	70%
Space and time for reflective practice	491	41%	2115	48%
Supportive and safe working environment	478	40%	2243	51%
Cultural supervision	258	22%	1261	29%
Assistive equipment	78	7%	249	6%
Other	28	2%	149	3%

*Participants can select more than one area of employer support, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

FIGURE 16. EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE – BY TOP 4 EMPLOYER TYPES 2023



4.2 Employer support with fee payment

Registration with the SWRB requires payment of registration application fee(s). Practising social workers must also have a valid Practising Certificate (PC) which is renewed annually. The survey asked social workers if their employer pays these fees in full, in part, or not at all.

Over nine out of ten Oranga Tamariki social workers reported that their employer paid their practising certificate renewal fees (92%), and 97% reported that their employer pays their annual practising certificate renewal fees in full. Oranga Tamariki social workers reported the highest level of employer payment for both registration and practising certificate fees in the survey.

TABLE 16. EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR REGISTRATION AND PC FEES – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Fees paid by employer	Oranga Tamariki participants	Full survey	Oranga Tamariki participants	Full survey
	Registration fees	Registration fees	PC renewal fees	PC renewal fees
Yes	91%	82%	97%	90%
In part	1%	2%	0%	2%
No	8%	16%	3%	8%

Section 5 – Standing of the profession

This section explores social workers' views on how mandatory registration and media coverage have impacted the respect, trust and confidence in their profession.

5.1 Impact of registration on profession

Mandatory registration came into effect in February 2021. In the years since, the SWRB's workforce survey has asked social workers if they think the profession is more respected now that all social workers must be registered. Four in ten Oranga Tamariki participants thought the profession is more respected (44%), and a further 37% said it was 'in part'. These results closely resemble those of the full survey sample.

FIGURE 17. BELIEF THAT PROFESSION IS MORE RESPECTED SINCE MANDATORY REGISTRATION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

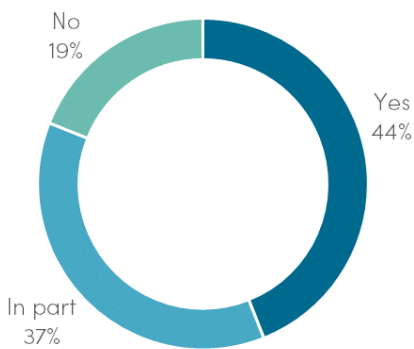


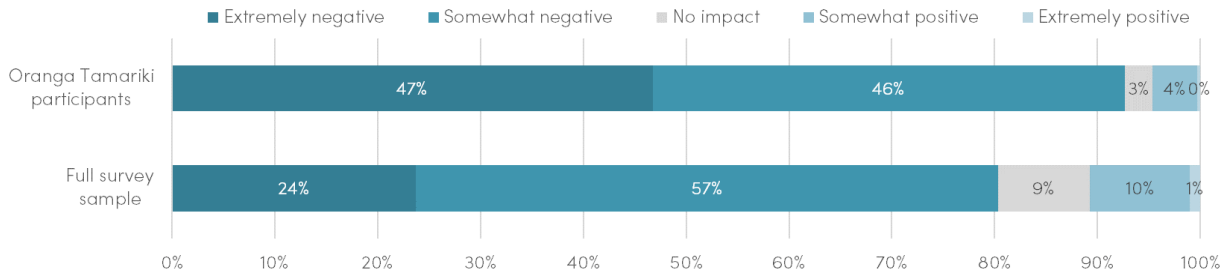
TABLE 17. BELIEF THAT PROFESSION IS MORE RESPECTED SINCE MANDATORY REGISTRATION – ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS 2023

Profession is more respected since mandatory registration	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Full survey %
Yes	458	44%	46%
In part	387	37%	36%
No	194	19%	18%

5.2 Impact of media on trust and confidence in profession

Survey participants were asked about the impact that media coverage relating to social work has had on public trust and confidence in the social work profession. Almost all survey participants employed by Oranga Tamariki thought it had a negative impact (47% extremely; 46% somewhat negative). The chart below shows that close to double the proportion Oranga Tamariki social workers think media coverage has had an *extremely* negative impact on trust and confidence in the social work profession than the full survey sample.

