

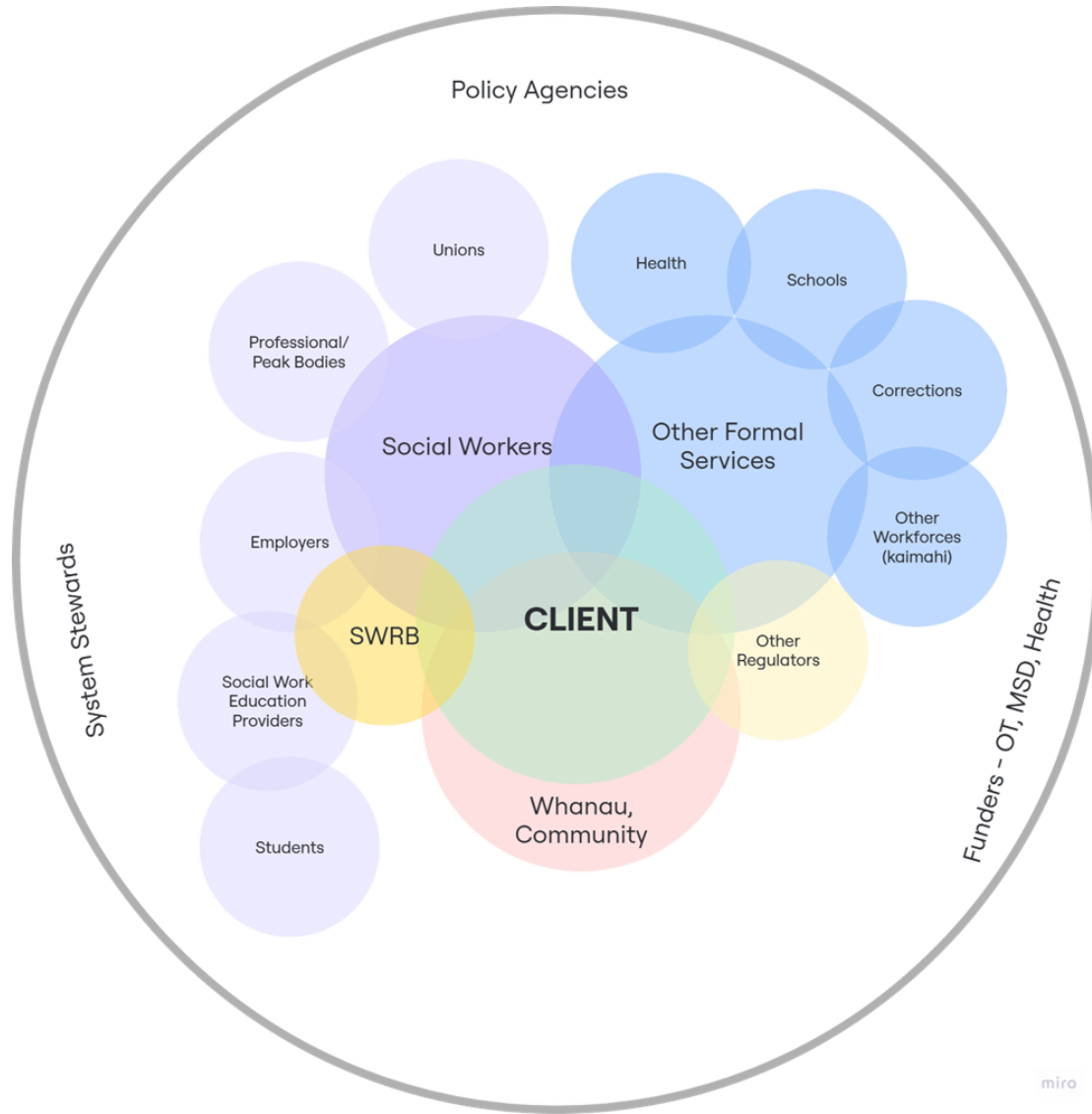


**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

Strengthening the Social Worker Workforce

**Whakamanawa 2025
The National Social Services Conference**

**Protecting the safety of the public and enhancing the professionalism of social
workers**



Social work environment

Social Workers Registration Board: Who we are & What we do

Crown Entity

Crown Agent that gives effect to government policy, when directed by the responsible Minister

Crown Entities Act
2004

Aotearoa New Zealand
Occupational Regulator
of the social work
profession

SWR Act
2003

Lead Agency

workforce planning for all social
workers

Cabinet
Mandate

Why was the Lead Agency role for workforce planning established and why SWRB?

