

# Experiences and support needs of the Pacific sexual violence workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand

## Summary for Government stakeholders

### Authors

This document summarises the main findings from the following report:

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The research team acknowledges the members of the Pacific sexual violence (SV) workforce who responded to our call to participate in this study. We are humbled by your gift of time and expertise, your willingness to share knowledge and stories, some of which were painful and heavy, others warm and affirming, all of which were yours. We are in awe of your dedication to your work with and for our Pacific peoples affected by sexual violence.

*Fa’afetai tele, Malo ‘aupito, our sincere and warmest Pacific thanks!*

“We want to thrive,  
not just survive!”

## Introduction

Through Budget 2019, the Government announced \$90.3 million over four years for the Ministry to fund sexual violence services. Of this, \$1.39 million was earmarked for research and evaluation, and a four-year (F20-F23) research and evaluation programme was developed.

The aim of the overall research and evaluation work programme is to:

- evaluate the impact of the funding through Budget 2019 on building the capacity and capability of specialist SV services, and creating a more integrated, efficient, and responsive system.
- increase understanding of how best to support people affected by SV with a focus on the needs of select priority groups, through the commissioning of several exploratory projects.

Recognising Pacific peoples as one of the priority groups within the work programme, MSD commissioned a team of Pacific researchers from the University of Auckland to conduct research to understand the experiences and support needs of Pacific peoples in the SV workforce. This research project was by Pacific, for Pacific.

Research has identified that Western models of practice can be ineffective and traumatic for Pacific peoples, contributing to a process of re-victimisation. To deliver culturally responsive support to Pacific peoples affected by sexual violence, the workforce needs to have as many workers as possible who can communicate with Pacific service users effectively, read cultural contexts well, and advocate for Pacific SV worker needs. The necessary prior knowledge and skills are most likely to be found within peoples of Pacific ethnicities.

Currently, the Ministry does not partner with any specialist Pacific SV service organisation, which means the Pacific SV workforce are located across mainstream agencies. This inhibits knowledge of where the Pacific SV workforce are located geographically, and who they are in terms of personal and professional characteristics. This knowledge will be valuable for assessing the capacity and capability of the Pacific SV workforce, which, in turn, is important for workforce development and support.

## Methodology

The research consisted of a literature review, a survey (involving 40 participants), and talanoa sessions (involving 13 participants). The research used a Talanoa research methodology to bring the findings from these sources into conversation with each other.

This is the first survey that has been conducted specifically on the Pacific SV workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the number of participants appears small, a recent study suggests that there are approximately 50 specialised Pacific workers working in the Aotearoa New Zealand SV sector.

## Recommendations

This section summarises the recommendations from chapter 6 in the main report.

Based on the findings from the literature review, online survey, and talanoa sessions, in order of priority, the researchers recommend:

1

The emerging **national Pacific SV workforce network** be supported to bring the workforce together to advocate for Pacific workers, and explore the viability of a Pacific SV multi-service agency

2

**Research findings** be used to inform SV sector planning and investment in workforce development

3

Further research to include a **review of the impacts of state funding, reporting, and clinical evaluation processes** on the retention of the Pacific SV workforce and the risk of re-traumatising Pacific SV survivors

4

**Investment in the growth of the Pacific SV workforce**, particularly in expertise of cultural and clinical supervision, and through leadership and professional development pathways

5

**Expansion of the Pacific SV workforce**, with a view to wider capabilities and recruiting more males, youth, disabled, and Rainbow+ peoples to serve the specific needs of these intersections.



## What we learned about the workforce

51%

are largely of Samoan ethnicity, but overall are a **wonderfully diverse group** from across the Pacific Islands.

70%

are over **40 years of age**.

