HASANZ Health and Safety Professionals Survey

How businesses see New Zealand health and safety professionals and how we see ourselves.

Contents

About HASANZ

"Trusted advisers for healthier and safer workplaces"

Established in September 2014, the Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ) is the national umbrella organisation for workplace health and safety professions.

Our member organisations are jointly committed to making New Zealand workplaces healthier and safer. We aim to lift the standard of health and safety advice and services in the workplace.

A priority is improving access to quality, reliable health and safety advice for businesses. We are currently developing an online national register of workplace health and safety professionals who meet required competency standards. The HASANZ Register is due to open for business in March 2018.

For more information go to www.hasanz.org.nz

Introduction

As workplace health and safety professionals we are on a journey and, like all journeys, it is important to take stock of where we are, where we are going and how we might get there. We have taken the opportunity to reflect on not only how we see ourselves, but how those who use the services of health and safety professionals see us in the light of their expectations.

As the peak body for workplace health and safety professionals in New Zealand, HASANZ is delighted to present the results of our first survey on the current state of the sector from both the demand and supply sides. Our focus is on lifting professional capability and increasing the sophistication of demand to help ensure that New Zealand workplaces are healthy and safe.

By partnering with PwC, we've been able to bring a huge amount of depth and breadth to this publication. Not only has this allowed us to understand the industry through our survey and workshops, it's allowed us to build a fuller picture of how health and safety is shaping the future of New Zealand businesses. This publication certainly hasn't been a small undertaking and we're very appreciative of their support.

We conducted the inaugural HASANZ Health and Safety Professionals Survey in July this year and expect to run it annually. The survey aims to increase understanding of the influence of workplace health and safety professionals in New Zealand from businesses' and health and safety professionals' points of view.

The excellent response from more than 700 people has given us a wealth of data to reflect on. The key themes to emerge from the survey were teased out by a series of focus groups hosted by PwC in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Thanks to all participants.

The survey results show that workplace health and safety professionals are in good heart, with 91% finding their profession rewarding and 72% believing they play a part in contributing to the performance of their client organisations.

One thing is clear; it's no longer enough for health and safety professionals to be just technical experts. Businesses also value softer skills, such as communication skills and expertise in effecting cultural and behavioural change. Businesses that have moved beyond the compliance level of maturity want advisers who understand how health and safety performance can support broader business objectives and can work at a strategic level.

The survey identifies a major area for improvement. Respondents highlight a significant gap around "what good looks like" when it comes to professional standards and service expectations.

The lack of clear standards impacts on recruitment and contracting practices, service expectations and satisfaction levels. If we're not clear about standards and expectations, how can we measure the effectiveness of our work? This also has a profound influence on the nature and quality of qualifications and training offered. It suggests a need for stronger engagement between health and safety professionals, educators, trainers, regulators and the business community to ensure access to a workforce that can meet current and future market needs.

The stringent registration standards required to list on the HASANZ Register of Workplace Health and Safety Professionals are an important part of the solution.

People must meet strict criteria relating to qualifications, experience, CPD, ethics, insurance and good character.

Agreeing recognised industry standards is essential and we expect that the first HASANZ Survey will be a benchmark to help measure progress in this area. One thing's for sure – it's just the start of the conversation.

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Key takeouts

34% had more than 15 years experience while 27% had less than 5 years experience

45% hold a health and safety related qualification , 78% were members of a professional body (half of which were NZISM)

75% of respondents enjoy what we do and see the career path as appealing.

58% of respondents think that training is sufficient

62% of respondents thought that the work we do has an impact on organisational culture

Best part of being a health and safety professional: variety, ability to influence and educate to bring positive changes, working with people, facing challenges to drive continuous improvement

Health and safety professionals understand their qualifications and certifications are important in seeking work.

53% say these qualifications and certifications are always or usually required

Who participated?

There were over 700 respondents – a fantastic response for the first HASANZ Survey. We wanted to hear not only from those who use the services of health and safety professionals but also, and most importantly, from those practising in the New Zealand environment. 81% of respondents were providing advice and services to organisations (professionals), while users of those services made up 19% of respondents.

Who responded to our survey?

Demand	19%	81%	Supply

In total 705 surveys were completed, the majority hailing from across New Zealand with a small number joining the domestic group from offshore (mainly Australia).

More than 50% of our respondents were over 50 years old and more than 80% over 40, reflecting a seniority trend amongst the current population of health and safety professionals.
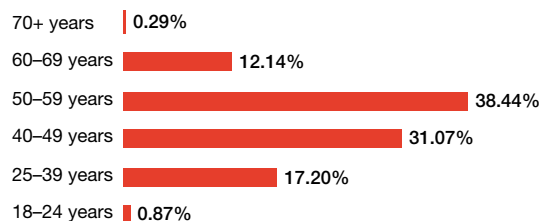
Given this trend, we were curious about how long people had been working in what they considered to be the health and safety industry.

34% responded that they had been active in the industry for more than 15 years, with 50% active for more than 11 years.
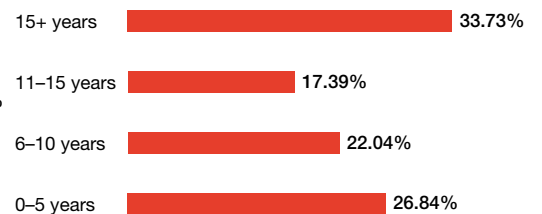
27% of respondents reported working in health and safety for less than five years.

Matching these two pieces of information leads to a suggestion **that health and safety professionals may have transferred from other fields to work in health and safety,** i.e. although relatively senior in their career from an age perspective (over 80% aged more than 40), we are not seeing time in the health and safety industry being reflected to the same degree.

Age profile of our respondents

70+ years	0.29%
60–69 years	12.14%
50–59 years	38.44%
40–49 years	31.07%
25–39 years	17.20%
18–24 years	0.87%

How long have you been in the industry?

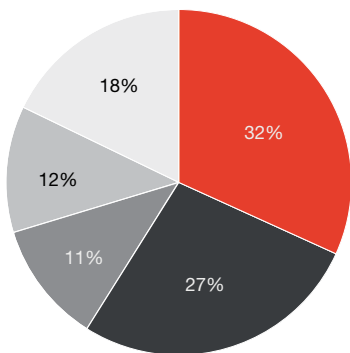|	
15+ years	33.73%
11–15 years	17.39%
6–10 years	22.04%
0–5 years	26.84%

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1 For the purposes of this survey, the term "professionals" includes both workplace health and safety professionals and practitioners

Respondents reflected a high level of seniority in their roles with 50% holding senior or executive positions. This broadly aligns to age and experience demographics. The "other" category included diverse roles such as: adviser, self-employed business owners, directors, health and safety reps and technical specialists.

Respondents' gender reflected the overall split of employment in New Zealand which is approximately 53% male to 47% female.

75% of respondents were in fulltime work, 15% considered themselves contractors and the remainder had a blend of flexible working arrangements.

73% of respondents identified their ethnicity as New Zealand European, with the second largest group – approximately 17% identifying with the 'other' category – reflecting origins such as Australian, British and South African.

Maori constituted 5.39% of survey participants and Pacific and Asian peoples less than 3%.

Overall employment rates currently (based on Statistics NZ labour market statistics) show Maori making up 13% of the working population while Pasifika make up 6%.

What is your position?

18%
32%
12%
11%
27%

- Executive/Senior Leader
- General Manager/Department Head
- Team Lead
- Project Manager/Consultant
- Other

What is your ethnicity?