- When mandatory registration was introduced, many in the sector said better planning for the future of the social work workforce was needed
- As the major employer and funder of social workers, it's important for the government that there is a sustainable workforce
- MSD looked at options for which agency could take on the role. SWRB was seen as the best placed of the government agencies
- SWRB receives direct funding from Government for this work.



What does the Lead Agency role involve?

The role complements SWRB regulatory functions under the Social Workers Registration Act (2003).

It involves building:

- evidence on workforce pressures and supply issues
- relationships across the sector.

Overall:

- growing intelligence of what is required across the system to address workforce sustainability challenges.

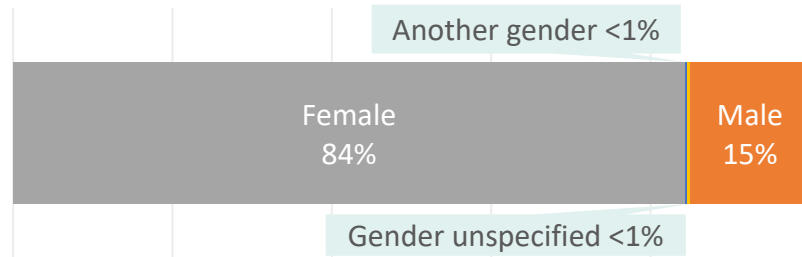
As part of the public sector, we are politically neutral, provide free and frank advice to Ministers, and support stewardship of the system.



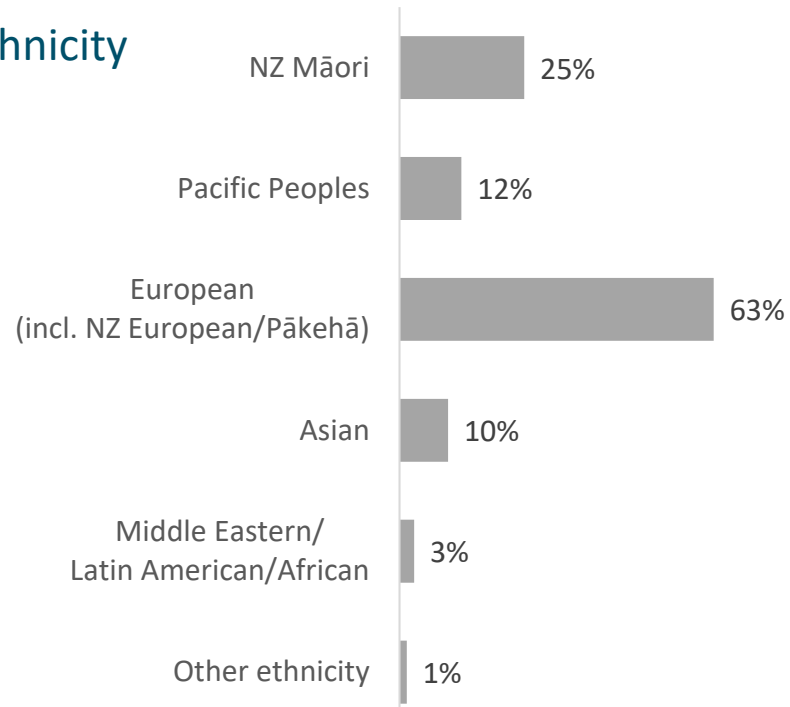
2024-25 Workforce planning and sustainability

The SWRB's register included **9,065** practising social workers as at 30 June 2025