FIGURE 18. BELIEFS ABOUT IMPACT OF MEDIA ON TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION 2023



5.3 Biggest challenges for the profession

Social workers were asked what they think the biggest challenges for the social work profession are now, and in the immediate future. Over three-quarters of those employed by Oranga Tamariki thought that the recruitment and retention of social workers would be the biggest challenge (79%), followed by the public perception of social workers (59%). Both of these challenges were selected by a higher proportion of Oranga Tamariki social workers compared to the full survey sample. In contrast, Oranga Tamariki social workers were less likely to indicate that they think pay parity is, and will be, a challenge for the social work profession than the full survey sample.

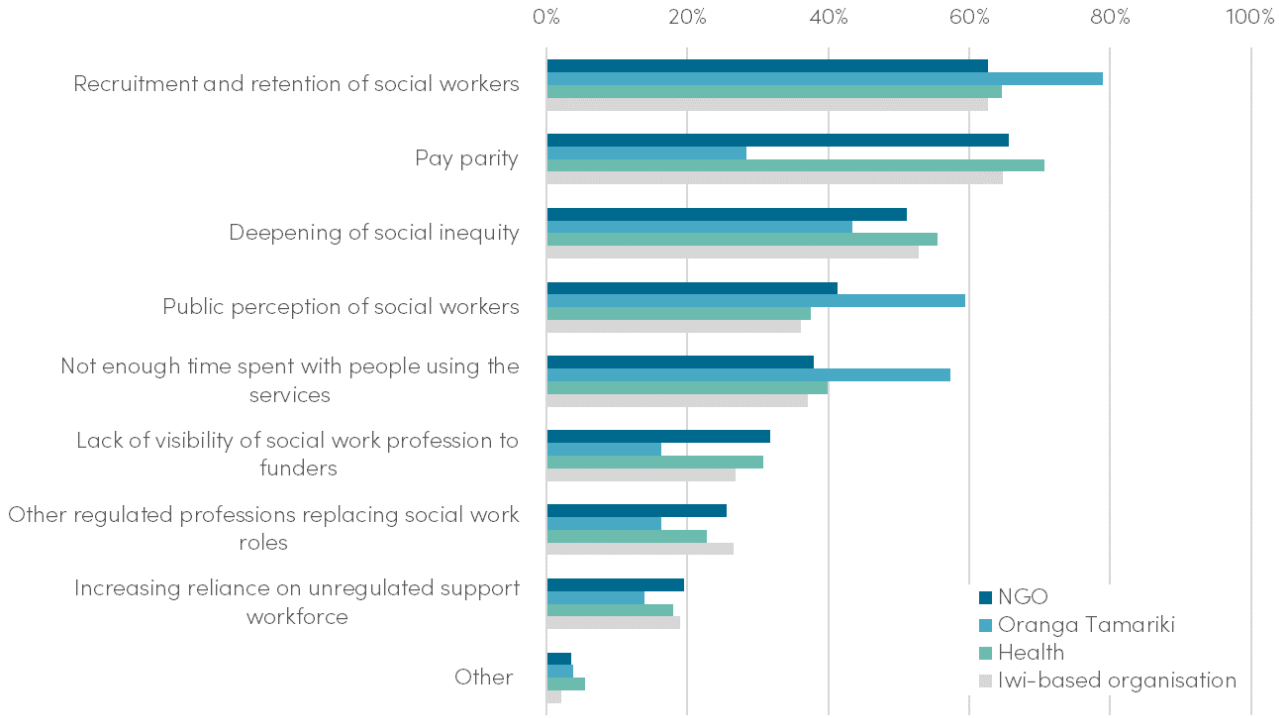
TABLE 18. CHALLENGES FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION NOW AND IN THE FUTURE 2023

Challenges	Number in survey employed by Oranga Tamariki	Survey employed by Oranga Tamariki (%)	Full survey %
Recruitment and retention of social workers	948	79%	67%
Public perception of social workers	713	59%	45%
Not enough time spent with people using the services	688	57%	44%
Deepening of social inequity	521	43%	51%
Pay parity	340	28%	56%
Lack of visibility of social work profession to funders	196	16%	27%
Other regulated professions replacing social work roles	195	16%	23%
Increasing reliance on unregulated support workforce	166	14%	18%
Other	46	4%	4%

*Participants can select more than one challenge, so totals exceed the sample of 1,201

The chart below shows how results for Oranga Tamariki social workers compare to the other top three employer types (NGOs, health and iwi-based organisations).

