

**TE TAUNAKI**  
Public Service Census  
2021



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# Sexual Identity Deep Dive

August 2023

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**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

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# Diversity and inclusion in the Public Service

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is an essential part of the Public Service. We want our Public Service workplaces to value, reflect and understand the communities that we're here to serve. The Public Service Act 2020 supports our D&I commitments with requirements on leaders to promote diversity and inclusiveness within our workforce and workplaces. Everyone in the Public Service is entitled to work in a safe and inclusive workplace, where people treat one another with respect.

For more than five years Te Kawa Mataaho has been focused on building a diverse and inclusive Public Service. We have made some significant gains in that time, but we know that there is still work to do. We value the voices and experiences of our people and collect the data to help give us a better picture of the experience of public servants and ideas of how our workplaces can be more welcoming and inclusive of a wide range of communities.

We are committed to doing more work and Te Taunaki provides an important benchmark and deeper understanding of where the focus needs to be. Today, the Public Service has a comprehensive approach to achieving diversity, equity and inclusion which includes three main work programmes.

- The [Papa Pounamu](#) work programme sets priorities for growing Public Service diversity and inclusion capability;
- the [Kia Toipoto](#) and [Pay Equity](#) work programmes provide plans to address pay gaps and workplace inequities;
- the [Positive and Safe Workplaces](#) programme helps agencies to create work environments where people enjoy working, are respected and can contribute to their potential.

## About the survey

Te Taunaki | Public Service Census 2021(Te Taunaki) captured information across a range of demographic and job dimensions, allowing us to explore characteristics of transgender public servants and how included that community felt in the workplace. Understanding this helps us to gain a better picture about what's working well and where we need to do more to be an employer of choice for all of our workers.

Te Taunaki was New Zealand's first Public Service Census. About 60,000 public servants working in 36 agencies (departments and departmental agencies) were asked questions focusing on diversity, inclusion and wellbeing at work, a unified Public Service, and strengthening Māori Crown relationships. The final overall response rate was 63.1%, representing the views and experiences of about 40,000 public servants. New Zealand's first Public Service Census started on 11 May and closed in early June 2021.

## About the deep dive reports

Cross-agency Employee-led Networks (ELNs) were an important stakeholder of Te Taunaki Public Service Census and Te Kawa Mataaho engaged with them in the development and planning stage, consulting on the survey, and they helped increase response rates of members of their communities. After Te Taunaki was completed, we reached out to ELNs to see what questions we could answer for them based on the data that had been gathered in Te Taunaki or the Workforce Data. This proactive approach to information ensured that there was benefit for the ELNs in continuing to be involved in Te Taunaki.

The deep dive research papers that have been produced as part of this process present reporting on topics of interest to ELNs. Te Kawa Mataaho has now completed deep dive research for: We Enable Us (WEU), the Cross-Agency Rainbow Network (CARN), and Government Women's Network (GWN). The research covers the experiences reported in Te Taunaki by disabled public servants, and public servants who are transgender, intersex or of multiple/another gender/s or different sexual identities, and women in the Public Service.

Te Taunaki gives us just a start at understanding the effects of intersectionality on feelings of inclusion, but further work is needed to explore the combined effects of diversity dimensions. We are continuing to learn from what this data tells us, and the experiences of different communities and are working with the cross-agency ELNs on plans and initiatives for the future and to help us achieve our goal of improving inclusion in our workplaces and for New Zealand's public servants.

### **From the Cross-Agency Rainbow Network (CARN)...**

*We know that without data, we cannot be counted. As the Cross-Agency Rainbow Network, representing rainbow public servants across the motu, we want to see data being collected about us that paints a picture of the state of the public sector when it comes to rainbow inclusion. We want to see our successes, the challenges we face and where we as a community and the public sector can do more.*

*CARN aims to create a wide, deep and sustainable shift in strengthening the participation, representation and respect of people with diverse SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics) throughout the public sector. As a network, CARN endeavours to be accessible, inclusive, welcoming and representative of all SOGIESC-diverse communities. CARN stands by members of our rainbow communities, and strives to promote the dignity, respect, and safety of these people in our network, across our public sector, and in the communities we serve.*

*The key to building a diverse and inclusive Public Service, is building data and information. That's why we were excited to collaborate with Te Kawa Mataaho to produce these four deep dives focussed on the rainbow community. The experience of rainbow public servants is not uniform across groups, and without analysing the data in more detail, we aren't able to see the full picture. We were able to work alongside the teams at Te Kawa Mataaho to identify that separate deep dives were needed, focussing on sexual identity, and public servants who were trans, intersex, or of multiple/other genders.*

*We note also the importance of intersectionality and the range of experiences for different communities within our broader rainbow whānau.*

*We hope these deep dives will be a valuable resource to draw on as the Public Service takes a focussed approach to rainbow inclusion going forward.*

For this report on sexual identities across the Public Service, the relevant questions or topic areas from Te Taunaki that were socialised with CARN were:

- How representative is the Public Service of the wider community/communities in New Zealand? (and what aggregate of communities would be useful?)
- How many people from these communities are working in the Public Service?

- More information on number of people for groups within the communities (i.e., intersectionality with iwi, ethnicity, etc)
- How are these communities represented across regions within the Public Service?
- What kinds of roles do these communities have? Any over representation in occupational grouping?
- Are members of these communities well represented in leadership positions?
- Are these communities paid what others in the Public Service are? (by age / tenure median pay band)
- Do members of these communities have access to training and career development opportunities?
- Why did members of these communities join the Public Service? Why do they stay?
- Do members of these communities feel included at work? If not, what would they like to have their agency do (based on the qualitative questions in the Census)?
- Do members of these communities feel satisfied with their job?
- What differences in experience across age / tenure are there within these communities and between others?
- How similar/different are the barriers/enablers/positives described by these communities?

## Under the rainbow umbrella

Te Taunaki | Public Service Census 2021 collected information on experiences of working in the Public Service for people in rainbow communities. Rainbow is a broad umbrella term that covers a diversity of sexual identities (the definition relevant to this report is provided below) as well as gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

Te Taunaki results indicate that rainbow communities make up 9.4% of Public Service staff, and that the experience of working in the Public Service can be less positive for some people within these communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The information collected for rainbow communities in Te Taunaki followed the Stats NZ standards for sex, gender, sexual identity, and for variations of sex characteristics.

The experiences of people of diverse sexual identities are the focus of this particular report, with further publications in this series looking at transgender and intersex public servants, and gender identity. Please note that those people who responded ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Prefer not to say’ to the survey question on sexual identity were not included in this analysis and neither were those who did not respond to the question or provided a response that was outside of scope or unidentifiable.

### **Sexual identity**

A person’s sexual identity is how they think of their own sexuality and which terms they identify with. In Te Taunaki, 91.2% of respondents identified as heterosexual or straight, with 4.3% identifying as bisexual, 2.1% as gay and 1.5% as lesbian. 1.0% identified as another sexual identity (referred to as ‘other sexual identities’ in this report) and consists of those who answered the open ended ‘Other’ option in the sexual identity question. Examples of written responses include asexual, pansexual, and biromantic.

This proportion of sexual minorities (8.8% total) is considerably larger than in the New Zealand adult population. For example, the [June 2020 report](#) from Stats NZ using information from the Household Economic Survey (HES) reported that 3.7% of people identified with a sexual minority: 1.2% gay or lesbian, 1.7% bisexual, and 0.8% with another sexual identity.

The higher proportion of sexual minorities in Te Taunaki may be due to a number of reasons. For example, CARN’s engagement in developing and promoting Te Taunaki may have encouraged a greater proportion of people in rainbow communities to take part. Also, the fact it was an online survey compared with the HES being conducted via in-person interviews or that the questions were worded slightly differently may have resulted in slightly different responses.<sup>2</sup> Further, those eligible for the HES were those 15 years old and over in the selected households, compared with the Public Service of working age. These different aspects may alter the likelihood of an individual to self-

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<sup>2</sup> The HES questionnaire asks ‘Which option below best describes how you think of yourself? 1. Heterosexual or straight 2. Gay or lesbian 3. Bisexual 4. Other 5. Don’t know 6. Prefer not to say. The survey is carried out using a fair statistical selection method where every household in the country has a known chance of being included to participate in the survey. Respondents are 15 years or older and live in the selected New Zealand household. The question in Te Taunaki asks ‘Which of the following do you identify as?’ Heterosexual or straight, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Other – Please specify, Don’t know, Prefer not to answer.

identify and so any comparisons between Te Taunaki and other sources in this report need to be considered with these potential differences in mind.

Te Taunaki gave respondents opportunity to identify what their 'agency/department do to make you feel more comfortable about being yourself at work?'. There was also an opportunity in Te Taunaki to identify if there was 'anything else about your experience of working for the New Zealand Public Service you would like to comment on?'. Of those identified as of sexual minorities, a total of 2,512 responses were given across the two questions and these comments covered a broad range of work topics. In this report, we have included quotes and summaries of the comments from public servants of various sexual identities where they related to the topics being covered.