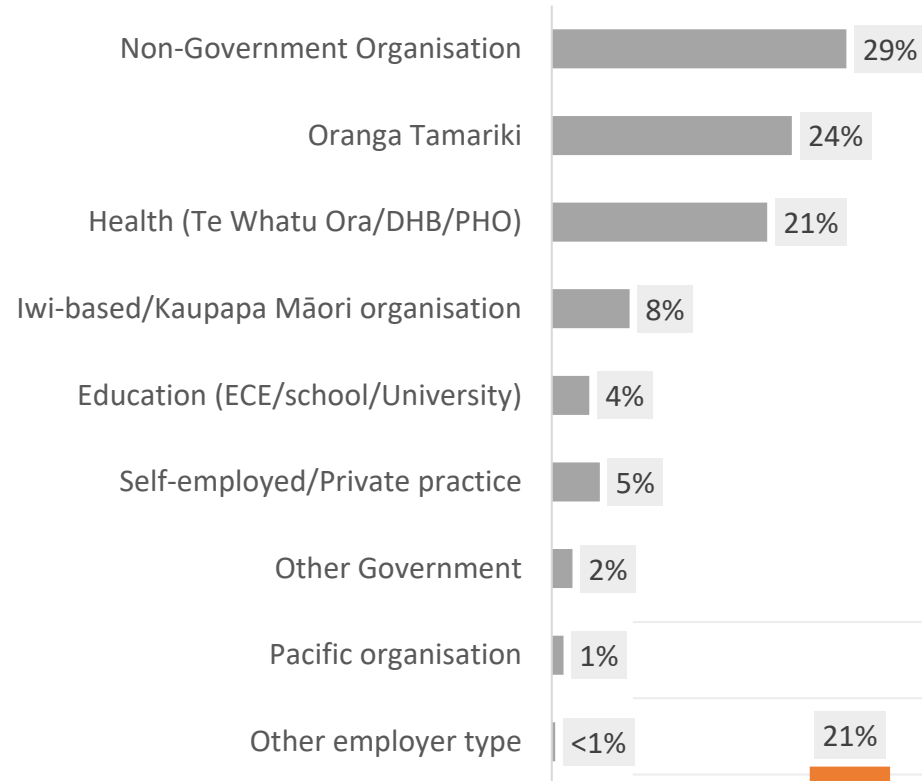
Gender



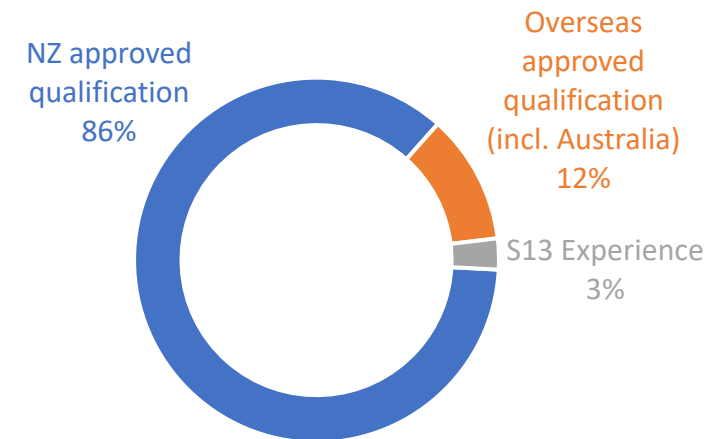
Ethnicity



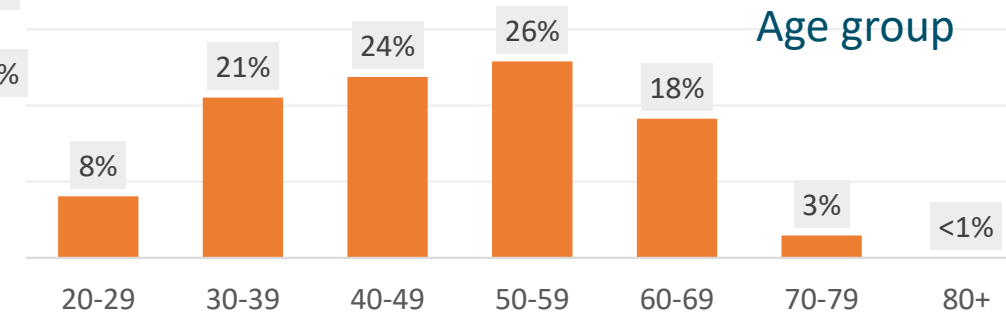
Employer type



Pathway to registration



Age group



Workforce Sustainability - issues identified

Attraction and Recruitment (workforce pipeline)

- student numbers in social work training the lowest since 2013
- a high proportion do not complete training
- Some with social work qualifications do not enter the workforce as registered social workers.