FIGURE 19. CHALLENGES FOR THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION NOW AND IN THE FUTURE 2023 – BY TOP FOUR EMPLOYER TYPES



Section 6 – Safety and conduct

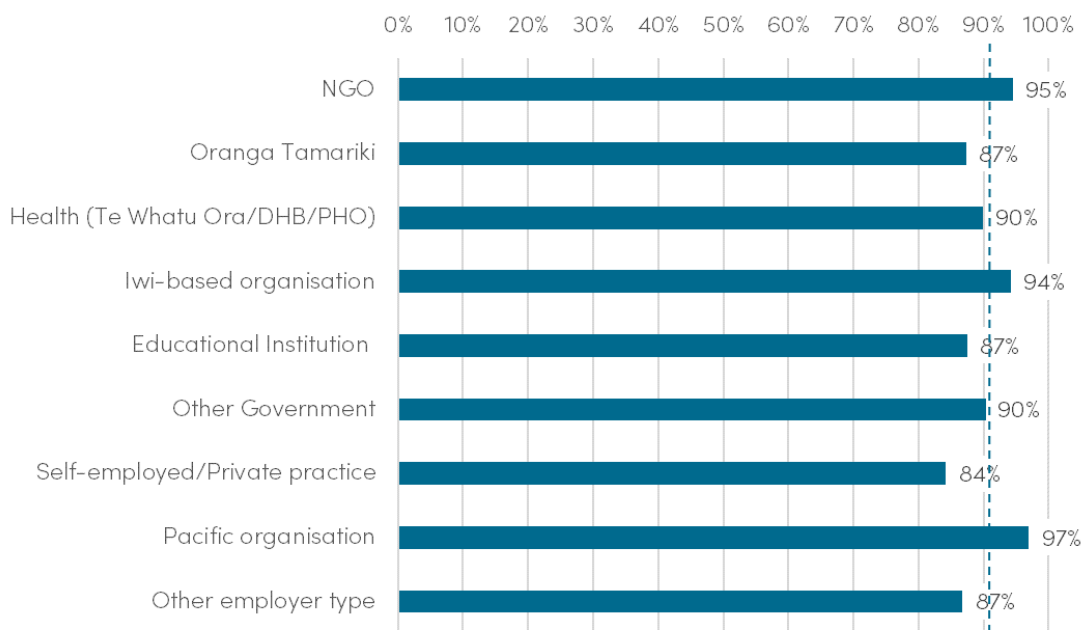
In 2023, workforce survey participants were asked two new questions about safety and conduct: whether they had confidence in their employer’s policies and processes for dealing with serious issues with a social worker’s practice and/or conduct, and whether they would raise concerns about another social worker with the SWRB where it was not possible to resolve with their employer.

6.1 Confidence in employer’s policies and processes for practice/conduct issues

When asked if they were confident their employer has adequate policies and procedures in place to deal with serious issues with a social worker’s practice and/or conduct appropriately and safely, 87% of Oranga Tamariki participants said yes. This is slightly lower than the proportion for the full survey (91%; dashed line on the chart below).

For those Oranga Tamariki participants who did not feel confident in their employer’s ability to deal with serious practice or conduct issues, many referred to a negative past experience with trying to address issues with a social worker’s practice or conduct, and a lack of action or response from ‘management’. There is a perception that staffing shortages can lead to issues being ‘swept under the carpet’, and policies being interpreted differently across teams.