# Section One: Demographics of different sexual identities in the Public Service

## Age

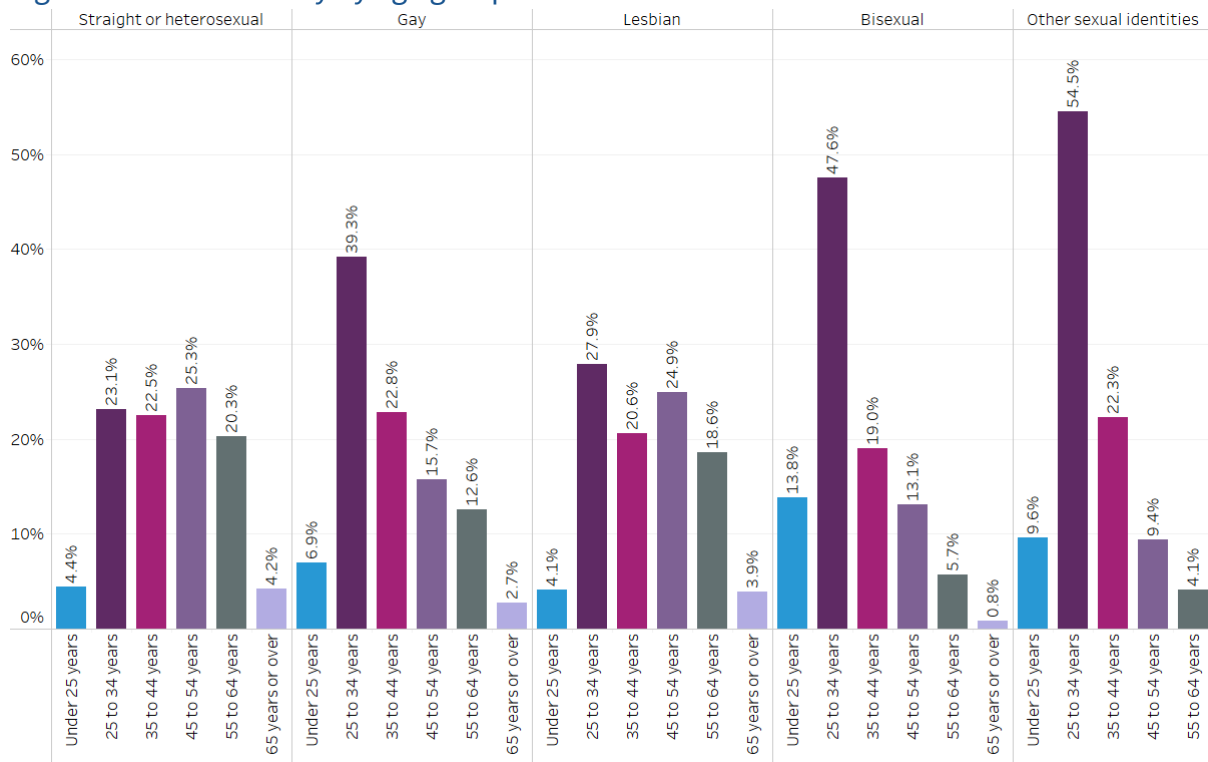
All of the sexual identity minority groups in the Public Service tended to be younger than their heterosexual colleagues. This is similar to what is seen in Aotearoa’s LGBT+ population overall ([Stats NZ](#)). Gay and bisexual public servants and those of ‘other sexual identities’ had noticeably larger proportions in the 25 to 34 age group and the only sexual minority that had an age distribution close to the overall pattern was lesbian public servants.

“It is hard to be a young person in the public sector. The expectations and rights of young workers are not often clearly laid out and there are few training opportunities that are specifically targeted towards young people.” - Bisexual public servant

### How to read the charts in this report

The charts in this report show the way public servants of various sexual identities are distributed across groups in various key areas such as demographics, qualifications, and feelings of inclusion. This means that for each section of the graph, the different coloured bars will show what proportion of public servants of each sexual identity are in that group so that comparisons can be made. For example, in Figure 1 below, the light blue bar shows the proportion of public servants of each sexual identity that are under 25 years of age, the dark purple bar shows the next age group, 25 to 34 years, for each of the sexual identities and so on. This shows that the smallest proportions of each group are in the youngest and oldest age groups and there is a noticeable spike in the 25 to 34 years age group for each of the sexual minorities except for lesbians.

Figure 1: Sexual identity by age groups



### Ethnicity<sup>3</sup>

The proportion of minority sexual identities varied by ethnicity, with lower figures in Asian (6.8% of sexual minorities), Pacific (4.7%), and Other ethnicities (0.9%) compared with straight or heterosexual public servants. Proportions were higher (above average) in Māori (18.3%), European (85.6%), and MELAA (2.0%).

“Do more to be inclusive of the LGBTQI+ community network wise. Be more friendly and offer more support to younger professionals and also have a more diverse workplace (i.e. areas related to working with Māori throughout the business have a noticeable lack of Māori identifying staff).” – Bisexual public servant

“I approve of my agency's commitment to Tikanga Maori, BIPOC and LBGT communities, this allows me to be myself at work. Overall I am interested in staying in the public service.” - Demisexual public servant

<sup>3</sup> Respondents could select multiple ethnicities and so percentage totals will not sum to 100.

Figure 2: Ethnicities by straight or heterosexual and sexual minorities

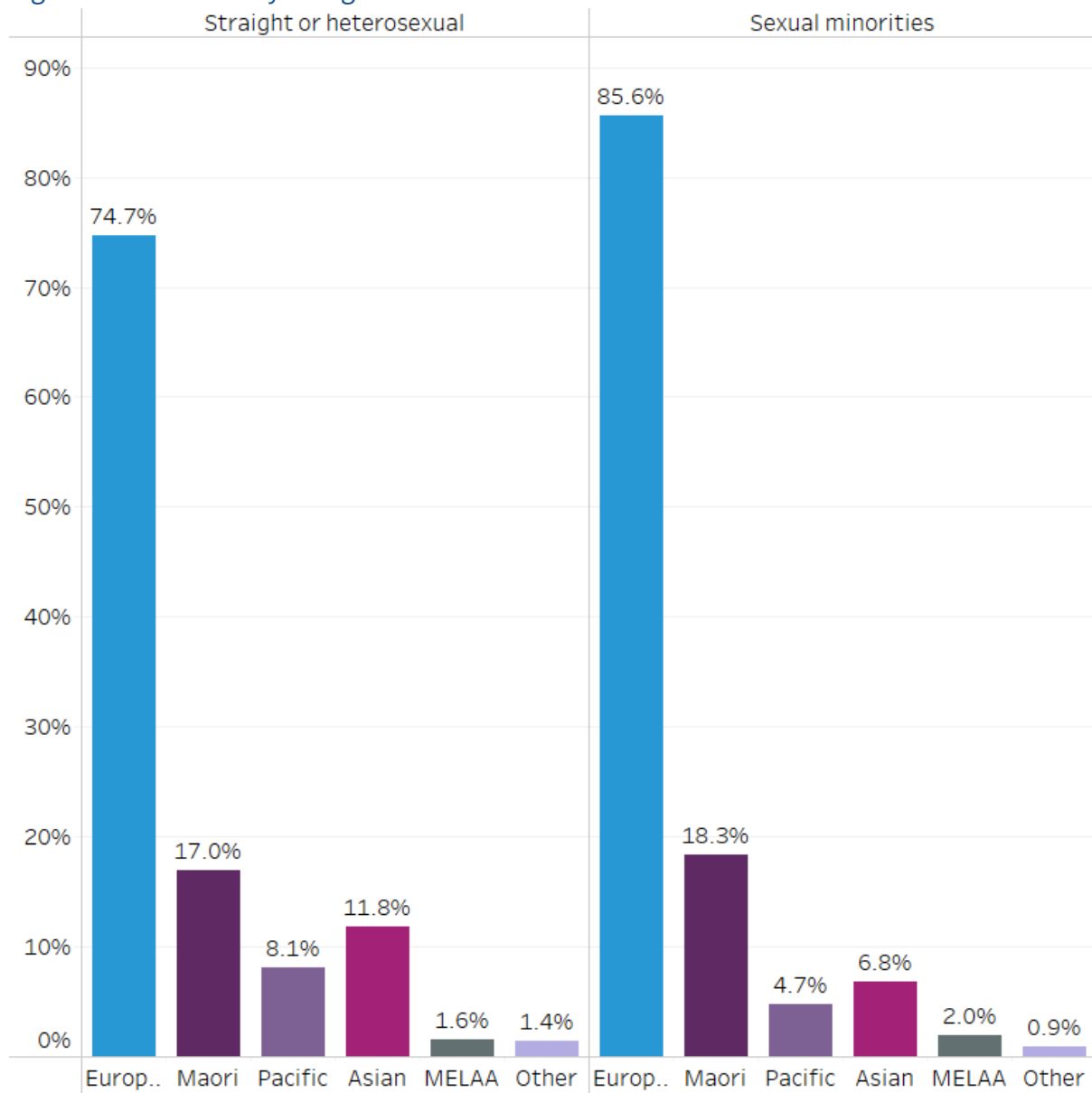
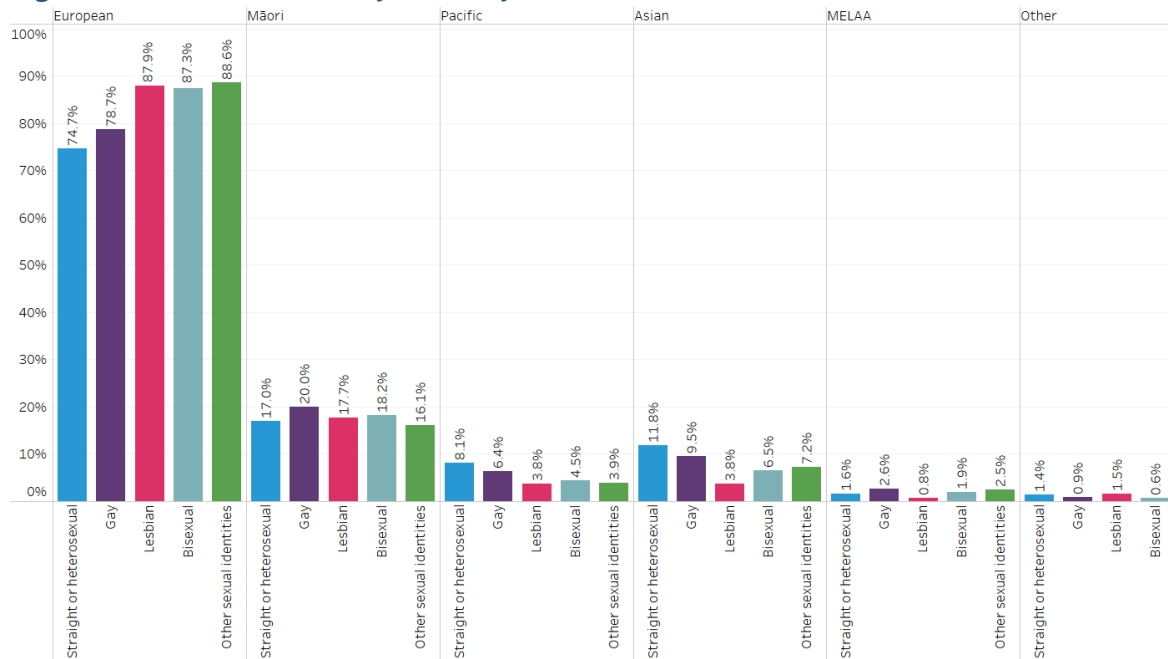


Figure 3: Sexual identities by ethnicity



### Region

The Wellington region was identified by Stats NZ in 2020 as having the highest proportion of LGBT+ people in New Zealand relative to its population, a finding that was also echoed in Te Taunaki with 58% of sexual minority public servants working in Wellington, compared to 44.3% of their straight or heterosexual colleagues. The regions with the next largest proportions of sexual minority public servants across New Zealand were Auckland (13.2%) and Canterbury (7.8%).