Retention

- Ageing workforce: 20% social workers aged 60 or above
- Retirement as the main reason for social workers leaving the profession, increasing by 13% since 2023.

More social workers leaving the profession than entering.



Sustainable Social Work Pathways Tauwhiro Ararau – Social Worker Workforce Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030

Highlights:

- challenges with the sustainability of the social worker workforce

Focus:

- Workforce Lifecycle as a frame

Priority:

- attracting and recruiting more social workers and retaining those we have

Identifies:

- actions required across all parts of the workforce lifecycle



Workshop: Attract - Recruit - Retain

What's Working

What's Hard

How does registration and
being a regulated profession
help or hinder?

What's a Good Idea

Who could make it happen

Early findings from 2025 workforce survey

4257 social
workers

Over 50% of those
who renewed their
PC

Full results to be
released in
December

69%

Were highly
likely or likely to
recommend
becoming a
social worker as
a career

Top 3
Challenges

Recruitment &
Retention (61%)

Deepening of social
inequity (53%)

Public Perception of
social workers (51%)

Views of Registration:

The not so positive

Very expensive if your employer doesn't pay or if you have to pay before getting reimbursed

Re-registration was a massive process

It's difficult for students to pay

Fees are a barrier, people let registration drop if they are out of the workforce

Difficult for retired social workers who may still want to take on short term work

There's a disconnect between SWRB and social workers

The complaints process is horrible to go through

I'm not always sure what SWRB does

We get more from ANZASW

SWRB needs to increase its visibility and networking

Views of Registration:

The positives

Like the professionalism
we receive through
registration

It recognises the
sensitivity of the mahi

It gives us status within
Aotearoa

We feel validated and
respected

It's now a recognised
profession so
encourages people to
study social work

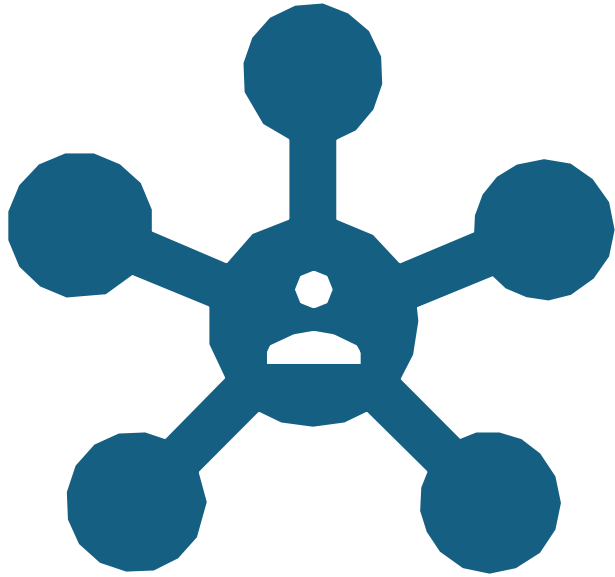
Social workers have
more standing and
recognition in
multidisciplinary teams

Rogue social workers are
now being held to
account

Registration provides
the visibility for people
to be able to make
complaints

It protects the public
and also protects us as
social workers

Gives integrity to our
practice



SWRB Resources

Suite of brochures for social workers:

- **Code of Conduct in Practice** to assist social workers to understand their professional obligations in relation to specific topics that come to our notice frequently e.g. social media, boundaries, supervision, record keeping, conflicts of interest, confidentiality and privacy, complaints, criminal charges and criminal convictions.
- **Benefits of Registration**
- **The Code of Conduct**

And for consumers of social work services:

- **What you can expect from your social worker**
- **Is your social worker registered?**

In development :

- **Guide for Employers of Social Workers**

See the Resources page of our website: swrb.govt.nz