FIGURE 20. CONFIDENCE IN EMPLOYER TO DEAL WITH SERIOUS PRACTICE/CONDUCT ISSUES 2023 – BY EMPLOYER TYPE



6.2 Raising concerns with the SWRB

When asked if they would raise concerns about another social worker’s practice and/or conduct with SWRB (where it wasn’t possible to resolve with the employer), 94% of Oranga Tamariki social workers said yes.

Closing comments

This Spotlight Report seeks to shine a light on the social work workforce employed by Oranga Tamariki, as the largest single employer of social workers in New Zealand (26% of the practising workforce at the time of the 2023 survey). The aim of the report is to show the depth and breadth of activity, workforce capability, opportunities and challenges facing this subset of the social work profession.

Each year, we add to the suite of surveys and reports we produce to support workforce planning activities, and our intention for 2024 is to add a survey of employers. This will extend our evidence base to better understand the 'big picture' of the social work workforce and provide valuable insights to support future workforce planning across the sector. The goal of this evidence base is to provide further insight and support for employers and decision-makers, and to ensure a sustainable and future-focussed workforce.

The SWRB appreciates and acknowledges the social workers who shared their time and feedback in 2023, achieving the highest response rate since the survey began (51%), and a sample that matches the demographic profile of the workforce. This gives us high confidence that the results in this report reflect the reality and diversity of all practising social workers employed by Oranga Tamariki, and enables us to build on our evidence base to support workforce planning and decision-making in the social work sector.

We welcome feedback, comments and suggestions on ways to improve this survey or specific topics that might be useful to explore in the future.

Appendix 1: Survey sample and data representativeness – comparing sample of Oranga Tamariki social workers to the full practising workforce

This appendix compares the Oranga Tamariki survey participant demographics with the full practising Oranga Tamariki and total practising social worker workforce to better understand representativeness of the results – can the trends shown in the survey be generalised to what is happening in the wider Oranga Tamariki social worker workforce?

'Practising' workforce includes all social workers on the SWRB register with an active practising certificate (PC) as of 30 June 2023. [Totals match with data from 2022/23 Annual Report for consistency.]

TABLE A1. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS COMPARED TO PRACTISING WORKFORCE 2023

Age group	Oranga Tamariki sample %	Full survey sample %	Practising Oranga Tamariki workforce %	Practising workforce %	Oranga Tamariki sample n	Full survey sample n	Practising Oranga Tamariki workforce n	Practising workforce n
20 - 29	6.5%	7.1%	7.3%	7.6%	78	313	165	695
30 - 39	19.7%	18.7%	23.4%	20.7%	236	827	526	1814
40 - 49	26.7%	24.3%	27.3%	24.1%	321	1072	614	2068
50 - 59	27.0%	27.3%	24.2%	26.0%	324	1206	544	2231
60 - 69	17.8%	19.7%	15.5%	18.8%	214	870	347	1639
70 - 79	2.2%	2.6%	2.0%	2.5%	26	115	46	243
80 or older	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1	1	1	4
Unspecified	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	1	7	2	11
Total					1201	4411	2245	8705

TABLE A2. GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS COMPARED TO PRACTISING WORKFORCE 2023

Gender	Oranga Tamariki sample %	Full survey sample %	Practising Oranga Tamariki workforce %	Practising workforce %	Oranga Tamariki sample n	Full survey sample n	Practising Oranga Tamariki workforce n	Practising workforce n
Female	85.3%	85.1%	84.7%	84.3%	1024	3752	1902	7339
Male	14.5%	14.4%	15.0%	15.2%	174	637	336	1319
Another gender	-	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%		8	2	22
Unspecified	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.30%	3	14	5	25
Total					1201	4411	2245	8705

The table below shows the survey distribution by ethnicity compared to the most recent census of the NZ population (2018). This shows that the 2023 survey sample, and practising workforce of social workers has a higher representation of Māori and Pacific peoples than the general population. Unfortunately there are no holistic data that show the exact number and characteristics of those who access social worker services, so it is difficult to compare the workforce with the 'client' population. However, having more Māori and Pacific social workers in the workforce is an encouraging trend for supporting population well-being across Aotearoa New Zealand.