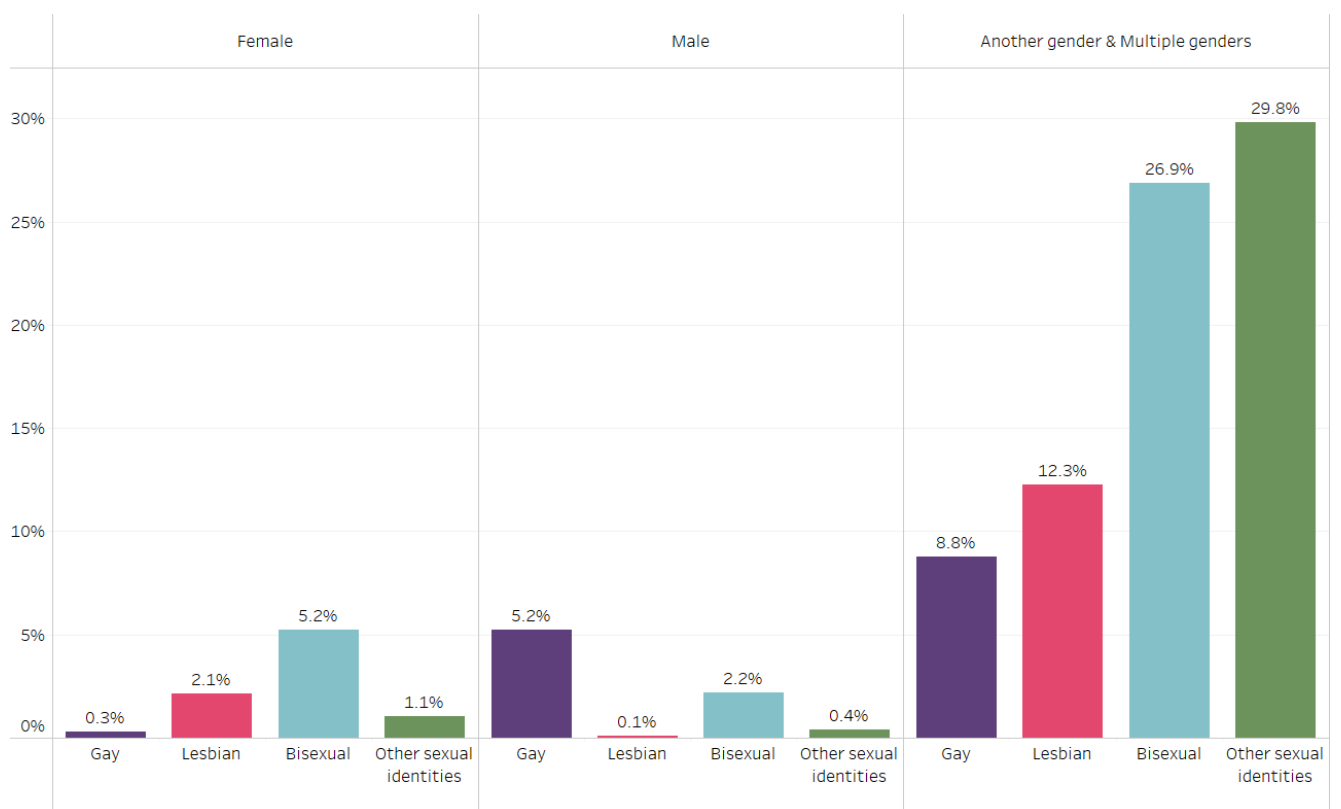
Another way of looking at the results is by the proportion of the Public Service working in each region who are sexual minorities. On average, this was 8.8% across all regions; in Wellington, sexual minorities made up 11.3% of public servants, 5.6% of whom were bisexual, 2.6% gay, 1.6% lesbian, and 1.4% of ‘other sexual identities’. The proportion of sexual minority staff across all other regions combined was 6.8%, with the next two largest regions – Auckland and Canterbury – having respectively 6.9% and 7.3% of staff in a sexual minority.

### Intersection with gender identity

As well as sexual identity, respondents were asked about their gender identity in Te Taunaki. People were able to select as many of the gender options that were applicable and these were coded to male, female, another gender, and multiple genders.<sup>4</sup>

The largest proportion of sexual minorities amongst females was those who were also bisexual (5.2% of females), those who were gay amongst males (5.2% of males), and those who were of 'other sexual identities' amongst the combined another and multiple genders group (29.8% of another or multiple genders).

Figure 4: Gender identities by minority sexual identities



<sup>4</sup> People could also choose to skip the question or select 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to answer'. People with these responses were excluded from this analysis.

### **Intersection with disability**

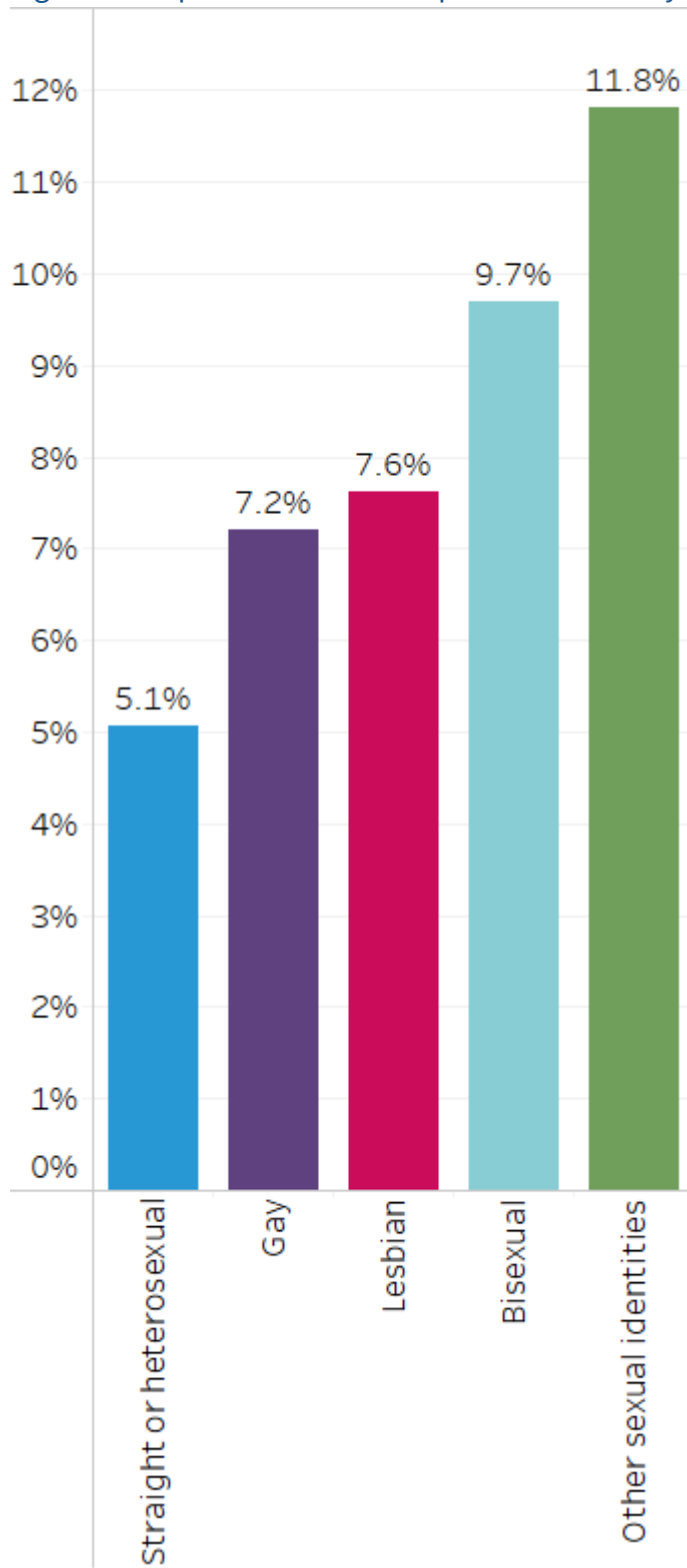
In general, a higher proportion of public servants with minority sexual identities reported a disability than did straight or heterosexual public servants (9.0% compared to 5.1%).<sup>5</sup>

This is true across each of the sexual minorities individually, but the largest proportion of disabled public servants was for those of 'other sexual identities' (11.8%).

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<sup>5</sup> Te Taunaki used the Washington Group Short Set of Questions to measure disability. These are an internationally valid and reliable way of collecting disability information but they do not capture all disabilities so underestimate prevalence.