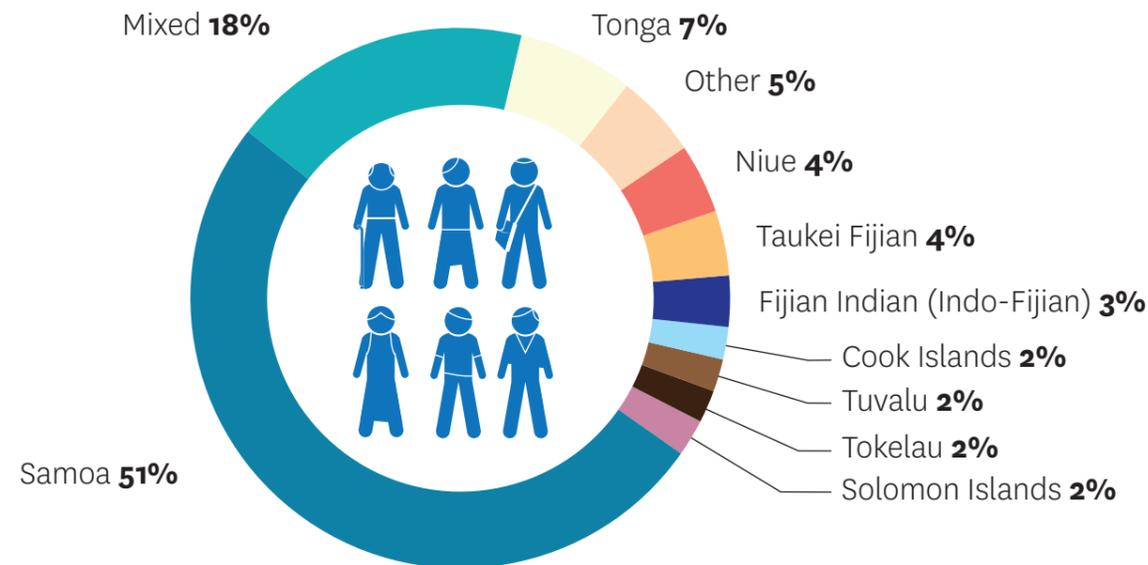
80%

hold at least an undergraduate degree, making it a **very well-qualified workforce**.

95%

are female, making it an **overwhelming majority**, but also includes male and nonbinary/third gender members as well.

## Ethnicities of the Pacific SV workforce in Aotearoa



## Experiences providing SV support

### The Pacific SV workforce:

- Intentionally use a wide range of Pacific values, practices, and protocols to inform their work, especially when supporting Pacific peoples affected by SV.
- Find state funding and review systems frustrating and re-traumatising for their Pacific clients.
- Spend a significant amount of time doing pro-bono work to meet the support needs of Pacific clients.
- Support a small clientele of Pacific peoples; those who do present are often Samoan or Tongan, however, have also seen clients from a range of different Pacific ethnicities.

## Support needs

### The Pacific SV workforce:

- Draw on informal, formal, and pastoral support for self-care
- Joined the workforce to make a positive impact in the healing journey for Pacific peoples affected by SV
- Often leave the sector due to family reasons, but also due to pay issues, burnout and a lack of cultural safety
- Feel isolated and fragmented from other Pacific peoples who work in the SV sector.

## Location and roles

63%

are **based in Auckland**, with the remaining based all across Aotearoa.

87%

are mostly employed by a **non-government organisation**.

24%

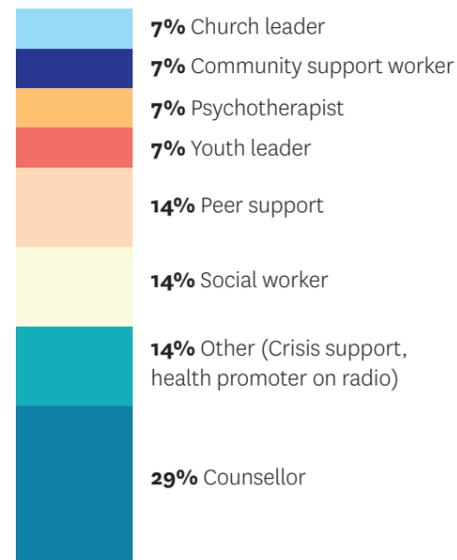
are social workers, with another 24% counsellors, but all are employed in a **variety of roles**.