1.21%
1.48%
0.94%
16.71%
5.39%
72.91%
1.35%
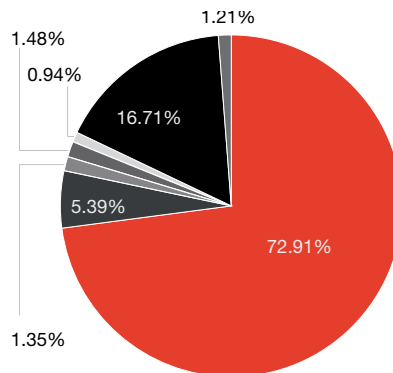
- New Zealand European
- Maori
- Pacific Peoples
- Asian
- Middle Eastern/Latin/American/African
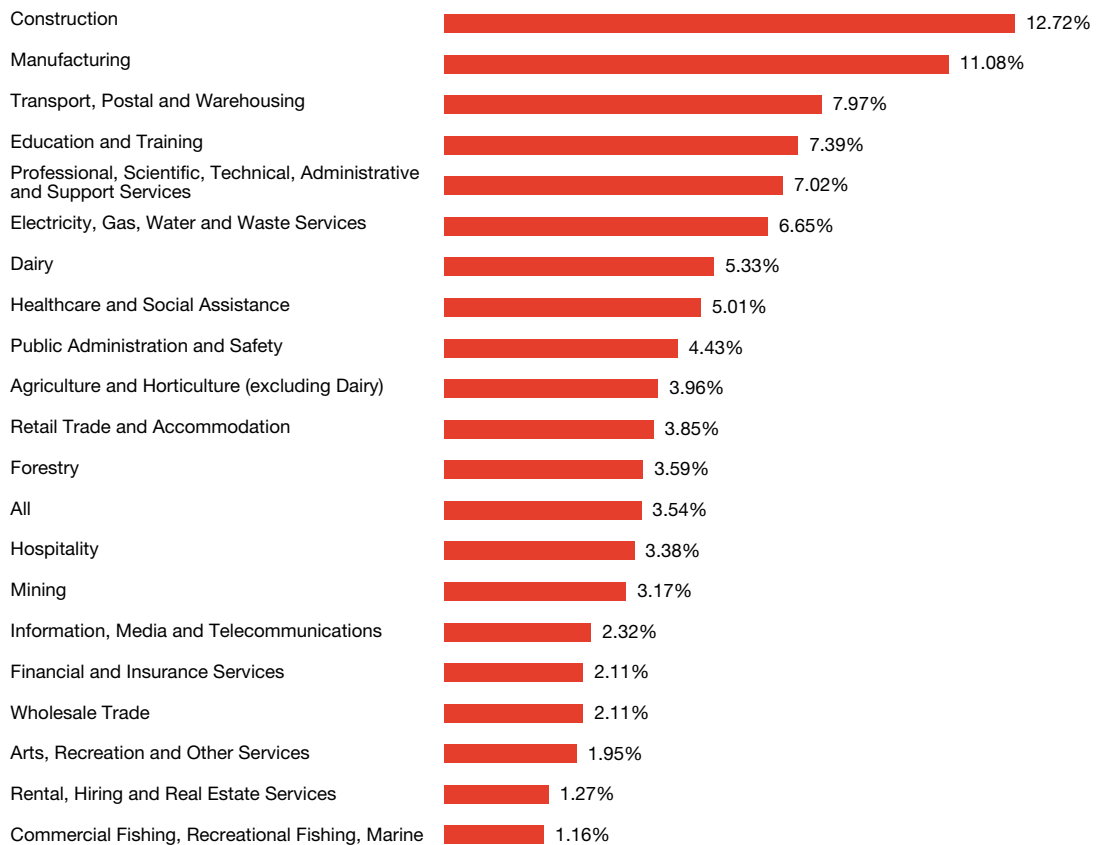- Other
- Prefer not to say

What industries contributed?

Our respondents came from a wide range of industry sectors. This is an indicator of current demand for health and safety professional services. We were interested in the relationship between where work is being done and where more serious injuries and fatalities have occurred.

It was not a surprise to find construction, agriculture (combined with dairy), manufacturing, healthcare and logistics in the top four categories – nearly 40% of our respondents reported working in those fields.

However, what was notable was the high number of professionals working in education, training, public administration and safety – a reflection of the high number working in general safety consulting roles as well as for governmental and or regulatory bodies.

Which industry do you work in?

Industry	Percentage
Construction	12.72%
Manufacturing	11.08%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	7.97%
Education and Training	7.39%
Professional, Scientific, Technical, Administrative and Support Services	7.02%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6.65%
Dairy	5.33%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	5.01%
Public Administration and Safety	4.43%
Agriculture and Horticulture (excluding Dairy)	3.96%
Retail Trade and Accommodation	3.85%
Forestry	3.59%
All	3.54%
Hospitality	3.38%
Mining	3.17%
Information, Media and Telecommunications	2.32%
Financial and Insurance Services	2.11%
Wholesale Trade	2.11%
Arts, Recreation and Other Services	1.95%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1.27%
Commercial Fishing, Recreational Fishing, Marine	1.16%

Retail and wholesale trades may seem to be under-serviced from a risk perspective while electricity (and other utilities) and media shows that there is a higher proportion of professionals working in those sectors than they have historically had issues within.

The electricity industry is known for being highly regulated in New Zealand and potentially more mature in its health and safety practices than others – perhaps as a result of the increased focus by those working in the sector!

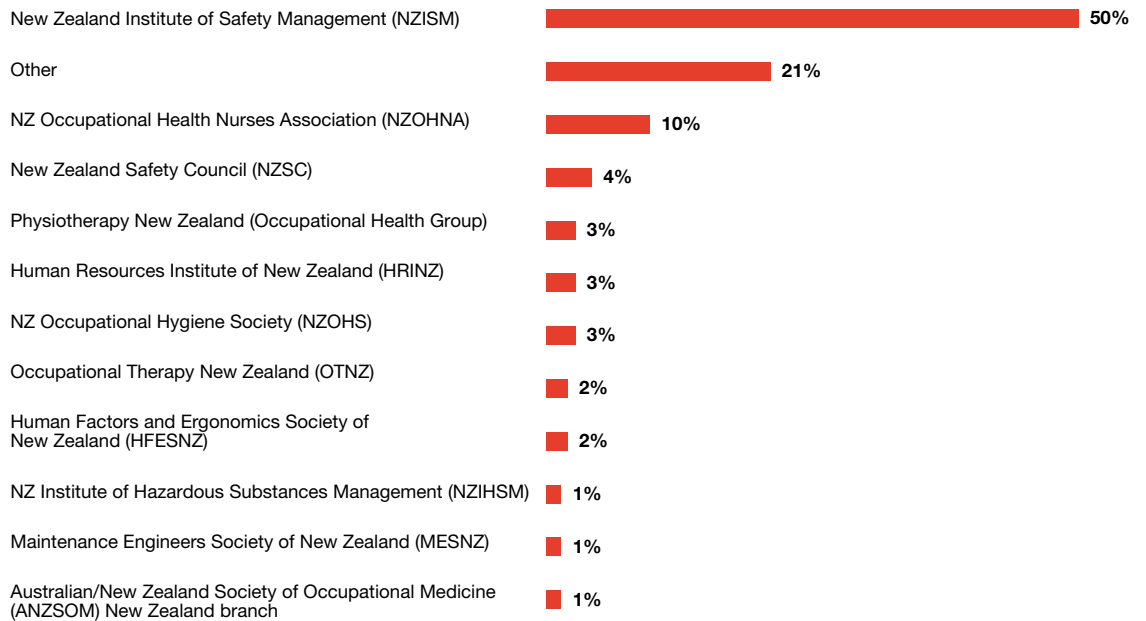|	% Total Fatal & Serious Injuries 2009-2016	% Survey Respondents Working in Industry
Manufacturing	27.7%	11.08%
Construction	20.1%	12.72%
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	16.2%	13.14%
Transport, postal, and warehousing	10.1%	7.97%
Retail trade	8.1%	3.85%
Accommodation and food services	4.3%	3.38%
Wholesale trade	3.9%	2.11%
Professional scientific technical administrative and support services	5.0%	7.02%
Electricity, gas, water, and waste services	1.7%	6.65%
Rental, hiring, and real estate services	1.5%	1.27%
Mining	0.4%	3.17%
Financial and insurance services	0.4%	2.11%
Information media and telecommunications	0.3%	2.32%

Belonging to professional bodies…

78% of respondents told us that they are already aligned to, or part of, what they would consider a professional body.