TABLE A3. ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION OF ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS COMPARED TO FULL SURVEY, PRACTISING WORKFORCE 2023 AND NZ POPULATION (CENSUS 2018)

Ethnicity	2023 Oranga Tamariki survey %	2023 Oranga Tamariki practising workforce %	2023 full survey %	2023 practising workforce %	2018 Census ⁷ %
Māori	26.1%	25.3%	23.4%	24.3%	16.5%
Pacific peoples	11.7%	12.9%	10.9%	12.1%	8.1%
European (incl. NZ European)	63.6%	67.3%	66.9%	63.7%	70.2%
Middle Eastern / Latin American / African	2.2%	2.4%	2.3%	2.6%	1.5%
Asian	10.0%	10.9%	8.7%	9.5%	15.1%
Other ethnicity	1.3%	1.3%	2.0%	1.3%	1.2%

* Both Census and workforce survey use 'total response' ethnicity calculations, allowing participants to identify more than one ethnic group. Totals will add to more than 100%.

⁷ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/ethnic-group-summaries-reveal-new-zealands-multicultural-make-up/>

TABLE A4. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKERS COMPARED TO PRACTISING WORKFORCE 2023

Region	Oranga Tamariki sample %	Full survey sample %	Practising workforce %	Oranga Tamariki sample n	Full survey sample n	Practising workforce n	NZ pop'n ⁸ %
Northland	5.8%	5.1%	5.2%	70	227	450	3.8%
Auckland	31.6%	28.4%	29.2%	379	1251	2538	33.8%
Waikato	9.7%	8.2%	8.2%	116	363	711	9.7%
Bay of Plenty	7.6%	7.6%	7.9%	91	336	692	6.5%
Gisborne	1.1%	1.5%	1.6%	13	64	143	1.0%
Hawke's Bay	5.5%	4.4%	4.2%	66	192	369	3.5%
Taranaki	2.8%	2.7%	2.5%	34	118	215	2.5%
Manawatū-Wanganui	4.7%	5.4%	4.7%	56	237	408	5.1%
Wellington	9.7%	11.3%	11.6%	116	498	1006	10.7%
Tasman	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	2	26	38	1.1%
Nelson	1.7%	2.1%	1.9%	21	91	167	1.1%
Marlborough	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%	16	42	66	1.0%
West Coast	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%	4	23	49	0.7%
Canterbury	11.7%	14.9%	14.1%	141	656	1225	12.7%
Otago	3.8%	4.3%	2.9%	46	191	249	4.8%
Southland	2.5%	2.1%	3.0%	30	93	264	2.1%
Unspecified/ International	0.0%	0.1%	1.3%	-	3	115	-
Total				1201	4411	8705	

⁸ Stats NZ (2019). Census: Population and dwelling counts (amended) 2018.
<https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2018-census-population-and-dwelling-counts>

TABLE A5. EMPLOYER TYPE OF SURVEY SAMPLE COMPARED TO PRACTISING WORKFORCE 2023⁹

Employer type	Survey %	Practising workforce %	Survey n	Practising workforce n
Non-Government organisation (NGO)	28%	29%	1240	2489
Oranga Tamariki	27%	26%	1201	2245
Te Whatu Ora/DHB/PHO	23%	21%	1004	1817
Iwi-based organisation*	8%	8%	342	669
Educational Institution (school; university)	4%	4%	196	372
Other Government	2%	2%	98	193
Self-employed/private practice	3%	3%	117	235
Pacific organisation*	1%	1%	35	67
Other	2%	2%	86	180
Unspecified	2%	5%	92	438
Total			4411	8705

* These categories include a number of iwi-based and Pacific organisations with a focus on health, and social workers employed by these are counted in the health/hauora spotlight report. In 2022/23, the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) restructure of the New Zealand health system merged the functions of 20 DHBs into Te Whatu Ora, which leads the day-to-day running of the health system for the whole country. IN the past, we have reported 'DHB' as an employer category. For 2023, we use a collective 'health' employer category that includes Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora, DHBs (which are still used as interim employment entities during this transition phase), PHOs, iwi-based and Pacific health organisations.