56%

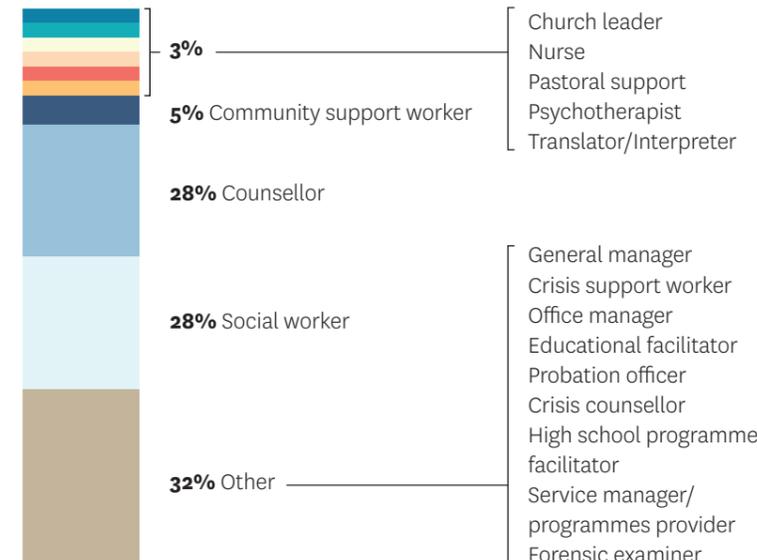
are **relatively new to the workforce**, having worked in the SV sector for two years or less.

## Roles held by past or current members of the Pacific SV workforce

### Past SV workforce members



### Current SV workforce members



(NOTE: percentage decimals have been rounded to nearest whole number)

## Goals and aspirations

### The Pacific SV workforce desire:

- An increased number of **cultural and clinical supervisors**
- A formal **nation-wide Pacific SV network** to provide support and advocacy for the Pacific SV workforce
- A **multi-service Pacific-led agency** to coordinate Pacific expertise, referrals, client support, and more
- Improved **career prospects and cultural responsiveness training**
- Dedicated **pathways, scholarships, and grants** for Pacific peoples to enter the sector and increase the Pacific SV workforce capacity and capability.

The Pacific SV workforce relies on Pacific values, practices, and protocols in their work. These include the following:



## Values

Vā feiloa'i	Faith-based values	Soalaupule (the sharing of decision-making)
Aiga (family)	Lotu (Christian church, spirituality, faith-based) values	Saogalemu (safety)
Family	Alofa (love)	'Fofu le alamea le alamea' (Samoan proverb – 'solutions lie within')
Hospitality	Tatalo (prayer)	Fesoota'iga lelei (good relations/ relationships)
Spirituality	Ethnic-specific values	
Trust	Fa'aaloalo (respect)	
Vā	Tautua (service)	
Cultural values	Pasifika values	
Respect	Fonofale concepts	
Forgiveness	Lalaga (weaving) and malaga (journeying)	
Boundaries	Aga faatamālii (chiefly values; dignified values)	
Communities of support		
Cultural sensitivity		
Cultural competency across different cultures		



## Practices

Vā feiloa'i	Trust	Uses biblical word-based scriptures
Vā	"Cultural space"	Ethnic specific practices
Talanoa (storying; conversational method)	Authentic connections	Acknowledging the collective
Use of legends, bible stories, pese (songs)	Uses lived experiences	Pasifika modalities
Use of alagaupu (proverbs)	Use of Pacific languages	Lalaga le ato (basket weaving)
Use of gafa (genealogical knowledge)	Cultural practices	
Understanding of 'demigods'	Community of support	
Aiga	Cultural sensitivity	
Family	Acknowledge cultural diversity and complexity across and within Pacific cultures within practices	
Hospitality	Cultural competency practices across different cultures	
Spirituality	Uses faith-based practices	



## Protocols

Vā feiloa'i	Appropriate use of Pacific languages
Vā	Cultural protocols
Fa'asamoa	Cultural sensitivity
Aiga	Cultural competency across different cultures
Hospitality	Faith
Spirituality	
Trust	



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### Disclaimer

The views and interpretations in this report are those of the researchers and not the official position of the Ministry of Social Development.

### Published

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