Figure 5: Proportion of disabled public servants by sexual identities



## Section Two: Occupations, leadership, and remuneration

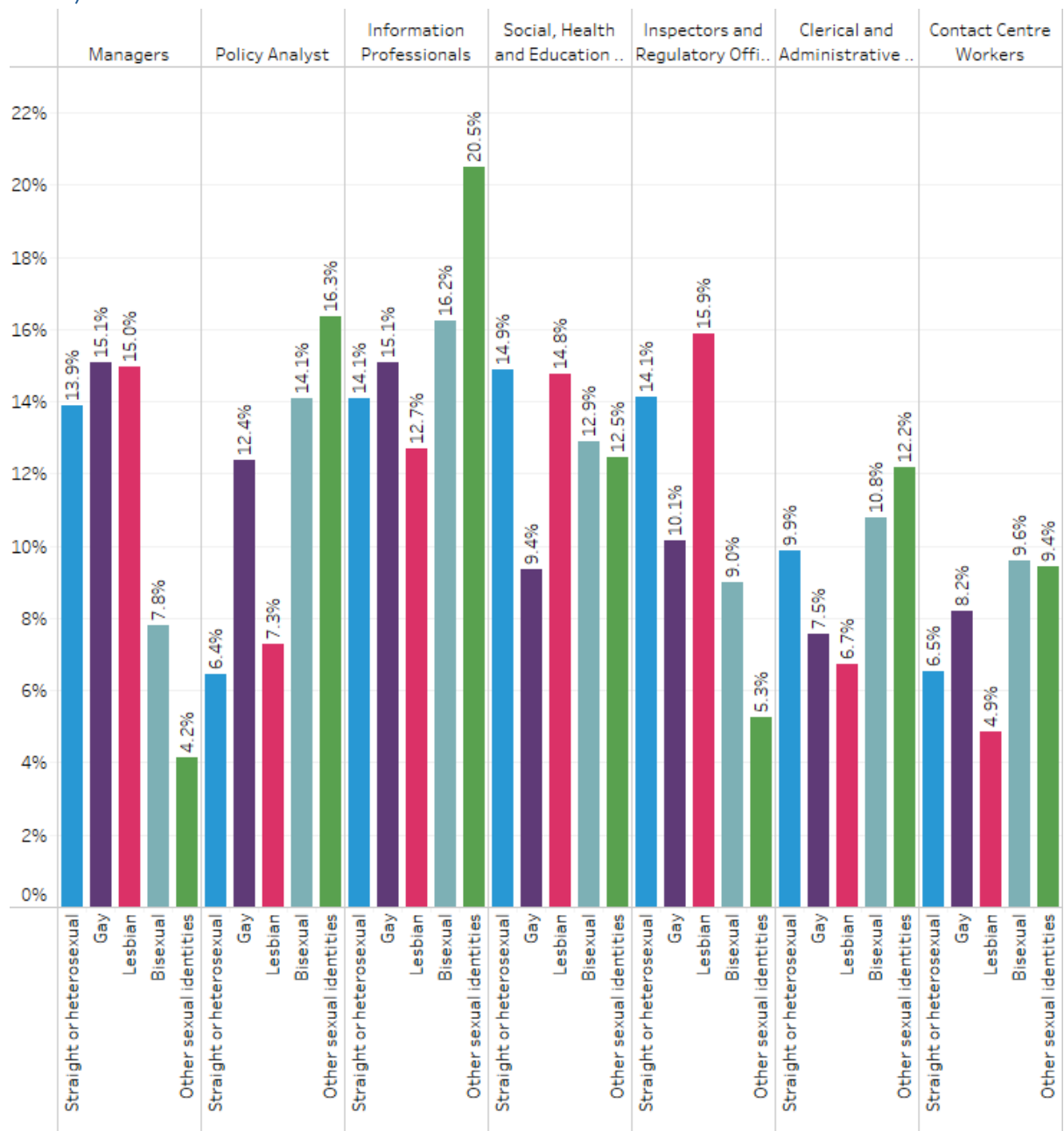
### Occupations

When it came to the distribution of sexual identities by occupations of public servants with varying sexual identities,

- Similar proportions of gay and lesbian staff were Managers (15.1% and 15.0% respectively) as for straight or heterosexual staff (13.9%)
- Smaller proportions of lesbian (7.3%) or straight or heterosexual (6.4%) public servants were Policy Analysts than those who were of ‘other sexual identities’ (16.3%), bisexual (14.1%) or gay (12.4%) public servants
- Those public servants of ‘other sexual identities’ had the highest proportion of Information Professionals (20.5%)
- 9.4% of gay public servants were Social, Health and Education Workers – the smallest proportion compared to the other sexual identities (14.9% of straight or heterosexual, 14.8% of lesbian and 12.9% of bisexual public servants and 12.5% of those with ‘other sexual identities’)
- 15.9% of lesbian public servants were Inspectors and Regulatory Officers, the highest proportion compared to the other sexual identities (14.1% of straight or heterosexual, 10.1% of gay, 9.0% of bisexual public servants and 5.3% of those with ‘other sexual identities’).



Figure 6: Sexual identities by a selection of occupations (smaller occupational groups excluded)



### Leadership

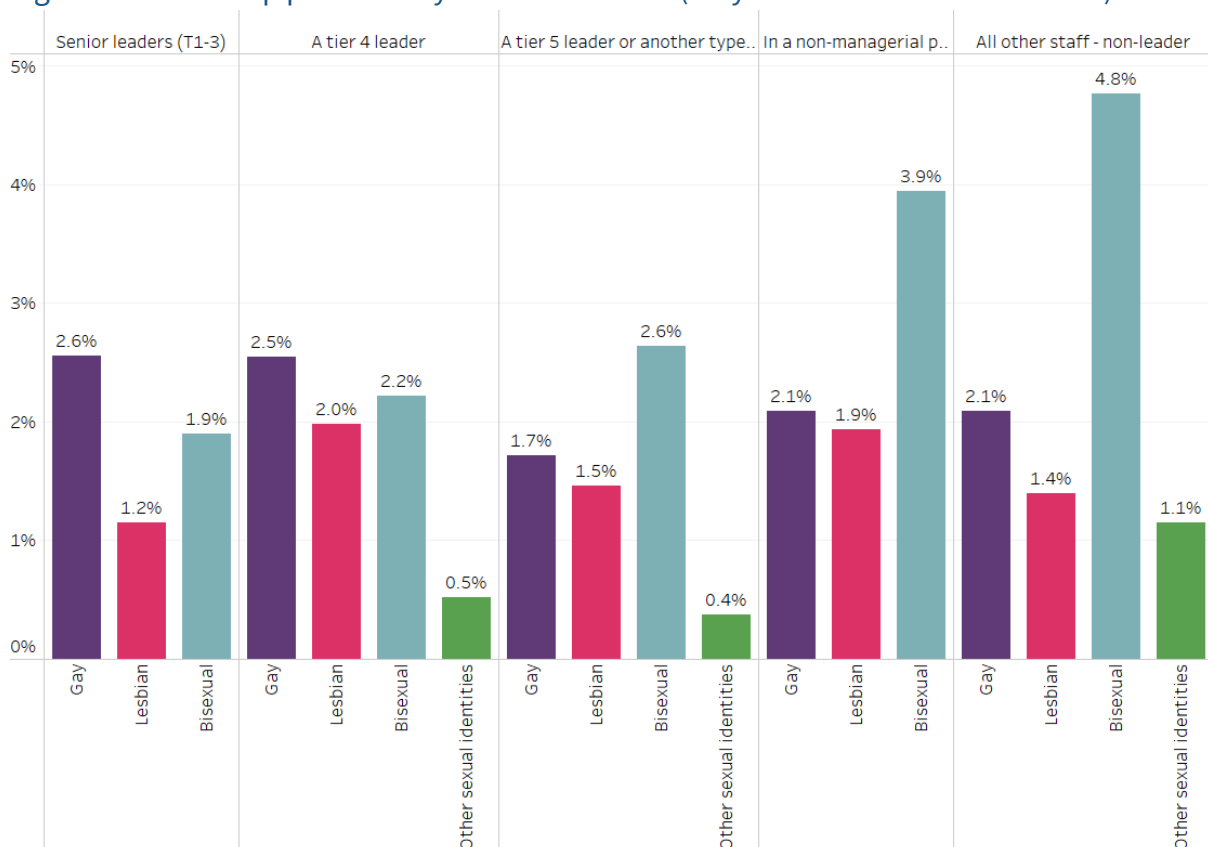
In terms of representation through leadership, 2.6% of senior leaders (tiers 1 to 3) were gay, slightly higher than their overall proportion in the Public Service (2.1%). Bisexual public servants were the most under-represented, with 1.9% of senior leaders, compared to 4.3% of public servants overall with this sexual identity. Of the sexual minority groups,

gay public servants also made up the highest proportion of tier 4 leaders with 2.5%, followed by bisexual public servants (2.2%) then lesbian public servants (2.0%). Bisexual public servants had the largest share for a sexual minority in a non-managerial leadership position (3.9% compared to 2.1% gay and 1.9% lesbian public servants).

The relationship between age and sexual identity may explain some of these discrepancies between management level and proportion of sexual minorities: age is significantly related to management level (managers are likely to be older)<sup>6</sup> while some sexual minorities (particularly bisexual and ‘other sexual identities’) are more likely to be reported by younger people. Therefore some sexual minorities may be less likely to be managers because they are younger on average.