Of the 78% who responded that they were members of a professional body, nearly 50% were associated with the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management. It is understood that in this first survey the respondent data is representative of the groups who were targeted through various channels, including member organisations of HASANZ.

The 'other' category, which made up 21% of responses, included strong representation from the Institute of Safety and Health (IOSH) (6%) risk and quality management professionals, and professional bodies from Australia, South Africa and the United States.

Which professional bodies do you belong to?

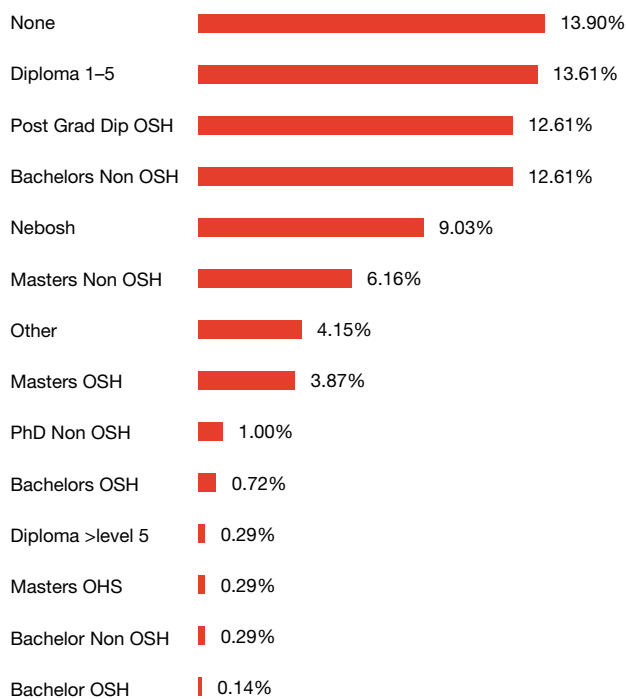| Professional body	Percentage
New Zealand Institute of Safety Management (NZISM)	50%
Other	21%
NZ Occupational Health Nurses Association (NZOHNA)	10%
New Zealand Safety Council (NZSC)	4%
Physiotherapy New Zealand (Occupational Health Group)	3%
Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ)	3%
NZ Occupational Hygiene Society (NZOHS)	3%
Occupational Therapy New Zealand (OTNZ)	2%
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of New Zealand (HFESNZ)	2%
NZ Institute of Hazardous Substances Management (NZIHSM)	1%
Maintenance Engineers Society of New Zealand (MESNZ)	1%
Australian/New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) New Zealand branch	1%

Qualifications

Many of our respondents had one or more qualifications, many relating specifically to a health and safety field.

A third reported that they had either a graduate or post-graduate diploma in occupational safety and health and nearly 60% of respondents had some sort of health or safety-related qualification.

Non-health and safety Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees accounted for 20% of respondents with many coming from the fields of engineering, commerce and general management.

It was noted that 14% of respondents did not report having any qualification.

What qualification(s) do you hold?

Qualification	Percentage
None	13.90%
Diploma 1–5	13.61%
Post Grad Dip OSH	12.61%
Bachelors Non OSH	12.61%
Nebosh	9.03%
Masters Non OSH	6.16%
Other	4.15%
Masters OSH	3.87%
PhD Non OSH	1.00%
Bachelors OSH	0.72%
Diploma >level 5	0.29%
Masters OHS	0.29%
Bachelor Non OSH	0.29%
Bachelor OSH	0.14%

The business view of health and safety professionals…

What drives the demand for advice and services from health and safety professionals? What are businesses looking for and what do they value?
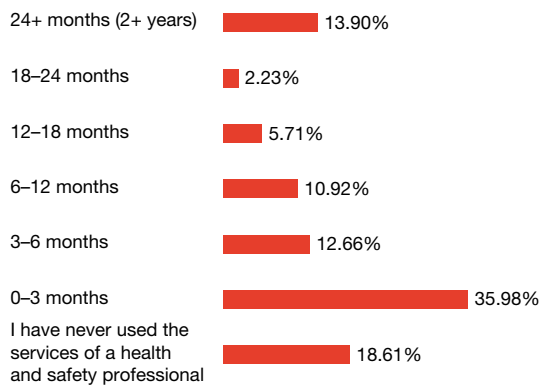
Although 19% of business respondents said they had never used the services of health and safety professionals, a significant number had used them recently. In particular, the last 12 months showed a 60% uptake amongst survey participants.

There has been undeniably an increased focus on health and safety in the workplace with the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 2015 in April 2016, and related regulatory activity.

Much of this demand seems to have come from the need to understand and comply with the new regulatory environment.

There was a strong response when we asked whether businesses were looking for compliance advice, with over 85% of businesses having at least some component of compliance driving their demand for services.

When have you used the services of a health and safety professional?

24+ months (2+ years)	13.90%
18–24 months	2.23%
12–18 months	5.71%
6–12 months	10.92%
3–6 months	12.66%
0–3 months	35.98%
I have never used the services of a health and safety professional	18.61%

How often do you need compliance advice?

Never	2.93%
Rarely	12.02%
Sometimes	41.94%
Usually	26.39%
Always	16.72%
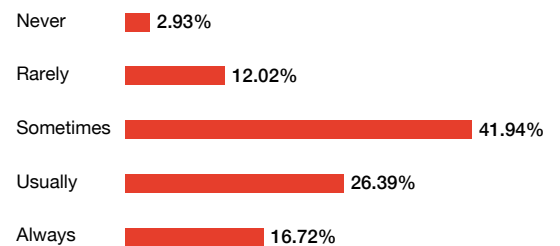
43% of businesses responded that they always or usually required assistance with compliance, further reinforcing a view that in the last twelve months the demand for services has been focused on getting up to speed with the requirements of the HSWA, in particular, the more complex governance and risk aspects of officers' duties, inter-PCBU responsibilities and employee participation.

The demand for strategic advice was slightly lower than the demand for compliance advice. Building a health and safety vision, developing roadmaps, planning and implementing change programmes to transform business performance are typical strategic activities undertaken in this area. 25% of businesses have never used a health and safety professional for this purpose and only 36% usually or always think about strategic advice when requiring services.

53% of business respondents thought that health and safety professionals had the capability of offering more to satisfy compliance and data requirements with only 11% disagreeing with this statement.

Even more emphatically 72% of business respondents agreed that health and safety professionals add value to the organisation by changing behaviours. This could signal demand for services beyond simple compliance and the realisation that, to achieve the required level of future performance, organisations will need a strong change focus to develop culture, leadership and engagement at all levels.

There are signs of change to future demand for what health and safety professionals have been traditionally used for.

Businesses believe that health and safety professionals can offer more, potentially in the strategic and change areas. We will be watching this with interest in future surveys.

How often do you need strategic advice?