⁹ In past workforce survey reports, NGO and iwi-based organisation employer types have been reported as a single category. For 2023 reporting, NGO, iwi-based and Pacific organisation categories are reported separately to allow for more detailed analysis and reporting for social workers employed by services for priority groups.

Appendix 2: The SWRB’s role as Lead Agency for Workforce Planning for all social workers

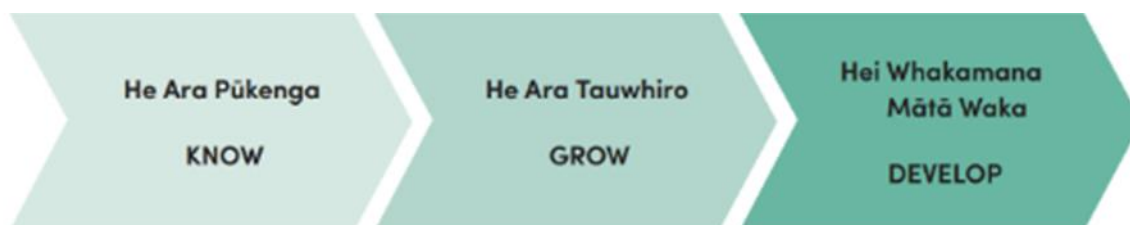
The SWRB’s role as the Lead Agency for workforce planning for all social workers was announced publicly in March 2021. The Cabinet Paper assigning the role to us stated that the emphasis should be on ‘building evidence on workforce pressures and relationships across the sector.’ To reflect that intent, we have developed an aspirational vision for our Lead Agency work:

The SWRB will provide strategic, cross-agency and cross-sectoral leadership in consultation with the sector, based on a robust evidence base, to guide the development of a strategy and action plan to support the sustainability of the social worker workforce.

This vision acknowledges the need for cross-agency and cross-sector support to enable any significant change. Our high-level outcome has also evolved and now recognises the emphasis on being data driven and evidence based:

Leveraging data to support the system to have the right social workers, with the right skills, knowledge, and competencies in the right place, at the right time to support and enhance the wellbeing of New Zealanders.

We developed an approach to articulate what the Lead Agency role means focusing on three components of work – **KNOW, GROW, DEVELOP**.



KNOW

The initial ‘know’ phase is about building the evidence base to underpin our work.

The register of social workers provides us with valuable demographic information about the workforce. This is supplemented by the findings from our Annual Social Worker Workforce Survey and other information sources such as the SWRB’s Annual Education Report, one-off surveys and pieces of research.

From this evidence, we have developed insights and briefings to disseminate to the wider sector including Ministers, other government agencies, employers and other stakeholders. These will continue to be updated regularly as the latest reports become available.

GROW

We moved into the second 'grow' phase from the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year, taking a more proactive approach. We continued to strengthen and enhance our business-as-usual Lead Agency work, including tailoring and expanding our Workforce Survey. We will also develop an Employers Survey for the 2024/25 financial year, and work to enhance our Annual Education Providers Survey and Report.

Increasingly we are growing our contribution at a system level and have proactively undertaken the following work:

- Working with education officials on increasing the funding rate for the fieldwork components of the social work degree programmes, including providing advice to Ministers alongside the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission
- Working closely with Te Pūkenga, Te Toitū Waiora - Community, Health, Education, and Social Services Workforce Development Council, Health Workforce NZ, Immigration NZ, Public Services Commission, the Employment, Education and Training (EET) Ministerial Advisory Group and Oranga Tamariki
- Identifying research opportunities, including those that draw on what we are learning through the project to better understand the social work-like workforce.

DEVELOP

The third phase 'develop' shows us now moving into external phases of work. Drawing on our existing relationships we are taking a dual approach (cross-government agency and cross-sector) to encourage agencies across government and sector to collaborate on a system-wide and integrated social worker workforce strategy and associated action plan.

We will also continue to build our links with other agencies that have a workforce function including the Ministries of Health and Education, Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Based on their advice and our suite of workforce data, we will provide the Minister with updates on cross-sector engagement.