“I think there is probably room for discussion about more diversity in leadership. Senior role models are important.” -Lesbian public servant

Figure 7: Leadership positions by sexual identities (only sexual minorities included)

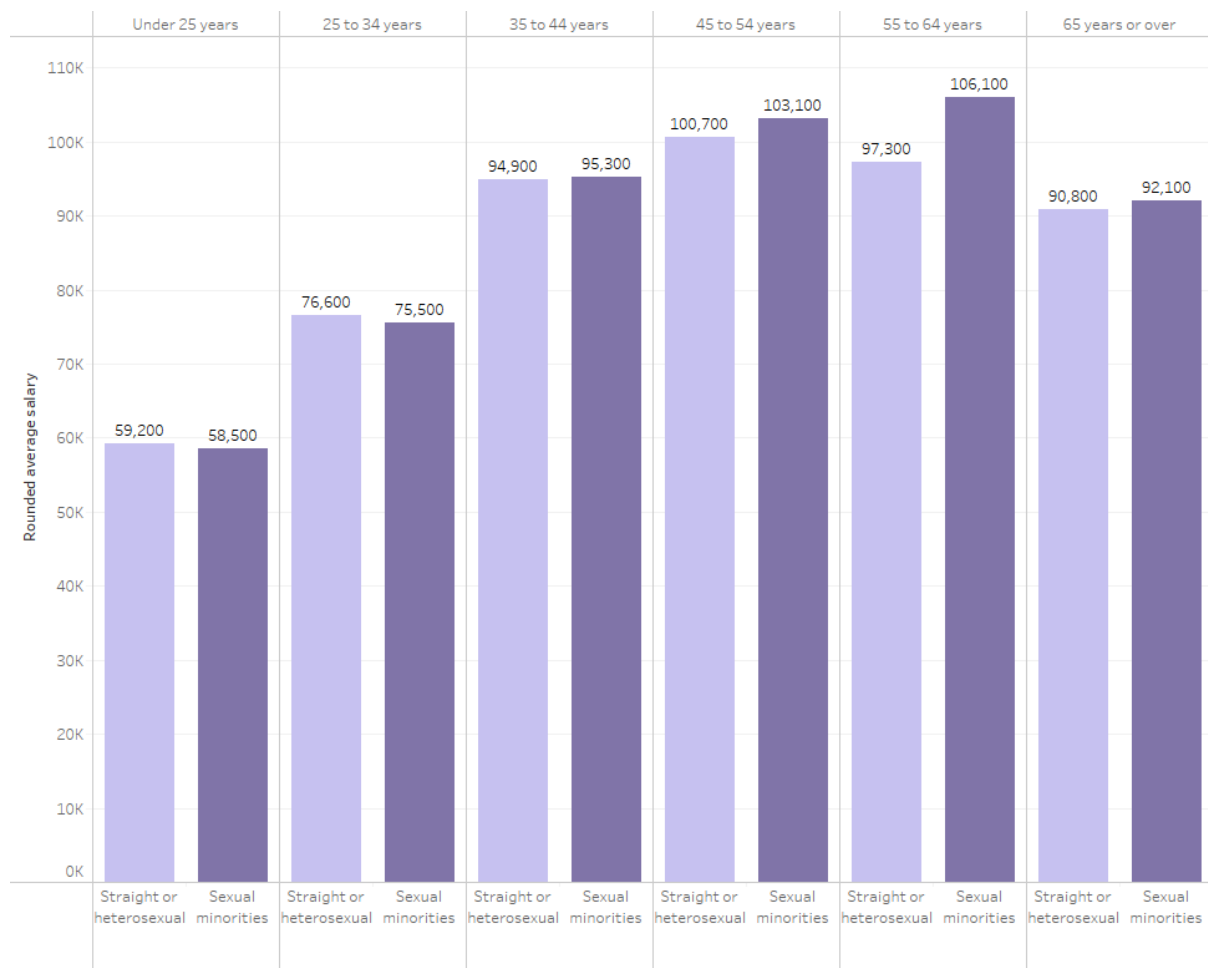


<sup>6</sup> See Age section of the Inclusion Deep Dive at [Feelings of inclusion for different groups and communities - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

## Remuneration

The average full-time equivalent annual salary for straight or heterosexual public servants in Te Taunaki was \$90,800, compared with \$85,000 for sexual minorities. However, once this was broken down further by age groups, the differences were much smaller and the average salary is actually higher for the minority groups across the older age bands.

Figure 8: Rounded mean salaries by straight or heterosexual vs sexual minorities and age group



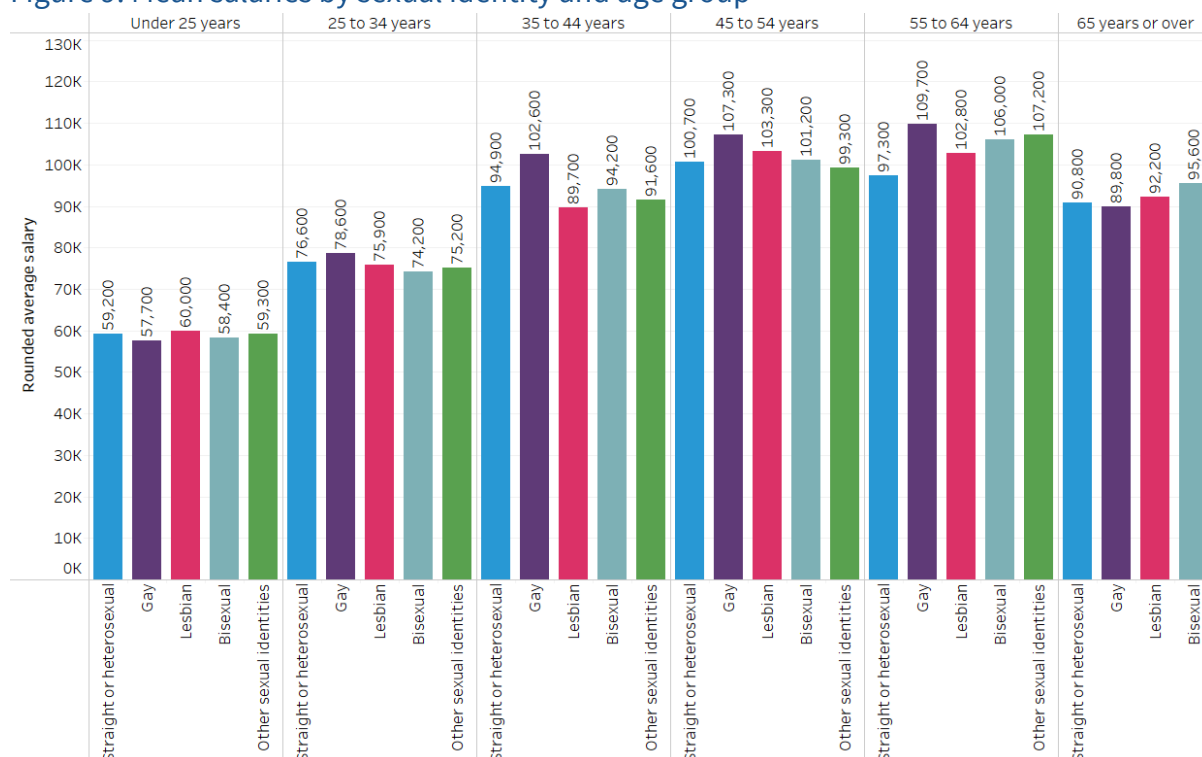
A similar age effect is also noted by [Stats NZ](#) in the 2021 Household Economic Survey (HES). Incomes tend to increase as people age and the LGBT+ community tend to be younger. Once the age effect on disposable incomes is adjusted for, sexual minorities had similar mean disposable income to heterosexual people in the New Zealand population.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For the figures on adjusted disposable income specific to Heterosexual vs Sexual Minorities, refer to Table 9 in the Stats NZ Excel Data Download on [LGBT+ population of Aotearoa: Year ended June 2021 | Stats NZ](#).

When looking at the sexual minorities separately, there are clear differences across the groups. Straight or heterosexual public servants in Te Taunaki had similar average pay (\$90,800) to gay (\$90,900) and lesbian public servants (\$90,500). Those with ‘other sexual identities’ had the lowest average pay (\$80,900) with bisexual public servants not far ahead (\$81,200).

Looking at this again by age, the differences in average salary across sexual identities in the younger age bands are relatively small and although there are varying patterns as age increases, gay public servants have the highest average salary across all age groups except the youngest (under 25 years) and oldest (65 years or older). These variations within age groups could be due to a number of reasons, including the intersection with other demographics (e.g. gender).

Figure 9: Mean salaries by sexual identity and age group



## Section Three: Reasons for joining and staying in the Public Service

The five most popular reasons given<sup>8</sup> by all of the sexual identities of public servants for being initially attracted to working in the Public Service were:

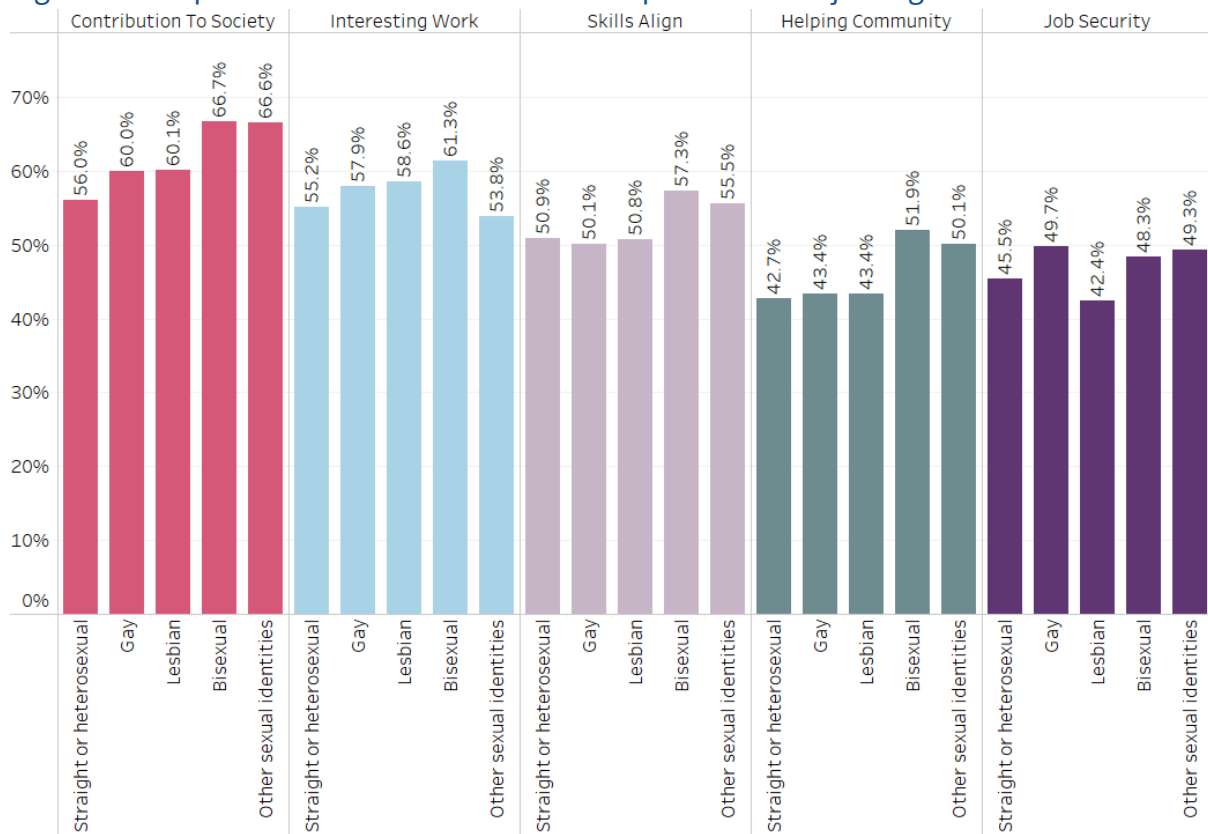
- It's work that contributes positively to society
- It's interesting work
- The work is aligned with their job skills, experience or training
- It's work that helps people in their community
- There's job security

Around two-thirds of public servants who were bisexual (66.7%) were attracted to working in the Public Service because it's work that contributes positively to society. This was a similar result to those of 'other sexual identities' (66.6%) and a higher proportion than for lesbian (60.1%), gay (60.0%), and straight or heterosexual public servants (56.0%).