Never	7.29%
Rarely	16.03%
Sometimes	39.94%
Usually	22.16%
Always	14.58%
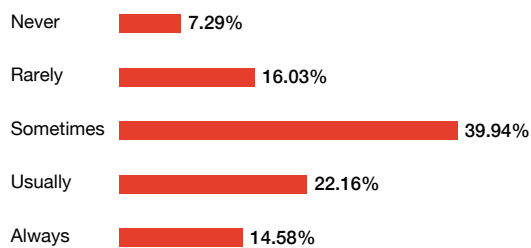
As we move past compliance to a more holistic view of health and safety performance across organisations the requirement for more strategic advice may rise.

Integrating health and safety performance into overall business strategy is moving closer to leading practice.

Once business is satisfied that it has compliance covered, health and safety professionals may be required to provide guidance on how to create an integrated approach to managing health and safety in the workplace rather than as a separate aspect or function.

Other services required from health and safety professionals included:
• Technical specialisation (e.g. occupational hygiene)
• Assistance with regulatory and legal issues
• Culture change and traction within the organisation
• Auditing and assurance
• Training
• 3rd party review
• Safety systems and tools implementation
• Establishing measures
• Policy and governance development
• Mental health and wellbeing

How satisfied are those who use the services and advice of health and safety professionals?

We were pleased to see that overall satisfaction with services and advice offered by health and safety professionals was very good with over 76% of businesses responding that they were moderately to highly satisfied.

On the other hand, there was a level of dissatisfaction with around 15% of respondents reporting bad experiences.

We were curious whether businesses felt they were using the advice they sought and bought effectively.

A potential source of disjoint and dissatisfaction?

25% of businesses responded that they agreed that they had not been able to use the advice or service given to its fullest effect.

A picture starts to emerge of dissatisfaction potentially being driven by a lack of clarity about what is being offered, resulting either in the advice not being effective or effectively implemented by the organisation.

There was a concerning level of uncertainty when asked whether there was clarity around what was on offer from a technical perspective and whether services and advice were backed up by the required competency in this field.

Nearly one third of the respondents disagreed with this statement leading to the view that it was not always clear what was on offer, what was required and whether the individual(s) offering the advice or service were qualified and experienced to undertake it.

How satisfied are you with the advice offered by health and safety professionals?
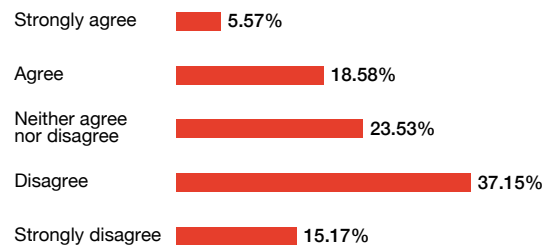
3.70%
10.80%
9.57%
28.70%
47.22%
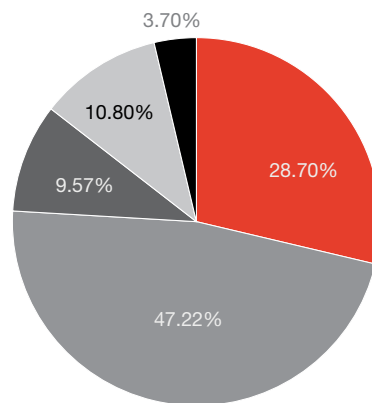
- ■ Extremely satisfied
- ■ Moderately satisfied
- ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ■ Slightly dissatisfied
- ■ Extremely dissatisfied

We do not use health and safety advice effectively

Strongly agree   5.57%

Agree   18.58%

Neither agree nor disagree   23.53%

Disagree   37.15%

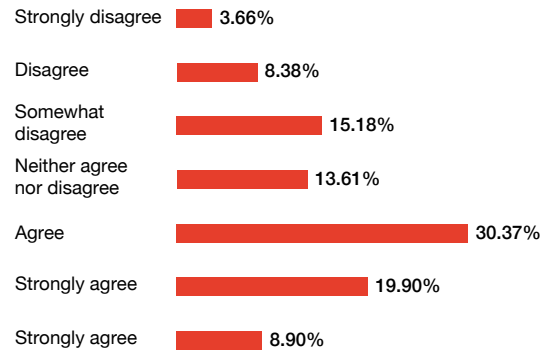Strongly disagree   15.17%

Do we work well together?

It was clearly apparent that professionals from different technical aspects of health and safety worked together effectively, with nearly 70% of respondents agreeing with the question.

An apparent strength of the sector in the eyes of its customer base is the ability for health and safety professionals to integrate their skills across different technical areas and professional disciplines to achieve business needs.

Do businesses have a clear understanding of what health and safety professionals can provide for them? The answer is an overwhelming Yes.

Better insight into what businesses require now and in the future will assist health and safety professionals in meeting business needs and raise satisfaction.

Health and safety professionals are clear about their technical capabilities and only take on work that they are competent to perform.

Strongly disagree	3.66%
Disagree	8.38%
Somewhat disagree	15.18%
Neither agree nor disagree	13.61%
Agree	30.37%
Strongly agree	19.90%
Strongly agree	8.90%

90%
of businesses said that they understood what health and safety professionals could do for them.

What factors do users of health and safety services and advice value?

When asked to list the qualities that organisations were looking for in health and safety professionals there were some very strong themes.

The 'ticket to the game' is around having the right experience and knowledge to be an effective and credible adviser. Qualifications matter but walking the talk is just as important in translating academic or theoretical concepts to real business situations. The words "practical" and "pragmatic" featured heavily, which reinforces the concept of being able to work effectively within organisations to enable change at all levels.

People skills were also dominant in responses. Organisations are looking for their health and safety professionals to be personable, able to connect at different levels of the organisation, have integrity in knowing their limits and be very good communicators.

Reinforcing the need for more strategic capability, there was also demand for cross-functional business skills, problem solving, continuous improvement and change management expertise.

When we asked what organisations value in health and safety professionals, knowledge and experience came out on top. The 'ask' is that knowledge and experience be applied to solve specific technical issues, as well as leveraged effectively across the business.

Independence and objectivity were also valued highly. Health and safety professionals need to put themselves in a position where they can offer the best advice, based on the business context, and challenge organisations to achieve their goals.

Health and safety professionals can improve the value they offer businesses by establishing clear standards of what good looks like. This would make it easier for organisations to understand what they are getting, set strategy and resource appropriately.

A move to more strategic and change skills is required by businesses so advice can be leveraged effectively and communicated well.

Attributes that were less important to those looking to use a health and safety professional were qualifications that were meaningless, 'paper based' or solely academic in nature (i.e., not able to be translated into the business environment). Participants expressed distrust around qualifications generally as well as those who endorsed others without objective and meaningful references.

Some respondents referred specifically to 'black market' consultants who use scaremongering and other tactics to provide inappropriate, outdated and culturally poor advice on New Zealand business situations.

There was a definite trend around organisations not wanting a 'policeman', 'box checker' or 'rule enforcer'.

Arrogance, overconfidence, poor listening, poor interpersonal skills and lack of focus in understanding the business they were working in were all unwelcome traits experienced by our respondents.

Some business respondents commented that it was undesirable when health and safety owned 'the system', with the converse being a desire to have businesses fully accountable for health and safety outcomes – with professional coaching and guiding.

Age, gender and ethnicity were not factors that were considered when looking for a health and safety professional.

Where do the users of health and safety professionals source them from?

There was a very even split between means of sourcing permanent health and safety professionals.
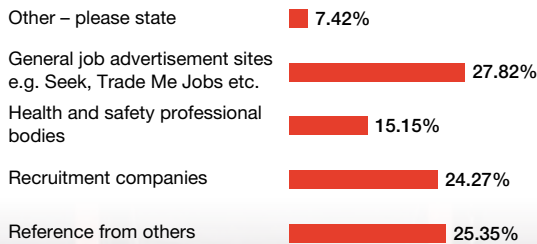
General job advertising, recruitment companies and third party references were used broadly equally to find and recruit employees. Word of mouth hires were represented potentially more than in other fields. This may be a feature of a developing market.