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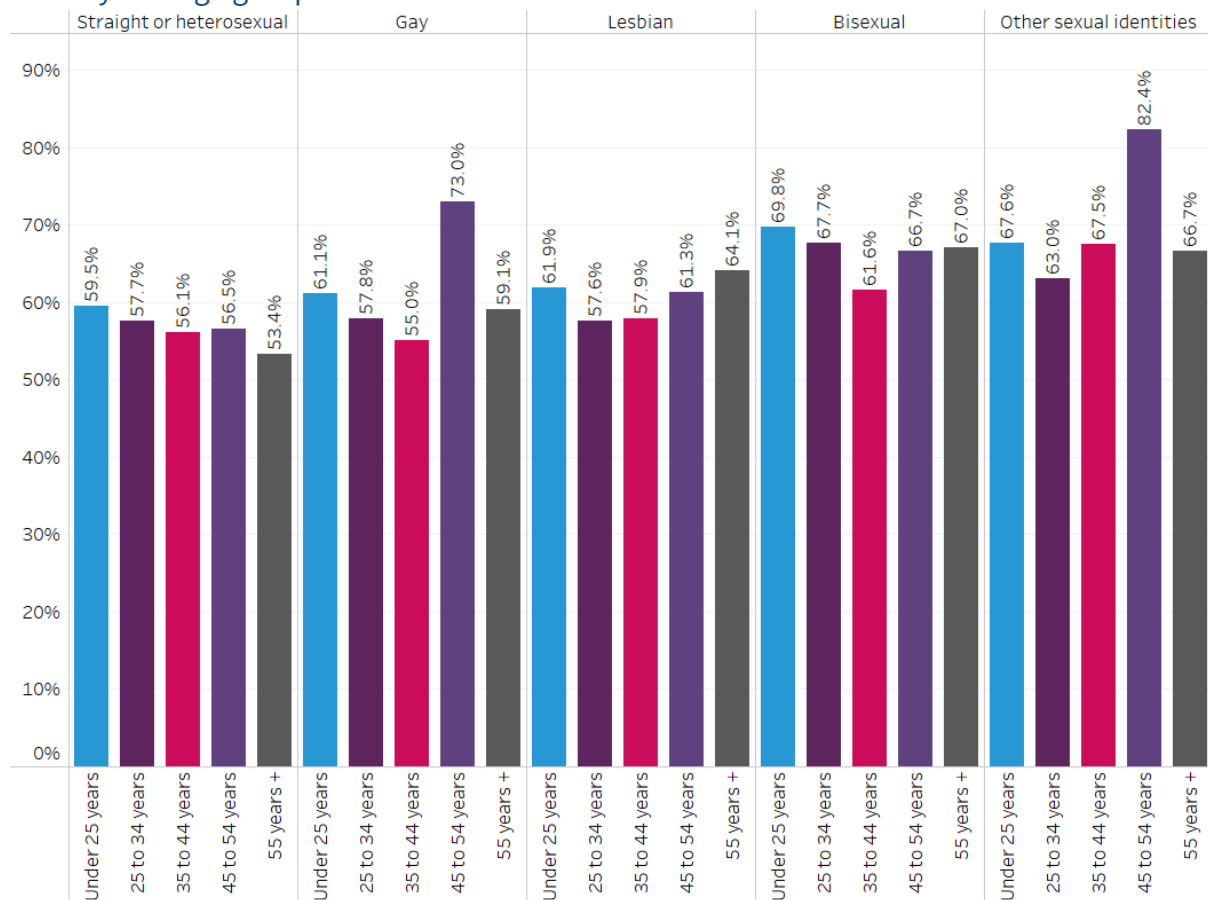
<sup>8</sup> Respondents could select as many of the reasons as they felt were applicable.

Figure 10: Proportions of sexual identities for top five reasons joining Public Service



Higher proportions of bisexual public servants also agreed that alignment with skills, experience or training, and work that helps people in their community were reasons why they were attracted to working in the Public Service.

Figure 11: Attraction to working in the Public Service for contribution to society by sexual identity and age group



This is another topic where responses appear to be related to age, as younger people were more likely to be attracted because it's work that contributes positively to society. As discussed above, people reporting their sexual identity as bisexual or 'other sexual identities' were likely to be younger on average than other identities, however in this case bisexual and 'other sexual identity' staff were consistently more likely than other sexual identities to value the contribution to society across nearly all age groups.

“My agency is at the forefront of helping New Zealanders and communities which I am passionate about.” - Bisexual public servant

“There are a lot of people who care passionately about making New Zealand a better place, and I love that. I love how my work doesn't just make shareholders richer.” - Asexual public servant

“Actively and intentionally recruit more LGBT+ staff, including by implementing a 'Rainbow Internship’” - Gay public servant

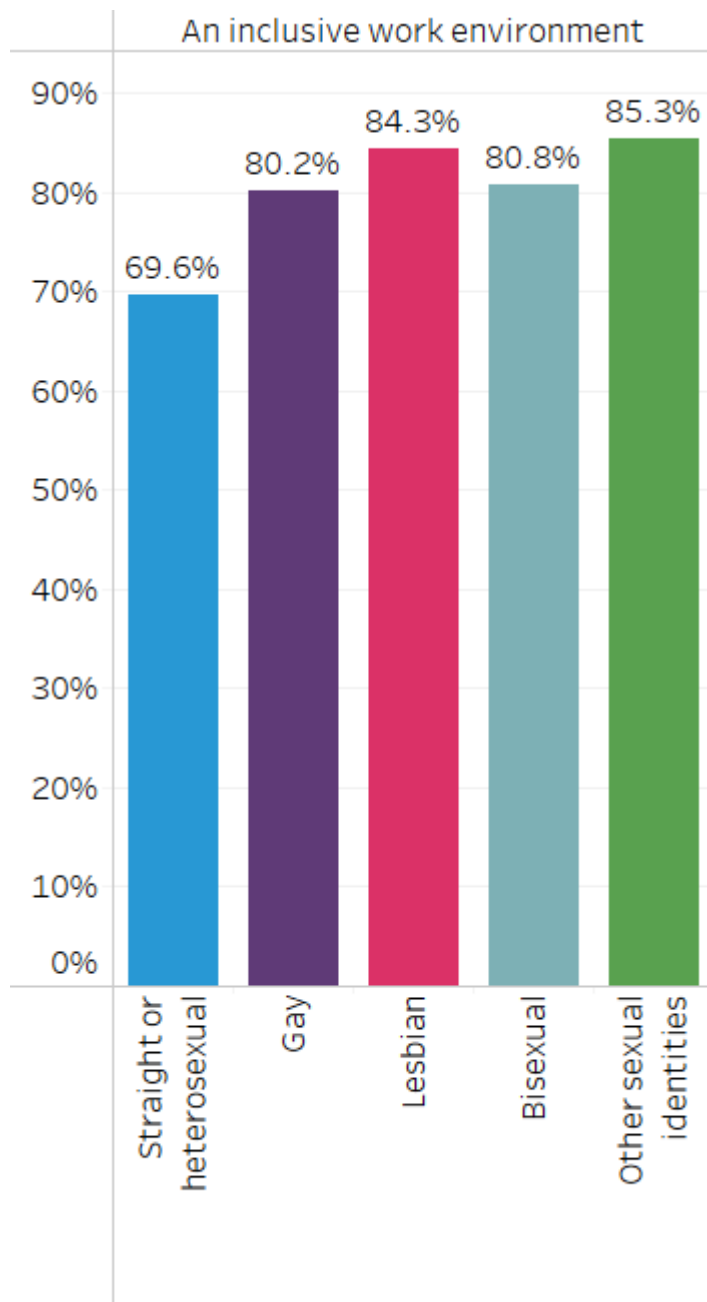
Looking at reasons to **stay** in the Public Service, the two strongest reasons across nearly all sexual identities were interesting work and work that contributes positively to society. The exception is the other sexual identities group who considered an inclusive work environment to be the second most important reason (ahead of interesting work). This was also the third strongest reason for all other minority sexual identities, who rated this as considerably more important than their straight colleagues (by at least ten percentage points), the most significant difference in any of the reasons to stay by sexual identity.