Health and safety professional bodies featured but were used much less than other general recruitment methods.
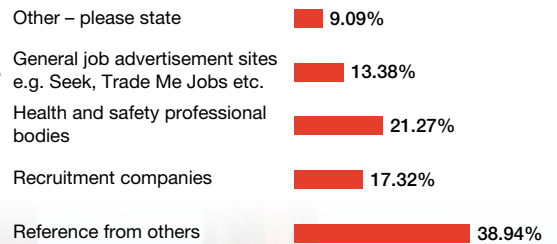
When it comes to contract roles there was more reliance on word of mouth or third party references. Partly, this could be due to the shorter time frames often required when sourcing contract roles, thus potentially reducing the effectiveness of general advertising and recruitment companies.

Trust was mentioned several times by respondents as a factor in sourcing both permanent and contract roles. Personal recommendations had more emphasis where standards, experience and qualifications were more uncertain.

How are you sourcing permanent roles?

Other – please state	7.42%
General job advertisement sites e.g. Seek, Trade Me Jobs etc.	27.82%
Health and safety professional bodies	15.15%
Recruitment companies	24.27%
Reference from others	25.35%

How are you sourcing contract roles?

|	
Other – please state	9.09%
General job advertisement sites e.g. Seek, Trade Me Jobs etc.	13.38%
Health and safety professional bodies	21.27%
Recruitment companies	17.32%
Reference from others	38.94%
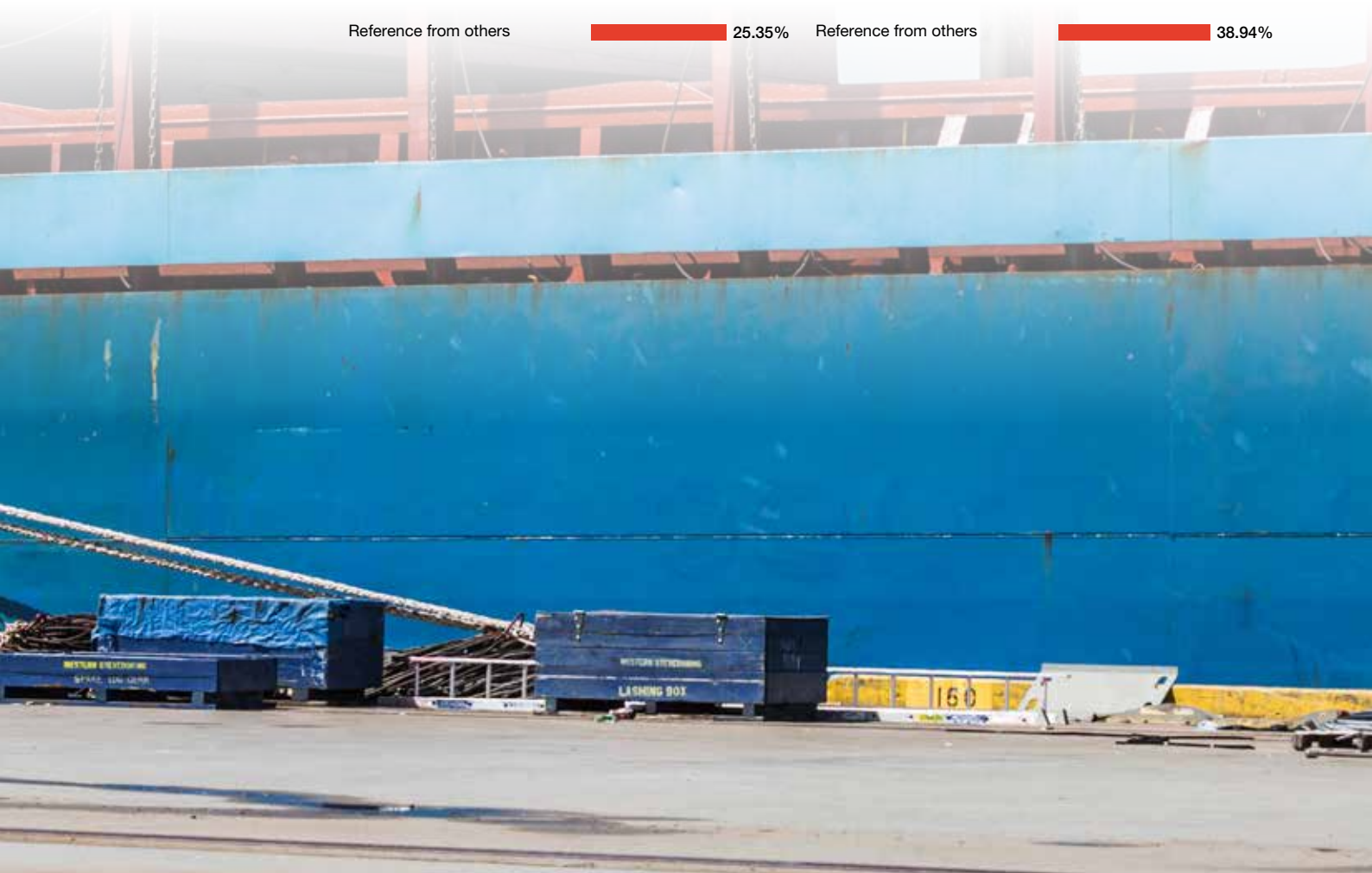
When asked whether businesses place a high degree of importance on relevant qualifications and certifications when recruiting (employing or contracting) health and safety professionals, there was an overwhelming positive answer. Over 60% of respondents "always" or "usually" look for relevant qualifications and certification.

This was a surprising result, given other feedback around the lack of trust in qualifications which seems to contradict this response.

One hypothesis could be that, while businesses as part of their due diligence in sourcing health and safety professionals do look for 'relevant' qualifications, they do not place much weight on them in the final decision because of lack of clarity as to what qualifications mean and the lack of standards between them.

Are NZ based health and safety practitioners considered as competent and qualified as those working offshore?

When asked this question 40% our respondents thought that NZ based health and safety professionals compared well to those working offshore. However, a significant number felt the other way, with 30% seeing those working overseas being more competent and/or better qualified.

Disagree
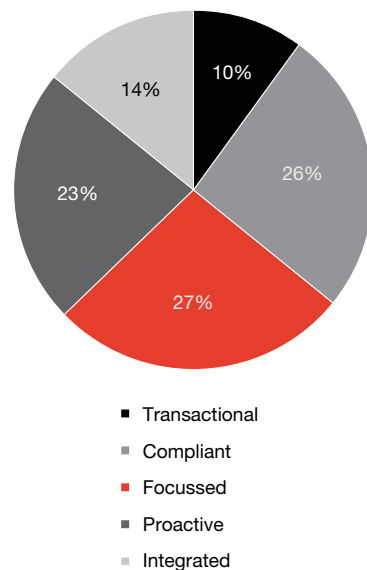**30%**

Neutral
27%

Agree
40%
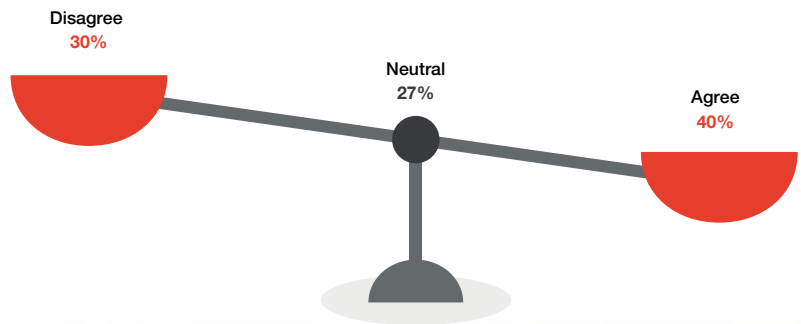
What about organisational maturity?

We asked our respondents to place their organisations on a health and safety maturity scale. We had a very good opportunity of gaining feedback from an informed population who had some understanding of health and safety maturity so it was interesting to see almost a normal distribution of maturity levels.

We will monitor this in the future and see how health and safety professionals can work to bring about better health and safety performance for the organisations they work with.

- Transactional organisations generally only focus on health and safety when there has been an incident and tend to ignore safety performance

- Compliant organisations react to legislation and regulation to fulfil basic health and safety requirements, focus on lag indicators.

- Focused organisations are those where frameworks have been established and legislation is only a minimum requirement. Health and safety is planned with underlying strategies in place.

- Proactive organisations actively promote health and safety throughout the organisation and prioritise its importance, including personal commitments. Both lead and lag measures drive the business.

- Integrated organisations view health and safety performance being closely linked with business excellence. Health and safety is honest, transparent and seen as a learning opportunity for the organisation.

What's your approach to health and safety?

Pie chart:
- 10% Transactional
- 26% Compliant
- 27% Focussed
- 23% Proactive
- 14% Integrated

■ Transactional
■ Compliant
■ Focussed
■ Proactive
■ Integrated

What our health and safety professionals are thinking…

What are our health and safety professionals feeling when it comes to training, qualifications and support from their organisations they work in and the general New Zealand environment? Do they feel they've got what they need? What more can we do to boost their capabilities?
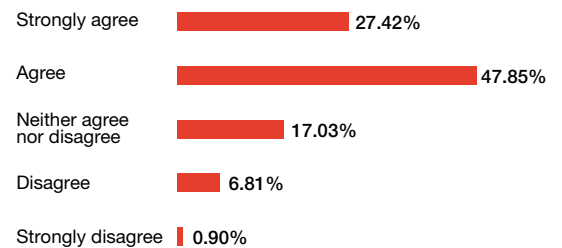
Our health and safety professionals are passionate – they love what they do.

75% of health and safety professionals told us enjoy what they do and see it as an appealing career path.

An overwhelming 90% found that the work they do in health and safety rewarding. This conforms to the characteristics for health and safety being a vocation, rather than just a job.

We need to ensure that we support health and safety professionals in maintaining this level of engagement and passion going forward.

Does the health and safety profession provide an appealing career path?

Strongly agree	27.42%
Agree	47.85%
Neither agree nor disagree	17.03%
Disagree	6.81%
Strongly disagree	0.90%

They love the work, but what's expected from them?

An overwhelming area of interest for both our business and health and safety professional respondents was the current state of standards and qualifications.
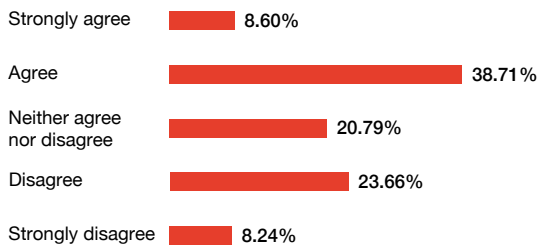
47% of health and safety professionals aren't clear on what standards they're subject to and what's expected of them.

While more than half of our respondents held a diploma or post-graduate diploma in occupational health and safety, a number felt these were obtained to 'tick the box', rather to establish a base level of competency.

The lack of standards and qualifications requirements is likely to be a significant factor in the qualifications our respondents held, and whether they held any qualifications at all. Health and safety professionals are looking for a recognised, rounded-out professional standard to measure themselves against.

They also want to align themselves with other professions and establish wider formal structures such as a code of ethics. While a number of our respondents felt they had this through their industry or technical professional bodies, they didn't see these as their health and safety standards.

How strongly do you feel that there are no clear standards or expectations for health and safety professionals?

Strongly agree	8.60%
Agree	38.71%
Neither agree nor disagree	20.79%
Disagree	23.66%
Strongly disagree	8.24%

What does the employment landscape look like?

On the flip side of business recruitment approaches, we asked health and safety professionals to provide their views on seeking work.

Health and safety professionals are in agreement with businesses on the weight of formal verification of their capabilities. Over half (53%) said qualifications and certification are always or usually required to secure a role. If we reflect on the 60% of businesses that always or usually look for qualifications when recruiting health and safety professionals, we can see there is similar level of understanding on whether qualifications matter.

However, given the diversity of health and safety professionals, qualifications are often subjective to the scope of the role and the technical capabilities required. This may be the thinking behind the 35% who said qualifications were only sometimes required. Again, we can compare this against the opinions of our business respondents and can draw two possible hypotheses.

The first may be that businesses place a certain degree of importance on qualifications as a due diligence element for roles with technical requirements.

The second may be that health and safety professionals must be able to prove their capabilities beyond this, with the ability to work with people and provide practical and pragmatic solutions as the top non-technical qualities sought.

Both businesses (as discussed earlier) and health and safety professionals had their views supported in focus group discussions – they agree that both hypotheses are true, but there is no 'stock standard' approach to recruitment.
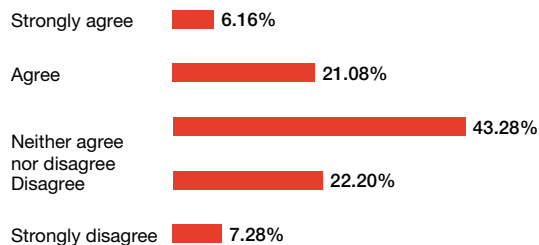
While this is largely the case for other roles in organisations, health and safety professionals seem to face greater uncertainty on how they can get their foot in the door. A solution that was evident from the survey data, and echoed resoundingly in our focus groups, was to establish a base qualification on which to build.

Establishing minimum standards and a clear and consistent qualification framework may go some way towards building trust in the profession, and closing the perception of a capability gap between New Zealand and offshore health and safety professionals.

Relevant qualifications and certifications are required to obtain health and safety employment and/or consulting engagements
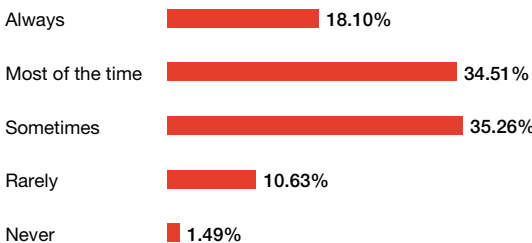
Always	18.10%
Most of the time	34.51%
Sometimes	35.26%
Rarely	10.63%
Never	1.49%

Are our New Zealand health and safety professionals as competent and qualified as their offshore counterparts?

Strongly agree	6.16%
Agree	21.08%
Neither agree nor disagree	43.28%
Disagree	22.20%
Strongly disagree	7.28%

Health and safety professionals have a strong belief that they work within their professional capacity and seek help when required…

Over 90% of respondents agreed that were competent in the field in which they provided services and would collaborate with others if necessary.

That view is not totally consistent with how businesses see this, with lower levels of response when asked similar questions.

There is further work to do in closing this gap and ensuring we are all measuring professional competency in the same way.

Equipping our health and safety professionals – what development opportunities are available?

We asked our professional respondents to reflect on their experiences and the journey of their role. Many had mixed feelings about where they were going and how to progress in their roles.

Only half of the health and safety respondents had a clear view of their future progression in their career. During focus group meetings many felt that, while there were good entry points into the profession, becoming too technically specialised might make it difficult to progress to higher management roles. Businesses expect and value professionals who have strong technical skills and wide industry experience, but also those with strong general management skills relating to business, organisational change and strategy.

We dug deeper into the progression path and asked respondents what training they've received, and what's currently available to them. While there was a largely positive opinion of the training provided being sufficient for health and safety professionals to fulfil their roles, there's room for improvement.