“After nearly 20 years, I see changes taking place that I feel are for the better in our Public Service. It is a better place than when I started. It needs to be diverse, and at all levels, to best reflect who it serves. I am pleased to be working at a time where I see more diversity; better support for flexible and remote working, and recognition of the skills that can be brought in from outside of a physical presence in Wellington. I have also valued efforts to increase system leadership and to tackle important issues from bullying to pay equity. It is a place where I come as I am, to make a difference, with people who like having me around, have encouraged my secondments elsewhere in the public sector, and want to do the right thing. That keeps me here, people and work that matter.” -Lesbian public servant

“I choose to work in the public sector because I care about my country and want to help it improve.” - Gay public servant



Figure 12: Proportion agreeing that an inclusive environment is a reason to stay in the Public Service



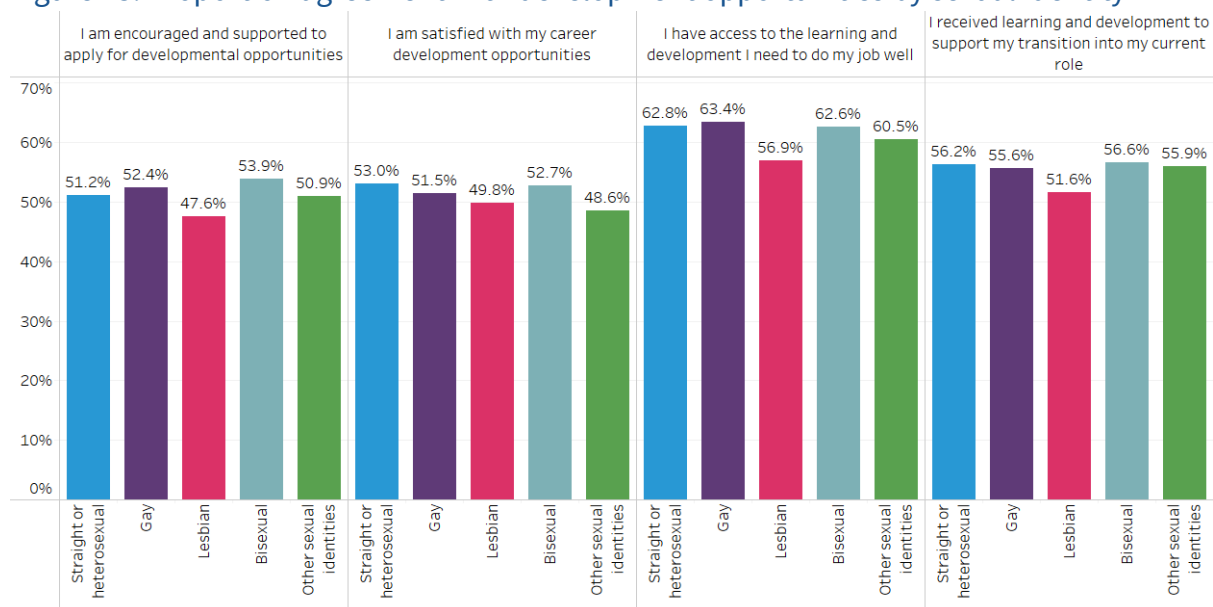
## Section Four: Development opportunities and satisfaction with work

### Development opportunities

Lesbian public servants reported a slightly less positive experience in relation to development opportunities than other sexual identities. No group was consistently most positive and differences between groups were not large.

“The public service encourages people to move around roles regularly in order to have sufficient pay and career progression. This is very inefficient use of staffing/resources and needs to be addressed. I was told that there was no further development I needed to move to a senior position, but that there was no process to move me to a senior position, despite there being space within my team. I now am moving to a senior role in another department. I will have to relearn new systems and content - despite being happy in my current team.” - Bisexual public servant

Figure 13: Proportion agreement with development opportunities by sexual identity



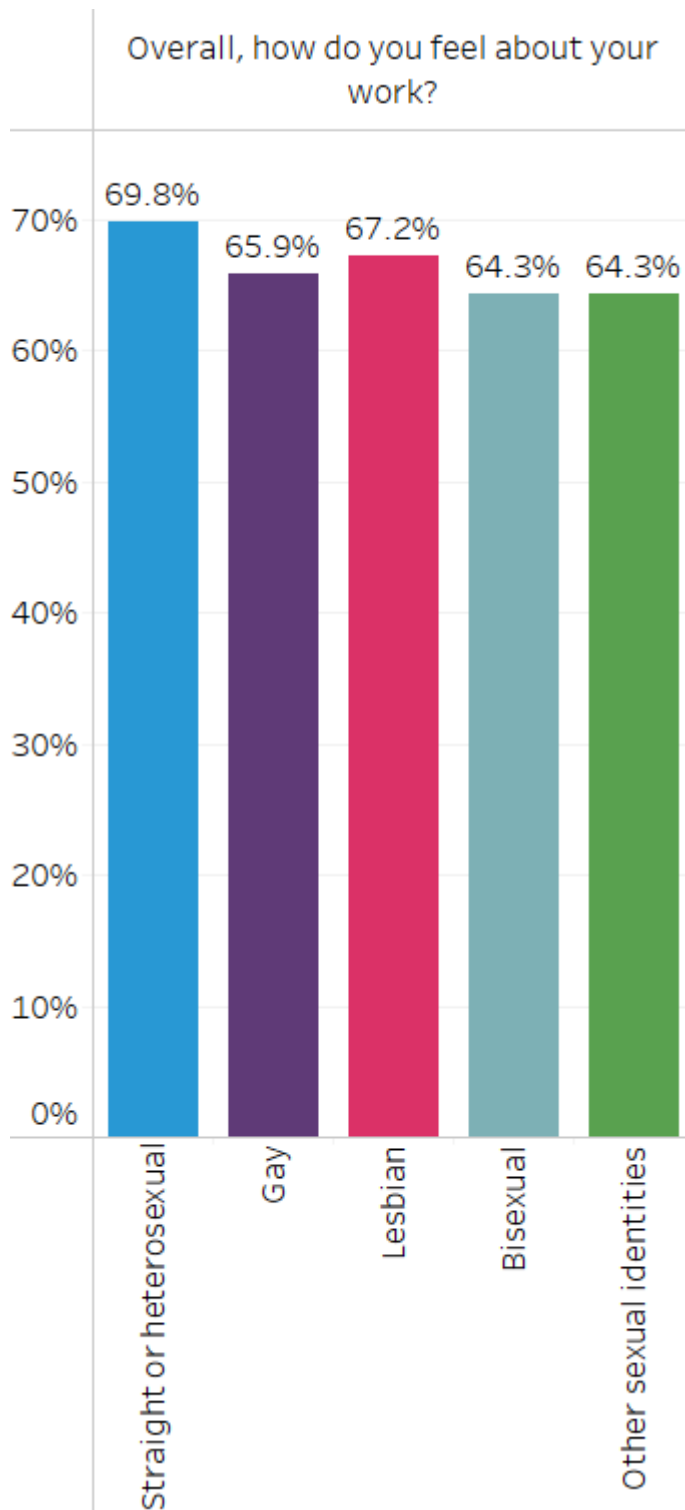
### Satisfaction with work

There were lower levels of overall satisfaction with work amongst the sexual minorities (65.1% combined) compared to straight or heterosexual public servants (69.8%), although the differences across individual sexual identities were not large.

“There is no open support for LGBTQ+ people at work that I know of and sometimes my ideas for supporting our customers of diverse gender or

sexual orientations isn't followed up or acknowledged.” - Pansexual public servant

Figure 14: Work satisfaction by sexual identity



## Section Five: Inclusion

### Feelings of inclusion

There were not consistent patterns of response across all the inclusion questions by sexual identity – for example there wasn't much difference between identities in feeling accepted as a valued member of their team (ranging from 77.3% of 'other sexual identities' to 81.5% of lesbian staff). However, the reported experience was often less positive for people of 'other sexual identities' than for their colleagues.

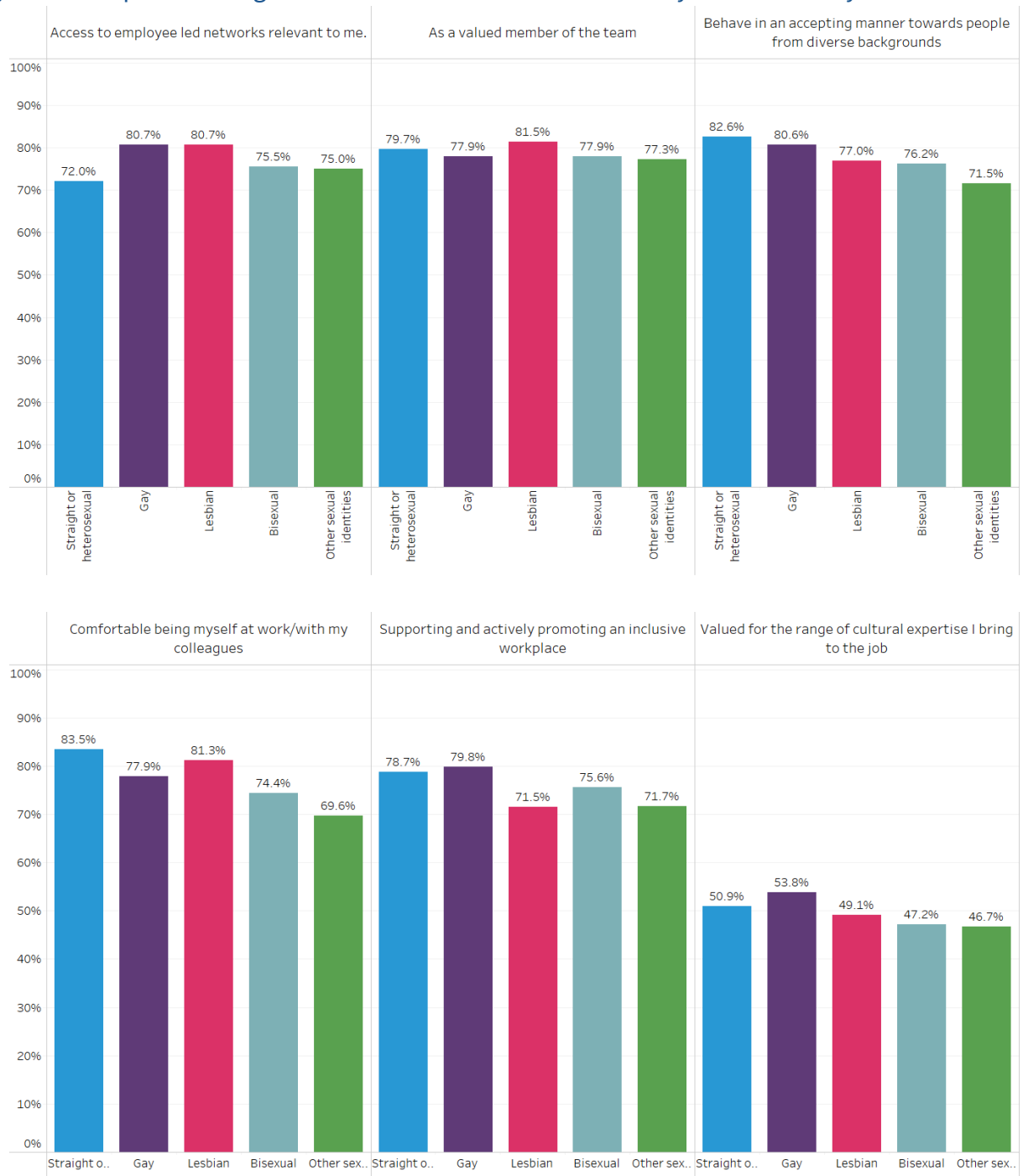
In particular, staff of 'other sexual identities' were least likely to report feeling comfortable being themselves at work/with their colleagues (69.6% compared to 82.8% overall), and also least likely to agree that people in their workgroup behaved in an accepting manner towards people from diverse backgrounds (71.5% compared to 82.0% overall). Differences for the other sexual minorities were not as pronounced, but straight or heterosexual staff were the most positive in both cases.