I have a clear path of progression as a health and safety professional

Strongly agree	12.72%
Agree	35.84%
Neither agree nor disagree	27.78%
Disagree	20.25%
Strongly disagree	3.41%
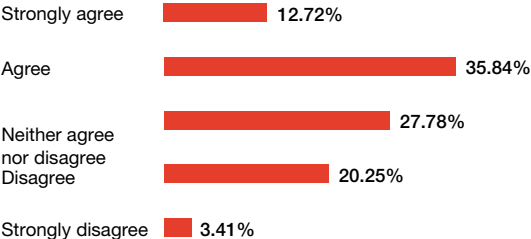
Almost 60% of health and safety professionals were happy with the training they'd received and, similarly, 58% felt the training adequately supported ongoing professional development.

On the flip side, 21% did not believe training was sufficient to support ongoing professional development, and 20% were undecided.
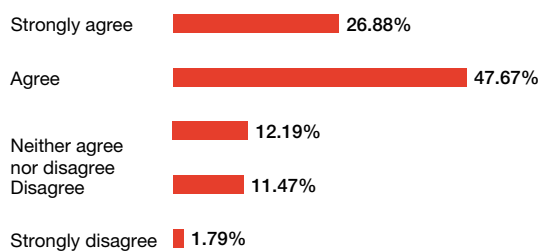
When we compare this to the 47% who didn't believe there were clear standards and expectations for health and safety professionals, it would seem that the training currently being provided is positively received, but doesn't necessarily help round out the role in general.

Respondents cited inconsistent qualifications impacting on competencies across industries as one of the worst parts of their role. **They want a base standard on which to build!**

Our focus groups provided valuable insight into this issue, indicating that those with a positive view of training were often from specialised fields, such as occupational therapy.

Because their role required a certain degree of health and safety competency and awareness, their training had been developed to meet these requirements.
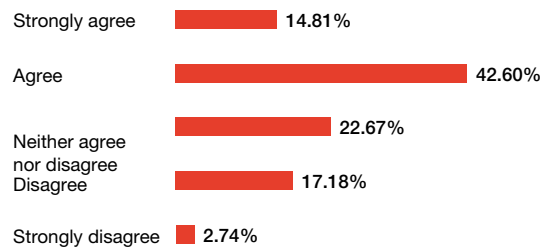
What part do our tertiary institutions play?

The backbone to developing our health and safety professionals really comes from an established and recognised assessment framework. Some respondents wanted to see their training reflect New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) standards. In general, there was a desire to align sector standards with a clear framework that would be meaningful both in New Zealand and offshore, covering all stages of professional development.

Respondents felt some of the training provided wasn't up to comparable standards and wanted this improved to align with frameworks in other professions.

Tertiary institutions as well as professional bodies and standard setters all have roles to play in this.

Historically, we've seen our tertiary institutions take a 'build and they will come' approach to study options for health and safety professionals. We had feedback that the courses on offer did not always reflect the needs of health and safety professionals in today's environment.

I have access to the training I need to fulfill my role

Strongly agree	26.88%
Agree	47.67%
Neither agree nor disagree	12.19%
Disagree	11.47%
Strongly disagree	1.79%

I feel my career path is supported by sufficient training and education

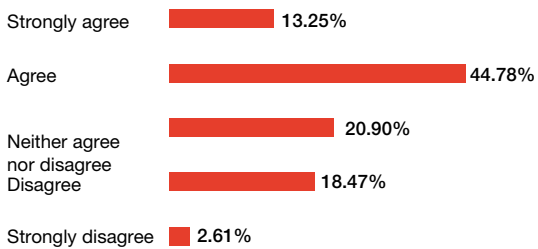|	
Strongly agree	14.81%
Agree	42.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	22.67%
Disagree	17.18%
Strongly disagree	2.74%

As a result, health and safety professionals may look offshore for better options, or opt out of education altogether if this proved too expensive.

We can take this a step further, and see how well current New Zealand training options would equip health and safety professionals for wider competition when seeking roles. We asked them whether they felt equally competent and qualified when 'sized up' against their offshore counterparts. The response was mixed - 27% of health and safety professionals were confident in their capabilities, however, the same proportion had doubts.
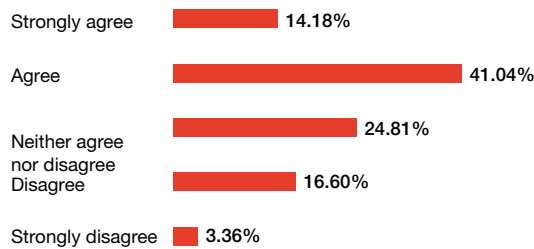
Almost half of respondents sat on the fence for this question, with 43% feeling neither advantaged or disadvantaged, compared with their counterparts overseas.

While qualifications pay a key role in developing capable and confident health and safety professionals, support from organisations offers them the ability to grow. Over half (55%) of health and safety professionals felt their organisations were meeting their professional development needs but 20% felt their organisations could do more.
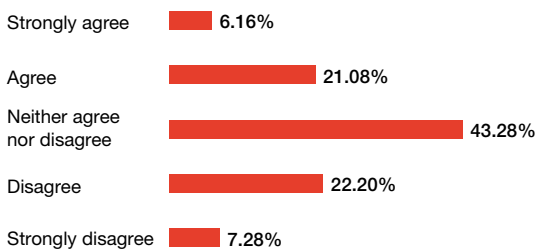
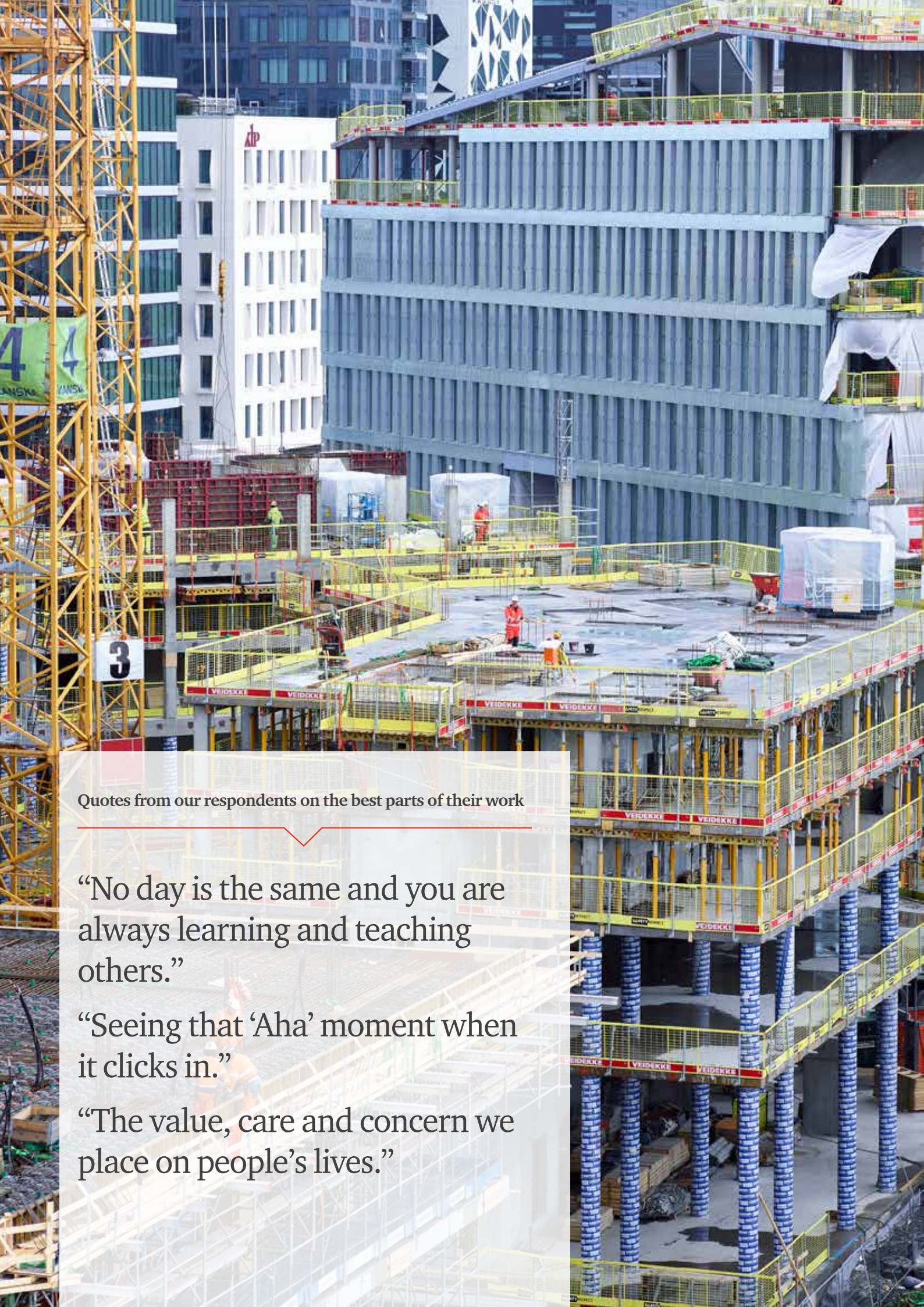*Does it sufficiently support my professional development?*