People of all minority sexual identities felt they had greater access to Employee-led Networks (ELNs) than their straight or heterosexual colleagues. For example, 80.7% of both gay and lesbian public servants felt they had access to ELNs, while only 72.0% of straight or heterosexual staff agreed.

“As a member of the rainbow community and having grown up in a time when discrimination was much more common, I would like people, especially leaders to behave appropriately and not just use 'accepting rhetoric'. Non-rainbow people are still quite oblivious to the cumulative affects of discrimination and think that marriage equality resolved everything. I have had one leader use the joking term 'people like you' on two occasions... People should use 'banter' very carefully when it runs the risk of othering or offending the recipient.” – Gay public servant

A lower proportion of lesbian and 'other sexual identity' public servants (71.5% and 71.7% respectively) agreed that their agency was supporting and promoting an inclusive workplace compared to other sexual identities. Gay staff were the most likely to report their agency was doing so (79.8%).

Figure 15: Proportion of agreement with inclusion statements by sexual identity



Te Kawa Mataaho has published an in-depth look into [inclusion](#) in the Public Service, which includes looking at it by demographics such as sexual identity.

“We actually have a wider problem around retention, particularly retention of young staff, Māori and Pasifika staff (of which we have very few to begin with) and staff from other diverse backgrounds. I don't feel

100% comfortable being myself at work because of the microaggressions I get sometimes from other staff questioning what I wear, how I speak etc.” - Gay public servant

### **Inclusion by region**

Sexual minority public servants in Wellington typically reported a more inclusive experience than their equivalents in other areas of the country.<sup>9</sup> For example, sexual minorities working in Wellington were most likely to agree that their colleagues behave in an accepting manner towards people from diverse backgrounds (78.5%), compared to 77.1% in the Auckland region, 72.7% across the rest of the North Island, 76.2% in Canterbury, and 70.6% in the rest of the South Island.

“I feel that things are actively promoted at a national office level and they also have support groups or network groups for various 'cultures' yet there is no willingness or encouragement to promote and allow equal time in the regions. One can be quite jealous of what is on offer within the Wellington region.” -Lesbian public servant

### **Barriers and suggestions to improve inclusion**

In the open-ended comments, there were many similarities in barriers/suggestions for improving inclusion across sexual identities. This included a lack of safety for some to be ‘out’ in their work environment because of concerns about how their colleagues would treat them. Visible support by leaders, training for staff, and an active rainbow employee-led network were all proactive steps that agencies could take to improve inclusion for rainbow staff members.

“Actively engage with and listen to rainbow staff about their experiences in the workplace and then take actions to implement the feedback. Learn from other agencies about how they make inclusive environments for queer staff e.g. gender neutral bathrooms, no dress code and training for staff and managers. Leaders in [Agency] do not champion rainbow staff issues or concerns and always pass the buck. Advocacy falls on network volunteers with little time/power.” – Bisexual public servant

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<sup>9</sup> The region information collected in Te Taunaki was aggregated to ensure there were sufficient numbers to carry out this part of the analysis. The areas used for comparison were: Wellington region, Auckland region, Rest of North Island, Canterbury and Rest of South Island.

Some people had experienced hurtful comments/jokes/banter. Some raised issues with bullying, either from people in leadership positions or colleagues.

“Support its Rainbow Network and inclusiveness for the rainbow community e.g. making it clear that the language people use matters. Encouraging people to use gender neutral terms like 'partner' rather than 'husband/wife'. To not accept people using 'gay' as a negative adjective in the workplace.” – Lesbian public servant

“The agency is full of bullies, especially in management. I've seen them pick on peoples ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation and health conditions and this generates a place of mistrust. Complaints about bullies are not dealt with. Bullies have the power and people who don't 'fit the mould' are key targets....The LGBTQI network at [Agency] was strongly encouraging members to come out to their teams, ignoring the risks that the people may face if they do come out to their teams. What may work in one team doesn't work in others.” – Lesbian public servant

“I feel like I have to suppress myself to a degree and be careful what I say. This is largely because as a gay man I am concerned people will have an unfair bias against me for no reason. I think the [Agency] could do more to showcase queer people in leadership and proactively state they will not tolerate discrimination against queer people in the workplace.” – Gay public servant

“I have had issues of homophobic jokes and behaviour aimed at me and when I have complained I have been ignored and basically told to find a new desk so I don't have to be near them. The onus for this should NOT be on me and it should have been followed up to make sure it doesn't happen again. There are still people I am uncomfortable and anxious being around at work.” – Lesbian public servant

“I'm not openly queer at work and I'm aware of my 'passing' privilege. I feel like keeping my romantic/outside work life relatively private and quiet is a good approach for appearing more professional. Many of my colleagues are heterosexual married people with children which makes me feel less comfortable about being open at work. I think in general it is a very accepting workplace for people who are gay or lesbian but maybe not as accepting of people who are queer and outside the bounds of those categories.” – Queer public servant

The need for more training about rainbow communities was a common suggestion for improving inclusion.

“Diversity training around rainbow issues. Sometimes it feels like it's a taboo subject to talk about when people incorrectly discuss issues relevant to the rainbow community (i.e. gender identity).” – Gay public servant

“Active diversity training regarding the LGBT+ community, covering topics such as gender and sexuality. I find that my colleagues are not always tactful.” – Bisexual public servant

“Promote understandings of sexuality that go beyond monosexual (gay/lesbian). While I am comfortable expressing that I have a same sex partner, I don't think there is much understanding of bisexuality and most people just continually assume that I am lesbian. Talking about different gender partners in my past can lead to intrusive questions or confusion.” – Bisexual public servant

Those who worked in agencies that did not have an ELN for rainbow staff expressed a desire for one. Some agencies had networks but they weren't always as active, visible, or geographically spread as people wanted.

“Our employee-led networks don't tend to do much, if anything at all. I'm unsure if it's due to a lack of time or a lack of people or lack of funding. I would feel more comfortable being openly out as a queer woman at work if they had more of a presence.” - Bisexual public servant

“Would be nice to have more presence of the Rainbow Community and/or mental awareness.” – Asexual public servant

“The Rainbow Network primarily works out of Wellington. As someone based in the regions, there is little way of networking with other people in the rainbow community.” – Pansexual public servant

Visible support by agency leadership, such as celebrating pride month, was a valued show of support. The need for more diverse leadership was also raised.



“Have some of our top leaders come out as LGBTI or at least show they are talking about events like pride and encouraging participation.” - Sexual identity not labelled

“More LGBTQ+ friendly acknowledgements/signage.” – Bisexual public servant

There were some areas that people found to be less accepting, either because they were in a more remote area or because their part of their organisation was less accepting.

“[My] department is not as aware or inclusive about gender, LGBTQ issues as other parts of the organisation. It is still a male dominated culture where asking for help is seen as a weakness. Still has a 'toughen up' approach. Our senior managers share with us [Agency]'s great policies around gender diversity, LGBTQ, issues and mental health issues but it does not get down to the grass roots level.” – Bisexual public servant

## Conclusion and next steps

The Public Service has had a dedicated diversity and inclusion programme in place since 2017. Significant progress has been made across the system, with the Public Service more diverse now than ever before. With strong leadership commitment to ensuring diversity and inclusion across the system, agencies are more focused and connected as they plan and deliver a range of diversity and inclusion initiatives at pace.

The data we have tells us that the diversity of the Public Service workforce is increasing, and most public servants feel included in their workplace. But alongside this, it also shows that people from some communities within our workforce, do not. This cannot be overlooked.

Papa Pounamu continues to develop its work programme based on Te Taunaki and deep dive data and insights (and new insights as they arise). Te Kawa Mataaho also continues to work in partnership with agencies to increase the quality of the data collected and our employee-led networks to help understand it. High-quality data and insights are critical to understanding public servants and their experiences, where progress is being made and where our collective focus should be.

Over a two-year period from 2023-2025, the Papa Pounamu co-leads and Te Kawa Mataaho will work with CARN, Rainbow Chief Executives (i.e. chief executives who champion rainbow inclusion across the system) and agencies on a focused approach to rainbow inclusion.

With a strong system foundation in place, we are well positioned to place collective focus on inclusion for public servants from these communities. Papa Pounamu is committed to supporting agencies to collect and understand their workforce data and to planning and delivering initiatives to effect change.

This approach will focus on increasing the quality and breadth of rainbow data, increasing the numbers and visibility of rainbow public servants and leaders and removing inequities and barriers to inclusion for rainbow public servants. We are ambitious and committed to doing the work we need to, in collaboration with our cross-agency ELNs.

Te Taunaki 2024 will give us more data and insights and enables us to measure the progress we make.

For more information:

- [Papa Pounamu priority areas](#)
- [Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021](#)
- [Te Taunaki Public Service Census: Inclusion deep dive](#)
- [Workforce data](#)
- [Cross Agency Rainbow Network](#)

- [Employee Led Networks](#)
- [Rainbow inclusive language guide](#)
- [Transitioning and Gender Affirmation in the New Zealand Public Service](#)
- [Pronoun use](#)