Strongly agree	13.25%
Agree	44.78%
Neither agree nor disagree	20.90%
Disagree	18.47%
Strongly disagree	2.61%

Are organisations supporting their health and safety professionals in their development?

Strongly agree	14.18%
Agree	41.04%
Neither agree nor disagree	24.81%
Disagree	16.60%
Strongly disagree	3.36%

Are our New Zealand health and safety professionals as competent and qualified as their offshore counterparts?

Strongly agree	6.16%
Agree	21.08%
Neither agree nor disagree	43.28%
Disagree	22.20%
Strongly disagree	7.28%

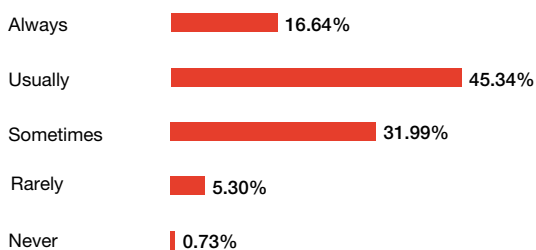# Sparking interest – what is attractive about the role?

We can see our health and safety professionals are enthusiastic about their work. We wanted to understand exactly what it was that really drew them to the sector and kept them coming back. We gave our health and safety professionals free rein to comment on the best part of their role. They were in agreement on the following areas.

Ability to influence and educate

Our health and safety professionals like to work with people, and want their work to make a change in organisations. The ability to directly influence and educate people was important to them, whether this be a shift in behaviours and perceptions, or those areas that can be measured quantitatively, such as reduced incidents or near misses. In order to have this influence, health and safety professionals need a certain degree of autonomy and capacity to think creatively – our health and safety professionals felt this existed and was one of their top areas of satisfaction.

Taking that a step further, we can broadly divide these into two pillars of an organisation - culture and performance. We asked our respondents whether they felt their work had an impact on each in the organisations they had provided advice and/or services to.

62% felt they always, or usually were able to influence an organisation's culture, and 72% agreed health and safety is part of an organisation's performance, and their work contributed to this.

If we reflect on the takeouts from our questions to businesses, our survey data would suggest a positive correlation between what health and safety professionals like doing, and what businesses saw health and safety professionals as offering. The 53% of businesses that thought health and safety professionals had more to offer than compliance advice is a good indicator of this, as is the 72% that agreed part of their 'value add' appeal was their ability to change behaviours.

Again, we can use these takeouts as indicators of future demand, and what training and professional development opportunities are most pertinent to our health and safety professionals. We will watch movement in this area in future surveys.

I have been able to change organisational culture through the advice and/or services I've provided

Always	16.64%
Usually	45.34%
Sometimes	31.99%
Rarely	5.30%
Never	0.73%

I have been able to change organisational performance through the advice and/or services I've provided

Always	25.05%
Usually	46.98%
Sometimes	23.22%
Rarely	4.02%
Never	0.73%
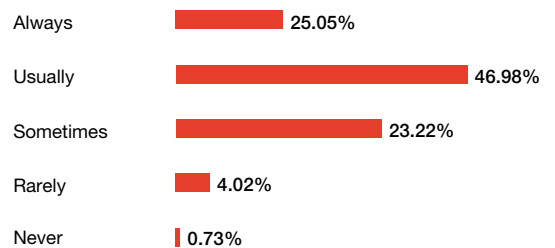
What parts of the role are less enjoyable for health and safety professionals?

When asked what aspects of their role health and safety professionals found less appealing, the top responses were dealing with people resistant to change, and a stigma towards their role in general. A number of our health and safety professionals said the 'fun police' was the term not-so-affectionately used by their colleagues and people outside the sector.

A possible reason for this 'wrist-slapper' perception may be limited interest in, and knowledge and awareness of what health and safety professionals can bring to the table. In the absence of experience working with health and safety professionals, organisations and the wider public are influenced by images projected by the media. The heavy focus on embedding the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 may have skewed perceptions of health and safety professionals. More often than not, health and safety professionals are only referred to when reporting on injury statistics, and cases of non-compliance with the law. This may change over time as health and safety becomes an everyday part of doing business, not an isolated compliance requirement.

We're already able to see a change in the scope of health and safety roles that reflects this. Organisations are starting to seek skills that go beyond 'ticking boxes', to understanding their health and safety culture and working closely with their people to improve it. While changing public perception is a challenge, our focus groups believed working alongside the media was critical, and they were keen to get started.

Tone from the top – support from an organisation's leadership

A large number of respondents felt there was a lack of support and commitment from an organisation's leadership team. While their assistance and advice was sought, it wasn't always understood or actively listened to.

Part of the reason for this could be linked to an organisation's structure, where the place of a health and safety professional is the subject of much contention. A traditional approach to health and safety often sees the role operating as a secondary part of a human resources function.

Quotes from our respondents on the less enjoyable parts of their work

"Lack of leadership (or) management support."

"Making the tough calls - going against the grain."

The stark difference in what HR teams generally do, and what health and safety professionals are there to do often isolates them. As mentioned, health and safety professionals saw autonomy and authority as big ticks in attractiveness of the role. However, the responses we received suggest this is depends very much on the organisation.

Looking forward, a similar approach to the shift in public perception is needed. Leadership teams set the tone of an organisation and have the ability to boost the profile of health and safety professionals more broadly by promoting and supporting their role.

A raised profile should naturally lead to better integration of health and safety into the business whereby everyone understands its importance and that they have a part to play. An understanding that health and safety is part of organisational risk, and affects organisational performance, may form part of leadership education on how best to promote the role.

In terms of organisation structure, the health and safety role may continue to form part of an organisation's HR function. However, their level of authority and accountability can improve. Health and safety professionals are seeking greater involvement in decision making, which may involve a direct reporting line to the Chief Executive.

In order to work with organisations to help achieve their strategic goals, a large number of respondents stated that a bigger budget, and setting KPIs would support ongoing management and, therefore, continuous improvement in health and safety performance.

However, a 'cookie cutter' approach to changes in the role is not always the best option. Rather, the changes pursued by leadership should be directed by the operating environment and strategic goals of each business.

Get in touch

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